

TREE MEMORIAL TO DANIELS

Commencement A Time For Sentiment

BY SUSAN USHER

In twos, West Brunswick High School's Class of '92 sedately marched the width of the 50-yard line Tuesday night at Rourk Stadium behind Chief Marshal Emily Gore and her cohorts, looking forward, not backward as they headed into the future.

It was a new beginning. High school commencement may be only one of many milestones in life, but 191 seniors made it clear Tuesday that graduation is still a big deal, a bittersweet moment not to be forgotten.

"It's great!" Costa Rican exchange student Milena Jenkins said, her voice emotional as she clutched her American diploma. "I don't have no words for it."

Student officers spoke sentimentally on four years the class shared at West-shy "greenies" fumbling with lockers, the excitement of a first prom and a winning senior year football season in a newly revamped stadium—and optimistically of meeting future challenges.

Meg Small welcomed classmates with "I love you, guys," while in her farewell Ebony Grissett urged, "hang

in there and never lose your thirst for knowledge."

Jessica Robinson spoke poignantly of their loss of "a great friend and athlete with a personality that impressed us all." Classmate and football standout George Wendell Daniels, affectionally known as "the Big G," was killed in a highway accident May 14, 1991.

It was the choice of the class to hold graduation in the stadium, rather than the courtyard. They and most of their guests sat in bleachers and program participants played out their roles from a platform on the track below, with visibility good and loudspeakers functioning well.

As each row of green-and-white clad graduates stood for the walk down the bleachers, classmates cheered, stretched out hands in congratulatory clasps and grinned during what was a generally dignified and short—one hour—ceremony punctuated by music by the school band and chorus.

Salutatorian Pamela Detrie and Valedictorian Terrence Nawara were recognized by Principal Ed Lemon, with Nawara presenting the class gifts to the

school, a cordless microphone system and a tree planted on the campus as a memorial to Daniels.

When Assistant Principal Sandra Robinson appeared, the class cheered: Diplomas were not far behind as she presented the class.

Seniors accepted their diplomas in ways that reflected their own personalities, and perhaps their paths to Tuesday's ceremony. Some smiled in calm dignity, others shrieked, strutted or danced a jig in near-hysteria, stopping midway back to the bleachers to show the class their diploma. One young man kissed his diploma cover.

Athlete Aldwin Lance took a deep bow—and momentarily lost his mortarboard. Greg Yeager accepted his diploma and darted to the side to give his band director, Craig Morris, a quick hug of farewell.

With one senior in a wheelchair and another absent because of injuries received in auto accidents, Brunswick County Board of Education Chairman Donna Baxter's motherly caution "to be careful" while celebrating graduation was timely.

Honor graduate George Stathos accepted his diplo-

ma from a wheelchair pushed by a JROTC cadet escort.

Jessica Langford Combest's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Stewart, accepted her diploma. Recovering from injuries received in a highway accident in which her husband and newborn child were killed, Mrs. Combest had hoped to attend the ceremony, said Mrs. Stewart, but her condition did not allow it.

Dignitaries participating in the ceremony included Superintendent of Schools P.R. Hankins, his assistants, and all five members of the board of education.

Hankins suggested to students that the four keys to success are competence, values, teaching by example and assuming responsibility for themselves and others. He recommended they start each day with pledges to do their best, to treat people as they would like to be treated and to contribute to the groups to which they belong.

In her remarks Mrs. Baxter also encouraged students to continue their educations, an essential, she said, if they are to achieve Christopher Morley's definition of success: "Doing what one wants to do in one's own way."

Sunset Beach Acting To Correct Flood Insurance Program Violations

BY SUSAN USHER

A town official faults use of an outdated guideline for many of the flood insurance program construction violations found during a recent spot check at Sunset Beach.

The violations, which could involve several hundred homes, were discovered May 13 during a routine state inspection to monitor flood insurance program compliance and have the town and contractors moving quickly to bring structures in line.

No punitive action is anticipated, said Berry Williams, state coordinator of the National Flood Insurance Program. He said the violations discovered at Sunset Beach should not jeopardize the town's standing in the program.

"The town is in the process of having the violations corrected," he said. "She's taking aggressive action. They're doing what we've requested them to do. So long as they do that we have no problem with their remaining eligible."

Williams said he understands the town was using an outdated 1985 FEMA handout describing the type

of construction allowed below the base flood elevation.

That accounted for some of the violations found, such as compressors being mounted below base flood elevation as was previously allowed.

"I was not aware the law had changed," said Town Administrator Linda Fluegel.

Some compressor units only need to be moved three inches, she said. "The island has very little V-zone (a higher risk area) and most had them upstairs anyway."

Some other violations went unnoticed possibly, she said, because, until February, the town had only one person handling building inspections in addition to other responsibilities.

"With just one person some things were bound to fall through the cracks," she said.

All that is needed in some instances is professional certification that below-level construction is of a light "break-away" design, intended to give way under wind or water pressure, or that support braces or anchors are attached properly.

Another common violation was

shower heads attached to below-level shower stalls. While the stalls should be of break-away material, the shower head must be remounted separately, on a piling.

"We had very few sinks or hot water heaters" below elevation, she added.

Some violations are more extensive and may be more expensive or time-consuming to correct.

In some instances, she said, individual property owners went back after a house was completed and a certificate of occupancy issued and enclosed ground-level storage areas or made other non-complying changes.

Ms. Fluegel said she doesn't know yet the full extent and volume of the violations and won't know until Williams' office sends its report to the town.

Corrections Under Way

However, she said contractors have already begun bringing homes under construction into full compliance.

The violations were called to contractors' attention at a meeting with town officials that had already been called to discuss other issues. "A lot

of them went out and corrected a great deal then and there," said Ms. Fluegel.

Language on the town's building permit signed by the applicant obligates the builder to construct a house according to all applicable state codes. The flood program standards are part of those codes and thus something with which individual contractors as well as the town should have been familiar, said Berry, especially if they have been doing work in other areas where those provisions were being enforced.

To encourage corrections in other homes, she plans to write homeowners advising them of the flood insurance premium savings they can realize by making the suggested changes.

"If they flat refuse to make the corrections," said Ms. Fluegel, "we have to notify their insurance company. Then it is up to their company whether or not to raise their premium rates."

If the violations are serious enough to be a threat to the town's participation in the program, she said, the town would recommend that the owner be dropped as a program participant.

Base flood elevation is the height of a "100-year" or base flood in relation to a standard reference plain from which elevations are measured. A base flood is a flood having a 1 percent probability of being equaled or exceeded in any given year.

In communities that participate in the National Flood Insurance property owners and the towns take steps to reduce the potential losses—and payouts by the program—that could result if flooding occurs.

For instance, structures in floodplain areas must be built so that habitable areas are above base flood elevation, along with other structures such as compressors.

Anything below that level is to be of "break-away" construction. Other requirements relate to how well the main structure is secured to the roof and to the supporting pilings, and generally how well the structure could withstand the wind and water accompanying a strong hurricane.

The taxpayer-subsidized program works with insurers so that coverage is made available to qualifying homeowners in low-lying areas where potential flooding represents a higher risk of property loss. Cost of premiums can vary depending upon how closely a home meets pro-

gram standards.

Homeowners in an entire community can qualify for discounts if, as Sunset Beach has done over the past two years, their community takes specific steps to prevent flood-related damage as well.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) contracts with the North Carolina to handle monitoring of compliance in the state.

The National Flood Insurance Program is under scrutiny at the national level, with proposals to prohibit new construction in high-risk oceanfront areas and to mandate that owners relocate or demolish existing structures in those areas.

The changes have the support of program opponents who say the government-backed, low-cost insurance has encouraged dense development and accompanying problems along the nation's coastline.

However, business interests are concerned that the changes could harm economies closely linked to coastal development.

The national program was created in 1968 after river floods left hundreds homeless and private insurers reluctant to provide coverage for potentially high-cost claims.

Comments Light On Shallotte Budget

BY DOUG RUTTER

The idea of no tax increase must appeal to Shallotte residents. It was so quiet at the budget hearing Tuesday night you could almost hear dust settle.

Carson Durham, a member of the town's planning board, provided the only public comments on the \$1.2 million spending plan for the 1992-93 year.

He urged town aldermen to support Hope Harbor Home, the county's shelter for victims of domestic violence.

"It's a shame we've got the need here in the county, but there is a need," Durham said.

The proposed budget, based on a tax rate of 47 cents per \$100 of property, doesn't include a donation to the shelter.

It does include contributions of \$250 to the N.C. Symphony and \$2,000 to Shallotte Volunteer Rescue Squad.

Durham said 31 of the 165 people who have used the shelter or its counseling services in the last nine months live in the Shallotte area.

Due to the lack of available grants, he said Hope Harbor is looking for local governments to help with funding.

Aldermen made no decision Tuesday night. They plan to continue discussing the new budget at a workshop Wednesday, June 10, at 7:30 p.m. in town hall.

The budget proposal features a \$755,553 general fund, \$468,523 water and sewer fund and \$40,000 capital projects fund.

The water and sewer fund is

based on an increase in rates. Starting July 1, customers who use the minimum amounts would pay an extra \$2.75 per month.

On Tuesday, the board approved an amendment to the current year's budget to cover a \$12,300 shortfall in the sanitation fund.

Town Clerk Mary Etta Hewett took \$6,500 from contingency and \$5,800 from the public buildings fund to cover the shortfall.

Public Works Director Albert Hughes said the higher cost of trash service was caused by inflation and growth. "It's a good reflection on the kind of growth we've experienced, residential and commercial," he said.

In other business Tuesday, aldermen voted to pave Hinson Street, located between Shallotte Lumber and Shallotte Marine off Main Street. MAC Construction was hired to do the work at a cost of \$5,500.

Aldermen also referred an annexation request to the town planning board. Robert Williams is asking the town to annex one acre between East Gate Square and the Edgewater community on N.C. 130 East.

Town board members also said Tuesday they want to meet with someone from the N.C. Department of Transportation soon to discuss transportation issues in Shallotte.

Among other things, aldermen said the new left turn lane N.C. 130 East needs to be changed to allow for better traffic flow near the stop light. Changes also are needed in front of Shallotte Middle School on N.C. 179.

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