

Perquimans People

Jimmy Hunter speaks

Baseball, wisecracks key dinner

By MIKE McLAUGHLIN
Baseball stories, wisecracks and future plans filled the pine paneled meeting hall at the Durants Neck Ruritans' first meeting of the New Year on Thursday night.

Some 36 Ruritans and a large number of guests feasted on a barbecued pig donated by Marshall Caddy, then settled back and listened as plans were introduced for the coming year, and special guest speaker Jimmy Hunter, Perquimans County's major league baseball star, was introduced.

Among the many proposed projects for the coming year were hunting and boating safety courses.

President Albert Eure told the group that there are three kinds of people, "those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who don't know what happened." He said he hoped Ruritan members would count themselves in the first category.

Caddy, of course, had a wisecrack ready when he was complimented on the pork. "Ya'll just can't believe that hog died three weeks ago," he said. "It smelled a little, but I stuck it with a knife to let the air out of it and then it was alright."

The highlight of the night, though, was the appearance of Hunter. "We had a hard time running him down," said club vice president Charles Mims. "This is the first time in 15 years he's gonna be home since he left high school," Mims said.

Hunter reminisced on his baseball career, and talked of his future plans as a retiree. He also had some complimentary comments for the Ruritans.

Before being asked to speak at the program, Hunter said he had little knowledge of what the Ruritans do. But upon reading up on the club and its community service projects, Hunter concluded

that such organizations are very worthwhile.

"There should be more of 'em around," he said. "There should be one around Hertford. Clubs like this makes us all a lot closer and make us live a little bit better," Hunter said.

Noting the number of young persons in the crowd, he said there is a strong need for a young man to have the guidance of an elder in the community, a sort of "boss" to keep him pointed in the right direction.

He said he had always had such bosses, beginning with his four older brothers. Early on, they ruled over his access to the ballfield.

"The only way I'd get to play was to throw strikes and let 'em hit it out of the ballpark. When I got up to the majors I did the same thing," he said.

The good old days for Hunter were with the Oakland Athletics. The younger players learned from the older players, he said, and team members were a close bunch, not a group of strangers bought with free agent money.

Together they won championships in 1972, '73, and '74, he said. "Then (Oakland owner) Charlie Finley refused to pay me the money I earned so I went to the Yankees," Hunter said.

Hunter had mixed memories of his years in New York City.

Just playing in the old Yankee Stadium was a thrill, he said. The stadium was a monument to baseball achievement. As an example, Hunter spoke of the spot in the right field seats where Micky Mantle's legendary 600 foot homerun struck, within six feet of having soared out of the stadium.

There were, however, some moments of dark dissension among the Yankees. Reggie Jackson, who along with Hunter came from the Athletics to the Yankees, was initially not well received.

Hunter told his new teammates that Jackson was a nice guy, but he just talked too much sometimes and you had to know when not to listen. It took a couple of years, but the rest of the team finally realized Hunter was right.

New York sportswriters didn't exactly contribute to love and brotherhood on the team either, he said. "If you said 'boo' they'd write it down," Hunter said. "If one player said 'I hate that guy' they'd write it down and go over to the other guy and say, 'that guy said he hated you. What do you have to say about that?'"

Hunter said the sportswriters always tried to keep something stirred up. "It's like my Daddy said. The more you stir a pot of manure the worse it's gonna smell," Hunter said.

On Billy Martin, the fiery sometimes Yankee manager, Hunter said he knew baseball as well as anybody, but would let his temper get in the way of his better judgement. "He'd fight anybody if he had two or three more with him," Hunter said.

Martin would even let his temper get in the way of winning ballgames on occasion.

On the other hand, Yogi Berra was the even-tempered coach who always kept things in perspective. He also had the Midas touch, Hunter said.

Berra had convinced a few players to go in with him on a Yoo Hoo chocolate drink deal,

and when the proposition started losing money, they all wanted out. Berra bought back all the stock and wound up turning a \$5,000 investment into something like a \$10 million return.

Another time Berra tried to get Hunter to join him in a racketball club venture. "You'll be sorry if you don't go in with me," Berra warned. Six months later the facility was paid for.

"Anything he touched turned to gold," Hunter said, "and I've got one dog he touched," he added hopefully. Berra even named the dog Yoo Hoo.

In looking back, Hunter said his 15 year baseball career had been very good to him, giving him the opportunity to see places and do things he otherwise would not have done.

His last season as a Yankee, though, was a rocky one.

"This year was the hardest I've ever spent in baseball," Hunter said. "I felt like my arm was sound and I could pitch but they wouldn't pitch me."

The script was similar for each of his infrequent appearances on the mound. He would usually be tagged hard in the early innings.

When the manager would ask, "What happened," Hunter said he would respond, "I've always pitched on four days rest. I can't pitch this way."

Hunter also lost three people

who were very close to him this past year. They were Clyde Klutz, the scout who signed him, his father, who died this past July, and Thurmon Munson, the Yankee catcher killed in a plane crash.

"The whole year, nothing seemed to go right, in baseball, or in life," Hunter said. "But it's helped me a lot. It's changed me," he said.

"I'm just thankful to God that he gave me the opportunity to play baseball. If it wasn't for him I wouldn't be able to play ball, or hunt, or fish, or farm."

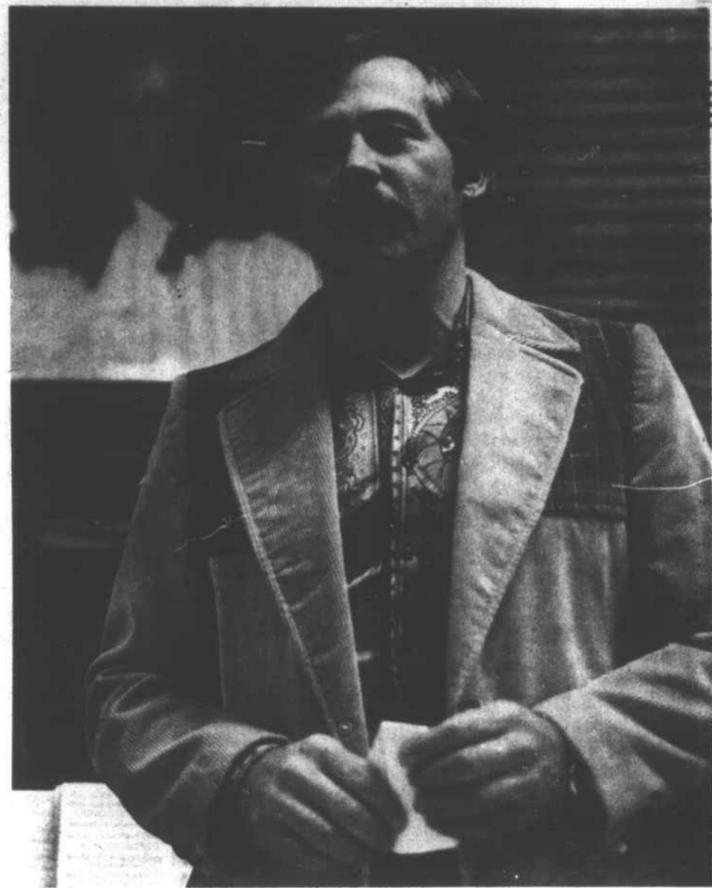
Now that his baseball career is over, Hunter said he is looking forward to settling into the farming life in Perquimans County. Again, he said he will have that boss to give him direction.

"I've got an older brother who thinks there ain't but one way to farm and that's his way," he said.

As Hunter was finishing up his remarks, a comment from the audience made reference to his latest promotional gambit.

"Hey Jimmy, can we call you Catfish Chapstick?"

"Long as they pay me you can," Hunter quipped.



George Washington appears to be looking on as Jimmy Hunter delivers a talk to the Durants Neck Ruritans.

Proctor promoted

Peoples Bank and Trust Company recently announced the promotion of Janie W. Proctor to Assistant Vice President in the bank's Hertford Consumer Credit Department.

A native of Perquimans County, she attended Perquimans County High School and graduated from American Schools, Chicago, Illinois.

Prior to joining Peoples Bank, she worked as a bookkeeper with Hollowell Chevrolet, Inc. Since being with the bank, she has worked in both Consumer and Commercial loans.

Mrs. Proctor has completed several AIB courses including Advanced Business

Management, Supervisory Development, and Special Organizational Services. She is a member of National Association of Bank Women and Women's Division of N.C. Bankers Association, where she has served on the Executive Committee. Along with memberships in professional organizations, she also has been active in the Hertford Grammar PTA, serving as Secretary, and Perquimans County Chapter of N. C. Cerebral Palsy, serving as Treasurer.

Mrs. Proctor is a member of the Bethel Baptist Church, where she is presently in the Adult Choir and works as the Clerk. She is married to Willis Proctor, and they have one son, A. Willis, of Hertford.

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