

# THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

Volume 62, No. 17

Hertford, Perquimans County, N.C.,

Thursday, June 3, 1993

35 Cents

## Step 2

### Smith will meet with school board

By SUSAN R. HARRIS  
Editor

Sharon M. "Sherry" Smith will take step two in her quest to be reinstated as a special education teacher at Perquimans County High School on June 21 when she appears before the board of education to tell her story.

Smith, who was suspended for 90 days on March 15 pending an investigation into sexual misconduct charges, received a letter dated May 27 from her attorney, Luke Largess, telling her that the board of education would like to meet with her at their regular June 7 board meeting. The letter states that the board will hear Smith at that time, although the appointment does not constitute a formal hearing.

Largess said that if the board decides that a full hearing is warranted after hearing her story, they will set a date for a full hearing.

Neither Largess nor Ken Soo, the attorney representing the school system, could be present on June 7. Smith said she preferred to have her attorney at the meeting, and requested a date change from board chairman Wayne Howell on June 1. Howell agreed to change the meeting date.

Smith said Monday she is preparing her presentation with the help of N.C.A.E. representative Luceta Sellars. Smith also said that the board will go into closed session to hear her case. North Carolina general statutes allow the board to enter closed session to discuss personnel matters.

Smith was placed on a 90-day suspension with pay March 15 by schools superintendent Randall L. Henion. The suspension complied with general statutes dealing with public school personnel. The board voted not to renew Smith's contract on May 17 after meeting in closed session with Soo. On May 19, Henion called Smith and asked her to meet with him in his office. At that time, Smith was told she could return to the classroom as early as May 20. Smith chose to return on May 24. The board has not met again since Smith returned to the classroom and has not renewed her contract.

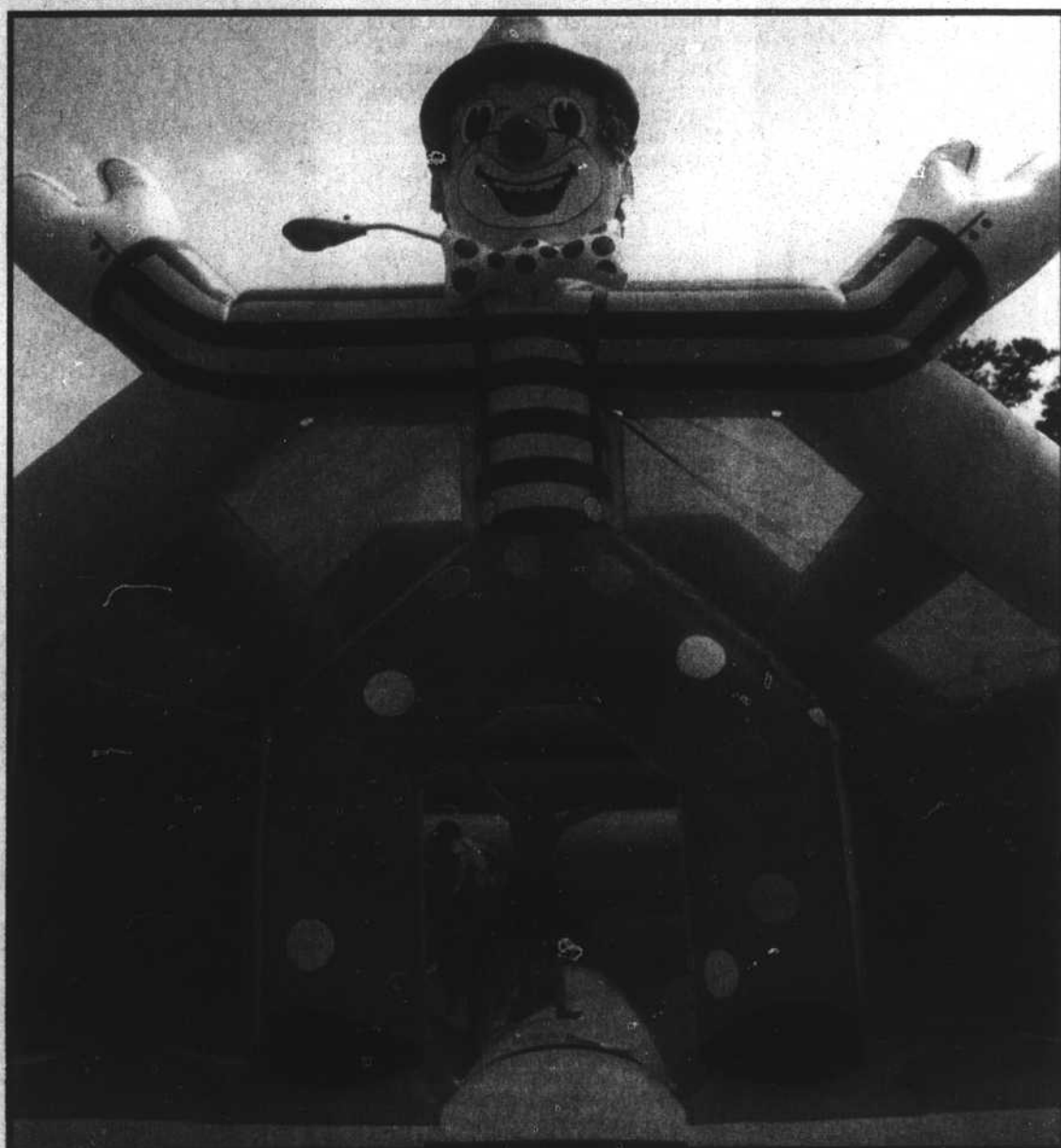
Smith has denied allegations of misconduct with a student.

## Park to be dedicated

The town of Hertford will dedicate its new waterfront park on Monday, June 14 at 7:30 p.m. during a combination dedication/Flag Day celebration featuring the Hertford Drums and Pipes.

The park is located behind the municipal building. Included on the site is a boardwalk with benches overlooking the river.

## Clowning around



Over 80,000 people, including many Perquimans County residents, enjoyed the sights and sounds of RiverSpree '93 in Elizabeth City over the weekend. Entertainment, crafts, food, competition and fun were high on the festival's priorities list. Organizers declared the event a success. (Photo by Gary Cosby Jr.)

## Cove Grove celebration highlights county's rich architectural history

By SUSAN R. HARRIS  
Editor

Perquimans County will celebrate the history of its Old Neck community Saturday at the Old Neck Celebration at Cove Grove.

The celebration includes a traditional Southern barbecue and entertainment on the lawn of Cove Grove. The event is a fundraiser sponsored by the Old Neck Committee of the Perquimans County Restoration Association. Monies from the event will go toward research of the significant historic buildings in the Old Neck area, in hopes that

an Old Neck Historic District will be accepted into the National Register of Historic Places. Committee members estimate research costs at \$6,000.

Several buildings of historic significance are located in the proposed district. Two of those buildings, Cove Grove and the Sutton-Newby house, are in the National Register individually. Owners of the Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon house, known now as 1812 on the Perquimans, are in the process of applying for National Register acceptance.

The buildings in the district were reviewed by Dru Gatewood Haley and Raymond A. Winslow Jr. in their 1982 book, *The Historic Architecture of Perquimans County, North Carolina*.

Cove Grove, built around 1830, was described as an im-

pressive, graceful coastal plan plantation house which combines the boldness of the Greek Revival period with the delicacy of the late Federal period. The house was built by Benjamin S. Skinner, who married Elizabeth Leigh, the daughter of Col. James Leigh. Leigh built Land's End. The home is still owned and occupied by descendants of Benjamin Skinner.

The Fletcher-Skinner-Nixon house (ca. 1815) is one of the largest, most outstanding Federal style plantation houses in the county. The house was built by William Fletcher; was owned by four Skinner brothers, including Cove Grove's Benjamin; and is now a bed and breakfast inn. The house was recently restored by owners Peter and Nancy Rascoe. Mrs. Rascoe is a descendant of one of the home's early owners.

Riverside, published in the Gatewood-Winslow work as the Williams Jones House, was probably built around 1815. The house is a center-hall plan Federal dwelling which was modified into a larger, more formal, T-plan Greek Revival plantation house. Tradition holds that the earliest portion of the house, a two-room wing, was probably built in the 18th century.

The Thomas Nixon house, also known as Elmwood (ca. 1814), features several period outbuilding, including barns, a smokehouse and a dairy. A well windmill tower still stands tall on the site.

The Francis Nixon house is an example of continued additions to a small dwelling. The original portion of the three-part house is thought to have been a one-and-a-half story coastal cottage built in the early 19th century. Two Federal-style additions were made to the original dwelling.

The Gabriel White house has also undergone changes since it was built in the early 1800s. Originally a three-bay, two-story house, it was enlarged with a story-and-a-half wing. The house features Federal, Greek Revival and coastal plain architecture. It was moved a short distance from its original site in 1978 and renovated by present owner John Matthews.

Willow Branch School, also known as Frog Hall School, is one of the county's largest early 20th century community schools. Black students in grades 1-7 attended the school until 1951. It was converted to a private residence that year.

The Sutton-Newby house is one of the oldest in the state, and is thought to be the second oldest house still standing in the county. It is a significant example of medieval house forms in the state, and features a frame structure with brick ends. The house has both an 18th century rear frame shed and a 20th century side shed addition. It is presently being renovated.

## County budget hearing is tonight

County manager N. Paul Gregory submitted a budget exceeding \$5.3 million to the county commissioners, which would result in an 8 cents per \$100 valuation tax hike if the commissioners accept it.

Gregory trimmed the departmental requests before presenting his budget recommendations to the board. The half million dollar increase from last year's budget is due in part to a 5 per-

cent across-the-board salary increase for county employees, an additional deputy sheriff, increased jail costs, an additional employee at the Department of Social Services, dispatch equipment and a new ambulance for the EMS department.

In last week's *Perquimans Weekly*, the Perquimans Taxpayers Committee ran an advertisement against any increase over 1992-93 levels. The group has

attended board meetings, studied the budget and spoken with commissioners about rising ad valorem taxes and the land use break for farmland owners.

The public will have an opportunity to speak to the commissioners about the proposed budget at a public hearing set for tonight (Thursday) at 7:30 p.m. in the commissioner's room in the courthouse annex.

## Willis, White lead PCHS class of '93

Perquimans County High School announced recently the names of the valedictorian and salutatorian of the class of 1993.

Ryan Willis finished his high school career with the highest average in his class. Dena White earned the number two spot. Both will speak during graduation exercises on June 11 at 8 p.m. at the Perquimans County High School athletic field.

Willis, the son of Earl and Gloria Willis of Edenton, has been accepted at both Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He expects to decide between the two schools within the next few weeks. Willis will pursue a degree in political science and history. He is interested in a career in education and politics.

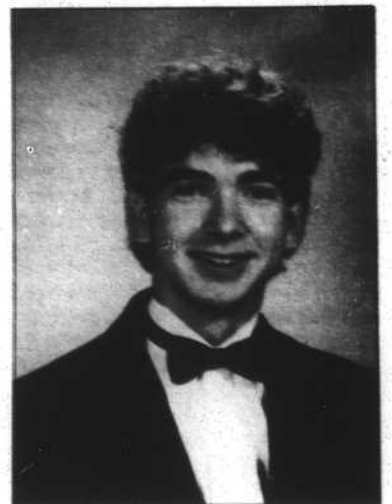
During his high school career, Willis has been involved in numerous extracurricular activities, including band, Future Teachers of America, Future Business Leaders of America, Beta Club, Spanish Club, Students Against Drunk Driving, Quiz Bowl and Math Science Club. He served as senior class president and as president of FTA, FBLA and the Beta Club. Willis was offered a slot in the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program.

White is the daughter of Joe and Mary White of Hertford. She will enter Meredith College in the fall, where she plans to major in English. Her career goal is to teach English, then move up into educational administration. She has been accepted into the honors program at Meredith and as a North Carolina Teaching Fellow.

White served as drum major for the band her junior and seniors years, is president of Students Against Drunk Driving and vice president of the Future Teachers of America, and is a member of Future Business Leaders of America, Beta Club, Math Science Club and Spanish Club.

The honor students said they felt prepared to enter college, especially in the areas of English, math and history. Both said they felt most of their teachers had been very good, although at times lack of equipment and facilities had hindered experimentation and hands-on learning, particularly in the science area.

Attending a small school has been a positive experience, the students said. The sense of community in a smaller school provides greater faculty support and integration with other students



Ryan Willis

...Valedictorian



Dena White

...Salutatorian

from a variety of backgrounds, White and Willis said. White said her decision to attend a small college was influenced by her experience in a small school setting. Willis, who began school in Perquimans County, then moved to a metropolitan area before deciding to come back, said he much prefers the atmosphere in a small school system.

Both students said they will miss family and friends when they leave for college in August, but look forward to the challenge of university life and to the new opportunities and responsibilities they will have.

Wherever their futures take them, both said they will always have an appreciation for the beauty and the people in Perquimans County.

## Governor creates task force to study schools administration

Gov. Jim Hunt has created a task force to conduct a statewide "audit" of central administration offices in each school system.

Hunt created the Public Administrator Task Force by Executive Order in mid-May, as part of his education reform effort. The Task Force will analyze the percentage of dollars going to administrators, to make sure classrooms and teachers are getting adequate funding.

The Public School Administrator Task Force will be charged with:

- Analyzing existing ratios of public schools administrators to teachers and students;
- Determining the ratio needed to effectively and efficiently administer quality education at a local level;
- Developing guidelines for local administrators to follow in becoming more effective and efficient; and
- Reporting its findings to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight and to the State Board of Education.

The Task Force will be made up of eight business and industry leaders with experience in increasing productivity in their organizations.

"We want these business leaders to take a hard look over the next 6 months at our public

schools, and make recommendations," Hunt said. "Right now we don't know if we have too many administrators, or too few. We do know that we need facts and recommendations before we make wholesale changes."

The Task Force is just part of the comprehensive education reform plan Hunt unveiled in March. Hunt also proposed:

- Legislation creating the Standards and Accountability Commission, which has passed the Senate.

- Legislation creating a National Teaching Exam has passed the House. The bill would help North Carolina become the first state in the country to reward teachers for becoming nationally board-certified.

- Legislation allowing local school systems more flexibility in spending state education dollars, so that local schools can target local needs, is being considered in the House and Senate.

The Governor has also proposed creating the Governor's Business Committee on Education, to find ways of implementing the principles of Total Quality Management in the state's school systems.