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Robinson sworn in as sheriff Friday

Former chief deputy not asked to serve

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Ralph Robinson was sworn in as interim sheriff at a midnight ceremony Friday at the Perquimans County courthouse by the Honorable J.C. Cole, 1st District Court Judge.

"It was a very humbling experience," Robinson, 70, said of the ceremony. "We had standing room only. It was something."

The sheriff was appointed by the county commissioners in special session last Monday to fulfill the unexpired term of David Lane. Lane resigned on July 20 effective July 31 to pursue other job opportunities outside the area.

The interim sheriff defeated Lane 1,012 votes to 832 votes in the Democratic primary elec-

tion in May. Deputies sworn in were Kevin L. Byrd, Darlene M. Jacobs, Homeria V. Jennette, David Layne (no relation to the former sheriff), Ersal Overton, William Spruill Jr. and Eric V. Tilley.

Notably absent from the swearing-in ceremony were three members of Lane's staff—chief deputy Dean Cartwright and deputies Chris Whitmore and Darrell Felton.

Robinson said Cartwright had not resigned to his knowl-

edge, but would not comment further on his separation from the department. He did say that Cartwright met with him last week and offered assistance with the transition between administrations.

"He was very professional," Robinson said. "I'm glad he called me and he helped in the transition."

According to Cartwright's wife, Susan Godfrey Cartwright, her husband was not asked to be sworn in Friday by Robinson. Susan

Cartwright said that during the meeting Robinson and Cartwright had last week, Robinson told Cartwright that he respected him and that he had done a good job, but that there was no place for Cartwright in Robinson's administration. Susan Cartwright confirmed that the former chief deputy did not resign.

Cartwright came to Perquimans County to serve as chief deputy at the start of Lane's tenure in December

1994. Susan Cartwright said the 17-year law enforcement veteran holds a masters degree in criminal justice and is certified by the state as both a general instructor and as an instructor trainer.

The position of chief deputy will be held by Eric V. Tilley, Robinson said. Presently a probation/parole officer, Tilley served as a deputy in Perquimans County from August 1987-December 1992 under sheriff Joe Lothian.

Please see Sheriff, page 6

RETRACING SLAVERY'S PATHWAY

Interfaith pilgrims walk to understand

By ANGELA FOREST
The Daily Advance

For more than two months they've been on the road, walking through communities large and small, visiting landmarks from American's slave-holding past.

When their journey is finally complete later this year, the 50 or so members of the Interfaith Pilgrimage for the Middle Passage hope to have retraced slavery's path from the United States back to Africa.

But more importantly, the Interfaith pilgrims hope to have a better sense of slavery's legacy on the New World.

Representing several countries and a variety of cultures and economic backgrounds, the Interfaith pilgrims walked through the Albemarle Thursday and Friday, spending one night in Elizabeth City and the other in Winfall.

The group began its journey in Leverett, Mass on May 30. So far, the pilgrims have traveled through 11 states and Washington, D.C., said Clyde Love, an Interfaith member from Kansas City, Mo.

The pilgrims will end the United States portion of their tour in New Orleans in November, said group spokesman Aaron Jones, who hails from San Francisco.

The pilgrims then hope to board a boat and sail to Cuba, Puerto Rico, Haiti and other Caribbean island nations, and follow that with a trip to Brazil. They then will set sail for Africa, where they hope to visit 14 countries and complete their trip to Cape Town, South Africa, in June 1999.

Financing for the historic pilgrimage has come from fund-raisers, contributions from members, and non-member donors, Jones said. A Friday evening fund-raiser in Winfall, for example, raised more than \$100 for the trip.

The logistics of obtaining food and lodging for the group has at times been difficult, said Jones. But the challenges have only strengthened members' faith that they will reach their final destination.

"We've walked 85 percent of the way since leaving Massachusetts," he said. "Sometimes the day's journey is longer than the day and we have to (ride) to the next location. We're learning how to be one unit. It's like a family.

Jones said the group still hasn't secured a ship for its



PHOTO BY J. MURPHY MILLER, THE DAILY ADVANCE

Members of Interfaith Pilgrimage for the Middle Passage make their way into Elizabeth City via the Camden Causeway Thursday. The pilgrims, who number about 50, are retracing the path of slavery from Massachusetts to Africa. They were welcomed in Perquimans County by members of Melton's Grove Church, where they stayed overnight Friday.

passage to the Caribbean and Africa. But that's not a concern, he said. "We're just going on faith and praying it will work out as it should."

The group's visit in the Albemarle apparently went smoothly. On Thursday, the pilgrims were greeted by Elizabeth City officials that included Mayor Rick Gardner and Pasquotank County NAACP President Raymond Rivers. They bedded down for the night in dorm rooms at Elizabeth City State University.

On Friday, they were entertained by the Inspirational Voices choir at an evening program hosted by Winfall Mayor Fred Yates, Perquimans County NAACP President Estelle Felton, County Commissioner Shirley Yates and members of Melton's Grove Church, where the pil-

grims stayed the night.

For Love, 38, being able to follow the Underground Railroad through several states, standing before a former slave auction house in Washington, D.C., and visiting a slave cemetery in Newport, R.I., has often been an emotional and healing experience.

"When I stand in (places where slavery existed), I think about my history, I think about my family tree and who was being beaten and shackled in this one place," Love said.

"For people of African descent, these places cause deep feelings and deep hurt. There are a lot of tears. But by expressing these feelings it's healing for ourselves and the communities we travel to."

Jones said the group has visited several towns where the local citizenry wasn't aware of their community's

significant ties to slavery. Jones says many people feel slavery should be forgotten. But he says Americans will never be able to embrace a future free of racial and social problems as long as slavery's legacy isn't fully understood.

Christianna Abel, an 18-year-old from Miller's Fall, Mass., says the pilgrimage has helped her see the history of oppression other races and ethnic groups have experienced in the United States.

Before I heard about the walk, I never saw people as different colors and races and the problems that went along with that," she said.

"(On this pilgrimage), I saw a lot of anger and forgiveness and I was witness to an amazing ritual of a people crying for ancestors that were never cried for. It's very empowering," she said.

Superintendent sees positives in school system

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Cooperation between teachers, students and parents and setting high standards can be the keys to success in the Perquimans County Schools, according to new superintendent Gregory L. Todd.

Todd said Monday that when teachers and parents communicate and cooperate, it can help motivate students to perform at a higher level.

"There is no doubt in my mind that all children can reach grade level," Todd said. "It has been shown all over the state. If (everybody) works together, it is achievable."

Setting high standards is one of the first steps to student achievement, Todd said.

Todd said he has already seen signs that high standards can be met in Perquimans County. Preliminary indications are that students at Central School performed very well on the state end-of-course testing this past school year, with the middle school showing improvement. And he said that although scores were not strong at the high school, they can be improved with closer alignment to the state curriculum.

The superintendent said that while grades 3-5 had good test scores overall, there is a concern with the fourth grade scores. He said there will be an emphasis on improving them during the coming year.

The middle school also had what the state will probably term adequate growth in student achievement, but Todd said particular attention will be paid this year to the sixth grade.

Todd said that at the high school, there is a good faculty and steps are already being taken to more closely align curriculum with the state's standard course of study.

The comprehensive ABCs report is expected to be released Thursday. It will contain end-of-course test scores from across the state and the ranking of each school system.

He said that efforts will be made to continue to expand the curriculum at the high school through distance learning and technology courses.

One step that will be taken over the next three years to strengthen academic standards will be that students must perform at or above grade level on end-of-course tests in order to be promoted. Next year, students must perform at grade level in one of

three areas to go to the next grade. That standard will be raised the next year to two of three areas, and the next to all three core areas.

He said the school system will also set high expectations for student behavior in order to maintain safe and orderly schools. He said ways must be found to make sure disruptive students are not allowed to hamper the learning environment for other students. While all students make mistakes, Todd said ways will be found to remove habitually disruptive students into a supportive, controlled environment.

Todd has found the facilities in Perquimans County to be in good shape. Perquimans Middle School and Perquimans High School are good facilities, he said, adding that there are roofing concerns at the high school that engineers are working to address at present. With the completion of the new school under construction in Winfall and major renovations underway at the elementary school in Hertford, all four schools should serve students well.

One of the most positive signs that Perquimans schools can improve is the people of the county, Todd said. He described those he has met as "good, sincere people with strong value structures in place." He said those values and the community's interest in and commitment to the schools will help in the school system's efforts to improve education.

With the start of school around the corner, Todd said Kahn Construction, the management company overseeing the Hertford and Winfall construction projects, still foresees the completion of Hertford Grammar by the opening day of school on Aug. 24. He said the project is still on schedule.

Meanwhile, maintenance employees have worked this summer moving classroom equipment and supplies boxed by teachers and assistants at the end of last year. Grades pre-kindergarten-2 will be housed at Central School and grades 3-5 at Hertford. Some teachers and assistants have already reported to work organizing their new classrooms.

The annual convocation for faculty and staff was set for Wednesday, with work days set up from then until school begins. Aug. 12 is the first required day for teachers.

Todd is looking forward to a successful year for students and staff.