



# The Perquimans Weekly 35¢

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Hertford, North Carolina 27944

## Hunter diagnosed with Gehrig's disease

### Hall of Fame pitcher receives news at Johns Hopkins

By BRIAN ZUMBANO  
The Daily Advance

It was named for one baseball legend and now it has struck another—one who happens to be Hertford's favorite son and a Perquimans County icon.

It is Lou Gehrig's disease, and it has infected Hertford native and baseball Hall of Famer Jimmy "Catfish" Hunter.

"At Johns Hopkins (Medical Center in Baltimore), they told me I had Lou Gehrig's disease, ALS," Hunter told the New York Post Sunday. "They are going to put me on some medicine to try to keep it stable or slow it down a little bit."

Efforts by The Daily

Advance to reach the legendary pitcher and members of the Hunter family for this story were unsuccessful.

On Monday, as word of Hunter's crippling ailment spread, he reportedly was back in Hertford doing what he loves best -- hunting with his son.

Gehrig's disease, which is technically called amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and is named after the Yankee great, is a degenerative neurological condition of the nerve cells that control muscular movement. It usually leads to paralysis, and often, death.

Reaction in the Hertford area was a somber mix of sadness and shock as the countless residents who call Catfish a friend learned of the news.

"It certainly was a surprise," said longtime friend Wayne "Lefty" Winslow, a Perquimans native and high school baseball teammate of

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DAILY ADVANCE FILE PHOTO

Hall of Fame pitcher Jim "Catfish" Hunter, Jimmy to his old friends in Hertford, has helped raise thousands of dollars for sports at his alma mater through participation in such activities as the annual Old Timers Game.

## Community offers support

By WILL SULLIVAN  
The Daily Advance

From the high school baseball field on Jimmy Hunter Drive to the corner drug store that still serves as the local hangout, residents here expressed similar reaction to the news no one wanted to hear.

"Everybody's concerned in the community because Jimmy's done so much in here as far as helping people," said Charles Woodard, a lifelong friend and owner of Woodard's Pharmacy, a popular downtown establishment and hub of Hertford activity. "I've had several people come in today and ask about him."

The man they're asking about is baseball Hall of Famer Catfish Hunter, who was recently diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, the terminal ailment named after the courageous New York Yankees star first baseman.

News of Hunter's health problems spread quickly. But concern and support for the hometown hero has spread just as fast.

"Everybody is real upset here at the school," said Perquimans Athletic Director Harrell Thach. "He has our prayers and support because he has meant a lot to us. As far as the school goes and what he's done, he's been tremendous."

Debbie Proctor, who works in the Perquimans County Building Inspector's office, agreed.

"I think everybody just looks up to him," said Proctor, who can look out of her window inside the Perquimans County Courthouse Annex and see a monument honoring Hunter. "He has been in places that a lot of people probably would like to have experienced. And he's brought that experience back home and shared it with others, too. He's shared it with children right on up to adults, helping them with sports and encouragement. And that means a whole lot."

Proctor said Hunter has meant a lot to her family, in particular. Her husband, Pete, hunts regularly with Catfish, while Proctor's sons, Tim and Nicholas, played under Hunter in little league baseball.

"Everybody that knows Jimmy will tell you the same thing," said Proctor. "He's just a homeboy, and it's never been anything more than that."

Despite all his athletic accomplishments—he pitched a perfect game and won 224 games in a sparkling 12-year

major league career with the Yankees and Oakland Athletics—folks close to Hunter say the hard-throwing right-hander has never lost sight of where he came from.

"I've known Catfish Hunter for approximately 12 years," said Perquimans County Sheriff Ralph Robinson. "His (youngest) son, Paul, was in my D.A.R.E. class in 6th grade. I've got the greatest respect for him as an individual, and he's a down-to-earth person. Success didn't spoil him."

Robinson said Hunter, who has been a special deputy on the Perquimans County force for the last 20 years, is a local treasure and a living legend.

"I don't know if they (the area residents) understand what they have," said Robinson, who is originally from Long Island, N.Y. "I'm not a native of this county—I've adopted this county—but he's an amazing guy."

Woodard said he's keeping close tabs on his childhood friend. The two attended school together from the first grade all the way through high school and remain close.

"He was in here today," said Woodard, who first noticed something different in Hunter last spring. "I talked to him for a while. I think the main thing is, he's at least glad he finally found out what's wrong with him."

Woodard and Hunter, and their families, go way back.

"My mama was a school teacher and she used to ride with Jimmy down to Florida to tutor him through Spring Training in Fort Lauderdale," Woodard recalled.

Woodard's now hoping some sort of medical breakthrough will arrive in time to save the ailing Hunter.

"The thing is now, hopefully there are some new drugs that hopefully can arrest it or slow it down," said Woodard, who noted Hunter was in church, as usual, for Sunday's worship. "The word is from the medical community, they're supposed to have a cure for Lou Gehrig's disease by the year 2000."

Until then, Woodard said the best thing to do is pray that Hunter can somehow beat the mysterious disease.

"You don't see it very often," said Woodard, shaking his head. "It's just a bad thing to get. It's kind of ironic, Lou Gehrig played with the Yankees, Jimmy played with the Yankees. The people are all concerned. I just think we all need to get together to pray for him."

## YOUTH RALLY



PHOTO BY SUSAN HARRIS

Perquimans County native Danny Meads brought a delegation of youth from his church in Midlothian, Va., Victory Tabernacle Church of God, to Perquimans County this weekend for an area-wide youth rally at the high school. The group shared modern, youth-oriented ways to share the gospel with others at a 5th Quarter activity sponsored by the PCHS Fellowship of Christian athletes Friday night and at a Saturday evening service.

## Band requests uniforms, second instructor

By SUSAN R. HARRIS  
Editor

A growing band program and aging uniforms sent Perquimans County Schools band program supporters tuning up for help from the school board Monday night.

Band Booster co-presidents A.O. Roberts and Parker Newbern and band director David Ziemba asked the board for financial help to purchase new uniforms and for a second band teaching position.

Roberts said the band's 12-year-old uniforms are showing their age. He said based on information he and Ziemba had received from uniform companies, it will cost approximately \$40,000 to purchase new uniforms.

At present, the Band Boosters are paying for instruments on a 5-year installment contract at a cost of over \$5,000 per year, Roberts said. The club does not have funds to pay for the uniforms, he added.

"We've got a lot here to be proud of," Roberts said of the band program. "The kids here are just exceptional. We've got the participation here, we just need some help."

Roberts asked that the

board work with the Boosters to purchase the uniforms.

The co-president also asked the board to consider hiring a second teacher for the band program.

"David Ziemba needs help," Roberts said. "We feel like he's got a load on him."

Roberts said that there is a need for someone else to work with the band program to provide continuity in the event that Ziemba would leave or retire.

Newbern said that the marching band this year is composed of about 120 students. At an average of 100 students in the marching band each year for the past 10 years, Newbern said that the band program has touched a lot of students and families.

Ziemba said when he began the band program in 1978, he had no idea it would grow so much. In years past, students could begin taking band in sixth grade; however, growth in the program caused the sixth grade to be cut from the program. Another teacher, he said, would allow sixth graders to be included in instrumental music again.

In addition to learning how to play a musical instrument, Ziemba said the band helped

sixth graders feel like a part of their school and helped develop pride. Sixth graders are not eligible for participation in middle school sports.

Ziemba also said that there are so many extra duties associated with being a band director that additional help is needed.

"My first goal is my classroom every day, then the other things," Ziemba said. "It's just a matter of how much I can get to."

There are presently about 300 students enrolled in four band levels in grades 7-12, he said.

Dare County and Elizabeth City-Pasquotank school districts have three full-time band instructors; Currituck, two, Ziemba said. Edenton Holmes and Gates County are both pushing to get second instructors, he said.

Ziemba said there needs to be someone trained and ready to assume his duties because he might not be here too much longer. The veteran teacher has over 25 years in the state's public school system.

The band director likened bringing in a new band director to bringing in a new coach. He said what has happened with the turnover in football

coaches over the past few years will happen to the band.

Ziemba said he addressed the need for help to principals at both the middle and high schools as well as to school-based committees last year, but heard nothing.

The band director ended his comments by telling the board that he has copies of studies showing that music education improves test scores.

Board chairman Wallace Nelson said the board will look at both issues brought to the board.

"I don't know what we could do, but we could sure take a look at it," Nelson said. "We'll try to do the best we can."

In the 1998-99 fiscal budget of the school system, the band program was allotted \$24,036 in local funds, according to schools finance officer Frances Hammer. Hammer said those funds are to cover two months of summer employment for the band director, interim instructor fees, supplies and materials, equipment repair and travel. The band director is in a teaching position funded for 10 months by the state.

Hammer said to her knowledge there has never been a line item in the band budget for uniforms.

## Outside

Thursday Nov. 12	Friday Nov. 13	Saturday Nov. 14
High 60s Low 40s	High 70s Low 40s	High 70s Low 50s
Clear, sunny	Partly cloudy	Chance of rain

Have a great weekend!