

SCHOOL NEWS

2-B

EDUCATOR PROFILE

Barbara Turner Likes Teaching In United States

BY MARTY HOHMANN
Of the Herald Staff

Comparisons are impossible for Barbara Turner. As a British lady teaching here in Kings Mountain with the Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program, she has been asked to make them over and over again. And as always, she replies, "It is impossible."

School systems in America and England are drastically different and Turner has been able to see that first hand. As a third grade teacher in Manchester, England, she has exchanged jobs with North Elementary's Connie Phifer for the year. Turner took over a third grade class in Kings Mountain and Phifer is busy teaching in England.

With the year drawing to a close, Turner is able to sit back and reflect a bit on some of the more obvious differences between the two systems and the two countries.

The schools in England are much less structured, she noted, and the curriculum is essentially left to the teacher to set. In essence, the teacher is quite autonomous in his teaching and what the child learns can differ greatly between classes. According to Turner, group teaching is stressed rather than directing lessons to the individual child.

"The teacher is not given the timetable like you are here," she said. "You can teach the humanities all day long there - if you can justify it. There are great gaps as a result."

In this country, things are more structured and a national curriculum is set forth for the teacher to follow. Turner admits that she likes the structure of our system much more than the one followed in England, and she in fact sets her own timetable when teaching in England. However, she admits that teaching is difficult, no matter how well the lessons are structured.

"Teaching here is not to be underestimated because it takes up a lot of time and energy," she explained.

Turner noted that Great Britain plans to implement many of the same ideas practiced in American schools.



BARBARA TURNER

In September, a new national curriculum will be introduced in that country and Turner will be returning just in time to see what changes it will bring. She is hopeful that a better system will emerge.

"Quite frankly, it needed to improve," she said. However, Turner did note some qualities that the

schools in America lack as opposed to those in Europe.

"The world affairs are missing," she said. World affairs are not typically integrated into elementary classes here in America. Instead, the basics are stressed. But Turner notes that introducing what is happening all around us can help students learn the lessons better and have a clearer idea of where they fit in the big picture. With her class this year, Turner has encouraged students to follow the news reported on Public Radio. Afterwards, class discussions take place to help the students understand world news.

She did note, happily, that languages are beginning to be stressed more here in North Carolina, thanks to the state's Basic Education Plan. In England, languages are not high on the curriculum list, and Turner feels it is due to a cultural arrogance.

"I wouldn't say our strong point is language. Everybody feels, 'If England is the mother language, then why should we speak another language?'" she said. That feeling is also common in America, but the BEP should help eliminate those ideas.

Essentially, she noted, each system could learn from the other.

"Wouldn't it be nice to take the best of American teaching and the best of English teaching and combine them," said Turner.

Kings Mountain, in her opinion, is worthy of high praises for its school system.

"They've got the most smoothly run school system I've ever seen," she said. And the teachers also receive high praises. "I haven't met a teacher yet in this system who isn't enthusiastic about his job."

But the students are really what the exchange program is all about. Turner acknowledges that many parents were apprehensive about how the children would respond to this English woman teaching their children for the year. However, the parents, staff and students quickly acclimated to her style of teaching and light-hearted spirit.

"The family life in America seems to be a very good thing...You're to be admired for that."

—Barbara Turner

"The students to me are the most important thing," she said. "This is probably one of the most delightful classes I have ever taught."

And for the students, the feeling is mutual. One visit to the classroom and it is evident that the children have absolutely no difficulty relating to Turner.

The visiting teacher also noted something very special about the children here and throughout America. They, she said, seem to be very well-mannered and somewhat innocent when compared to the more worldly-wise children in England, she explained. That she attributes to a very different family environment.

"The family life in America seems to be a very good thing and is very close," she said. "And it's very church-based. The family unit is very tight here. You're to be admired for that."

The school year is rapidly drawing to a close, and so is Turner's stay here. She plans to travel throughout the United States before heading home in July, a trip for which she is already gearing up psychologically. She explains that reentry to the old system can be difficult and it will likely take some time to readjust after teaching in such a different environment.

"Not only am I going to have problems, but Connie is also," she said. "I'm going back to a new national curriculum."

With all of the difficulties she has experienced in getting used to the culture in America, including driving on the wrong side of the road for a time, Turner vows she would do it again in an instant and is already considering teaching in Australia next.

"How else am I going to get a chance to live and work and experience Australia unless I teach?"

Central News

By JADA BROWN AND JAYDA BIDDIX

Central's Spring Festival Was A Great Success

The annual Spring Festival was held Friday, May 5. Many events were held.

The first event was a Family Feud. The seventh grade team, consisting of Windi Goode, Michael Wray and Phetsakone Phonphet, won.

The second event was the Miss Spring Festival. The winner was Jennifer Davison. First runner-up was Ginger Blalock and second runner-up was Jayda Biddix. Third runner-up was Denise Small.

Another event was the Mr. Spring Festival. The winner was Jairus Laughter. First runner-up was John Bryson.

The week before the Spring Festival, sixth and seventh grade science and math classes sold tickets for a Ninetendo. The winner was Mike Chambers.

The jellybean guess winner was Carrie Thornburg.

Central also made some money. The car smash brought in \$97. The dunking booth brought in \$14 before having to close because of the weather.

Cheerleading tryouts continue through May 12. Around 50 sixth and seventh grade girls will be trying out.

Tuesday was Teacher Appreciation Day. The PTO gave gifts to all the teachers. The Student Council sponsored a breakfast for the teachers and gave away door prizes.

Four baseball players from Central are on the Kings Mountain Junior High team, which is undefeated. They are Dean Clark, Sheldon Smith, Brandon Putnam and Johnny Stewart.

The band is working hard on their three concert pieces. The concert will be May 18. The public is invited.

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