

Erin Whitaker, a 1992 graduate of Shelby High School, plays ping-pong Friday night at Project Graduation at the Cleveland County Fairgrounds.

Project Graduation big success

Volunteers expected about 1,000 students Friday night for Project Graduation held at the Cleveland County Fairgrounds.

The weather was cold and rainy, but students were ready to celebrate their graduation by pulling an all-nighter in a safe, drug and alcohol-free environment.

"What we're saying to them is 'We're proud of you,'" said activities coordinator Debbie Smith. "They'll remember this and as they get older, they'll want to do something for the community."

Smith said that students were given \$50 worth of play money upon entering the gate. That money

was to be used to play the many games set up in the main exhibition hall -- games like penny toss, roulette, dart throw, bowling and basketball. Prizes were given to winners to be turned in for more play money.

Students could save their money for the auctions, held throughout the night, or they could turn the money in at Prize Central for a chance at one of the many prizes available.

There were drawings on an hourly basis until 6 a.m. when the grand prize of a '88 Dodge Shadow was given away.

Prizes for the drawings and auc-

tions included camping equipment, a tape player, a VCR, a bike and a \$350 gift certificate to a jewelry store.

The winner of the scavenger hunt won a portable CD player. And the winner of the dance contest won His & Her watches.

Food, including pizza, cotton candy, hot dogs, french fries and hamburgers, was free all night long.

Smith said it was the second year she had participated.

"This is sort of addictive," she said. "You don't want to go home."

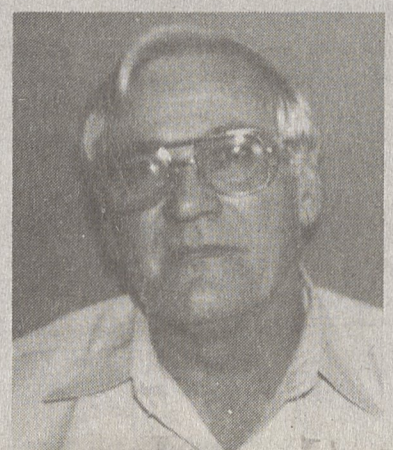
Hamrick Driver of Year

Kings Mountain truck driver George Hamrick has been behind the wheel of a tractor trailer rig for 34 years, logging over three million miles.

This week Hamrick was honored as Driver's Inc. 1991 Regional Top Notch Driver of the Year after competing for the award with over 270 tractor trailer drivers.

The award was based on his safety record, community involvement, and courtesy displayed to motorists and company customers.

Hamrick has driven two million miles for Kings Mountain Driver's Inc. since he came to work in October 1970, assigned to PPG Corporate Fleet driving a tractor trailer out of the Kings Mountain terminal. During 21 years with Driver's Inc. he has driven a tractor



GEORGE HAMRICK

trailer over two million miles. During this period of time he was never involved in an at-fault acci-

dent nor received a moving traffic violation ticket.

Driver's Inc. officials cited Hamrick "for a top notch driving record and demeanor which makes him a just recipient of the coveted professional tractor-trailer driving award on the nation's highways."

Hamrick and his wife, the former Marilyn Dixon, have three grown children and four grandchildren and reside in Kings Mountain.

Reunion honors Mrs. Mace

A family dinner and reunion honored Mrs. Corrie Mace on her 78th birthday Sunday.

The picnic-style meal was hosted by her children. Ham and chicken with all the trimmings was served with a pink and white decorated cake from tables set up on the lawn.

Mrs. Mace was joined by her children, Pat and Wayne Worcester, Donald and Brenda Mace, all of Kings Mountain, and a special visit by her daughter and son-in-law, Joel and Douglas Watkins of San Diego, California. Other guests included her grandchildren, Mr. and Mrs. Ricky Carroll, Mr. and Mrs. Eric George, Tammy Worcester, and seven great-grandchildren. Special guests included Rev. and Mrs. James Hamrick of Kings Mountain, Bertha Wray Riddle and Elaine of Gaffney, SC, and Oveda Clary of Spartanburg. Mrs. Mace's son, Bobbie and his wife,



CORRIE MACE

Billie Smith, were unable to attend due to illness. Five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren were also unable to attend.

Mrs. Mace, 78 on Monday, is active in Pathway Baptist Church.

RIKARD

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As a canine handler, Rena said her nickname in rookie school at Shelby Police Department was "crash and burn." Every time she received a bite from her dog they gave her the nickname. She hit the ground and went home muddy and dirty. After the first bite, she became somewhat discouraged but she would not give up. When the ligaments in her hand were injured she wondered what she was doing in this assignment when she could be on a routine assignment.

Being female doesn't mean the woman trainer doesn't have to take as many bites as her male counterparts in rookie school. Being a canine handler is stressful. It's tough and demands physical training for yourself and the dog in a strenuous workout program. It isn't easy to shake off a 100 pound dog.

When the dogs are turned loose the handler has to know what to do. Rena was among five graduates of the recent class of K-9 cops and the only woman. She was never prouder, she said, because she loved police work and she felt she had reached a high pinnacle of achievement.

Pd. Thomas said he and the entire KMPD is proud of Rena. Thomas says his dog is street smart now because he's been on the streets longer. The dog bites harder. If a suspect makes threats, the animal is trained to bite and defend his master. A suspect can be arrested for assaulting the dog as well as the policeman.

Rena says her dog is trained to protect her. When an officer and a dog enter a building to search it, a suspect inside is warned to come out with his hands up. If he doesn't give up, the dog will probably get him first and hold him until his partner arrives.

"Our dogs aren't vicious but they respond only to us and are protective of us," said Rena.

The two officers gave demonstrations to elementary school children this week, climbing youngsters about climbing over fences to pet animals, referring to a recent case in Shelby when a child was severely injured by a dog.

"Our dogs don't maul, they are trained to bite and they bite," said Rena, demonstrating a recent bite

on her arm.

Thomas also demonstrated how he was bit through the heavy sleeve covering in an exercise demonstration.

On a recent day an officer chased a suspicious car and the driver bailed out and ran. The dogs gave chase and the suspect was in handcuffs.

A drug dealer runs when he sees police but if he sees the dog first he stops. Police dogs have made a tremendous difference on the crime scene in Kings Mountain.

Responding to boisterous domestic calls, the K-9 squad breaks up a fight quickly if the crowd gets a glimpse of Tank and Joker.

Tank has the run of the Rikard home but the 17 cats don't share the affection of his "mama." The felines keep their distance from his fenced-in abode, says Rena.

In addition to Joker, Thomas and wife, Lynn, have a cocker spaniel.

Both officers would like to see the K-9 corps expanded to four dogs and four officers with a dog on each squad. The K-9 squad is the primary responder to an armed robber and both officers wear pagers and their job is to have their dogs ready on call for any situation.

"We told the kids this week that police officers are their friends," said Rikard, who says she has wanted to be a cop since she was little girl. She said she realized a life-long dream when she came to the police department and completed rookie school.

Rikard admits she cries every time she sees "Rin Tin Tin" on television. She puts her heart in her job and in her every day training of her police dog. She encourages other women to go into law enforcement and take criminal justice classes after high school graduation.

Demonstrating "seek and fetch" techniques with her "baby" on the lawn, Rikard said that dogs like Tank and Joker are big assets to the police department. The training was the hardest she and the dog ever had to endure but she, and her police cohorts, agree it was worth the effort.

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