

Creating magic on stage therapy for Lanford

by ELIZABETH STEWART
Herald staff writer

GROVER - Music is the best therapy for Olin Lanford, 70. He knows the gospel songs he sings by heart.

Lanford, who is legally blind, is getting ready to release his second CD, "Precious Memories of Mom and Dad" in September.

The Long Branch Community man actually doesn't remember his parents. He lost his parents and two siblings in a car/train wreck in 1941 when he was 22 months old.

"They thought all eight of us were dead and then they heard me whimper," said Lanford who was reared by his grandfather. He started singing in church as a little boy and never quit.

"I'm a survivor," said Lanford, as he gave a preview of his DVD and soon-to-be released second CD to a group of friends at Patriot's Park in Kings Mountain on a recent Wednesday morning. Richard Price, 84, his severely deaf roommate and father figure for 34 years, their friend professional caregiver Jim Gregory who spends every day with them, his pastor Kenny Bell, who makes the introduction on the new tape, and professional musician Ray Michaels working the sound equipment for his DVD, were among those in attendance.

"I have practiced and practiced day and night for this day," said Lanford. With the help of his friends he had secured copies of the music and it didn't take long for him to commit the songs he didn't know to memory.

Lanford's favorite song in the group of 10 is "I Can't Even Walk." Other gospel numbers include "First Day In

Heaven, I Claim the Blood, Master of the Sea, I Know Who Holds Tomorrow, Thank You Lord, What A Day That Will Be, Who Am I, Canaan Land is Just In Sight, and Look For Me At Jesus' Feet."

Lanford's voice is a strong baritone and the presentation developed by Michaels includes background accompaniment. The CD is available by calling 704-482-5819 after Sept. 1.

Michaels, who hosts karaoke shows in the area, said he had seen many performers on stage in the 39 years he had been in the entertainment business but none quite as enthusiastic as Lanford.

As his friends set up the microphone, Lanford stood to sing the music he loves.

A former resident of Woodruff, SC and Kings Mountain, Lanford has sung and preached at the Patrick Senior Center and has been invited to sing at Life Enrichment Center.

"The Lord knew when to send Richard (Price) and Jim my way," said Lanford, as Jim Gregory assisted Lanford in rising from a chair to stand in the center of the downtown gazebo to share his music with friends. Gregory helped Lanford dress especially for the occasion with a brand new outfit and hairstyle.

"Senior citizens need love and attention and we appreciate the people in Kings Mountain and Grover and the good things about our communities," said Lanford. He added his appreciation to his pastor and the congregation of Mount Sinai Baptist Church of Smyrna, SC. Richard Price, who was in a wheelchair, smiled, and those who came for the special concert got close to his ear to speak with him, chatted with Lanford and applauded his talent.



OLIN LANFORD

Obviously Lanford was creating magic on stage.

KM girls named pageant runners-up

Two Kings Mountain girls were named runners-up in the Miss Gastonia and Miss Gastonia's Outstanding Teen Pageants held August 1 at Gaston College.

Montreal Barnette, 18, the daughter of Trace and Myra Barnette, was named third runner-up to Miss Gastonia. She won a \$200 scholarship. A graduate of Bessemer City High School, Barnette plans to attend UNC-Pembroke this fall to major in radio and television broadcasting. For the talent competition, Barnette presented a crowd-pleasing vocal rendition of "At Last."

Hailey Rotenberry, 14, the daughter of Michael and Lisa Rotenberry, was the second runner-up in the Outstanding Teen division. She won a \$150 savings



MONTREAL BARNETTE



HAILEY ROTENBERRY

bond. Rotenberry is a ninth grade student at Kings Mountain High School. For the talent competition, she sang "The Climb" made popular by Miley Cyrus.

The Miss Gastonia Scholarship Association sponsored the pageants, which featured 19 contest-

ants. The winners were Miss Gastonia Mikhaila Leinbach, Miss Gaston County Shaina Anderson, Miss Gastonia's Outstanding Teen Hannah Baldwin, and Miss Gaston County's Outstanding Teen Lauren Hossfeld.

BRIEFS

Class of 79 reunion set

Kings Mountain High School class of 1979 is holding its 30th reunion Sept. 25-26. Visit kmhs1979.com for more information.

KMHS Chorus to host BBQ fundraiser

The Kings Mountain High School Choral department is hosting a BBQ plate fundraiser from 10-6 p.m. September 18, 2009.

The plate includes pulled pork, two buns, slaw, chips and a snack cake, catered by Buddy's BBQ. The cost of each plate is \$7.

An order of 10 or more plates from one location may be delivered.

For more information or to buy tickets, call Lori Sutherland at 704-739-2292.

QUIET

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Lt. Durwin Briscoe, of the Cleveland County Sheriff's vice squad, said that he could not confirm whether or not a special agent with the FBI visited the businesses.

"We just went down (there) to see how the operation was run and talked to store owners," Briscoe said.

No arrests were made. No machines were confiscated. But the businesses are closed. A sleepy silence has fallen on the town under a veil of mystery.

"All of the shop windows say that they're having a zoning hearing," Briscoe said.

He added that all four of the shops down on Main Street are "legal," "based on how the laws are written".

Payouts are still illegal, he added.

But without catching the businesses in "the act" of redeeming winnings, there was little officers could do.

Earlier this year, a superior court judge in Guilford County put a "restraining order" on law enforcement after several of these types of facilities had been raided. According to court affidavits, officers are prohibited from harassing or raiding these establishments until a "declaratory" ruling is officially decided by the courts on whether or not these types of machines are in violation of the state's video gaming laws.

But the judge said nothing about zoning or federal laws. County planning and zoning officials have looked at the businesses and found that owners may be in violation of zoning laws.

Main Street is zoned for general business, but Planning Officer Chris Martin said that the businesses need conditional use permits to continue to operate their "video gaming" equipment.

But some have questioned whether asking for a conditional use permit is not the same as admitting they are "gambling". Gamblers can be arrested after all.

"I went down there today," Briscoe said. "All four shops had signs in the windows (that said) pending zoning hearings. Each one of them says temporarily closed down."

It was not confirmed, as of press time, exactly what the FBI's role in Grover's sudden silence was last week.

They were not told to close up and leave town by the Cleveland County Sheriff's Department, according to Briscoe.

Martin said that he did not tell them to close their doors until the pending zoning hearing.

So what made the store owners want to leave?

The Cozy One Stop, which was set to be a convenience-type store that featured some of the video gaming machines, apparently never made it to opening day.

Store clerks at KC's Discount and Variety Store say that their business has been relatively dead since the other shops closed down last week.

The traffic brought in by the other establishments on Main Street helped them stay busy since they opened in April. Now, they sit and gaze at the traffic that pauses to read the closed signs on the other doors before driving off.

Grover's Board of Adjustments will meet Sept. 9 to handle the appeals of the two gaming businesses left on Main Street.

Start spreading the news

After the story of Grover's Internet cafes first appeared in The Herald on Aug. 12, it was picked up by the Entertainment Group of North Carolina. The advocacy group circulated a press release citing The Herald's coverage and an electronic copy of the article throughout the state.

Entertainment Group has cited the story in two press releases since Aug. 12. The group is fighting for the video gaming industry to be taxed and regulated.

"We made great progress in the General Assembly this year, but we didn't get our legislation passed so we are planning a major campaign to get oversight and regulation of the video gaming industry in next year's short session," said William Thevaos, president of the Entertainment Group of North Carolina.

Thevaos said his group plans to reach out to the governor and state lawmakers this fall and next winter to build a broader base of support for regulating and taxing video lottery terminals, according to the release.

"If the state fails to act, they are leaving millions of dollars on the table that could be used to help fund education, health care and infrastructure projects across the state," said Thevaos. "Video gaming is here and growing. We believe it's time to have accountability and transparency in this industry."

The county is rumored to have at least 17 video gaming-type facilities operating in its borders.

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