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BESS HINSON
TAYLOR**

**COLUMBUS
COUNTY
MEMORIES**

**SECRET IN
THE SAUCES**



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Orthopedic Surgeon James Slauterbeck, MD, has joined UNC Health Orthopedics at Southeastern Health Park and the medical staff of UNC Health Southeastern.

In addition to his specialty areas of adolescent orthopedics and sports medicine, his areas of special interest include female sports medicine, high school and college athletic injuries, injury risk and prevention, knee and anterior cruciate injury risk, prevention and treatment, meniscus and cartilage transplant, knee preservation, and pediatric anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) reconstruction.



"I strive to practice medicine by promoting professionalism characterized by humility, empathy, accountability and resilience," said Dr. Slauterbeck. "I am passionate about helping active individuals of all ages, especially injured middle school, high school, college, and professional athletes get back to sports safely and quickly. I value every athlete by providing state-of-the-art operative and nonoperative treatment. My research in sports injury risk, prevention, and management allow the athletes to actively participate in their sport long term."

He earned his medical degree from the University of Arizona in 1988. He completed an orthopedic surgery residency at the University of New Mexico in 1993 and a research fellowship in sports medicine and research from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1995. He is board certified in orthopedic surgery and orthopedic sports medicine.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Slauterbeck at UNC Health Orthopedics at Southeastern Health Park, 4901 Dawn Drive, Suite 2300 Lumberton, call (910) 738-1065.

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COVER PHOTO BY JUSTIN SMITH

Artist Bess Hinson Taylor is pictured with two of her creations. She is holding a wooden cutout of a Roseate Spoonbill and is standing in front of a Yellow Swallowtail butterfly mural she painted near the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences in downtown Whiteville.

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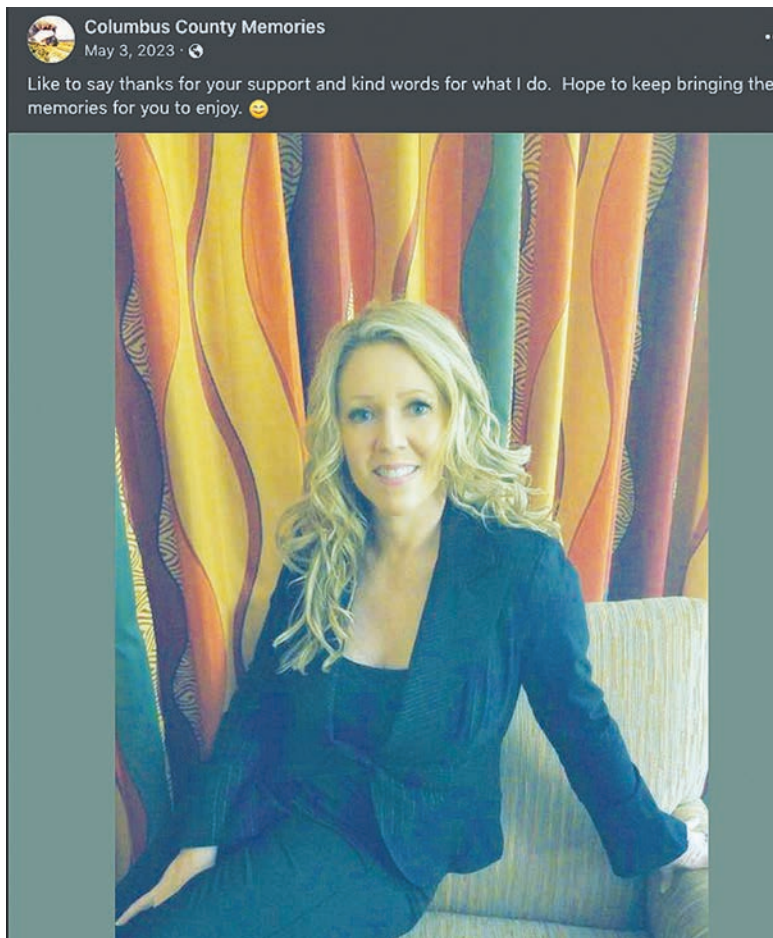
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NANCY VARNEY: SHARING COLUMBUS COUNTY HISTORY ONE POST AT A TIME

STORY STUART ROGERS
PHOTOS NANCY VARNEY &
COLUMBUS COUNTY MEMORIES



Nancy Varney, above, didn't realize how popular and meaningful her Columbus County Memories Facebook page would become.

When Mark Zuckerberg and his college roommates, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes, created Facebook in 2004, Nancy Varney of Whiteville may have been the kind of user they imagined would bring the social network alive in the best possible way.

Varney is the creator and sole administrator of the popular Columbus County Memories Facebook page. With over 11,300 followers at the time of this printing, Columbus County Memories connects people near and far with the history of Columbus County.

"I collect and share old photographs of people and places around the area," is how Varney simply states her purpose for creating Columbus County Memories in the page's "Intro."

The idea of a Facebook page dedicated to sharing and documenting Columbus County history came to Varney while she was collecting and sharing family photos on her personal Facebook page for an upcoming family reunion in Crusoe, the community where she grew up and which is still home to her family. "I didn't realize how much these pictures would interest other people," she said. "They wanted to hear all about my ancestors (in Crusoe) and about the dugout canoes."

While researching her family history, Varney started finding interesting photos of other people and history in Columbus County. With a growing number of followers on her personal page, she decided while isolating during the coronavirus pandemic to create Columbus County Memories.



Photos shared on Columbus County Memories Facebook page from left: John Gore of Old Dock and his family working their last crop of tobacco before retiring. Old Whiteville downtown baseball game announcement. Chadbourn Strawberry Festival Parade.

A day in the life...



Clockwise from left: Big rattlesnake in Fair Bluff. First train to go through Tabor City when the rail line was extended in early 1880s. Page visitors comment to identify members of the WHS football team. Cory Rogers (left in photo) posted, "On this Memorial Day, I choose to remember Private Fletcher D. Smith of the 82nd Airborne Division... a 19-year-old kid from Riegelwood, N.C., who was far from home doing what he thought was right for his country. God bless you, my friend. That's all I can say." Speed boat rides at Lake Waccamaw.

'Some little thing might make all the difference'

Varney creates each Facebook post and edits each photo to produce the best possible image since many originals are torn and tattered. When available, she gives credit to contributors. She does not post photos she thinks will make someone uncomfortable, and she is quick to delete a post if she finds out it's upsetting to viewers. She posts as much and as often as she can, and faithful followers reach out to check on her if she misses a day or two online.

Recently someone asked her to find out if South Carolina Revolutionary War General Francis Marion, also known as the "Swamp Fox," spent time in Columbus County, specifically on the Waccamaw River.

By mid-April, 22 people had responded with comments such as "I was told by an older gentleman some years ago that they camped at the Edmund mill pond near Doodle Hill Road." Another commented, "I'm sure it's legit. In the Reaves Ferry to Pireway section of the Waccamaw River there is an area that is called Marion's Cove. The old timers and fishermen know the area well. I grew up being told it was one of Francis Marion's hiding places during the Revolutionary War." The collective voice of Columbus County Memories followers is a powerful tool to restore the faded stories of our past.

"Nothing is too small for me (to post). Some little thing that somebody sees might make all the difference in someone's life," Varney says.

With thoughtful intention and many hours of research, Varney has created a safe place where followers can share family photos and memories in a community that is quick to identify forgotten details and share their own recollections to complete the story.

Surrounded by family and music

Nancy Etheridge Varney is the daughter of the late Rowe and Hattie Long Etheridge of the close-knit Crusoe community located about five miles south of Lake Waccamaw. She married Dr. Michael Varney in 1994 after they met while working together at Columbus County Hospital. Nancy Etheridge worked in the lab, and Varney served as a physician in the emergency department. In 1994 they moved to Greensboro and Wesley Long Hospital, and then to Wilmington in 2000 before moving back to Whiteville in 2012.

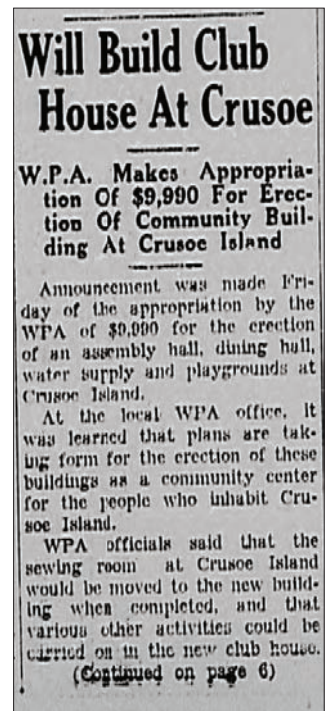
Nancy Varney enjoyed growing up in Crusoe surrounded by family and music, and says, "I wouldn't change it for anything." Residents were known as talented musicians and skilled craftspeople who dug out cypress boats and bowls by hand with axes and who sewed beautiful quilts and textiles. The Crusoe Community House that was first used for community meetings and socializing was enlarged by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the Great Depression to become a commercial sewing room.

Hard work and resourcefulness were and are a way of life in Crusoe. Farming used to be the main livelihood in Crusoe, but it isn't so much anymore. In 2018, floodwaters from Hurricane Florence devastated the community. Recovery has been slow, and many residents are hesitant to rebuild due to constant flooding.

In spite of the hardships its residents have endured, today Crusoe is home to people of many occupations and professions, Varney said. She listed educators, health care providers, attorneys and accountants as well as the current district manager for a major area utility. Numerous military service people from each branch have lived in Crusoe, as well as a retired Navy rear admiral. Varney's intention to preserve history and family memories is founded on her pride in her community.



From left: Varney's brother, Monroe Etheridge, was a talented guitarist who played in a group with well-known piano player Tony Clewis. Etheridge (left) tragically died at age 19 from complications caused by rheumatic fever. Pictured to his right are his sister, Willa Dean Etheridge, and Lonnie Clewis. Etheridge family gatherings always included music. Nancy Varney's paternal grandparents, Roy Godwin and Martine McPherson Godwin, on their farm in the Beaverdam community.



Left: Outside and inside of the WPA Crusoe Community Building and sewing room, including photos of Varney's two great-aunts working. Above: WPA announcement of funding for the assembly hall.

Reconnecting over lost memories

Most of the content for Columbus County Memories comes from followers who share treasured family photos and articles clipped from The News Reporter.

Varney has shot over 1,000 photos of local schools' yearbook pages and has spent days researching historical records at the libraries in Whiteville and Tabor City. She has over 10,000 images saved on her phone waiting to be posted.

The North Carolina Room located at the Carolyn T. High Memorial Library in Whiteville has been a valuable resource for Varney while researching local family genealogy and Columbus County history, and she has the highest regard for the Columbus County Public Library staff for their assistance and support.

Her dedication to the project is astounding, and she says it makes her happy to connect family and friends with stories of the past. "I've heard from people from all over the United States, Puerto Rico and even Norway that are connected to Columbus County," Varney said. "One woman commented, 'I am sitting on the beach right now in Puerto Rico looking at your page and learning about Columbus County.'"

In the beginning, Varney discovered and shared photos from the late Mabel Maulsby Prevatte's collection of historic photographs of Whiteville and Lake Waccamaw that dated back to WWI. These photos were very popular, and Varney was pleased to see how much people enjoyed and responded to them.

When she started posting yearbook photos, she says, "That is when the followers came. [Columbus County Memories] blew up with the yearbook photos."

Varney added that people have told her, "Thank you so much for posting this yearbook. My parents never had the money to buy one." Varney imagines how it would be for a student who couldn't afford

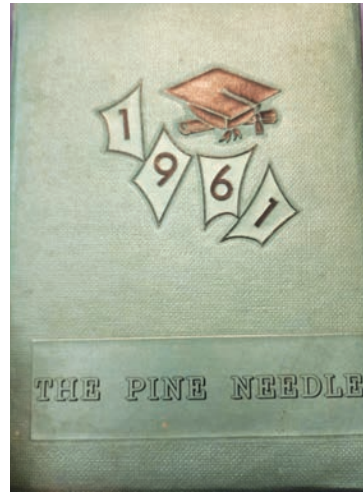
to buy a copy of their yearbook: They might have glanced at a classmate's book at graduation, but, "They only saw it that one time and never saw it again. [Having a digital image] would make that person so happy." She says people in adult care homes love to look at the historic posts on their tablets.



Varney researches Columbus County history in the North Carolina Room at the Carolyn T. High Memorial Library in Whiteville.



Left: The News Reporter front page from June 11, 1981, leads with an image of Bessie Adams. This edition featured a full-page story about Adams' life on the family farm with her husband, Taylor Adams, and their 10 children. Right: 1976 Hallsboro High School Tigers, defending N.C. 2A Baseball Champions



1961 Evergreen High School yearbook

Left: When Varney launched Columbus County Memories, she posted photos from Mabel Maultsby Prevatte's collection donated by her family to the community. Prevatte's images date back to WWI, and she is seen visiting Boardman in 1916.

Preserving and sharing history

With each post, Columbus County Memories has become a priceless digital scrapbook of local history. Comments show how followers appreciate Varney's time and effort.

A fan of the page, Rhonda Bullard-Dutton of Whiteville, says, "Nancy Varney posts a lot of memories from back in the day. Nostalgia fills my mind with those good old days when life was so much simpler. We no longer have many of the hangouts. She [Varney] has encouraged posting memories that will keep putting smiles on your face for many years to come. Thanks, Nancy, for the memories."

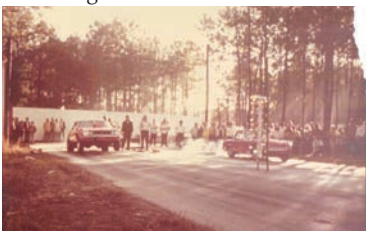
Popular hangouts from "the good ol' days"



Cruising downtown Whiteville



Meeting at the Starlite



The drag strip on Chadbourn Hwy.



1958 WHS Sophomore officers at Dupree Landing



Prince ESSO in Tabor City, where Showroom Shine Detailing is now



Photos posted by Columbus County Memories contributor Austin Watson



Men from Buckhead working in tobacco



Left: New Hope Baptist Church in Buckhead. Haywood McKoy. Watson's second great-grandfather Joseph Freeman was born in Waccamaw Township in 1866 and died in the Buckhead community in 1920.



From left: Then & Now photos. Burns Law Office in Whiteville, circa 1896. Dr. James Williamson owned 908 Pinckney St. (206 Pinckney back then) in the 1890s, selling it to his mother- and father-in-law. Over time it was sold to the Soles, Grady and Burns families. In 1926 the Burns family practiced law on the first floor, and in 2014 Susan and Bill Wood purchased the home. The Cold Storage building circa 1912. It was a store. The News Reporter maintained its offices on the second floor until the 1920s, when it built its first dedicated building on Madison Street. The News Reporter's press was in Vineland at Shulken Brothers Hardware. Cold Storage building photos and information provided by Fuller Royal and Adam Williamson. Colored photo by Adam Williamson. Cold Storage building in later years.

Popular posts

Varney enjoys matching "then and now" photos sent in by followers. Several in a series in Whiteville include the Columbus County Library Bookmobile, Burns Law Office and the offices of W. Greene, PLLC, that was built by the Memory-Culbreth family and known as The Oaks.

Photos of popular businesses, including some that are no longer operating, are fan favorites, and Varney has discovered that yearbook "ad" photos are an excellent source of some of the best images of landmark businesses to be found.

In her research, she found photos of the New York Restaurant, which was once located on Madison Street in Whiteville where the Columbus County Chamber of Commerce now sits. It was a popular lunch destination in the '60s, and followers have shared photos, menus, and memories of eating there. Many note the checkerboard sidewalk in front.

Some of the oldest history in Columbus County is recorded in group photos taken in front of churches and family homes. Varney says followers help identify individuals in the photos, and several have reached out to say they have been able to see an image of a



Landmark Businesses - top row from left: Bolton Hotel and Clarida's Barber & Hairstyling Shop in Whiteville. Center row from left: Pierce & Co. in Hallsboro and Powell Warehouse in Fair Bluff. Bottom row from left: Ward's Friendly Grocery in Nakina, Dairy Queen in Whiteville and the restaurant at the original Chadbourn Motel circa early 1960s



Church photos often show the congregations. Top: St. Mark's was the first church in the Buckhead community. Bottom: Ward Station Church of God, Rough and Ready Road, Chadbourn.

long-lost family member for the first time in these photos.

After the launch of Columbus County Memories, Varneys says posting yearbook photos, "...brought people together and connected them." Schools and libraries have worked with her to give her access to yearbooks. "I spent four days in the library in Tabor City taking photos of yearbooks," Varney said. Followers have kept her well supplied in hard-to-find editions, too.

Sports have long been a passion in Columbus County, and sports photos always bring a lot of comments with memories of favorite coaches, teammates, friendly rivalries and significant wins.

The history of Columbus County would not be well represented without including the legacy of farming, especially during the tobacco years. Naval stores, strawberries, sweet potatoes, soybeans, corn and tobacco have been major players in the county's farming economy.

The ECU Digital Library is home to a 1945 book, "Facts About Columbus County," written by B. Gordon Lewis and published by The Columbus County News in Chadbourn. The book explains, "The tobacco industry was first introduced into the county about 1896, but [the crop] was not successfully grown or marketed until about 1914. Fair Bluff was the first town in the county to have a market."

Farming photos posted on Columbus County Memories evoke memories of family and friends working together in the fields and selling goods at the market.

Some of the best posts on Columbus County Memories capture "day-in-the-life" images that at the time probably didn't mean much, but which are treasures today. As Varney says, "The smallest thing can bring back memories long forgotten."

For a project that Varney took up with modest expectations, she says Columbus County Memories has made many more people happy than she ever imagined. She plans to keep sharing photos and memories of Columbus County, she says, "as long as the inter-



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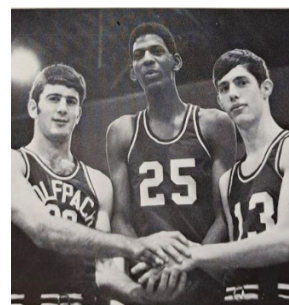
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est continues.” With so much rich history, photos, and stories of Columbus County yet to be found stored away in shoeboxes, scrapbooks, yearbooks and cedar chests, I think that interest and that sharing will both continue for a long time.

Check back often for Varney's latest treasures on Columbus County Memories. The easiest way to share your historical photos and information is to message her on Facebook at Columbus County Memories.



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Top row from left: Boyd Thompson, a talented artist known for his steady hand painting business signs. The 1970 Williams Township High School yearbook dedicated to Coach J.D. Gore. Second row: SCHS bowling team at 701 Bowling Lanes in Whiteville. Columbus County Library when it was located on Chadbourn Hwy. Third row: SCC Foundation Annual Fund Drive Leadership Team. Students at Guideway School around 1948. Bottom row: Old artesian well at the river bridge in Crusoe. WHS Basketball 1969 conference champions varsity tri-captains David Dutton, Reggie Royals and Donnie Viets.



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954 Finds Pops of Color in Columbus County



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Artist Sally Medford will show her current work in the "Another Assignment" show. Right: A piece she created as a student



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211 Hickman Rd. Tabor City
Open daily except Wednesday and Sunday, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Nothing beats a Fowler's Grill hot dog all the way with an ice-cold Sun Drop, except maybe adding a cheeseburger to the order. When you are in downtown Tabor City, a visit to Fowler's is a "must-do." They are known for their delicious grilled hot dogs and burgers, ice-cold drinks, friendly service and fair prices.



Columbus County Arts Council
Bannerman Art Students Show: "Another Assignment"
Artists' reception Saturday, June 15
910-640-2787

Columbus County Arts Council will host a show June 15–July 19 with artwork created by students of well-known local artists Mark and Mary Louise Bannerman. The Bannermans moved to Whiteville 40 years ago and have taught art in our community and schools for over 30 years. Former students who would like to participate in the show can contact Sally Mann at ccarts1976@yahoo.com or call 910-640-2787. The deadline to drop off art is June 7. The artists' reception is Saturday, June 15, 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Columbus County Arts Council, 822 S. Madison St. in Whiteville.

A Sweet Discovery Market & Cafe
Expected to open in July at Uptown Fair Bluff, 1001 Main St.
Currently taking orders at A Sweet Discovery on Facebook

Jessica Pallitto, owner and operator of A Sweet Discovery in Fair Bluff, creates custom and delicious charcuterie boards, dessert tables for small and large events, decorative cookies and cakes, assorted cookie arrangements, chocolate-covered strawberries, dessert boxes and party favors for all occasions. Pallitto plans to open A Sweet Discovery Market & Cafe in July in the new Uptown Fair Bluff business district with an expanded menu and a market full of unique products such as natural soaps and candles, fresh flowers and herbs, dried meats and cheeses, jams, honey and fresh eggs. She looks forward to being a part of Fair Bluff's business district.



Fuller Royal Photography
622 S. Madison St. Whiteville

Here is a beautiful splash of color from PPA Master Photographer Fuller Royal, who plans to turn his part-time portrait business into a full-time studio operation in downtown Whiteville in July. The opening is a long-anticipated goal for Royal, who started in photography in 1974. His award-winning work includes high school seniors, brides, children, toddlers and families. The studio, which is already booking sessions, is at 622. S. Madison Street. The phone number is 910-770-1834.



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27200 Andrew Jackson Hwy. E. Delco
Tuesday – Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
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The Purple Pepper Plant Shop in Delco, owned by Ed Wagner and operated by his daughter, Crystal Purdue, and her husband, Kale Purdue, carries a wide variety of houseplants, tropicals, trees, shrubs, bedding plants, native plants, bougainvilleas and aquatics. Subscribe for notices at purple-pepper.com for upcoming plant classes on potted plant design for adults and children, medicinal plant uses and more. Call 910-655-8400 or stop by to see their seasonal selections for your landscape and garden.



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7:30 a.m. to noon
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TABOR CITY RESORT WELCOMES CAMPERS FROM NEAR AND FAR FOR 25 YEARS

STORY DIANA MATTHEWS

PHOTOS DIANA MATTHEWS & CONTRIBUTED BY
YOGI BEAR'S JELLYSTONE PARK AT DADDY JOE'S

Yogi Bear fishes with a boy in one of Daddy Joe's ponds.

The official name of the 350-acre campground at 626 Richard Wright Rd. is Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park at Daddy Joe's. The campground website calls it Tabor City Jellystone.

However, "Longtime campers call it Daddy Joe's," said Rebecca Murphy, former manager and now marketing director.

That's because it started out 25 years ago as Daddy Joe's Fishing Hole, named after the owners' father, Joe Coleman.

Murphy herself calls the getaway "a hidden gem," saying, "A lot of people think, 'It can't be that exciting,' based on where it's located. But our owners are pretty innovative. Every year they put something new into the park."

On a Saturday in April, co-owner Rick Coleman gave 954 Magazine a tour of the grounds, including stops to talk with some of the guests who were lounging, strolling, using the pool and eating ice cream. Campers interviewed included an extended family group that's vacationed at Daddy Joe's for decades, younger families just establishing a camping habit, an empty-nester enjoying the fresh air while telecommuting to a job hours away and a party of first-time visitors from Massachusetts camping with a newborn baby.

"Every week the crowd flips," Coleman said as he navigated the next bend in the road. "The dynamics change every week."

Growing up camping

During the coronavirus pandemic, "Camping blew up," Mur-

phy said. "It was something people could do outside while they were furloughed." Camping became "just a lifesaver for some people."

Daddy Joe's was ready for the camping wave. In 1999, brothers Rick and Joey Coleman had converted a large part of their tobacco and corn fields and pastures into a hunting and fishing preserve. Daddy Joe's gradually "evolved organically" into a campground, Rick Coleman said, because visitors wanted to stay on the land while hunting or fishing there.

Although the campground's ice cream shop boasts a trophy wall full of deer heads, birds and fish harvested on the premises during the earlier years, "We do not allow hunting at the campground anymore," Murphy said, "just catch-and-release fishing."

Among Daddy Joe's longtime campers is Tim Carter of Ocean Isle Beach. "We've come every year since 2002," he said as he sat in the shade of his family's RV. "It's grown. We love the fishing, love everything."

His daughter, Ashley Bradsher, a first grade teacher in Brunswick County, "grew up camping here," she said. "There weren't so many amenities then, but I had fun playing with my friends. Now it's really special to me because I get to bring my own family here and continue that tradition for my little boy."

Elliott Bradsher, 3, "loves riding a golf cart and loves the splash pad," his mother said.

Donny Osborne of the Harnett Sudan Racers was watching fellow Shriner Leslie Jackson cook chicken on a grill fashioned out of a burial casket on a grass patio surrounded by four RV hookups. Osborne said there were “lots of things for kids to do,” and the 30 people in the Shriners group were “hanging out and eating well. Stay and have lunch with us!”

What's there?

In 2004 Daddy Joe's became affiliated with the Jellystone Park brand, which now has “about 76” Yogi Bear camp resorts in North America, Murphy said. The camping chain's trademark bear characters — Yogi, Boo Boo and Cindy — attend story times and interact with young campers.

Campers can hike miles of nature trails on their own or join in on activities like volleyball, basketball, cornhole, horseshoes, gaga ball and zombie tag. Mini golf and other recreational activities are built into the camping price.

Over the years, Rick and Joey Coleman have added attractions including three swimming pools, an “Aqua Play” area with water slides and other splashy features, miniature golf, a playground and an outdoor strength training gym.

“We're constantly trying to raise the bar,” Rick Coleman said.

Who's there?

As a result of all the recreational options, “We get a melting pot of visitors,” said Coleman. “We get biking and hiking enthusiasts, and we have city folks who want to watch TV all weekend” in a peaceful environment.

Even the turtles basking peacefully in the sun at the fishing pond draw admirers, he said. “It's surprising how many people love to look at our turtles.”

Murphy said summer is the busiest season, but, “A decent number of older travelers stay with us multiple weeks at a time” during the winter.

The majority of Daddy Joe's guests come from Horry and Columbus counties, Murphy said. She added, however, that, “Many people from all over come to camp with us. We had a large family from Ukraine in March.”

While some long-distance visitors choose Daddy Joe's for its proximity to the beaches, Murphy said, they also support Columbus County restaurants and other businesses. The campground provides guests with information about recreational opportunities and attractions outside the boundaries of Daddy Joe's.

Murphy said the camp resort has even helped entice some guests to settle down permanently. “We also have many campers who visit us to camp and then end up building and buying homes in the county because they fall in love with the area,” she said.



The Sudan Shriners from Harnett County socialize while waiting for lunch to be ready at one of their quad sites.



The Longbottom family from Wilmington was spending their “third or fourth” visit at Daddy Joe's and called it “an exciting place.”



The campground is pet-friendly and has three exercise areas for dogs.



Children climb on the playground equipment at Daddy Joe's on an April Saturday.



Rick Coleman stands beside Michelle Hairfield of Martinsville, Virginia. On Hairfield's frequent trips to see her daughter's family, she uses Daddy Joe's as her home base.



The Creamery serves ice cream and coffee. It's the only part of the campground open to non-guests.



Abby McCleney, left, and Courtney Grainger work in The Creamery at Daddy Joe's. Right, Clerk Emma Parker pumps up a rubber ball in the store.



Add-ons

In addition to the included amenities, some guests opt to pay for golf cart rental or craft classes. Another add-on treat is to get breakfast, cookies or s'mores delivered to a campsite by Yogi or another of the bear characters, Murphy said.

A la carte food options are the Creamery and a take-out grill. There's a camp store where guests can purchase T-shirts or the toothpaste they forgot to pack. Emma Parker of Whiteville, now in her fourth year working at Daddy Joe's, said the store's most popular items are firewood, worms, drinks, clothes and plush bears.

The Creamery is the first building people see when driving onto the property and the only amenity open to the outside public. It's served ice cream since 2011 and made-to-order coffee drinks since 2022. Hours vary by season. The ice cream is blended and churned on site.

Scooping ice cream when 954 Magazine arrived were Courtney Grainger of Tabor City, now in her third year at the campground, and Abby McCleney, who started her first season there in March.

During peak season, Daddy Joe's has around 50 employees reporting to work per day, Murphy said. Many are students working on their summer break. Daddy Joe's recruits workers by holding at least two job fairs a year. The company reaches out to high schools in Columbus and Horry counties and to Southeastern Community College.

In her 10 years working for the campground, Murphy has seen 16-year-olds come for their first job, then return summer after summer until they graduate from college.

"We get to see them grow up into a totally different person," she said. "It's so great to be part of their lives."



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The Carr family from Wilmington walks past the pond.

Home away from home

Michelle Hairfield, formerly of Tabor City and a longtime friend of the Colemans, now lives in Virginia but camps at Daddy Joe's several times a year to spend time near her daughter's family.

"There are two grandkids involved, so we make it as fun as possible," Hairfield said. The children enjoyed visiting their grandmother's yurt before she "graduated" to a cabin. "We made up our own holidays," she said, like "Betwixtmas," which falls between Christmas and New Year's Day. "We had a big celebration."

Murphy said she likes to see visitors create their own special times on the trails or around a campfire.

"There's a large group — about 50 people — that come and stay about a week before Thanksgiving," she said. The people live locally but like to gather at the campground as their shared gathering place.



Jeff Daw looks after his grand-dog Gracie at a tent camping site while the rest of the family are busy.

The "Friendsgiving" celebrators reserve sites close together and drift from one to another visiting, Murphy said. They collaborate to prepare a feast complete with turkeys and side dishes. "They could do this at home in their backyards, but they choose to come to us," Murphy said.

She's heard first-time guests say that camping was something they never thought they'd be interested in, but, once they gave it a try, they discovered that it "created more family time outside, whether they were riding bikes or sitting around the fire."

Murphy said those together times are what keeps bringing guests back to the campground: "It's just the simple things."

The address for Daddy Joe's website is taborcityjellystone.com, and the phone number is 877-668-8586.

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COLUMBUS COUNTY ENTREPRENEURS MARKET HERITAGE SAUCE RECIPES

STORY GINGER LITRELL

PHOTOS GINGER LITRELL & ASHLEY BULLARD



Standing between grandparents Judy and Rick Bullard, Jenna Wilson, 10, holds a bottle of wing sauce her grandfather named after her. Perhaps the grandkids will continue to produce "Papa's recipe" for future generations. (photo by Ashley Bullard Photography)

The fictional Judge Matthew Baldwin bequeathed quite an inheritance to his daughters Mamie and Emily. For nine seasons of "The Waltons," the naïve spinsters continued bottling and sharing "Papa's recipe" with friends on the mountain. The all-purpose elixir that emerged from their genteel still was guaranteed to make a good day better, revenueers or no.

Ricky Bullard, Alex and Walt Munroe and Alan Gerald aren't ladylike bootleggers in lace, but all have done something similar to make good meals better with special sauces that pay homage to their kinfolk.

Folks from near and far have discovered the flavorful sauces created in Columbus County through social media, word of mouth or tasting them in restaurants. For many, they've become "the recipe" to take dining to a whole new level.

Bullard's sauces bring smiles for miles...

With a population of fewer than 140 residents, Cerro Gordo owes a lot to Ricky Bullard and his family for providing a one-stop shopping experience. Some folks describe Bullard's Meats as the "Cerro Gordo Mall." Customers can pick up breakfast or lunch at the grill, grab a few staple groceries, buy a variety of fresh locally sourced meats, enjoy Bullard's homemade ice cream, shop the clothing boutique, select flowers and gifts from the florist or choose a piece of concrete yard art from a selection of 1,300 designs. "Every little business has its own niche," says Bullard.

But what really excites him are the sauces and rubs he's developed that will enhance any variety of meat. After visiting popular barbeque restaurants with his family, Bullard says he'll put his sauc-

es up against any others on the market. "I visited Buc-ees to taste their brisket, and mine is second to none," he said. When he posted a Facebook photo of his family at a popular barbecue restaurant, a friend asked if he'd taken a bottle of his barbecue sauce there with him. "My sauce is BETTER!" he answered. He keeps two bottles of Sweet Baby Ray's Barbecue Sauce near his display of sauces as a comparison to his Sweeter, Thicker Sauce. "I tell my customers, if they love Sweet Baby Ray's, they'll like mine even better," he says.

Bullard takes pride in the trial-and-error process it took to build his business and perfect his products and is thankful for the support he had along the way. "I give the Lord and my mama credit for my business success," he says. "My mama (Carrie Bullard) pastored Boardman Pentecostal Holiness Church for 23 years and always told me, 'Ricky Boo, I'm prayin' for you!' My daddy, James 'Peck' Bullard, opened Whiteville Meat Market in the 1970s and butchered his own hogs. I'm doing a lot of the things he taught me."

After Bullard's mama passed away at 95, he treated his daddy to a yearly birthday pig pickin' and invited anyone who wanted to come. "That's when I came up with the vinegar-based recipe. It had 20 ingredients in it, and I made 50 gallons of it before I got it right," Bullard said. He started bottling and selling it around 2002, followed by a 12-ingredient sweeter, thicker sauce in 2015. "Our sauces are always cooked low and slow," he said. "I'm very satisfied with them now." Several years ago, Ricky created a third sauce, "Jenna's Wing Sauce," named for his granddaughter. Another popular item on the store's shelf is "Ricky's Rub," suggested for seasoning pork, chicken or beef.

What's next? Bullard never seems to run out of new ideas, says wife and business partner Judy Bullard. "The wheels are always turning," she says. Earlier this year the business released a variety of pre-wrapped sandwiches, and it is now offering a variety of home-made cakes. Ricky Bullard is working on two new sauces, a brisket sauce and a steak sauce.

Friends and customers enjoy following the Facebook photos and videos Bullard posts, especially on Thursdays, to show folks what's cooking for the weekend. He ends the video with a personal invitation: "Come eat with us!"

When Darryl Little of Lumberton saw a Facebook post for Bullard's, he was curious. "I had to see this place," said Little. "I had to beg my wife to go with me, and after we got there, she didn't want to leave." Little purchased a variety of locally sourced meats, which he said was the main reason for driving the distance. "I wish we had this in Lumberton!"

A former construction contractor, Bullard lives on the 120-acre former tobacco farm where he grew up. The Bullards' son Matthew Bullard, daughter Ashley Bullard and daughter-in-law Amber Bullard are a big part of the business. The grandchildren — Alex, Jenna and Conner — are never far away from the action. Eight-year-old Conner directed a recent visitor to the grill. "You gotta go get one of our cheeseburgers! It's my favorite," he said. Then he motioned to the fresh batch of blueberry ice cream in the nearby freezer. After tasting a sample, the first-time visitor became a frequent shopper.

Bullard's Meats is located at 95 Bullard Lane, Cerro Gordo. Business hours are 7 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7 a.m. until 2 p.m. Saturday. The telephone number is 910-654-MEAT (6328).



Alan Gerald fills his first commercial bottle of Dale's Seafood Sauce from the cooker.

Whiteville landmark bottling 'Mama's recipe'

Dale's Seafood has been a Whiteville landmark for nearly 50 years. Opened in 1977 by Dale Gore, the business was sold to his faithful friend and employee Lois Gerald in 1989. Her son Alan Gerald literally grew up in the business, becoming a perfect fit to take the helm after Lois Gerald passed in 2020.

"Mama worked here while she was teaching home economics at Whiteville and Chadbourn," recalls Alan Gerald. "I've worked here since I was 10 years old."

A staple condiment in any seafood restaurant is cocktail sauce, and Lois Gerald had the recipe down to a science.

For a few years, Alan Gerald had been thinking about selling the sauce. His friends Alex and Walt Munroe of Whiteville are experienced sauce-makers themselves, and they encouraged him.

"Alex has it going on and likes to do stuff," Gerald said, "so he suggested bottling it at his distillery [in Bladen County]. Of course, Walt is always excited about a new idea and said, 'Let's do it!'"

Gerald said he had to make some mathematical adjustments to the recipe. "I usually made it a gallon at a time for the restaurant, and it takes 10 gallons to fill 108 bottles. I had to use the math skills I learned at Whiteville High School from my teachers, Mrs. Dottie Hill and Mrs. Diane Edmunds," he chuckled.

Gerald suggested naming the family recipe "Seafood Sauce" instead of cocktail sauce because it complements any type of seafood. Each recipe is hand mixed and cooked, and the bottles are filled, labeled and sealed by Lacy Loan, who stays busy cooking and bottling a variety of products for the distillery. The sauce was released for retail sale in late February, and Gerald's customers enjoy taking a bottle home after their meals. It's available for sale at the restaurant and at Cape Fear Distillery's gift shop in Elizabethtown.

As the excitement builds for Seafood Sauce, Gerald says he plans to enter it in the 2024 International Craft Sauce competition in Las Vegas.

Dale's Seafood is located at 107 South JK Powell Boulevard, Whiteville. Business hours are Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. until 9 p.m. The telephone number is 910-642-5770.



Alan Gerald raises a 'toast' to a portrait of his mother, Lois Gerald, in the front dining room of Dale's Seafood in Whiteville. A former home economics teacher at Whiteville and Chadbourn high schools, Lois Gerald was admired as a strong businesswoman and a treasured friend of many.

BBQ sauce so good it should be outlawed

Homer Munroe would be proud of his grandsons Alex and Walt Munroe for what they've done with his old barbecue sauce concoction. It's another example of entrepreneurs taking a recipe from the family vault and refining it for the marketplace.

And in this case, the "recipe" really does have a bootleg pedigree.

The Munroe brothers developed two barbecue sauces — White Dog Prohibition BBQ Sauce with Moonshine, a moderately thin vinegar-based sauce, and White Dog Prohibition BBQ Sauce with Bourbon — a thicker, sweeter sauce.

The term "white dog" refers to the first liquid to be drawn off a still, Walt Munroe explained.

The sauces earned a silver and a gold medal, respectively, from the North American Bourbon Competition.

A 2021 press release from the event reads, "The judging pitted White Dog against some of the most recognized brands in the world, proving the new product's merit as one of North America's premium barbecue sauces."

Alex Munroe is the owner of Cape Fear Distillery, located on the grounds of Cape Fear Vineyard and Winery in Elizabethtown. There he offers spirits, wine and food surrounded by an art collection and what he calls "God's natural artwork" in the form of donkeys, llamas and peacocks on the grounds — but that's a story for another day.

The release from the bourbon competition summarizes Alex Munroe's account of a recipe that was "two generations in the making. 'During Prohibition,' he said, 'our grandfather hid his moonshine in vinegar jars. Eventually, the white dog and the vinegar blended, and he developed a special barbecue sauce.

The recipe has remained in our family, so when my brother Walt opened a barbecue restaurant and I opened a distillery, it was only natural that we continue the tradition, except legally this time."

"The thicker White Dog Prohibition BBQ Sauce is made with Cape Fear Distillery's two-year-old single-barrel Frying Pan Shoals Bourbon, winner of the 2020 Proof Awards Gold Medal for Taste and the 2020 Las Vegas International Spirits Awards Gold Medal for Taste," the release said.

It continued by quoting Walt Munroe, "who's been in the professional barbecue business for more than 25 years, saying, 'Some of my first memories are of Grandad making the barbecue sauce when I was a young boy. He'd hand me the bowl he'd mixed it in, and I'd swipe the leftovers with my finger and lick it. To me, it was better than a spoon of brownie mix!'"

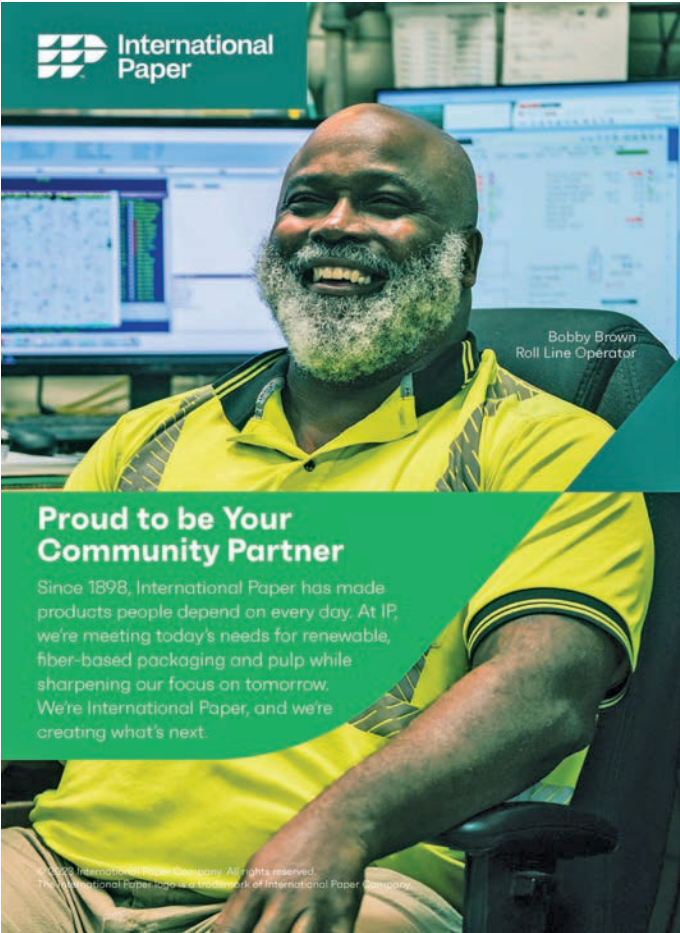
An e-mail from a satisfied customer, Tom Barker of Oak Island, called the product "the best tasting BBQ sauce I've ever tried." Barker described it as a sauce "made with alcohol (bourbon) that you can actually taste. I put it on beef, chicken, fish and any other thing that I could throw on my grill, and I even used it as a dipping sauce."

Walt Munroe's customers at Cruzers Drive Thru are big fans of the sauce. With his reputation for making great barbecue, he says it's the White Dog that puts it over the top. Besides Cruzers, other Whiteville locations where White Dog sauce is available are Sam's Pit Stop, Barnes Exxon and Farmacy on Main. It's also available at Chadbourn Feed Service and in Elizabethtown at Cape Fear Distillery.



Alex Munroe, Alan Gerald and Walt Munroe display the collection of sauces produced at Cape Fear Distillery.

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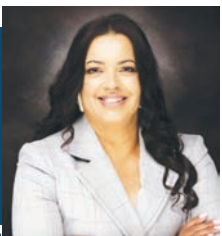
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FAN CAVES PUT SPORTS CONNECTION ON FULL DISPLAY

STORY & PHOTOS DASHUAN VEREEN

Sports fandom can come in many different forms. For some, being a sports fan means being able to gather with friends and family to watch their favorite team. For some it means collecting autographs of their favorite players or wearing team colors on game days. In some cases, team loyalty motivates fans to surround themselves wall to wall with tangible keepsakes.

Some people became fans of certain teams during their adult years, while others had their fandom sparked by watching their favorite players as kids growing up.

And for some, sports fandom is a connection passed to them from their loved ones. As years go by, that connection grows before being passed down to the next generation. And when that happens, sports fandom becomes a bridge — a way for people to stay connected to their loved ones, a

connection that grows even stronger as time passes.

This spring, I was fortunate to meet six sports fans who allowed me into their fan caves and shared with me the stories that make those spaces special to them. The News Reporter made a Facebook post asking for people to reach out if they had, or knew someone who had, a fan cave, and I messaged multiple people who responded to our post, starting my journey.

I enjoyed the time spent learning about their connections to their favorite teams. Although each one of these fan caves has its own unique story of how it came to be, all of them share one thing in common — a deep-rooted connection to their favorite teams that I think many of us can relate to.

CAROLINA COLLECTION CONNECTS BASS WITH MEMORIES OF HUSBAND

Alice Bass' late husband, Donald Ray Bass, was an avid University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill sports fan. Since his passing, his wife has kept much of his favorite UNC memorabilia hung on the walls of her house in Chadbourne, where Donald Ray Bass served on town council.

How long were you guys UNC fans?

He was always a big fan. I met Donald when we were in school together at West Columbus. We got married in 1969, and he was always a Carolina fan.

Why is keeping these items special to you?

Alice Bass: Because they were his. And he hung a lot of them up before he passed away.

Tasha Bass Dyson (daughter): It's like a piece of him is still here with us. By keeping these items here, it keeps a piece of him with us all the time.

What is your favorite item?

Alice Bass: The picture with him and [former UNC men's basketball coach] Roy Williams. He was so happy to be able to shake his hand.

Tasha Bass Dyson: The Tar Heel foot in the driveway. That was his signature piece. He was very proud of it — he kept it painted and touched up each year. He liked people to know that it was his house that had the Tar Heel foot in the driveway



A golf cart decorated in Tar Heel colors



A football autographed by UNC Chapel Hill Head Coach Mack Brown is displayed in Alice Bass' home in Chadbourne.



Alice Bass, left, poses with her daughter, Tasha Bass Dyson, and her grandson, Liam Dyson, at her home in Chadbourne. Tasha Bass Dyson is holding a picture of her late father, Donald Ray Bass, shaking hands with former UNC Chapel Hill Head Basketball Coach Roy Williams.

PRINCES' PLACE IS PACKED WITH PLENTY OF PRIDE

William "Billy" Bishop Prince Jr. and his wife, Stacy Stout-Prince, have a guesthouse filled with North Carolina State University memorabilia at their home in Little River, S.C. Prince is a business owner, and Stout-Prince works for Columbus County Schools. The couple offers scholarships to college-bound students from South Columbus High School.

What inspired you to collect these items?

Stacy Stout-Prince: Because my husband graduated from N.C. State. I wanted to respect him and everything he has done for our family to make sure that we have everything that we need.

What is your favorite item?

Stacy Stout-Prince: I call it the 'wall of fame,' where we post all of his degrees and licenses.

What was the hardest item to obtain?

William Bishop Prince Jr.: The degrees on that wall. To pass the tests to earn the degrees, and then working on the wastewater and contractor's licenses, was very difficult.

What qualities separates NC State from other ACC schools?

William Bishop Prince Jr.: N.C. State provides many great opportunities in agriculture, and it also provides some of the best engineers in the state.



William "Billy" Bishop Prince Jr. and Stacy Stout-Prince's fan cave is fitted with a TV and couch for sports viewing.



William "Billy" Bishop Prince Jr., his wife, Stacy Stout-Prince, and their dog, Dixie Carolina, pose inside of their guest house in Little River.



Christian Simmons poses inside his classroom at the Classical Charter Schools of Whiteville.

Christian Simmons is a teacher at the Classical Charter Schools of Whiteville, where he is known by students and staff for his classroom decorated with Carolina Panthers, Carolina Hurricanes, Charlotte Hornets, Cleveland Guardians and North Carolina State University sports memorabilia. Along with declaring his team allegiance in the classroom, Simmons drives a truck painted in Carolina Panthers colors.

Which team is your favorite?

I'm really big into all my teams, but I think my favorite is the Panthers. I do a lot more stuff with the Panthers than the other teams. I've only missed two home games since they've been in Charlotte. I've been to both of the Super Bowls they played in. I've been to every playoff game they've been in. I've traveled to London to watch them play before, and I'm going to Germany to watch them play this year.

What about the Panthers is special to you?

I love football. That's my thing. Growing up, everyone picked the recent Super Bowl winners, so everyone is a Cowboys fan or a Steelers

fan or something like that around here. I was a Raiders fan before the Panthers came along because I played on a Little League team that was the Raiders, but I've been a Panthers fan since Oct. 26, 1993.

What were the most difficult items to obtain?

The two Super Bowl tickets that I have at home.

What are your favorite items?

I have a lot of autographed things from different players. I have a Cam Newton signed football that I love. Steve Smith and Julius Peppers also autographed some items for me that I love. It's hard for me to pick my favorites because I have so many items that I appreciate.

SIMMONS DISPLAYS TEAM COLORS IN THE CLASSROOM, ON THE ROAD



Simmons' Panthers-themed truck.

45 YEARS OF COLLECTING 'I NEVER THREW ANYTHING AWAY'



Glenn McPherson stands near his Dan Marino cutout poster in his fan cave.

At his home in Whiteville, Glenn McPherson has a guesthouse filled with mementos of multiple sports teams, but it heavily features the Cincinnati Reds, the Miami Dolphins and the UNC Chapel Hill Tar Heels.

What led you to pick these teams?

My dad pulled for these teams. So you either pulled for them, or you pulled against them. So I choose to root for them.

How did your collection develop into a display of this size?

I started collecting in 1979. I never threw anything away. And once I got older and got married and built the fan cave, I had a place to put everything that I'd saved since I was 8 years old.



A Michael Jordan cutout poster stands near a couch draped in UNC Chapel Hill colors in McPherson's fan cave.

What are your favorite items?

The helmets that I've collected from the 32 NFL teams. I have Dan Marino's signature on the Dolphins helmet and Ronnie Lott's signature on the 49ers helmet, so those are some of my favorites.

What was the hardest to get?

The hardest part was re-collecting the helmets. Before a hurricane, my wife took them from the fan cave I had before this one and took them to my dad's house so they wouldn't get messed up. My dad took them and threw them into the dumpster, and we didn't realize it until a month later. So I had to start over.

ECLECTIC COLLECTION FEATURES COLUMBUS COUNTY STANDOUTS

Jeff Walker has a fan cave featuring multiple teams in his backyard at his home in Whiteville. Walker has collected items since he was a child. Alongside memorabilia from collegiate and professional sports teams, Walker has collected cards from former Columbus County athletes who have made it to the collegiate and professional ranks.

What teams are featured inside your cave?

I'm a Cubs fan, a Falcons fan and a Hawks fan in the three major sports. I'm a Blackhawks fan in hockey and an N.C. State fan in college. So most of my stuff is of those teams, but then I have a variety of other sports as well. I became fans of those teams after opening my first packs of professional cards.

Why do you keep cards of former area players?

It's a special thing to be able to see people make it to the big

leagues. I started by collecting some of the older guys like Chester McGlockton and Tommy Greene, and I kept going and got some of the younger guys like MacKenzie Gore. It has been great seeing local players go on and have great careers.

What is your favorite item?

The pictures that I took at Wrigley Field. I figured I would never make it, but my sister moved to Indiana, and Wrigley Field was only an hour or two away. Wrigley Field is an iconic place, so it was great to go there.

Can you tell a story behind one of your items?

My dad took me to UNC Wilmington to watch an exhibition match between the Hornets and the Nets. As a kid, I didn't go prepared with something for the players to sign, so I ended up getting a hotdog wrapper and got as many players as I could to sign it.



Jeff Walker poses inside his fan cave in the backyard of his Whiteville home.



Walker displays his collection of cards featuring area athletes.



An N.C. State chain hangs near a photo of Wrigley Field.



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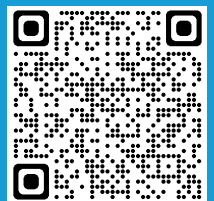
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Bess Hinson Taylor touches up one of her butterfly murals in 2020.

NATURE ARTIST CAPTURES 'THE MESSY, BEAUTIFUL PART OF LIFE'

STORY TONNYE WILLIAMS FLETCHER

PHOTOS TONNYE WILLIAMS FLETCHER & NR ARCHIVES

As her 40th birthday drew near, Bess Hinson Taylor decided to celebrate by painting 40 birds. The self-trained artist painted the birds on plywood and sawed around their outlines.

But once the bird dream nested in Taylor's heart, she couldn't stop at 40. She told herself, "I'll paint 100 birds," but then the project grew — "I'll paint the songbirds of Columbus County" — and grew — "I'll paint all the birds of Columbus County." Finally she told herself, "I can't leave out the extinct birds that used to live in Columbus County."

After two years of work, she'd painted over 200 birds. "If I had known what a big project it was going to be," Taylor said, "I never would have started."

Taylor's birthday project became a featured exhibit at the Columbus County Arts Council's gallery this spring, causing Sally Mann, council president of the arts council, to say that, "Bess Hinson Taylor is an amazing artist and teacher! I have learned so much about the birds of our area in the past few weeks." Mann said the exhibit also showed viewers practical ways "to keep these birds thriving" in our environment.

Taylor's nature-based art is educational and tells a story — it's a story she is having to learn first, one lesson at a time, so that she can tell it.



Taylor's exhibit at the arts council gallery comprises two years' worth of work.



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Butterflies and bees

When Taylor was growing up right here in Columbus County, she didn't realize what she would be doing now. Bess Hinson was the youngest of four children born to Sam and Meg Hinson. She enjoyed arts and crafts as a child but did not pursue art formally. A winding path led her to study biology at N.C. State University, then to work as a makeup artist, before settling back in Columbus County.

Then, in her own backyard, a series of lessons began as Taylor observed birds nesting and feeding their young. She painted them so others could also observe. She began to realize that many native birds eat native insects. Native insects need native plants. Her interest in art and her passion for nature grew and expanded.

Many county residents have seen Taylor's large art installations, including a series of huge butterfly murals known as the Butterfly Trail. The Columbus County Community Farmers Market and the Columbus County Beekeepers Association commissioned her to create murals, in addition to the ones at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences at Whiteville and others fluttering around Whiteville.

"With Whiteville being a Bee City USA, we wanted to tie the honeybees in with the butterflies as pollinators," said Nikki Walker, beekeeper and farmers market board member. Walker said Taylor "has an amazing story to tell and we are proud to help her do that."

Historic connections

One extinct bird featured in the exhibit at the arts council gallery is the Carolina parakeet. Taylor consulted with Ashley Lomboy of the Waccamaw-Siouan STEM Studio to learn more about it and other birds that inhabited Southeastern North Carolina before colonial times.

When they arrived, "Colonists tried to destroy the Carolina parakeet because it spoke some of the native tongue," Lomboy told Taylor. The arts council exhibit includes a land acknowledgement statement, paying respect to the Southeast woodland tribes of American Indians as original inhabitants of the area. The Waccamaw-Siouan tribe covers Columbus and Bladen counties.

Taylor also said she had learned from watching wildlife that, "Nature is full of cycles." She said she paints not only to capture nature's beauty but to remind herself and others that, "Life is hard, and beautiful."

Her art reflects the cycles of change in nature and what she called "the messy, beautiful part of life. It's not always easy in the way we think it should be, but there is beauty in all the stages, and the birds help me remember the bigger picture and that there is life beyond me."

A more harmonious life

"Birds are everywhere," Taylor said, "and almost everyone you meet has a bird story," yet the practice of birding can be intimidating for beginners because there's so much to learn.

Taylor said she hopes to make birding more accessible to everyone. That's why, for her exhibit, she grouped the birds by color, by habitat and by season, making it easier to identify an unfamiliar bird.

Taylor hopes viewers of her art will learn ways to live more harmoniously with the creatures she paints. That might mean adding native plants in landscaping and reducing non-native planting, Taylor said. It might mean leaving some debris for insects to overwinter in, leaving some areas unmowed to benefit the pollinators or choosing



Taylor's art captures the details of common backyard birds and some unusual species.

not to spray pesticides.

Even just learning the names of plants and creatures "helps us connect with them," Taylor said, rather than just thinking of something as "a bird or a flower or a weed. There is something special about knowing the name of something and then seeing it in the wild."

Taylor helped found a local chapter of the Wildlife Federation called the Southeastern Swamp Stewards as a way of helping the wildlife that also calls these 954 square miles home.

Although Taylor still has birds to paint, this spring she took on another project — a 277-square-foot mural at the Lake Waccamaw State Park Visitor Center. She won the commission with a design including more than 30 wildlife species and approximately 20 types of native plants.



Taylor's birthday project led her to paint more than 100 birds associated with Columbus County.

For more information on Taylor's work, local art and birds in general:

Taylor's outdoor butterfly murals may be seen on several buildings in downtown Whiteville and at the Columbus County Community Farmers Market. The Columbus County Arts Council gallery is at 822 S. Madison St. in Whiteville, and the phone number is 910-640-2787. The Lake Waccamaw State Park Visitor Center is at 1866 State Park Dr. The phone number is 910-646-4748. To learn more about birds, you may want to try the free Merlin bird identification app or visit ebird.com.

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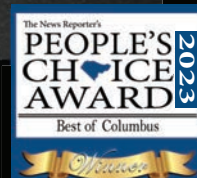
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COLUMBUS COUNTY MUSICIANS BAND TOGETHER TO PERFORM



The Columbus Community Band performs its spring concert at First Baptist Church in Whiteville in June 2022. Founder and president Anna Smyth says she hopes those who attend their concerts “feel a certain ‘Wow’ factor” from their performances. “You don’t have to travel to Raleigh or Myrtle Beach to see a good show.”

The Columbus Community Band performs with the Southeastern Oratorio Society in the Leamon Rogers Memorial Chapel at the Boys and Girls Homes campus at Lake Waccamaw in July 2023. Performing with the choir is “a tremendous honor,” said band founder and president Anna Smyth.



STORY JOSEPH WILLIAMS
PHOTOS JOSEPH WILLIAMS, NEWS REPORTER ARCHIVE
AND CONTRIBUTED

Classical. Rock. Rhythm and blues. That’s just a sample of the many genres of music that bands across Columbus County play.

Whether it consists of two or three members or nearly two dozen, each group brings its own unique style to performances.

Musicians from five bands in Columbus County told 954 Magazine how they got together, what genres they play and what they hope to accomplish in the future — in their own words.

This is not a complete list of Columbus County bands. Responses were edited for brevity and clarity.

Columbus Community Band

From an early age, Anna Smyth felt a calling “to play music, to sing, to dance — just to be involved in the arts.” Her fascina-

tion with music in particular led Smyth to pursue playing the bass clarinet.

Upon moving back to Whiteville to care for her mother, Smyth realized it wouldn’t be feasible to continue playing in her community band at Sunset Beach, where she worked as a chiropractor.

Smyth started up a Facebook page in early 2020 to gauge the interest in Columbus County in forming a community band. She quickly received messages from over 100 people who wanted to form one, although not all of those ended up joining.

The band performs at events around Columbus County and hosts spring and winter concerts each year.

Who makes up the Columbus Community Band?

Smyth: Our band numbers change a little bit every season. We can have as many as 25 members performing at a time. A lot of our membership comes from local high schools and Southeast-

MUSICIANS BAND TOGETHER

ern Community College, so as students graduate, that changes things. Some members were born and raised in Columbus County; some moved here for work.

What instruments make up the band?

Smyth: We currently have a piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, french horn, trombone, tuba and some percussion. There are a few instruments that I'd like to recruit, such as more alto saxophones and a euphonium, which kind of act like tenor voices would in a choir. We're essentially missing the tenor part of our band, which limits us in the choices of music that we play.

What types of music do you play?

Smyth: It depends on the time of year. Our spring concert has the most variety, featuring the music of Broadway and Disney movies as well as traditional orchestral music. Obviously in July we're doing patriotic music and Americana. During the winter concert, we play songs like "Sleigh Ride" and "A Christmas Festival," a medley of holiday tunes arranged by Leroy Anderson.

What do you enjoy most about playing music?

Smyth: Playing music with a band transcends a lot of other barriers that society might impose on you. It's a way to overcome those boundaries as a community.

For the audience, I hope that they enjoy our performances and that they feel a certain "Wow" factor and recognize the talent that we have right here in Columbus County. You don't have to travel to Raleigh or Myrtle Beach to see a good show.

What's next for the band?

Smyth: I'm planning on buying nice polo shirts with our logo for the band to wear. I feel like it will really up our professionalism. I'm also hoping to grow the band. More people means more performances, and that's definitely a goal.



Jason Smith of Crenshaw Trucking Band performs April 27 as part of the N.C. Alligator Festival at Lake Waccamaw.

Crenshaw Trucking Band

Jason Smith and Matthew Dudley had two decidedly different paths of learning how to play music.

Smith, a Marine Corps veteran and retired captain with Columbus Correctional Institution, got his first guitar when he was 12 years old. Not knowing anything about music theory at the time, he said he learned to play songs through trial and error.

Dudley received drumming lessons from his older brother and later began to offer lessons himself. For a while, he pursued an entrepreneurship degree in music industry at UNC Pembroke.

However, he realized that what he was studying was "what I was already doing." He teaches drumming lessons full time in Whiteville.

Prior to forming Crenshaw Trucking Band in July 2021, the two friends had played music together but never under an official name. "Jason finally talked me into it," Dudley said.

"It wasn't that hard," Smith added.



"We are only two people, but with all of the elements we add to the music, it fills up all the event space," said Matthew Dudley of Crenshaw Trucking Band. "I don't know of any other band like ours."

How did you decide on the name Crenshaw Trucking Band?

Smith: There's this old Saturday Night Live skit. I don't know which year it aired. One woman [after describing a trip she and two others took to the Grand Canyon] said something like, "We thought we had found the great eagle spirit, but it turns out the great eagle spirit was actually a fugitive trucker by the name of Rich Crenshaw!" I thought, "If I ever have a band, I'm going to call it 'Crenshaw Trucking Band.'"

Dudley: Jason had told me about the video from years back, and we were just talking about band names and stuff one day when he brought it up. I was like, "Yeah, let's roll with it. It's unique."

What do you play at your shows?

Smith: We play '90s rock, modern bluegrass, all kinds of stuff. Our biggest hit by far is our version of "Hungry Like the Wolf" by Duran Duran. Everybody knows that song, but when we do our acoustic version of it, it shocks everybody.

Dudley: I like it when we play "Broken Window Serenade" by Whiskey Myers. It goes from a simple acoustic pattern into a couple of different shuffles. I'm also playing a shaker at the same time. There's a lot of different percussive elements to it that I like.

What do you enjoy most about playing music?

Smith: It's just the adrenaline for me. Getting up in front of people and playing — "fun" isn't the word for it. I can hardly sleep the night before, and I can't sleep at all after the show, because my adrenaline is still going.

Dudley: I've been playing the drums for about 30 to 40 years, so I rarely get nervous playing the drums at all. But whenever I get up to play acoustic guitar or piano with Jason, I get that old sense of nervousness. That's the exciting part for me.

What's next for the band?

Smith: We're working on an album.

Dudley: I've got a recording studio at home, so we have the means to write, record and produce everything.

Smith: I've written one song so far, called "Chain Gang Inside Me." Now that I'm retired, working on that will be what I want to do next.

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With Jamaaladeen Tacuma's blessing, Alonzo McArthur (seated, behind keyboard) formed the eight-member Dirt Road Band after Tacuma wrapped up his Dirt Road Xperience arts residency in Whiteville in March 2022. From left to right: Carey Fleming on guitar, Jennie Smith on tambourine, McArthur on keyboard, Joseph Askew on bongos and Tim Jones on bass.



Denise McAllister sings "Tonight is the Night" by Betty Wright while fellow members of the Dirt Road Band provide accompaniment. From left to right: Gary Johnson on guitar, William Locklear on drums, McAllister on the mic and Keith Davis on guitar.

The Dirt Road Band

This eight-member outfit got its start when world-renowned bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma hosted his Dirt Road Xperience arts residency in Whiteville, where he had spent his summers with relatives in his youth.

As he was wrapping up his month-long series of jam sessions with Columbus County locals in March 2022, one avid attendee, Alonzo McArthur, had a question for Tacuma before he left. "You got us musicians together, but what are we going to do once you're gone?"

With Tacuma's blessing, McArthur became the director of the Dirt Road Experience Performing Arts Center — now spelled with an "E." Since then, its house band has performed at the Strawberry Festival and Brunswick Stew Festival in addition to its regular performances every second and fourth Saturday night in a cozy hole-in-the-wall beside The Chef and the Frog in downtown Whiteville.

How did you decide on your name?

McArthur: Tacuma and I grew up basically the same way. He's from Philadelphia, and I'm from Baltimore. To keep us out of trouble in the city during the summer, our parents would send us down here where we both cropped tobacco. My parents lived on a dirt road, too, so I told him, "I'm going to call our band 'The Dirt Road Band.'" He said, "That sounds great!"

What do you play at your shows?

McArthur: We play old school R&B music, like Sam Cooke, Lionel Richie and Aretha Franklin. We're working on incorporating some Heatwave music into our repertoire too. Some of my favorite songs for us to play together are "Electric Boogie (Electric Slide)" by Marcia Griffith and "Under the Boardwalk" by The

MUSICIANS BAND TOGETHER

Drifters. We're getting ready to record some of our own music, too.

What do you enjoy most about playing live music?

McArthur: I enjoy seeing the audience's excitement and how they react, especially when they get up out of their seats and dance to what we're playing and I can see the smiles on their faces. And I know we're hitting it when everybody in the band starts smiling and laughing too. I play music in church, but we all need something to let our hair down, too.

What's next for the band?

McArthur: We're looking for grants and accepting donations to cut back on expenses. All the audio equipment for the band I purchased myself with my own money. We're trying to get our own place, because we can't stay where we are at now forever.



Dawn and Waylon Hayes, a husband and wife duo, have performed as Jubilee since 2021.



Jubilee performs in April at Music in the Alley, a City of Whiteville-sponsored event downtown. "Just the right song can spark someone to ask you to play something else," said Dawn Hayes. "Even our own songwriting points you back to understanding that, in some way, form or fashion, you need Jesus."

Jubilee

Religious undertones pervade the music of the husband and wife duo Dawn and Waylon Hayes, who go by the band name Jubilee. "We've been playing music together since we've been together, going on about 12 years," Dawn Hayes said.

But it wasn't until 2021 that the two formed the band Jubilee.

"My whole life has been church culture," Dawn Hayes, a native of Kinley, North Carolina, said. Waylon Hayes, for his part, grew up in Old Dock — where the couple lives now — and fondly recalls playing in bands with his high school friends.

Besides public venues, the two also play music at Peace Baptist Church in Whiteville.

Whether it's through carefully chosen covers or their original compositions, Dawn Hayes said, the songs Jubilee performs "point

MUSICIANS BAND TOGETHER

you back to the understanding that, in some way, form or fashion, you need Jesus.”

How did you decide on the name Jubilee?

Dawn Hayes: It came from our pastor’s sermon one Sunday morning about what it means to truly praise the Lord. He brought up the word “jubilee” and said that it literally means to have a party before the Lord, praising and worshiping Him. Waylon said, “Didn’t you hear what the pastor said? Why don’t we call ourselves Jubilee?”

Waylon Hayes: I understood his message, and it sounded like a really good band name.

What do you play at your shows?

Dawn Hayes: A lot of people stick to one genre. We try to throw in a little bit of everything: Creedence Clearwater Revival, Miranda Lambert, Whitney Houston. If you dig in and look, every song that I’ve written and we’ve performed is about one’s spiritual journey.

One of my favorites to perform is a song I wrote called “Wild Canary.” Writing it allowed me to let go of a bunch of stuff and say, “Hey, I don’t care what you think, I’m going to worship how I want to.” It’s the trivial things that stop us from following Christ.

What do you enjoy the most about playing music?

Dawn Hayes: For me, the way the audience reacts is always one of the best things — especially when they’re singing along. Music should bring us together, it should never tear us apart. When people are singing along with you in that moment, it really is the ultimate picture of people being unified.

Waylon Hayes: I’ve been dealing my whole life with addiction, but playing in front of a crowd is a high like no other. It really helps. To get up there and actually see people enjoying what you do is a high you can’t reach with anything else.

What’s next for the band?

Waylon Hayes: We’re recording our first album, but we’re in the process of finding a new place to record, so we’ve had to put things on hold. We’re also toying around with the idea of starting an Evanesence tribute band called Tourniquet. Dawn can pull off Amy Lee without a hitch.



Evans Humphreys, Isabel Humphreys and their mother, Kathryn Caine, play together as Ogden Heart.

Ogden Heart

Kathryn Caine recalls her two children, Isabel and Evans Humphreys, sitting at her feet as she played music at her local church in Virginia. Later on in life, Isabel and Evans would perform music together with their mother.

Caine, Isabel and Evans moved to Whiteville in 2016 to live closer to Caine’s parents. The three shared one profound musical influence: Dr. William Singleton Ogden, Caine’s father and Isabel and Evans’ grandfather.

Formerly known as The Family Band, the trio rebranded themselves in 2022 as Ogden Heart after Ogden passed away in June 2021.

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Kathryn Caine and her two children, Isabel and Evans Humphreys, rebranded themselves from The Family Band to Ogden Heart in honor of Caine's late father, William Singleton Ogden — Isabel and Evans' grandfather — upon the release of their self-titled album in 2022. Isabel designed the cover art.

Like Ogden, the three have other creative outlets as well. "We're musicians, but we're also artists," Isabel writes books. Evans carves wooden pipes. Caine herself does portraiture. Pursuing their innermost artistic ambitions, whatever form they may entail, she said, is "the embodiment of who we are."

MUSICIANS BAND TOGETHER

How did you decide on the name Ogden Heart?

Caine: The band is named after my father, William Singleton Ogden. Isabel and Evans just adored him. He was a renaissance man. He was a doctor; he wrote books; he played music, including banjo. He was just amazing. When you're around somebody like that, it makes such an impact. He was one in a million.

What types of music do you play?

Caine: We're not your traditional bluegrass band. The reason that there's so many different types of sounds on Ogden Heart is because we like tons of different music. We really like to play "Silver Dagger." It's an old Scottish folk song about a young girl whose mother doesn't want her to marry. It's really dark, but it's so awesome. People don't write songs like that anymore.

What do you enjoy most about playing music?

Caine: We're not searching for the spotlight when we perform. We're inviting people to revel in the creative. We want to make music that lasts, has artistic integrity and makes a difference. Music that makes a difference, to me, is when something moves you emotionally when you hear it. Sometimes you can't put your finger on it. You're communicating on a level that doesn't need words. It's more of a spiritual thing.

What's next for the band?

Caine: I want to make another record, but I'm not sure if my children are on board with it yet. Right now, they're going to graduate from North Carolina State University this May before they go on to graduate school. While they're home, we're going to play as much as we can together this summer.

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A vibrant poster for the Fair Bluff Watermelon Festival. The background is a collage of watermelon slices and green leaves. A large white oval in the center contains the event details in a red, cursive font. Below the oval, the presenter's name is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, followed by contact information in a smaller, red, sans-serif font.

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W. Crowell Black established Black's Service Station in Whiteville in 1929.

FROM SMALL BEGINNING, BLACK'S TIRE SERVICE GROWS TO 59 STORES IN THE CAROLINAS

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STORY DIANA MATTHEWS

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY BLACK'S TIRE SERVICE

At Black's Tire Service, "We take a lot of pride in the small towns that we serve," says Rick Benton II, one of the company's vice-presidents. BTS began with one shop in Whiteville in 1929 and now has 59 retail locations in two states. The BTS central distribution center is located just half a mile from where it all began.

"We've had a lot of opportunities to move," but the family business has resisted the call of larger cities to relocate "our home base," Benton said.

Being a hometown business means being accountable to the

customers who depend on BTS year after year. "We need repeat business," Benton said. "We need you to refer your friends and your children to us."

When customers see him around town or at a ballgame, Benton says they're likely to ask him to recommend "a good tire at a good price" or request other automotive advice. Sometimes people apologize for "bothering" him. "But I tell them, 'You aren't bothering me. That's what I'm here for,'" he said.

Debbie Greene was Benton's sixth grade teacher and directs the choir Benton's wife sings in at Cerro Gordo Baptist Church;



The Benton family: Parents Dianne and Ricky are pictured in front of their sons — Rick, Ryan and Jeremy.



Crowell Black was a founding partner of the Boys and Girls Homes of North Carolina.

she feels comfortable asking him car questions. "She told me last night at church, 'It's good to have somebody you can trust.' That's the culture. You want to give back."

Growth

Crowell Black of Cerro Gordo founded the original Black's Tire Service in 1929. His son, Buddy Black, eventually owned service stations across Columbus County.

Benton's father joined Buddy Black in business in 1980 and bought BTS in 1996. It was Benton Sr.'s idea to grow the business beyond its original reach beginning in 1983.

Along the way, Benton Sr. faced the decision of whether to



Black's first Charity Golf Tournament for the BGHNC was held in Myrtle Beach.

move the company headquarters, perhaps to Myrtle Beach or Florence. Instead, in 2000, he chose to buy Whiteville's old Lowe's building on N.C. 130 and convert it into the central distribution facility, keeping 100 jobs in the local economy.

Benton Sr. set a business model for making Whiteville the "hub" of a wheel with "spokes" reaching to 10 regions. He multiplied the size of the company but stayed committed to guiding principles learned from the Black family. They are family, team, trust and service. Rick Benton II said those "core values" still guide BTS today.

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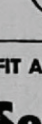

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BLACK'S TIRE SERVICE

skills. Benton said the company has partnerships with local high schools and Southeastern Community College that help aspiring auto technicians, accountants and clerical specialists earn credentials and academic credit while getting paid.

What's ahead?

New retail locations opened in Fayetteville and Calabash in December, then in Columbia and Lugoff, S.C., in January, giving BTS a total of 59.

Today the company's 10 "spokes" reach to Charlotte, Raleigh, Durham, Statesville, Wilmington, Fayetteville, Greenville S.C., Florence, Columbia and Myrtle Beach. In addition, the company wholesales tires to about 500 independent "partner dealers."

With the Black's centennial just five years away, what does Benton predict for the company's future?

"We're buying the old Quality Ford," which was Patriot Ford from 2019 to 2023, he said. BTS may "move some service work and training activity there." In addition, Benton thinks BTS could "dress up" the original shop at 1615 S. Madison St. and make it a place to showcase local history.

As far as daily application of BTS values, Benton said he hopes he and his team "can keep getting better," learning new technology while living up to their reputation for quality.

"We don't take that lightly," he said.



In 2015 BTS Training Center opened and Whiteville Warehouse Distribution Center added 20,000 sq. ft.



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OLD BARN, PRINTING PLATE WALLS TELL STORIES OF CHANGE

STORY **BILL THOMPSON**

PHOTOS **BILL THOMPSON AND LES HIGH**

Once upon a time in southeastern North Carolina, tobacco was king and the curing barn that sat in or near the fields of the green weed was his castle. The alchemy of time and labor, prayers and frustration, combined with heating fuel (wood, oil or gas), turned sticky green leaves into “golden weed,” the sustenance of farm families.

When tobacco was king, the golden leaf also provided tax revenues to build schools and farm-to-market roads. Churches were built and supported by congregations giving a portion of what they earned from their tobacco crops.

But the economy changed and the old barns succumbed to time and weather and the weight of kudzu vines. And the king descended his throne.

Up on Red Hill Road on the edge of White Marsh and Welches Creek, the High family’s farm sat on low rolling slopes that rose slightly above the surrounding swampland. Although the swamp repeatedly tried to encroach, the land prevailed. The family of Lonnie Haynes “Boy” High Jr. farmed tobacco until the time came to adapt to the changes of agriculture. Boy High and his son Jim High planted and harvested other crops. But the memory of tobacco farming was still there, partly in the minds of the High family and partly in the form of seven barns on the property.

Even as the crops changed, some old customs, particularly bird hunting, continued to be a part of the family heritage. And if a visitor were to stop by that farm today he would still find much that made the site distinctive.

On a spring afternoon the same wind blows across a field of winter wheat that now surrounds one old tobacco barn, the last of the seven. There is still one tobacco barn there today because, years ago, Jim High believed that saving it and another one — his parents’ last two barns — was a worthwhile project. High was then editor and publisher of *The News Reporter*, but he considered himself a farmer first.

It’s uncertain what years any of the High barns were built. By the mid-20th century, only two remained, and they had begun to crumble. Jim High saw the need to preserve them and the old tree as a part of his heritage.

By last year, one of the two remaining tobacco barns had severe roof damage, and the other needed repair. Jim High’s son and daughter, Les High and Stuart Rogers, hired Cam Heustess to repair the barn that was still relatively sturdy. He patched it using salvaged portions of the more dilapidated barn.

Today the restored barn stands under a giant oak tree that frames the building as the late-afternoon sun paints a tableau.

OLD BARN, PRINTING PLATES

In tobacco barn terminology, the barn's interior space is divided horizontally into four "rooms" five tiers high. The walls are made of wood, and a new metal roof now caps the building. In the old days, the cracks between the boards or logs on the side would have been chinked with clay, a substance in abundance in the area. But this is no ordinary barn. Jim High was not only a farmer but a newspaper man who hated to see anything go to waste. So, when the technology of the newspaper business changed, Mr. High repurposed plates that had been used on the old printing press to line the walls of the old tobacco barn.

At first glance, the combination of elements seems contradictory or at least unusual. But there really is an appropriate connection.

When tobacco was king, the local newspaper was the court herald. In the Kingdom of Columbus County, that voice was *The News Reporter*. The newspaper told the populace about the events that affected them. That included where and when the tobacco markets would be open. The *News Reporter* told what price farmers were getting for their tobacco at which markets. Some of the paper's advertisers promoted goods the farmers needed to make their crop. Others told them where they could buy their clothes, cars, trucks, tractors, clothes, food and other goods once they realized their income for the year.

So, it was really a natural collaboration to include the plates in the reconstruction of the barn. Everyone who knew Jim High knew he was a son of the soil with ink in his veins. This barn was a symbol of the legacy that Jim High left to his family. It was a way to leave his mark, to remind his family of their roots and their connection to this community.

Sixty years after Jim High brought home used printing plates and covered his tobacco barn with them, it's still possible to read the writing on some and learn a little bit about what news was happening in the Columbus County of that time. If a visitor looks closely at the plates nailed to the walls of the barn, they will see familiar names of people who have played a role in the history of this area along with the events that shaped their lives.

It is not a difficult road to travel to get to the old barn. It is a typical rutted field road that has been the route of mules and tractors and trucks. It's a place where the High family can gather, eat a picnic and share family history and stories. And, if they listen to the little breeze blowing under that giant oak tree, they may hear the familiar call of Jim High, editor-farmer: "Got any news?"



High family members Keith and Stuart Rogers and Les and Becky High plan to use the restored tobacco barn for family gatherings.



Ads from the 1960s are still legible in places on the restored barn.



Lumber from an adjacent barn storm damaged beyond repair was repurposed to restore the last remaining tobacco barn on the High farm.

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954 Events



KALEIDOSCOPE OF HOPE SOIREE FRIDAY, MAY 31 | 5:30 P.M.

Kaleidoscope of Hope Soiree is the first annual benefit for Carolyn's Kaleidoscope Child Advocacy Center, a program in Whiteville for children harmed by physical or sexual abuse or neglect. The center is a part of Boys and Girls Homes of North Carolina. The event includes dinner and entertainment and begins at 5:30 p.m. on May 31 at The Spillway in Whiteville. Tickets are \$75 per person, \$100 for a couple and \$500 for a table of 8. For ticket information, call Danielle Nolan at 910-646-3083 or email danielle.nolan@bghnc.org.

WHITEVILLE GARDEN CLUB TOUR SATURDAY, JUNE 1 | 10 A.M.-5 P.M.

Five private gardens and the pollinator garden of Lower Cape Fear LifeCare's Angel House will be open to visitors. Tour booklets are on sale for \$25 through club members and at Country Nursery in Whiteville. Proceeds support club projects to beautify and educate the community.

SPRING HAS SPRUNG FESTIVAL SATURDAY, JUNE 1 10 A.M.-3 P.M. | DOWNTOWN TABOR CITY

The Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a day of family fun in downtown Tabor City at the fourth annual Spring Has Sprung Festival, Saturday, June 1. Events include a parade at 11 a.m. plus a free kidzone with Flimsy The Clown, a car show on 5th Street, live entertainment and a variety of craft and food vendors. Look for up-to-date event information at facebook.com/taborcitychamberofcommerce.

COLUMBUS COUNTY FARMERS MARKET SPECIAL MARKET EVENTS

The market will be open on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. through December 14.

June 15 - Old Fashioned Farm Day | **July 13** - Watermelon Day
Aug. 10 - Back-To-School Day | **Sept. 14** - Honey Day
Oct. 19 - Chicken Bog & BBQ Day
Nov. 16 - Collard, Cornbread and Sweet Potato Day

The Columbus County Community Farmers Market is located at 132 Government Complex Rd. (near the Farm Services Building and the Department of Social Services) north of Whiteville.

CONGRATULATIONS, GRADUATES! HIGH SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT CEREMONIES

June 7 - West Columbus High School 6 p.m.
June 8 - Whiteville High School 9 a.m. at Legion Stadium
June 8 - South Columbus High School 10 a.m.
June 8 - East Columbus Jr.-Sr. High School 2 p.m.

MUSIC IN THE ALLEY FREE LIVE SUMMER MUSIC SERIES 7 - 9 P.M. | DOWNTOWN WHITEVILLE

Performance dates:

June 6 - Chris Nash | **June 20** - Jeffrey Simmons
July 18 - Crenshaw Trucking Band | **Aug. 1** - The 2 Kahones
Aug. 15 - Morgan Hudson | **Sept. 5** - Jeffrey Simmons
Sept. 19 - Jubilee | **Oct. 3** - Luke Kiser
Oct. 17 - Jason Smith & Evan Wright

COLUMBUS COUNTY JUNETEENTH FESTIVAL JUNE 14, 15 & 19

The Miss Juneteenth Scholarship Pageant on Friday, June 14, launches a weekend of family fun celebrating freedom at the Columbus County Juneteenth Festival. The festivities continue Saturday, June 14, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Columbus County Fairgrounds with music, food, vendors, a play zone for children and a cultural exhibit. A Juneteenth picnic luncheon is at noon on Wednesday, June 19, in downtown Whiteville followed by a parade at 4 p.m. Follow the event on Facebook for updates or e-mail rootedcreationsbysb@outlook.com for event, pageant and vendor information.

MUSIC ON MADISON AT VINELAND STATION FREE LIVE SUMMER MUSIC SERIES 7 - 9 P.M. | DOWNTOWN WHITEVILLE

Performance dates:

June 17 - Pink Slips | **July 25** - Gary Lowder and Smokin' Hot
Aug. 22 - Rivermist | **Sept. 26** - Painted Man
Oct. 24 - Southside Saints

ANNUAL COLUMBUS COUNTY FIREWORKS CELEBRATION TUESDAY, JULY 2 SOUTH COLUMBUS HIGH SCHOOL STADIUM

The Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce will host an evening of music, patriotism and fireworks on Tuesday, July 2, at the South Columbus High School Stadium. Gates will open at 6 p.m. Entertainment begins at 6:30 p.m. The fireworks display will begin around 9:30 p.m. Find event information closer to the date at facebook.com/taborcitychamberofcommerce

THE FAIR BLUFF WATERMELON FESTIVAL SATURDAY, JULY 27 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, FAIR BLUFF

Schedule of events:

7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m. - Biggest Watermelon Registration
10 a.m. - Biggest Watermelon weigh-in & awards presentation
10:30 a.m. - Youth & adult watermelon eating contests
11 a.m. - Youth and adult watermelon quality awards presentation
12:30 p.m. - Parade
2:30 p.m. - Fair Bluff Rotary Club Duck Race

For event updates visit facebook.com/fairbluffwatermelonfestival and fairbluff.com for pageant information. The new festival website, fairbluffwatermelonfestival.org, includes information about sponsorship opportunities, festival history and the Fair Bluff Watermelon Growers Association's new educational outreach program.



HEROES CRUISE-IN, PARADE & BBQ COOK-OFF COMPETITION SATURDAY, SEPT. 14 DOWNTOWN TABOR CITY

The Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce and the Tabor City community are hosting a Heroes Cruise-In, parade and, new this year, a BBQ Cook-Off competition on Saturday, Sept. 14, in downtown Tabor City.

The Cruise-In will feature classic cars, trucks and motorcycles that will cruise into town and set up on Main Street. All fire, EMS, law enforcement and veterans are invited to participate in the cruise-in and parade.

Participants are asked to register by calling Cynthia Nelson at 910-840-0292 or 910-377-3012. Find event information closer to the date at facebook.com/taborcitychamberofcommerce

COLUMBUS COUNTY AGRICULTURE FAIR OCT. 8 – OCT. 13

The annual Columbus County Fair is Oct. 8–13 starting with a parade in downtown Whiteville. Fair events such as thrilling rides, delicious food, competitions, a demolition derby and live entertainment will be located at the Columbus County Fairgrounds. Save the date and look for complete fair information and an event schedule published in *The News Reporter* on Thursday, Oct. 3.

TROOPER KEVIN CONNOR MEMORIAL RUN SATURDAY, OCT. 12 DOWNTOWN WHITEVILLE

Master Trooper Kevin Conner (B-551) of Clarendon lost his life during a traffic stop on Oct. 17, 2018, and he is remembered each year on his EOW (End Of Watch) at the Trooper Kevin Conner Memorial Run. Proceeds from the event fund a scholarship for students in Columbus and Bladen counties in memory of Trooper Conner.

8:30 a.m. – 5K starts

8:35 a.m. – 1 Mile starts

9 a.m. – Pancake breakfast and family activities

9:45 a.m. – Awards (this time is approximate)

Register to participate online before the race at runsignup.com/Race/NC/Whiteville/TrooperKevinConnerMemorialRun or you can register online from your phone or device up to the start of the race.

WACCAMAW SIOUAN POW WOW OCT. 18 AND OCT. 19

WACCAMAW SIOUAN TRIBAL GROUNDS, BUCKHEAD

The 52nd annual Waccamaw Siouan Pow Wow event celebrates Waccamaw Siouan history, culture and traditional tribal foods. Weekend events, held on the Waccamaw Siouan Tribal Grounds in the Buckhead Community north of Bolton, include an American Indian dance and drumming competition.

N.C. YAM FESTIVAL SATURDAY, OCT. 26 TABOR CITY

The N.C. Yam Festival hosts many community events and gatherings throughout the year, leading up to the festival celebration in downtown Tabor City on Saturday, Oct. 26.

As the event nears, stop by the Tabor City Library for event information, festival T-shirts, souvenirs, event tickets and free children's Yam Festival coloring books, plus parade and vendor applications. Visit ncyamfestival.com and facebook.com/ncyamfestival for up-to-date information.

THE NORTH CAROLINA PECAN MUSIC FESTIVAL SATURDAY, NOV. 2 DOWNTOWN WHITEVILLE

A new event is coming the first Saturday of November in downtown Whiteville. The festival's official new name is The North Carolina Pecan Music Festival. The Whiteville Downtown Development Commission is the new sponsor and plans to replace the parade with free live band performances and a bigger and better kids' block. Bring your chairs downtown and spend the day listening to performances by a great lineup of popular bands, along with the traditional car show, great food and vendors. Look for more festival, sponsor and vendor information on Facebook at facebook.com/NCPecanHarvestFestival or email Meredith Ward at mward@ci.whiteville.nc.us or Emily Cross at ecross@ci.whiteville.nc.us.

N.C. Pecan Music Festival band performances

11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Julio & the Saltines

1:30 to 3:30 p.m. - Thomas Road

4 to 6 p.m. - Southside Saints Band

SHUCK N' SHAG OYSTER ROAST NOV. 7 | 5–9 P.M. VINELAND STATION, WHITEVILLE

The Columbus County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism will host the annual Shuck 'N' Shag Oyster Roast on Thursday, Nov. 7, at Vineland Station in Whiteville. Oysters will be served at 5 p.m. along with chili, peel-and-eat shrimp and Brunswick stew. Tickets are available closer to the event at the chamber office. Raffle tickets are \$5 each or 5 tickets for \$20. Visit thecolumbuschamber.com for more information or call 910-642-3171.

COLUMBUS REGIONAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEM FOUNDATION GALA SATURDAY, NOV. 23 VINELAND STATION, WHITEVILLE

Save the date of Saturday, Nov. 23, for the 2024 CRHS Foundation Gala at Vineland Station with dinner and dancing to music provided by The Ray Band. Proceeds this year will support health screening supplies and events in Columbus County. Contact Stephanie Miller at smiller@crhealthcare.org for sponsorship and ticket information.

WHITEVILLE DIAMOND CLUB FIRST PITCH BANQUET

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Jan. 6

Photos by Savanna Elkins



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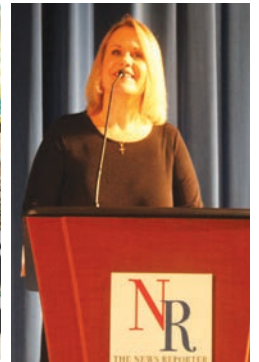
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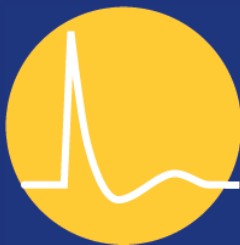


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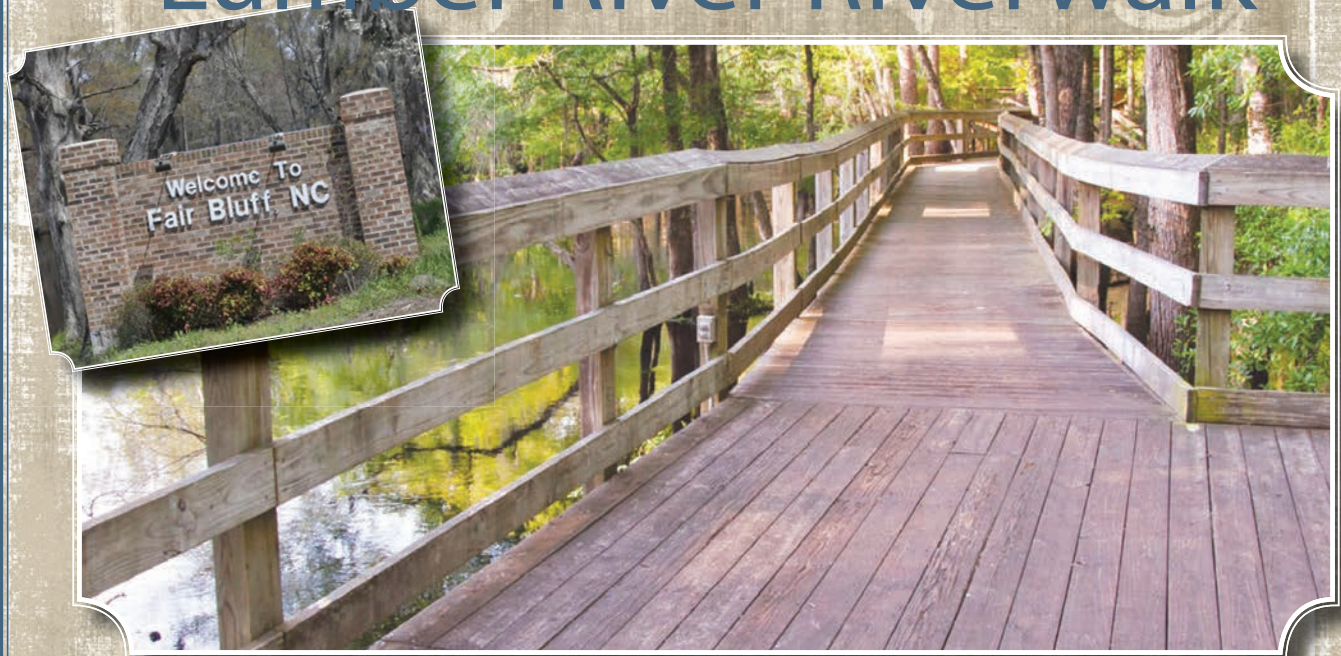
Supported by the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, with funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Opioid STR/Cures (Grant #1H7971080257) and SPFF-RX (Grant #1U795P022087).

GREATER FAIR BLUFF CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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March 7



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March 15

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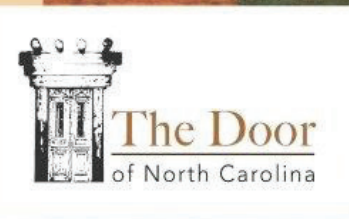
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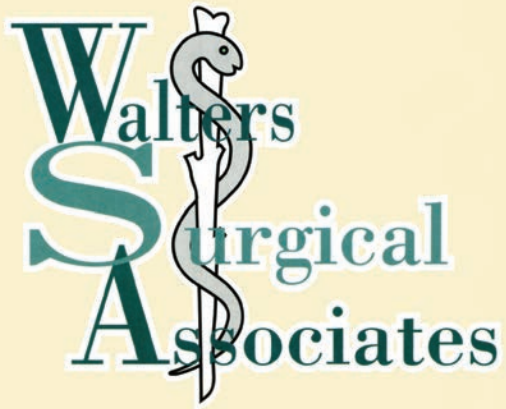
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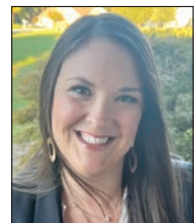
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A RIDE TO RECLAIM ROOTS

STORY MARI B. THOMPSON

ILLUSTRATION NR STAFF

After my daughter's high school graduation last summer, we set out for Hallsboro on the hottest day of the year. In the early morning haze, we headed east on Hwy. 74 from Charlotte with our Chick-fil-A on the console between us and her iPhone playing her tunes through the car. She educated me on the latest music and chatted until she fell asleep around Wadesboro, and I was alone with the road and my thoughts.

I tried to recall the trip I'd taken on that same highway, going west to Charlotte more than 30 years earlier, but I couldn't. Back then, the trip was unremarkable because I hadn't realized I would stay in Charlotte and build a life. I was 22, single, and flying up the highway in a little white sports car. No responsibilities or plans.

Now, as I neared the 701 bypass in Whiteville, I had an undeniable craving for a Ward's hamburger. I decided to make a detour. I knew I'd be forgiven for my lateness if I showed up with lunch for everybody.

I didn't go downtown to Ward's immediately but first drove around the courthouse. Miss Pearl's Dress Shop, which had been in the shopping center, had been closed for decades. I still remember driving to my first job there, that first paycheck I earned and the pride I felt in being able to contribute to the purchase of all those pageant dresses my parents and I bought. I think it was here, among the sequins and feathers, that I began to believe a life beyond the borders of the world I knew wasn't just something to read about in the adventure books I loved, but something attainable. The parking lot was empty now. Not a rhinestone in sight.

I drove down Warrior Trail to Waccamaw Academy and saw myself again as the smallest face in the pack of kids peering out the window of the paneled station wagon on the way to school. I smiled as I remembered one particular morning when all the kids in my carpool had sung "Another One Bites The Dust" as loudly and off-key as possible as we arrived and pulled through the circular drive. We had piled out of the station wagon, rebellious and invincible. Now the school was closed, and the gate was locked.

Next, I tried to retrace the route I'd taken during the two

summers I'd driven the United Carolina Bank lemonade truck around to the tobacco auctions. Yes, it was hot on that June morning in 2023; I was wearing shorts and flip-flops as I drove with the air conditioning on and bobbed my head to a Taylor Swift song on my daughter's playlist. But I realized it was not the same kind of hot it had been inside a tobacco warehouse in August back when I was wearing pantyhose and a full can of Aqua Net in teased-out '80s hair. I understood that now most of the warehouses no longer hold tobacco auctions, nor does United Carolina Bank play the role it did in Whiteville life. But just thinking about the hot, sticky days made me turn up the air conditioning fan and lean forward to let it blow on my face for a minute.

I'd had no illusions that I could come home and find things

the same. I'd kept up with family and some high school friends on Facebook, and I'd seen some of the hurricane damage and recovery efforts in The News Reporter. I knew of the economic challenges that had existed for years, and I'd made short visits during those years. But visiting isn't living it.

My daughter stirred in the passenger seat. She turned her travel pillow to the cool side and then curled back up to the deep sleep of a teenager. It was time to get our lunch, but I found myself turning the car toward my grandparents' house instead. I had seen it only once since our family sold it, and the pull was so strong I convinced myself I would only drive by and not stay long.

I approached the little white house a few minutes later and slowly pulled into the driveway as I had a thousand times before. I thought I must be mistaken. My mouth even hung open a bit. I knew I couldn't be lost because I could have found my way to this doorstep from anywhere. This was home.

But it wasn't.

The car idled as I surveyed the destruction. The weeds and brush in the yard had grown so high they obscured most of the house from the road. Vines tugged at the faded pink chimney, threatening to pull it over into the once well-loved and well-tended garden. The long green vines climbed up through my childhood bedroom windows like the tentacles of the monsters



I had feared in my little girl nightmares, destroying my home, this house that had been my shelter and refuge as a child and a touchstone as an adult. The broken blinds hung askew in shattered windows as harbingers of the abuse to be found inside.

I had become a very different person than the one who'd left Columbus County three decades earlier. I'd had a career, a tumultuous marriage, two children and a nasty divorce. I'd had experiences, good and bad, that the girl who'd left this house behind couldn't have imagined. There had been dreams fulfilled and dreams crushed.

Looking at the house, I felt that it and I were alike. Both of us had been built to be strong by my family's love, but both of us were the worse for wear now.

I sat in the car, and at last I cried. Hard. This modest but once warm and welcoming house represented the people I loved and the values I'd learned here: Be a good person, work hard, and in the end you'll be okay. The decay in front of me refuted that. The house that had nurtured four generations of my family looked neglected and on the verge of collapsing.

There had been other changes than those to the landscape. My mother and grandmother passed away in 2019 just before the pandemic. Losing them wasn't a natural disaster like a hurricane to everyone, but it was seismic to me. Like so many of my generation who have now lost the people who raised us, I feel as if there's a crack in my foundation. Our lives are still standing. But it's not the same without that support as we resist all the forces trying to pull us over.

I silently railed at something unnamable. Not God, surely. I knew He had a plan even if I didn't know what it was.

Injustice? No tempest in my little teapot deserves such a grand word.

The inevitable exhaustion of this stage of life? Perhaps. Because it's as invasive as the vines choking the house.

The tears finally dried. I had used up all the Chick-fil-A napkins from the door pocket. I looked over at my daughter, who was looking at me.

"OK, Mama?" she asked quietly.

"Almost, baby," I replied with a soggy smile, abashed knowing she had witnessed me shaking my fists at Fate. "Let's go."

Before I put the car into reverse, I reached behind me to pull out my purse. She chuckled as I rummaged through it and said, "Grandma always told you to put on some lipstick. You'll feel better." This was true, and so I did.

Just as we were about to pull back onto the road, a passing pickup blew its horn at us, and I raised my arm in a return salute. We drove back to Whiteville on the two-lane road lined with corn waving in the faint summer breeze as we passed. Drivers of oncoming cars greeted us with a raised finger or two over their steering wheels and I responded in kind.

"Mama, do you know all these people?"

"I don't know, Punkin. But I wave just in case."

She laughed. "Cool."

The next time a car passed, she waved, too.

We turned beside Vineland Station on the way to Ward's Grill.

"What's that building, Mama?"

"It's an old train depot. Trains don't come through any more, so now it's used as a place to have special events. We're going to have Granddaddy's birthday party there."

*I had become a very different person
than the one who'd left Columbus County
three decades earlier. Looking at the house, I
felt that it and I were alike.*

"That's cool they can reuse an old building like that for something fun instead of tearing it down."

We bounced across the railroad tracks and pulled into a parking spot. I called Daddy and got everyone's lunch order. My city girl eschewed the opportunity to stand lined up in the glare of the midday sun outside of the tiny grill to wait our turn.

I struck up a conversation with the lady in front of me as we waited for our food. We didn't introduce ourselves but discussed the heat and our hunger in depth like old friends. So engrossed was I in the pleasantness of an idle chat that I didn't notice everyone ahead of me paying in cash. As the young man behind the counter called my order, I pulled out my credit card and was speechless to learn that credit cards weren't taken at Ward's. Embarrassed, I asked if he could please set my order to the side, and I would return shortly with the money to pay for my lunch.

The man shrugged as he wiped his hands on his apron and said, "Oh, that's all right. Just take care of it next time."

Then he nodded to me and turned to the next customer as I thanked him. A man wearing overalls and a John Deere hat opened the door for me, and I returned to the car, my hands loaded with bags full of hamburgers.

My phone rang. It was Daddy. He was hungry and wanted to know how far away I was. I thought about that for a second as I pulled away from the curb.

"Not as far as I thought, Daddy."



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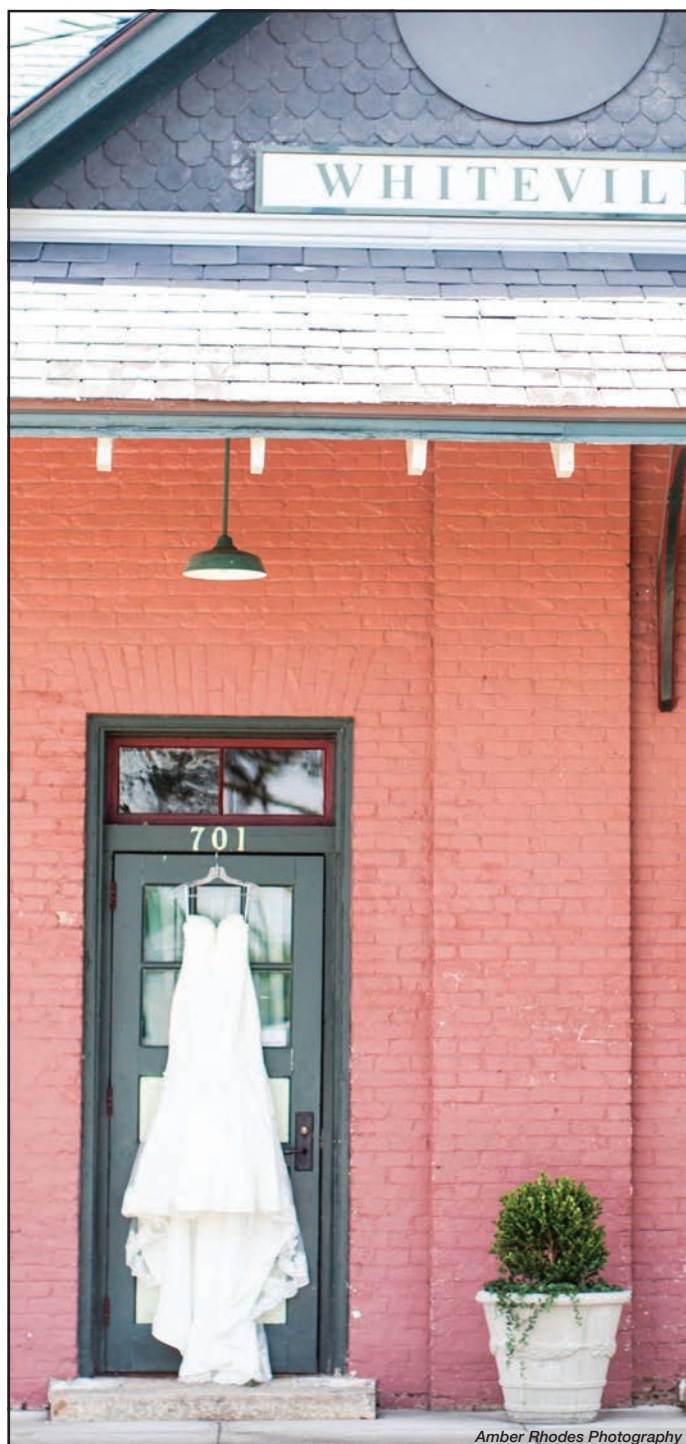


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Meet General Surgeon Dr. Jayme McArthur-Herder

General Surgeon Jayme McArthur-Herder, M.D., has joined UNC Health Surgical Specialists at Southeastern Health Mall and the medical staff of UNC Health Southeastern. She has a professional interest in robotic surgery, particularly hernia repair. She is also interested in increasing medical literacy and promoting preventative health and health maintenance.

"I want to be an advocate for my patients, ensuring they are empowered to make the best medical decisions for themselves while also being able to provide them high quality, personable care," said Dr. McArthur-Herder.

She completed undergraduate degrees in both science education and chemistry at East Carolina University in 2006, and medical school at UNC Chapel Hill School of Medicine in 2016. She completed a general surgery residency earlier this year at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, Ga.

"Being from a small North Carolina town, I value the opportunity to contribute to the community and am excited to be a provider in Robeson County," added Dr. McArthur-Herder.

Outside of work, she enjoys home improvement projects and spending time with family.

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