

EVERY SQUARE MILE OF COLUMBUS COUNTY

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Celebrate
The Arts

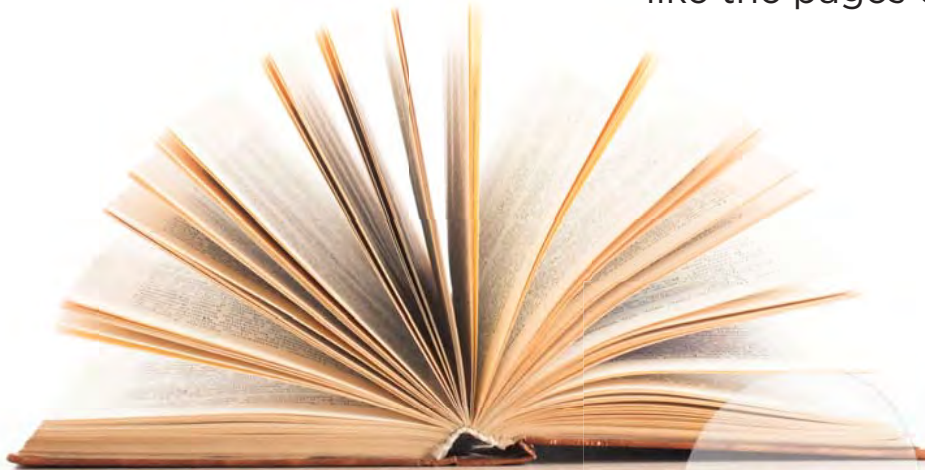
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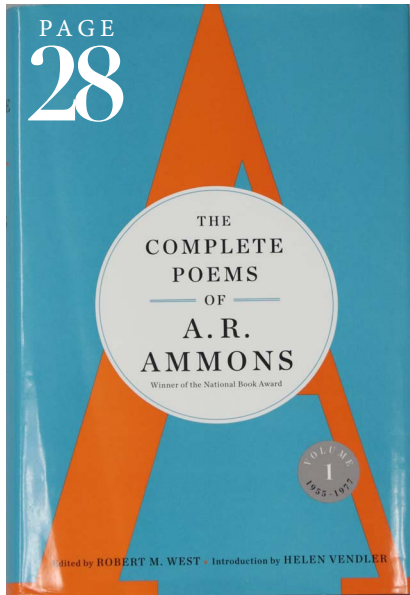
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Ambassador Camp water sports
Cover photo by Grant Merritt

954 MAG

SPRING & SUMMER 2018

VOLUME VI ISSUE I

THE NEWS REPORTER COMPANY, INC.

WHITEVILLE, NC

910.642.4104

954 EDITOR

STUART HIGH ROGERS

LAYOUT

JANIS CREECH

ADVERTISING

DEAN LEWIS • AMELIA SASSER

TJ ENZOR • HANNE RICHARDS

SARAH CRUTCHFIELD • JOHN FONVIELLE

CONTRIBUTING EDITORIAL

CLARA CARTRETTE • SARAH CRUTCHFIELD

CAROLINE HENSLEY • DIANA MATTHEWS • GRANT MERRITT

FULLER ROYAL • ALLEN TURNER

JEFFERSON WEAVER • BILL WOODSMAN • RAY WYCHE

COPY EDITING

DIANA MATTHEWS

CLARA CARTRETTE • BECKY HIGH

954 PHOTOGRAPHERS

JANIS CREECH • LES HIGH • JACKIE LEWIS • DIANA MATTHEWS
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954 FINDS

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Celebrate the Arts Turns 30

STORY BY FULLER ROYAL

PHOTOS BY FULLER ROYAL & NR ARCHIVES



ECCHS sophomore Raini Patrick stands with her painting of a tiger that won best in show at the 2018 Celebrate the Arts. The Best of Show Award is made in honor of Celebrate the Arts founder Dan Strickland, at right.

For most of its 30-year history, the Columbus County Arts Council's Celebrate the Arts (CTA) festival has been billed as the "largest student art festival in the state."

In those three decades, no one has contested that boast, according to current CTA organizer Kelly Jones.

"There are other school-based, student arts festivals around the state," Jones said. "But I know of no others that are done on this scale."

Jones, who has been in charge of CTA since 2006, is just coming off March's successful CTA event at East Columbus High School.

Celebrate the Arts first came about during the 1988-89 school year.

Dan Strickland, who had been teaching art at West Columbus High School, was moved into central office administration as director of human resources and – as something unique to just about any school system – an arts education coordinator.

At the time, arts in the schools were mostly band, chorus and

the visual arts in the middle and high schools. Visual arts in the lower grades were the product of mostly homeroom teachers and some itinerant art teachers.

Strickland said that prior to the first CTA event, the Whiteville City and Columbus County schools hosted annual all-county symphonic and concert band performances, usually in the Lawrence Ray Bowers Cultural Arts Center on the Whiteville High School campus.

The two systems also hosted a high school art show, which, one year, was displayed at the Whiteville McDonald's restaurant.

Strickland thought it would be a good idea to merge the two events and form the first CTA festival. He approached the city schools and they jumped on board.

The Columbus County Arts Council joined as a sponsor, as did *The News Reporter*.

For the first several years, WHS hosted the event. West Columbus High School had no auditorium and the newer East Columbus

and South Columbus high schools had yet to be built.

Once the new schools were completed, the four high schools began to rotate hosting duties. WCHS used its gymnasium for performances until its spacious new auditorium opened in 2000.

After a few years, CTA added middle-grades band and chorus.

Students in the elementary schools were already entering hundreds of original pieces of art when CTA added a middle school arts component.

Waccamaw Academy and the Columbus Christian Academy were also welcomed into the CTA family.

With CTA as a way to promote and expand the arts curriculum, both school systems added art and music positions to the lower grades as well as theatre and dance programs to the high schools.

By the early 1990s, Strickland and his team had organized CTA into an event that displayed thousands of pieces of art and involved thousands of students.

The annual CTA event also involves arts teachers from around the state who act as clinicians for high school band, middle school band, high school chorus, middle school chorus, high school visual art, middle school visual art, high school theatre and high school dance.

Strickland said few school systems offer as much in the way of arts programs as the Columbus and Whiteville systems.

“We took the state’s arts education plan and expanded on it,” Strickland said, adding that after a few years of CTA festivals he was told by officials with the state’s arts council that the CTA was the largest in the state.

Strickland said that theatre was added when the two new, consolidated high schools were built. Dance was added not long after that.

Jones said few school systems have both theatre and dance curricula in their high schools.

The Columbus County Schools also became one of three districts in the state at the time to require at least one arts credit to earn a high school diploma.



Kelly Jones has been in charge of CTA since 2006.



2010 CTA Best of Show artist Elizabeth Spaulding is now an art teacher in the county schools.



2014 Best of Show Lindsey Lewis

Strickland remained at the helm of CTA until he was promoted to superintendent of the county schools. Jones, who had spent the previous decade as WCHS’s theatre instructor, was tagged to replace Strickland as the county’s arts education chief.

It’s one of many hats Jones finds himself wearing today.

Since assuming the job, Jones has shortened the annual CTA by a day, with the open house and all of the performances on Saturday night instead of Sunday afternoon.

Students participate in the arts clinics at the host school all day on Friday and Saturday. In a county as sprawling as Columbus, it’s much easier on parents not to have to make the extra Sunday trip.

Also during his tenure, Jones has added a general music component to CTA as well as a K-5 art workshop.

This year, the three dozen city and county arts teachers were joined by a dozen or so clinicians to work with several hundred CTA students.

Jones, who this month is busy helping the county high schools with their spring musical theatre productions, is already at work on the 2019 CTA, which will be hosted by SCHS.

He said he tries to have all of the clinicians lined up prior to school starting in the fall. Arts teachers will make contact with the clinicians to decide on projects, music and performance subjects. Local arts teachers have final approval. All of that happens by No-

CELEBRATE THE ARTS

vember.

Beginning as early as December, students will start to receive scripts and project ideas. Auditions will be held for the bands. Teachers will make their selections on who will participate in the theatre, dance and visual arts clinics.

Each school will also decide which art piece is its “Best in Show,” with CTA clinicians selecting the overall Best in Show from among the four high schools.

Jones said he was pleased with this year’s CTA.

“I thought it was one of our best ever,” he said, adding that in addition to the auditorium still full of people at the end of the performances – the high school band goes on stage last – there were still large groups of guests in the school’s lobby and in the gymnasium where the art displays were set up.

He said this year’s attendance numbers might be the best CTA has ever had.

“We’ve seen support grow across all of our programs,” Jones said.

Last year, to recognize his 20-plus years of work with Celebrate the Arts, the top visual arts award was permanently named the Dan Strickland Best in Show Award.

ECHS sophomore Raini Patrick was this year’s recipient of the honor.

“Celebrate the Arts is important,” Jones said. “This entire weekend does something important to two groups of people.

“For the people attending, many of them will see things they would never have otherwise seen,” he said. “For our kids, it gives them an authentic experience in the arts. The experience of creating something in just a few days that will be displayed or performed.

“It is an authentic career experience,” he said, adding that in today’s world, “the arts are more relevant than ever before.”



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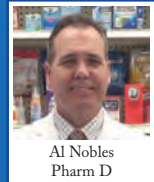
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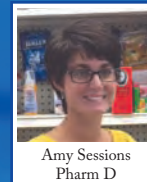
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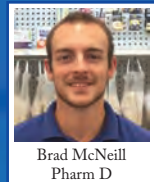
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Reuben Brown House Preservation Society

STORY DIANA MATTHEWS

PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT & COURTESY OF RBHPS

“Our members are talented, resourceful, giving and fun-loving,” said Janice Young, now in her fifth year as president of the Reuben Brown House Preservation Society (RBHPS). “All those things in combination make them unstoppable.”

The organization has been caring for the white house at the corner of East Columbus and Franklin streets in Whiteville for half a century. In addition, RBHPS members promote other cultural resources of the area, whether historical, literary or artistic.

The house

In 1967 the house was in danger of being torn down when the county began planning to build the county law enforcement complex upon the site where it stood. The county deeded it to the Columbus Fine Arts Committee, Inc. (CFAC), which borrowed money through the Whiteville Development Corporation to buy the lot at 128 East Columbus Street and have the house moved there.

The approximately 600-square foot cottage still has its original exterior siding, doors, ceilings and wide floorboards and most of its original wavy-glass windowpanes. At the time of the move, the fireplaces and chimneys were taken down and thieves stole the bricks. The Society purchased antique bricks from near Charleston, S.C., to replace them. The Society put up new interior plaster walls after the move. The handmade cedar shake roof was restored in 1967 and replaced in 2006.

The RBHPS had electricity, heating and plumbing installed, and



Janice Young and the historical plaque committee will mount this plaque on the courthouse when repairs are completed.

10 years later air conditioning was added. Such creature comforts are one way in which RBHPS members have balanced the demands of preserving history with the need to enrich current day life. “We want to do more than preserve old buildings,” said Young. “We want them used.”

Preservation

The Reuben Brown House is used several times a year for social and educational events, includ-

ing a tour with historical craftspeople or re-enactors on site every November during the N.C. Pecan Harvest Festival. In 2017 guests heard traditional music while admiring handmade quilts and other traditional crafts. The house has hosted poetry readings, bridge parties and after-concert receptions. “It would even be a lovely venue for a small wedding,” Young said.

RBHPS members look beyond their own front gate, however, to find other local historic sites they can help preserve. In 2014, a plaque committee led by Donna Scott and Karen Dawsey began recognizing sites with black metal plaques bearing the name of the Society and the date of the structures’ construction.

RBHPS members fought hard to save Whiteville’s 1938 City Hall from demolition earlier this year. Said Young, “I regret that we couldn’t save it.” Water damage, with resulting mold, had gone unchecked for so long that “it wasn’t feasible by some people’s reckoning to repair it.”

Young referred to the historic county courthouse as a piece of local heritage that should not be taken for granted, lest it suffer the same fate as City Hall. In 2015, RBHPS members conducted tours

of the 1915 structure, taking visitors behind the scenes to see enormous handwritten deed books from the 19th century and the barred holding cell where prisoners were kept when waiting to testify in court.

“We lost City Hall because it wasn’t preserved. Let’s not lose more historic buildings if we can take care of them.”

Culture

RBHPS member Janice Simms agreed. “It’s been rewarding to see houses and structures in Columbus County revived and recognized with a plaque,” she said. “If we take good care of things before they fall into disrepair, we have a much better chance of keeping them,” she said.

Serving on the literary committee with Pat Ray, Simms has helped bring groups together to hear local writers read their works. For example, in 2016 retired Latin teacher William Cooper shared contemporary poems by writers of different nationalities that he had translated to Latin, demonstrating that the classical language could still be a vehicle for sharing culture today.

Said Simms, “We’ve had some

very interesting readings by people that you would never even think would write poetry. There is a core of interest in this community for that type of thing.”

RBHPS members support other grassroots cultural efforts and also benefit from the other organizations’ support. The Whiteville Garden Club is now planning a historically appropriate garden for the house’s front yard in memory of Julia Bowers, the leader of the CFAC at the time the house was moved.

North Carolina’s Poet Laureate, Shelby Stevens, performed a reading with guitar music at the Arts Council gallery in 2015. “We had to have a lot of support to do that,” said Young.

This year’s March visit by U.S. Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith was the result of months of preparation by Ray, Simms, other Society volunteers, local schools and a long list of sponsors.

Smith’s visit marked the 25th anniversary of the Society’s A.R. Ammons Poetry Contest. With 1,350 entries, “We have the most interest this year we’ve ever had,” Young said.



A Tight Fit

(Photo By Elgie Clemmons)

The old Reuben Brown home was moved to a new location, corner of Columbus and Franklin streets, last week and will be set up as an historical site by the Whiteville Fine Arts committee. The house was located near the County Hall building and was given to the Fine Arts committee by the board of county commissioners with the understanding it be restored. One of the major problems in the project was the moving of the house. Yes, it made it under the bypass bridge on its way to the new site.

The News Reporter September 7, 1967



Preservation society volunteers keep the house and grounds in good condition year-round.

REUBEN BROWN HOUSE



RBHPS members welcome U.S. Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith to the Reuben Brown House.



Susan Wood, Ammons Poetry contest chair and Tracy Smith, U.S. Poet Laureate.

Melba Wyche and Susan Wood formed the idea of the poetry contest in 1992 and held the first contest the spring of 1993. Original sponsors were Parents for the Advancement of Gifted Education (PAGE), United Carolina Bank and *The News Reporter*.

Wood said that entries have averaged 700 per year, for a total of almost 17,000 in the first 25 contests. With writers' names removed, all the poems are read by a panel of judges. Prizes include cash and copies of A.R. Ammons' *Very Short Poems*.

Service

Beginning as a small group of "strong-willed women with leadership as their mantra," the Society began admitting men as members

in the 1990s.

"That was a turnaround," said Young. Also in the spirit of inclusiveness, "We've kept the dues low. We do not want to exclude any interested people because of expense."

Members are encouraged to serve on a committee, whether decorating, raising funds, publicizing events or caring for the grounds.

There is no paid caretaker for the house; when work is needed, "We do it," said Young. Working together lets members "become cohesive and get to know each other."

The Society has 94 members, more than twice as many as in 2012. Said Young, "One of the most exciting things about this group is that people are willing to think outside the box. I think that's why we've



Members set up the grounds for a fundraising luncheon.



During the N. C. Pecan Festival the house opens for craft demonstrations.



St. Mark A.M.E. Zion church unveiled their historical marker in Sept. 2017.

really grown.”

James Fowler, who joined RBHPS three years ago, maintains the Brown house grounds. He said he treats the Brown house yard “the same as I treat my own yard. If you let a place go, it’s hard to catch up. I like things to be neat, clean and straight, with the fence crisp and white,” Fowler said.

“Janice Young is a natural manager,” he said. “(Her leadership) is what’s allowed the group to grow and offer special things like inviting

the Poet Laureate. That’s a rare thing for a small town. She’s dynamite, and we all kind of follow on her coattails.”

Young gave credit to her fellow RBHPS members and the community at large. “This is a generous community. People from not just Whiteville but all of Columbus County come together.”

The Reuben Brown House Preservation Society’s website is www.reubenbrownhouse.com. Information is also available through the Columbus Chamber of Commerce and Tourism at (910) 642-3171.



2003 A.R. Ammons poetry contest winners - Geena White, Kate Sasser, Emily Best, Brianna Jamison and Erica Williamson. The A. R. Ammons Poetry Contest celebrated its 25th anniversary at the Poetry Ceremony at Vineland Station May 6, 2018.

Gracie Toney
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Professional cat breeder reaches high for top Cornish Rex

STORY & PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT

A local resident, Charlene High, is one of only sixteen Cornish Rex breeders in the United States. She met her first Cornish Rex at a cat show in Melbourne, Fla., in 1983. High was impressed by the breed's body shape and the unique "Marcel waves" in the incredibly soft coat. Unlike other cats, a Cornish Rex has only one layer of hair, meaning it does not have guard hairs; it is sometimes referred to as the poodle cat.

The Cat Fanciers' Association describes the appearance of these rare cats this way: "The Cornish Rex is a study in curves, with curly coat, curved profile, large expressive ears and Whippet-



The Cornish Rex's most distinguishing feature is its wavy coat. It is worth 40 out of 100 points in most cat shows High enters.

like arched bodies." Surprisingly heavy for their delicate looking build, they behave like playful kittens throughout their long lives and are very friendly to humans.

Cornish Rex cats are descended from a barn cat who was identified as having a specific gene that produced the breed's unique characteristics. They were discovered in 1950 in Cornwall, the southwestern part of England, and eventually imported into the United States. Breeders discovered they had to use other breeds, at that time, to create a bigger gene pool. Burmese, Siamese and British shorthair cats were some of the breeds



used in the 1960s.

High's kittens are sought worldwide by families looking to adopt these unique pets and often travel long distances to obtain them. The Madison House in Whiteville had guests who came to visit High and the kittens, and the most recent visitor flew in from Portland, Ore., to obtain the kitten she adopted.

Although they reside strictly indoors, High's cats do love the screened porch, where they can pretend to chase birds and insects.

High said: "I get a kick out of their antics. It's kind of like watching a [human] baby grow up, watching them first crawl, then stand up and finally get into everything." During playtime, though, High sometimes has to separate the kittens from their mothers because the adult cats are so playful, the kittens don't get a chance to play with the toys she puts out for them.

After playtime, High confines the kittens in a room with their mother for a short time so they can rest and nurse; this is something she calls "putting them down for a nap."

The cats love human body warmth, she said. "When I sit on the couch at night, the cats like to pile on top of me and keep me warm with their 102-degree body temperature."

Kittens normally reside with High until they are 16 weeks of age and have been completely vaccinated and sterilized. Dr. Jeffery Burroughs of Columbus Veterinary Hospital and his staff in Cerro Gordo have cared for High's kittens for several years. "In the early years it was very difficult to get care for purebred cats," High said. "Food contained chemicals which caused many issues, and, through articles submitted by veterinarians from the American Holistic Veterinary Association, I began to publish a magazine called *Natural Pet*." High eventually sold the magazine to a major publishing company.

Although many of the kittens go to new homes, the purpose in

breeding is to continue to improve the species, as the gene would disappear if it were not kept pure with breeding Cornish to Cornish.

High's favorite part of living with Cornish Rex is being able to play with them. When it comes to obedience, High said her cats know when she says a firm "No" it means to listen and obey. She said it is how you pronounce words and the tone in your voice that makes the difference. "I swear they don't actually know their name," High said. "They do know what you are saying by the way you pronounce their particular name." High said that Cornish Rex cats typically live between 18 and 21 years, and, although tempted to give each adoptable kitten a name, she prefers to leave that to the new family.

The highlight of breeding is selecting the next possible show contender. Breeding for the finest quality Cornish Rex means selecting from gene pools from around the world when necessary. When a specific kitten meets criteria for being a possible show contender High will work to promote the kitten, and as it becomes an adult, to reach for the highest award possible. This can only be accomplished by the cat meeting the standard set by The Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA), which allows points for coat density, body stance and overall appearance. In 1991, after winning regional and national cat shows, High's Cornish Rex cats were featured on the House and Garden Network. After the episode played for three years on television, Hill's Pet Nutrition Inc. bought a segment and featured it in their commercial for Science Diet Cat Food.

Competition can be difficult, with breeders around the world looking to obtain recognition for their specific breed, which means the competition is not just within the Cornish Rex but against all breeds. In 2017, one of High's Cornish Rex, living in Hong Kong, became the Best Cornish Rex in Asia and Third Best CFA Cornish Rex in the world.



Virginia Barnett (left) holds her new kitten, Archimedes, while Charlene High (right) holds one of her Cornish Rex cats.

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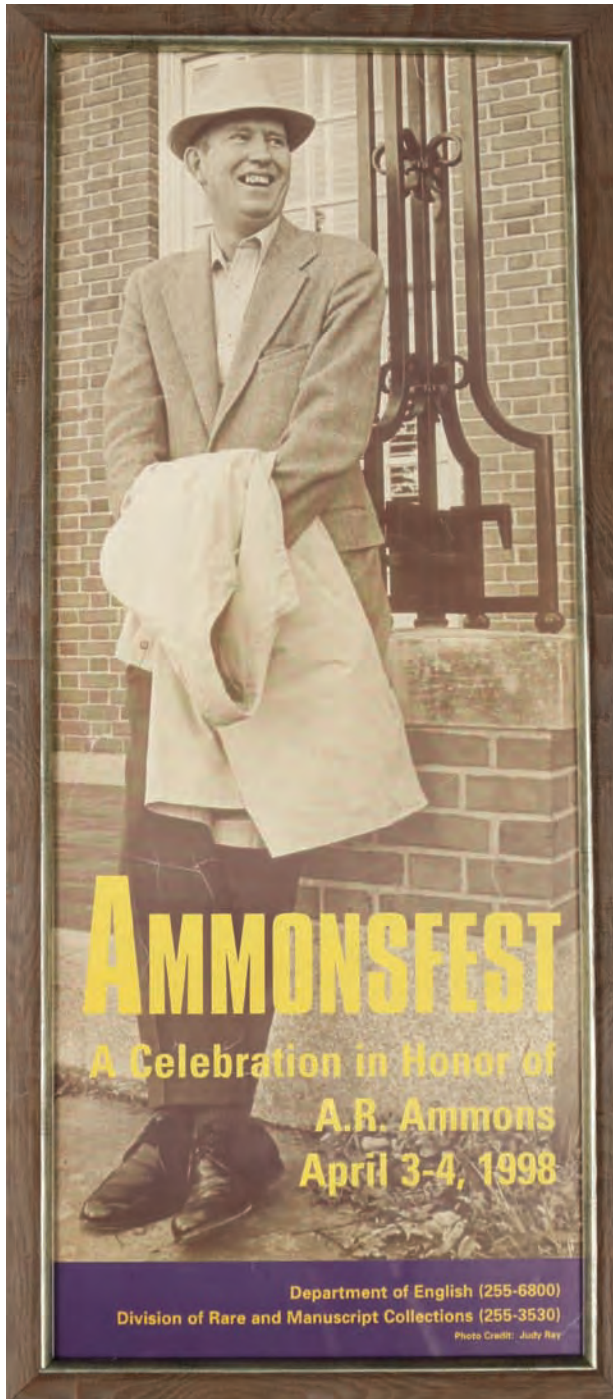


Radical Light:

Remembering A.R. Ammons' life and art

STORY DIANA MATTHEWS

PHOTOS DIANA MATTHEWS & GRANT MERRITT



Archibald Randolph Ammons died Sunday, Feb. 25, 2001, and *The News Reporter* featured two articles about his life and work the following Thursday, March 1.

Writer Ray Wyche gathered recollections of Ammons from his contemporaries, including his cousin and teacher, Mabel Powell, who called him “a top student. He would come up with some real interesting poems on his own,” she said.

“He grew up wanting to get away from the farm.” Wyche went on to tell how World War II, college and career success took Ammons far away from his roots. Still, the poet came home often in his imagination.

In the second tribute, Southeastern Community College English professor Ray Mize wrote, “Ammons does not succumb to easy solutions... It is better to keep open the doors, to remain receptive to the world around us rather than approach the world in a straitjacket of preconceived ideas.”

Mize, who in 2001 was working on an Ammons biography, praised his descriptions of grief and loss: “We all know this; only A.R. Ammons could articulate it for us.”

“...an old man having gotten by on what was left...”

(From “Easter Morning,” 1979)

Yvonne Wilkins, Ammons' second cousin, remembers, “Archie grew up poor, as did most everyone else in the New Hope community,” but his family owned the land they farmed and were not tenant farmers. His parents were William and Lucy Della McKee Ammons.

“Archie was named after his two grandfathers – Archibald McKee and Randolph Ammons – but everyone called him Archie,” Wilkins said. “Archie was a renaissance man. He majored in biology at Wake Forest, wrote poetry, and in his later years taught himself to play the piano and also did many paintings. (His sister) Vida has cds of him singing the old hymns of the church. No one else in our family had so many gifts.”

Said Whiteville High School classmate Reba Bowen, “He liked people and he was liked by everybody.” She described Ammons as quiet and courteous.

Bowen, who helped judge the A.R. Ammons Poetry Contest, first held in 1993, predicted that, “People will appreciate him more in the future than they do now.”

Ammons was already well appreciated in elite literary circles long before his death at age 75.

Yet Ammons was often surprised that people knew his name and accomplishments. Contest organizer Melba Wyche wrote to him in 1992, asking him to allow the use of his name. Contest chair Susan Wood said, “He wrote the nicest letter back saying, yes, it was all right, but he didn't know why we wanted to honor him.”

Ammons spoke to Wyche's English classes at Hallsboro High School once in the 1960s. He was more willing to speak to students than to audiences of his academic peers, however. “He was retiring,” Wyche said. “He didn't like to go on stage even at Wake Forest when they were presenting him with an award. He spoke but wouldn't step on the stage.”

One reason for establishing the contest was that Ammons was dangerously close to being unappreciated in his own home county and

town. "Nobody knew who he was at the high school where he graduated!" said Wyche. "I wanted students to know about him."

Said Ammons' sister Vida Cox, "He dedicated his whole life to writing poetry. He used to read it in our den, and I'd ask him, 'Now tell me what that meant.'"

"We were close in age and always stayed close." She described her brother as talented in many ways, but modest and "very shy." They had one surviving older sister, Mona Louise; two other sisters and a brother died in infancy. Ammons refers to the death of their younger brother in "Easter Morning," Vida Cox's favorite of his poems.

Vida and Allen Cox's three sons, Allen Jr., Johnny and Jeffrey Cox, all live in Clarkton. Allen Cox remembers how his uncle, who earned his science degree with honors from Wake Forest College in three years, "would challenge us scientifically, ask us what we knew about the solar system and things like that. I loved science and hearing what he had to say. It was always a joy to get together with him."

Cox's 6'1"-tall uncle "used to fit



Melba Wyche reads one of her favorite Ammons mule poems.

himself into a little Toyota Corolla to drive all that way down from New Jersey or New York. He'd tell my mother, 'I get good gas mileage.' Phyllis would come down with him sometimes. I liked her a lot, too.

"When I was in college, he was beginning to be more known. Later he won his awards. But he was very humble when he was here. You would never know he was a poet. He was just himself. He was down to earth."

After 1964, when Ammons accepted the offer of a job at Cornell University, the visits were less frequent. "It's several hundred more miles to travel from Ithaca," said Cox. After a turbulent cross-country flight to visit his ailing father in 1955, Ammons seldom flew.

Allen Cox's favorite of his uncle's poems "would probably be 'Easter Morning,' his most famous. That one is very special," he said. "But 'Coon Song' is funny. Check it out."

That poem describes the moment when a pack of dogs have cornered a raccoon, asking what thoughts the coon's "dull fierce stare" might be hiding: regrets? a plan for escape? Ammons goes on to mock the reader by refusing to tell what happened next.

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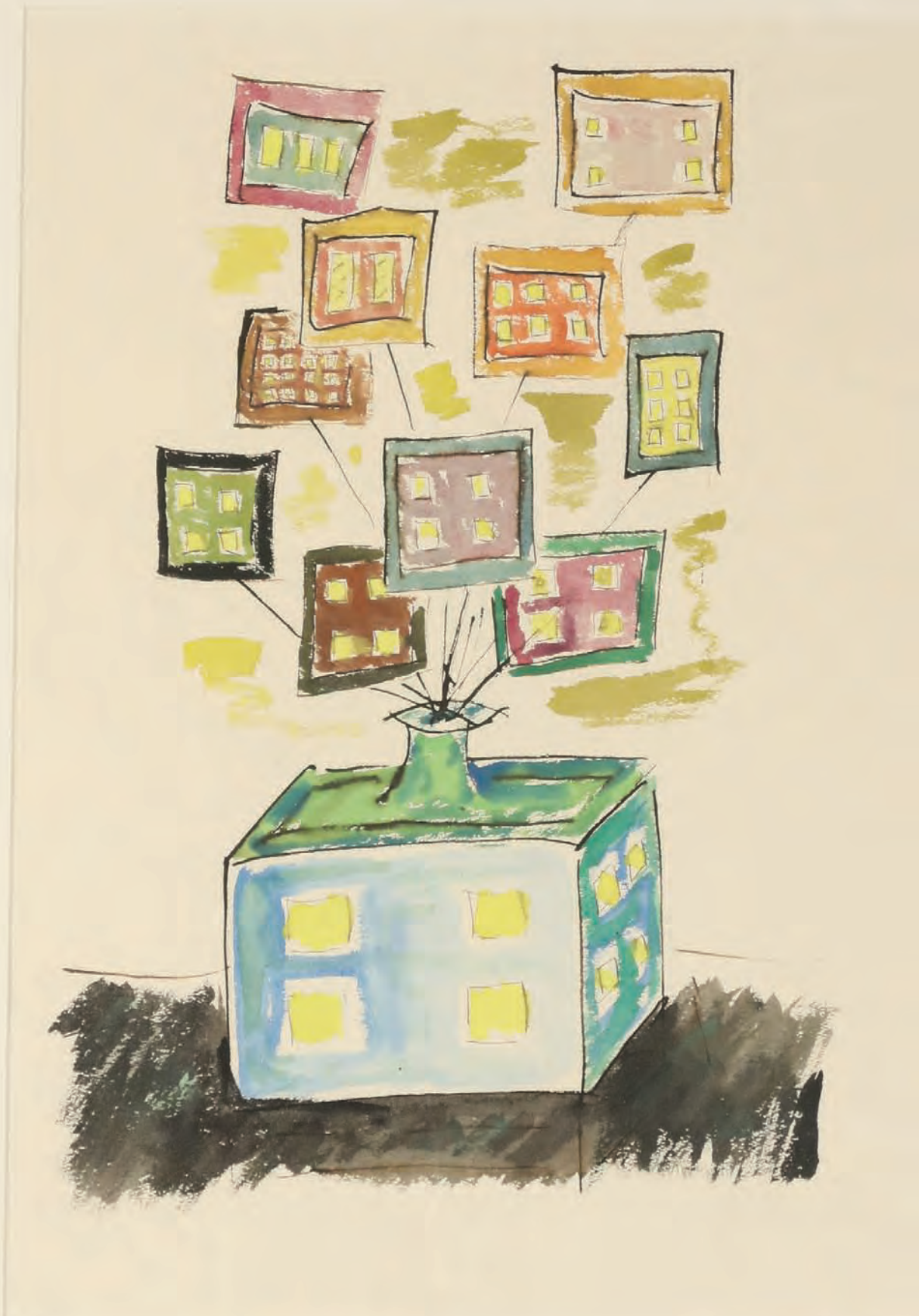
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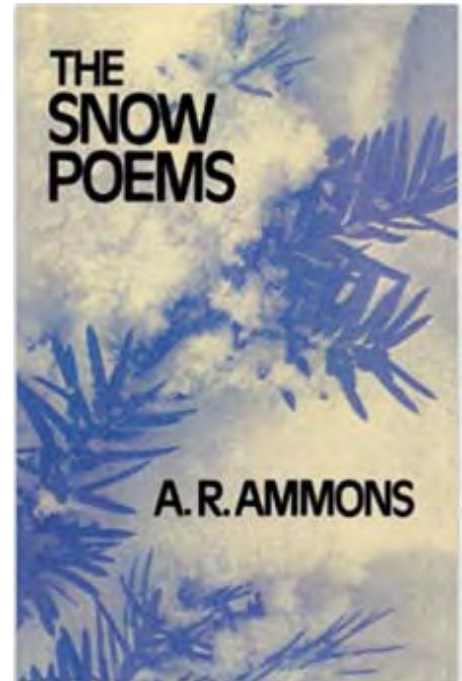
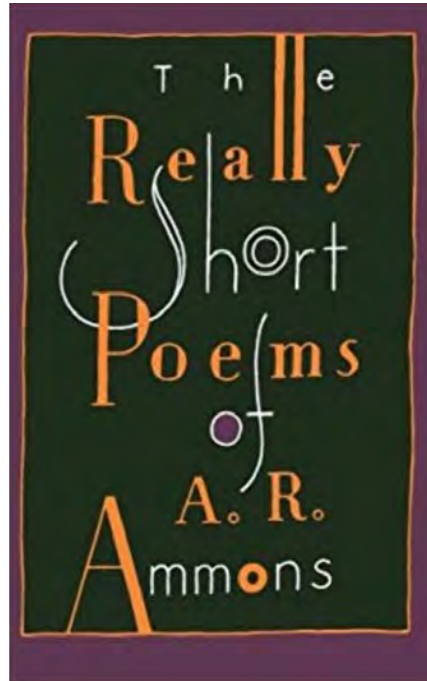
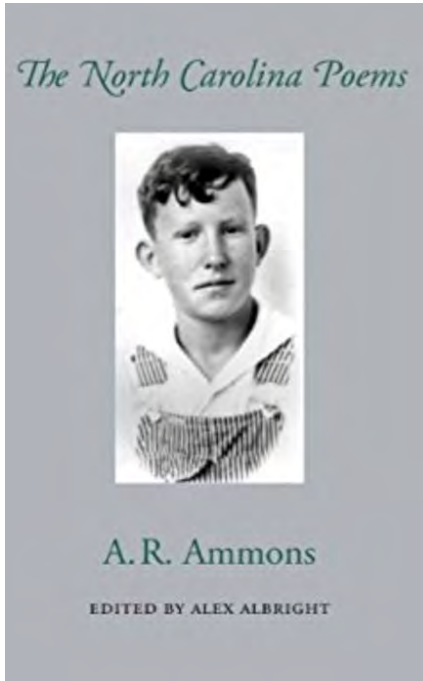
then the world had
nothing I wanted

- A. R. Ammons

Watercolor by A. R. Ammons - 1978



A. R. Ammons painted a series of square “bouquets” during the 1960s and 1970s.



Many of A.R. Ammons' books are still in print.

The piece appears to end with a total change of subject. Said Cox, "He kind of goes off the rails at the end of the poem. He's so deep I often don't know what he's trying to say."

The same holds true of his uncle's abstract paintings. Cox's favorite is a recognizable, although not realistic, image of a bunch of perfectly circular purple grapes with a black stem and gray leaves that Phyllis Ammons had in her home until her death. The grapes look as though their outlines might have been stamped with a coffee mug dipped in coffee or coffee-colored paint in some places, black paint in others.

**I don't feel at home in this universe,
and it may be the only one:**

(from "Run Ragged," 1998)

Archie and Phyllis Ammons' son John grew up in Ithaca and studied engineering at Cornell; he said, "I stayed away from the English department," where his father was "a luminary." He runs an audio transmission business in Mill Valley, California.

He said, "I love the attention Archie's getting" since the December publication of Ammons' *Complete Poems*, edited by Robert West.

John Ammons remembers his father's "wonderful singing voice," Depression-born tendency to "save everything" and ability to swing between self-deprecation and "grandiosity" in the same poem.

The message of the poem "He Held Radical Light," said John Ammons, is "I know I'm a genius, but I still burp. I'm still one of you."

John Ammons' favorite of his father's poems

is "Easter Morning," which begins in the New Hope Baptist Church cemetery "and ends with a walk around our neighborhood in Ithaca, with Archie observing nature as he so often did. I also like the cute, short poems that you can absorb in sound bites."

The younger Ammons recalled his father as constantly full of "burning creativity" in need of an outlet. "There were periods when he wasn't able to write, and that's when he painted watercolors. At the peaks of those times, he poured out four or five paintings a day. It helped him keep his equilibrium.

"He had a lot of anxiety. Writing and painting were ways to wrestle with anxiety. He had a hard time reading his work in public although the reception was always wonderful." In a field where it was difficult to make a living, "Archie was the absolute cream of the crop."

Cornell alumna C.A. Carlson wrote a fond tribute, "The Complete Archie," for the March/April edition of the university's magazine, saying that the appearance of the two-volume collection was "an opportunity to sit down again with a friend" whose coffee shop conversations had been a highlight of her education.

While his "verse was wildly adventurous," Carlson said, "(his) daily habits made the word 'routine' seem inadequate." No matter how early she and her fellow students arrived at the university's café, "He was always there first." And "Archie – known to the world of letters as A.R. Ammons, two-time winner of the National Book Award and one of the first MacArthur "genius" grant recipients – was al-

ways there first with his writing, too.

"Yet even when I knew him, he still seemed to think of himself as an outsider – the poor farm boy who never stopped being surprised to find himself a successful and celebrated poet."

In spite of his outer diffidence, "He was quite proud to be the only tenured prof in the Cornell English department without any graduate degree," his son wrote. Surrounded by colleagues with doctorates, he wore his accomplishment "like a badge of honor!"

"I went back..."

Ammons attended the poetry contest recognition program once, in the late 90s, Wood recalled. "He handed out every prize and shook hands with every one of the winners, then he stayed another hour signing autographs."

While in Whiteville, Ammons gave a rare reading at the community college library. "He was blown away," said Wood, by the large crowd of students who came, prepped on his work by instructor Mize. "He was so relaxed and happy. When he finished, the audience called out titles of poems for him to recite – the students wanted to hear the bawdiest ones, of course.

"It was a wonderful experience for us, and it seemed obvious that it was equally wonderful for him.

"Those Ivy League intellectuals thought Ammons left the South behind and became one of them," Wood said. "But he was always one of us."

I went back

I went back
to my old home
and the furrow
of each year
plowed like
surf across
the place had
not washed
memory away.

- A. R. Ammons

Salute

May happiness
pursue you,
catch you
often, and,
should it
lose you,
be waiting
ahead, making
a clearing
for you.

- A. R. Ammons

-- from *The Really Short Poems of A.R. Ammons*
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Ambassador Camp grew out of a small Bible club

STORY CLARA CARTRETTE

PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT

At Ambassador Camp on the north shore of Lake Waccamaw, “We focus on three important goals in fulfilling our mission,” said camp director Becky Ray. “Our primary goal is to keep the children safe and free from anything that would divert their attention from having a great time and receiving spiritually. “Secondly, we create a program that hopefully gives them a lot of fun and smiles and laughter. I remember one teenage boy going down to the lake after he had played in the gaga pit during the rain. He was coated in mud from top to bottom. As he was walking down the steps to the pier to get into the lake, he looked at me and said, ‘I have just had the most fun that I have ever had in my entire life!’”

Campers participate in arts and crafts, music, archery, horseback riding and various water sports.

The camp’s third goal, said Ray, is “to create an environment that promotes youth coming to Christ.” There are daily Bible studies, missionary stories and nightly messages from the



Ambassador Camp Director Becky Ray

special speaker of the week, all in an environment where “team members become like family,” she said.

Ambassador Camp grew out of an afternoon Bible club for children in Brunswick Presbyterian Church, taught by Mrs. Thomas (Sara) Sledge. She provided refreshments and paid some children a quarter to attend, and children attended from three churches in Brunswick. None had ever attended a camp.

A couple of years later, “Aunt Sara,” as she would be called the rest of her life by young and old, founded Ambassador Camp on the shores of Lake Waccamaw. Said Ray, “Through her dedication and determination to let the Lord use her, Aunt Sara impacted thousands of lives for the Kingdom through Ambassador Camp and her day-to-day living.”

It was in the summer of 1957 that the camp opened at no charge to the 27 children who spent a week in two cottages rented from Oscar High. Friends brought corn and other produce to provide meals for the camp-



Ambassador Camp offers many enjoyable games and activities for campers.

ers.

The camp grew quickly. The next summer three cottages were rented from High and in the three following summers, the camp rented the old hotel located on the site of the present townhouses.

In years to come, those child campers would return to serve as counselors and in any other capacity needed, and their children became campers. From Aunt Sarah's small Bible club to present attendance, Ambassador Camp grew in leaps and bounds, sometimes with three generations attending summer camp.

Camp volunteers speak

During the summer of 2017, counselors and other volunteers took time to tell what Ambassador Camp has meant to them. In the Ambassador Camp spirit, some of them are honorary "aunts" and "uncles;" some were having too much fun to give their full names.

Amy Phillips Hicks grew up in Whiteville and attended Ambassador Camp regularly. She now lives in Kannapolis and completed 31 years as a schoolteacher last spring. She and her daughter Tricia were camp counselors last summer, but her son, who was a senior at UNC Charlotte, did an internship elsewhere during the summer.

Aunt Christian of Sumter, S.C. began attending camp when she was 8 years old and now she and her kids attend. Rylan was 12, and Savannah Grace was 11 when they attended camp last summer.

Melissa (Missy) has been coming to camp for 38 years, first as a camper and now as a counselor, and she brings four kids. Emily, who lives in Southport, wants to live close in order to bring kids to camp.

Older kids help with various camp activities. In addition to Bible studies, they perform skits, help in the dining hall, direct athletic events and do other chores as well as participating in camp activities.

Sara Bailey Wooten has attended camp since she was 5 years old. She and Faith Devennely, both from Kannapolis, and Christina Harden of Spencer are all teachers who come to camp, along with Aqua, a retired teacher.

Camp staffers are assigned to certain activities, such as directing waterfront activities, fun activities at night, leading music, overseeing to assure that everything keeps rolling, laundry, housekeeping, answering the phone, kitchen, dining hall, working with kid counselors and more. Christina was the head counselor last year "and she does creative stuff like graphic design for T-shirts and does all the writing," according to her peers. Amy and Sara Beth wrote the devotional material.

Ron Walton is a camp board member who is the keeper of the grounds. He attended camp when he was a youngster. His wife Carol also helps at the camp and Webb Brown is "key conspirator in props and cabinet making," and Carol did the design.

Amy, who first attended camp in 1962, said at least 12 counselors had children at camp last year and many others were children

AMBASSADOR CAMP

of previous campers. “Logistically, we’re maxed out,” she said. “We keep the ratio of counselors to kids low but we’re pretty much at our capacity.”

Amy’s dad grew up in Whiteville and became a Christian and a minister through the influence of Aunt Sara Sledge. He went to talk with her about Sunday school material and she asked him about his relationship with God. “The end result was, he became a Christian that day,” Amy said. He later became a pastor in Spartanburg, S.C. but left and came back to Whiteville to help Aunt Sara, who was getting the camp started.

It was Emily DeJesus’ 14th year at Ambassador Camp. She is a counselor who started in day camp taking care of the kids, rocking them to sleep, “and some would get homesick, like all kids, but it was a lot of fun.”

Carol Brown was at Ambassador Camp for her 25th year. “I do what they tell me,” she said. “I grew up in Wilmington and Ron got transferred to Charlotte. We lived there for 21 years and took early retirement. I wanted to get closer to family and camp. Our daughter, who lives at the lake, called and said they had found a house.”

The kids speak

Savannah Yates of Leland said camp is fun and she enjoys the competitions in the lake. She said she would return next year. Caleb Churn, 11, said he liked the camp’s music, arts and crafts activities and the Bible study. Brennan Brooks of Columbia, S.C., 11, said he especially liked arts, crafts, music, which was a lot of fun, “and I love, love, love water sports. I like tubing with friends.”

Emilee Flaverney of Southport said it was her first year and she liked the Kangaroo Court. Christian Clement, 10, is from Dallas, Texas, and said his dad went to camp here when he was a kid.

Liam Blackmon, 9, from South Carolina said he “probably liked water sports and the 9 square game best.” Julian Jacobs, 8, of Maxton said he liked the Ga Ga ball game.

Madison DeJesus, 11, was attending camp for the sixth year. She said she liked Kangaroo Court best. Zoe DeJesus, 10, was also attending for the sixth year.

The camp has grown with no means of advertising, except word of mouth, from 27 persons for one week to 500 campers over five weeks each summer. The majority of campers are from the Carolinas with some from Virginia, Illinois, Texas and Florida, and occasionally from overseas.



Left to right: Carolyn Arnemann, Ron Walton, Faith Devenney, Missy DeJesus, Christina Harden, Bonnie Adams, Becky Ray, Sara Bailey Wooten, Rick Andrews and Amy Phillips Hicks.

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SWEEDEEPIE: THE ONE MAN SHOW

STORY CAROLINE HENSLEY

PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT

You have probably tasted their sweet treats at a local function, seen their logo at various spots around town and in community events, or heard of their unique name through the grapevine.

SweeDeePie Cheesecakes is a popular spot in downtown Whiteville, but before it rose to fame in its well-known location, it started as a challenge to recreate a recipe in a home kitchen.

Thomas Jones, owner and operator of the local bakery, fell in love with a sweet potato cheesecake that his niece brought to a family Christmas dinner. He had low expectations in regards to the dessert as he had never been a fan of cheesecake, but he was blown away by how the heavier sweet potato layer managed to lie perfectly on top of the cheesecake. He asked for the recipe, but when he was unable to get it, he decided to figure it out on his own.

“It was more of a challenge to me to learn this,” Jones said. “I’d never baked a cheesecake in my life. In fact, I didn’t even think I liked cheesecake.”

While Jones was growing up in Maxton, North Carolina, his father had a love for cottage cheese, and for much of his childhood, Jones equated cheesecake to cottage cheese and wouldn’t touch the stuff. However, he did admire his father’s talent for cooking, and by combining his love of numbers and creative mind, he managed to come up with a cheesecake recipe from scratch.

“The next year, I messed and messed and messed,” he said. “I took it home, and everyone liked it.”

Friends and family began asking him to make cheesecakes. Soon, he was providing for co-workers as well.

“And then, we were playing in a golf tournament down at Holden Beach and there was a couple there who had operated a restaurant in New York, who had retired and moved to North Carolina. They had a daughter who was a chef in Atlanta and she was going to relocate to Southport. We asked them to ask her if she would be interested in us bringing her a sample of our sweet potato cheesecake.”

The trial was a success and the cheesecake soon began selling from their connection’s restaurant in Southport. Jones and his wife, Vi, created the cheesecakes in their kitchen in Whiteville and transported them to the restaurant. This went on for a year and a half before Jones decided to retire from his job in Robeson County and open a bakery of his own in 2007. They called it SweeDeePie to honor both his niece and granddaughter.

“[My granddaughter] used to call me Granddaddy Sweetie, and my niece’s father called her Sweet Dee. And when we first started doing it, it was in a pie shell. So all of that just fell together.”



Thomas Jones prepares all of his baked goods by hand.

SweeDeePie chose its location because Jones had already been here in Columbus County for 30 years. His wife, Vi, joined him in Whiteville after they met through a minority business council and were married 17 years ago.

Jones retired from a career as a certified public accountant, but since his youth he had felt an interest in commercial art as well. He was a businessman with a passion for creativity, so SweeDeePie brought his talents together into a perfect blend.

His employees paired well with his vision.

“I have three employees – me, myself, and I. I do it all except my wife does the sweet potato pie that goes on top of the cheesecake. Other than that, everything is done by me. So when I have a problem with my

employees, I just go in there and talk to the mirror.”

The bakery fit well into Whiteville’s downtown dynamic, since there were few businesses to compete with in making cheesecakes.

“It was not something that was being done here anyway. So that sort of filled a niche.”

Besides full-sized cheesecakes, SweeDeePie also carries an assortment of bite-sized *cheesecakes*, cheesecakes on a stick, grooms’ cheesecakes, cupcakes, and cheesecakes in a cup in lieu of a slice for customers who stop by in search of a sweet treat.

They would also like to start catering towards weddings, birthdays, and other events as they now do specialty cakes.

“This has all been



While SweeDeePie is known for cheesecakes, they also provide cupcakes and specialty cakes for any special occasion.

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trial and error. But one thing I found out is the thing about baking, it's not like cooking. Baking has to be precise. I'm an accounting major, so I have to be precise. That's my mindset. That fell right in to what I like to do anyway. I don't mind trying because if I mess up, I can just throw it away and try again. Some people don't want to try. They don't want to mess up. But failure makes you learn."

On top of it all, they have created a line of grits cheesecakes, made with old-fashioned, Southern grits in the recipe. The cakes are still sweet or savory depending on the flavor combination, with a grit texture in place of the cornstarch as a glue to hold it all together.

The bakery has been included in

many community events, including the Pecan Festival, the hospital gala, and the most recent New Year's Eve celebration at Vineland Station. They love catering for weddings and bridal events, but their favorite customers are the young ones who come in for the first time.

"I think one of the most satisfying things that happens is when I have someone come in, and particularly kids, that don't like cheesecake. I'll say, 'Will you do me a big, big, big favor? Will you just try it?'"

SweeDeePie Cheesecakes is located at 115 E. Walter Street in downtown Whiteville. For more information about prices and available desserts, catering or events, Jones can be reached at 910-642-



Thomas Jones and his wife, Vi.

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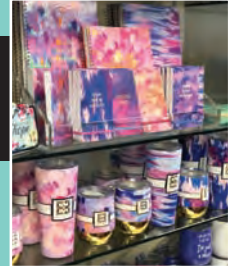


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PIERCE & COMPANY-THE HEART OF HALLSBORO

STORY & PHOTOS SARAH CRUTCHFIELD

Pulling into the dusty parking lot on the side of Hwy 1001 in Hallsboro and walking into Pierce & Company general store is like stepping back in time. Cars whiz by the nondescript entry door that appears more like a service entrance as young and old, locals and visitors, take care of their Saturday morning errands.

The heavy scent of gardening supplies and dusty, wooden floorboards let you know you have just stepped into a piece of history that shows no sign of slowing down. The antique cash register, dating back to 1923, is large and a commanding presence in the old store. This store has everything from coveralls to a 4-quart ice cream maker, showing the old general store qualities Pierce & Company still exudes.

Pierce & Company is one of the oldest businesses in the county. Started in 1898 in the Red Bug community southwest of Hallsboro, the general store was established after the Farmer's Alliance community store closed. In 1926, the present Pierce



& Company two-story brick building was constructed in Hallsboro at the corner of Sam Potts Highway and Hwy 1001. Customers began using the entrance on the west side of the store when "the highway," as Sam Potts Highway was called then, was paved.

& Company two-story brick building was constructed in Hallsboro at the corner of Sam Potts Highway and Hwy 1001.

Stocked with a little bit of everything, including groceries, home goods, building supplies and more, it's a place where folks from near and far stop by to catch up on the latest news and take home the store's special signature sausage.

History in the making

Henry Wyche, the only full-time employee of the Farmer's Alliance, was asked to start the new venture. Ray Wyche of Hallsboro, grandson of Henry, says, "My grandfather said, very truthfully, 'I don't have the money.'" Vance Pierce, S.W. (Worth) Pierce, Henry Wyche and James E. Thompson invested \$50 each to keep the community outpost named Pierce & Company afloat. The store sold mostly chewing tobacco and candy in the early days. "People really loved their candy back then," Wyche said. Total value of the business the first year was \$740, which today equals around \$21,200.

In 1904, the investors renamed the business "Pierce & Company." In 1924, Thomp-



Brothers William Jolly, left, and Thomas Jolly, right, balance the work week by splitting their days at Pierce & Company.



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Above is the second Pierce & Company location built in 1904, later sold and renamed Red Bug Store by the new owner. The original Pierce & Company stood about 10 feet behind this building.

son decided to leave the partnership to concentrate on his lumber business. Henry Wyche, Vance Pierce and S.W. Pierce remained partners in the business and opened two more stores in Delco and Freeman communities.

“The state tax collectors claimed we were operating a chain store, and they were going to have to charge us extra taxes and fees,” Wyche said, “but, if we changed the names of those stores, it wouldn’t be considered a chain.” Therefore, the two new stores were called Pierce, Wyche & Company.

Thriving

Pierce & Company grew from just a country store to a thriving multi-faceted business over the early part of the 20th century. It provided the surrounding area with most

everything they needed from clothing to groceries.

Not only did they supply goods to the local community, they ran a cotton gin and lumber mill. “In 1916, there was a boom in building in the North,” Wyche said, “They were shipping lumber, one to two boxcar loads a week, from Hallsboro to western Pennsylvania and Ohio.” The train stop in Hallsboro carried goods to Wilmington, where they were shipped up and down the Eastern seaboard.

“Cotton was the tobacco of its time,” Wyche said. However, with infestation of the boll weevil and a fire in the 1920s that destroyed the cotton gin, Pierce & Company, like most businesses in the South, moved away from cotton production and on to other crops.

After the move to Hallsboro in 1924 and the con-



A Pierce & Company sign painted by the Coca-Cola company graces the north side of the 1904 store.



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struction of the new store on the same site in 1926, the business thrived as the center of commerce in the area. As Ray Wyche says, "It's a rainy-day hangout for loafers." On days when the weather was bad, farmers couldn't farm and needed a place to go. The bus stopped there, residents could register to vote on Saturdays, and when it was time to get annual shots, the public health nurse stopped by to make sure everyone was vaccinated. "It got my arm hurtin'," Wyche said when remembering the public health nurse's visits. "They used to send her around every summer to give you a shot." Wyche said with a chuckle, "We swore she used the same needle for the whole county."

Saturday was always the busiest day for Pierce & Company. "You couldn't walk in there," Wyche said. On Saturdays, Pierce & Company stayed open until 10:30 p.m. "I'd go down at 5 p.m. to restock the shelves," he said.

"Let me sell you a business."

In 1976, William Jolly built a home in Hallsboro without expecting he would have the opportunity to purchase and become proprietor of the historic Pierce & Company. Jolly didn't make the decision to buy the general store lightly. A business analyst with Dun and Bradstreet for 20 years, Jolly knew first-hand the ins and outs of a successful business. "I was looking around at businesses I would possibly be interested in buying," Jolly said. "You never saw a hardware store go out of business unless they wanted to." As fate would have it, in 1990 Ben Wyche, Henry Wyche's grandson, approached Jolly with the offer, "Let me sell you a business." Jolly and his brother Thomas, a "retired" Sprint employee, bought the business. Thomas Jolly said, "My first retirement didn't last but a day. I left Sprint and came up here the next day." The rest is history.

"If we ain't got it, you don't need it."

These days the store gets a lot of business from tourists traveling Hwy 1001 to the Brunswick County beaches. "Vacationers have found to avoid the traffic jam on Hwy. 701, they can stay on Hwy. 74 and shoot through Hallsboro to Hwy. 130," Jolly said. Vacationers stop at Pierce & Company and become regular visitors on their summer vacations. "A lot of people stop by to buy steaks and sausage

to take to the beach," Jolly said. Locals like to purchase the fresh cut steaks and homemade sausage to give to friends and family living away as a reminder of home.

The brothers have made thoughtful updates to the store while keeping the integrity of the historic structure. The pine floors show the patina of people coming and going, good times and bad times. "I tried to keep the old atmosphere, but at the same time tried to upgrade it," William says, "I want it to be a place where people can come and get anything they need." The old Pierce & Company slogan stands the test of time: "If we ain't got it, you don't need it."



Pierce & Company prides themselves on carrying a variety of merchandise. At one time, they carried mail-order men's custom-made suits and women's dresses.



Pierce & Company butcher Jesse McCormick, now deceased, was the first to make pork sausage at the store. Friday was the main "sausage day."



Sausage is packaged in butcher paper.



The glass storefront was an innovative design feature when the current Pierce & Company building was constructed.



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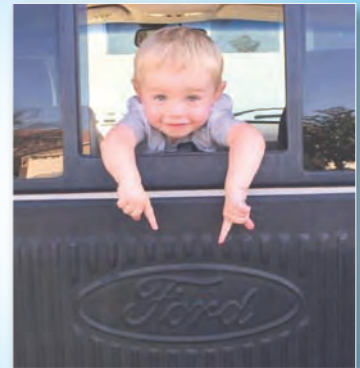
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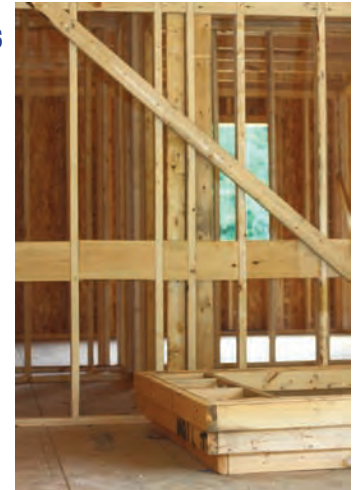
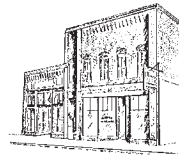
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Foundation: SCC's go-to friend turns 50

STORY RAY WYCHE

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SCC & NR ARCHIVE



The SCC Foundation Board (seated) Theresa Blanks, Pat Ray, Doris Dees and Jim High, first row: Dr. Tony Clarke, Joe Hooks, Henry Edmund, Butch Hooks, Richard Wright, Lonnie Fox, Robert Leder, Dan Figler, Lynn Spaulding and Lisa Clark, second row : Terray Suggs, Randy Britt, Danny McNeill, Paul Pope, Steve Smith, Terry Mann and Ivan Wilson. Not pictured are: Jack Hooks, Brenden Jones, Sandy McNeil, Carl Meares, Jr., LaDeen Powell, Bob Aldrich, Ricky Benton, Jr., Mark Cartret, Dr. Maudie Davis, Bobby Ezzell, Harry Foley, Jimmly Garrell, Rhone Sasser, Willard Small, and Ray Wyche.

On Feb. 6, 1964, Columbus County took a giant step forward.

The advance involved a community college in Columbus County, offering courses that would transfer to a bachelor's degree-awarding four-year college, as well as a variety of training in fields such as nursing, auto mechanics, welding, and other subjects that would prepare the student for a job.

If a new industry that needed a specialized workforce located in the county, the community college would provide that training.

In the early 1960s, the concept of a community college was new ground. Two-year colleges had been around for years, catering mostly to "boarding" students seeking to complete the first two years of a college education. A community college offered these first two years leading to a bachelor's degree, and much more.

The higher educational situation brightened considerably in Columbus County on the above date when it was announced that a charter had been issued that day officially giving birth to Southeastern Community College. The new college was to serve Columbus, Brunswick, and Pender counties. A short time after Southeastern was formed, Brunswick and Pender counties received their own community colleges.

A local community college proved to be welcomed news in

Columbus County. Its value was realized on a broad scale among county residents. The comment most often heard was, "It's the best thing that's ever happened to Columbus County."

Southeastern began functioning as a college shortly after receiving its charter, holding classes in a building that for years had served as Chadbourn High School, while construction of the new campus was underway between Whiteville and Chadbourn. Other public school facilities no longer used by the county board of education also housed classes of the new college.

The financial procedure for establishing the new colleges called for the state to construct the buildings and the counties and colleges to take care of the maintenance and any needed repair expenses. So fundraising became an important and necessary function in the life of a North Carolina community college.

In April 1968, a special committee was formed at Southeastern to come up with a master plan for obtaining funds for college upkeep and other college expenses not funded by the state. The committee's job was made more difficult since the new college was in a Tier One County, meaning that it lacked a large property tax base and other sources of income, resulting in lower tax income for Columbus and less money the county had to give to SCC. A

Tier-1 designation for a county usually meant that the median incomes of that county's citizens were lower perhaps than those in other counties.

Rather than depending on the hit-or-miss results of merely letting the public know that their new college needed funds to take care of items the state did not finance — and hoping for good results — the college formed the Southeastern Community College Foundation with a goal of establishing funds to finance scholarships and to take care of other unfunded expenses such as building and grounds maintenance and helping with SCC athletic teams' expenses.

The people who were the first board members of the new foundation — Dr. John Munroe, Dr. F. M. Carroll, Jim High, Charles Leggett, and R. C. Soles, Jr., as president — obviously had the welfare of the new college at heart and went to work explaining the value of the college to county residents, businesses, and civic groups and obtaining donations. The first financial statement of the new organization, issued in February 1970, showed that \$30,730 had been donated to the Foundation by individuals and businesses.

From the beginning, the Southeastern Foundation's method of getting contributions was marked by dignity; there were no entertainments or meals used as fundraisers. Rather, the one annual fund drive conducted by friends of the college solicited people named by the college as possible donors. SCC's Institutional Advancement office, with Director Lisa Clark's guidance, prepared these lists of past givers to the Foundation. The drive for funds depended on heavy promotion in area media and having solicitors promote the college's need for additional funds to individuals, civic clubs and other groups.

So the Foundation was off and running, filling a money gap that enabled ambitious but short-of-money students to attend college

on a Foundation scholarship and improve their lives.

The first monies collected by the Foundation went to scholarships, a keen move as the word soon got out that if you lacked the money to attend the new college, a group connected to the institution would lend you the money. And if you felt you were not scholastically prepared for college, this school would prepare you to handle college courses, or encourage you to consider another training path.

Such attention to the would-be student, as the word soon got out, aided the fund drive solicitors tremendously.

Among the items and programs at Southeastern that the Foundation provided are, first of all, scholarships, then travel expenses for some of the college's athletic teams, help with purchasing textbooks, assistance in paying babysitters or car repairs, and other student expenses.

To put it succinctly, anything that will help a recipient stay in school is eligible for consideration by the Foundation.

As the years went by, the Foundation's fund drives prospered. The solicited money went further when several individuals, families, and businesses began contributing to designated scholarships, limited to students in specific fields of study such as nursing.

There were other fitting projects in which the Foundation played an important role. Several years ago, roofs of several campus buildings began leaking. Unless something was done to repair this problem, the college would see an increase in costs as ceilings, floors, furnishings and contents would have to be replaced. The county was unable to help, and the original agreement establishing the college clearly called for the college to handle all building repairs. Southeastern faced a serious problem as it had no rainy-day fund to rescue it.

But the Foundation, standing by like a rich, big-hearted uncle,



Left photo: Retired Dean of the SCC Foundation Sue Hawks was awarded in 2018 with the Columbus Chamber of Commerce Honorary Lifetime Membership Award in recognition of her service to Southeastern Community College and the community beyond.

Right photo: Joyce Webb, Hattie Campbell, SCC Director of Institutional Advancement Lisa Clark and SCC Trustee Theresa Blanks

SCC FOUNDATION

stepped in with a loan approaching \$10,000, and soon the leaking roof problem was solved. Southeastern dutifully repaid the loan when it received its next allotment from the county.

It would be incorrect to say the college could not continue to exist without the Foundation, but the organization has made a difference. Many medical facilities have problems finding trained, licensed nurse assistants, registered nurses and other medical care givers, but Southeastern keeps turning out newly trained and licensed medical personnel.

Without leaving home, many of these Angels of Mercy were trained at Southeastern Community College. Those who volunteer and those who contribute to the Foundation can take a bow for getting many of these Angels where they are today.



In 2004, Underwood & Millard sponsored the Hole-in-One contest at the annual SCC Foundation Golf Tournament. Pictured are Vann Underwood, left back; Lee Croom, left front; Sue Hawks, right back and Sonny Millard, right front.



SCC held an open house on May 26, 1968, for the new campus on Chadbourn Hwy.

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Maze Craze

Hallsboro woman finds her way to become a leader in her field



STORY DIANA MATTHEWS

PHOTOS ALMA GALLOWAY, JACKIE LEWIS, DIANA MATTHEWS & GRANT MERRITT

Alma Galloway has been on a seven-year journey, filled with twists and turns, dead ends and tantalizing side paths. And she's taken a lot of other people along on the journey with her. Galloway runs Maze Craze in Hallsboro, the largest sorghum maze in southeastern North Carolina.

Jason's challenge

Maze Craze "began in 2011," Galloway said, but the idea of outdoor family fun was on her mind long before that. "I went to a farm in Burgaw around 2002 with my son's kindergarten class," she said.

"I came home and told my husband, 'Honey, I think I can do what they're doing.' I have a strong drive toward teaching and working with children." She believed the beef cattle farm she and her husband Jason Galloway ran could become an educational, fun place for children to experience nature and farm life.

Galloway was struck by "a strong disconnect between agriculture and children;" although "everything we have comes from an agricultural product," too often children don't see what really happens on a farm unless they live on one themselves.

"My husband thought I was crazy and didn't pay a lot of attention," she said.

Subsequent field trips, including a visit to a corn maze, increased her passion. "I told him again, 'I know I can do this.'"

"Jason said, 'This is Columbus County. Everybody has corn. Nobody's going to come to a corn maze.'" Besides, both of the Galloways were working as hard as they could already.

But in 2010, she said, "I was laid off my construction job. My husband finally agreed to let me use 11 acres of our farm" for a maze. "He told me, 'Show me that you can make more money on those acres

with a maze than we make with beef cattle.'"

Starting out

Galloway began by applying for a Tobacco Reinvestment Grant; her educational focus helped her obtain other grant funds. She called successful maze owners and was surprised to hear most of them say she should forget about corn and plant sorghum.

So in 2011 Galloway planted "the first sorghum maze in this area, maybe in North Carolina." She began promoting the maze to schools in the region as a field trip destination.

The variety used at Maze Craze is a sorghum/Sudan-grass hybrid, Galloway said. It grows 14 to 16 feet tall and fills in more thickly than corn.

Galloway opted to incorporate a bullying prevention message as part of her educational focus. That first year start-up expenses outweighed income, as the Galloways had known they would. "But my husband started to see the potential," she said.

How to make a maze

The process of creating a sorghum maze is technical and time-consuming.

A graphic designer draws the paths; in mid-July, when the sorghum sprouts are a few inches tall, an independent maze artist mows the design, following a high-tech guidance system. "Their GPS is accurate to an eighth of an inch," said Galloway.

"I like the Wow! Factor," Galloway said. That factor has brought all three TV stations from Wilmington to report on Maze Craze every year since the attraction opened.

Like any other crop, a sorghum maze is dependent on the fickle



Alma Galloway leads a group of excited school children into her sorghum field. The farm provides a fun introduction to agriculture and values education.

variable of weather. “One year it was very dry,” Galloway said. When the time came to mow the design into the field, “the sprouts were only three-quarters of an inch tall, and, instead of mowing, we tilled them under.”

After cutting the design, Galloway maintains the five miles of pathways twice weekly using a zero-turn mower. Her husband and their son Walker use machetes to trim leaves overhanging the pathways.

“Other maze owners have said I keep the most pristine pathways they’ve ever seen. I’m funny. I like stuff to look good,” Galloway said.

Partnership: the name of the game

“In 2012 I had a notion to get other local businesses involved,” said Galloway. “I realized I was pulling in visitors from surrounding counties, and while they were here we could let them know about other businesses in the county.”

She found a way to incorporate restaurants and retailers into her maze patrons’ experience. “It’s kind of like a game. We have clues in

the maze. You have to find 10 stations and at each one you use a hole punch to make a different-shaped hole on your card to prove you found it.”

Maze visitors refer to an aerial-view map to navigate from station to station. “Each station is sponsored by a different business partner, and their logos are on our maps.” Galloway estimates that Maze Craze has had more than 30 station sponsors over the past seven years.

Her largest-scale promotion, however, takes a form best appreciated from the sky. Since 2012, Galloway has had the maze cut into a custom design incorporating the logo and name of the year’s major partner. Maze maps and the maze itself then become creative advertising for that sponsor.

Vann Underwood Chrysler-Jeep-Dodge-Ram was the first major sponsor. Others have been Pawn South and Black’s Tire Service.

A heavy investment for an uncertain return

Even though the first seasons followed a good growth trajectory, it



has never been easy money, Galloway said. She is committed to providing just what her roadside sign says: Affordable fun for everyone. She invests a lot in making visitors' experience better each year.

She believes the entry fee should include everything on the property: tractor rides, play equipment and games. "I don't like to nickel-and-dime people" by charging additional fees for individual activities, she said. "If they want to ride the train three times, we let them do it."

Galloway employs local high school students, giving them a first work experience they can build on. Speaking of some of her older employees who have gone on to college and other jobs, she said, "The kids helped me grow, and I helped them grow."

After "a perfect season" in 2014, Galloway was ready for a big 2015. That summer a beautiful crop of sorghum grew to just the right height by the week before opening day, and Galloway had "bought a lot of radio and TV commercials and print ads. Then Tropical Storm Hermine laid us flat," she said. "I never knew a crop could lay so flat."

She pulled the ads; friends came to the farm and worked to recre-

ate the pathways as best they could, but Hurricane Joaquin dealt the knockout blow a few weeks later.

The 2016 season looked as though it would make up for the previous year's setback; then Hurricane Matthew dumped massive rain on the area in October. The storm caused little damage to the maze but closed all the major roads leading to the farm.

During the lull, Galloway and Black's Tire, with 40 locations in the Carolinas, collected supplies for people displaced by the hurricane. "That was a good thing," she said. "It's about helping each other out and coming together in times of need." Visitors came back to Maze Craze, realizing that it, too, was a neighbor in need of support.

Simple pleasures

"Most of our guests are not country people," Galloway said. Some Wilmington school groups have included children from "very low-income neighborhoods; it's their first time crossing the Cape Fear River. They say, 'This is the greatest place in the world!' I'm very satisfied to



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know I brought that much joy to a child's life."

She does have to tell the city-bred youngsters that, no, the tan cow is not a deer, and Pop-Tarts do not grow on sorghum stalks. And, even from adults, Galloway has learned to expect the question, "Did you pick all the corn?" She explains that sorghum produces grain, fodder, sweetening syrup, alcoholic beverages and biofuels.

Sheep, cows and miniature donkeys add to the wow factor as well as the educational aspect. If a calf is available, she allows visitors to bottle-feed it. "I love to see their faces" when city children meet their first calf, she said.

"Seeing the kids' happiness, that's what I live for."

Leading the way

"You'd be surprised how many people get lost," Galloway said. "They call the cell number on their map and tell me, 'We've walked past the same sign three times. We're going in circles.'" Galloway goes out to help the wanderers find the right path.

The farm features homemade skee-ball, cornhole and other skill games. A new attraction added in 2016 is Bunnyville, a truly small town populated by 12 rabbits hopping around between a store, church, jail, school, water tower, outhouse and hotel.

Galloway is adding activities to extend the farm's season beyond the fall.

At the farm's Spring Fling in March, visitors raced rubber ducks, rode pedal-cars and enjoyed rustic playground equipment in the fresh

air while waiting for a helicopter to arrive overhead and drop 10,000 plastic Easter eggs. Children picked them up and exchanged them for prizes. "I have so many ideas in my head," she said. "My wheels never stop turning."

As president of the Southeastern N.C. chapter of N.C. Agritourism Networking Association, she also finds it rewarding to help other farmers find their way through the twists and turns of the agritourism business.

Dina Gause brought four children from Shallotte to this year's Spring Fling. "We came to the maze last fall," she said. "The kids had a blast. It's a lot of walking; you'll get a workout."

"This is a cool place, so kid-friendly. We think it's just awesome."

Retired teacher Cynthia Rock came from Wilmington with her grandchildren. She called Galloway Farm "not only fun but educational. There's so much for kids to do."

Rock looked forward to returning in the fall. By then, the calves will have grown bigger, the population of Bunnyville may have doubled, and – barring any weather setbacks – the sorghum will be high enough to get lost in. A new "corn bin karaoke" attraction may even be in use. Whatever adventures await Rock's family this fall will definitely be worth finding the way back to Hallsboro.



Galloway includes the train and other attractions with the Maze admission at no extra charge.



Moments like this are "what I live for," says Galloway.

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STORY ALLEN TURNER

PHOTOS ALLEN TURNER, DANNY SEARS & SUBMITTED

When Ray and Margaret Muraszko from central New Jersey stepped out of their single-engine, propeller-driven Beech airplane the Saturday before Easter at Columbus County Municipal Airport, Margaret held in her arms a potted plant, an unlikely illustration of what the airport means to scores of aviators who travel up and down the East Coast.

The Muraszkos were here to refuel en route to their vacation home in Jekyll Island, Georgia, a pit stop they've been making for years. The plant was for Phil and Mary Greg Edwards, husband-and-wife airport managers, who have become close friends of so many travelers who pass through.

A former New Jersey highway patrolman who now earns his living as a corporate airplane pilot, Joe Muraszko makes the trip south in his own airplane with his wife several times a year, and his trek always includes a stop in Columbus County. Their regular ritual started for two reasons: First, Columbus County Municipal Airport is roughly halfway between many departure airports in the Northeast and vacation destinations in Georgia and Florida. Second: fuel prices here were once the lowest on the East Coast, so low that many fliers once went out of their way to make their fueling stops here.

With the volatility of petroleum prices, local prices for jet fuel



or 100 octane low lead for prop planes are not always necessarily lower here than at other nearby airports, but they remain competitive, and loyal customers from up and down the East Coast continue to make CPC (the Federal Aviation Agency's designation for Columbus County Municipal Airport) the spot of choice for mid-journey stops.

"It's the hospitality, absolutely the hospitality," Joe says. "We wouldn't consider stopping someplace else." The friendship they have developed with the Edwards couple over the years has helped, too. After refueling and dropping the potted plant off for Phil and Mary Edwards, they resumed their journey with a big basket of Easter chocolates that Mary had prepared for them.

The Muraszkos aren't alone in their appreciation of the local airport by air travelers, both private and corporate, small prop planes and corporate jets. A guest book in the terminal's lobby is filled with comments.

"Always a pleasure," wrote one traveler. "Superior service as always," said another. Other comments: "Real friendly. Nice." "Best stop anywhere." "Thanks for the hospitality." "Super stop. Fantastic." "Nice airport. Good barbecue at Joe's."

That last comment came because of a courtesy vehicle the airport offers free to travelers to allow them to run into town for a meal or other reasons while they are here for fuel.

Bill Trumbull, chairman of the international Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, characterized Columbus County as an "excellent airport" and Ron Wineski of Tipton, Md., wrote that the airport is the "best FBO (fixed-base operation) coming and going to Florida."

The rich and famous also land here

Entertainment icon Oprah Winfrey landed her private jet



Mary and Phil Edwards have managed the airport since 2004.



David Thompson, Monty Towe along with Ted Shay, right, and Kevin Satterwhite (Towe's girlfriend) fly into Columbus County Airport from New York to play basketball in Clarkton in May 1975. - Photo by Danny Sears

here when she was in the area to visit relatives of her significant other, Stedman Graham. The best-known wayfarer was President Bill Clinton; in 2000 he flew to Wilmington on Air Force One and then came to Whiteville aboard the Marine One helicopter for a speech at Vineland Station. Marine One landed at Columbus County Municipal Airport.

The president's advance team had visited some local restaurants and, in the process, invited some waitresses and other staff to come out to the airport to get their pictures taken with the president.

Edwards remembers, "After they came back out here after his speech downtown, the motorcade was supposed to take him straight to the helicopter. Instead, he got out of the car and started coming up our walk."

The airport manager laughs, "He was about to drive the Secret Service crazy. He took pictures and signed autographs for a lot of people. Then he came in our terminal to use the restroom and then just kind of wandered around. He stayed in here and talked to us for a long time. You could tell the Secret Service was at their wits' end."

Edwards smiles, "It was a good day."

Fox News television anchor Jon Scott frequently stops here for fuel, and a picture of another visitor, NASA astronaut Katie Coleman, adorns the wall of the terminal's lobby. Coleman was a member of the crew of the International Space Station for six months.

"We try to get to know our customers," Edwards says, "even the famous ones. We don't meddle in their business, but if something comes up in conversation and we find out who they are, we'll maybe get a picture or something. Most of the people who come through here are very friendly people, good people. A lot of them will sit around and take up time and talk."

CPC by the numbers

Edwards also has thousands of pictures of aircraft that pass through the airport. He logs the tail numbers, or registration numbers, of all aircraft that visit, and he tries to take a picture each time one lands here for the first time.

Twenty-seven aircraft are based at the local airport, and it sees about 17,000 operations, or takeoffs and landings, annually.

In addition to general aviation, corporate customers include HARPO, Inc. (Oprah Winfrey’s company), Liberty Medical, the Atlantic Corporation, R.J. Corman Railroad, BB&T Bank, Lowe’s Corp., First Community Bank, Top Tobacco, DNS Pump and, in the past before its plant here closed, Georgia Pacific. Medical industry users include Duke University Medical Center, UNC-Chapel Hill and Carolina Health Care. Military and agricultural users also make frequent use of the airport. Planes working out of the airport have

been used for such diversified local activities as fertilizing trees at tree farms and a Dept. of Natural Resources project to count birds in the area.

“We’ve got a good airport,” Edwards said. “A lot of people don’t realize it, but the airport is one of the most important parts of the infrastructure here because it’s really the gateway to the county.”

It also has a significant economic impact, according to the N.C. Dept. of Transportation’s Division of Aviation. In 2016, the most recent year for which figures are available, a DOT study found that, although the airport only has one full time and three part time employees, it is responsible for 380 jobs with an annual payroll of \$22.57 million.

Direct economic impacts result from firms that are directly engaged in the movement of people or goods and the DOT says that 170 jobs with a \$14.83 million annual payroll are attributed to the airport. Indirect impacts from spending from



The Dept. of Natural Resources uses this float plane to count waterfowl.

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airport-related firms and services account for another 150 jobs and \$5.12 million in payroll, and “induced” impacts, described as resulting from payroll expenditures by employees of directly and indirectly-related firms that produce repeat spending, result in 60 jobs and \$2.63 million in annual payroll here, according to the Division of Aviation.

Expansion since 1963

The airport originally was owned by the City of Whiteville and governed by the Whiteville Airport Authority. The original tract of land was conveyed by the State of North Carolina to the Whiteville Development Corp. in 1972. Sixty-nine out of the original 200 acres were used to establish the original airport. That land ultimately was conveyed to the

City of Whiteville, but in 1969 the land was conveyed from the city to the county. Ten years later, the remaining acres of the original 200-acre tract were conveyed by the Whiteville Development

Corp. to Columbus County.

Edwards reflects on the changes and improvements to the facility. The airport opened in 1963 with a 3,200-ft. runway, later lengthened to 3,700 ft. “When I came here, they were extending the runway to 5,500 feet. We didn’t have a parallel taxiway so, on a busy day, people were landing and taking off and people would have to wait and taxi on the active runway. Some days it got a little hairy, so completion of the parallel taxiway helped out a lot.”

Since 1993, the airport has added an eight-unit hangar, navigational aids, published instrument approaches for pilots, clearer and safer runway approaches, weather reporting capabilities and much larger fuel tanks. Pilots can now

serve themselves outside of business hours, tying into the weather system to check wind conditions before landing, and activating the runway lighting system via radio. They purchase fuel by inserting



The Columbus County Airport stays busy, catering both to private and commercial aircraft like the jet in the foreground and smaller planes like the one in the background.

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a credit card into the pump, much like a motorist at a convenience store.

Current projects totaling \$3.38 million for runway and apron construction and rehabilitation began in April and are expected to close the facility for 45-60 days. Those improvements came about through grants to the county from the N.C. Dept. of Transportation.

Dedicated staff

Planes arriving during business hours are serviced by Edwards or by Joe Thompson, the only full-time airport employee.

Edwards, who flew his own airplanes even before he became involved with the airport, enjoys what he does and has no plans for retiring. "I plan to stay here as long as I can keep making a positive impact, and for as long as they'll let me stay. I enjoy it."

Phil and Mary Edwards are contractors, not county employees. "I take care of the airport," he says, "but Mary does all the bookwork. She pays the bills and does whatever else needs doing." Thompson is on the county payroll. County employees frequently do work at the airport and, when they do, they're under Edwards' supervision.

The Edwards couple started working at the airport in 2004. Before then, he served on the county airport authority. "Even before I was working here, as early as 1998, I was coming out here to help look after the airport. After I retired from my job with R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., I started spending a lot of time here. I ordered all the fuel and kept on top of all the other things."

He's big on what an airport can do for a community. "You can build a mile of road and it will take you to your



Columbus County airport employee Joe Thompson refuels frequent visitor Ray Muraszko during Muraszko's Easter weekend trip from New Jersey to Jekyll Island, Georgia.



Margaret Muraszko, center, and her pilot husband, Ray, left, have become good friends with Phil, right, and Mary Edwards at the Columbus County Airport. They stopped here the Saturday before Easter and brought Mary a potted plant as a gift.

neighbor's house," he says, "but you can build a runway and it will take you anywhere in the world."

"We try to stay busy here," Edwards says. "At one time we were the cheapest source around for aviation fuel, but we're not any more. But our customers keep coming because they like the location since we're halfway between New York and Florida and because we just like to give good service. We've got a really good customer base."

Among those customers is a French manufacturer of corporate jets. When the company sells a plane to a customer in the U.S. south or southwest, it flies that plane from France to Bangor, Maine, where it is refueled. The plane then stops here for more fuel before it is delivered to its final destination, usually somewhere in Florida or Texas.

After this year's runway and apron rehabilitation, Edwards sees construction of a new terminal building as the next major project, but that might be four or five years into the future. "It might be longer than that," he says. "I hope we get it before I leave." The current terminal, a 1,756 sq. ft. building, was constructed in 1979 and Edwards says airport operations have outgrown it. "We need a new terminal now, but we decided the current runway and apron rehabilitation project about to start needed to take a higher priority."

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STORY RAY WYCHE
PHOTOS LES HIGH & NR ARCHIVE

Downtown Whiteville in late summer and early fall presents appearances that are strikingly different from the views of the same area a few years ago.

In late summer months, when area farmers' main cash crop — flue-cured tobacco — was sold at picturesque auctions, the streets and sidewalks were filled with people.

The present quietness of the downtown streets is in sharp contrast to earlier times with greetings to friends perhaps unseen for months, and the blaring of public address systems in passing vehicles urging the strolling farmers to sell their tobacco at a particular tobacco sales warehouse for the top dollar.

Years ago in tobacco market towns in the true South, during the endless jabbering that filled the streets urging the tobacco-sales-rich farmers to buy this, buy that, there was one invitation to purchase heard more frequently than all others. It was only two words: "Boiled Peanuts."

The name of the first person to put raw, freshly-dug goobers into a pot of salted water and anxiously wait before fishing out one unshelled peanut to sample, as well as the date or place this historical blessed event took place, are lost in the murky past. To him or her, unknown as they are, we owe a debt of gratitude.

An Internet cooking show, "What's Cooking, America?" lists seven Southern states in which boiled peanuts (you never eat just one boiled peanut - they're very addictive) are the accepted snack. Legend holds that the first boiled peanut was a makeshift substitute



Handmade signs mark seasonal roadside boiled peanut stands.

for more substantial foods in the Civil War for Confederate soldiers whose supply system left a lot to be desired; from the middle until the end of the war, Rebel soldiers gleaned enough overlooked food items in harvested fields to survive.

Confederate troops soon became adept at subsisting on what was available. Peanuts, by the methods used in harvesting, were noted for the many mature nuts left in the field when the harvesters moved on.

One scenario holds that the scavenging Confederate soldiers soon tired of eating raw peanuts. The made-up history of the first boiled peanuts says that salt was added to the boiling water to flavor the nuts, thereby giving rise to one version of the birth of boiled peanuts.

Salt, however, was a scarce item in the inland Confederacy in the "late unpleasantness" and some say to waste it in boiling peanuts was not likely.

Regardless of how, where, when, or who got it started, we addicts of boiled peanuts should pay homage to this unknown, saintly individual who left the South a better place because of his or her gift.

Boiled peanuts offered by the youthful sellers, in the heyday of tobacco auctions, were peddled in brown paper bags about 5 inches tall and holding about a cup of the tasty treats. The going price was 10 cents per bag and somewhere along the sales circuit, one vendor offered three bags for a quarter, a real deal for many adult addicts for whom one 10-cent bag was only an appetizer, and a scant one

at that.

The peanut sellers were males in their early teens with husky voices. Their sales pitches were all the same and unchangeable. They walked up and down the sidewalks and in the tobacco sales warehouses, hawking their product with a shouted, two-word come-on: "Boiled Peanuts!"

Incidentally, green peanut does not indicate the color of the nut itself but means the nut is freshly dug and has not yet begun the drying process.

One of the most amazing facts about boiled peanuts is their limited exposure as a snack. Although tobacco markets have long been shuttered and the sound of mouth-watering "Boiled Peanuts" long muted, some of us still enjoy the homegrown snack. The underground-grown delicacy of the South, when cooked in salted water, has a large and growing contingent of discerning people of good taste.



Ripe peanuts, which came in about the same time as the tobacco market, were a popular snack on the sidewalks and at local tobacco warehouses. Youthful peanut sellers sold their peanuts in small brown bags for a nickel.

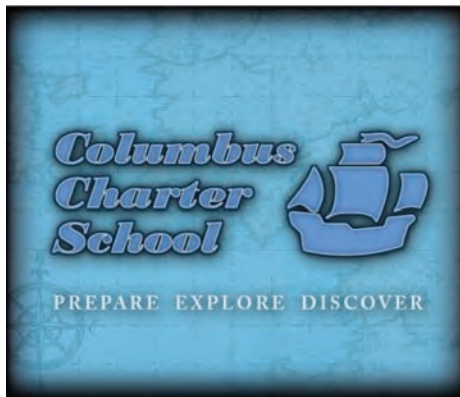
A Lake Waccamaw native in the U.S. Army stationed in Italy soon after World War II recalls walking in Rome on a Saturday afternoon when he heard a faint cry from a far-off voice, "Boiled Peanuts."

I've got to find that man, he said to himself.

He related that after walking for quite a distance, and guided by the frequently yelled cry that he admitted made him homesick, he spied an American soldier sitting on the sidewalk, his arm around a lamppost. He'd spent too much time with a bottle to turn loose his supporting post.

It turned out that the resting GI, in answer to my friend's question, "Where are you from?" the boiled peanut shouter's answer was, "Tabor City."

The cry normally is heard only in areas where peanuts are boiled. Even in southern Virginia, where goobers grow abundantly, mention boiled peanuts and your Virginia peanut



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Boiled peanut parties in the local area were popular pastimes for high school-aged young people in World War II, when driving (if at all possible) was sharply curtailed because of wartime rationing. Usually, the father of a classmate who was a farmer and who planted peanuts for home use came to the rescue for his children's friends.

The cooking was done in the backyard in a 30-gallon cast iron pot that normally heated water for the family clothes washing. Peanut boiling times varied, depending in part on the ripeness of the nuts; the longer the ripe peanuts stayed in the ground, the harder the shell became, requiring extended boiling time. Hence, the enviable jobs of periodically sampling the boiling goobers for



East Columbus High School agriculture science teacher Bryan Fowler is shown in this 2003 photo with an older peanut variety, NC-7, that is no longer available. Fowler currently grows the Gregory variety on his farm in Hallsboro. The Gregory serves as a good choice for boiling peanuts.

optimum ease in opening the shell, the softness of the kernel (the nut), and most importantly, the saltiness. Veteran peanut boilers from years of experience consider the hardness of the peanuts' shells to estimate the boiling time; the treats are sampled while still cooking to determine if the shells have softened properly. The hardness of the shells after up to two hours in boiling salted water will tell the chef if the peanuts are ready for eating.

How much salt in how much water depends on the cook's preferences. The "What's Cooking, America?" program suggests four or five pounds of peanuts and water to cover, and one cup of plain salt per gallon of water. Test the boiling peanuts for softness of the shells and also for saltiness.

The longer the goobers stay in the



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DOWN-HOME SNACK

water they were boiled in, the saltier will be the kernel, the eating part. To somewhat ease the disappointment of too-salty peanuts, there is some relief. As soon as the checker announces, "They are just right," immediately pour off the water the peanuts were boiled in. To leave them in the pot with the salty water is to end up with over-salty peanuts.

But in case the peanuts have absorbed too much salt, there is a partial remedy for this misfortune. Refill the boiling container with fresh, unsalted water, peel about five tennis ball-sized Irish potatoes and cut into pieces about the size of golf balls. Bring the water with peanuts and potatoes to a brisk boil for about five minutes.

Some of the salt will migrate from the peanuts to the potatoes, hopefully leaving the peanuts with just the right amount of salt.

The simple matter of washing away the dirt that nurtured the delicacy and then tossing the cleaned peanuts into a pot of boiling, salted water turns a farm commodity into a country club-level snack.

It's really a simple preparation considering the pleasure that will result.

The streets and sidewalks in tobacco market towns took on a different appearance during tobacco auction sales days. In the heart of downtown to which visitors from outlying areas gravitated, the accumulation of empty peanut shells covered the edges of streets and the sidewalks as well as the warehouse floors.

Nobody, except perhaps a few out-of-area visitors to whom boiling an unshelled peanut and then eating it was abhorrent, questioned or complained about the appearance of the town's thoroughfares.

A Whiteville banker, now deceased, in the days before an



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Richard Kelly Ward Sr. of Hallsboro specializes in boiling small batches of peanuts for his regular customers.

industry hunter was on the county's payroll, recalls how officials of the town's two banks (that's correct — two) would seek to convince an industry, usually Northern-based, to set up shop in Whiteville. These local bankers sang the praises of Whiteville and other towns in the county, and a site-hunting visitor was impressed. He said the small city atmosphere he observed as he toured the area, including Lake Waccamaw, was exactly what his company was looking for.

A few weeks later, the Yankee industrialist and his wife visited Myrtle Beach for a weekend of golf. The businessman decided to show his wife what he hoped would be their new home.

Unbeknown to the prospect, his visit to town came on a Saturday night at the height of tobacco sales season. The wife eyed the streets and sidewalks of our town, and disappointment and disgust clouded her face. She noted the sidewalks and streets were crowded with mostly overalled men, some barefooted, and endless peanut shells and puddles of chewing tobacco spittle. The view ruined whatever attractions downtown Whiteville had to offer.

"If you're going to put a plant in this town and expect me to move here, get yourself another wife," was the wife's summation of her impression of a Southern tobacco market town in sales season.

The appearance of a man, usually overall clad, sauntering along the sidewalk with a bag of goobers in one hand while methodically placing a peanut in his mouth with the other, was a welcomed sight to Whiteville's merchants. These store owners, most of whom made comfortable livings with their stores and who were held in high esteem by all, knew that their most successful sales times were during the tobacco market sales period.

DOWN-HOME SNACK



Richard Kelly Ward Jr. of Hallsboro carries on the family business, offering summer favorites, watermelon and fresh boiled peanuts. (2003 photo)

The outstanding two-word sales pitch, “boiled peanuts,” heard so often during tobacco sales season, turned into a memory around the first part of October as the tobacco buyers, auctioneers and others whose work in the Border Belt tobacco markets ended until the next year. These seasonal workers moved on to other tobacco sales belts.

The youthful peddlers and their endless late summer cries of boiled peanuts were silent until next year’s tobacco sales season.

Tobacco farmers could see rural living as more pleasant now that they were free for a few days of the hectic, breakneck pace that would begin with the coming new year with the making of tobacco plant beds. Small patches of woodlands where no farm commodity had been grown previously were cleared of trees, and tobacco seed, one of the smallest seeds in existence, were sowed on the bed. As the plants reached a certain size, they were transplanted to a field.

Next came the plowing, fertilizing, suckering, cropping, curing, grading and tying the Golden Leaf into neat bundles, ready for the trip to the auction warehouse.

Toward the end of the calendar year, farmers were on the threshold of facing these can’t-wait chores. Their rewards would not be realized until the last days of the coming summer, about the time the peanut crop was producing its first boiling-sized fruits.

Tobacco in the old days was truly a 13-month crop. The sales season was relatively short but the growing season long. It ended for the year with the carnival-like selling season.

Tobacco farming was a risky business and hard work, but the joys of selling the Golden Leaf — and eating boiled peanuts — eased the pains for a few weeks.

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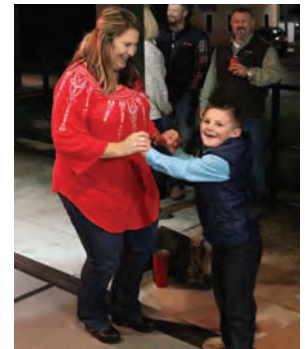
Alexis Spivey, Mildred Surles, Debbie Nance, Kimberly Batten



Rachel Smith, Natalie & Ken Fraizer, Georganna & Byron Fisher, Liz & Matt McLean and Carey & Todd Burney



The Batten Pavilion at Vineland Station hosts a packed crowd.



Teresa Jacobs and Will

COLUMBUS CHAMBER ANNUAL DINNER

JANUARY 22



2018 Columbus Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Board of Directors



Rick Edwards accepts the Sol B. Mann award.



Sue Hawks, Lifetime membership awardee, with family.



Erica Evans, Tara Spivey, Meredith & George Jeffries



Southeastern Oratorio Society performs.

THE NEWS REPORTER HOMETOWN NEW YEAR'S EVE



Families brave the cold while cheering in the new year.



Wanda's School of Dance performs.



The crowd enjoys food from downtown restaurants and entertainment.



Danielle Creech and son Grayson enjoy the festivities.



Sid Miller, Becky & Les High, Jenny Clore and Stephanie Miller.



Taste of Downtown Whiteville participant Anthony's.

LAKE WACCAMAW DEPOT MUSEUM SOCIAL

FEB 9



Blanche Garrell museum curator & Karen Gore retiring curator.



Members admire silent auction items.



Martha Thompson & Betty Sasser



Thomas Academy choir performs.



A fried chicken dinner was served.

TABOR CITY CHAMBER

Annual Dinner

FEBRUARY 20



Richard & Margo Wright, Bill Thompson



Todd House restaurant catered the event.



Judge Ashley Gore, Lamont Grate & Jess Hill



Jennifer Phipps, Jessie Sasser, Susan Ellis & Gina Rabon

Reuben Brown House Preservation Society
U.S. Poet Laureate - Tracy K. Smith

MARCH 6



U.S. Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith spoke at SCC at the invitation of the Reuben Brown House Preservation Society.



Miranda Sibbett, Tracy K. Smith & Pat Ray, event co-chair.



Miranda Sibbett of South Columbus High School recited Smith's poetry.



Jacqueline Roseboro, Selena Rowell, Lisa Clark SCC Foundation, Tanner Bullard & Brian Chesanek SCC Ambassadors.



Smith met with more than 600 seventh graders from county schools.



Local high school seniors attended a master poetry class with Smith at Columbus County Arts Council.

FAIR BLUFF CHAMBER ANNUAL DINNER

MARCH 8



The Rev. Kelvin McGeachy was presented the Fair Bluff Chamber Community Service Award.



Sherman Axelberg, center, was recognized as Citizen of the Year.



Terrell & Sheila Ellis, Lester Drew



Newly installed Chamber Director Rev. Todd Padgett.

COLUMBUS YOUNG PROFESSIONALS *Cocktails & Conversation*

APRIL 5



CYP keynote speaker Mayor Jody McLeod from Clayton, N.C.



Jess Hill, Liz McLean, Rachel Smith



Amber Bellamy, Tonya So



Alicia Greene, Crystal Hagood



Jody McLeod, Jennifer Holcomb Chamber President, Mayor Terry Mann

COLUMBUS COTILLION

Spring Dance & Debutante Ball

MARCH 17



Mason Hewett, Mary Grayson Koonce, Sterling Koonce



Bridger Warlick, Ellen McLam, Tom McLam



Carrie Burney, Jennifer Stocks, Christy Stocks, Ray Short, Todd Burney



Katherine Swafford, Kathryn Caine Ogden, Mari Liza Almand, Lou Gray Ogden, Genie Almand



Judge Ashley Gore, Hillary Melvin, Lacie Jacobs, Kathrine Scott, all former Cotillion debutantes.



Lindsey & Anthony Cartrette, Onnie & Allen Cartrette attended the CJB social at The Spillway.

COLUMBUS JOBS FOUNDATION

SPRING SOCIAL

APRIL 24



Rick Edwards, who recently stepped down as head of CJB, is presented with a CJB construction hard hat.

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Pictured: Dr. David Bjerken,
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A LETTER TO OUR COMMUNITY

Our communities change, businesses grow and the pursuit of quality continues to transform our healthcare delivery. At McLeod Health, we believe in our calling to serve patients and their families who entrust us with their care. We are bound by this mission and filter our efforts through our four Core Values of: Caring, The Person, Quality and Integrity.

McLeod Loris, with the support of both providers and our residents, is committed to excellent medical services, treatment, compassion and technology. In our ongoing efforts to keep you informed, we wanted to brief you on those advancements currently underway.

First of all, let me express my deepest appreciation for welcoming me in this new role as Administrator of McLeod Loris. Many of you attended the public “meet and greet” held in February. It was a privilege to be received with such warmth and to hear your thoughts about both our growth and the challenges that face us. Your response has strengthened our confidence in the strategies ahead and we are grateful for your engagement.

In the next few months, we will be announcing quarterly evening educational programs and opportunities to dialogue with physicians from a variety of specialties. We hope the public of all ages will benefit from this learning experience.

Additionally, recruitment is underway for physicians to serve in primary care, as well as plans for clinical rotations and an increased presence of specialists. We will serve as the area’s only Dialysis Access Center, led by McLeod Vascular Surgeon Dr. David Bjerken (pictured above), and provide vascular services and heart care to the many citizens in our region diagnosed with cardiovascular disease, stabilizing when necessary to undergo even more specialized care available within the McLeod Health system. We are continuing to work on improvements in our Emergency Department for more positive patient experience in flow and time in being seen.

Our Obstetrics program will also receive enhancements with renovations to the Post-Partum areas and the designated rooms for Hospice will also be upgraded for comfort and compassionate care. We are working on growing our diagnostic, general surgery, critical care and physical rehabilitation capabilities as well.

Together, through community utilization as the catalyst for our investment, we will flourish as a medical facility within the McLeod system of hospitals and services. Thank you for choosing McLeod for your healthcare needs. We want to be your Choice for Medical Excellence.

Scott Montgomery
Administrator, McLeod Loris

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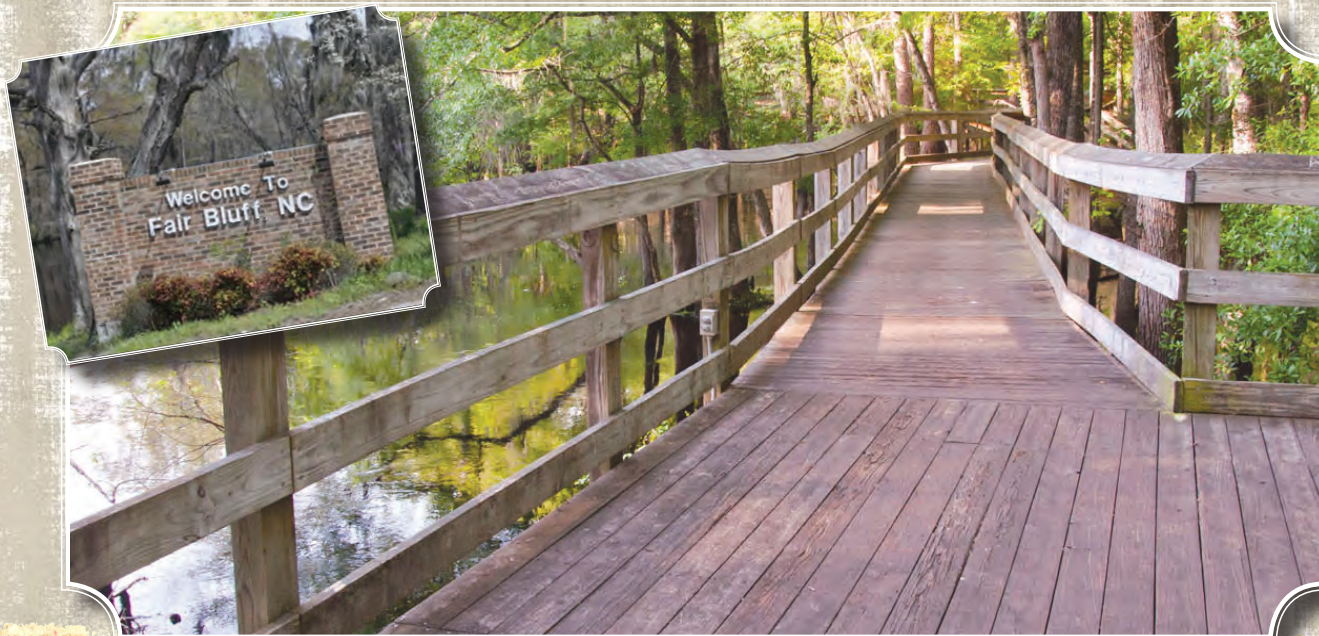
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Stupidities

STORY **Bill Woodsman**

The results of our indiscretions torture us. Our stupid choices usually will come back to haunt us.

Despite what you might think, I'm not perfect, and I've had difficulties sometimes with making great and serious errors. And those that I have made in hunting were potentially fatal. I'm confessing this not so because I need redemption of my sins, but because confession is good for the soul.

I guess the best place to start is my youth. The first gun I owned was a .410 H&R with an outside hammer. I was only 9 or 10 years old. I really had no instruction on how to handle the gun except from my older brothers, who thought of me, as most older brothers do think of younger brothers, as being rather stupid. I could cock and shoot the gun with no difficulty, but I never could quite get the hang of letting the cocked hammer down without the gun going off.

During my one-day learning stage with the gun, we went squirrel hunting. My older brothers walked ahead of me, going up to trees, looking for squirrel nests and shaking the tree if one was located. Amidst the activity, I had cocked my .410 anticipating shooting a squirrel. But, as no squirrels were found, we walked from tree to tree, and being a safe hunter even at that young age, I decided it would be best if I could get the hammer down and have a safer gun. Well. As we were walking, I was looking down at the gun trying to figure out how I could let the hammer down without the gun going off, and I had put my thumb on the hammer spur. As I did this, I tripped forward. The gun went off and it

shot directly between my brother's legs. Mind you, it was between his legs and not hitting the legs or any parts above or below. Of course, immediately everyone fell apart. My brothers attacked me, and they beat me severely even though I made the excuse that I saw a squirrel on the ground or something of that nature. But be that as it may, I was not allowed to go hunting again with my brothers for about two years.

While this stupidity is acceptable for a youth, when I was in my early 20s, I did something probably even dumber. I was hunting deer and climbed up to the tree stand but couldn't figure out how to get my gun up behind me. I didn't have a sling, so I decided to take one of my bootlaces off and tie it around the trigger guard of the gun. I would then climb up the tree and pull the gun up behind me. Once I got up to the upper limbs, I did exactly that, and it worked to perfection. I thought it might be a good idea to leave the shoestring tied to the trigger guard because in that way if I happened to drop the gun, I could retrieve it with no difficulty.

I left it tied, loaded the gun and in a few minutes I heard a deer behind me. My legs were dangling over the limb, and I had the shotgun in my hands. As I turned to look behind me, the string that was on the trigger guard pulled forward, and the gun went off. It scared me so badly I fell backwards from the limb, and I was left straddling the tree on one side while my gun was on the other. I was able to recoup and climb back up in the tree, severely shaken, finding that all parts of my body were, by God's grace, still intact.

The only comment that I got from my brother-in-law Dial was

Continued on page 96

Continued from page 95

he thought the shot that I made at the deer sounded quite odd, as though someone had shot directly up in the air.

While that should be enough to quench your appetite about stupidities, three or four years ago someone brought to me a nice old muzzle-loader Kentucky rifle. Now, anyone who knows anything about old muzzle-loaders knows these old rifles have the nipple holder drum screw into the barrel, and it frequently will rust out. While I was fully aware of this, I inspected the gun and thought it would be quite sound, so I'd take a chance to shoot it.

I put what I considered a light load of powder into the gun, rammed home a bullet and fired it. As you might suspect, the very worst possible thing happened. The drum, along with the nipple, blew out of the gun, split the stock and luckily did no more than burn my face. I should've been killed.

All of this points to one thing, and that's stupidity seems to know no age or bound. No matter how dumb we can act in our youth, we seem to outdo ourselves as we get older. I'm sure in the next year or two I'll find something else I can add to this list.



"Bill Woodsman" was born in 1954 when eighth grader Billy Ogden created his nom de plume "Willie the Woodsman." He wrote weekly hunting articles for his all boys junior high school in Macon, Georgia. When Dr. Ogden entered college and medical school, "Willie" matured into "Bill" as he has continued to write about the sports of hunting and fishing.

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Friday, May 18**Movies on Madison**

Walt Disney's "Coco" is the first movie in the summer film series at The N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences in Whiteville. The event is free. Bring a blanket or chair. The museum lawn opens at 6 p.m. and the movie starts at dusk. Refreshments available for purchase. This is a family-friendly event: no pets, coolers, alcohol or smoking permitted. Call the museum at 910-914-4185 for information. Event made possible by the museum and Columbus County Arts Council.

Saturday, May 19**9th Farmers Market****Fun Run & Walk**

The Columbus County Farmers Market hosts the annual 3.1 mile Run/Walk at 9 a.m. and half-mile Kids Fun Run at 8:45 a.m. Start and finish at the Farmers Market. Visit www.fmrn.com to register.

**Sunday, May 20****Bountiful Tile &****Wings of Love Ceremony**

The annual Wings of Love butterfly release and Bountiful Tile ceremony is at 2 p.m. at the Lower Cape Fear Hospice Angel House. Visit lcfhfoundation.org/events/

Friday, May 25**Field of Flags**

More than 600 flags will be on display at 6354 James B. White Hwy.

S. at the Veterans Memorial Park of Columbus County. As a park fundraiser, flags may be purchased for \$10 to honor veterans. Visit veteransmemorialparkofamerica.com for more information.

**Saturday, May 26****Bass Tournament**

14th Annual Greater Tabor City Chamber Bass Tournament at Lake Tabor from 5 a.m. to 2 p.m. Entry fee of \$30 per person includes lunch and boat ramp fee. For more information, call Committee Chairman Donald James at 910-653-5310 or Cynthia at the Tabor City Chamber Office at 910-377-3012 or 910-840-0292.

Friday, June 1**Literacy Golf Tournament**

Columbus County Literacy Council 7th Annual "Super Ball" Golf Tournament at Land O Lakes. Registration at 11 a.m. and Tee Off for Literacy at 12:30 p.m. \$50 per player includes lunch, dinner, prizes and awards. Sponsorships available. Pre-register by Thursday, May 24 by calling 910-642-2442.

Saturday, June 2**Kids' Color Run**

Kids' Color Fun Run sponsored by the Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce. Registration is

7:15 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. Start time is 8 a.m. at Ritz Plaza.

Saturday, June 2**National Trails Day**

Celebrate National Trails Day by discovering the new ultimate trail in Columbus County. The Lake Waccamaw State Park pedestrian bridge over the dam allows hikers to safely cross the Waccamaw River mouth and access the park's Lake Shore Trail. Parking is available at the dam and park visitor center. Check the park website ncparks.gov/lake-waccamaw-state-park for the official pedestrian bridge opening day.

Saturday, June 2**SCC Foundation Summer Supper**

The Southeastern Community College Foundation celebrates its 50th anniversary Saturday, June 2, with A "Southern Supper" on the SCC campus, featuring southern dishes prepared by Chef Sarah Gore and live music performed by The Legacy Motown Revue. Advance tickets only, \$50 per person. For more details, visit scnc.edu/foundation or call 642-7141 ext 308.

Friday, June 8**Summer fun begins**

Summer fun begins Friday, June 8th with an early release for Whiteville City Schools students. Graduation is Saturday, June 9, at 9:30 a.m. in the WHS gym.

Friday, June 8

Last day for students attending Columbus County Schools is Friday, June 8. Graduation Ceremony dates & times for county schools include: CCCA Tuesday,

May 22 at 6 p.m. in the WCHS auditorium; ECHS, Friday, June 8 at 6 p.m. in the auditorium; SCHS, Saturday, June 9 at 10 a.m. in the auditorium; WCHS Friday, June 8 at 6 p.m. in the auditorium.



Mid-June

Columbus County Parks and Recreation Summer Clinics

Look for youth clinics this summer in baseball, softball, tennis, soccer, art and volleyball. Visit columbusco.org/Departments/Recreation or call (910) 640-6624 for clinic dates and times.

Mid-June

Whiteville Parks and Recreation

Whiteville Parks & Recreation offers Summer camps and programs including baseball and softball. The Nolan park center offers a newly renovated gym. Call (910) 642-9052 for dates and times or visit whitevillenc.gov/parks-rec.

Mid-June

Dixie Youth Tournament

Dixie Youth League Tournaments begin in June. Watch *The News Reporter* sports for tournament schedule.

June 11-15

NC Wildlife Action Pioneer Day Camp

NC Wildlife Action Pioneer Day Camp at the Helms Nature Preserve. Must pre-register by June 6. Form available at wildlife-action.com/events or email info@nc-wildlifeaction.org

June 14 & 15

Tom Stanley Memorial Scholarship Fundraiser

Thursday, June 14 - Dinner and Dancing at Vineland Station from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Tickets are \$50 per person. Friday, June 15, the Tom Stanley Memorial Golf Tournament will be played at Land O Lake Golf Course. Cost is \$50 per golfer. Sponsorships available

Friday, June 15

Movies on Madison

The N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences presents Paramount Pictures' "Raiders of the Lost Ark." Bring a blanket or chair. The museum lawn opens at 6 p.m., and the movie starts at dusk. Refreshments available for purchase. This is a family-friendly event: no pets, coolers, alcohol or smoking permitted. Call the museum at 910-914-4185 for information. Event made possible by the museum and Columbus County Arts Council.

Saturday, June 16

Old Fashioned Farm Day at County Farmers Market

Celebrate farm and agricultural heritage, view farm equipment and participate in cooking demonstrations.

June 18 - June 22

4-H 2018 4-H Exploration Camp at Lake Waccamaw State Park

Day camp for 9 - 12 year olds sponsored by Columbus County 4 - H and Lake Waccamaw State Park. Activities include nature, history, safety and fun visits with N.C. Nature Museum, LW Depot Museum, LW Fire Department and more. Cost is \$40 and limited to 25 participants. To register, call the NC Cooperative Extension Agency at 910-640-6607.

Saturday, July 3

31st Annual Columbus County Fourth of July Fireworks Celebration

"Celebrating the Fourth on the Third" fireworks celebration at South Columbus High School. Entertainment begins at 7 p.m. and fireworks at 9:30 p.m. Free admission and gates open at 6 p.m. Sponsored by the Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce. Hot dogs and drinks sold inside the gate.



Saturday, July 7

Watermelon Day

Watermelon Day at Columbus County Farmer's Market. Free samples, recipes and nutritional information.

Friday, July 20**Movies on Madison**

The N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences presents Walt Disney's "Star Wars: Return of the Jedi." Bring a blanket or chair. The museum lawn opens at 6 p.m., and the movie starts at dusk. Refreshments available for purchase. This is a family-friendly event: no pets, coolers, alcohol or smoking permitted. Call the museum at 910-914-4185 for information. Event made possible by the museum and Columbus County Arts Council.

**Saturday, July 27 - 28****N.C. Watermelon Festival**

Friday, July 27 - Watermelon Delight 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Fair Bluff Baptist Church. Tickets \$25 each. Saturday, July 28 - All day festival events including parade at 11 a.m., crafts, entertainment, melon bites, watermelon contests and more.

Friday, August 17**Movies on Madison**

The N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences presents Walt Disney's "A Wrinkle in Time." Bring a blanket

or chair. The museum lawn opens at 6 p.m., and the movie starts at dusk. Refreshments available for purchase. This is a family-friendly event: no pets, coolers, alcohol or um at 910-914-4185 for information. Event made possible by the museum and Columbus County Arts Council.

Saturday, August 18**Fun Day**

Kids' "Back-to-School" Fun Day 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Columbus County Farmer's Market.

Friday, August 24**Golf Tournament**

Lakes District Boys Scouts of America Golf Tournament at Land O Lakes. Proceeds support Columbus and Bladen scouts. Visit capefearcouncilbsa.org for sponsor and event information.

Saturday, September 1 -**Monday, September 3****Labor Day Weekend****10th Annual Take The Lake**

Walk/Run, Bike, Paddle, Swim personal challenge events at Take the Lake on Labor Day Weekend at Lake Waccamaw. Pre-registration highly encouraged at takethelake.org

Saturday, September 1**TTL Walk/Run**

Start and finish at Elizabeth Brinkley Park. Register from 7 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. Pre-registered participants can start the 16-mile walk/run at 7:15 a.m. The 16-mile walk/run begins for everyone else at 8 a.m. The 6.5 mile Family Fun Walk starts at 8:30 a.m. (no early start).

Sunday, September 2**TTL Paddle**

The paddle around the lake is at 8 a.m. and starts and finishes at Dale's. Registration begins at 7:15 a.m. Instructions at 7:45 a.m.

Sunday, September 2**TTL Bike**

The bike around the lake is at 2 p.m. and starts and finishes at Elizabeth Brinkley Park. Registration begins at 1:15 p.m. The 6.5 mile Family Fun Ride is at 2:30 p.m. Helmets required for all bike events.

Monday, September 3**TTL Swim**

The traditional Labor Day swim across Lake Waccamaw starts at 8 a.m. either at Dale's or the dam, depending on the weather. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. Register for all events online at takethelake.org

Monday, September 3**Take The Lake X-TREME**

TTL X-TREME is 48 miles of cycling, running, paddling and swimming around and over Lake Waccamaw. Individuals and teams can compete. Register at takethelake.org.





Saturday, September 8

N.C. Honey Festival

This 2nd annual N.C. Honey Festival in downtown Whiteville highlights the significance of bees in our environment, celebrates honey and honey products, encourages bee-friendly practices, and promotes beekeeping. Visit nchoneyfestival.com for events.



Friday, September 21

Columbus County Industrial Golf Tournament

Columbus County Industrial Golf Tournament at Land O Lakes Golf Course sponsored by The Columbus Chamber of Commerce & Tourism. Registration is at 11 a.m. and tee off is at noon. Teams are \$240, individuals are \$60 and bundle is \$15. Teams are flighted, captain's choice, prizes, lunch and dinner. The entry deadline is Fri-

day, September 7th. Call the Columbus Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, 910-642-3171 or visit the website to register, TheColumbusChamber.com.

Saturday, October 6

Pine Tree Festival in Bolton

Family Fun in Bolton with parade, crafts, vendors, entertainment and health and safety information.

Saturday, October 6

Lip Sync Battle

Annual fundraiser for Families First and Columbus County Arts Council at 6 p.m. at Vineland Station. Tickets available at Families First or call 910-642-5996.

Tuesday, October 9 –

Sunday, October 14

30th annual Columbus County Agriculture Fair

30th annual Columbus County Agriculture Fair at the Columbus County Fairgrounds. Parade in downtown Whiteville on Tuesday, Oct. 9 at 3:30 p.m. Fair events, family fun and evening entertainment.

Saturday, October 13

Sweet Potato Day

Sweet Potato Day at Columbus County Farmers Market. 8 a.m. til 1 p.m. Featuring sweet potato recipes. Free samples. Plus market vendors featuring fall vegetables, baked items and crafts.

Saturday, October 20

Miss North Carolina Yam Festival Pageant

Miss North Carolina Yam Festival Pageant is at 6 p.m. at South

Columbus High School. Admission is \$8 and includes program.

Saturday, October 27

NC Yam Festival and Parade

NC Yam Festival and Parade in Downtown Tabor City. Food and craft vendors will be on hand as well as entertainment and children's activities. Visit ncyamfestival.com for more information



Friday, October 19 &

Saturday, October 20

48th Waccamaw Siouan Pow Wow
Waccamaw Siouan Pow Wow at the Tribal Grounds located at 7275 Old Lake Road in Bolton.

Wednesday, October 31

Halloween Safe Nite

Columbus County Parks & Rec. Halloween Safe Nite at Boys & Girls Home Exhibition Center. Free event.

Friday, November 2

Pecan Festival Queen's Luncheon

Pecan Festival Queen's Luncheon 11:30 a.m. at Vineland Station and Elegant Homes of Whiteville tour tickets available at Trigon, Inc., 115 W. Main St., Whiteville.

Saturday, November 3

26th Annual North Carolina Pecan Harvest Festival
 26th Annual N.C. Pecan Harvest Festival in downtown Whiteville. Parade at 10 a.m. Entertainment at the Downtown Stage 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. Other events include pecan cooking contest, Kid's Block, Tri Beach Car Show.



Thursday, November 8

9th Annual Shuck n' Shag
 9th Annual Columbus Chamber Shuck n' Shag Oyster Roast from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at Vineland Station in Whiteville. Oysters, Chili, Brunswick Stew and entertainment. Tickets at thecolumbuschamber.com.



Saturday, November 10

21st Annual St. James Waccamaw Siouan Festival
 The 21st Annual St. James Waccamaw Siouan Festival at the St. James Volunteer Fire Department will have vendors with homemade items, food vendors, hay ride and childrens games. Festival opens at 11 a.m.




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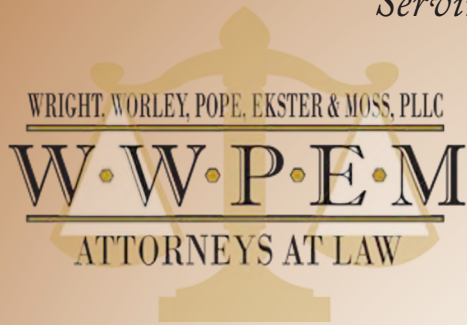
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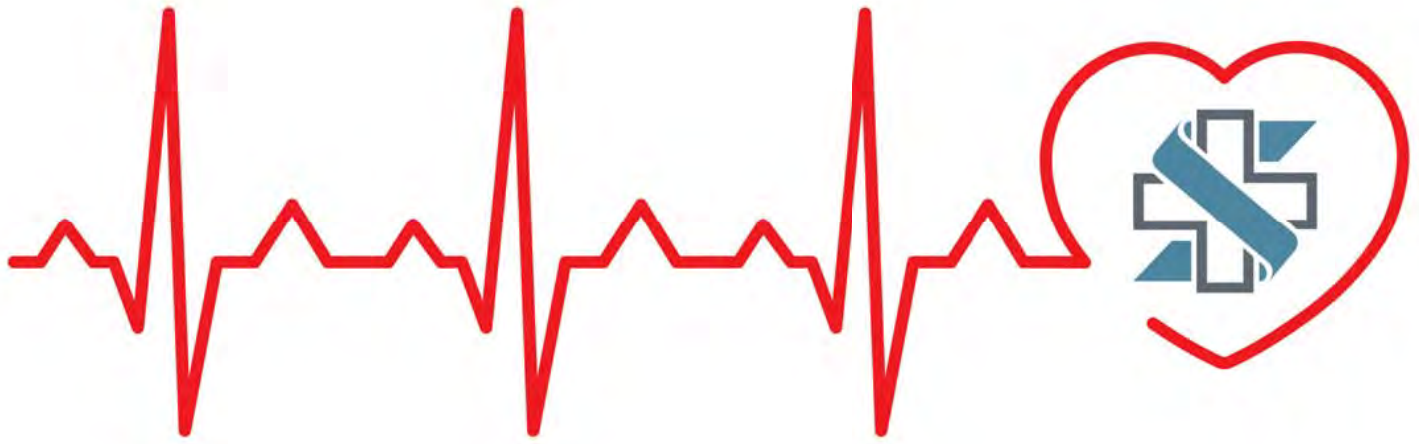
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