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Mary Mintz

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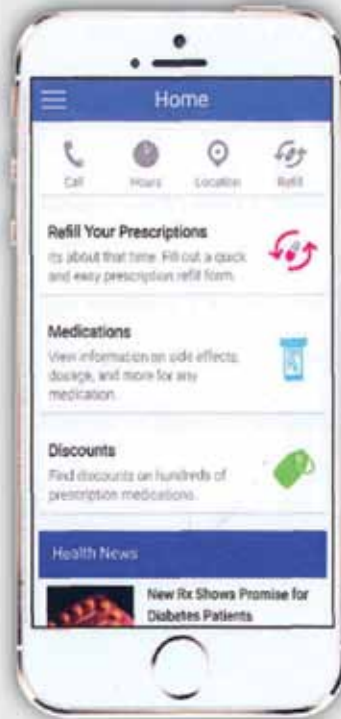
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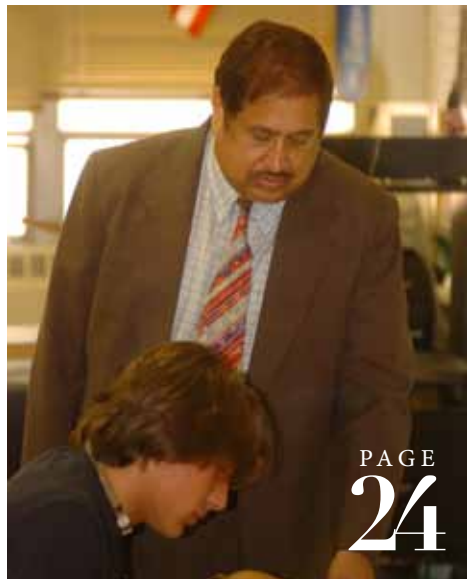
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CONTENTS



954 FINDS	8
MARY MINTZ	12
EZZELLS: SANTA STOPS HERE	16
MR. TAN	24
KRYSTAL HAWKINS	32
SCOTTS: WILDLIFE HABITAT	36
MILLIE-CHRISTINE MCKOY	44
PARKINSON'S: HOPE	58
WORLD WAR I: 'RED HAND'	66
KARLYN STEVENS	74
NORTH STATE GAME CLUB	80
SOCIAL EVENTS	86
LIFE OF A WOODSMAN	95
EVENT CALENDAR	98
THE SHORT ROW	105



The Millie-Christine McKoy family
Cover photo by Grant Merritt

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Mary Mintz is an active, much loved living legend

STORY CLARA CARTRETTE

PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT

Mary Wyche Mintz is a living legend who continues to educate people, although she has been a retired teacher for many years. She's 99 years old, but is still active in the community. She is a member of and still active in a number of service organizations, including the Daughters of the American Revolution, FBLA Honorary Life Member, FFA Honorary Chapter Member, Lake Waccamaw Book Club, United Daughters of the Confederacy, Southeastern North Carolina Genealogy Society, Alpha Delta Kappa Honorary Teachers Society and Honorary Life Membership presented by the Presbyterian Women (Presbyterian USA).

Susan Wood said that Mintz has been a judge for the A.R. Ammons Poetry Contest since it began. She also busies herself doing other good works, such as a major undertaking of researching and writing a book, "A History of Lake Waccamaw Presbyterian Church." Ever the modest woman, she sought no credit for her tremendous research and writing the book about her church.

A teacher is born

Mary Clayton Wyche Mintz was born at home in Hallsboro on May 11, 1918, the oldest child of James Avery Wyche and Olive McBryde Clark Wyche. She had six siblings, Graham, Paul, Cyril, Brett, Neil (a "blue baby" who died after three days) and one sister, Amy McBryde. She lives in the house where she was born, a historic home built around 1882.

She decided at an early age that she wanted to be a teacher, possibly influenced by both parents, who were teachers. Her mother taught school until she married, and her father taught for a few years before becoming a mail carrier. He also worked part time at Pierce and Co. after his father died and eventually became part owner of the Hallsboro store.

Mary attended school in a large wooden building that still stands on Red Bug Road. She attended grades one through five before going to the new brick structure on Hwy. 74, which is now Hallsboro Middle School. After graduating from Hallsboro High School in 1934, she attended Meredith College, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1938. In

Mary met Harry Luther Mintz Jr. while they were students at UNC, and they were married about 10 years later. Although she was Presbyterian, they were married in the Hallsboro Baptist Church because the Presbyterian Church would not accommodate all of the wedding guests. She and her sister Amy McBryde Wyche had a double wedding and wore identical dresses.

Mary and Harry lived in Harry's hometown, Shallotte, but after her mother's death they moved to Hallsboro so she could keep house for her father. They had three children, Graham Wyche Mintz, Mary McBryde Mintz and Henry Luther Mintz. Mary's husband Harry was born Dec. 13, 1916 and passed away March 19, 1987 at age 70.

Mary taught high school for more than 50 years, in Wilmington, High Point and Hallsboro. She mainly taught English, but also taught some Spanish, French and history classes.

Mrs. Mintz notes that she made many trips to Elizabethtown, the capital of the Coastal Carolina Presbytery, to gather her church's history and she talked to a lot of church members and former pastors. She credits Donna Brown Askew with typing the information and gives credit to Henry B. Wyche Jr. and her daughter, Mary McBryde, for their assistance.

To talk with a former student of Mary Mintz is to hear what an excellent and interesting teacher she was. Some years ago, Kenneth Smith shared his love and respect for Mintz

as a teacher and told about her generosity. By request of *The News Reporter*, he wrote a few comments about her for this story:

A student speaks

"When Hallsboro High School's class of 1967 had its 50th Reunion on July 8, 2017, there was a sense of anticipation in the air with everyone — we all could hardly wait for the arrival of Mrs. Mary Wyche Mintz,



Mary Mintz talks about *Kin'lin'*

1940 she earned a master's degree at UNC Chapel Hill and later attended Columbia University in New York to study English. She spent a summer in England studying Shakespeare, living in a manor house on an estate owned by a viscount. She also traveled to Mexico with her sister for a summer to study Spanish, and they lived in the home of a wealthy family.

our beloved high school English, literature, Spanish and all-about-life teacher. We were all so disappointed that she was unable to make the reunion. She relayed to a fellow classmate later that she 'clean forgot' about the reunion. She apologized and went on in her class wordsmith fashion to add that the expression she had used as her excuse was certainly coined in Columbus County. This is classic 'Miss Mintz.'

"One of the reasons I was so looking forward to seeing her after some 50 years was to rekindle our friendship and to thank her in person for all the tools she taught me to use over the years in continuing to learn by reading and listening and applying myself. I had recently seen an article in *The News Reporter* describing Mrs. Mintz's latest project that she had recently completed, a book about the history of her Lake Waccamaw Presbyterian Church. When I read the article I just had to send a note to the paper, as she would say, to put in my two cents' worth.

"My two cents was praise for all she tried to teach me and gratitude for some of the special things that we shared. One of the special things that in retrospect I probably should not have shared was a story about my graduation. As I told *The News Reporter*,

times were very hard when I was growing up and I had managed to earn enough money driving a bus and working on weekends at Belk's to open my own checking account. I was so proud to write one of my first checks for my cap and gown for graduation."

Teacher's gift

"When graduation ceremonies were over on that warm May day in 1967, Mrs. Mintz walked up to me and handed me a small white box that I thanked her for and I gave her my first and only hug for being so kind," Smith wrote. "Later that day I remembered the box, opened it and found my cap and gown check torn in half with a note thanking me for the pleasure of teaching me. What a gift indeed.

"Several weeks after I sent my note to the paper, I found a small brown handmade envelope in my post office box. On the front it said simply, Ken Smith, Creston, NC...no post office box, no address, just my name and the little crossroads where Linda and I now live. In a few special words in that note, 'Miss Mintz' gave me another gift by thanking me for my note to the editor and waving away 50 years with a simple wish that I had a wonderful life so far... and adding that she did not remember the check in the box. She

never forgot anything. That's why I regret sharing our secret. It was intended to be just that. What another gift indeed.

"As a result of my letter to the paper, I became acquainted with one of my neighbors in the High Country, Elizabeth Allen Andrews, who compiled some of the history of Mary Wyche Mintz. In our class reunion I just had to grin and act a little foolish as I teared up talking about our guest of honor who could not be with us. I spoke of her and about her book on the history of her church. I reminded all my classmates of her introducing us to Japanese Haiku and iambic pentameter and my first taste of guacamole in her Spanish class.

"I spoke of her persistence in helping me to attend the charter class of the North Carolina Governor's School in 1962. I recalled the production of Thornton Wilder's 'Our Town' in our high school auditorium in the fall of 1962. I was so proud to show my classmates some of what I had learned during the summer. And I ended my comments about our absentee guest of honor by reciting some of the prologue to Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales' for a special classmate who I am sure was influenced to become a teacher by Mrs. Mintz, just as two of my sisters were.



Mary Mintz, Betty Timberlake and Billy Shipman

“The fact that I am writing this at the request of the paper is evidence that she is still challenging her students, me for one. She had a fervent life of teaching in the classroom and is still teaching outside the classroom. She sent me a copy of her book with a note on the flyleaf promising she would ‘never forget what a good student’ I was. That’s what made so many more good students than just me. I sent her a note asking her to promise that she will be at our 51st class reunion next year... when we can help celebrate the 100th birthday of our beloved ‘Miss Mintz.’ From one of her proud students, Kenneth Smith, Creston, North Carolina.”

Another of her students, Patsy Wright, a former Miss Columbus County, is now living in Clayton and is an assistant principal in a Wake County school.

“I owe that to Mrs. Mintz,” she said.

Andrews researches Wyche

A lot of information for this story was the result of Elizabeth Allen Andrews’ research of Mintz, the result of Andrews’ curiosity to

learn more about Mary Wyche Mintz. Of her research and writing a book about the Lake Presbyterian Church, Andrews said (two years ago), “What an outstanding accomplishment for anyone, but especially a lady who is so capable

“I am in awe of Mary’s knowledge, talents and abilities, and honored to know such a fine lady who has been a teacher and mentor to thousands during a teaching career spanning 50 years. Some students who complained, ‘Mrs.

excited about our newly found friendship and look forward to learning even more about her in days to come. She is amazing and an inspiration to those who know her, and most certainly me. It’s been interesting and a joy to talk and visit with her.”

Andrews said she had been sitting beside Mary in church and they had truly bonded. “I have known her for years, but not in a personal way. I just love her!”

She taught one of my daughters who at the age of 52 can still recite the prologue to ‘*Canterbury Tales*.’ I told that to Mary and it made her proud as a teacher.” Andrews said that her daughter, Melany Wayne, laughs and says she still remembers it because she “had to go back to Mrs. Mintz about 50 times to recite it.

If you stumbled, Mrs. Mintz sent you right out to come back another time until you could recite it perfectly without hesitation.”



A copy of a *Kin'lin'* magazine.

at the age of 97 years.” She said she knew many pages of a book could be filled with stories from Mrs. Mintz’s teaching career “and if I were a ‘real’ writer I would attempt such a book.

Mintz is just too hard!’ look back and are thankful to have been her students. This independent lady still drives, shops, cooks, cleans and writes, amongst other things, at the fantastic age of 97! I am

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Ezzells celebrate Christmas
in every room

STORY DIANA MATTHEWS
PHOTOS FULLER ROYAL

“No one loves Christmas more than Michelle does,” says Jerry Ezzell of Whiteville. His wife particularly loves decorating their home with the tree ornaments, Santa figures, snowmen and Nativity sets she has collected throughout their 40 years of marriage.

The Ezzells moved to 204 E. College Street in 2010. The two-story Georgian style brick house was built about 1937 for the family of Dr. William H. and Elizabeth W. Hoskins.

“It’s a well-built house. It’s still in good condition,” says Jerry Ezzell, owner of Ezzell Custom Construction.

The Ezzells’ neatly-landscaped front yard features a tallowood tree decorated with lights, two decorated topiaries in urns, Christmas banners and a “Santa stops here” sign. Two small lighted trees on the porch flank a large red-ribboned wreath on the lime-green front door. Passers-by can see two lighted trees through the ground floor windows and two upstairs.

Behind the lime green door

How many Christmas trees do the Ezzells have? “I’m not really sure,” Michelle Ezzell says. Upon reflection, she answers, “Six big ones, two little ones. Two never come down.”

A large tree framed by the living room windows is the biggest and has the widest array of ornaments of any of the eight trees in the

house. The mixture of colored and white lights “shows up your ornaments better” than plain white lights. This tree features ornaments handmade by Michelle Ezzell and her second-grade students at Columbus Christian Academy in the seventies before she returned to school to become a registered nurse.

Wooden building blocks, topped with ribbon bows and jingle bells, are the same ones her sons Isaac and Jonathan played with. There are some simple bells with bows as well. She can date the ages of her handmade macramé candy canes by recalling how old the boys were when she stopped making them.

“I must’ve made this one about 31 years ago, when Isaac was little,” she said. “I quit making things for a while after that because both boys were getting into everything.”

Isaac Ezzell recalls that his mother “decorated every bit of the house,” displaying “more Santa Clauses than any store.” Before they began buying artificial trees, the family used to get natural trees from the mountains when his Uncle Bobby would bring down a trailer load.

As far back as Isaac Ezzell can remember, extended family members from Abbotsburg to near the beach have gathered at his parents’ house on Christmas Eve to celebrate and hear

Michelle Ezzell’s father read about the birth of Christ from the Bible. “We’ve never missed that.”



Michelle and Jerry Ezzell



The Ezzells begin decorating in early November.

SANTA STOPS HERE

Other homemade decorations on the living room tree include stained-glass style pieces made in the oven by Isaac and Jonathan when they were old enough to help out.

The living room displays an army of varied Santa Claus figures: 11 on the mantel, nine small ones on an end table and 15 more standing in corners of the floor or on other surfaces.

"I've collected them over the years," Ezzell says. "I used to collect snowmen and nativity sets, too, but I had to stop."

"My prayers were answered," Jerry Ezzell says with a smile.

A team effort

Although Michelle Ezzell is the avid collector, the Ezzells, who celebrated their 40th anniversary June 25th, work as a team for weeks to put their displays up.

They have dedicated an area of their attic to the artificial trees and decorations. The first week in November, they begin setting up, beginning with the living room tree. "We get it all up by Thanksgiving," Michelle Ezzell said. "We work a couple of hours a night and on Sunday evenings."

With lots of specialty ornaments accumulated, Ezzell likes to give each of the smaller trees a theme. "The living room tree is the mainstay. The rest of the ornaments go on there."

The trees stay up until after the new year, then come down room by room. "We take our time," says Ezzell.

Theme trees

Across the hall from the living room is a cozy, bookshelf-lined den. The tree under the TV is decorated with snowman ornaments while



Owl tree



Snowman tree with black top hat.



“Eve” and her tree skirt.

more than 30 snowman figures look down from the top shelves.

A tree in the guest room next door to the den also features snowmen and large snowflake ornaments. Michelle Ezzell topped the tree with a large “Frosty” looking top hat. “It was originally red,” she says, “but I thought it would look better if I painted it black. The ornaments have moved from room to room. I like to try different things. I like to change things up.” A snowpeople nativity set combines two of Ezzell’s collecting passions.

In the kitchen is a narrower tree decorated with rustic-looking ornaments made using burlap, feathers, buttons and animal figures. “I just noticed there’s not one Santa on this tree,” Ezzell says. There is a good-sized Santa standing on the floor beneath, though.

Up a stairway decked with leg-dangling elves and snowpeople are four more trees. The master bedroom has a tree decorated in silver and white. In another bedroom stands one of the two trees that stay up year-round. The Ezzells obtained “Eve,” as they call this tree, through a silent auction fundraiser for the Columbus Regional Hospital Foundation in 2015. Eve is part dressmaker’s dummy and part tree. Or she could have been someone’s take on the term “tree skirt.”

Michelle Ezzell replaced the original bodice fabric and many of the balls to harmonize with the colors of the room. “I just try to color coordinate,” she says.

Eve seems to be Jerry Ezzell’s least-favorite tree. Not that the Ezzells are planning to move any time soon, but he said that, if they do move, “She’ll stay with the house.”

Remembering with love

On the landing overlooking College St. is the other year-round tree. Michelle Ezzell says, “It was our first second tree.” In 2002, the Ezzells’ younger son Jonathan died in an accident at the age of 17. Members of the Whiteville High School Marching Wolfpack Band donated a natural tree to the Cape Fear Hospice festival of trees in Jonathan’s memory, decorating it with handmade

paper stars and other personally crafted ornaments. The person who bought the tree at the fundraiser auction took the ornaments off the natural tree and presented them to the Ezzells.

When Isaac and Stacy Ezzell’s son Abel spends the night with his grandparents, he sleeps in a room across the hall from theirs. For Christmas, his grandmother decorates a tabletop tree with ornaments representing owls and other animals. Three Santas stand in the room, one wearing hunting clothes.

Now that Abel is 4 years old, said Isaac Ezzell, “I get to see him enjoy those things.”



Santa figures guard the family stockings.



The Ezzells carry the festive theme into the dining room.

That’s not the last of the trees. There’s a ninth one in the area Michelle Ezzell calls “the junk room,” too: it has skinny elf legs sticking out the bottom.

Christmas all over the house

During the Christmas season, Michelle Ezzell takes down two pieces of art from the living room and den walls and replaces them with two Santa portraits, one of which she painted in an art class.

“Daddy always told her she should’ve been an interior designer,” said Isaac Ezzell.

For someone with no formal training in decorating, Michelle Ezzell creates an impressive display by bringing together things she likes – lots of them – and shifting them around until she is happy with the overall effect. She doesn’t mind taking the time because she enjoys the process as well as the result.

Her advice for others who want to spread Christmas spirit around their homes: “It doesn’t have to be expensive to look good.” She remembers buying decorations from the Jones’s and Roses stores when they were in downtown Whiteville, as well as Kmart, Dollar General, Big Lots and Cracker Barrel. “I just try to keep it economical and pretty.”

And in case you weren’t sure of it yet, she says, “I love Santas.”

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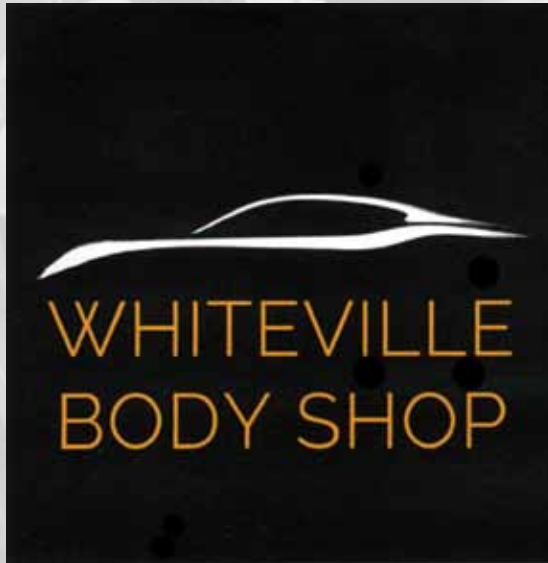
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Mr. Tan with his WHS students at a “Kiss the Goat” fundraiser held by the school system.

Mr. Tan

STORY & PHOTOS CAROLINE HENSLEY

Whiteville High School math teacher Sunil Taneja has taught all over the world, but ultimately, he put his roots down at WHS.

Tan is an iconic figure among many of his former students and their parents.

He established a math club on campus, primarily to raise money through candy sales for annual math scholarships. Tan is at most football and basketball games selling candy, which goes back to support scholarships for his math students.

Students are enthusiastic in their gratitude for Tan’s help:

“Mr. Tan is definitely one of a kind. He’s very passionate about teaching math and is always willing to help. He also has a great sense of humor and loves to make you laugh. Glad to say I’ve had him as a teacher,” said Skylar Smith.

“Funny and dedicated! He put in a lot of extra time for his students,” said Laura Nye.

Tan has always stressed to his students that they need to make learning a priority. “You not need boyfriend. You need to kick him,’ ‘Fine, fine you not want to pay attention,

you fail, I don’t care.’ He never meant this,” said Bree Sanders-Turner.

“He always told his students exactly what was on his mind but he always made sure he smoothed it over afterwards and let them know that he genuinely cared. He only wanted what was best for his students. Not to mention, the man is a brilliant genius.”

His early life

Reared in a rural area of India, Tan was the third of five boys to father, Mana Ram, and mother, Vichar Wanti. They were poor poultry farmers, but despite the lack of funds, his parents always pushed for their children to reach their highest potential, especially in education.

“They were guiding us to go wherever we wanted. They earned money for us to go and study,” Tan said. “Their aim was always that if we study, it’s the best investment in the world.”

All five brothers attended university in India with the help of their parents. Tan acquired a Bachelor of Science degree in not

only chemistry, but physics and biology as well.

However, Tan strove for more.

He wanted to attain his master’s degree, but because his family could not afford to send him to graduate school, he found a job at the university working as a demonstrator in the labs alongside a professor. His high grades and love for chemistry gave him the opportunity, though it put him two years behind on starting his master’s program.

When Tan decided to apply for the chemistry program, he was two months late and the seats had already been filled. He had already resigned from his position as a lab demonstrator, and his heart was set on achieving his goal.

“My brother-in-law, he was a professor at the same university – economics professor. So I talked to him. He said, ‘There’s a vacancy in mathematics.’ Then my brothers told me that it’s better you go if you want to do your master’s.”

Instead of waiting another year for an open seat in the chemistry program, Tan got

his master's in mathematics. He had gained the seat, but achieving his goal was not that easy.

Because he was two months late in applying, he spent long, hard hours both night and day to catch up and surpass his classmates. He made an effort to ask other students for the notes he had missed, studied during his free time, and worked as hard as he could to reach graduation.

After two years, his work had paid off. Not only did he gain his master's degree, he was also at the top of his class in the university. He received a gold medal for his achievements and was carried around the university by his friends, who were just as ecstatic as he was for his accomplishment.

Cell phones were not invented yet, so Tan sent a letter home, telling his family the good news.

A teacher around the world

After graduation, job offers began rolling in for the top student from the university. Tan was given the opportunity to study for his PhD at the same institution, but after discussing the idea with his parents, they suggested that he work for a while so that he could better afford the program.



Mr. Tan with his wife, Neelam.

He began working for the same university in its mathematics department, and it was there that he met his wife, Neelam. She was an English literature professor, while Tan taught statistics and calculus. They would later have two children together: Nikil and Niti.

After a year of teaching at the university, Tan decided to try something new. He had received several offers for teaching outside of India due to his excellent credentials, and with the support of his new wife, he decided to head to the Middle East.

Their stay in the Middle East only lasted about seven years. They ended up in Kenya for a year before moving back to the Middle East.

Their next stop was New Zealand. Tan got a job as a professor in a college. His wife and son joined him in the new country while his daughter studied for her own degree at Stony Brook University in New York.

After working for three years, Tan saw an advertisement in a college gazette for teaching vacancies in the United States. He applied and was immediately given an interview. Of all the people who applied for the mathematics position, he was the one chosen from New Zealand.

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With his ticket already paid for, he flew to the United States, where he underwent more interviews before he was given an option: either he could go to Colorado or to North Carolina. Because of the cold weather in Colorado, he chose North Carolina.

In Raleigh, he took short training classes on driving in the United States, proper classroom etiquette, and the overall culture. He was then put in a van and driven to downtown Whiteville in late 2000, where he was dropped off on the curb.

“I was sitting there, just waiting... waiting.”

It didn't take long for the locals to reach out to Tan. Because he did not have credit cards – only cash – he was at a disadvantage. He had no place to live and no furniture, and he was across the world from his family.

It was the parents of his new students who came together to help the new Whiteville High School teacher.

“I didn't have anything in my apartment. They filled my apartment. They gave me my bed. They gave me my TV. They gave me everything. I'm surviving because of them.”

His career in Whiteville

Seventeen years later, he considers Whiteville to be his home away from home. He holds a great appreciation for his students, their parents, and the people of our small community who have welcomed him with open arms.

“It's my second house. When I go home during the summer vacation, I tell my wife I want to go back.”

While his wife is a primary school teacher in New Zealand, she manages to visit during the Easter holidays each year. His children and grandchildren still reside in New Zealand.

In the years he has spent at Whiteville High School, he has made a lasting impact. He has pushed his students to reach their full potential through hard work and determination.

“He called my mom every

single night to make sure I was studying,” said Andrew Odom. “He influenced me to be eager to learn and to have an appreciation for the luxury of being able to learn.”

“I had two classes with him. I've graduated college and he still calls me to this day and checks in to see how I'm doing. Mr. Tan is passionate about teaching math and the success of his students. Whiteville is extremely lucky to

have him and he deserves a raise,” said Julia Dail.

“He was always willing to go that extra mile for his students,” said Alexis Carter, “especially if they were not understanding his academic material. I loved his sense of humor and how he set very high standards for his students. Oh yeah, can't forget the good ole saying “BREAK IT” when a calculator would fall on the floor. When I think of WHS,

I think about him and Mrs. Nichols' class.”

He has watched his students grow to become successful adults, with a few of them returning as parents of his more recent students. Many have gone on to experience other endeavors, but have continued to rely on Tan for guidance and friendship.

“Mr. Tan has impacted my life like no other teacher,” said Kendall Bush. “When I moved to New Zealand to study two years ago, he made sure I was in contact with his family to make sure I had everything I could need or want, not to mention the countless dinners his wife cooked for me at his request. He is also the most dedicated teacher. I stayed after school every day for tutoring with him all four years of high school, even if he wasn't my math teacher. His love for teaching and his students has always far surpassed any other teacher I've ever had, even in college. He wants everyone to work hard and go far in life. He's the best! Whiteville is so, so lucky to have him! He still Skypes me from time to time.”

This year makes 40 years that Tan has been teaching. He prides himself on the success of his students and his time spent in this little corner of North Carolina.

“Life goes on like this, but I am very happy because the atmosphere is very good here. It made me stay 17 years. That's a big part of my life.”



The Taneja family: Sunil, Nikil, Niti and Neelam



Dedicated to students' success, Mr. Tan offers assistance.



Caroline Hensley

As the newest member of The News Reporter's media department, Caroline Hensley is a longtime resident of Whiteville and a senior at UNC Pembroke, where she will graduate at the end of the fall semester.

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A woman with long, straight dark hair is seated at a dark wood piano. She is wearing a black long-sleeved top and blue jeans. She is looking down at the keys while her right hand is on the keyboard. A silver microphone is positioned in front of her, and she appears to be singing. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting like a studio or a living room. The lighting is soft, highlighting her face and the piano keys.

Krystal Hawkins
up & coming vocalist

STORY CLARA CARTRETTE
PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT

When Krystal Hawkins was growing up, she was exposed to all of the finer things that little girls were involved in.

She took piano, guitar, tap and ballet lessons; she played softball and soccer and did other things that keep a little girl active and creative. However, she didn't stick with any of those opportunities. The thing that interested her most was her own idea — singing. And now she sings for audiences in places such as The Cape Fear Winery in Elizabethtown and The Chef and the Frog in Whiteville. Her audiences must think she's pretty good, as her "trusty tip jar" serves her well.

Hawkins, 23, graduated from Whiteville High School in 2012 and attended Southeastern Community College for two years, working on an associate degree in business. She also learned phlebotomy.

"I wanted to be a veterinarian," she said.

She had always enjoyed singing and, while waitressing at both The Chef and the Frog and The Cape Fear Winery, it was a natural for her to sing there. While working at The Chef and the Frog with Brad Davis and David Beaver, she learned that there was a recording studio at Brad's home. "I

had a song I practiced at home by myself, using a karaoke machine," she said. "I used to wait until my family was gone and I'd listen to it and re-do it over and over.

"Brad, David and I did two songs one day and recorded a video that was put on Facebook. It got a lot of views, comments and likes, and more than 100 shares," she said. "The song was 'Baby, I'm No Fool' by Melody Gardot and I bought the rights to sing it. I heard it while working at the restaurant and I found it on the Internet and liked it. Putting it on Facebook helped me record more songs and videos."

Hawkins said it will be an independent label that will produce her CDs, and she has had a record company approach her. She expects her recordings to be available by December.

"I didn't expect many people at my first show at the downtown restaurant in Whiteville, but every seat was filled," she said. "Brad and David set it up for me and I had a tip jar that got filled up, and the restaurant was filled. I wasn't expecting that."

She also did a show at Cape Fear Winery "and it was packed," she said. Hawkins said she enjoyed singing when she was a young girl but stopped for a while when she was

"9 or so."

Krystal is also a gifted artist. She began art classes at the Clarkton School of Discovery with Teresa Weubbles. In high school Mark Bannerman was her art teacher and she won many awards for her paintings. She auditioned for the "The Wizard of Oz" in high school and made it as a munchkin, "but I focused mostly on painting," she said.

"For so long I didn't think I could do it," she said of singing, "but I got back into it and I wanted to make CDs for my family. Most of the people who come to my shows want CDs." She said her music was more theatrical style at first, and then she started singing with a deeper voice.

She noted that she has had no voice lessons "since I was a munchkin," except being in the chorus, which practiced in groups, and she had no individual lessons.

"I do mostly jazz music and I want to do something that older and younger people will enjoy," she said. "On the jazz LP coming out you'll hear Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald and some modern music. I want the third one to be all original songs that I wrote.

"It's been an exciting time," Hawkins said of her musical experience. "I went from carrying a video on my phone to hav-



Krystal Hawkins breaking into the music industry

KRYSTAL HAWKINS

ing people approach me about it. Brad, his wife Corri and David are good people who have helped me so much in this endeavor and they are so patient with me. When we are recording it takes a lot to keep me from laughing.” She said her family is happy for her. “They knew I could sing before I did and knew that I hadn’t discovered myself yet.”

Hawkins said she had additional shows scheduled in Wilmington and Raleigh and another show at the Cape Fear Winery, where she works as a waitress Monday through Thursday and on Saturday.

Krystal is the daughter of Earlene Hawkins and her grandparents are John and Patty Stacker. John is a vocalist with his brothers Josh and James, so there are probably some musical genes that transferred to Krystal. She said her grandfather had a band when he lived up north. Her sisters are Hillary and Megan, and Hillary’s daughter Kali, just a year old, is already trying to sing.

Her cousin Amanda Hayes and Amanda’s mom Ressie and her Aunt Sally also sing.

“We used to sing Brittany Spears and Spice Girl songs and have our own shows when we were younger,” she said. “I took dance lessons until I was 16 and Megan took until she was 22. I quit everything except music and art.”

So, Krystal, keep that “trusty tip jar” handy at your performances and it will surely keep filling up. She said the tip jar was a gift from Kayla Ward, wife of Dr. Ernie Ward, who told her to “make some money.”

Krystal hopes to make music that everyone can enjoy and is very thankful for her family and friends who continue to love and support her.



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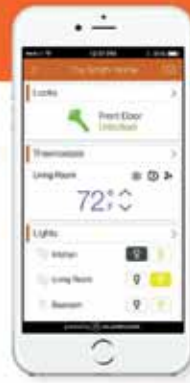
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Scotts live in harmony with nature year-round

STORY DIANA MATTHEWS

PHOTOS FULLER ROYAL & DIANA MATTHEWS

When David and Donna Scott first “gave up on grass” and began filling their yard with lower-maintenance plants, they were “not very scientific,” said David Scott. They just chose plants they liked and that wildlife would also like.

In the decade since then, they have committed to plant nothing but native species, all of them perennials and many of them evergreens. “Friends don’t let friends plant annuals,” they say.

The view from their screened front porch takes in azaleas, wax myrtles, liriope, hosta and dogwoods under the shade of tall pines. In one sunny spot next to the road, gold lantana grows side by side with a groundcover of purple wandering Jew. Beyond the road stands a patch of wildflowers. A vine-covered bank, partially shaded by cypresses, faces Lake Waccamaw.

“We’ve always been curious” about nature, the Scotts say. They enjoy “spying” in friends’ gardens and borrowing cuttings to grow at home. They enjoy watching and identifying birds and sailing on the lake.

For about 20 years, the couple led canoe outings to other lakes and waterways on behalf of the Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum. “We hoped that when people saw the beauty of those places, they would want to protect it,” Donna Scott said.

Donna Scott is a retired nurse and biology teacher, and her husband has a degree in wildlife biology. David Scott managed a plumbing and electrical supply company and for a time worked for the Wildlife Resources Commission.



David and Donna Scott

As members of the Waccamaw Riverkeepers Association, the Scotts take water samples from two sites on their side of the lake every two weeks. “It takes about an hour; it’s not a big deal,” they said.

Retired physical therapist Jo Wayman cultures the collected material in a lab at Lake Waccamaw State Park. Wayman is “an absolutely wonderful volunteer scientist,” said Donna Scott.

Five years’ worth of lake and river quality

records are now archived at Coastal Carolina University, providing a baseline of normal conditions in both Lake Waccamaw and the Waccamaw River.

Going wild

The yard had several pine trees and two dogwoods when they bought it as newlyweds nearly 40 years ago, and they planted more trees and shrubs. Living in the shade “saves a tremendous amount of energy,” David Scott said. “We educated our daughter with what we saved on air conditioning.”

As the Scotts’ trees grew taller, shade increased and grass decreased. Finally, 10 years ago, the Scotts replaced what grass they had with shrubs, ferns, and groundcovers. First they had the soil thoroughly tilled, then they laid down six to eight inches of mulch.

“We increased the organic material. That is the secret,” David Scott said. They put stone pathways where they wanted to walk between clumps of ferns and Lenten rose.

The Scotts allow volunteer plants, such as the Spanish moss that has appeared on some of the trees nearest the lake, if they think the newcomers will fit in. Spider lilies have appeared in unexpected places; the Scotts deny planting any of them but are happy to have them.

“A yard does not necessarily equal a lawn,” said David Scott. “I think people believe, ‘I’ve got to have a lawn so I can have a lawn mower.’ This way is so much more fun. It’s amazing how much more wildlife we see since converting the yard away from grass,

and how quickly it happened.”

Frogs were the first to arrive, then toads, “a lot of turtles and a lot of lizards,” fireflies, and a few harmless ribbon snakes and black snakes.

Observations and tips

The Scotts have experimented with collecting and germinating amaryllis seeds, just to “see what’s out there.” They have about 50 small amaryllis plants growing now, but the crop has had “a relatively high failure rate” on account of the shade. Sunlight is “one of the critical factors in what will grow and what won’t,” they say.

Wildlife gardeners, like any gardeners, should “pay particular attention to a plant’s requirements.” For instance, on their pier, they have sun-loving basil and cattails. To thrive in the drying wind and hot sun, “something has to be mighty tough.”

New wildlife gardeners need to be patient. “It takes several years” for a wildlife habitat to mature, the Scotts say. “Our yard looks a lot different now than it did two years ago, or than it will look two years from now.”

Donna Scott warns that a habitat garden is going to be more wild than some people want: “Some people don’t like the random, unmanicured look.”

Even though perennials “pretty much take care of themselves once established,” the Scotts say some weeding still needs to be done now and then. Smilax is “such a devil,” said Donna Scott.

When allowing for future growth of the plants now in the yard, “We’re about out of space,” said David Scott. The back yard has mostly trees around a gravel driveway, with the large compost pile that “David is constantly stirring and adding to,” Donna Scott said.

If a storm took down the major shade trees, “We’d have to go back to the drawing board,” said David Scott. Fortunately the pines, which reach over the house, suffered very little damage from Hurricane Matthew.

When trees grow close to one another, Donna Scott pointed out, their roots form a thick mat, making them harder to uproot than a solitary tree, she said.



A Gulf Fritillary visits the lantana on the pier.



Most of the front yard is now in groundcover.

Making it official

In 2015, the Scotts applied for certification as a National Wildlife Federation Certified Habitat. They paid a \$20 application fee and took advantage of the NWF’s “wonderful educational tool” online to design a

wildlife habitat.

To qualify as a NWF certified habitat, a site must incorporate the following features:

- Food – three sources, such as plant seeds and nuts or man-made feeders. (More examples in each category are found at www.nwf.org.) The Scotts added one large seed birdfeeder and two hummingbird nectar feeders. Their dogwoods produce berries, and their flowers provide nectar and pollen.

- Water – one source of clean water, for example a rain garden, a pond or a butterfly puddling area. The Scotts added two bird-baths.

- Cover – at least two places where creatures can find shelter from the weather and predators, for example the Scotts’ rocks, groundcovers and dense shrubs. They also put up a bat house built by their neighbor Rick Dorsey. Dorsey’s bird and bat houses are for sale at the Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum.

- Places to raise young – at least two places animals can engage in courtship behavior, mate and then bear and raise young, such as a nesting box, a dead tree or host plants for caterpillars. Several bird nesting boxes meet this requirement in the Scotts’ habitat.

The NWF also requires a habitat owner to employ methods from at least two categories of what they call “sustainable practices.” These include soil and water conservation strategies, control of exotic species and trading chemical pesticides and fertilizers for more organic methods, such as the Scotts’ compost. Their lake bank loaded with natural vegetation helps reduce erosion and chemical runoff from the road.

David Scott said he is “constantly looking ahead” to see what the coming season will bring. “I like to watch things grow. I don’t remember where the plants were

last year, until they emerge again. It’s always fun to see things flower, and they flower at different times.”

Although spring is probably his favorite season in the yard, said David Scott, summer brings loads of butterflies and the cool

WILDLIFE HABITAT

seasons have their attractions as well.

“We spread a good layer of compost sometime between fall and spring,” he said, and they allow fallen leaves to decompose where they land. “That’s the beauty of it.”

An exception to the no-annuals rule is the patch of sun-loving wildflowers that Donna Scott planted in the spring when someone gave her a packet of mixed seeds. Cosmos, aster and coreopsis seeds that aren’t eaten by the birds will bring a new crop of flowers in that spot next year.

Promoting yard-sized habitats is “just a very small part” of the NWF’s work to preserve wildlife, said David Scott.

The Scotts hope the wildlife habitat idea spreads to more homeowners in the area. “If other people adopt this model,” said David Scott, “it will help protect trees and the lake from toxic runoffs, fertilizer and pesticides.”

Plus, compared to what they used to have, this way is “just so much more fun.”



Moths, butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds are all pollinators.



Bee on ageratum



Orange lilies



Ginger lilies



Hot pink cosmos



Anole on aspidistra

Websites for more information

The full list of NWF habitat criteria: www.nwf.org

Monarch butterflies: www.monarchwatch.org

Honeybees, butterflies and other pollinators:
www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/Monarch_Butterfly/habitat

Native plants: www.audubon.org/content/why-native-plants-matter

Bats: [www.batconservation.org/help/bathouses/#section-Bat House](http://www.batconservation.org/help/bathouses/#section-Bat%20House)



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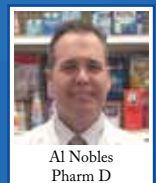
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Remembering Millie-Christine

Famous conjoined twins led a paradoxical and exemplary life

STORY RAY WYCHE WITH DIANA MATTHEWS

PHOTOS JACKIE LEWIS, GRANT MERRITT & SUBMITTED

An old maxim held that the way to determine whether or not a deceased person was truly one of social prominence was to ask, “Was his (or her) obituary in *The New York Times*?”

The mention of one’s demise in the *Times* was a distinction that one would not expect to be applied to a Columbus County resident, especially one who had been born into slavery, but it happened — in 1912.

The county citizen, or citizens, so honored was Millie-Christine McKoy, African-American conjoined twins born in the Welches Creek community east of Whiteville on July 11, 1851, and for all her life she had commanded attention far beyond her birthplace.

It was a life that defied expectations again and again. Said one of her great-great-nieces, Brenda McKoy Troy, “In a nutshell, Millie-Christine was the embodiment of Christ’s love. There was no pretense, no hidden agenda, just a loving individual.

“She is what we hold up to our youth as an example to emulate.

“Often we fall short of her example.” Nevertheless, Troy said, it is important to know “that you can live a life on this Earth that is pleasing to God in spite of disadvantages.”

She could be two or one, as it suited her

“Although we speak of ourselves in the plural, we feel as one person,” Millie-Christine wrote. Following Millie-Christine’s example of referring to herself often in the singular, other times in the plural, this article will do the same.

“Fearfully and wonderfully made: that’s how *she* thought of *herself*,” said Harold Troy, emphasizing the singular pronouns.

Troy heard about his great-great-great aunt or aunts from his father, James P. Troy, who grew up in Welches Creek. “Millie-Christine acted like a singular entity. She moved without one twin consulting the other to say, ‘Let’s go that way.’ They would have the same thought at the



Charles Eisenmann portrait

This portrait was taken in New York City after the twins’ return from Europe.

same time. They were doubly instantaneous. It's remarkable to me that two entities could think as one."

A 1902 publicity brochure, published while the twins toured with a circus, said, "Millie Christine, physically, has but one existence; mentally, she has two, perfectly developed. From the middle of the single spine grow two perfectly developed busts, each of which has a pair of fine arms, and terminates in an interesting head. Both heads are adorned with curling black hair; each has a pair of sparkling black eyes, constantly lit up by intelligence."

Yet one face was said to resemble her father; the other, her mother.

She could walk on four legs or two. Her biographer said, "She is a very graceful dancer, and executes the schottische, polka or waltz with equal ease."

The same publication said that the twins' two minds were independent of each other but had learned to agree on every subject: "...in no single instance has a particle of disagreement ever occurred to conflict with the happiness or comfort of either."

The musically talented twins could sing in two-part harmony. Christine took the soprano line and Millie the contralto.

But when she traveled by train, she carried letters signed by the heads of the various railroads, saying, "It is customary for Millie Christine, the dual woman, to require but one ticket. Please be governed accordingly..."

And if an unpersuaded conductor charged Millie-Christine for a second ticket, she pursued the matter until she got a refund from the railroad.

Some things are certain, though. She had four legs, four arms, two hearts, two brains and more than average intelligence and character.

Fame

In October 1878, the Philadelphia *Evening Telegraph* reported that the "Carolina Twins" had returned from a tour of England, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Hungary,

Austria, Holland and Russia. She had given "levees" to paying spectators and had received gifts of jewelry from royal patrons, including Britain's Queen Victoria, who commanded her appearance at least four times and gave her matching diamond hair ornaments.

Souvenir books sold to her tour audiences called her the "Two-headed Nightingale" and the "Eighth Wonder of the World."

The Liverpool *Daily Courier* described

Back in Philadelphia, the sisters were examined by surgeon W.H. Pancoast of Jefferson Medical College Hospital. The *Telegraph* article said that Millie-Christine walked into the room "like an expanded V, with a crab-like movement that was not ungraceful..."

Exams by Pancoast and other doctors over the years showed that the twins shared physical touch sensations below their junction, but Millie could not lift up Christine's legs, nor Christine Millie's legs. Their spines

were humped above the joined area. Christine was a bit taller than Millie and strong enough to pick Millie up by bending forward. They could not look each other directly in the face.

Christine's heart usually beat fewer times per minute than Millie's. Pancoast and several other doctors thought that Millie's heart was on the right side of her chest, but a cardiologist eventually stated that it was only shifted a bit toward her sternum.

Either one could fall asleep while the other remained awake. They did not necessarily share illnesses or headaches, but a severe migraine would affect both. They sewed their own clothes. Christine wrote most of their letters while Millie crocheted and dictated. Christine was easier to talk into things; Millie was the more dominant personality, said friends.

Said Brenda McKoy Troy, "Millie was the feisty one. She made the decisions and sort of spear-headed their more assertive moves. Her sister grounded her a little. They were good together and good for one another. My grandfather didn't remember them ever arguing."

The 1878 medical col-

lege visit was far from the first time the twins had been subjected to public anatomical examination. But Millie made sure it would be the last time.

The beginning

Although she was famous and wealthy in



NC Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

one of her appearances. "We can only say that an hour's audience with her yesterday afternoon proved her to be a cultured, self-possessed and accomplished person, who had a most singular attribute of being able to hold two totally distinct conversations at the same time with different persons..."

her adult years, she came into the world powerless, born to parents who were slaves of blacksmith and farmer Jabez McKay of the Welches Creek area.

The midwife thought Millie, whose estimated birth weight was five pounds, was a growth on the back of Christine, who presented first. The pair reportedly weighed a total of 17 pounds. Millie-Christine's parents' names were Monemia and Jacob McKay. Monemia McKay said that the birth was no more difficult than any of her previous seven births.

The left side of Millie's back joined the right side of Christine's from below the shoulder to below the waist. The family called the dual offspring "Sister."

The 1902 circus biography said, "At the time Mr. McCoy, being a man in very moderate circumstances, a plain farmer, thinking the girl would become a burden to him, and annoyed with the frequent visits of strangers to see her, determined to dispose of her."

At 10 months of age, Millie-Christine was sold for \$1,000 to the first of several showmen, John C. Pervis, who promoted her as a sideshow act at fairs. For 16 months Monemia McKay traveled with "Sister" and Pervis.

At this period, the public was enthralled by the bizarre, particularly things involving oddities of nature, and Millie-Christine filled that bill. As news of the child spread, the public came for

a look.

Millie-Christine was truly a static display in her beginning years in show business; in her sideshow appearances she only toddled onstage and appeared as an "abnormality of nature."

There were some doubters in the audiences; the rumor soon spread that what people were paying to see was merely two small girls strapped together at their midsections by a wide leather belt.

Her showman invited medi-

to Philadelphia without paying.

Smith covered Brower's payment and thus inadvertently became the owner of the missing twins. It would take a private detective more than two years to track them down. Their mother did not see the twins again until 1856.

But Millie always knew where Christine was, and vice versa.

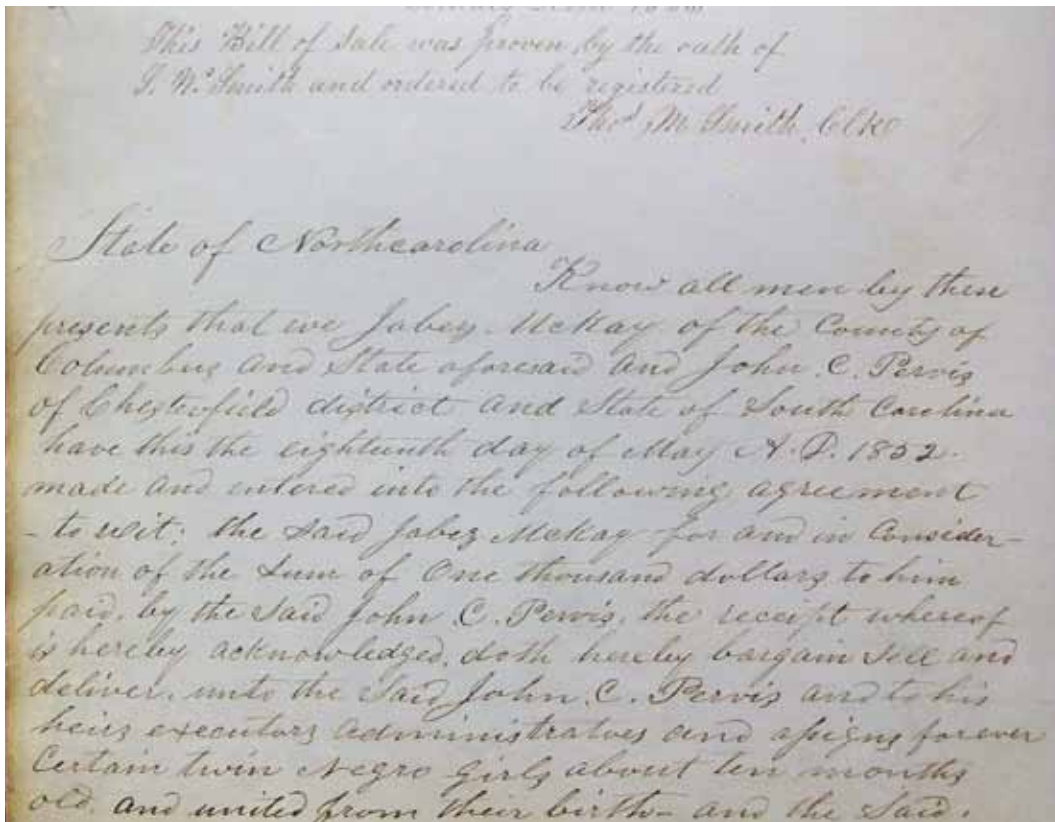
Selena Rowell believes that what allowed Millie-Christine to overcome the hurtful and unjust circumstances they suffered

published brief summaries of Millie-Christine's life, some are vague about how many times they were sold and how many times they were kidnapped before the age of six.

Even the twins' autobiography, published to bring in additional income when they were probably 17 or 18, leaves unanswered many of the questions that modern readers would like to pose about the early years. For instance, it begins by stating that the twins were born in 1852 rather than the well-documented date of 1851.

A doctor who interviewed them in the mid-1860s wrote to a colleague that the girls could "read tolerably well and (were) beginning to write." They were not far into that learning process when the autobiography was published, thus possibly had a co-author who added his or her spin to the story, or embellished the bare facts to make the book more saleable.

The kidnapper put Millie-Christine on display in New York City, then in Philadelphia, where he lost the girls to two other con men, William Thompson and William Millar. These showmen carried Millie-Christine to Canada and boarded a ship for England and Scotland. There they told audiences that the twins, now four years old, were voluntarily touring to raise money and free their family back home.



On May 18th, 1852, Jabez McKay agreed to "bargain sell and deliver...certain twin Negro girls about ten months old, and united from their birth" to John C. Pervis.

cal people to private viewings of the twins, stripped naked, in return for statements attesting to their conjoined condition. For years, it would be the girls' fate to be poked and prodded by strange men every time they arrived in a new city.

In 1853 a Mr. Brower bought the twins, backed financially by a successful Wadesboro merchant named Joseph P. Smith. Brower promptly lost them to a swindler, who absconded with them

was "the faith they had in God," and the fact that each supported and cared about the other. "They were one but they were two companions sharing life experiences. They had kinship, friendship all in one. It was duality and unity. We all need someone to talk to, to relate to, someone who understands us. They went through everything together."

Turbulent times

Although many authors have

Joann Martell, who in 2000 published the only book-length Millie-Christine biography, wrote that visitors often remarked on how cheerful and amiable the little girls were. The hype that they constantly heard about seeing their mother and father again probably contributed, said Martell, to their compliant behavior.

Bondage and freedom

A lengthy search by Smith's detective located Millie-Christine in Birmingham, England. Smith boarded a ship, taking with him Monemia McKay, who was pregnant, to claim the twins. A melodramatic reunion led to a police court hearing, followed by two re-kidnappings and a custody hearing, before a judge finally returned Millie-Christine to Monemia McKay's custody.

Even then, their mother and Smith briefly relented to let the twins be exhibited by Millar in Europe, but the deal soon went sour.

The twins' autobiography said, "Our mother... begged our good master to assist her and us children to reach the shores of our own beloved America. He yielded to her prayers and entreaties, and determined to set us free from a bondage so repulsive." Smith arranged a quick departure by the next steam ship to New York City.

Being set free from bondage to Millar did not mean freedom from slavery, however.

In England, mother and twins had been treated as free people by the courts. Monemia McKay gave birth during her three-month stay in England. She brought Millie-Christine and the new baby back to North Carolina in February 1857, re-entering slavery in the Smith household.

Many of the conventions of that day strike a modern person as impossibly exploitative and cruel. The idea of snatching children from their parents and trafficking them around a foreign country for the entertainment of strangers is revolting. But, considering how other little black children were being exploited for economic gain in those slavery days, Millie-Christine's plight caused no one any shock.

If Millie-Christine had been normal, non-conjoined twin sisters, they would have lived the same life as any other two enslaved little girls on Jabez McKay's farm.

Actually, children are still ex-

ploited today around the world in many ways, not that that makes what happened to Millie-Christine right.

These events happened during the tense eve of the war that Millie-Christine's autobiography euphemistically called "the domes-



Historian Ray Wyche helped obtain the historical marker that stands near Hwy. 74/76.

tic political troubles." Slavery was soon to end in the U.S., but things were going to get worse before they got better.

Turning points

The Smiths were devout Methodists. Joseph Smith had led a temperance campaign in Anson County, and he had Primitive Baptist relatives who were anti-slavery.

Smith was not an abolitionist, and he did not feel the need to honor Millar and Thompson's glib promise that the girls' earnings would free their family. But his Wadesboro household was a stable environment for Millie-Christine to have ended up in.

After coming into possession of the twins, he purchased Jacob and Monemia McKay and the rest of their children.

Smith wrote to a cousin that, aside from being a fascinating curiosity, the almost-6-year-old twins were "the most sprightly and intelligent children I ever saw of their age." With trustworthy management, he thought they could be "a fortune."

Perceiving Millie-Christine's potential to produce a larger income, Joseph Smith's wife began cultivating the twins' singing and dancing abilities. Millie-Christine would no longer just stand on stage and turn around; she would be a real star entertainer.

But Joseph and Mary Smith's attitude was not purely exploitative. The Smiths also taught Millie-Christine to read, in defiance of the law. The twins credited Mary Smith with training them in the Christian faith. During their wandering days, they "had heard the Supreme Being alluded to, but not in tones of love and reverence, but to give force to some angry expression."

Millie-Christine thrived in Wadesboro, albeit in slavery, surrounded by their parents and siblings and under the tutoring of Mary Smith.

The autobiography tells that the girls traveled under Joseph Smith's management until 1860, when he saw that war was likely to begin; he then brought Millie-Christine home from touring. He died in late 1862. "We were old enough then to mourn the loss of our good master, who seemed to us as a father, and we here would render a grateful tribute to his memory, by saying that he was urbane, generous, kind, patient-bearing, and beloved by all."

Smith left behind many business



A legacy celebration marked the 100th anniversary of Millie-Christine's death. Speakers included Wychulia George Stewart and Minister Shirley McKoy Kelly (holding microphone).

connections who owed him money they could not repay. Mary Smith could not repay her and her husband's own debts without selling most of the slaves they owned. The Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, proclaimed them free in theory, but North Carolina was not under President Lincoln's control, so in early 1863 Mary Smith and the estate's executors prepared to sell 20 of her 33 slaves and the majority of the family's household goods.

In the wartime economy, the material goods were appraised at \$5,190 and the human "chattels" at \$38,500, but an auction netted only about \$14,000. The twins were valued by the auction company at \$25,000 but were not offered for sale.

The McKoy family again stayed together, but the 11-year-old twins saw their peers sold and sent away.

Taking control

The Smiths' son Pearson managed the twins for most of their career from 1862 on. A maid and sometimes family members traveled with them. Between tours, Millie-Christine stayed with Mary Smith, calling her in their autobiography "our white ma."

Show business was poor during the war, and both the Smith and McKoy families were in what Millie-Christine called "straightened [sic] circumstances." After 1865, the newly-emancipated twins elected to continue touring, earning income for both the McKay and Smith families. "We are interested pecuniarily in the 'show,' and are daily receiving and putting away our share of the proceeds," they wrote.

Money was not all the young women now took control of. After age 14, there were no more nude physical exams except once by Millie-Christine's permission when she needed treatment for a medical problem.

Millie-Christine's great-great-nephew Lloyd Inman wrote, "She was more than just a circus freak. She was a talented, generous black woman who was one of the greatest black women of her time. She said that when God made her, he gave her two heads and two brains because her responsibility was so great.

"She did a lot to bring blacks and whites together because she was someone everyone – black, white or Indian – in Columbus County could be proud of. She was also one of the richest people in the coun-

ty. White folks treated her like an exception, not as a black woman in the South was treated then. She got the finest rooms in hotels."

Brenda McKoy Troy put it this way: Millie-Christine "was born black, enslaved, a female, and disabled. As a slave she was considered not profitable and unworthy." In spite of being abused and exploited, "she was not bitter, not angry. Of course she was not pleased with the circumstances, but she trusted that God would bring her out – and, boy, did he!"

Millie-Christine's travels made her "so worldly," said Troy. "That removed a lot of biases and hangups. She knew that people are people everywhere."

More paradoxes

Millie-Christine's given name is sometimes hyphenated in records and sometimes not. "Millie" is sometimes spelled "Mille" or "Millia," and Christine is often "Chrissy" or "Christina." She signed letters either Millie Christine or Christine Millie.

Her last name is also anomalous; she was born neither a McCoy nor a McKoy although her collateral descendants today use both names. Interchanges between letters *o* and *a* were common, even in legal papers, in the hand-written documents of earlier times, so some of Jabez McKay's slaves became known by the surname of McKoy.

In the autobiography, Millie-Christine followed 19th-Century usage and referred to herself by cringe-inducing terms such as "little deformities" or "poor little monstrosities."

Juxtaposed with those references, however, are statements that show the twins' self-acceptance. In expressing their religious beliefs, they said, "although we do not wish to speak Pharisical, we think we can safely call ourselves really Christian children." They often quoted Psalm 139, referring to being "fearfully and wonderfully made."

Another motto they adopted was, "As God decreed, we agreed."

They were not arrogant, but they knew they had dignity.

In 1881 a showman named Francis Uffner, promoting his own conjoined twins in a newspaper, called Millie-Christine "repulsive in comparison to this beautiful and extraordinary human phenomenon."

Millie-Christine bought an advertisement in the next issue, saying that "repulsive" was too complimentary a word to apply to Uff-

ner. The ad concluded, "If people lived to as great an age in these days as some of them did in olden times, OF WHICH I HAVE READ, no doubt you would grow to be a more monstrous monstrosity than you are, but, sir, you would never grow to be a gentleman. (Signed) MILLIE CHRISTINE, THE TWO-HEADED NIGHTINGALE"

In 1882, Millie-Christine sued the owner of a rival circus for the then astronomical sum of \$25,000. The competitor, Adam Forepaugh, had circulated a "rat sheet" to patrons in Indiana calling the twins a "horribly repulsive Negro monstrosity," and "a disgusting sight for ladies and children to gaze upon," not worth the 50 cent admission charge. The twins won their suit.

Millie-Christine wrote, "We wish to be viewed as something entirely void of humbug – a living curiosity – not a sham gotten up to impose upon and deceive the people."

They knew they were genuine, unique and worthy of respect. They even had a sense of humor about their uniqueness.

As teenagers, they considered the many sights they had missed seeing in England when they were kidnapped toddlers, and the money that could yet be made there. They wrote, "Perhaps, now, that we are 'grown up girls,' and like the rest of the sex, with

tongues, and a knowledge of their use, we may go across the water once more."

Millie and Christine had more to be proud of than the use of two tongues.

They had the ambition to pursue a wider education, using tutors to learn French, Spanish, Italian and German while on tour in Europe.

They had the courage to leave home and undertake the dangers of 19th-Century travel. Millie-Christine had near misses with steamboat explosions, theater fires and train wrecks over a four-decade career.

They had loyalty to their own parents and siblings as well as to the white family who had inadvertently come into possession of them, rescued them from the kidnappers and given them a basic education.

They had nobility to rise above bitterness and turn a handicap into an opportunity.

They were prudent businesswomen. Using Pearson Smith as their trusted agent for most of their career, they negotiated high-paying contracts with museums and circuses across the U.S. They took a second trip to Europe in the 1880s.

With their earnings, Millie-Christine bought enough land for their siblings to set up farms in the Welches Creek area. The publicity booklet they had printed in 1878 said

that the land included the very same tract that had been Jabez McKay's.

Later years

In retirement Millie-Christine returned to Welches Creek. She designed and built a 12-room house and continued purchasing any nearby land that was for sale, deeding most of this real estate to her rather large family.

She went to Whiteville shopping once a week, riding in her large white carriage, not in a buggy as did most wealthy people of that day. According to her great-nephew James Fred McKoy, Millie-Christine's surrey was "a big vehicle that would carry twelve to fourteen people" and she gave neighbors a lift to the store or to church.

A white woman, Fannie Sessions, lived as a child off the road from Welches Creek to Whiteville. She recalled children of her neighborhood yelling to one another, "Here comes Millie Christine."

"We were more interested in seeing that pretty white carriage than Millie Christine," she said.

Whenever the twins descended from a train at the Whiteville depot after a long tour, they were nearly back home where their relatives would all welcome them as "Sister"



again, and not as the eighth wonder of the world. Likewise, neighbor children for two generations remembered Millie-Christine as someone without pretense and with great love for everyone.

They were “Aunt Millie-Christine” to dozens of McKoy and Smith children.

In “The History of Welches Creek Township, Era 1733-1976,” Sessions wrote, “Millie Christine McKoy was truly a great person, an honor to her race, community and nation.” Sessions based her Millie-Christine writing on recollections of James Fred McKoy, who was 88 years old when she interviewed him.

McKoy also spoke to students at Hallsboro High School during the 1976-1977 school year; his “Memories of the Siamese Twins” were written up by Rebecca Robinson in the spring edition (Volume I, Number 5) of their local heritage publication *Kin’lin’*.

Millie Christine did not completely give up the show business routine that had provided her with wealth, but her travels to fairs and carnivals became less frequent. When not traveling the show circuit, Millie Christine welcomed visits from her neighbors, black and white. Sunday afternoons were primarily reserved for family.

James P. Troy also spoke to the Hallsboro students in the 1970s. “They came back to North Carolina when I was about six years old,” Troy recalled. “I sat on their laps many a day. They influenced me to try to get an education, not by telling me but by being so very intelligent themselves.

“They sang to me. They could speak seven different languages fluently. They could sing in French, and I would enjoy that because French has a musical sound. I learned a lot of words from them.”

Troy told his sons how local people, black and white, used to visit on the twins’ porch and “listen to her talk as if she were a sage. She was a fascinating storyteller,” said son Harold Troy.

In 1909, her house, probably the largest in the vicinity, was destroyed by fire along with uncounted gifts of jewelry given to her by the royalty of Europe. Millie-Christine built a new, smaller house.

“They didn’t stress about it,” said Brenda McKoy Troy. “They were just cool. They hated it, of course, but they never ran short of hope. They knew that tomorrow has the potential to be nothing like today.”

This writer (Wyche) was fortunate enough to know J. Fred McKoy, who as a young child spent many hours with her.

“I was her favorite,” he said proudly. “The first suit I ever owned she sent to me from Detroit, Michigan.”

He remembered his great-aunt as being “the best Christian-hearted person” he ever knew, according to the *Kin’lin’* article. “Once they waited on me when I had typhoid fever and pneumonia. They’d walk about three-fourths of a mile just to care for me.”

Millie-Christine gave the money to build St. John’s Methodist Church, her great-nephew said. She also attended Christian Plain Methodist Church, Love Grove Church and Welches Creek Church.

Millie-Christine lavished money on those in need around her and also donated anonymously to educational institutions for blacks, including Bennett College and Johnson C. Smith College.

James P. Troy described Millie-Christine as “very religious.”

Fred McKoy said that while she watched her big house burn, Millie Christine sat on a salvaged trunk in the front yard of the home. “I think Millie got chilled and that started that TB (tuberculosis).”



The end

The slow-acting disease finally led to the death of Millie on October 8, 1912; Christine reportedly said she could tell of Millie’s passing before the physician attending her was aware of the death.

Dr. W.A. Crowell of Whiteville was present at Millie’s death; he realized that the death of one twin would mean the death of the other a short time later.

Upon Millie’s death, Crowell telegraphed physicians at Johns Hopkins who were familiar with the twins and asked about separation. According to newspaper accounts of the time, they told him that such a move would not save Christine. They suggested that Christine be given massive doses of morphine to make her ordeal more bearable and painless. Crowell then got in touch with the governor of North Carolina since he would be administering more than the normal dose of morphine.

Contemporary accounts read variably that Christine spent her last 17 hours (or 12 or eight hours) on earth praying and singing hymns. The twins’ favorite hymn was “Come, Ye Disconsolate.”

Brenda Troy said, “She didn’t leave a whole lot of money and land to people. She gave it away” while she was living. “She earned a lot, and other people benefited from it. She gave it willingly.”

Remembering Millie-Christine

The twins had written a will, but there is no record of any pre-planning for her funeral. The neighborhood coffin maker, Harley Armstrong, constructed a two-body cypress-wood casket. Six manufactured handles were obtained for the coffin. Burial was in the community cemetery near Millie-Christine’s home.

The family procured an unusual double tombstone. A wooden frame was covered with a gray, lead-like metal alloy on which were pertinent facts in raised lettering. No one knows who composed the message on the marker, but it could have been Millie-Christine; writing poetry was one of her talents. The marker consisted of two identical sections, connected by a center section on which was written, “A soul with two thoughts. Two hearts that beat as one.” One of the big-

ger stones had the following inscription: “Millie-Christine, born July 11, 1851. Columbus County, N. C., a child of Jacob and Mone-mia McCoy. She lived a life of much comfort owing to her love of God and joy in following his commands. A real friend to the needy of both races and loved by all who knew her.”

The other large portion of the marker has Christine’s name and the following: “Christine-Millie died October 8th and 9th, 1912, fully resigned at her home, the place of her birth and residence of her Christian parents. They that be planted in the House of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.”

The fancy grave marker could not survive a wild forest fire that swept the graveyard at an unremembered date and left the metal portion of the original marker partially melted.

Even in death Millie-Christine was considered a source of money-making. Word got back to Welches Creek that a group was planning to exhume the body, have it embalmed, and display it (for an admission fee, of course), in what would have been one of the most gruesome sideshows in history.

Fred McKoy said he had heard that Pearson Smith had hired men to sit by the grave at nights for nine months to prevent such an atrocity.

The grave remained undisturbed until 1969. At that time, the Columbus County Historical Society asked the state to erect a historical marker along U.S.74/76 stating that the twins’ grave was located nearby. Since the original burial ground was no longer being used or maintained, the society also decided to move the remains (with permission from survivors of the twins and the State of North Carolina) to the well-maintained Welches Creek Cemetery.

On a cold, rainy November Saturday, State Archives and History employees handled the exhumation and reburial. The top surface of the 4x6-foot grave had noticeably sunk about 6 inches since 1912. Several scoops of dirt from the original gravesite, a few bits of bone, two sets of upper dentures, and fragments of burial clothes were reburied in a corner of the new cemetery, where a granite marker, bearing the same inscription as did the old marker, can be easily viewed.

The twins had been buried wearing matching garnet rings that



James Fred McKoy was “the history teacher of Welches Creek.” His front porch was his classroom, where succeeding generations of McKoys heard the true stories of Millie-Christine. His son Fred Dewey McKoy, 96, continues to share the legacy with his descendants today.

they had bought for their 40th birthday. Christine also wore a ring inscribed “As God decreed, we agreed.” All three rings were moved to the new grave.

The grave marker was paid for, after a hefty discount from Cole Monument Works of Whiteville, by members of the historical society, who hastily put together a pamphlet on the life of Millie Christine as a money-raiser to help pay for the grave marker. The trustees of the newer cemetery provided a choice plot for the reburial.

Millie-Christine will be remembered as much for her double helping of character as for her physical peculiarity.

Living inescapably linked year after year taught Millie-

Christine to pursue a level of forbearance and harmony that perhaps most people never achieve even with a chosen spouse. Each sister loved the other as herself and knew that she was unconditionally loved as well.

Her quiet self-acceptance and faith are shown in a verse she composed:

“Whether I’m created two or one, My Maker knows what He has done.”

Editor’s note: *The News Reporter* staff writer Ray Wyche was president of the Columbus County Historical Society during the exhumation and reburial of the twins.

Freelance writer and court reporter Barbara Martell discovered the historical society’s Millie-Christine pamphlet during a visit to Whiteville. In 2000, she published *Millie-Christine: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, which is available in the Columbus County Public Library. Martell’s extensive research clarifies the elsewhere jumbled facts of Millie-Christine’s early years and was invaluable in choosing what to include in this article. The fascinating book also describes the show-business world the twins inhabited as adults.

Another book worth reading is *Conjoined Twins in Black and White*, which contains contemporaneous writings by and about Millie-Christine McKoy and the British sisters Daisy and Violet Hilton, edited by Linda Frost.





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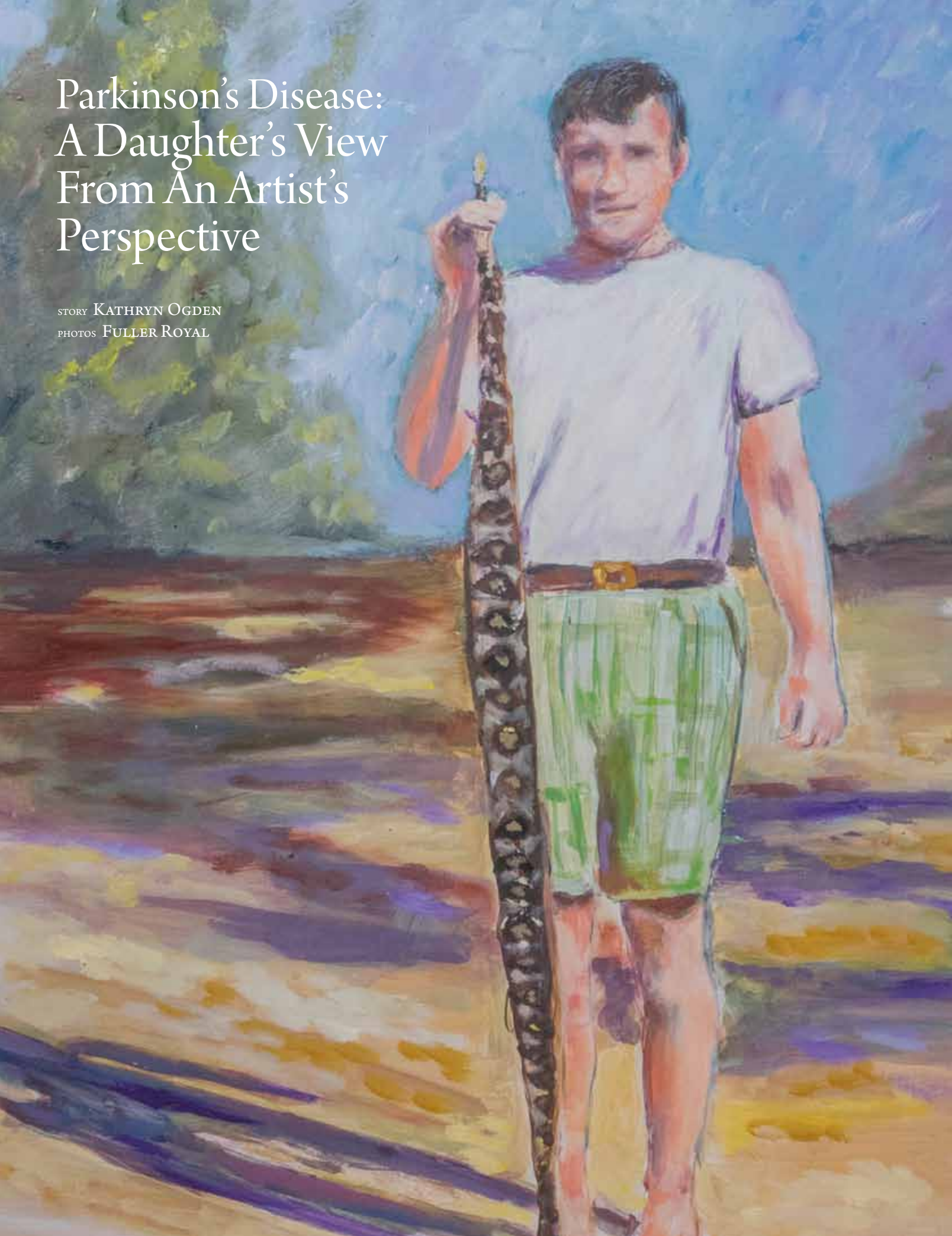
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Parkinson's Disease: A Daughter's View From An Artist's Perspective

STORY KATHRYN OGDEN
PHOTOS FULLER ROYAL



Hope

the last in a three-part series...

I spent every summer of my childhood at The Gray Cottage at Lake Waccamaw. We would travel from our home in Danville, Va., and always fight to be the first one to see the lake as we drove down the one lane road lined with pecan trees, Pecan Lane. Days were filled playing with my countless cousins, waterskiing, playing mermaids in the lily pads, lunches on the pier, card games at night and sunburn all the time.

The summer of my 13th year, my entire family from both my mother's and my father's sides had been to visit. The house had been filled with family, laughter and joyful chaos. The week came to an end and after all the relatives had gone home, I was left at the lake with my mother and my younger twin sisters Genie and Anna. We had spent the morning on the lake and had planned to go to Wilmington that afternoon to shop. I was so excited as I was going to get my first bikini, which, for my 12-year-old self, was a really big deal.

Around lunchtime, we heard my mother's name being called. It was the lady from next door at the top of the stairs beckoning my mom to come up to the house. My mom and Anna left Genie and me on the pier. Genie was floating in the water and I was kicking my feet lying in the sun. It wasn't long before we heard the lady again, calling us to come up to the house. This time Genie went and I stayed behind with the hope that they would bring down lunch. Lunch never came.

Just when I decided to go up to the house, I heard my name called. It was again the lady from next door. She was waving her arms for me to come to the house. She met me at the top of the steps and said it was bad news. I thought my grandfather who had been in a coma for a year had finally passed. She opened the door for me, and as I entered there was crying.

Genie and Anna were sitting in my mom's lap weeping and

I was told that my older brother Bill had been killed in a car accident. I turned and ran out of the house down the steps and blindly took off down the street.

After that moment, I never made plans for anything ever again. I didn't plan for college, for my marriage, for anything. I always had a sense that, if I made a plan, something bad would happen, so I flew by the seat of my pants. I did not want to be faced with reality that the worst could happen. The worst had happened. Tragedy wiped out any sense of security that I had and brought in fear.

In the midst of that horrible and sad time, I remember seeing my mom and dad walk down Lakeshore Drive holding hands. They were both reserved, quiet and calm. Now when I look back as a mother of two, I cannot comprehend what they were facing.

I am the fifth of seven children. As my sister Genie says, it was better for us to run in place than to sit still. We weren't allowed to sleep late, always had our hair brushed and our beds made. All seven of us played sports, played instruments, rode horses, sang in choir, played handbells and even put on puppet shows for other churches (we were the Von Trapps). We shot guns. We rode motorcycles, and drove ourselves to school at 13 and 14 with no

driver's license. We went on numerous mission trips. One summer each of us was in a different country.

My mother never sat still. She spent her time sewing our clothes so that we would have one-of-a-kind outfits. She was constantly decorating and painting. She cooked and cleaned. She entertained our friends and our friends' friends. She set beautiful dining tables and carted us around. She taught us every Bible verse and had us in church every Sunday.

More active than all of us put together was my father. We were always in his wake of activity. He hunted, rode motorcy-



Parkinson's Mud, oil on paper

cles, fixed old cars, did taxidermy and played racquetball . He was always fixing gun stocks and clocks. He took us sledding at night. We walked the dogs in the rain and snow. He and my brother Bill would roller skate behind us while we rode our bikes.

He took us to museums, read us *The Hobbit* and taught us old-time music. He took us hiking. He took us on mushroom hunts. He picked up snakes with his bare hands and played the banjo, as bluegrass music was his first love.

Every Sunday after church, we were in some field in the country searching for arrowheads or just running around at our

farm jumping creeks and having acorn fights. Along with the seven of us in tow, there were always extra friends with their extra friends and Duke residents with extra Duke residents that piled into our giant green van and joined in on the fun. My dad was good at everything. The best all around. Always in the midst of organized chaotic activity, he had a pipe in his mouth, some philosophical quote to make us all think, and always smiling.

The last person in the world that you would ever think would be slowed down is my father. You make plans so that your hopes and dreams can come to fruition. Regardless of our plans, we can't control outcomes. Security with an easy life is not prom-



Doc before Parkinson's, oil on linen

ised to anyone. Nobody plans for sorrow. Nobody plans for tragedy. Nobody plans for the death of a child. Nobody plans on getting sick. My father and mother did not plan on Parkinson's disease.

I asked my mother about that walk she took with my dad down Lakeshore Drive after Bill died. She answered, "I will tell you what we said. We knew we were at a crossroads. We decided that this is either going to destroy us or we are going to face it and be strong for our girls. We held on to hope and kept going."

They were strong for us. They chose to meet every disaster (and there have been many) head on with an unbending resili-

ence. In a way, I think that everything that they have had to deal with up to this point has prepared them for Parkinson's.

Parkinson's is just one more crossroads that they have to face. They have met it in the same way that they dealt with Bill's death. With dignity and calm and fearlessness. And in their fearlessness, hope is always apparent. They have never given up hope.

My mother has always told me, "Every minute on this earth is a gift. That doesn't mean that there won't be sorrow and sadness. There will be. Sorrow and suffering does not discriminate. There will also be joy and happiness. Make the most of every



Madonna, oil on linen



Photo by Kathryn Ogden

moment because the moment is all you have."

When you live with a degenerative disease you have no choice but to face it and face it with a prayer that God will provide strength to keep going and strength to remain hopeful. You can't run away.

As I was reading this to my parents for their approval, my father, with the ever-present pipe in his mouth and his forever brilliant mind, said in Latin, "Sic transit gloria mundi. Tempus fugit." Thus passes the glory of this world. Time flies. This is true for all regardless of circumstances. What is also true for all regardless of circumstances is there is always hope and "Spes oritur ut aeterna." Hope springs eternal.



William Singleton Ogden Jr.

When I see my dad's lip turn up ever so slightly to the sound of a great banjo lick, his eyes twinkle when smoking his pipe, his admiration of a fine gun, oil painting, or book, or his happiness when seeing an old patient, I see hope. When his face lights up at the sight of my mother and he says, "my, isn't she beautiful," I see so much life still to be lived. There are memories to write down, there are hands to hold. We are not promised an easy life, but we are promised comfort, peace, and to one day be whole again when we place our hearts in God's hands. As I hear of Mom and Kathryn changing linens, working with medications, and occasionally staying up all night, I believe that this security in God will one day take away Parkinson's and make my dad whole again. It will give him the strength to play the banjo, walk hand in hand with mom, swiftly lift me across a creek of rushing water, and sing his favorite bluegrass tunes. Then I cry just because he's my Dad.

Genie Ogden Almand

Kathryn Caine Ogden is working on her MA at UNCP. Her studio-based thesis is a visual narrative of the effects of Parkinson's on her father and mother from her perspective as an artist and a daughter.

A vertical advertisement for Fuller Royal Photography. At the top is a photograph of a young woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a pink sweater and blue jeans, sitting and looking slightly to the side. Below the photo is the name "Fuller" in a large, white, cursive script. Underneath that, in a smaller white font, is "FULLER ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHY" and "Master of Photography & Photographic Craftsman". At the bottom left is the PPA logo (a red square with white letters). To the right of the logo is the phone number "910.770.1834" and social media icons for Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Below the phone number and icons is the website "www.fullerroyal.com".

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‘Red Hand’ Local man saw little-known part of WWI

STORY JEFFERSON WEAVER

PHOTOS JACKIE LEWIS & GRANT MERRITT

John Thompson, Sr. (in the framed portrait) wore this uniform while serving as an officer in the 371st Infantry Regiment in World War I.

John Thompson barely remembers attending World War I veterans’ reunions with his father, the late John Thompson Sr.

“I was a very small child, and I can barely remember going. Some of the other soldiers would talk about what they saw, but my father didn’t,” Thompson said. “It wasn’t a topic of discussion around our house.”

As a lieutenant in the First World War, the senior Thompson went to war alongside thousands of other Americans a century ago this year.

His service was unusual, however -- he was an officer of a groundbreaking regiment that many officials thought would never function.

The 371st Infantry comprised black soldiers with white officers, many of whom were Southerners. The U.S. Army first officially incorporated black soldiers into the ranks during the War Between the States, and “Buffalo Soldiers” earned a reputation as brave fighters in the Indian Wars, the Spanish-American War, and in the Philippines during the first part of the 20th century, according to the U.S. Army History Center.

Despite their service, black soldiers were still often treated as second class, sometimes put into service battalions or used mainly for manual labor.

When the United States became involved in World War One – the “Great War,” as it was called – manpower was at a premium. The regulations on black soldiers were somewhat relaxed, but African-Americans still had to serve under white officers.

In what has been called a racially-discriminatory policy by modern historians, black units such as the 371st that were mustered in 1916-17 often had white Southerners in command.

The real reasons were far less sinister: geography played a role. The South still had a significantly larger black population than other areas in the first quarter of the 20th century, and many of the volunteers of all races were mustered in at the Army base closest to where they signed up. Southern states had also developed a tradition of military academies that turned out young white men who joined the military after college.

The 369th, 370th, 371st and 372nd Infantry Regiments were originally scheduled to be brigaded together to become the 93rd Infantry Division (Colored), but after much political wrangling, the decision was made to attach the regiments to the French Army instead.

Unlike other regiments, the 371st had a longer delay getting organized than its sister units. Officials in Washington, D.C. set Aug. 31, 1917, as the official organization date for the regiment. In theory, recruits were to be in place at their mustering camps (in this case, Camp Jackson, S.C.) by that date to begin training.

But before the recruits of the 371st could be sworn in, the citizen soldiers had to finish their time at home.

By mid-1817, there was a severe manpower shortage in the South, as more and more farmhands of all races volunteered or were drafted for the military. Due to a late and abundant cotton crop, recruits from Florida, Georgia, Texas, and the Carolinas were slow to arrive. Cotton being a strategic crop, as well as the backbone of the Southern economy regardless of war, recruits were allowed to finish the harvest before reporting for duty. By November, however, 3,380 men had been signed on with the 371st.

It was a confusing new world for many of the men, as they were shoved through a rapid course in close-order drill with

their M-1903A3 rifles and taught to properly wear and maintain their uniforms and equipment as well as march. By the time the regiments landed in France, however, contemporary accounts describe the four battalions as being smart in appearance and flawless in their drill.

Upon landing, however, the new recruits found out that politics can affect even the lowly foot soldier.

Some American politicians were convinced black soldiers would never fight, an opinion that led to the decision to attach the "colored" units to the French Army. France, having lost 40 percent of its fighting age men by 1917 to sickness, injury and death on the battlefield, was more than willing to accept the Americans in their ranks.

Due to supply problems, however, the 371st was ordered to turn in all of its now familiar U.S. "Sam Browne" gear, "tin hat" helmets and Springfield rifles in exchange for French equipment. Only the U.S. Army uniform remained, which meant the American troops had to once again go through a training period. A military history of the time notes that while officers were originally concerned the often-uneducated black soldiers would have problems with the French language, it was the white troops and officers who had issues pronouncing place names, repeating field commands, and pronouncing the names of weapons, such as the Chauchat machine gun and Lebel rifle. The American officers were allowed to keep their own equipment and weapons.

Thompson's unit was one of those attached to one of the last cavalry battalions in the French service. The joint command was tasked with protecting a village that dominated the roads leading to a relatively unknown place called Verdun – home of some of the most vicious fighting of the war, and where thousands of Allied



John Thompson Jr. holds his father's U.S. issue helmet.

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and German soldiers died in battle.

The Battle of Verdun -- really a series of major campaigns that overlapped -- lasted for 303 days. It is considered the longest and one of the most costly battles in history. Researchers examining documents and firsthand accounts in 2000 found a total of 714,231 casualties, including 377,231 French and 337,000 German, for an average of 70,000 casualties a month. Official records show 976,000 during the battle, with 1,250,000 suffered at Verdun before and after the main battle. The geography of the landscape, including streams and hills, was completely changed by the incessant artillery fire and trenchworks built to protect soldiers. Although the actual main battle for Verdun was over in 1916, German commanders saw the area as a way to hook around the back of the Allies, and the Allies knew the Verdun subsections were a vital part of the overall defense. Units like the 371st were deployed to the area in 1917-1918 but never saw combat. It was to this landscape that Thompson and the 371st were deployed in May 1918, under the command of a French general in a French division, the 157th. French citizens were fascinated by the black American soldiers. Several firsthand accounts by both 371st soldiers of both races and French note the confusion on the part of local residents at the prejudice shown by some whites toward the black soldiers. While the guard duty was hardly idyllic, it was a major change for the farmhands and millworkers from the South. They spent their time befriending the French cavalry troopers, helping care for their mounts as well as the few remaining farm animals in the area. Others were dispatched to labor details to replace wagoners, horse and mule handlers, truck drivers, laborers and in a very few cases, soldiers on the front lines elsewhere.

The easy duty didn't last long, however. In September, when allied forces decided to make an all-or-nothing push against the Germans, the 157th French Division and its four American Negro regiments were tossed into the offensive at Champagne. Having been told that black soldiers couldn't or wouldn't fight, the men of the 371st were determined to show their abilities as soldiers. After the war, French Gen. Mariano Goybet admitted that he had had doubts about his American allies but put the 371st and its sister units in the lead in battle. Goybet needn't have worried.

The September Offensive in Champagne was where the 371st and her sister units were credited with changing the definition of the French Division's logo. The "red hand" of fellowship and assistance had a legacy stretching back more than 100 years in the French Army. The addition of the American forces who had something to

prove changed the tradition to mean a "red hand clamped around the throat of the invading Germans," Goybet wrote. While the title for the Americans was used unofficially for years, government officials in 1918 feared the idea of a bloody hand might cause black Americans to "rise up."

Instead, the logo and nickname came to symbolize what Goybet and the Red Hand Division came to know very well: fighting.

After taking five fortified villages and towns, the 371st racked up an impressive haul of German equipment and weapons -- 47 heavy machine guns, three 77 mm cannons, eight pieces of heavy equipment, a large number of prisoners, and more important, tons of lumber, hay, fodder for draft animals, food, and military supplies intended for the German forces defending against the Allies' September Offensive. The 371st was also credited with capturing an entire munitions depot and a number of rail cars.

Ironically, the French machine gun reviled by many American, English and French soldiers saw outstanding service in the hands of the 371st -- members of the regiment were honored for shooting down three German airplanes with their tongue-tangling Chauchats and Lebel rifles.

The 371st paid a heavy toll for its courageous deeds: 2,384 members were actually engaged in the September Offensive, and 1,065 were killed and wounded over three days of intense fighting. Thompson was one of the luckier officers -- more than 60 percent of the 371st leaders died or were wounded multiple times.

"Realizing their great responsibilities, the wounded officers continued to lead their men until they dropped from exhaustion and lack of blood," a unit historian wrote. "The men were devoted to their leaders and as a result stood up against a most grueling fire, bringing the regiment its well-deserved fame."

The 371st received accolades from both American and French forces, with 146 individual medals and commendations going to soldiers and officers in the regiment. Her sister regiments saw similar honors. Cpl. Freddie Stowers of the First Battalion of the 371st was the only African American recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor in World War I.

Lt. Thompson was apparently with the 371st to the very end, mustering out at Camp Jackson with the last of the 371st in 1919. He came home to start an automobile parts business that eventually expanded into electrical and plumbing supplies, forming the foundation for Trigon Construction, which is run by John Thompson Jr. today.

It was years after the last of those veteran reunions that Thompson found out about the honors bestowed on his father's unit. He has



The 'Red Hand' insignia adopted by the 371st was originally a French tradition referring to friendship and unity.



A closeup of the French military helmet worn by Thompson in WWI. The fancier helmets also reportedly gave more protection than the American "washbasins."

‘RED HAND’

divided the remaining mementoes of his father’s service among his children. Son J.E. Thompson said he still shoots the M-1911 .45 semi-automatic pistol carried by his grandfather.

John Thompson said he was always curious about his father’s role in the Great War, but the lieutenant’s time in uniform just wasn’t talked about around the house.

“That’s how those men and women were back then,” Thompson said of his father. “Their country needed them, and they answered. They did what they had to, and didn’t see a reason to boast about it.”

Some of Lt. Thompson’s comrades were not so reluctant to toot the horn of their brave Americans, who just happened to be black. In an interview with the U.S. Army History Center, Lt. John B. Smith of Greenville, S.C., said some officers questioned whether the “colored soldiers” would stand and fight if a battle was turning against them.

“We never had that experience but once,” Smith said, “because we were usually winning.”



The 371st was awarded the French Croix de Guerre.

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A Competitive Edge

STORY DAN BISER

PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT

History was made at Southeastern Community College last spring when the school's softball team recorded a 30-win season for the first time ever.

The 30-win goal was at first tough to attain for Coach Karlyn Stephens' 2017 SCC team as it suffered some tough early season losses. But the Lady Rams bounced back at mid-season, winning 16 of their last 18 regular-season games. Their final season record stood at 31 wins, 13 losses and a tie.

Stephens' 2015 season as SCC head coach was highlighted by all-around play of Bladenboro native Abbey Walters, who earned Region 10 Player of the Year honors as well as being named a junior college All-American. Walters went on to star at UNC-Pembroke the past two years.

Five years ago, Stephens was named as a physical education instructor and head softball coach at SCC. She has more recently added the responsibilities of athletic director.

"We've been able to get a lot of good, hard working girls in our program," said the 45-year-old Stephens, who is assisted by Amber Williamson. "Several of them are from right here in Columbus County."

When Stephens was growing up in Whiteville, she had the desire to compete in any sport she encountered. In 1984, she was crowned the Whiteville Optimist Dixie Youth League

Queen while also holding one of the top batting averages in the otherwise all-male league.

At Whiteville High School, she competed in three sports, gaining all-conference honors in each, showing a lot of skill, hustle and tenacity as a player. She graduated from WHS in 1990.

She went on to Louisburg College, where she split her time between third base and the outfield and was among the top hitters in the Lady Hurricane softball batting order.

After her two years at Louisburg, she enrolled at UNC-Wilmington, where she majored in physical education and competed in a lot of intramural sports activities. She attained both her bachelor's and master's degrees in physical education from UNC-Wilmington.

"Sports has always been a big part of my life," she said. "While at Louisburg, I definitely decided that I wanted to get into coaching, and hopefully do what I could in making a difference in the lives of young people."

Her first coaching position was at East Columbus High School, and she served at the school for 15 years, working diligently to put the Lady Gator athletic program at a high level.

It was while she was teaching and coaching at East Columbus that she encountered another challenge, and it was not on the



Coach Karlyn Stephens (standing left) coached the 2017 SCC softball team to a 31-13-1 record.



Karlyn Stephens, SCC athletic director and softball coach.

court or the field.

The report came on Dec. 7, 2009. It was Hodgkin's Disease.

"I had found myself feeling tired and worn down much of the time, and that had never happened before," she said. "I went in for a check-up and was told what the diagnosis was. I was floored. I never imagined that I would be affected by cancer."

It didn't take long for Stephens to regain her battling spirit as she took it head on.

"I knew I couldn't let it get me down. I loved my job, the people I worked with and the kids I taught and coached," she said. "The support from everyone and everywhere was overwhelming."

For a six-month period, Stephens made every-other-week trips for treatments at Duke. Her parents, Mike and Brenda Stephens, and younger brother Hamp were always available in supporting her needs. Her dad even took a semester off from law school in order to serve as her regular driver to and from Durham.

In the meantime, she was still able to continue teaching and coaching.

"It meant having to be away from school some days, but the administration and faculty pulled together and made a lot of things possible in my absence," she said.

"I knew I had to overcome the adversity," she said. "I was determined to do it, and everyone was supporting me and praying for me."

In January of 2011, Stephens was diagnosed as being free of

the disease.

While in the midst of coaching the ECHS girls basketball team to a second consecutive conference championship in 2012, Stephens was hired to the physical education/head softball coaching spot at SCC.

"It was a very tough decision because of everything that had been done for me at East Columbus," Stephens said. "East Columbus had become my comfort zone in a lot of ways."

Stephens works closely in the athletic department programs with second-year SCC baseball coach Daniel Britt, a native of Evergreen. Britt was a baseball All-Stater at West Columbus and went on to a strong pitching career at Elon University.

The Lady Rams are hoping for another strong showing this spring as their recently completed fall workouts brought on a lot of positives.

"We're looking forward to the season ahead," she said. "It has a strong possibility as being another good one for us."

Southeastern softball and baseball teams compete in Region 10 - Division 2 of the National Junior College Athletic Association. Region 10 consists of schools in North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia.

Stephens says she is now part of an "ideal situation" at SCC.

"I get to instruct, coach and spend a lot of time with young people who are making transitions in their lives and in their communities," she said. "There's nothing more I'd rather be doing."



Coach Karlyn Stephens (left in gray shirt) encourages her team following a big inning.



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TROPHIES AND TRADITIONS

LANDMARK HUNT CLUB HAS ROOTS IN COLUMBUS

STORY JEFFERSON WEAVER

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



1970's pre-hunt meeting with huntmaster Robert Clark.

Near the intersection of two dirt roads at North State Game Club in Council, a mailbox stands solitary guard at the entrance to the main hunting camp.

The mailbox is just one of many traditions at the 110 year old getaway.

"Anyone who comes through the gate has to stuff their egos, their titles, their honors, anything like that into the mailbox," said Dial Gray, a third generation member of the club. His mother's grandfather was John Pickett Council, considered the founding father of North State.

That family heritage, however, doesn't matter when the bonfire lights up the Bullpen and the dinner bell is rung on the wide veranda of the dining hall. It especially doesn't matter when hounds strike a trail and begin pursuing a whitetail deer down the twisting trails.

"You can pick that junk up on the way out, but it has no place at North State. There is no 'Mister' or 'Doctor,'" Gray said.

The mailbox puts everyone on a first name basis, Gray said, which can be awkward for younger members of the organization, but after a while camaraderie trumps courtesy titles.

"Everyone is equal here," he said.

That doesn't mean the club, founded by John Pickett Council, is a haven for hooligans, a place where hunters go wild on weekends. Gray said only a handful of members have ever been asked to leave,

and amidst the fun and frivolity, courtesy and conservation are still big parts of the club.

"There was a discussion once regarding rules," Gray said, chuckling. "One of the members pointed out that a gentleman doesn't need to have rules, and someone who isn't a gentleman won't follow them anyway."

While the community of Council is just across the Bladen County line, North State's roots run deep across North Friar Swamp to the headwaters of the Waccamaw River. Council was founded when John Pickett Council's blacksmithing skills and innovative tools used in the naval stores industry led to the founding of Council Tool Co., which is still in business today at Lake Waccamaw.

Council took advantage of the railroad line to market and ship his tools across the South; when he was home, however, Council loved to hunt. Eventually, trains stopping at Council Station were dropping off guests who had been invited to the Council family's hunting camp.

In 1906, Council and a handful of friends formally organized North State, forming a corporation and creating a model for hunting clubs that is still used to some extent today with other organizations.

Most of the founding members of the club lived in towns dominated by the Seaboard Railway, including Chadbourn, Whiteville, Wilmington, Kenansville, and Clarkton. Council Tool had been

moved to Wananish (now Lake Waccamaw) by that time, but many guests and members still took the train to Council and disembarked there. Some hunted for quail on the walk to the club, while others were met by mule-drawn wagons. Today members and visitors are reminded that the roads, despite constant maintenance, are best traversed by a stout truck.

A tradition that has now carried to the fourth and even fifth generation of membership is that the club is limited to 55 members, each holding one share of stock. Gray said the club has an extensive waiting list of children and grandchildren.

While still hunting is popular at the club, most of the hunts are traditional “drives” using hounds. Unlike many deer-dog clubs, however, hunters don’t use trucks to pursue their quarry.

Hunters are assigned a stand, then the huntmaster releases the hounds, just as it has been done since before the turn of the 20th century. Seth McLean manages the hounds in the same way his father, the late Cicero McLean, handled the same duties for more than 50 years.

Poetry and shirttails

Pickett Council’s brother, Kinchen Council, was a prolific writer and poet. He memorialized a number of anecdotes about life at North State in poems that are often quoted, verbatim, around the campfire and in the dining hall.

One of the first things a visitor notices in the dining hall is the number of shirttails decorating the ceiling. In colors ranging from dusty, dry red check flannel to modern disruptive camouflage, the short tails are from hunters whose excuses for missing a shot were not acceptable to the Court of North Friar Swamp – another tradition stretching back to the founding of the club.

The court has a remarkable 100 percent conviction rate, Gray said.

“It’s just one of the traditions,” he said. “It’s all in fun. It’s probably been here as long as the club has.”

The judge of the court is chosen from among the senior members of the club, and clad in a fur cloak, he generally refuses to acknowledge any excuse. The court is a big part of Friday nights at the club, and the shirt tails hanging from the rafters, along with antler mounts, framed magazine and newspaper stories, photographs and other memorabilia, often delay the line heading to the buffet where venison and other wild game are served up to hungry sportsmen.

For the first five decades of its existence, North State was a men-only place. After some long and serious discussions, ladies began to be welcomed in the 1950s, a move that was popular with at least one outdoor clothing manufacturer.

“It’s said that L.L. Bean asked North State to have more weekends when the ladies could come, because they sold so many



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The Hunting Camp

clothes and boots,” Gray laughed.

The introduction of ladies to the club also led to a few other changes. An addition was made to The Bullpen, the lean-to near the bonfire where many members sleep. Naturally, the new accommodations were painted pink, and christened The Heifer Pen.

The dining hall is another place steeped in tradition. Most of the deer harvested at North State are consumed in the dining hall. Members buy a meal ticket every year, and some buy additional tickets, with the revenues going to help maintain the club, hunting lands, and the hounds. While breakfasts are early and hearty, the evening meal is considered a time of fellowship and relaxation.

Yet another carryover from the early days of North State is that younger members help cook large broilers of venison over coals in an open fireplace in the dining hall. The meat is then served throughout the meal. There is fierce but friendly competition to see who is the best fireplace chef, since properly broiling the meat requires a deft hand and perfect timing.

Before anyone eats, however, a member of the club is always asked to say grace. Dial said the prayer is as much to bless the food as to ask for safety for the hunt, but even the prayer has led to stories

that have been told and re-told through the generations.

“One time, the fellow who was asked to say grace may have had a few adult beverages,” Gray said. “He just keep praying and praying. Meanwhile, you could smell that meat cooking throughout the room. He finally said ‘Amen,’ and one of the cooks said it was a good thing he’d finished – the broil was about to get burned.”

Although stories and poems, hunts and meals, trophy bucks and traditions are all part of North State, Council’s original stand on conservation is still a driving force behind the club.

Letters from the 1930s show how the club entered into an agreement with area farmers to give deer and big game a five-year respite from hunting. For decades, food plots have been meticulously maintained on both the club and the land it leases, and some areas are closed to hunting to allow safe haven for wildlife. Wildlife regulations are strictly followed, along with hunt rules that are as much about safety as they are manners.

Conservation is king

J.P. Council’s conservation mindset even helped set a precedent in state law – when the new owners of a large tract of land close to North State refused to honor the club’s longstanding hunting rights,



The Court of North Friar Swamp by Kenneth A. White



Council took the fight to the state courts. The hunting easement decision is still cited in property lawsuits today.

North State has always tried to keep an eye on the future, Gray said. The club is currently working with two property owners on one of the most aggressive projects yet – restoring 2,000 acres of mixed use farmland and timber to its original state. Gray said that if the plan comes together, the property will feature natural wetlands, longleaf pine savannahs, mixed hardwood and bay forests, some open fields, and maintained loblolly pines for revenue.

The property was originally owned by J.P. Council, and was hunted by the early members of North State when members still rode the train and walked to the hunting camp.

“The goal is to return the habitat to an environment like it was when Uncle Kinchen and the others first saw why this place was spe-

cial,” Gray said. “It will take years, but it will be one of the only tracts of its kind I know of. The owners are very enthusiastic – their families enjoyed being part of North State, too.”

For the time being, Gray said, hounds will still sing in the bays and forests of North State, although it’s rare that they chase a deer all the way to Lake Waccamaw, as Kinchen Council described in one of his poems, “The Buck that Got Away.”

In the poem, Council pokes fun at every member of the club, lampooning both their professed hunting prowess and lack of marksmanship, all in a way that shows the camaraderie that still makes North State a special place.

“There’s nothing else like it,” Gray said. “That’s the North State way.”



Dial Gray, great-grandson of John Pickett Council

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Mimi Robinzine, PA-C with Dr. Berry

Meyassar (Mimi) Robinzine holds a Master's Degree of Medical Science in Physician Assistant Studies. She is a national board certified Physician Assistant, who completed her training at Mercer University in Atlanta, Georgia. Mimi has a background in Family Medicine and Neurology.

Her love for education and medicine, coupled with a heart for service, has blessed her with opportunities to provide care to patients in Haiti, Brazil and Guyana, through medical missions. It is with this same enthusiasm that she is highly committed to providing considerate, individualized, evidence based, medical care to each patient.

Ms. Robinzine is a member of the Christian Medical and Dental Association, the American Academy of Physician Assistants and the North Carolina Academy of Physician Assistants. Also, she enjoys the outdoors, spending time with family and friends and volunteering in a variety of community service projects. Mimi looks forward to serving Columbus County.

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MAY 6



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JUNE 10



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THE NEWS REPORTER

FIFTEEN UNDER 40

JULY 27



Jennifer Ganus, Amber Bellamy & Jamika Lynch



2017 winners Cassie Dawson, Christian Grate & Jessica Davis with Lamont Grate.



Jessica Benton, Nadina Bernal, Jane Bousquet, Rebekah Benton, Mary Ward, Alexandria Benton



Sidney Miller makes his musical debut with Honey Don't.



Christian Grate, Rebekah Benton, Fielding Hammond, Sid Miller, Boyd Worley, Justin Smith, Jonathan Medford, Kevin Williamson.
Seated: Amber Bellamy, Jessica Davis, Cassie Dawson, LeighAnn Merritt, CeCe Creech, Lacie Jacobs

LIVE AFTER 5 HONORING TOM STANLEY

SEPTEMBER 7



Barbara Ward, Joan Ward, Kelli & Joe Edmund



Kay Horne sets the pace for a line dance.



Black Water Rhythm & Blues Band

COLUMBUS CHAMBER INDUSTRIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

SEPTEMBER 15



Al Hackney, Paul Gore, Danny McNeill & Brad McNeill



Parker Nance & Keith Alsup



Jenny Holcomb, Chamber President, welcomes golfers.



Cathy Boswell, John Fort, Jennifer Holcomb, Becki McPherson, Terri Edmund, Carol Worrell & Suzanne Hall

COLUMBUS COTILLION
PARTY AT THE MILLPOND

SEPTEMBER 16



Mike & Briana Cahn and Brenden & Angela Jones



Mary Hooks, Kayla & Ernie Ward, Joe Hooks



Kathryn Caine Ogden with The Midatlantic Band

LAKE WACCAMAW DEPOT MUSEUM
***Kin'lin'* Is Born with Mary Mintz & Billy Shipman**

SEPTEMBER 23



Kin'lin' documents local history, art and customs.



Guests learn how Mary Mintz and Billy Shipman started *Kin'lin'*.



Mary Mintz talks with Peggy Wilson



Charlotte Hollingsworth, Donna Askew & Karen Gore

FAMILIES FIRST & COLUMBUS ARTS COUNCIL *Lip Sync Battle*

OCTOBER 7



Buns on the Run, Mo' Money and Best Act winners. Left to Right: Mary Bennon Wheatley, Jordan Carter, Amber Dinkins, Jenny Clore, Rachel Smith & Susan Smith



Back left to right: Brent Wheatley, David Smith, Grant Merritt, Coke Gray, Ryan Clore, Jonathan Medford, Matt McLean, Kevin Williamson, Sid Miller. Front left to right: Boyd Worley & Todd Burney



Vickie Pait & Sally Mann



The MC - Butch Pope



Garrett Tolley & Mallory Freeman



The Judges - Scott Hyatt, Frankye Boone-Newkirk & Jon David



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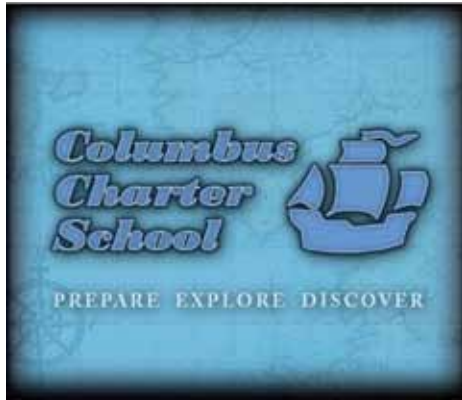
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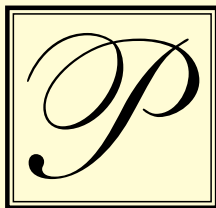
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A Spiritual Luxury

STORY BILL WOODSMAN

I have always loved the simple eloquence of people whom I have met in the woods, whether they be educated or not. What they usually say comes from the heart and sometimes is rather funny. I was recently hunting above Gretna, and my guide was a little old man who had hunted in those mountains for many years. We came to an area that was free of grass, about the size of a man lying down, and it looked very unusual there in the middle of a woodland meadow. I commented that this lack of grass was certainly unusual, and the man said, "No, this has always been this way and the story is that the devil has come up here and has laid down right at that spot and, as you know, where the devil lies down, the grass never grows." I saw that he was serious, and I asked him why in the world would the devil come all the way up here above Gretna to lay down, and the man said, with a twinkle in his eye, "He has so much work to do in Chatham, he has to come up here and rest."

I am sure many Chathamites would take issue with this, but the man really believed this was the reason for the lack of grass in the area. To the sophisticated person, this type of belief seems too childlike, but the point I want to make is that I have the gravest suspicion of sophistication. I have never discovered it in nature, and to me, it seems that instead of being a proof of enlightenment and culture, it is evidence rather of ignorance, perhaps folly, and is the triumph of shallowness and sterility. The real trouble with

a sophisticated person is not that he knows too much, but that he knows too little. I have found in nature things are usually as they appear to be, and the deep dark reasoning behind them seems to have escaped God's plan. I wish to borrow unashamedly from what Archibald Rutledge had to say about life's extras because these extras are not what people give us, but what nature seems to have placed before us and are open to anyone who is willing to take a walk into the woods with an open mind. My knowledge of theology is hardly more ample than that of a bush man in Borneo, but I have an absolutely unshaken faith that the God who created us also created the animals we are so fond of seeing, and the simplicity and beauty of nature around us. One has no difficulty in discovering in the vast scheme of things the extraordinary and exciting world around us.

Last fall while drifting down the Dan River duck hunting, I saw on the mud ledge directly over the river a very large animal. On closer examination, we discovered it was a magnificent stag with ten points, weighing at least 250 pounds. This old fellow had made a valiant effort to get away from the hunters as his bullet riddled body showed. He was able to get just to the edge of the water and then collapsed. Even in his death, the deer was magnificent, having been dead certainly no more than a day or two. It pointed out to me both the sadness of the hunt that ends up with an animal dying but also the magnificence of the animal and the

Continued on page 96

SPIRITUAL LUXURY

valiant fight that most had put up to struggle and maintain their lives. This old monarch had spread his seed many times I am sure and had come to this resting place where no one could devour his flesh or take his antlers. The sadness sets with me even now, but as we drifted down the river, I could see the entire world of the old deer – courage, endurance, even valor – a clearer lesson could not be taught.

It sometimes seems that the woods can ease the pain and clear the mind far quicker than any words a man can speak to you. I remember being especially impressed with this truth when I went hunting this spring, partially to escape from a personal sadness. I had walked only a little way into the fragrant forest in one of the areas where the giant yellow pines are yet to be cut. An early morning wind was blowing a low contralto to music in their crowns and the sunlight was just coming over the hills and beginning to burn the tops with a golden glow. The majesty of the moment overcame me, and all thoughts I had of sadness and grief were washed away. Far on the other side of the hill, an old turkey gobbled and filled my entire soul with an excitement that was only heightened by the beauty around me. The idea of that great bird, strutting high in the hills and looking forward to reaching what nature had called him to do, was answer enough for me, and perhaps I could see a little of my own life in what was going on. The remainder of the hunt is really unimportant because everywhere I looked that particular day, I saw a perfect grace about me. I very rapidly passed from a state of grief and sadness to a profound conviction that indeed here in these living woods, God had a message for me and everyone who would just take the time to look. For many years, I had the idea that nature had for man an active sympathy. But now I have changed my opinion. There seems really a superb indifference about nature, for it is what lies behind nature that really has sympathy. A pine in itself does not sing a song, but God has made that song music to those who are willing to listen. Surely, this beauty is not a random affair for it is too authentic and represents the highest form of affection. We originate from Him in our sublime art. Our activity to that end is nothing more than an attempt to imitate the things in nature He has already created.

Whatever my religion may be worth, I feel deeply that these extras nature and hunting have given me will always be a part of me and free for the taking whenever I wish to go and become part of this marvelous scheme. I haven't come by this feeling by traveling the highest path, for I know the valley of shadows as well as most and the veil that grief can bring to one's eyes. But I know also that the spiritual luxuries I have gained from my walks in the woods and walks of nature are such that they can never be removed. I hope this is perhaps the most positive thing that anyone can say about nature, and for that matter, hunting.



"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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From left: Tammie Frick General Manager,
Blair Page, Jenny Wright and Brad Walker



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Saturday, November 18

Collards & Cornbread Day

Enjoy a local favorite at 9 a.m. at Columbus County Community Farmers Market, 132 Government Complex Rd. in Whiteville.



Saturday, November 18

CRHS Inspiration Gala

13th Annual Columbus Regional Healthcare Foundation Gala honoring Dr. William S. Ogden at Vineland Station. Music by The Embers featuring Craig Woolard. Cocktail Dinner Buffet and Silent Auction. Black Tie optional. To purchase tickets, call 910-642-9303.

Saturday, November 18

N.C. Museum of Natural Science Meet Me at the Museum

Marine Debris: A Global Issue with Local Solutions

Explore the global impacts of marine debris at 1:30 p.m. Learn what is being done in N.C. to solve the problem of derelict fishing gear, abandoned vessels and storm debris. Discover what you can do to lessen the impact we, as consumers, have on our oceans and waterways. This free program is for all ages. No registration required.

Thursday, November 23

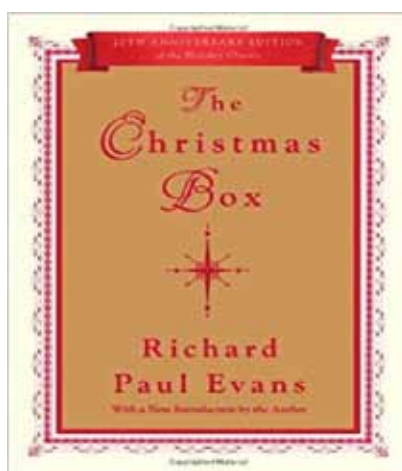
Turkey Trot 5K

Kick off Thanksgiving morning at 8 a.m. with a fun 5K sponsored by *The News Reporter*. Meet in your most festive running attire at Madison St. and Main St. in downtown Whiteville.

Saturday, November 25

N.C. Museum of Natural Science DisneyNature's Monkey Kingdom

Amazing footage captures the real-life journey of a Toque Macaques monkey named Maya, as she tries to keep her son safe through unexpected and sometimes perilous adventures. This free 81-minute film is rated G and showtimes are 10 a.m., 12 p.m. & 2 p.m. After each showing, extend the learning experience in fun and engaging ways. Drop by the education table to learn more. Science Cinema programming is funded by a grant from the International Paper Foundation. No registration required.



Thursday, November 30

SCC Foundation Christmas Luncheon at Vineland Depot

Richard Evans, the #1 best-selling author of *The Christmas Box*, is the guest speaker at the SCC

Foundation Christmas Luncheon at Vineland Station Thursday, November 30 at 11:30 a.m. Tickets are available for purchase by calling the SCC Foundation office at 910-642-7141 ext. 308 or you can stop by the college. Tickets are \$35.00/person or you can purchase a table of 8 for \$250.00. Lunch to be served. All proceeds from the event will help fund the SCC Success Scholarship, a free tuition and fee scholarship for recent high school graduates in Columbus County.

Friday, December 1

Collier's Christmas Treasure Hunt

To kick off Vineland Christmas week, Collier's will hide 12 Little Green Boxes throughout the city limits.

Friday, December 1

Vineland Christmas Tree Lighting
Meet at the Christmas Tree at Vineland Station for (free) hot chocolate, sweet treats, glow sticks and music. Entertainment begins at 6 p.m. and tree lighting is at 7 p.m.

Friday, December 1

"Souper" Supper

Boy Scout Troop 512 will be serving Chicken Bog plates, \$6 each, at Vineland Station.



Friday, December 1

Lake Waccamaw Candlelight Walk & Tree Lighting

Sponsored by Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum. Meet at Lake Waccamaw Town Hall at 5:30 p.m. for a candlelight stroll to the Christmas tree lighting followed by cookies and hot chocolate at The Depot Museum.



Friday, December 1

Saturday, December 2

The Mistletoe Market at Vineland Christmas

A holiday shopping event hosted by Whiteville Junior Woman's Club at Vineland Station on Friday, December 1, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday, December 2, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Local merchants and craftspeople from around the region, on-site photography and monogramming will be available. Admission is \$5 and gives access to all vendors, complimentary hot cocoa and coffee bar and a gift tote. All proceeds support local scholarships and community projects.

Saturday, December 2

**N.C. Museum of Natural Science
1st Saturday Nature Explorations**
Bring a pair of binoculars, a camera and a lot of excitement as we explore the natural beauty of our

area. For location of this month's Nature Explorations location and for more information, please contact Meredith Morgan at Meredith.morgan@naturalsciences.org. In case of inclement weather call the museum at 910-914-4185 for possible cancellations. Nature Explorations is recommended for ages 8 and up, but all ages are welcome.

Saturday, December 2

27th Annual Lake Waccamaw Christmas Parade

The parade begins at 10 a.m. at Elizabeth Brinkley Park, traveling down Columbia Ave., right on Lake Shore and right onto Flemington Dr. Parade entries are free; contact Town Hall for more information at 910-646-3700.

Saturday, December 2

Breakfast with Santa at Chadbourn Depot

Santa will arrive by train to the Chadbourn Depot at 8:30 a.m. Breakfast with Santa is 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Depot. Tickets are \$5 for children and \$10 for adults. Tickets for sale at Old Towne Florist and CresCom Bank in Chadbourn.

Saturday, December 2

Chadbourn Christmas Parade

Parade starts at 3 p.m. Route begins in front of McArthur Supply on East Railroad Ave., right on North Brown St., right on Strawberry Blvd., right on Howard St., and concludes at Chadbourn Baptist Church. For more information or to enter the parade, contact Olde Towne Florist at 910-654-5646.



Saturday, December 2

10th annual "Christmas from the Heart" Craft Show & Sale

Columbus County Farmers Market features local bakers, crafters, jelly makers, entertainment and door prizes. For more information, visit columbuscountymarket.com.

Saturday, December 2

"NewSong's Very Merry Christmas Tour 2017"

Doors open 5 p.m. and concert begins 6 p.m. at Northwood Church in Whiteville. Tickets ranging from \$20 to \$30 available at iTickets.com.



Sunday, December 3

Whiteville Christmas Parade

Peace Baptist Church is hosting the Whiteville Christmas Parade on Sunday, December 3 at 3 p.m. with lineup at 2 p.m. For entry information, call Carol Clark at 910-234-5628.

Thursday, December 7

Tabor City “Christmas Parade through the Lights”

The only nighttime Christmas parade in Columbus County is Thursday, December 7 at 6 p.m. in downtown Tabor City. A Christmas tree lighting ceremony follows the parade at the Tabor City Library.

Saturday, December 9

Fair Bluff Christmas Parade

Parade and Christmas on Main Street begins at 11 a.m. in downtown Fair Bluff. Lineup on Causey Avenue will begin at 9 a.m.

Saturday, December 9

Breakfast with Santa

Whiteville Junior Woman’s Club

Check out Whiteville Junior Woman’s Club Facebook for more event information.



Saturday, December 9

Richard F. Burkhardt Fine & Performing Arts Series at SCC

It’s a Wonderful Life:

A Live Radio Play

If you love the classic American film, “It’s a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play” is sure to bring joy and laughter this holiday season. Performed as a 1940s live radio broadcast in front of a studio audience, five actors perform the

dozens of characters in the radio play as well as produce the sound effects. This award-winning adaptation has been named one of the top ten most produced plays in the country by *American Theatre Magazine*. Ticket Prices: \$25 Gold Circle seating, \$15 General Admission. For wheelchair accessible seating, call the SCC Foundation at 642-7141 ext. 308.



Saturday, December 9

N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Celebrating a Vineland Christmas with special story time and movie “The Polar Express”

Put on your favorite pajamas for a special Vineland Christmas celebration featuring a story time reading of the beloved holiday classic *The Polar Express* at 10 a.m. and a showing of the Warner Brothers film *The Polar Express* at 11 a.m. This 100-minute film is rated G. Story time is recommended for children in preschool to kindergarten, but all ages are welcome. No reservations required for this

free program except for groups larger than 10.

Monday, December 11

Tabor City Visitor

Center Holiday Open House

Stop by the Tabor City Visitor Center open house from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The visitor center is located at 301 E. 5th St. in Tabor City.

Monday, December 11

Southeastern Oratorio Society

The Oratorio presents Camille Saint-Saëns’ “Christmas Oratorio” and K. Lee Scott’s “Christmas Cantata: The Incarnation” with orchestral accompaniment and solos at First Presbyterian Church, 511 N. Thompson St., Whiteville. Free concert underwritten by the Fisher family.

Tuesday, December 12

Hanukkah

The Jewish Festival of Lights begins at sunset on December 12 and ends Wednesday, December 20.

Tuesday, December 12

Richard F. Burkhardt Fine & Performing Arts Series SCC Choir Ensemble

Holiday Concert

Join the SCC Collegiate Choir Ensemble at 7 p.m. as they present their Holiday Concert featuring traditional Christmas carols, gospel celebrations, and new popular holiday repertoire. This event will be held in the auditorium and is free to the public. Enjoy a showcase of soloists, duets, and the Ensemble through a variety of genres.

Friday, December 15

Open Minds Teen Science Café
N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences
 Calling all teens! Teen Café is an informal, interactive program from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. that promotes exploration, creativity & lifelong learning. Meal provided. No registration required for this free teen program. Contact Vicki DiMuzio at (910) 914-4185 ext. 236 or email vicki.dimuzio@naturalsciences.org.



Saturday, December 16

Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum

The Railroad Gift Shop will hold an Open House from 9:30 a.m. til 3 p.m. with cider and cookies for visitors while shopping for specially-selected holiday gifts. Proceeds support depot restoration and programs.

Saturday, December 16

N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Meet Me at the Museum: Saturday Explorations

Introduction to Letterboxing

Discover letterboxing, an exciting activity that combines the elements of hiking, treasure hunting and creative expression that the entire

family can enjoy together. Learn everything you need to know about letterboxing in this fun interactive program. Includes a take home 'make your own stamp' kit to get you started. This free program is for all ages. No registration required.



Saturday, December 16

2nd Annual Christmas on the Lake at Lake Tabor Hosted by the Tabor City Chamber of Commerce at Lake Tabor

Exhibitors are invited to decorate their boats for the flotilla. Registration is at 5 p.m. and the flotilla begins at 6 p.m. A trophy will be awarded to the most creative entry. New this year is a Kids' Fun Zone with inflatables and more. Hot dogs, hot chocolate and coffee will be for sale. For more information, call 910-377-3012.

Monday, December 25

Christmas Day

Saturday, December 30

N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Science Cinema -

Disneynature's Born in China

Follow the groundbreaking journey of 3 animal families – the majestic panda, the savvy golden monkey and the elusive snow leopard. Featuring stunning imagery,

this film showcases remarkable scenes captured on film for the first time ever. This free 79-minute film is rated G. After each showing, we extend the learning experience in fun and engaging ways. Drop by our education table to learn more. Science Cinema programming is funded by a grant from the International Paper Foundation. No registration required and show times are 10 a.m., 12 p.m. & 2 p.m.



Monday, January 1

New Year's Day

Monday, January 15

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Friday, February 9

Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum Annual Members' Dinner

Annual members' dinner at the Boys & Girls Homes Fellowship Building. Visit lakewaccamawdepotmuseum.com for membership information and to join.



Friday, February 16

Richard F. Burkhardt Fine & Performing Arts Series at SCC
Shana Tucker is a singer-songwriter and cellist who credits her genre-bending ChamberSoul journey to the influences of her jazz and classical roots interwoven with 80's & 90s pop music, movie soundtracks, and world music. Concert begins at 7 p.m. Advance tickets can be purchased from www.sccnc.edu. Gold circle seating is \$25 per ticket and general admission tickets are \$15.



Saturday, February 24

Taste of Columbus "Italian Style"
The annual Taste of Columbus fundraiser for Columbus County Youth & Families. New this year,

youth ages 18 & younger and adults ages 19 & older can compete. For more information or to sponsor a table, check out Columbus County Youth and Families Association on Facebook. Proceeds support residents of all ages and assist in building a Community Wellness Center for Columbus County.

Tuesday, March 6

Evening with U.S. Poet Laureate

Tracy K. Smith

Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, professor at Princeton University and the 2017-2018 U.S. Poet Laureate. Tracy K. Smith will bring "poetry to the people," an event held at Southeastern Community College auditorium with a reception afterwards. The event is sponsored by The Reuben Brown House Preservation Society to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the A.R. Ammons Poetry Contest for Columbus County youth. The following morning, Smith will read poetry to public school students at Bowers Auditorium and will have a 'masters poetry class' at the Columbus County Arts Council for selected students displaying a keen interest and talent in writing poetry.

Friday, March 16 & Saturday, March 17

Richard F. Burkhardt Fine & Performing Arts Series at SCC
40th Annual Dr. Sharyn Edwards Piano Festival & Competition

This year's festival will feature a concert with guest artist Dr. Sharyn Edwards, who began this festival. A longtime music instructor at

Southeastern Community College. Dr. Edwards will be accompanied by several local pianists during the Friday evening performance. The Festival concludes with a piano competition open to students in Kindergarten through college. The Saturday evening performance will be a recital by the Saturday competition winners. Tickets for Friday evening's performance are \$10 for general admission and Saturday's performance is \$5 with \$5 students pricing for SCC students for either performance.

Saturday, March 17

Columbus Cotillion

Debutante Ball and Spring Dance at Vineland Station.



Saturday, March 17 & Sunday, March 18

Southern Farm Days

Southern Farm Days at Boys & Girls Homes Exhibition Center at Lake Waccamaw each day from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Handicapped parking available and a trolley service provided from main parking area to gate and around the show. Antique tractors, hit and miss engines, working horses and mules, crosscut sawing, soap-making, open fire cooking and much more.

Saturday, April 14

Jeans & Jewels

Lower Cape Fear Hospice is hosting a Jean & Jewels fundraiser April 14 from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Columbus County Fairgrounds with Southern Smoke Barbeque and entertainment by Honey Don't Band.



Friday, April 27 & Saturday, April 28

BBQ on the Bluff

BBQ, live music, games and rubber duck races in downtown Fair Bluff featuring some of the finest BBQ cooks in North and South Carolina.



Thursday, May 3

Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum
The Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum Lunch on the Lawn will be at the Boys and Girls Home Fellowship Building.

Friday, May 4

Strawberry Encounters

Entertainment, Music and Berry Fellowship. Save the date.

Saturday, May 5

Annual N.C. Strawberry Festival and Parade in Chadbourn

Festivities include Strawberry judging contest, entertainment, hat contest, amusements and parade. Concludes with the N.C. Strawberry Festival Scholarship pageant that evening.



Saturday, May 5

Whiteville Rotary

The second annual Kentucky Derby Party. Visit whitevillerotary.org closer to the event for more details.



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It was all worth it. I've been in remission for 10 years, and now, I'm a mother of two beautiful daughters. They are my miracle children.

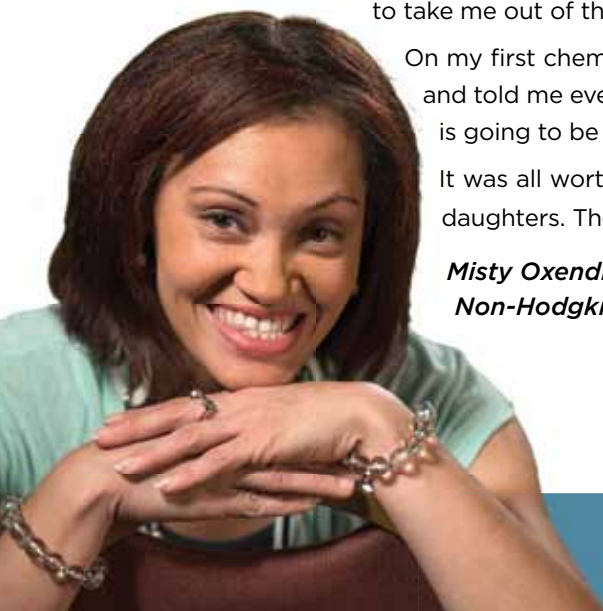
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