

# The McDowell News

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## Brick sale

Due to increased interest, the Old Fort Depot Commemorative Brick sale is open again. Bricks are \$45 and will be ordered in lots of 100. Replica bricks will not be available. All proceeds will be used to offset Old Fort's cost for the depot renovation. Applications are available at Old Fort Town Hall or go to [www.oldfort.org](http://www.oldfort.org) and print an order form from there. For more information, call Richard Acivos at 668-4831.

## Onion orders

The McDowell County Republicans are now taking orders for Vidalia onions to be delivered the first week of May. For more information, call 652-6542 or 659-6272.

## Positive Parenting

The Positive Parenting classes cancelled at the Partnership for Children and Families have been rescheduled. Class No. 7, "Parenting Teens and Pre-Teens," will be held today at 6:30 p.m. Class No. 8, "Personal Anger Management," will be held Wednesday, Feb. 25 at 6:30 p.m. Both classes will be held at the Partnership building on Main Street.

## Democrat club

The McDowell County Democrat Club will meet Thursday at Countryside Bar-B-Que. There will be a brief social time at 6 p.m. and the business meeting will start at 6:30 p.m. For more information, call 668-7338.

## Library classes

The McDowell County Public Library's free computer classes are Thursday, beginning MS Excel spreadsheets; Tuesday, Feb. 24, creating a calendar; and Thursday, Feb. 26, basic computers and becoming familiar with the mouse. The classes will be from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. or 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. For more information, call Darlene at 738-9732.

## Mopar meet

Mountain Gateway Mopar Association will have its monthly meeting Thursday at MoonDoggy's at 7 p.m. For more information, call Dawn at 659-1428.

## Little Miss contest

The deadline for Little Miss McDowell applications has been extended to Friday. Applications are available at West Junior High, East Junior High, all elementary schools, the Christian schools, The McDowell News,

'It makes no difference what people think about you. You got to have a getting up spirit.' — ALBERT JOYNER



Albert Joyner, 78, reminiscences about his role in the local civil rights movement. In 1955, in the aftermath of the Brown v. Board of Education decision, he walked a group of five black children to the all-white school in Old Fort, asking officials to admit them. (Photo by Peggy Rowe)

## Old Fort man, children took a stand for equality

Nearly 50 years ago, group turned away from school

By RAGAN ROBINSON  
Staff Writer

Albert Joyner didn't plan to make history on that sunny August morning in 1955.

Members of his traditionally black Old Fort community had been meeting, planning to walk a group of black children to the all-white Old Fort School and ask for admission. A preacher from Black Mountain — Joyner can't remember his name now — and a couple of neighbors were supposed to escort the elementary-age kids, as Joyner recalls.

When he looked outside, the little ones were waiting. The adults didn't show.

Joyner doesn't know why he decided to take the children himself. He didn't go to the meetings, wasn't involved. And he knew taking a stand could be dangerous.

"I didn't even think about it," he said last week. "The Lord just had

me do it."

Meanwhile, a crowd of white students and community members gathered at the school — 300 to 400 people, the next day's newspaper reported.

The walk wasn't a secret. Lots of people in Old Fort expected the small group before they ever set foot on the hot pavement. Students remember talk of weapons; parents, the threat of violence.

Then a sophomore at Old Fort, David Setzer, now publisher of The McDowell News, heard one student brought a pistol. He saw a set of brass knuckles. Mary Early, who had three children in school, remembers a rumor that a man in the crowd had a shotgun.

Nora Greenlee, whose children Richard and Norma Greenlee walked with Joyner that morning, said her family got threatening phone calls on the days leading up to the symbolic school visit.

"They claimed they were going to beat them up if any of them came down there," she said.

As Joyner neared the school, he saw the swarm of people. Police kept the crowd on the sides of the road as he walked down the middle, the five

## February is Black History Month

youngsters following. The faces that watched them were all white, and Joyner knew they weren't there to support him. He didn't listen to their words but kept his eyes on the front steps of the school building.

There, he said, the Old Fort principal met him at the door and told the small group they couldn't enroll.

The McDowell News account has Superintendent Melvin Taylor meeting Joyner that morning.

"Superintendent Taylor said the man inquired where he might find the office of registration," the article reads.

"He was told by Taylor that the McDowell County Board of Education had directed him to inform all principals throughout the county not to enroll any pupil — regardless of race — which would result in transferring the pupil from a school previously assigned unless and until such a request had been reviewed by the board and a formal transfer made by the board."

(See JOYNER, Page 3A)

## Jury hears graphic details

### Bowman admits killing in confession

By RICHELLE BAILEY  
Assistant Editor

A state agent choked back tears as he read from the stand Larry Eugene Bowman Jr.'s confession of how he beat, raped and squeezed the life out of 13-year-old Tiffany Lynn Freeman.

It was another emotional day of testimony Tuesday in the first-degree murder and rape trial of Bowman, 23, of Forsythe Street in Marion.

Special Agent Alan Flora of the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation took the stand as the state's last witness. He aided Marion detectives with the case in November 2002.

Tips from neighbors who saw a yellow truck in the Freeman driveway on the morning of Nov. 1 led authorities almost immediately to Bowman. At officers' request, the suspect turned over his boxer shorts, hair samples, a saliva sample and fingerprints for

(See JURY Page 2A)

## Family says factory noise bothersome

By MIKE CONLEY  
Staff Writer

Several Old Fort residents say they are bothered by a constant vibrating noise coming from the nearby Ethan Allen furniture plant and want something done to stop it.

Ethan Allen representatives said they are taking measures to reduce the noise and want to be good neighbors to people who live close by.

Both sides appeared before the Old Fort Board of Aldermen Monday. Michael and Kathy Lamb, residents of McDowell Street, said they have put up with the sound for two months. They live across from the factory.

Kathy Lamb said she and her husband first heard the "vibrating, uneven" noise coming from the plant at various times last December.

"This noise was especially bothersome at

(See FAMILY, Page 2A)

## Cattlemen honor their Producer of the Year

By MIKE CONLEY  
Staff Writer

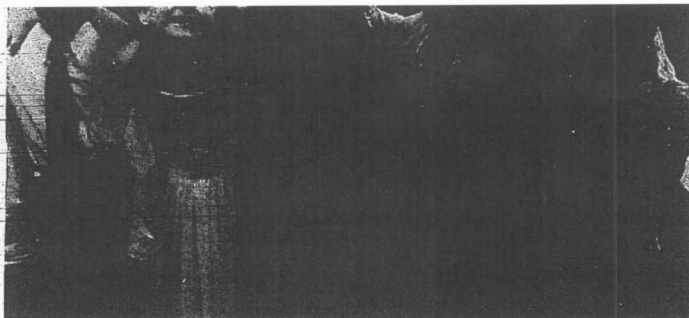
The criteria for the award



ate a 112-acre farm in southern McDowell County. They have owned 75 head of cattle, al

mercial to feed the cows," she said, adding this better ensures the cattle will get good food and

cow disease was discovered in a cow in Washington state. Federal officials said the cow came



The kindergarten class of Julie McKinney and Billie Highland at Marion Elementary School held a Valentine Manners Tea Party Friday. Students planned the entire party. They made Valentine cards for guests, placemats and origami roses to decorate each table. They planned the menu and even entertained the guests with a few songs. Students dressed in their best for the celebration. Pictured (from left) are DJ Philbeck, Ashton Morris, Laurin Bradley, Aslyn Sills and Rachel Walker.

next 10 years.

The shortage has forced teachers to take time away from classroom instruction to treat illnesses, educators and school nurses said.

But hiring enough nurses to meet the standard of one nurse for every 750 students could cost the state about \$5 million a year, said Paula Collins, a senior adviser for the N.C. Health Schools initiative.

Her group helped write the board's recommendations.

"There is very little money available at the county level," Collins said. "They just don't have it."

The board said the state Department of Public Instruction and the state Department of Health and Human Services will have to work with the General Assembly to find additional sources of money.

Four school systems in

Ledford, the county's school health coordinator.

"We're constantly scraping money together," Ledford said.

Despite having more nurses than most school systems, Ledford said Cherokee County still spends a lot of time and money training teachers to care for students in their classrooms.

"And teachers didn't go into education to become nurses," Ledford said.

Schools get money for nurses from several sources, including grants, local health departments and hospitals.

Some students also pay for services on a sliding scale.

Asheville High School is among just three schools in Buncombe County with comprehensive health centers that served more than 6,000 students this past school year.

They provide emergency

otherwise," said Cindy Kunion, a registered nurse who manages the school's health center.

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## Joyner recalls 1955 march to school

(Continued from Page 1A)

Joyner didn't expect officials to let the children into school. He wasn't surprised when they turned him away.

On the way back, a man from his community brought a car to pick up Joyner and the youngsters.

"They were looking for me to get shot that morning," he said. "He said, 'get in here before you all get killed.'"

The 1955 newspaper article names all five students there that morning, as well as their families.

"Taylor said he learned from Joyner that the Negro children accompanying him and seeking entry in Old Fort white school were Richard and Norma Greenlee, children of Thurmond Greenlee; Thomas Lowder, son of Lucille Lowder; Audrey Logan and Teressa Murphy, grandchildren or living with James Bryson."

Richard Greenlee was 9 at the time. His sister, Norma, was 6.

Neither remembers much about the event. Richard, now 57 and living in Kernersville, heard stories about his role later, when he came to understand the danger of that short walk.

His sister, now Norma-Batten of Greensboro, knows her photo was in "Life" magazine.

She remembers standing on the steps of the school in a plaid dress with cameras flashing around her.

"You didn't realize it then but it was some significant history at the time," she said.

The walk was three months before Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Ala. bus.

Batten isn't sure whether the children understood their place in the local civil rights movement. She thinks they took a cue from elders in the community, that the kids picked up on the idea that facing down a flawed system was the right thing to do.

"I grew up in a very spiritual family," she said. "My mother always told us God loves us all the same, no matter what the color of our skin. Human rights were what we were supposed to stand up for."

Joyner remembers that after

the march to the school, Norma and Richard's father lost his job at Old Fort Finishing and had to go out of the county to find work.

Minnie Murphy's granddaughters, Audrey and Teressa, walked alongside the young Greenlees. She was scared that morning, but her husband, Fred, had faith in their safety.

"He had the conscience to think nobody would mess with a Murphy," she said. The name had some clout in the white community, where his father lived and Murphy himself had friends.

The Old Fort events of August 1955 followed a year-old decision by the Supreme Court to end legal segregation and outlaw the "separate but equal" doctrine.

A lot of people thought things would change immediately, said Dan Pierce, an assistant professor of history at UNC-Asheville. In the aftermath of the Brown v. Board of Education ruling, however, the courts allowed a clause that said integration should occur "with all deliberate speed."

That, said Pierce, allowed school systems to move slowly or not at all.

When Superintendent Taylor met Joyner at the school in 1955, he told him that the North Carolina legislature directed schools to keep races separate, according to the newspaper. The McDowell News also reported that Taylor told Joyner the case could go to court.

Weeks before, Old Fort parents submitted a petition to allow their children into the school. The request came from a law firm in Raleigh. Pierce said that was a common step in the aftermath of Brown v. Board of Education. Across the nation, black people made similar appeals, only to have their names published in newspapers. Threats and pressure from the white community often made the people who filed withdraw their petitions, according to the history professor.

Integration began bit by bit. Old Fort started admitting black first-graders in 1956. Schools continued with one grade a year until McDowell County students fully integrated in the 1960s.

Even then, Minnie Murphy said she and her husband made sure to pick up their kids right

after school, when fights often broke out between white and black students.

Joyner knew he would probably face repercussions for his actions that Wednesday morning in 1955. He heard gossip later that some other black people in the community went to the Board of Education to say he was an outsider stirring up trouble.

The Pendleton native moved to Old Fort in 1952.

"The story was that they offered to take care of me," he said.

Six days after he walked to the school, Joyner was downtown with his sister, who was visiting from New York, and a few of his eight children. He was sitting on the rail around a fountain when a man walking by punched him, knocking him into the water.

The same man had briefly stopped his truck behind Joyner and his family on their way to town, and Joyner knew then there might be trouble. He wasn't backing down.

"It makes no difference what people think about you," he said. "You got to have a getting up spirit."

After the man knocked Joyner into the fountain, his sister ran to the nearby Caplin Drug Store to call the police. Joyner said workers there wouldn't let her in the building, much less use the phone.

Police officers came anyway, and he remembers them telling him to go to the mayor's office. Joyner thought he might be facing charges, too, but he went. The mayor told him to go home, he said.

When he did, Joyner went to another sister's house to call the sheriff's office, where an officer asked him only, "Whose son are you?"

The McDowell News printed a story about the assault in the Sept. 5, 1955, edition. Police Chief Bill Autrey issued a warrant not only for the man who attacked Joyner but also for Joyner himself.

Later that month, Mayor W.L. Dalton declared Joyner innocent. Dalton found Joyner's attacker guilty and imposed a \$15 fine. According to the paper, no one submitted any evidence to show the

assault was related to Joyner's efforts to integrate the school.

It wouldn't be the last time he saw the man who punched him, however. Years later, when Joyner was working as a nursing assistant at the Veteran's Administration Hospital, the same man lost his leg in a car accident and came under his care.

Joyner said he didn't harbor any hostility, though he made sure to look his patient in the eye

when he talked to him. Neither of the two ever mentioned the incident in downtown Old Fort, but Joyner is sure they both recalled that long-ago afternoon.

"I didn't forget," he said. "But you don't try to get even with nobody. You do what's right and you go on."

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