

GREENSBORO ECHO

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Louisville Alumni Host a Memorable Reunion By C. Sade Turnipseed

Recently hundreds of distinguished colleagues from years-gone-by convened, to celebrate the official Louisville Alumni Class Reunion. The memorable and hugely successful biennial affair marked the 26th occasion, in which the event has taken place, here in Winston County. The primary reason for the gathering is not just to see old faces and have a wonderful time, but to raise funds for their educational scholarships to students from Noxapater, Nanih Waiya, and Louisville High Schools; and, to give honor to graduates from the Louisville Training School; AKA, Louisville Negro School; AKA, Louisville Colored High School; AKA, Camille Street High School. Activities were held, for the most part, in the beautiful newly renovated Imperial Palace venue, located on Hwy 14.

This year's theme, "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," proved to be an unforgettable phrase throughout the weekend. The organizers made special efforts to reflect on the memorable moments of the past; to capture the accomplishments of the present; and to embrace the hope for the future. All in all, this year's theme became a prophetic focal point for the collective scholastic and social history of Louisville High Schools.

The events kicked off on Thursday June 29th, with some good-ole Southern hospitality...a country-style fish fry. Accompanied by live music the band was an assembly of local musicians, who came together just for the occasion.

On Friday, June 30th, the activity entitled, 'Get Acquainted' opened with a lecture by medical specialist Leon Thomas, Class of 1957. Mr. Thomas presented a brief, but

highly informative lecture on prostate cancer and the chemical sciences relative to the ongoing research. The timely topic "Choosing to Live Longer, or Die Young," was greatly appreciated by the entire audience.

The evening from that point on was dedicated to the youth. Sheriff Walter Coburn offered a hopeful prayer for our future leaders and the lively celebration was set in motion. The sweet soulful sounds of songstress, Shante Hughes, who beautifully sang "Devotion;" was immediately balanced by the strong and resounding voice of Cornelius Miller, who stirred the audience with an accappella rendering of the Negro spiritual song "Pray for Me."

The remaining portions of the program including poetry and recitals by the Young Publisher's Network, Winston County Chapter; Calista Coleman, Salutatorian Class of 2006 and Miss Ebonette 2006; performances by students from the Louisville Ballet School, Courtney Miller, instructor; a song by Clemissa Goss; and, Winston Co. Steppers, So-o-o Phi Click. The evening's performance was complemented by a "Back Down Memory Lane" fashion show that presented the many looks and styles of the traditional high school uniforms the Mighty Trojans and cheerleaders have dressed in over the years.

The 2006 Alumni Scholarships were awarded to the following recipients: Clemissa Goss & Melanie R. McReynolds, both attending Alcorn State University; Jeremy Thompson, of Stillman College; and, Areil Steve, of Mississippi Valley State University.

MC Miller, President of the Louisville Alumni Chapter concluded the evening with remarks, which reminded the audience that indeed the children are our future and we need to continue to em-

brace them by giving them the necessary support to insure their future. He also challenged the youth to pick up the reigns by becoming active participants in the Louisville Class Reunion organization. The invitation was extended and by the looks of the many youth in attendance, it was in fact received.

Saturday morning July 1, began with a parade of over one hundred cars, floats, four wheelers and motorcycles. This year's parade was bigger and better than ever before. The participants lined up and filed one-by-one onto the streets of downtown Louisville. It was a spectacular display of unity and colorful artwork that was enjoyed by spectators along the path, from Eiland Middle School to the heart of Main Street and back. This display was a marvelous reminder that Louisville Alumni had indeed returned home.

The participants of the parade were treated to a warm and comedic recollection by Jackson State University professor, George Mitchell, Ph.D., Class of '63. Dr. Mitchell recounted memorable school days and the often controversial ventures & exploits by the lively characters, who made living in Winston County, 'back in the day' interesting. He told stories in accordance to the geographical layout of Winston County, while at the same time conducted a 'roll call' of the 'who's-who' of Louisville Alumni prominence charting their successes all along the way. "Every name I am calling touches some family here and I am just proud of the people from Winston County," stated Mitchell.

"Saving Rural America"

The Louisville Alumni, Gwendolyn C. Griffin, Parade Chairperson and her committee of judges were so impressed by the participants that trophies were issued to groups in the following categories:

CHURCH/BUSINESS—Mt. Moriah M.B. Church King and Queen, 1st place; Young Publisher's Network (YPN) 2nd place;

CIVIC—Chevy Classic Club 1st place; Slab Riders 2nd place;

ALUMNI—Class of 1971 1st place; Class of 1968 2nd place.

Later that day the activities culminated in grand style. With nearly four hundred people in attendance, the highlight of the evening, an elegant banquet, was preceded by a refreshing hospitality cocktail hour. The welcoming remarks by Mr. Billy Ray Shields embodied the specialness of the experience. "This is something special, to be able to come home and be welcomed. Let's have a good time and make memories everlasting." Indeed, it was memorable. The delicious dinner was a Louisiana Creole cuisine by Best Bless Caterers, of Baton Rouge, LA; and hosted by the lovely first lady of the Louisville Alumni, Mrs. Pat Miller.

The stellar occasion was enhanced with the passionate keynote presentations by Attorney Aleatha Pittman, who represented the "Today" aspect of this year's theme; and Mr. Norris Lynch, who represented "Yesterday." Both delivered heartfelt reminders of the reason the Alumni come together in anticipation of celebrating the future...and that is LOVE.

The tributes by Royce Stephens, Billy Metts, Sheriff Walter Coburn and Asst Chief of Police Lawrence Estes bestowed on Mr. Harold Hudson and Mr. Tom Billups were examples of

the love the keynote presenters spoke about. All messages centered on the examples set by these men as teachers and life coaches for their students and athletes. "I think Mr. Hudson is the greatest man there is...he made us believe that we could do anything...he made men out of us," affirmed Sheriff Coburn. "He produced some of the best ball players in Mississippi. We were the Mighty Mighty Trojans. During those days, we did not have much, but we put our little stuff together and caught up with the people who had a lot." Sheriff Coburn continued.

"If we are ever to excel, in this community and beyond, we are going to have to continue putting the things these gentlemen represent into action," proclaimed Billy Metts. It was clear that Coach Billups and Hudson's passion and dedication to teaching was inured by their principled character, as members of the greater Winston County faculty. As seen by the many successes of those who trained with them.

Their lessons were brilliant illustrations of quality teachings and model examples of how people here have the tools needed to do anything in life...because when you leave home, you leave your protective cover...People outside of this community are not as friendly...and it is important to be the type of people to carry it forward and pass on the tools, to the next generation, remarked Pittman. Attorney Pittman went on to say, "I realize there are going to be those who do not learn from the kind of lessons taught by Mr. Hudson and Mr. Billups and who will try to function outside of the law." She then posed the question as to what will happen to those people, when Sheriff Coburn responded, "I will take them to the Hilltop Inn." "And, that's when you got to call me...but, it's gonna cost a fee." Attorney Pittman added.

"Give your children plenty of love" reminded Lynch. "Remember your teachings from teachers at school and from the pastors at church... and we will go far and be better off tomorrow." Lynch continued. The evening concluded with the song "It's So Hard to Say Goodbye" lead by Steven Eiland and accompanied by Willie Dean Miller and Delane Hudson.

"Now we are in the present age where some have been longing to see and for others it's a scary nightmare. In these days of uncertainty, where men are fighting for the control of land and oil, our futures don't shine as bright as it did twenty years ago. It is now that we must fight harder than ever before to preserve what we have and do more than our share to prepare generations to follow...For something to live, it must have substance and love and be nourished and cared for to grow. The Louisville Reunion must survive...In the final analysis, we must be an inspiration to the younger generations so they will be willing to take hold of the reigns and sail forward." Stated President MC Miller, as he thanked God for every heart, soul and mind that played a part in the "best ever" Louisville Class Reunion.

The Reunion ended with a well attended farewell dance on Sunday July 2, 2006, which was held at the Shriner's Club, along Hwy 15.

About the writer:

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