



Hilton Head Elementary Principal I. W. Wilborn Looks Confidently to the Future

(Photo by Ned Brown)

Islander of the Month:

Isaac Wayman Wilborn

By JIM LITTLEJOHN

They call him "Fess."

And they are not referring to the actor who portrayed Davy Crocket and Daniel Boone.

Islanders for an entire generation have had extremely close relations with our Islander of the Month—and they call him "Fess" from a sense of love, loyalty and quite a bit of awe. For he is "the Professor," the man who guides their young, and who takes a major part in the daily life of a large number of our citizenry.

No native of Hilton Head, having been born to a family of a Presiding Elder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Elloree, S. C., "Fess" was no stranger to the Island either. "I grew up coming here several times a year—on the old ferry—as my father had Hilton Head as part of his district and had to come over here every three months for the quarterly conference. If you have Methodists in your background, you might know what that is."

An intelligent youngster, urged on by his family, young Isaac Wilborn graduated from Orangeburg County Trade School in 1946 at the tender age of 16 and enrolled the following fall at South Carolina State College in his nearby county seat of Orangeburg. The next year, however, he moved to Allen University in Columbia where he continued his studies—and found a wife in his senior year—before graduating in 1950.

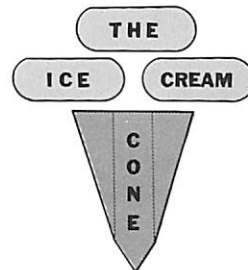
The wife, by the way, was not from the Low Country either, being the former Ramona Johnson of Latta, S. C. They now have three children, Sharon (Mrs. Richard Lowery); Isaac III, 13; and Lizzie, 5.

Shortly after graduation, the Wilborns found themselves in the very heart of the Low Country visited by young Isaac in his youth, as they assumed teaching jobs in Bluffton. Isaac was assigned the job of teaching a combined seventh and eighth grade class in Bluffton in a school that went only through the 10th grade. "The students who went on either transferred to a private boarding school like Mather in Beaufort—or they moved in with relatives in Savannah or Beaufort and attended the public schools," Wilborn recalls.

His teaching career was interrupted briefly from 1951 to 1953 when Uncle Sam exercised his prerogative on his time and he returned to Bluffton for a second year of teaching in 1953.

At the end of that year, "Fess" saw the completion of a dream when Bluffton graduated its first 12th grade class from the Michael C. Riley High School—but

(Continued on Page 34)



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if we had moved her... She'd still have them

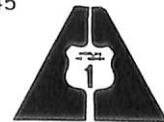
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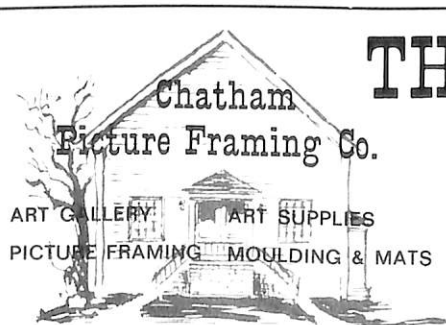
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(Photo by Ned Brown)

"Fess" and His Students Meet for Discussion on a Regular Basis

Islander of the Month

(Continued from Page 23)

he then took on another challenge and moved across the sound, via the old ferry, and took charge of the elementary grades at the brand-new school where he still presides. "We only came for one year," he laughs, "and we're still on our one year."

He continued his education, receiving his Masters Degree in Education from South Carolina State in 1957 and doing further graduate work at Tuskegee Institute, Peabody College in Nashville and at the University of South Carolina, "but you might say this area educated me," he smiles.

The population of the school remained fairly constant, Wilborn notes, until very recently when the increased opportunities for making a living began to draw back many native sons from all around the nation. "The construction, the inns and the other connected industry has been bringing many of the former residents back to Hilton Head. When they were younger, they felt they had to get away—but now they are coming back with regularity—and bringing their families with them."

"Professor" Wilborn has had what he feels considerable success in his job of heading up the local elementary school, particularly during the past two years of transition from a formerly all-Black school to an integrated one. "I feel we have an efficient and effective school situation here, because of community demands. I think our first full year of integration has been successful. Not beyond expectations, but successful. Attitude has had a lot to do with that," he says.

Asked to comment on what has been accomplished that gives him the most pride and the good "Fess" is quite likely to draw attention to the Hilton Head Island Child and Youth Development Center, Inc., of which he is both chairman and trustee. This project, commonly known as the Day Care Center and located on the Industrial Park Road, was a dream which our subject helped to dream and then to turn into reality.

Several years ago there were numerous governmental projects of a similar nature being installed across the country—but for one reason or another, Hilton Head Island did not qualify for the construction money. It was then that "Fess" approached members of the Island's white community, including Art Hall and Community Association President Emerson Mulford with a plan for building a Youth Development Center without federal funds. A campaign was begun and the building soon became a reality, with almost every segment of the Island contributing in one way or another. Once built, the Center was able to receive some federal money for providing office space to governmental projects—and the work of the Center got under way. Currently the Center is developing a pilot project for continuous Head Start kindergarten work with youngsters from three years on up. The idea is to work with one group from age three to first grade in an effort to increase elementary school preparedness.

If that is his pet project outside of school, his next is mental health. "Fess" Wilborn is currently the president of the Beaufort-Jasper Mental Health Society and has served on its board for a number of years.

He is also a member of the South Carolina Education Association membership committee, a director of the Hilton Head Island Community Association, past president of the Beaufort County Teachers Association and a member of the Low

(Continued on Page 35)

Out of Troubled Past

(Continued from Page 31)

house in Coosawhatchie and in the Union Chapel, Grahamville. All this on an annual salary of \$700. It is good to record that the Islanders after this hiatus must have sensed a lack, for in April of 1833 the church was recovered and reconsecrated.

"The years went by: then came the Civil War. Ravished and abandoned, Hilton Head became, perhaps, the greatest casualty of the disaster. Plantation houses all were put to the torch. Zion Chapel, however, survived the conflagration although its silver chalices, made by Barnard Brothers of London in 1834, were stolen. Yet, having escaped the flames, it succumbed to expediency. Negro freedmen, given land, sought materials to build their houses. Board by board the chapel disappeared and the land was claimed by the plough. When in 1867 the Rev. James Stoney came back to the Island, he found his congregation completely dispersed.

"In 1956 there came a renaissance. A bridge was built from the mainland and the Island again became a place of people and homes, of work and play. As Hilton Head began to emerge from its lonely isolation, priests from the Bluffton church held services at various buildings on the Island. And a wonderful thing happened. The stolen chalices came home, the story of their wanderings a trenchant commentary on war. In Philadelphia an old gentleman, searching in an antique shop, came upon what he thought was a pair of ancient goblets. Imagine his surprise when polishing disclosed the inscription: Zion Chapel, Hilton Head. The chalices were returned to Beaufort County and in the spring of 1963 taken back to the Island. They arrived at a moment ripe for their keeping.

(Continued on Page 35)

Islander of the Month

(Continued from Page 34)

Country Resources Conservation and Development Advisory Committee, the Beaufort-Jasper Economic Opportunity Commission, the Hilton Head Island Comprehensive Health Advisory Committee, the South Carolina Association of School Administrators, the National Education Association, the South Carolina Education Association, the Beaufort County Education Association and the National Association of Elementary School Principals. He has formerly served as a director of the Beaufort County United Fund, a member of the South Carolina State Textbook Adoption Committee, a member of the South Carolina Civic Guide, a director of Operation Head Start, and has been active in Adult Education, the South Carolina Committee on Children and Youth and the South Carolina Educational Television Advisory Committee.

With all his committee work, our smiling "Fess" still finds time to dry a teary eye, admonish youthful offenders of the school rules and work for that unrealized ideal of every educator—to bring universal education to every man, woman and child within his reach.

He may not live to see it, but in his own words, "We have come a long way."

Out of Troubled Past

(Continued from Page 34)

"Episcopalians of Hilton Head were becoming as anxious as were the planters of 1788 for a church of their own. Early in 1963 Bishop Temple sent a commission to the Island to select land for this purpose. A site on Cordilla Drive was chosen as being in the center of population. The Bishop appointed a fund committee whose efforts were directed toward practical means of obtaining their goal. Women of the Island helped by holding tours of homes. A mission committee was then created by the Bishop, consisting of John Postell, warden; Reuben Clark, treasurer; Mrs. George Newhall, secretary; and Charles Doughtie and Arthur Gerhard, members-at-large. A meeting was held with architects Richard McGinty and Tom Stanley and the fruition of work and planning seemed excitingly close.

"The name of St. Luke's was proposed to the Bishop and later confirmed by him. It seems a fitting choice. St. Luke's Church to which Zion Chapel had been a chapel of ease was now no more. Its parishioners with their plantations had been swept away by the Civil War.

"Long unused, it had been bought by the Methodists. So with the coming of the new church on Hilton Head there again would be a St. Luke's Church in the Beaufort District of the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina.

"On April 16, 1964, when the live oaks and pines glistened and sparkled in the clear spring light, Bishop Temple and Archdeacon Davidson conducted the ceremony of ground-breaking.

"Tom Stanley of the firm of McGinty and Stanley, architects, has created in the new St. Luke's an edifice to the glory of God and the joyous use of His people. The building sings with light and air and spaciousness. A verticality has been achieved that carries the eye to soaring heights and can not fail to lift the spirit.

"The roof is a series of Gothic arches

that, with its suggestion of inverted arch on arch, is reminiscent, in miniature, of Wells Cathedral in England.

"The reredos in varying arrangements of perpendicular lines of wood reaches up to a large clear glass window mullioned with strips of wood through which the tops of pine trees are seen. No stained glass could be more beautiful than this simplicity of art and nature in perfect accord.

"The chancel is enclosed by the communion rail and crowned by a free-standing altar. This arrangement is designed in keeping with the liturgical movement which has as its purpose the greater participation of the people in the service.

"At the sides of the church are long slender windows. Between these and continuing along the tops of the walls are rows of small windows which make a classic design and further the vertical effect of the interior. The walls here, as well as the outside fabric, are made of stucco on which tiny pieces of shell have been blown. It looks very like tabby, a material used in this region in early days.

(Continued on Page 36)

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St. Luke's Communion Cups Took Long Journey

Out of Troubled Past

(Continued from Page 35)

"The baptismal font, standing symbolically at the church's entrance, is a great polished clam shell topping a base made of the same tabby-like substance as the walls. The wide aisle in the terrazzo floor is covered by a sapphire blue carpet that continues on to cover the entire chancel. Walnut is used for the altar, pulpit and lectern. The choir stalls and pews are made of an African wood very similar in color.

"Standing among pines and oaks, the lines and fabric of the beautiful church seem very much in harmony with its surroundings. At a little distance is the bell tower, its large plantation bell used now for a purpose very different from the original one.

"Christmas Eve saw the first service of the new St. Luke's. Its parishioners were fortunate in their first vicar. The Rev. Henry Sears Sizer welded together churchmen of many types and from many parts of the country into one united congregation. On February 11, 1965 he was instituted vicar by the Right Rev. Grey Temple, Bishop of South Carolina.

"The slings and arrows of outrageous

fortune which beset Zion Chapel from its beginning in 1788 to its demolition in the Reconstruction are overcome in historic continuity. The hymns sung and the canticles chanted at St. Luke's first Christmas service were the same used at Zion Chapel so long ago. The new replaced the old. It is one church ever the same.

"Looking back over disasters now surmounted one can say with the Psalmist: 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning'."

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