

Lifting Standards High



Over the past several days, and particularly while in Tarboro, I have been approached with criticisms about the operations of the W. A. Pattillo High School National Alumni Association. This is not through hearsay, but comments made directly to me.

I am reminded of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his famous writing: **Letter From a Birmingham Jail**. He said, in essence, that he rarely responded to the criticism that he received ... but he believed that these clergies who were criticizing him were of genuine Goodwill and deserved to have their criticisms answered. I will take somewhat of a similar tenor and answer the criticisms of this trio of Trojans that I encountered.

First of all, the association is fiscally sound and fiscally transparent. We spend our funds in a manner that is directed and approved by an elected Board of Directors and reported annually to the membership of the association as is required by the Bylaws. We don't hoard funds as the premise of a Non-Profit Organization is to spend funds in a wise and prudent manner in concert with its stated purposes, goals and objectives. Not to build caches.

Secondly, our programs are strong and all inclusive. They reach into the membership, into our alumni at large, into the Edgecombe County community proper and specifically into the Edgecombe County Public Schools. Programmatically we rank with any association of our nature -- anywhere.

Thirdly, the persons who hold the different offices and positions in the association come from the rank-and-file of individuals who attended W. A. Pattillo High School. Persons who lived wise, prudent and productive lives and have chosen to be productive members of the cadre that governs and administers your association. These individuals are not standing on the "river banks of youth," but rather they are wading out in the "waters of senior citizenry." All of them are individuals who have been visited by the maladies and health issues the same as other people in the general population. Yet, time and time again they rise to the occasion to meet on a conference call, to drive to a board meeting, to answer an email request or simply to be available at an important function of the association. In addition, they pay membership dues and contribute to the scholarships fund. Just as noteworthy, they are willing to spend their personal dollars and dimes to bridge a gap in the office that they hold or to provide transportation cost from a Northeast or Southwest distance city to attend a board meeting.

So in closing, I will paraphrase the words of Abraham Lincoln from **THE MAN IN THE ARENA**. It is not the trio of critics who count; not the group who points out how the association stumbles or where the directors, officers and chairpersons could have done them better. The credit belongs to that cadre that is actually in the arena, whose faces are marred by the dust, sweat and blood of meetings, planning and travel for this passion of their life; the cadre that strives valiantly; that errs, that comes short at times knowing that effort without error and shortcoming is not a reality. The cadre that actually strives to do the deeds; that knows great enthusiasms and devotions of a successful reunion or a worthy scholarship program. The cadre that, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement -- a viable and functioning alumni association. And, the cadre that at the worst, if they fail, at least they fail while daring greatly.

So dear Trojans, I have accepted your comments as "constructive criticism" and made this an opportunity for information sharing and solicitation. I invite those with concerns or criticisms to come into the fold and look closer at the rewards of our efforts. Moreover, I invite you to come into the "arena" and help to stitch this beautiful "Tapestry" called the W. A. Pattillo High School National Alumni Association, Incorporated.

Fred S. Wood, Jr.
National President