

## What can be said about the 1990-91 School Year?

Before the academic year even began, the school was plagued with tragedy. Two of our students were involved in a horrible automobile accident which left one, Charles Sundeen, in a wheelchair for an undetermined period of time. The other, Gregory Padgett, was killed, taken from us far too soon, having only just begun to live. Our guidance counselor, Mrs. Owens, was also involved in a terrible automobile accident in which she sustained major injuries which caused her to be out the entire first semester. She was lucky; all of her physical injuries will heal; however, only time will tell if and when her emotional scars will. You see, one of her dear friends was killed in the accident. The school has been plagued with fighting this year as well. For some reason, unknown to those of us who don't understand the workings of a barbarian society, groups from different sections of the community as well as from surrounding counties have decided to use Ruffin as their battleground. The fear of bodily harm caused one student to feel he needed to bring a gun to school for his own protection. Unfortunately, this weapon served not as his protection but as his downfall. Because of this incident he was expelled. Two more students, because they chose to use violence rather than dialogue, were expelled. One of them, when asked to obey the rules of the bus, chose to physically fight with the driver rather than follow the rules. The other, instead of talking through a problem she had with another student, took a razor blade

and slashed the other young lady in the face.

It is hard to believe that in the 1990's a student, in anger, would call the school and warn that he had hidden a bomb somewhere in the school building. Since he called just before the lunch bell, he must have calculated the level of confusion that would occur when the students were asked to go to the football stadium rather than the cafeteria. He must have realized that it would take the police a good deal of time to get here, and once here, a good deal of time to carefully check through the school while the student body and the faculty waited, not so patiently, outside as their hunger and anger grew. What he hadn't counted on, however, was getting caught, and I'm certain he never stopped to consider the consequences his actions would bring. After his expulsion from the schools in our county, he is now faced with the reality that no other school in the state has to accept him as a student.

So as not to give you the impression that nothing positive is happening here at school, let's talk about some of the good things. This year the students are fortunate enough to have breakfast waiting for them when they arrive each morning. Many students have commented that, "It's not like Mother's grits, eggs, sausage and toast, but it is a nutritious and filling start to the day." In any case, they are grateful.

Our football team had a good season and made it to the playoffs. Some say this was due to the fact that, for the first time

in a long time, they has a cheerleading squad that was there in all kinds of weather (hot, cold, clear, cloudy, even torrential rains) cheering them on, giving them 100 percent.

The music department was very proud to have students this past summer winning awards in summer camps as far away as Virginia, also to have had three students enrolled in the S.C. Governor's School for the Arts (two of them for music, one for creative writing). We are equally proud of the two students who, this fall, qualified for the All-State Honors Chorus by receiving perfect scores in the auditions.

All we can say is that the school year so far has shown us some rocky roads in addition to a few silver linings. No matter what else happens this year (and surely something else will) the students here are definitely taking giant STEPS INTO.....

