

Brings New Vision To Old Foundations

By Ronald Horton

As competition in public education has stepped up the tempo of life in the schools, where technology and modern media continue to bombard young minds with data and stimuli, competing for their time and money, the pace for Fred Bartholomew has definitely not slowed or diminished. His faith in himself, like his faith in others, has sustained him since the halcyon days of the 1960s when he entered the field of education; and today, thinkers and planners in the rapidly-changing arena are discovering and restating ideas in which he has been a firm, early believer all along!

Mr. Bartholomew's successes have been the direct result of long- and short-range goals for his career, as well as careful and deliberate preparation. Moreover, he credits his home training and family devotion to the work ethic for his sense of purpose and stamina in making the overall climb a rewarding and fulfilling one. Mr. "B", as most of his staff and students have called him over the years, waded into the struggle for quality and relevance in public education during the time of great change known as the Civil Rights Movement in society. He admits that he knows only too well the difficulties of both Blacks and Whites who have been resolute in their attempts to gain equality of opportunity and performance for all races; and he has always taken private pride and pleasure in his search for fairness and for positive achievements in human relations. In these endeavors, as in most of his professional life, he has tried to do more than merely follow the dictates of prescribed laws. He has pursued a course of fairness coupled with firmness throughout many a troubled time.

At Princeton Union School, Mr. B (for those struggling with Bartholomew) is a K-12 administrator with a pace fast enough to require a body beeper and a golf cart to shuttle him back and forth from one campus location, meeting, evaluation, game or special project to another. Nevertheless, with an enrollment of more than one thousand, this principal does not believe that bigger is always better in the education business. Fred has observed over the years that in many of the large, comprehensive high schools, the staff does not get to know all of the students by name, much less have the information to know which visitors to the school belong there and which ones spell trouble. In his current role at Princeton School, Mr. B can generally recognize each young person, call his name, and tell him something important about his academic career or his family.

In spite of the total task to be done, Mr. Bartholomew is adamant in his belief that the principal sets the tone, defines the school, and gives it direction. His faculty handbook makes these points clear! Whether he is in conference one-on-one, before a staff gathering, or addressing the student body, he seldom raises his voice, preferring instead to wait for others to listen before he speaks. Perhaps this is true in part because of his Southern upbringing. He was born in a community near Warrenton, North Carolina, called Warren Plains, and the hint of Virginia gentleman is no accident. Everyone on campus recognizes it when he greets each one with "Ha' aw ya?"

Leading a good school in which young folks learn and take the spotlight is also not an accident. Mr. B insists that a primary goal for him personally over the years has been to defend the integrity of the school from detractors—political or otherwise. He wants his learning environment clean, competitive, and current, with an eye toward the future. If you want to see him blanch with indignation and suppressed rage, just attack the reputation or potential of his school. Therefore, he devotes much time and energy to strong public relations and "selling" programs, projects, and planned changes to the local, county, and state following. He admits that it is not always easy, for this is a time of staggering bureaucracy, with everybody wanting to be satisfied customers or to receive special consideration.

If Mr. Bartholomew wished to slow down and refuse some forms of professional or social participation, he likely could not. He is heavily involved with humanity and has learned through constantly working with and serving others that the only meaningful life is one of interaction with and improvement of others. As a school leader and a Baptist, as well as a member of the Princeton Lion's Club, he is a frequent guest speaker, eulogist at funerals, supporter of community functions, and a general cheerleader for all that goes on at school.

Whenever the local staff and student body see Mr. B coming down the hall in his best athletic gait, wearing his bright red N.C. State blazer, they know that his favorite college team has won again and that the boss is in a good mood. Furthermore, they know they can further brighten his day if they mention his granddaughters, Anna Mikel and Traci Bridgers. While Mr. B's three children were students at PHS, he says he often worried about their adjustment and the pressures upon them from other students. However, his youngest daughter Nancy used to chide him by asking, "How're we doing today, Fred?" Thus, Papa's fears were put to rest.

Mr. Bartholomew is often touted for his ability to put together a strong and effective staff. He practices what he



In front of the PHS gymnasium, Mr. B confers with cheerleader Amy Parrish, an honor student and active school supporter in all facets of campus life.