

Soundside Learning

This Week On Core Sound

One School, One Book

Down East Families Embrace Literacy Program

Dawn Simpson is the librarian at Smyrna Elementary School which serves students from pre-K through 5th grade. She also serves Down East Middle School which is situated on the same campus. In the winter of 2019, under Simpson's leadership the two schools embarked upon a program called "One School, One Book" with elementary students reading *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* while middle school students read *Love That Dog*. The program was a success and in 2020 both schools again participated. By 2021 Facebook pictures and videos of families taking part in nightly readings had captivated others in the community, prompting Harkers Island Elementary and Atlantic Elementary Schools to join in the fun, creating a true community literacy drive.



Sisters Kirby and Charlie Surfass, students at Smyrna Elementary prepare for a night of reading.

Photo: Ashley Best Surfass

The program is organized by Read to Them, a 501(c)-3 non-profit organization who's mission is "to create a culture of literacy in every home." Through programs like One School, One Book they are able to promote reading in the *home*, not just within the traditional confines of the classroom. This is made possible, Simpson explains, by the excitement that surrounds the program. In the weeks leading up to the program's kickoff, students, parents, and teachers alike begin eagerly anticipating the reveal of the new title. "We have visuals with a count down to the reveal, usually as a large assembly. The Read to Them posters are fabulous for this purpose! Getting the staff excited prior to the event also helps get the students excited. Families get into it with social media, sharing photos and interacting as a community, which in the end became framed collages in our school..." said Simpson.

Even in the days of virtual learning brought on by the pandemic, families still found something to be excited for in One School, One Book. As kids were filing in to pick up their school-issued laptops needed for virtual instruction, one parent remarked to their student, "Do you think we are going to read our school book this year?" Simpson quickly chimed in, "YES, we are doing One School, One Book!"

This year's reading selection, *Ranger In Time: Rescue on the Oregon Trail*, provides students with tales of hardship, survival, and perseverance. In addition to the reading, teachers at our local schools are working with officials at the Oregon Trail Center to provide students with a virtual tour of that facility in conjunction with the book.



Sound Reading
Material For You &
Your Child

**Ranger In Time: Rescue
on the Oregon Trail**

By: Kate Messner

**A Complete Crossword
Puzzle is available!**

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Ranger has been trained as a search-and-rescue dog, but can't officially pass the test because he's always getting distracted by squirrels during exercises. One day, he finds a mysterious first aid kit in the garden and is transported to the year 1850, where he meets a young boy named Sam Abbott. Sam's family is migrating west on the Oregon Trail, and soon after Ranger arrives he helps the boy save his little sister. Ranger thinks his job is done, but the Oregon Trail can be dangerous, and the Abbotts need Ranger's help more than they realize!

Annis & Mississippi (Part 2 of 2)

His name was James Archie, but no one called him that. Rather, he was known to everyone simply as “Mississippi,” the same as the state he called home. (According to Stacy Davis, he was from Hattiesburg, MS and was born around 1936.)

He worked in Henry Davis’ fish house, and lived in a small one room frame office at the foot of the dock that had been built as a market for Henry’s oldest son, Wayne. It was no more than ten feet square and had no facilities other than a cot to sleep on. Mississippi loaded fish into boxes and the boxes onto and off the carts that ran on a short makeshift railways that ran to and from the two docks — one out on the water for loading from boats and the other at the shore for loading onto trucks. He had originally been with a crew that manned a larger fish house at Atlantic. While there he made friends with Wayne who invited him to come work for him and his father. During his time at the Island he ate at the Davis family table and was treated as a part of their family.

Those same strong arms that lifted the fish boxes could do wonders with a 36 inch baseball bat. In what some have called Baseball’s Golden Age, and the heyday of Willie Mays and Hank Aaron, who were from his neighboring state of Alabama, this man called Mississippi became our very own Negro League All-Star. And with this one we could actually watch him play rather than just reading about him in the Sporting News or hearing about it on the radio.

Fish house work was mostly in the early morning and late evening, when boats came in with their catch. During the day Mississippi usually had time to come with Wayne, or Wayne’s cousin “Corn Cobb,” to the baseball field we had fashioned on some vacant pasture land behind the home of Johnnie Willis. It was the property of a retired Methodist preacher, “Mr. Johnson.” (Because cattle once grazed there, after the 1964 Republican National Convention held in San Francisco’s “Cow Palace,” some of us started calling our field “Johnson’s Cow Palace.” We even posted a hand made sign to that effect.) No matter where we were in our games, when word arrived that Mississippi was on his way, the excitement was palpable and we quickly reconfigured our teams to make sure he had a place.

Our field had been fashioned to dimensions meant for lanky young boys who were still filling out their bodies. Those distances proved woefully inadequate when Mississippi came to the plate. He would hit the ball so hard that infielders always moved back several steps to protect themselves for those few occasions when he hit anything other than towering fly balls that had to be retrieved from deep in the pines and yaupon bushes that were our fences. Since we had only one ball, and it was usually taped and dirty, searching for and finding it in the green thickets of early summer was not always easy. But that distraction was well worth the trouble because of the excitement of watching this enormous “colored man” hit the ball farther than anyone we had ever seen.

Just as when he was working on the dock, he was as jovial and happy as anyone you could ever imagine. He laughed just as loud and hard as he played and worked. Unlike Annis, given his age and background, he must have known firsthand the sting of the racial prejudices that were the norm of that era. But he never let on even the faintest sensitivity that he was in any way different or apart from the rest of us, either at the fish house or on the ball field. Perhaps it was for that very reason that we came to feel the same way – that he was just another bigger and stronger one of us. After an initial consciousness of his distinctive color, at least in regards to everyone else in our finite group, that difference inevitably gave way to an appreciation of his person and of his character and talents. After a while he went from being Mississippi the colored man, to Mississippi the hard worker, the ball player, and the friend.

I’m glad I had that lesson as early and as profoundly as I did. I think it made me a better person then, and especially in those later years after integration when I would come to sit with, play beside, be taught by, work together, and be friends with black men and women in every aspect of my life. The lessons I had first learned at Henry’s Dock and at Johnson’s Cow Palace have served me well and often.



Author Joel G. Hancock of Harkers Island, NC. This story is featured in his upcoming work, *The Education of An Island Boy*
Photo: Joel Hancock Collection