

STEVE CLARK

'The Hawk' remains a Christchurch star

Twenty-five years have passed since Robert M. Yarbrough Jr. was headmaster at Christchurch School in Virginia's Middlesex County.

But time has not diminished his reputation as a Christchurch legend.

Memories of Bob Yarbrough burn especially strong among men who attended the then all-male prep school during his tenure as headmaster from 1956 to 1971.

"I am absolutely devoted to Bob Yarbrough," said Richmond lawyer William G. Broaddus, Class of 1961. "He is a wonderful man who had a huge impact on my development."

The devotion of his former students means a

great deal to the 72-year-old Yarbrough, who has lived in Miami since leaving Christchurch.

"They're the most fiercely loyal people I've ever known," Yarbrough said by telephone from his home. "Each year I receive about 100 Christmas cards from my former students at Christchurch."

Last weekend, Yarbrough returned to the Christchurch campus on the bank of the Rappahannock River near Urbanna. He came to help the 75-year-old school launch a fund-raising campaign.

Yarbrough is honorary chairman of a campaign to raise \$2.9 million to convert the school's oldest dormitory, Bishop Brown, into a student center and library.

A native of Mississippi, Yarbrough arrived at Christchurch in the fall of 1952 as assistant headmaster and academic dean. He was a 28-year-old World War II veteran with a bachelor's degree from Millsaps College in Mississippi and a master's degree from the University of Virginia.

In the fall of 1956, he was named acting headmaster. "They said I would be acting

headmaster for a year."

Under his leadership, Christchurch had a building boom. Seven buildings went up in the 1960s.

One was a gymnasium named for Yarbrough.

"I was not an athlete, but I did lose my hair building that gym," he said.

Yarbrough resigned as headmaster in 1971.

"The school did not have a development officer in those days," he said. "The headmaster had to go out begging for money, and when you got back to campus, they had saved all the problems for you. It was a 7-days-a-week job, a killing pace. In fairness to my wife, it was time to move on."

He moved on to Miami's Ransom Everglades School to teach English and serve as academic dean.

He retired last year, but stays busy tutoring students.

When Christchurch alumni from the Yarbrough years gather, stories about "The Hawk" are fondly recounted.



"We nicknamed Bob 'The Hawk' because he didn't miss much," said Sandy Monroe, Class of 1960. Yarbrough knows all about the nickname.

"I did have a reputation for keeping a sharp eye out for boys who broke the rules," he said.

Yarbrough is remembered for more than being a stern disciplinarian. He is remembered as a man who was skilled at motivating students to study hard and to develop as well-rounded people.

Yarbrough also draws praise for his keen sense of humor, and Bill Broaddus has a story to prove it.

One year, on the anniversary of the firing on Fort Sumter that began the Civil War, Broaddus and another student arose by dawn's early light to run a Confederate flag up the school's flagpole.

At assembly later that morning, Headmaster Yarbrough held up the flag and announced that if the student to whom it belonged would confess, the flag would be returned. Fearing punishment, Broaddus and his sidekick kept mum.

Years later at an alumni reunion, Bob Yarbrough said to Broaddus: "Bill, I still have your flag."

The Hawk didn't miss much.

TOMORROW: A LOOK AT THE FIRST WEEK OF TESTIMONY IN THE CIRCUIT CITY RACIAL DISCRIMINATION TRIAL