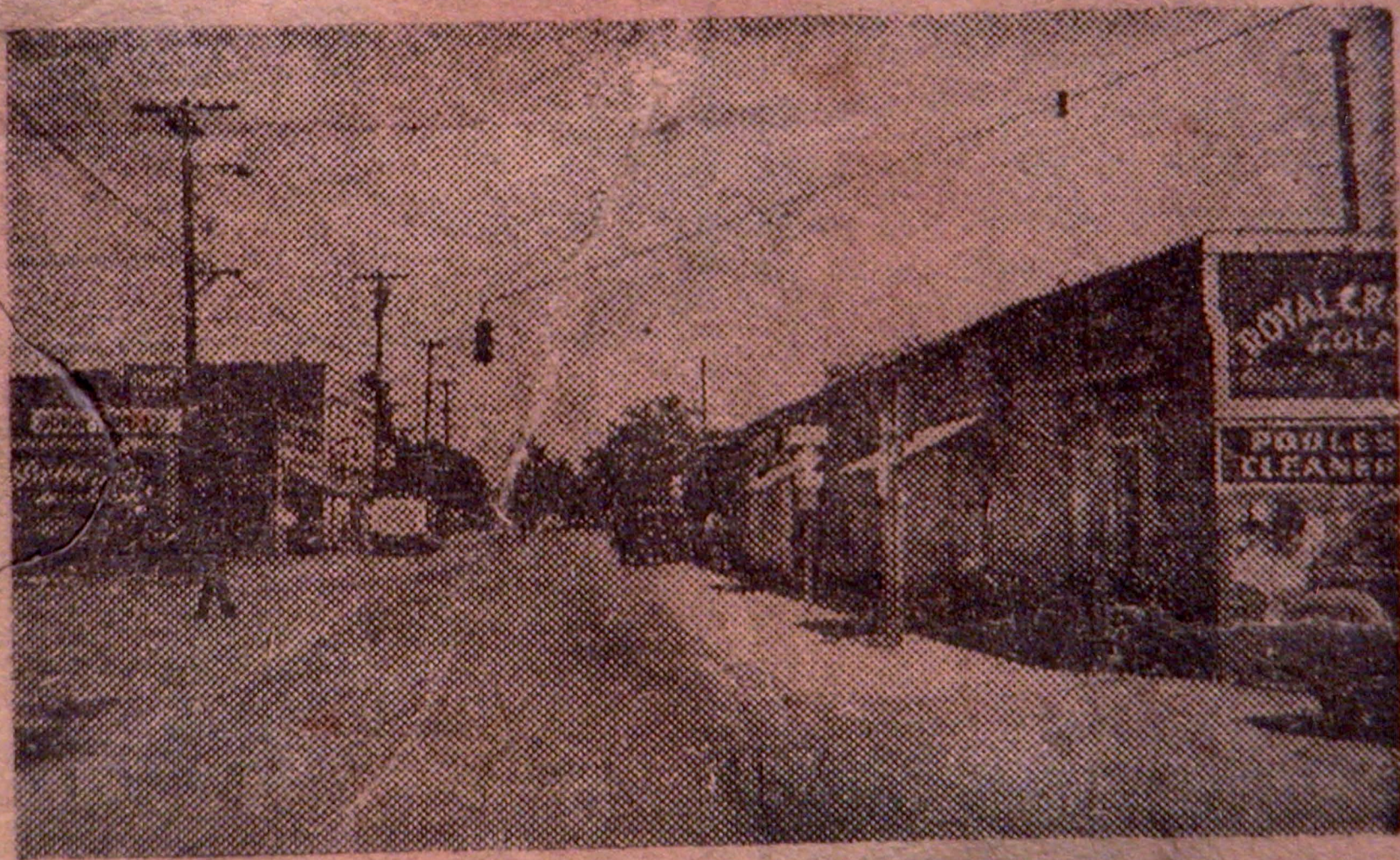


Main Street . . . Cornelius, N. C.





Potts Barber Shop

Founder: Wilson Potts

Started barbering in Smithville in 1940s

Started working for Mr. Blakeney – a white man in 1947 on Old Brick Row. During the time in Cornelius, Davidson and Huntersville black men cut hair in white only barber shops.

Mr. Blakeney sold the shop to Wilson around 1957.

Wilson moved the shop to the current location in 1960.

He trained several barbers including two of his sons.

He sold the shop to his son Mickey in 1996



Mr. Blakney (left)

picture from Margaret Robbing Parks

Summer 1991



Sid White, Len Grady Caldwell + J. J. Hill all

Gerald Milton (Mickey) Potts

Born: Jan 17, 1937

High School: Graduated Torrence Lytle - 1955

Barber College: Winston Salem 1956

Married: Nannie Raye Houston – Dec 27, 1959

Children: 3 sons

Professional: Began barbering with his father – Wilson Potts in 1956 at Potts Barber Shop. He bought the shop from his father in 1997. He is currently the owner and active barber of the shop.

He served on various Town Boards, church boards and has received numerous awards and honors for his volunteering.

No better time to say thanks

Potts is on many people's minds at Father's Day

By Jim Brown

It was 1912 when a little boy came crying into a world of poverty, just west of Cornelius, off Highway 73. The youngest of six children, his mother and father died when he was very young and he was practically raised by an older sister. As he approached manhood, opportunity and education were limited . . . to those with a different color of skin.

At the age of 21, having just taken married Bobbie Torrence, the young man, Wilson Potts, considered the future of his family with hope and determination.

"I wanted to give them a chance to have an education." Potts said recently from his Barber Shop in Cornelius. "I didn't have a chance myself. I wanted to give them a chance."

And somehow, along the way, he also proved what

others have proved in life . . . that an education is not the most important thing. Wilson Potts, one of the most respected businessmen in Cornelius and the greater North Mecklenburg area, has barbered in Cornelius for 53 years, owning and operating his own business for most of that time. He worked long hours . . . and different jobs . . . to be able to provide a good education for each of his six children.

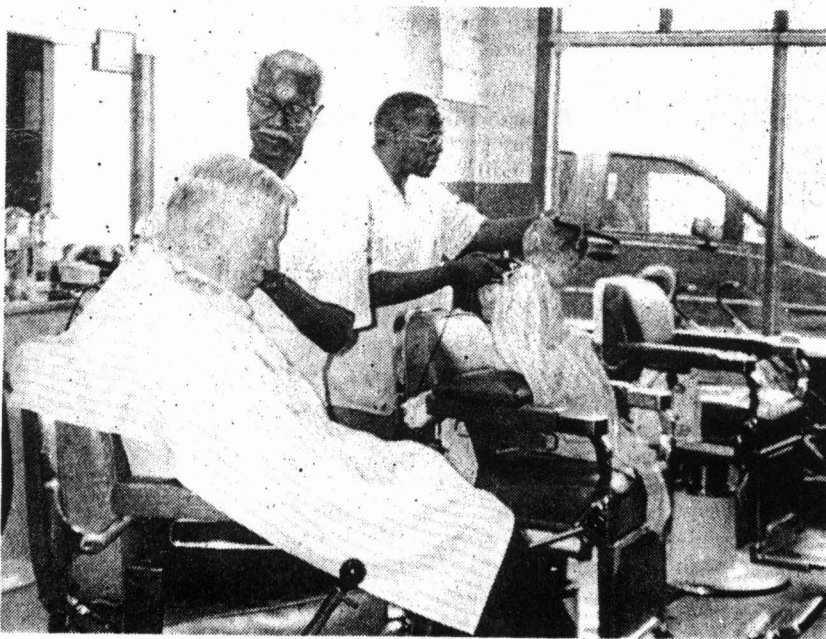
This Father's Day, Wilson Potts' six children, Daphine, James ("Brother"), Gerald ("Mickey"), Betty, Ronald, and Cathy, are grateful for the example their daddy has left them.

"The thing I have admired the most about Daddy has been his determination to guide us in the right direction," Daphine Potts said recently. "And he loved us all."

"Mickey" Potts has barbered alongside his Dad for 39 years. At 18 he wanted to go to college, but older sister and brother Daphine and James were already in and the money just wasn't there. "But after having a job for two years, with money in my pocket and driving my own car . . . college was the farthest thing from my mind!"

When asked what it was that he admired the

most about his father, Mickey says, "There's a bunch of them: the way he raised us, what he instilled in us about treating people right, having good work habits, and being there when we needed him. He



was always there."

Wilson has also been an example in the area of community involvement. In the 1940's he walked house-to-house to get petitions signed to encourage the county to pave Hill Street in the Smithville Community. He also was part of a group of men who bought the old school building in Smithville in order to convert it to a community center.

In the early 70's, Potts joined hands with Wes Rood, then mayor of Cornelius, and Hugh Roy

See POTTs—page 2A

sign, this translates into expensive maintenance.

- 4. Shrubs trap litter; cleaning and removal add to the duties of the maintenance personnel.
- 5. Historically, the Town Green was a place for common grazing of

Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge. Campers should dress in sturdy clothes and shoes which can get dirty and wet. We'll attempt to capture (and release in good health) any wildlife that is encountered. Meet at the entrance to the Refuge and be prepared to hike through streams and over rugged terrain.

Join professional wildlife experts and natural resource managers for an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of the Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge. We'll venture into secluded areas of this 668-acre nature preserve to view its diversity of wildlife and to learn how management efforts such as prescribed

Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge Viewing Stand 6-7:30 p.m.

To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance.
—Oscar Wilde

Potts a hero to his children

(Continued from page 1A)

Rood, then mayor of Cornelius, and Hugh Roy Smith, of Smith's Nurseries, in a beautification project. The three were responsible for planting flowers all over town. "I worked flowers from the Family Mart (currently The Beverage Mart) to behind the liquor store," Potts said.

Hugh Roy Smith's widow, Beulah, remembers with fondness Potts' involvement with the project. "Wilson came right in and I don't think he's ever stopped." Smith continued, "You couldn't ask for anyone to work any harder than Wilson Potts did."

And while many in Cornelius have felt his contributions, his

family has followed his lead. Mickey served with the Cornelius Fire Department for many years in addition to coaching baseball on the Bronco and Pony league levels. Daughter-in-law, Nannie Potts, has put in countless hours of service on the town board. Grandsons Gary and Jerry Potts are currently serving as volunteer firefighters . . . following in their father's

and grandfather's footsteps.

And, of course, behind every good man is a good woman. Wilson and Bobbie Potts were married for 60 years before she died in 1993. "I did all the work," Wilson said, "But she had the harder job (of taking care of the children)."

Wilson Potts is, according to Mayor Wes Southern, "the listening post for the community."

According to former Mayor Harold Little, "He is an asset to Cornelius in business relations."

But more importantly, to his six children, "He was there all the time."

"I'm just proud of him being my Father," Mickey Potts said. "I hope I can show some of the same qualities that he had. Cutting hair at 83? I don't think I'll make it!"



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The Mecklenburg Gazette



Veteran barbers' business stays at steady clip

CORNELIUS — Imagine spending four decades working 3 feet away from the same person. It could be pretty cozy. Or it could be maddening, if the chemistry weren't right.

John Vaughan



Luckily, the two men who own Potts' Barbershop on Cornelius' main street get along quite well. They're Wilson Potts and his son, Gerald, known to customers and friends as "Mick."

"I can sort of read my daddy without him saying anything," says Mick, 61. "If something's not right, I can tell."

Wilson will turn 86 in March. He grew up in Smithville, then the "Negro" section of Cornelius, where houses had no indoor plumbing. In those years — the 1920s — people heated with coal, cooked with wood and carried water to their homes from public spigots.



Wilson Potts

Wilson worked farm and cotton-mill jobs. But at 14 he'd started cutting hair evenings and weekends in Mooresville.

Later he spent a dozen years barbering part time in Smithville. He began wielding the snippers full time in 1942, when he joined a shop near the old Cornelius train depot.

Mick grew up in that shop, shining shoes for white men from the age of 10. When he turned 18 it was a natural choice for him to go to barber school in Winston-Salem. Since 1960 father and son have stood shoulder-to-shoulder, fighting the incoming tide of human hair in a little brick building at 21324 Catawba Ave., up the block from Town Hall.



Mick Potts

The place hasn't changed a lot in the past 50 years. The old porcelain washstands are curved and rounded in a pleasingly feminine way; the utility areas below the big mirrors look like vintage 1945, and the wall paneling is of a sort rarely seen in flashy modern shops.

All day long people come in, plunk themselves in the three chairs and jaw away at the barbers, while hair piles up like snow on the floor. Buzz-buzz, yak-yak. Wilson and Mick listen, but leave the talking to customers. "We're both pretty quiet," says the younger

man.

Figure it takes Wilson 15 minutes to give a haircut. And he's been cutting hair 10 hours a day, six days a week, for 56 years. . . . That's 960 haircuts a month, 11,520 a year or 645,120 since 1942. And that's not counting the pates he trimmed in his first 15 years, when he barbered part time.

If you could market hair and beard trimmings at a penny a pound, Wilson Potts could have retired rich to Acapulco years ago.

Back in the '30s and '40s he worked till 11 p.m. on weekends, as local farmers and merchants spruced up for social calls and church. Most men got their only shave of the week then. Cutting those seven-day growths, says Wilson, was like snipping screen wire. "And I usually had to cut a dozen beards before I got somebody wanting a haircut," he says.

Over the decades Wilson has involved himself in his community. He served on the town beautification committee, planting flowers up and down Catawba Avenue. He helped get streets paved and water lines laid. For years he and Mick have been giving free haircuts to residents of The Oaks nursing home in Huntersville. Last year Wilson was named a Citizen of the

Year.

Nowadays the barber chair nearest the window is manned by young Chad Hill. He handles most black customers, since he's expert at cutting African American hair. About 90 percent of the Potts' customers are white.

On a recent Monday all three chairs were filled continually. Customers included Lacy Houston, retired shipping clerk at Davidson College — a Potts regular for 25 years; and Dr. Bill Gray, a professor of medicine who settled in Cornelius 18 months ago, after teaching in the Philippines; and Sam DiVella, onetime sales manager for J.P. Stevens, now living on Lake Norman.

There was Jerry Shore of Huntersville, who manages the Ace Hardware; and Wib Overcash, retired transportation manager for Reeves Brothers, the foam manufacturers; and retired machinist Robert Goforth, a Cornelius native who got his first haircut from Wilson in 1942.

Some of the customers worried that a misguided civic-improvement impulse might soon require the Potts to dress up their old-fashioned shop front to make it blend with modern stores and offices planned for the Reeves prop-

erty across Catawba Avenue. The consensus was that any modernization of Potts Barbershop would be an unmitigated tragedy.

"Let everything stay the same!" cried Gerald Moore, who's become a Potts devotee since moving from Syracuse, N.Y., a few years ago. "The old-fashioned atmosphere is the main attraction here. It's like a good old mom-and-pop's restaurant: You don't need a fancy place with some 19-year-old asking if you want a filet mignon. I just want a plain haircut."

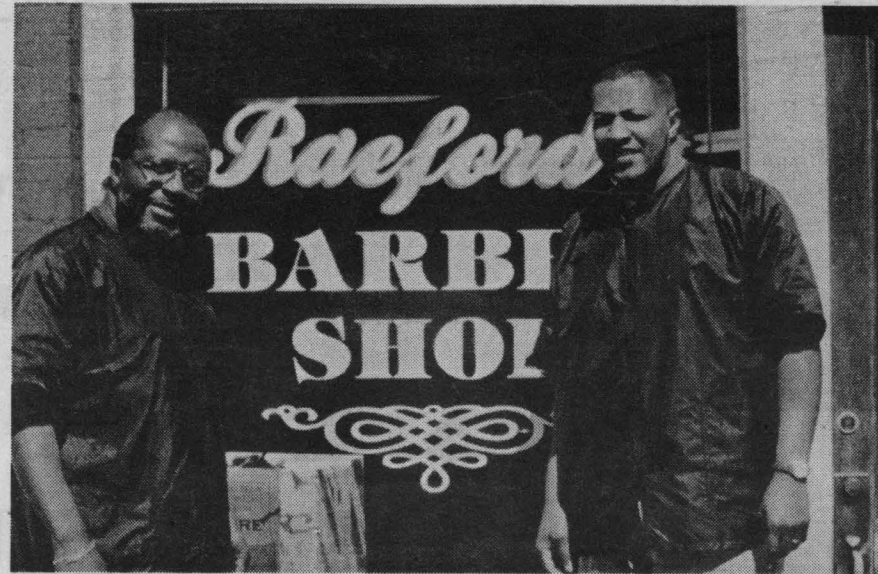
And for \$9 that's what you get at Potts' Barbershop: no frills, no nonsense and plenty of talk.

When closing time came at 6 p.m., three customers were still waiting. Mick said that's typical — and it wasn't even one of the busiest days. Fridays and Saturdays are busiest.

Wilson would retire tomorrow if he could find a reliable replacement. "But you can't get nobody you can depend on," he says.

Maybe. But you suspect that he wants to make it an even 650,000 haircuts before hanging up his shears.

John Vaughan's column is published every Wednesday and Sunday. If you have a story idea, call him at 358-5228 anytime.



Volunteers Honored At Huntersville Oaks/Brookwood

Huntersville Oaks and the Brookwood Retirement Home honored their "timeless treasures" at a volunteer recognition reception on April 23.

Receiving the coveted Golden Acorn was Jean Robertson for her work with H floor which has been adopted by St. Mark Catholic Church.

Gerald and Wilson Potts were given a plaque for their many years of volunteer service. Gerald and Wilson are a father/son team who come to the Oaks once each month to give haircuts to residents "and

they stay as long as it takes," said Volunteer Services Lois Inland in making the award.

A special group award was accepted by Msgr. Joseph A. Kerin on behalf of St. Mark Catholic Church. Special recognition was given to the Huntersville Oaks Auxiliary for their donation of furniture, planters and a fountain for the Oaks rose garden patio. A plaque will be placed on the wall of the patio in their honor.

Milestone awards were made to 50 volunteers who exceed 100 hours of service in 1997.



Retirement home says thanks to barber duo

Father-son team give unselfishly

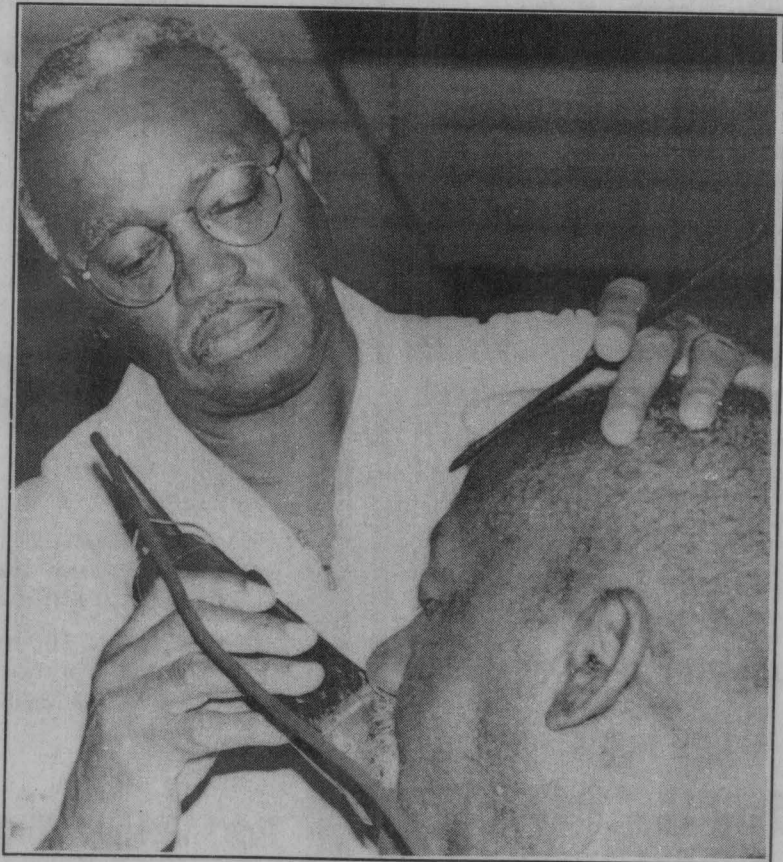
Wilson Potts, 86, has been cutting hair for 72 years. His son, Gerald, has been at it about 42. With 114 years of experience as barbers between them, the father and son team at Potts Barber Shop on Catawba Avenue in Cornelius is an institution.

And recently, they were honored for their volunteer efforts at the Huntersville Oaks Nursing home, where they take time each month to trim residents' hair.

Beginning at nine in the morning, the barbers each may cut the hair of 15 or 20 men before they leave at lunch time. Lois England, volunteer coordinator at The Oaks, calls the free services of Wilson and Gerald Potts invaluable.

One recent day, as the two of them clipped away at the The Oaks, residents waited in line patiently and chatted over the hum of the electric shears. Many residents who ordinarily are vocal sat quietly waiting their turn as if something profound was about to happen. Gerald Potts was training an apprentice of sorts, someone to relieve them when they are not available. When the barbers finished, the look of appreciation on their clients' faces was unmistakable.

Not only do the barbers relieve the staff at The Oaks from having to perform tonsorial duties, but the Pottses are, well, professionals and make sure that all of their customers are satisfied. In fact, more than a few of the residents were once



Gerald Potts, like his 86-year old father, volunteers his time and talents. (Photo by Joshua Barach)

walk-in customers at the Potts' shop in Cornelius and have had their hair cut by them for as long as they can remember.

Sheree Sherrill, a nurse secretary on the A floor at The Oaks, can't say enough about how much the residents and staff appreciate the Potts' work.

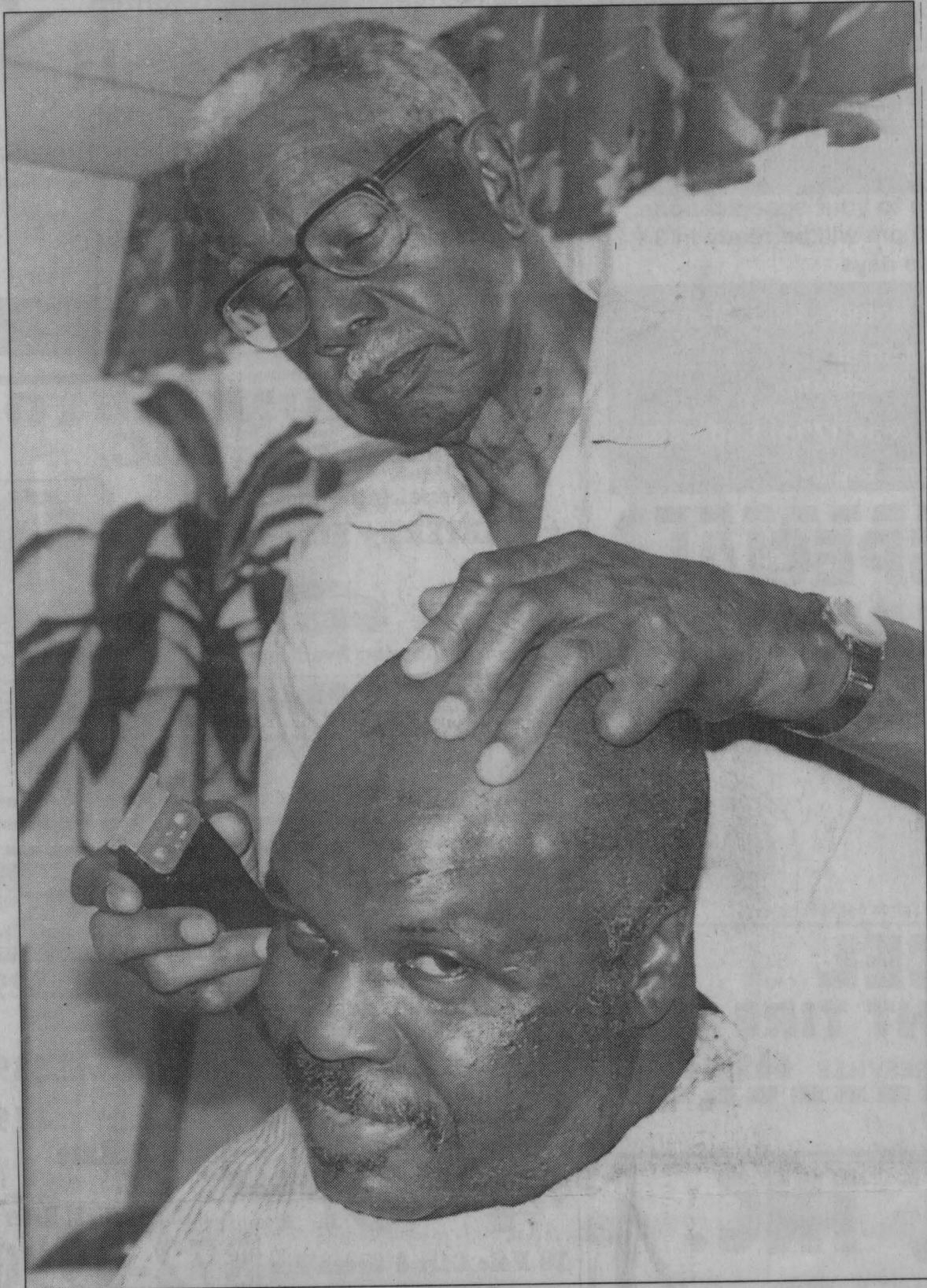
"Both of them do a really good service for us here," says Sherrill. "They have a lot of patience with the residents and they always come with a smile

on their faces. They're really good with the folks here."

At age 86, what gives Wilson Potts the energy to contribute so much to the people at The Oaks, and still maintain his business? Maybe it has something to do with breakfast.

"I have grits, eggs, a slice of bologna, cantaloupe and some liver mush," says Wilson. He says he never tires of his volunteer time at The Oaks, and residents there hope he doesn't anytime soon.

Wednesday, May 27, 1998



Wilson Potts gives The Oaks resident David Blakeney an "all the way" hair cut. (Photo by Joshua Barach)

For Dr. Henry Edna Jane (Hall) Robbins
Born: January 24, 1899 Died: January 30, 1987

The first story in this new notebook is a story about now. Yesterday morning Sonny Mayhew and I stood outside the post office for nearly two hours talking about some of the people that have lived their lives in Cornelius. We talked too about some of the places (homes, businesses, stores, churches, mills, roads, creeks, fields and springs) that are now either very different from the way they were or are totally gone and, for the most part forgotten. Something else came out of our little discussion. Driving home with my head spinning from all the stories, it struck me how quickly I lost the details and forgot the names. Sonny and I both agreed how important it is to record as much as we can of the past. If someone don't start writing this stuff down it will be lost after the "older generation", who lived in the early days, is gone. That someone might as well be me! Back at my desk I struggled to put into words on a page a story that Wilson Potts told us by the post office. In the coming days I'll talk to everyone I can find who will talk and record as many as I can of these stories we love to tell!

The past lives
in the fond
memories of
those who
were there,
today

Jack Conard Jr.

Hall House
January 30, 1992

Tuesday, March 24, 2009

Mick and Nen,

I wrote this story years ago after talking to Sonny Mayhew + Mr Wilson in the post office! (where the Cornelius Police Dept. is now!) I've been planning to give you a copy of it for years too! Today seem like a good day to finally do it! (On Wilson's 97th birthday!)

Take care,

Jack Conrad Jr.





Barber cutting a young boy's hair in a barbershop. The boy is wearing a white protective cape. The barber is wearing a light blue polo shirt. The background shows a sink, mirrors, and various grooming products.



Barber cutting a young boy's hair in a barbershop. The boy is wearing a white protective cape. The barber is wearing a light blue polo shirt with 'POT BARBER' on the sleeve. The background shows a sink, mirrors, and various grooming products.



Barber cutting a young boy's hair in a barbershop. The boy is wearing a white protective cape. The barber is using scissors and is focused on his work. The background shows a typical barbershop setting with a sink, mirrors, and various grooming products.



Barber cutting a young boy's hair in a barbershop. The boy is wearing a white protective cape. The barber is using clippers and is holding the boy's head steady. The background shows a barbershop setting with a sink and mirrors.



COURTESY POTTS FAMILY

A traditional trim

Twenty-month-old Memphis Caldwell of Dauphin Island, Ala., doesn't seem all that thrilled with the haircut he received from Mickey Potts at the Potts Barber Shop on Cornelius' Catawba Avenue recently. But it was a big event whether he liked it or not. Memphis is the fifth-generation of Caldwell men to receive haircuts from Mickey Potts and his father, the late Wilson Potts, the long-time north Mecklenburg-area barber.

Memphis has his hair cut at Potts' along with his dad, Daniel while visiting his great-grandmother, Freda Caldwell Brady of Cornelius. His grandfather, Jeff Caldwell, late great-grandfather Bud Caldwell and late great-great grandfather Sam Caldwell also received haircuts from the Potts in the past.



Wilson Potts was a young man the day the accident happened. Working at the Bem farm mill he was helping to haul off some stuff in the old company truck. When something started blowing he jumped out to catch it. Standing on the running board he reached up over the side rails that were held in place by iron pipes. Just as his little finger got stuck in the end of one of the pipes his feet slipped off the slick running board. He hit the ground with a thud! Trying to catch his breath he was shocked to find his little finger was gone!

(Wilson told this story at the post office. January 30, 1992.)

I still remember well sitting in the barber chair in Potts' shop in Lick now. Actually the kids had to sit on a board that Wilson put across the chair arms so they were high enough for him to cut their hair. I always would be squirming, like kids are inclined to do. Wilson would hold my head while telling me to sit still. I remember the feel of the nub of his little finger pushing against my head. And, I would sit so very still! The last time Mr. Wilson cut my hair, last fall, he turned my head with the touch of that same hand. In an instant I was back in that other shop forty years ago. The feel was just the same and I thought, "better sit still or you might lose an ear!" It was almost as if I could climb down off that board and peep through the swinging door at the huge pool table in the next room, only to be told "you too young to go in there"!

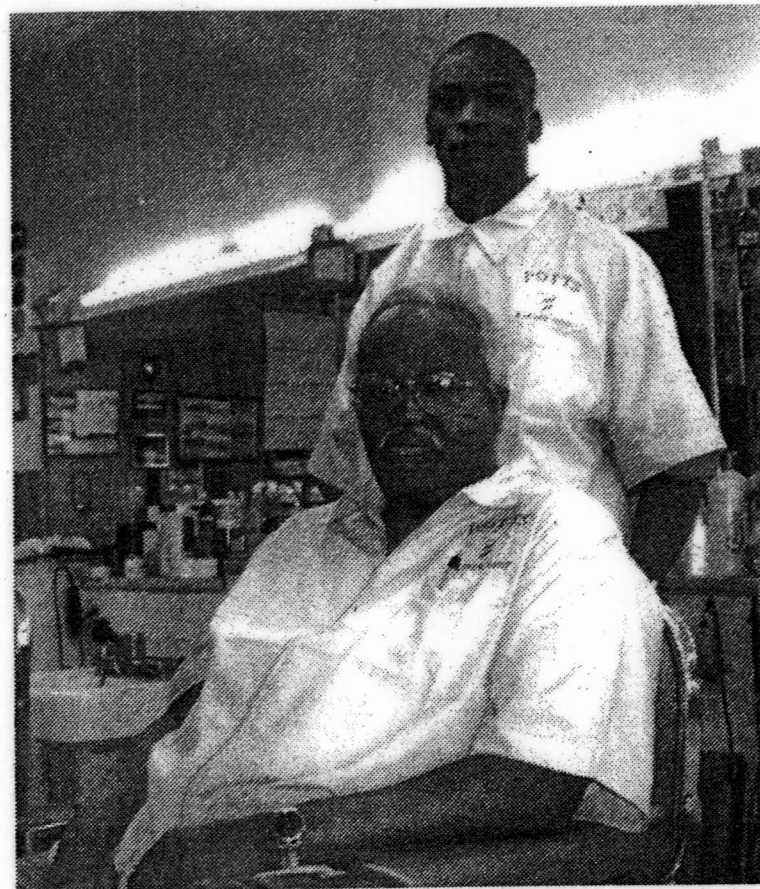
Jack Conrad Jr. January 30, 1992





Gerald Potts honored for giving back to community

Gerald Potts, owner of Potts Barber Shop in downtown Cornelius, and barber Mark Muldrow have been named Volunteers of the Year by Huntersville Oaks, the retirement home on Highway 115, just south of downtown Huntersville. Potts has been volunteering there for years, following in the footsteps of his father who was also a volunteer. The awards luncheon will be held Jan. 30 in Greensboro during the North Carolina Healthcare Facilities Association meeting. Potts and Muldrow cut hair for free at Huntersville Oaks one Tuesday a month. Potts and his wife Nannie, former mayor of Cornelius, live in Smithville.



Honored volunteers: Gerald Potts, owner of Potts Barber Shop in downtown Cornelius, seated, and barber Mark Muldrow



AROUND TOWN

Haircuts that stood the test of time

by Eren Tataragasi
aroundtown@huntersvilleherald.com

CORNELIUS – Located on Catawba Avenue in Cornelius, Potts Barbershop has survived depressions, segregation, recessions and the competition of chain salons and barbershops.

Gerald “Mickey” Potts is carrying on the family legacy, 62 years after his father, Wilson Potts, started running the shop, with hopes it will live on long after he’s gone.

He said the key to the businesses’ success is, “work hard and enjoy what you do, and treat everyone kindly.”

Wilson Potts first started barbering for Blakely Barbershop, which set up shop in the area known as Brick Row in 1926. The barbers in the shop were all black, but it was an all-white shop, and black customers were only allowed after hours until the schools were integrated in 1962.

Mickey never intended on being a barber, but with two other kids in college, Wilson Potts, who had taken over the barbershop and renamed it Potts Barbershop, offered his son a job until he could afford to help Mickey go to college.

“So I went to barber school and started working in the shop until it was time to go to college,” Mickey said. “Then around 1957-58 my dad asked if I wanted to go to

Want to go?

Potts Barbershop is at 21324 Catawba Ave. in Cornelius. You can call the shop at 704-892-4816.

college and I said, ‘It’s OK.’ I was settled in.”

Wilson Potts moved the barbershop to its present location in 1960, and now 50 years later, Mickey owns Potts Barbershop.

While it wasn’t his first career choice, Mickey said he grew to like barbering because of all the people he gets to meet, many of which become repeat customers.

“That’s how we built the business,” Mickey said. “I’m where I’m cutting the third generation now.”

Another thing that’s helped the barbershop stay in business is their pricing. Haircuts are \$11, and a line up, shave and beard trim are just \$5 each.

“Our prices are low,” Mickey said. “Our business used to be young, single families, where a mom might have two or three kids and couldn’t afford multiple haircuts, so we kept the prices reasonable, and now the boys don’t seem to want to change it.”

Mickey now has three men that work in his shop: Mark Muldrow, Marty Henderson and Chad Hill.



Eren Tataragasi/Herald photo

Marty Henderson, left, prepares Armard Moore for a haircut Monday, Feb. 6, at Potts Barbershop in Cornelius, while Mark Muldrow, right, works on giving Jim Hunter a haircut.

Muldrow is Mickey’s nephew and has been working for him for 15 years. He also never intended on barbering for a living, but decided to go to the Higher Styling Institute in Charlotte as part of a backup plan when the bank he worked for was closing branches. He now opens the shop early for Mickey and can often be seen through the shop window giving someone

a haircut first thing weekday mornings.

The shop’s official hours are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., but they keep it flexible to make it convenient for their customers. The shop is closed Tuesdays, which is a decades-old tradition that began when the U.S. switched to the 40-hour workweek so businesses had to close two days a week, and Sundays. Mickey said the Davidson barbershop closed Wednesdays, so they closed Tuesdays.

While much has changed, Mickey said one of the best things about being in the barbering industry is staying up to date on current events in order to talk with customers.

“One thing I found out before dad died is he read the paper, watched TV, kept up with the news, because someone is going to come in and talk about it, and you need to know what’s going on,” Mickey said. “I think as an old fellow I keep my mind sharp, I have to.”

At 75 years old, Mickey’s mind is sharp, his hands are busy, and he has no plans of retiring just yet.

“I don’t know what I’d do if I did retire,” Mickey said. “I come up here every day. The young guys cut most of the hair, but every once in a while I get in there and do it, but it gives me something to do. That’s what motivates me to not lay around.” □

Scrapbook

READERS

Sunday May 13, 2007



COURTESY OF JOY CALDWELL

The kindest cut: A part of tradition

Joy Caldwell sent in this photo of Memphis Caldwell, 20 months, getting a haircut from Mickey Potts at Potts Barber Shop in Cornelius. "Memphis is the fifth generation of Caldwell men to receive haircuts from Mickey Potts and his father, the late Wilson Potts," Joy Caldwell wrote.

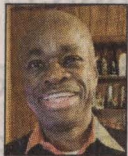
Civil rights-era barbers featured at event

Stories show how society has changed

By ADRIENNE BABBITT

Correspondent

Ron Potts still remembers how integration happened at his father's barbershop in Cornelius.



Potts

Though Ron and his father, Wilson, are African-American, their shop served only whites until the late 1960s. But, said Ron Potts, "when the first black customer came in, dad said, 'OK, have a seat.'"

Such a response wasn't the case at the first challenge to integrate a barbershop in the neighboring

town of Davidson. Two black customers had come in and were denied service.

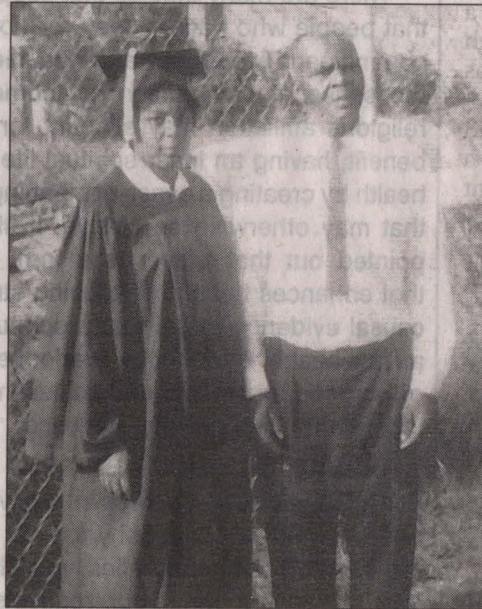
A protest ensued that caused a stir of media attention and eventually depleted business until the shop closed, opening later under different ownership.

About his father's actions, Potts said, "It was the right thing to do."

Potts' story, and the story of fellow Cornelius barber Ausie Rivens will be told at the annual Black History Month Celebration Feb. 28 at Cornelius Town Hall.

Tonya Rivens, granddaughter of Ausie Rivens, and Ron Potts, son of Wilson Potts, will paint the picture of the rich black history in Cornelius and the roles their ancestry played in it.

See **Civil rights**, 5N



COURTESY OF TONYA RIVENS

Ausie Rivens, with his wife, Anna, was the first black barber in Cornelius. His granddaughter Tonya Rivens will speak about his legacy at the Cornelius Black History Month Event.

Smithville Community Coalition & Manny Rosado

Invite you to join them for a start-up dinner and fellowship!



Meeting @ Our Towns Habitat for Humanity Office
@ 20310 N. Main Street, Cornelius, NC
on November 7th, 2013 @ 6:30pm

Please call Manny @ 704-309-2676 or email
habitatmanny@yahoo.com to RSVP by
November 4th

Civil rights-era barbers featured at event

[from IN]

Tonya Rivens still owns and operates the shop started by her grandfather in 1956. “Barbershops were integral to the community at that time,” Rivens said. “It was the place where things happened.”

Rivens’ grandfather also had a diner in the barbershop that she said shows his “incredible spirit of entrepreneurship.”

The community didn’t just know Rivens from behind the barber seat. He served as the janitor at Cornelius Elementary, where three of the first four black children to integrate in 1965 were his grandchildren, said Rivens.

He also co-owned a baseball



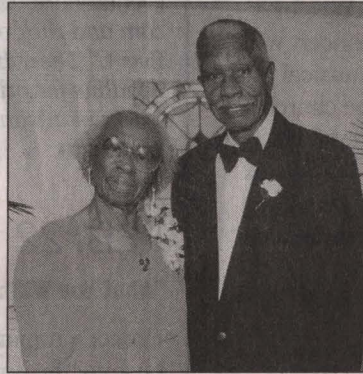
Rivens

team in Cornelius that was a part of the Jackie Robinson all-black league. His son, Marcus Rivens, went on to lead the team and rename it the “Davidson Jets,” which played where the ‘Our Town Cinemas’ is now located in Davidson.

“Playing ball was a part of coming of age in my family. My grandpa was a huge sports fan, and our last name is synonymous with baseball,” said Rivens. “As girl I learned how to keep score in the dugout at a very young age.”

The Potts family has a different, but equally rich legacy in Cornelius, particularly in the Smithville community that Ron Potts still supports through the Smithville Community Coalition.

At one time, Smithville was outside the Cornelius town limits,



COURTESY OF RON POTTS

Wilson Potts, with his wife, Bobbie, ran the barbershop in Cornelius close to town hall until he was 86 years old.

and his father helped bring water and electrical service to the com-

Want to go?

The Black History Month celebration will be held 2:30-5 p.m. Feb. 28 at Cornelius Town Hall. The black history event is free and offered by the town of Cornelius and the Smithville Community Coalition. The presentation will include music, dance, children’s activities and a variety of memorabilia including an original barber-shop chair from the shop owned by Rivens’ grandfather. For information, go to <http://www.cornelius.org/index.aspx?nid=162>

munity, as well as the first street light, Potts said.

He also knows first-hand the changes that took place due to the

civil rights movement. While his dad was running the barbershop, Potts attended Torrence-Lytle all-black high school, and was in the last graduating class under forced segregation.

Potts continues his father’s legacy by supporting programs to help revitalize the Smithville Community. Some of the projects include an annual cleanup, the community garden, and the future splash pad planned at Smithville Park sponsored by the Kiwanis Club. He said they are working with the town to rehab some of the homes as well.

>> Adrienne Babbitt is a freelance writer. Have a story idea for Adrienne? Email her at observerfreelancewriter@gmail.com.