

# Shared Stories: Service

## African Americans in North Mecklenburg

10 Sunday, Oct. 14, 1990

### Mecklenburg Profile



**Tom Franklin**

**Gerald Potts**  
 Honor: Potts, 53, has been recognized for his volunteer work at Huntersville Oaks Nursing Home the cuts 12 patients' hair for free each month and for his 15 years of volunteer service to the Cornelius Fire Department.  
 Occupation: Owner of Potts Barber Shop in Cornelius.  
 Background: Potts was born in Cornelius and has been a resident of the Smithville neighborhood for 35 years. He graduated from Torrance High School in 1955 and attended Winston-Salem Morgan Barber College.  
 Family: Married to Nannie Potts for 30 years. Three sons: Jerry, Gary and Milton.  
 Best aspect of job: Meeting new people from different places.  
 Hardest aspect of job: Standing on my feet and keeping up with different hairstyles.  
 Hobbies: He enjoys fishing, dancing, baseball and playing cards.  
 Favorite fast food: McDonald's Chicken Sandwich.  
 Favorite Presidents: Jimmy Carter. If you could talk to anyone in history, who would it be?  
 Dr. Martin Luther King. I always admired him for his nonviolence.  
 Pet Peeves: I dislike the situation in the community. There are not enough things for children who are trying to better themselves to do.

## The Mecklenburg Gazette

The Home Town Newspaper Of North Mecklenburg And Lake Norman  
 Vol. 95, No. 04 1982 September 23, 1982 Davidson, N.C. 28036 Twenty Five Cents

### Nannie Potts voted in as new mayor of Cornelius

By Gail Derwert  
 In the first order of business at the Cornelius Town Meeting, Nannie Potts was nominated and elected Mayor of Cornelius by the town's citizens.

Potts, a first-time candidate in last fall's election, was elected to the position of Mayor of Cornelius by the town's citizens. She was the only woman on the ballot and the only woman to be elected to the position.

Potts, 53, was born in Cornelius and has been a resident of the Smithville neighborhood for 35 years. She graduated from Torrance High School in 1955 and attended Winston-Salem Morgan Barber College.

She has been a volunteer at Huntersville Oaks Nursing Home for 15 years, cutting the hair of 12 patients for free each month. She also volunteers for the Cornelius Fire Department.

Potts is the owner of Potts Barber Shop in Cornelius. She has three sons: Jerry, Gary, and Milton.

### Nannie Potts Chosen To Succeed Cornelius Mayor Who Resigned

By NATHANIEL SALLINGER  
 Two years ago, Nannie Potts didn't even live in Cornelius. She was a resident of the Smithville neighborhood for 35 years. She graduated from Torrance High School in 1955 and attended Winston-Salem Morgan Barber College.

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They went to Tracy, Cherokee, The Wizard of Oz, and Timberland. When Carowinds opened up, these children were able to go the first year. There was a program where they would finance these trips. You just had to sign up and they would provide buses. A year later, we found there was a program in Charlotte where they would provide lunches for the children but a parent or somebody would have to go and pick them up at about 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. We even had volunteers to do that. Evelyn Carr, Phoebe Houston, her husband Harold Houston, they would go to Charlotte. That age group helped a lot with our trips. —Annie Mildred Lowery

### Pillar of Davidson community turns 83

By Marjean Torrence  
 On Tuesday, July 4, Mrs. Susie Lowery celebrated her 83rd birthday. While talking with her on Tuesday evening in her home on Griffin Street, she said how proud and thankful she is to have reached the age of 83.

I asked her to tell me a little something about herself. She began talking so fast, I could hardly keep up.

Mrs. Susie was born in Huntersville in 1912. When she was 14 years old, she and her family moved to Davidson. Her education began at Huntersville Elementary and the Joe Reid schools. Later she was married to the late Rufus Lowery. They have one child, James William Lowery, now of Columbus, S. C.

Aunt Susie (as she is affectionately called by everyone in this area), has always shown sympathy and love for the distressed or suffering of others. After the death of her niece, who had eight children, all very young, Aunt Susie took the children, ranging from ages 17 months to 15 years old, into their home and she says, by the help of God, friends and neighbors, she and her husband were able to love and care for all of them. She will tell you, with a big smile on her face, "God spared me to see all of my children finish high school and attend Davidson College."

Out of their 52 years of marriage, she and Mr. Rufus took in a number of children, loving and caring for all of them.

### Back in 1952, I even tried to get on the volunteer fire department. I went to the Mayor again about that.

That was before I was at the college. And they asked, "Why did I want to come on?" And I said I want to give my service to the community, like everyone else. And their answer was, "Well, we have these dinners once a year, and they don't want Blacks at that dinner." And I said, "Well, I don't need the dinner." Well, some of the people said they wouldn't come to the meetings if I were there. So, therefore they wouldn't allow me to become a volunteer fireman.

And so, from there, we got into the housing situation. That's where the Piedmont Development Association got in and organized the club, the Piedmont Association, and people who were getting houses would attend and people who weren't getting houses would attend. Davidson won several prizes. —Annie Mildred Lowery

### Minister has ambitious plans for historic school

Davidson  
 Continued from page 1

Over the next 25 years, both the Ada Jenkins School and Robert Shirley continued to serve similar purposes. For example, in December 1987, Shirley set up a job-training and motivation group at Flato Price School on Morris Field Drive in western Mecklenburg, one of seven black schools in the county selected by a segregation. He started it with the money working space and equipment were donated. The instructors — who included Hoyte Martin, then a teacher and now a member of the Charlotte City Council — were volunteers.

In February 1987, Ada Jenkins School became home to a federally financed kindergarten for 122 children whose families earned less than \$2,000 a year.

The town of Davidson has agreed to lease space at the old Ada Jenkins School for a Families and Kinship Development Center. Shirley has embarked again on what he does best: pulling the community together for the common good and creating something out of nothing.

With the help of community and church volunteers, Davidson College students and the town, he plans to set up a comprehensive set of programs for all ages and needs.

Mayor Russell Knox addressed the crowd some commencing before having town attorney Rick Kline draw up the lease agreement.

"One of my motivations was the fact that he preaches two Sundays a month at the church in Davidson, and he preaches two Sundays a month at one down in Morven," Knox said.

"I didn't see how he could do all that and take on a program like this. But apparently, he's a guy who is willing to work 24 hours a day. He's an interesting person, and I'm excited about what he's doing."

Council member Martin, who went on to direct Shirley's program at Flato Price, helped coordinate Knox and the other town officials. "I wrote them a two-page letter about our program," he said. "Bob Shirley is very effective. He's been involved in these kinds of programs as long as I've known him."

Shirley has plenty he has to be able to do. He has been in Davidson since 1947. He's been involved in these kinds of programs as long as I've known him.

When the town's \$1.7 million municipal building was completed this summer, all but the last lunch program moved out of Ada Jenkins and into the new Town Hall.

Since then, all but the cafeteria have stood empty. Lack of activity there spelled trouble, neighborhood residents feared drugs might move in.

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"We need something to draw them (youngsters) to. They stay in the streets. It would further them in life if they had some sort of goal."

—Zannie Hooper, who went through sixth grade at Ada Jenkins

Both town officials and residents of west Davidson have worried about the old school's fate. Since 1973, it had been used as a community center, offering a wide range of programs, including arts and recreation. Besides the hot lunch program in the cafeteria, the school also provided space for several other Department of Social Services programs.

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"We used to have a scout program here. When we're here, we feel like we're at home."

—Mary Carr, who worked in school's cafeteria 12 years

"I'm particularly interested in the values that scouting teaches: 'trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent.'"

Mary Carr agreed. "We're hoping they'll have a program to counsel our young people. A lot of times, they don't pay attention to their parents. They'll listen to other people before they'll listen to their parents."

Scout programs are high on Shirley's list. "I learned there is not a black Scout troop above 1-85," he said.

"We need something to draw them to," she said. "They stay in the streets. It would further them in life if they had some sort of goal."

Mary Carr agreed. "We're hoping they'll have a program to counsel our young people. A lot of times, they don't pay attention to their parents. They'll listen to other people before they'll listen to their parents."

### They used to have what was called the Teen Canteen and they had one that used to be there where the Carolina Inn is, they had it only for the white kids.

And I questioned the mayor of the town, why Black kids couldn't go. And they said, "No, no, no. They can't do that." And that was before Martin Luther King. I said, "What about another place, then?" And he said they didn't have the money. So I drafted a letter to President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, and you know, I never believed he would answer. He answered the letter. —James Howard

### Community Betterment Group Will Be formed In Davidson

A 13 member temporary steering committee has been named in Davidson to head up a citizens' drive to organize into a community betterment association.

This was the result of a town meeting of all citizens called Monday night and held at the Davidson Elementary school and attended by some 150 citizens.

The purpose of the meeting as outlined by its convener Dr. Anthony Abbott, chairman of the town's Community Relations Committee, was to form an organization of all citizens that would span the "three communities" of the town, the "white," the "black" and the "college" and work toward the common goal of community betterment.

Abbott then opened the meeting for ideas from the floor as to areas in which a community betterment association might serve toward building a better town.

Areas pointed out included:

1. Improved communications and education between the segments of the community.
2. Improved communications and education between the community and governmental bodies, local, county and state.
3. Pre-school education — a complete program for Davidson and even all North Mecklenburg.
4. Beautification.
5. Support and help find sources of financing for town betterment.
6. Lobby locally, at county level and elsewhere for matters that concern towns and town life.

The discussion of the ways the community betterment association might function continued for about an hour.

The group decided to incorporate as a non-profit basis and the following were named to the steering committee to get the newly proposed organization underway:

Lawrence Kimbrough, Mildred Lowery, Frank Wilkinson, James Kerns, Ernest Stinson, Erving McClain, Phillip Hazel, Sue Ann Thompson, Dee Dee Breen, Virginia Puckett, Ruby Houston and Woody Connette.

### After that, the next year, we had Town Day again, up there. After having the second year and coming up on the third year, we asked if we could have Town Day on the green and we had a committee and they gave us permission. You might not have thought about that—it wasn't the town green then but that place was full of trees and you had to walk with your shoulders hunched. The first year we moved there, we had games and everything. Jim Martin was the governor and it was my idea to invite him. And they said, "Ms. Mildred, he isn't going to come." And I said, "I asked him so he better come!" I wrote him a letter and he never answered whether he would [come] or not. But the day we had Town Day, about 12:30 everyone was saying, "Ms. Mildred, he isn't going to come." But I knew in my heart he would come and we looked out at about 1:00 and there was his black shiny car with the American flag on it. He brought some of his staff and he walked around and talked to people. And he had prepared us a flag; it is at the community center. And that's how we started Town Day and we kept it up for years until the club moved leadership and it stopped. —Annie Mildred Lowery

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### Our Soldiers in the Gulf

Air Force Sgt. Kerns has been deployed to Saudi Arabia as of Jan. 11, 1991. Sgt. Kerns is a graduate of North Mecklenburg High School. He is the son of James and Gloria Kerns of Westside Terrace, Davidson, N.C. and the grandson of Mrs. Alice Reid, Greensboro, N.C. He is married to Sgt. Sandra Kerns of Fort Worth, TX.

For those of you who would like to write to him his address:

Trenton D. Kerns 243-13-0299  
 Operations Desert Shield  
 47PM/Deployed  
 (48M)AD2E  
 APO, N.Y. 09782  
 Sgt. Trenton D. Kerns

### Betbel Church Road Area Residents Will Miss Sherrill

by Pat Johnson  
 The Lone Ranger of Bethel Church Road died January 23, 1985, without ever knowing how many lives he touched with his wave and spreading smile.

Neural Sherrill, age 66 at the time of his death, was a familiar sight to anyone traveling Bethel Church Road and that area of Highway 73 near Highway 21 and PRT.

Home was a rented, wood frame structure referred to by many as the "shanty." Located on Bethel Church Road, within a stone's throw of many houses valued over \$100,000, the little house and the man who lived there played a significant part in the daily lives of his neighbors.

His assistance was a lesson in simplicity and, yes, poverty, but deprivation was questionable.

"He had something a lot of us don't have anymore — he was content and smiled when I frowned," said one Island Forest resident. "Many a time when I traveled to and from my over-priced waterfront home with its whirring heat pump and digital

by the road without a care in the world."

Sherrill was born in Lincoln County near Triangle in 1918, the son of a farming couple. According to his sister, Ethel "Be" Patterson, the family moved from Lincoln County to Rowan County and then to Cornelius where they remained until the father, Winslow Sherrill, died.

Neural Sherrill and his mother, Etta Sherrill, then spent several years living on Bethel Church Road, farming cotton fields and corn fields of area farmers. After a move to Smithville, Sherrill worked for the Town of Cornelius until a knee injury, resulting from a fall on ice, made him unemployable.

Sherrill moved to the little wood house during the late 1960's, soon after the death of his mother.

"He was married once but she went to New York and he wouldn't follow — he just wouldn't leave our mother — he took such good care of her," recalled Mrs. Patterson.

### social notes ...

by Marjean Torrence  
 A birthday dinner was given for Layla Moore on Sunday, March 17 at 209 Westside Drive in Davidson.

Miss Emma Carr, the oldest member of Gethsemane Baptist Church in Davidson, celebrated her 90th birthday on Sunday, March 17th.

University Angelia Michelle Davidson, daughter of Mr. Calvin Davidson and Mrs. Deborah Caldwell, gave birth to a baby girl last week.

Orlando McClain was involved in a freak accident Friday, March 15, dislocating his elbow. He is the son of Brenda and the late Lonnie McClain.

### Norton to Address Historical Society

DAVIDSON BARBER KEN NORTON, who owns the town's oldest business in the same location under the same name, will speak at the Davidson Historical Society at 7:30 p.m. Oct. 23 at the Ada Jenkins Center. Norton will speak on "Memories of Old Davidson." The public is invited.

### Davidson Community Honors Applewhite and Ivory

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### Cornelius music man to speak at Davidson

Cornelius resident Ted Holland will bring a lifetime of work in the music business to his upcoming Davidson College multimedia show on "Rhythm and Blues Culture: 1940-1960." The free public presentation begins at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 21, in the College Union 900 Room.

Holland is the author of two books on music, "The B Western Encyclopedia," written in 1989, and the recently-released "This Day in African-American Music."

Holland was born in Pinehurst, N. C., and attended Johnson C. Smith University. While in college he worked as manager and booker of The Mystics Revue, a 14-piece aggregation that served as a backup band for such rhythm and blues artists as Mary Wells, Laura Lee and the Drifters.

He served in the Army in Germany from 1968 to 1971 as an emergency room surgical technician, and worked as a DJ during his spare time. In 1973 he and another technician founded Koncert Medical Services, a firm providing treatment facilities for large-scale rock concerts. Among the artists they worked with were Ted Nugent, the Charlie Daniels Band, the Allman Brothers, The Hollies and Jethro Tull.

Holland also wrote and published his own music, and formed unknown country rock groups such as Oil Can Harry and the Dipsticks and Chicken George and the Egg Suckin' Dogs. He has worked as an advertising salesman and owns his own public relations firm called Home Boy Communications.

For more information on his appearance at Davidson, call the College Union at 892-2140.

