

Evelyn Carr

Evelyn Carr is a daughter of Davidson. With the exception of the few years she tolerated living in Charlotte, she has spent all of her life here. Davidson is in her blood and bones. And we have all benefited because she has devoted her life to family and friends and community.

Evelyn remembers her childhood on North Main Street as a happy time. Her parents, Minnie and Johnny Mayhew, instilled in her and her siblings the value of hard work, the importance of education, and the mandate from the Bible to give back to the community. Minnie and Johnny never let them forget that success was measured, not by riches stored up, but by the way they treated others. "Treat people the way you want to be treated," are words that Evelyn took to heart and lived by.

Minnie also taught Evelyn to walk with her head held up, to keep her clothes ironed, and fry a mean piece of chicken.

When Evelyn was only a slip of a girl herself, she discovered that she loved children. Her first job, outside of picking walnuts from the family tree and selling them to neighbors, was to babysit for a local physician. She found that children brought her joy and fulfillment.

More hard work followed when Evelyn, still a teenager, picked cotton after school with her brothers and sisters. Minnie and Johnny would let Evelyn spend her own earnings, a way of teaching her the importance of money management. But it wasn't all hard work and no play because the Mayhew kids knew how to have fun, too. They jumped rope, played baseball and hopscotch and went to "Doc" Goodrum's drugstore on Main Street. Doc, a pharmacist, let them read comics and many days didn't charge them for their ice cream and cokes. More unusual for that time, he let them walk through the front door.

But he didn't let them sit down in the store. As an adult, Evelyn realized that this was not fair or just, and she sought positive change in race relations. Still, she feels that Davidson was full of people, both black and white, who were good to her, testimony to her parents' early lesson..."treat people the way you want to be treated."

On November 10, 1946, Evelyn married Orlandis Carr on the steps of the Charlotte courthouse. Orlandis, back from World War II and the recipient of the Purple Heart, was ready to settle down with the beautiful sixteen-year-old girl that he had met through his cousin. They lived in Davidson with her parents until Orlandis had the nerve to suggest that they should move to Charlotte. Evelyn went along with this idea and she worked in the Second Ward Elementary School cafeteria and later in the airport dining room.

Four of their nine children were born in Charlotte: Orlandis, Jr.; Pat; Garfield; and Mary Francis. Evelyn made up her mind that it was time to get back home before the fifth child, Elizabeth, came into the world. She wanted her children to enjoy the same kind of loving community in which she had been reared. Felton came next, followed by Gerald,

Andre and Kavin, and they even welcomed a foster child, Robert, into their merry band. They grew up in the pretty blue house on Griffith Street where Evelyn lives today.

Evelyn minded Minnie and Johnny's admonition to work hard. She was a cook at the Beta House and remembers Joe and Jim Martin as being good boys who only got into a little bit of trouble at Davidson College. She also cooked for World War II soldiers who were housed at the College. She devoted herself as a housekeeper to other families, and became a motherly figure to their children. She worked at General Time, remaining there for twenty-five years as a production worker. She sought to continue her education, whether formal or on-the-job training, as her parents had instructed.

In the midst of providing for her family, Evelyn always found time to give back to the community. She helped create the Lakeside Housing Development, the first neighborhood for African Americans living in Davidson, and she assisted the Town in raising federal funds to build Lakeside Apartments, the first rental units for low-income families.

Evelyn helped organize the Neighborhood Youth Corporation, which was the first summer recreation and employment program for African American children and teens in Davidson. She would leave at dawn, long before her early morning started at General Time, and drive to Charlotte to pick up the boxed lunches that fed the program's children. Evelyn made sure that no child was left behind, whether in having clean baseball uniforms or rides to games, well before that term came into popular use.

More recently, she worked with the Town to renovate properties on the west side. She was a member of Common Ground's Community Committee and of the Police Advisory Committee. She currently serves on the Stakeholders Committee for Westside planning. And she unfailingly extends her home and hospitality to those less fortunate.

Evelyn has imparted the wisdom of her parents to her own family, as well as to many others. Two of her children, Pat and Garfield, have served as Commissioners of the Town of Davidson, being the first African Americans elected to this position. All of her children work in numerous ways to make their world a better place, and as Evelyn taught them, to be givers, not takers.

Evelyn looks at the generations of her own family and at those many others she touched along the way, and she is proud of them -- much as we are proud of you, Evelyn. We are grateful that you have lived among us all these years, teaching us the values of your parents.

Because you sought education, because you worked hard, because you did favors at no cost, because you gave back to the community, and because you treated people the way you wanted to be treated, your town names you the recipient of the G. Jackson Burney Community Service Award.