

Geo. Frazier Swirls in Controversy, Creating Some of His Own Storms

By Donald Alderman
 Standing in the pulpit of Mount Zion Baptist Church on Fayetteville Street last Sunday, George Frazier leaned over the podium, pointed to the small crowd of NAACP faithfuls and "preached" about problems that, in his judgement, hinder black advances.

"Some people somewhere need to stop talking about guns and start talking about human needs," he said, referring to cuts in federally funded social programs and record increases in defense spending.

His audience, about forty people, sitting in the sanctuary's perfectly aligned oak pews, responded with enthusiastic "yeahs" and "that's rights."

Struggling to the other side of the pulpit, Frazier barked out another concern, beckoning for agreement from the audience.

"They send us off to war, tell us we're fighting for freedom and when we get back, we still aren't free," he said. "And that's not all, when we come back, deranged from that agony, they shoot us down in the streets like dogs."

Frazier's reference was to the recent fatal shooting of a black Vietnam veteran by a white Duke University public safety officer.

In many ways, this pep talk is a monthly ritual for Frazier, 54, president of the Durham Branch of the NAACP, a group that he calls "the greatest organization in the world."

Frazier, a rather compactly built fellow with salt and pepper, closecropped hair and an outgoing style that borders on the flamboyant, is certainly outspoken, if nothing else.

Moving easily from casual dress, such as shirt and slacks, to expensive three-piece suits, Frazier revels in his rather frequent one-on-one confrontations with white power brokers. At the first hint of anything he sees as an injustice or a mistreatment of blacks, Frazier will dash off a biting telegram, call a hasty press conference, or simply issue a statement to the press. Often it is not clear if his confrontations, his outbursts, are Frazier the citizen or Frazier the NAACP branch president.

But whatever the role, it is clear that Frazier likes being NAACP president.

"I've been riding this ship for a long time, since 1948," Frazier said during an interview following Sunday's meeting. The Durham Branch meets every fourth Sunday at various churches throughout the black community.

Frazier's reference to a ship described the Durham Branch and he has been captain of that ship since 1978 and co-captain four years prior to that.

The Durham NAACP branch is in its 61st year, and, according to several insiders, is one of the most

effective local branches in the state. For example, local branch treasurer Redditt Alexander says the branch is solvent, and almost never overspends its budget, though it operates a fulltime office, something that most local branches don't have.

Many of these things, such as the local office, can be attributed to Frazier's leadership, according to insiders.

But while Frazier appears to have brought a certain amount of stability to the branch as president, he also brought an outspoken character and demeanor probably unseen before. His style of leadership often creates controversy that sometimes boils over into disenchantment, but Frazier weathers it all like a seasoned ship rocks through a stormy night.

For example, when Frazier earlier this year managed to get a small group of his 23-member executive committee to endorse the controversial downtown civic center bond referendum, his engineering of the issue produced a lot of talk, but no censure, and in fact, not much disagreement of any substance.

The acceptance was, in fact, somewhat surprising since Frazier's move, according to an investigation by *The Carolina Times*, broke a tacit agreement between the NAACP and three other local black groups to present a unified front to the downtown civic center supporters.

But ultimately, Frazier's early support was vindicated as the Durham Committee and the Hayti Development Corporation openly supported the bond referendum in exchange for certain concessions from the downtown interests.

Then, scarcely more than a month later, Frazier, a machinist, who also raises race horses on his 60-acre farm in southern Durham County, moved boldly again in opposition to the Durham Committee.

Upset because the Committee switched its endorsement from Sheriff Bill Allen in the June primary to his opponent, Roland Leary in the July runoff race, Frazier pulled a bold move.

Designed, in his own words, to confuse black voters, Frazier printed up a marked ballot, very similar to the ones that the Durham Committee has been issuing for more than 30 years. All of the endorsements were marked correctly except the one in the sheriff's race. The Committee's ballot showed Leary as the favorite candidate, while Frazier's ballot showed Allen as the endorsee.

It is not clear how much confusion Frazier's ploy caused, or how many black votes he steered to Allen, since Leary whipped him soundly, by more than 10,000 votes. But, again, though many members of the NAACP are also members of

the Durham Committee, there was no public outcry of foul.

The organization appears to overwhelmingly support Frazier and his tactics, especially the 23-member executive committee. The executive committee is composed of chairmen of standing committees, such as the Legal Redress Committee and others.

"He loves the NAACP better than a hog loves slop," said Ms. Alice Wilson, chairman of the Freedom Fund Committee. I think that whatever decision he makes, he makes it in behalf of everyone, for freedom, justice and equality."

But beyond Frazier's love for the branch and his position, Alexander, a local realtor and branch treasurer, sheds some light on why there might not be any more resistance to Frazier than there is.

"He spends a lot of time on branch business," Alexander said, noting that getting rid of Frazier might be worse than abiding with his tactics, "and some of his own money. You might not be able to find a better person. There really aren't that many people who want the job."

And so chances are real good that when local branch members gather in December, as they do every two years, to elect branch officers, Frazier will still be president.

Right now, he's the only candidate for the job.

A nominating committee, named at Sunday's meeting will present a slate of proposed officers at the group's November meeting. The elections will be held at the December meeting. Though the nominating committee will present just one non-competitive slate, nominations can be made from the floor by bona fide members who have paid the annual \$10 membership dues.

Frazier is not anticipating any opposition, not even to speak of defeat. Closing Sunday's meeting, he said: "I pray that when the ship sets sail in January, we'll all be aboard."

In conclusion, Frazier says his convictions, not politics, enable him to withstand storms of controversy, even those he creates.

"I don't mend any fences. I don't tear any down," he said. "I make decisions on my convictions and on what's good for the total black community, not me or any individual. I don't sacrifice principle at any time for any reason. I try to keep my eye planted on the prize and the prize is freedom."

Frazier, who grew up in Durham on Merrick Street, the youngest of eight children, says the hard times and lean years of his childhood helped shape the tough, unapologetic person he is.

"I grew up in a poor and broken family, but proud. My mother washed and ironed on a scrub board

for white people until my brother bought her a washing machine. My mother always told us that even though we were poor and ragged, we could be clean and proud."

Frazier dropped out of Hillside High School in the seventh grade, but later earned a high school equivalency certificate in 1949. He also received a certificate in accounting from Durham College in 1954, and has taken courses in real estate and insurance.

He served in the Navy during WWII from '45 to '47 and in the Army during the Korean War from '50 to '53. After his last stint in the Army, Frazier came back to Durham and worked for a couple of years as a Pepsi-Cola salesman — the first black one in Durham. After a couple of years shuffling between Durham and Atlantic City, New Jersey, working here and there, he moved to Newark, New Jersey.

He spent the next 16 years there working in an unemployment office, and in a bail bond office. At one point, he ran his own bonding office. He first got involved in politics there, starting a political group named after himself that he says still exists.

Frazier met his wife, Edna, in New Jersey, but she's a "homegirl" from Fuquay-Varina. They have three daughters and a son.

As head of the local NAACP, one of 130 chapters across the state, Frazier boasts of having the highest number of life memberships of any chapter in the state, and of having one of the most financially stable chapters.

Recently elected as 3rd vice president of the state NAACP, he says his personal philosophy is to "love thy neighbor as thyself."

He says "the upward mobility of blacks should depend in large part on a positive strategy to increase economic conditions."

"Truthfully," he says, "the milk has been warmed over and given back to us. Blacks have advanced in certain areas but not overall. We can drink at any water fountain, ride anywhere on the bus and use any restroom, but we don't own much...We haven't moved in the direction that's most important and that is up the economic ladder."



Frazier

Get Medical Care

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sterile by taking the pill," he said. "There is no delay in conception following removal of an IUD or a pregnancy where a diaphragm remains in a dresser drawer."

He advised both IUD and oral contraceptive users to avoid pregnancy two to three months after discontinuing contraceptive use. Droegemueller said if a woman becomes pregnant during the first cycle following discontinuation of the pill, she should be cautioned that her calculated due date is only a vague approximation.

"Women who use IUDs should see their health care provider without delay if they miss an anticipated menstrual period or if there is scanty flow during their menstrual

period," Droegemueller said. "If a woman conceives with an IUD in her uterus and the IUD remains in her uterus, the instance of spontaneous abortion is between 50 and 60 percent. If the IUD is removed or spontaneously expelled after pregnancy is conceived, the incidence of spontaneous abortion is less than 30 percent."

Droegemueller said if the IUD pregnancy is fortunate enough to progress to the last three months, medically it should be considered high risk.

He also said that, although the evidence is not clear-cut, it does not appear that spermicides or oral contraceptives taken inadvertently during early pregnancy are associated with birth defects.

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