

# WINSTON-SALEM CHRONICLE

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## Black Women's Caucus Is Organized

A group called the Black Women's Political Caucus has been organized to enhance the power of Black women in the state.

Ora Coleman, chairper-

son of the organization, said the Caucus will hold an organizing meeting September 17 in Raleigh to bring together Black women from each of the state's political districts.

"The purpose of that meeting will be to bring together women from every congressional district in the state in an effort to consolidate a political power base so

that Black women can begin to collect and consolidate its efforts in the political process."

Concerning long range plans, Ms. Coleman

continued, saying, "We hope to use that power in the best interest of Black women throughout the State."

The Caucus is a non-partisan organization

and is an outgrowth of the Minority Caucus of the International Women's Year which met in Winston-Salem in June. The Caucus met on July 16 in Raleigh. It is

the only non-partisan organization actively involved in the state to increase minority women's representation in the political process. (ccns)

## Candidates Ask For Police Review Board

A Police Review Board has been a major plank in the platforms of several candidates for city government, and a common cause among conservatives and political gadflies alike.

When the NAACP dropped its investigation of the shooting by police of Tommy Lee Odum, they tempered their verdict with the rider that a police review board was a good idea.

A police review board, composed of citizens and possibly some city officials and police representatives, would investigate such matters as the killing of a suspect, charges

against individual officers, such as police brutality, and generally monitor the law enforcement program to ensure justice to all citizens.

Rodney Sumler pictures the police review board as a cross-section of the city, containing a judge or possibly the district attorney, some attorneys or police personnel, and a majority of citizens. He would like to see the board have as many members as a grand jury, and hopes that blacks would outnumber whites.

"After all," Sumler explained, "It's blacks who are involved in most of these cases."

## NAACP Drops Investigation

The NAACP has concluded its investigation of the death of Tommy Lee Odum, who was shot by police officers outside the Star-Lite Grocery on July 11.

Odum, 21, attempted to rob the Star-Lite Grocery using a gun loaded with blanks. He encountered police officers outside the store and, according to some witnesses, pointed his gun at police officers, refusing to halt when ordered to do so. Allean S. Gill, a black woman officer, and another policeman fired at Odum. He was hit in the head and side, and died of his wounds the following day.

The NAACP investigating committee, which consisted of president Patrick Hairston, Charles McLean of the state NAACP office, and Rod-

ney Sumler, talked to a number of witnesses of the Glenn Avenue incident, and announced that no further investigation is necessary in this case.

Committee spokesman Rodney Sumler explained the reason for the investigation, saying: "We feel that when anyone loses his life as a result of police action, it ought to be looked in to."

The NAACP's decision concurs with that of the police and district attorney, who ruled the shooting justifiable, since officers could not have known that Odum's gun only contained blanks.

Although no evidence of wrongdoing was found in this case, Sumler called for a police review board composed of citizens to investigate future incidents.



A Hair-raising Experience--Two contestants in the hairbraiding contest take a break before braiding. The contest, sponsored by the downtown public library, featured entrants from several city recreation centers.

## Magistrates Settle With Interracial Pair

The interracial couple who sued two Winston-Salem magistrates for refusing to marry them have nearly won their court case, but their troubles are not yet over.

In a session Wednesday, July 20th, U.S. Magistrate Herman Smith advised Mike Lewis, attorney for the defendants, magistrates Harold Thomerson and J.C. Lewter, to give top priority to the settlement of the case. This advice to settle out of court indicated that in Smith's judgment, Lewter and Thomerson did not have a defense. The two magistrates had refused to perform a marriage ceremony for Carol Figueroa and Thomas Person, stating that interracial marriages were against their personal and religious beliefs.

"When they told me that," Carol Figueroa recalls, "I wanted to say: 'That's your problem, not ours.'"

The magistrates' refusal to perform interracial marriages is in violation of a 1967 Supreme Court decision, *Loving vs. the Commonwealth of Virginia*, which outlawed racial restrictions on marriage. North Carolina retained an unconstitutional law prohibiting interracial marriages until March 24, 1977, when the legislature repealed it. Person and Figueroa requested their marriage ceremony several months after the state law was taken off the books.

When Lewter and Thomerson refused to



Carol Figueroa



Thomas Person

marry them, the couple went to the Legal Aid Society for assistance. Bertram E. Brown II, an attorney with the Forsyth chapter of Legal Aid, brought suit against the magistrates, asking for \$5 in actual damages, the cost of the marriage license, \$50,000 punitive damages, and a court order compelling the magistrates to marry them and all other interracial couples who request it.

Because the magistrates are appointed members of the state judicial system, it was expected that the North Carolina Attorney General Rufus Edmiston, would defend them, but representative of his office, Andy Vannoy, issued a statement saying that they could not take the case because it would constitute a conflict of interests with the laws making such marriages legal.

Lewter and Thomerson engaged the firm of White and Crumpler to defend them, and the case went to court July 20. The magistrates refused to answer questions put to them by Legal Aid Society

lawyers, pleading the 5th Amendment, and they asked that depositions taken in the case be sealed as well as an injunction to prevent disclosure of any of their testimony to keep secret anyway.

After hearing the evidence, Smith advised the magistrates' lawyers to settle out of court, and negotiations began.

According to Brown, the magistrates have agreed to sign a consent order agreeing to marry interracial couples.

"I don't know if I want them to marry us or not," says Carol Figueroa. "It would be bad to have your wedding performed by somebody who hates you."

The monetary aspect of the case is still unsettled, but the magistrates have agreed to pay, says Brown. The exact amount of that payment may never be publicized, however. One of Lewter and Thomerson's stipulations in agreeing to settle is the promise that no one involved should ever disclose the sum agreed upon.

Carol Figueroa has

Mayor Pro-tem C.C.

Ross called him "Mr. Transportation," and last Tuesday the city of Winston-Salem named its new Public Transportation Center in his honor, but Hampton D. Haith had been doing a masterful job of supervising the transit system for a long time before he received his accolades.

Mr. Haith has been in the transportation business since 1942, and since that time he has been dedicated to the cause of public transportation in Winston-Salem, first as manager of Safe Bus and now as co-ordinator of WSMT.

"Public transportation is more important now than ever before," Haith declared. "With pollution, congestion, and parking places cities now need an effective system of mass transit."



Hampton D. Haith

"Public transportation is bound to lose money, though," said Haith, explaining why such systems are no longer privately owned. "Operating costs are high, but fares must be kept to a minimum so that poor people will be able to use the system."

Haith's civic activities are not limited to transportation. He has served the community and the state for many years in various advisory capacities, including: 4 years as a board member on the N.C. Dept. of Corrections Commission, a formulating the regulations for the state's prison system; a member of the Winston-Salem Planning Board for 13 years; and liaison officer for minority businesses.

This last position, he explained, is important because it gives him the responsibility of ensuring that minority businesses get a fair chance to bid for federal projects.

Even with a building named after him, and "being close to becoming a senior citizen" as he put it, Hampton Haith is not resting on his laurels. He still has plans for improving the transit system. He is particularly concerned with the elderly and with handicapped persons.

"In the future, we must pay more attention to the needs of the handicapped," said Haith. He described special buses which have been designed to accommodate wheelchairs. Winston-Salem does not have any of those buses yet, but he hopes that they will one day be purchased for the city transit system. In the meantime, he says, drivers assist those passengers who are unable to cope with boarding on their own.

When he is not engaged in community activities or church work at St. Benedict's Haith enjoys golfing. A row of trophies in his den suggest that he handles golf as he does the transit system: very skillfully.

## Anti-Shoplifting Program Launched

Thomas Blair, Managing Director of the Winston-Salem Retail Merchants Association, announced the launching of a massive county-wide program to deal more effectively with the crime of shoplifting.

Losses from shoplifting have reached staggering proportions. Last year losses in Winston-Salem alone amounted to an estimated \$20 million. The costs were ultimately borne by each citizen in the form of higher prices (shoplifting loses cost the average Winston-Salem family of four \$560 in 1976).

The new anti-shoplifting program is the product of a one year effort on the part of the Winston-Salem Retail Merchants Association, the Forsyth County Juvenile Justice Council, the Court Counseling Service, the Juvenile Division of the Winston-Salem Police Department (over 50% of shoplifters

are juveniles) and the Greater Downtown Association of Winston-Salem. As a part of the program merchants will be urged to adopt a uniform policy of reporting all shoplifting incidents to the police. An elaborate computerized record system will be maintained to enable the police department and court personnel to deal more effectively with repeat juvenile offenders. An information network has been established to keep merchants informed as to the disposition of juvenile shoplifting cases and an anti-shoplifting educational campaign will be carried into the schools.

Blair stated that he was confident that a concerted effort on the part of the merchants, law enforcement personnel and the courts would result in a significant reduction in shoplifting which, by any measure, is the most expensive crime against business today.



## LEGISLATIVE ALERT

Item 8 on the Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Agenda calls for your concern and personal support. You may wish to retain and support each issue in this important series in safeguarding our interests through the Black Caucus.

### 8. HEALTH

The Caucus has vigorously sought passage of legislation to provide for a system of national health insurance. There is strong support and demonstrated need for such a program, yet concern about cost, which fails to recognize the savings in unifying existing health costs, and the cost in human terms, continues to impede action on the bills before Congress. To receive Caucus support, a health insurance program must contain three essential elements: 1) comprehensive

coverage, including dental expenses, 2) trust fund financing based on ability to pay and 3) reliance on the federal government as the insurer, along with the elimination of co-insurance or deductibles. We are concerned that efforts to pass a much more limited program of catastrophic health insurance will limit progress toward comprehensive national health insurance.

The Caucus supports legislation to provide grants to establish regional demonstration programs to encourage secondary school students from disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue careers in the health professions, and endorses H.R. 3432 which would create such a program. Because the minority community is critically underserved by the current health care delivery system, and

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## Chronicle Weather Outlook

Cool the remaining of the week, with highs in the upper 70's and low 80's. Chance of precipitation 15% Thursday, 20% Friday thru Sunday. Sunny & hot Monday and Tuesday.