

## Local Aggies reflect on a now-famous classmate

By ROBIN ADAMS  
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To the rest of the world he is known as the Rev. Jesse Jackson, expert orator, civil rights activist, Baptist preacher, executive director of Operation PUSH and the first black man to be taken seriously as a presidential contender.

But to Bishop Sylvester Johnson, a classmate of Jackson's when the two of them attended the Agricultural and Technical College of Greensboro from 1960-64 (A&T), he is simply known as "Big Feet."

While Johnson was pledging the Mu Psi Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., he had the task of shining Big Brother Jackson's shoes.

"He wore a size 13," Johnson says. "And I had to shine those shoes. Despite whatever else he is called, to me he is still 'Big Feet'."

Johnson says he could never muster up enough nerve to call Jackson "Big Feet" to his face because he knew then that there was something special about him.

"Jesse had a lot of intestinal fortitude," Johnson says. "He was just a go-getter and a very dynamic speaker and had a concern about people. I knew then that he had the call, that he would be somebody."

Johnson wasn't the only person who sensed something special about Jackson.

"Whenever Jesse walked in a room, he stood out among the group," says Clarence McKee, coordinator of special projects for the city-county schools. McKee, who was the campaign manager for Jackson's first national campaign, first vice grand basileus of his fraternity, which he won, says Jackson used to say that one day he would be famous.

Local businessman Tom Trollinger says he knew Jackson's wife, Jackie, better than he knew Jackson, but he could tell that Jackson was different from the other students.

"It was evident then that he stood out from among us," Trollinger says. "Dr. (Albert) Spruill (A&T professor) used to say that Jesse had a gift as an orator. He seemed to be the one who could analyze. He was destined for great things."

Only a sophomore when Jackson was a senior, Larry Hardy says he could still sense that Jackson was more than just a more sophisticated upper classman.

"I had no personal contact with him," Hardy says, "but I walked the demonstration lines with him and I was very much aware of his presence. He was very visible as a leader of the student body. In fact, he was probably one of the stronger student body presidents during my time."

But Jackson didn't excel in everything. Although his tall, muscular frame was suited for athletics, he only managed to make to the second string as quarterback for the football team. And like other young college men, he enjoyed college life.

"Jesse wasn't a minister when he was at A&T," Trollinger says. "And he liked to have a good time. He went to the parties and enjoyed himself like the rest of us."

It's been 20 years since Jackson donned the blue, gold and white football jersey only to replace it with the traditional minister's robe or the three-piece suit he now



Left, presidential candidate the Rev. Jesse Jackson addresses a function at the Hilton Inn in Winston-Salem last summer. In the picture at the right is Jackson 20 years ago in a posed shot for the "Ayantee," the A&T State University yearbook, when he was president of the student government. The bottom photograph, also from A&T's 1964 annual, shows Jackson in conversation. The caption read: "Through knowledge, they gain equal rights. (The photo at the left is by James Parker and the other two were taken from the 1964 "Ayantee.")"

sports so frequently during political rallies. Now that he has launched a serious presidential campaign, his old college classmates are behind him as they were when he led so many campus protests against segregation in Greensboro. Some for sentimental reasons, and others for reasons all their own have decided to put their strength behind one of A&T's most famous Aggies.

"I'm ready to support a black person who represents a serious challenge as a presidential candidate," says Hardy. "As I evaluate the credentials of all the candidates, he looks as good as anybody else. But my view may be prejudiced to some degree because he is an Aggie."

Trollinger says that qualifications also led him to support Jackson.

"Jesse is eminently qualified," he says. "If people get beyond his blackness, they will see that he has better ideas than (Walter) Mondale or (Gary) Hart."

"Of course, I'm not naive enough to think he can win, ... but he gives young people, who up until now, had no interest in the political process, something to rally behind," says Trollinger.

While Johnson agrees with Trollinger and Hardy, his feelings and his hopes for Jackson are much stronger.

"He is the conscience of the Democratic Party," Johnson says. "He keeps Hart and Mondale on their toes. I can really envision him as a vice president. Reagan has a lot of momentum going now, but if we (the Democratic Party) surface with a good ticket, we could win. I would like to see a Mondale and Jackson ticket."

From flipping through the pages of the 1964



"Ayantee," the student yearbook, pictures of Jackson are hard to find. He was not a member of Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities, his number 48 on his football jersey is hard to find in a picture of the team and he is not pictured in many of the campus student organizations.

Yet, from accounts of those who knew him at A&T,



the Greenville, S.C., native was one of the most well-known and respected students on campus.

"Jesse is what A&T is all about," Trollinger says.

"A&T has a history of taking slow bloomers and really making great people out of them. And that's what A&T did for Jesse."

## Charlotte native says he's moving toward his goals in Winston-Salem



### On The Path To Success

Leroy Anderson, who taught elementary and junior high school in his native Charlotte, says Winston-Salem is conducive to the goals he intends to reach as an operations section manager at Wachovia Bank and Trust Co. A business graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Anderson says anybody can reach their goals, if only he'll set them and then set his mind on accomplishing them (photo by James Parker).

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Wachovia has attracted a lot of black professionals to Winston-Salem, and if you ask 23-year-old Leroy Anderson Jr. why he's here, he will attribute it to the bank's reputation as a strong company.

A native of Charlotte and a 1982 business graduate of Morehouse College, Anderson was hired by

Wachovia in June of last year as a management trainee in the company's operations department, which handles billings and accounts for local colleges and universities in the Triad. Since hired, Anderson has managed to work his way up to an operations section manager.

"This kind of work was totally new to me," says Anderson, who taught elementary and junior high

### Newcomer

school for one year in Charlotte. "I had always wanted to go into my field and when things worked out, I was hired here."

"I can really appreciate coming here," he says, "because Wachovia really stresses excellence and that's one of the reasons I was attracted here."

Anderson occupies a small cubicle area in the bank's operations services in the Phillips Building. On his desk is a reminder of how he says he feels about going about goals in life. A framed sketch of Dr. Benjamin Mays, a past president of Morehouse who died a week ago, with a message that Anderson says he's carried with him since he graduated is the focal point of his neatly arranged desk.

The last line reads: "Not failure, but low aim is a sin."

The young manager reflects on those words as frequently as he does the Bible. And because he is a

born-again Christian, Anderson says he knows it is not every day that someone just out of college can become as successful as he has.

"If you desire something and seek diligently after it, then you will get whatever it is that you want," says Anderson. "I knew I was interested in management and I still feel like I have a long way to go."

"Height, weight, age, race or religion are just obstacles that people use, and they can in no way determine a person's ability," he says.

With Charlotte only being an hour away, Anderson visits his parents quite frequently and says he doesn't regret his move here. But there is one problem he wishes to correct.

"I'm still learning a lot about Winston-Salem," Anderson says, "especially the one-way streets, so I got myself a map and I think I'm getting on course now."

He says he also doesn't see any real comparable differences in Charlotte and here, only the size of the buildings.

"Since I've been here people have welcomed me quite well into the community," says Anderson. "I would rate Winston-Salem an A plus as far as meeting people are concerned."

"The people I meet are primarily business people and I don't think being a Christian has hindered me at all from that," he says.

Outlets that he's utilized for meeting people have been small get-togethers of Wachovia's black employees.

In giving his time to the community, Anderson has joined the ranks of the Black Political Awareness League. He's also a member of the N.C. Young Democrats and the Bankers Educational Society Inc., and says he's also seriously considering membership into the Full Gospel Businessmen Association. On Sundays, he worships at either First Baptist or New Bethel Baptist Church.

"As long as I'm with Wachovia," says Anderson, "I can visualize making Winston-Salem my permanent home and giving it another two years, maybe a house."