

## Cook And Sons Shoe Shop: They are keeping it all in the family

By AUDREY L. WILLIAMS  
Chronicle Staff Writer

There's something quaint and antique about the shoe repair and shine shop on W. Fifth Street, not even including the old black singer sewing machine that Samuel Cook Sr. has had since when.

The antiquity comes with the way Cook, 71, runs his shop, Cook and Sons Shoe Shop, just across from the Post Office. He still uses an old ring-up cash register and passing the time away still means laughing about the old days with James "Blue" McDaniel, 75, his partner in the shoe shine business back in '32.

The quaintness comes from the way folks just come in, sit and talk with Cook.

Until about a month ago, Cook, his son Samuel Cook Jr., and his grandson, Samuel Cook III, occupied space in the Medical Arts Building on Third Street. When the building was bought by R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., the elder Cook, who opened his business there 23 years ago, had to find another location.

"Shoes are about over with me," says Cook. "That's the reason my son's here with me. I'm too old to work. After you get 65 or 70, you sit back."

But he really doesn't. A longtime customer of Cook's comes in. He excuses himself and greets the customer at

the counter. After the brief business exchange, Cook jingles the tip in his large hands and turns it over to his grandson.

"My great-granddaddy was in the shoe repair business," he says. "I imagine I took after him. It was gift given to me and I passed it on."

A native of Lawrence, S.C., Cook came to Winston-Salem with his parents when he was just a young boy. The family moved to 14th Street, where he and his wife, Eva, still live. To get himself some pocket change, he started shining shoes when he was about 12 years old in a barbershop at 12th and Sessom streets.

After graduation from Atkins High School, where he was voted best dressed, lettered in track, tennis, football and basketball, Cook was the sacrifice for his brother, L.A. Cook, who became an elementary principal in the local school system and eventually had a school named in his honor.

"I started working at the old Greyhound Bus Station," says Cook. "I couldn't afford to go to college 'cause my brother went over to Winston-Salem College (now Winston-Salem State University). So I called myself going into business for myself."

"I've been in the shoe repair and shine business every

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It's An Art

Samuel Cook Sr. started shining shoes when he was 12 years old. At 71, he's still at it (photo by James Parker).

## Dock Grier promises to make his second retirement permanent



### Second Time Around

Dock Grier: He tried retirement one time; now he's trying it again (photo by James Parker).

By ROBIN ADAMS  
Chronicle Staff Writer

Five years ago, Dock Grier retired from his job as building manager and coordinator of the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA), once the home of the James B. Hanes Family on Marguerite Drive.

"They had a party and everything for me," Grier says. "But I only stayed (retired) one day."

Two weeks ago, Grier's friends and employees at SECCA tried again. They threw him a retirement party and named the SECCA library, now the Dock A. Grier Library, in his honor. Grier is scheduled to retire in June.

"This time, I promise to stay longer," he says.

To Grier, retiring is more difficult than it is for most people. After all, he has spent the last 49 years of his life at the same place.

When Grier was 20 years old, he left his job at R.J. Reynolds to help the Haneses out for two weeks. At age 70, Grier is just leaving that two-week stand.

"They asked me to come and stay two weeks, and I stayed 49 years," Grier says. "With the exception of three and one-half years in the Air Force, I have been with them every since."

Grier was hired as the Haneses' butler and chauffeur. In addition to those duties, he and his wife, Verna, who joined the Haneses' staff after marrying Grier, traveled with Hanes to three of his five houses and occasionally Grier would accompany Hanes to Canada for his annual fishing trip.

"Mr. Hanes was cordial and we had a formal relationship," says the soft-spoken Grier.

"They were nice people to work for. He was the last of the Southern gentlemen."

Grier's job also afforded him the opportunity to meet many famous people. The one he remembers most is Richard Nixon when he was Dwight D. Eisenhower's vice president.

"In Leesburg, Ga., at Mr. Hanes' house, I saw Vice President Richard Nixon for two or three days," Grier says. "He was ambitious and he insisted on being called Mr. President. He said, 'You may call me Mr. President because I am the president of the senate.'"

To young blacks today, Grier's job as butler and chauffeur to a wealthy white family may be viewed as humiliating. Not so, says Grier.

"It was difficult back then, coming out of

"... if it was not for the people in the kitchens and laundries, we wouldn't have any black doctors and lawyers."

-- Dock Grier

the Depression," Grier says. "A person considered himself fortunate if he had a job. Now, I know it's different because people have a choice of jobs."

"They paid the going price and it (the job) had its benefits," he says. "I did as well there as I would on any other job."

Grier continues: "When I first returned from the Air Force, I was offered a job at the Post Office. And I told Mr. Hanes about the job. He was getting old and the job (with the Haneses) was complicated ... and he said he would pay me just as much with the raises and clothes (as the Post Office job would have). That was as good a deal as you could have gotten at that

time without a formal education.

"I've done well at it," he says. "If I was a young person today, I wouldn't take it on. But if it was not for the people in the kitchens or laundries, we wouldn't have any black doctors and lawyers. You have to live in your day. You can't live in another day."

If he had had a career choice, Grier says he would have probably been a minister.

"That would have been an interesting, helpful career," he says. "We really need good ministers. We need dedicated preachers."

Now that Grier is nearing his final retirement he says he will spend his time traveling, doing yard work around his home on Maryland Avenue and becoming more active at his church, Reynolds Temple C.M.E. Church. He also plans to become a member of the "Honeydew Club."

"You know, hearing my wife say, 'Honey do this and honey do that,'" he says.

Dock and Verna Grier do not have any children to drool over in their retirement years, but they make up for that by spending time with their many nieces and nephews and great-niece, actress Pam Grier.

"There were 10 of us and eight in my wife's family," Grier said. "So I think they paid the debt for us."

After 50 years of tending to somebody else's home, you would think Grier would have grown so attached to it that it would be hard to leave. He says leaving the Hanes home and SECCA won't be that hard.

But whether or not he will hold to his word remains to be seen. After all, he tried retirement once, and didn't like it.

## Newcomer

### Reid says Winston turns him on

By AUDREY L. WILLIAMS  
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Frank Reid will set anyone straight who would even imply that the reason he's in Winston-Salem is to fill a minority quota for Integon.

"I wouldn't have even taken this job if I hadn't been aware of the opportunities that were here for me," he says. "I left a good job."

Reid, 28, and his wife Robin, who just landed a job at N.C. Baptist Hospital, left Tulsa, Okla., and came to Winston-Salem in January.

However, Reid is a native of Atlanta, while his wife is a native New Yorker. Their new home is now under construction.

At Integon, Reid serves as an employment specialist in charge of management and professional recruiting. In Tulsa, a city that he often makes reference to when speaking of progressive black people, he was personnel manager for an insurance firm there. His reasons for leaving not only stem from a greater career challenge, but he and wife's geographical preference also came into play.

"We decided we wanted to get back to the East Coast," Reid says. "The 19-hour drive from Tulsa to Atlanta made the homecomings a lot less interesting."

"I took the job here because I like the company here first of all," he says. "The people I work with are very professional and knowledgeable. I also found Winston-Salem to have a very good business climate."

A Morehouse graduate with a degree in economics, Reid is the only one of his parents six children to go to college. He says he was born and raised in the projects in

Atlanta, but refused to let where he lived decide his fate.

He cites Maynard Jackson, Julian Bond and Dr. Benjamin Mays as a few of his role models.

"Buc Benny (Mays), only the men at Morehouse could call him that, would always walk down the campus and ask you if you'd been challenged today," says Reid, "and if you had, you had to tell him what it was that you found challenging."

Morehouse College is not only where Reid met his challenges and learned how not to compromise, but it's also where he met his wife, Robin, a Spelman College graduate.

Since moving to Winston-Salem, Reid says he spends much of his leisure time on the tennis courts. But when looking for relaxing entertainment, he says he prefers Greensboro because the Twin City doesn't have much to offer minorities seeking good entertainment.

That may well be his only gripe about Winston-Salem, says Reid, who views the city as one with a lot of potential for minorities.

"We like it here," he says, "and what really turns me on about Winston-Salem is that there are a lot of opportunities here for people who are willing to work."

"But it takes folk from inside to ensure that everybody will get a fair shake," he says.

Quick-witted and frank, Reid, who describes himself as a straight-laced go-getter, is confident about his career and the direction he's going, and he takes great pride in his new job.

"I love my job," he says. "I enjoy it tremendously. I really enjoy the recruitment and counseling end of it. It's



Frank Reid has only been in Winston-Salem four months, but he's excited about getting to know the Twin City better (photo by James Parker).

kind of neat when someone has a problem and you counsel them and later they come back and tell you that their problem has been solved."

A member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., the young executive says he has plans to become involved in Winston-Salem's influential circles and already he's

waiting for membership into the Greater Winston Kiwanis.

More recently, Reid was voted Outstanding Young Man of America by the Jaycees.

"I'm not a member of the Jaycees," he says, "but that's what makes being named even more of an honor."