

# Legal Aid Director resigns after more than two decades

By RUDY ANDERSON  
Chronicle Managing Editor

Thoms Craven, who has directed the staff of the Legal Aid Society of Northwest North Carolina for the last 20 years, is stepping down. Craven made his announcement this week saying that, "I have reached a point in my life where it is necessary to determine what to do for the rest of it. I have spent my entire legal career in legal services for the poor, and I think it's time for a change."

At age 50, Craven is the third person to serve as director of Legal Aid Society since it was established in 1963 by local attorneys. His resignation becomes effective June 1.

Craven said he has no idea who his replacement will be but that he would be involved with helping the board to conduct their search for a new director. Craven says he informed the board of his decision to step down April 2.

It was Craven who directed a study in the early 1970s of the North Carolina Bar Association that led to the establishment of the Legal Services of North Carolina, a statewide legal services program.

That program now has 26 offices across the state with an annual budget of more than \$10 million dollars.

Craven says when he started doing this work that legal aid was not a popular cause. "It is still controversial, but it is also an accepted community institution. I've seen this organization go from being completely ineffective and almost a joke to being very successful in helping our clients across the state," he said. "I'm very proud of whatever I have been able to do to make that happen."

But Craven has also learned how cruel people can be to each other. "The unexpected experience out of this," he says, "is the significant number of people who have become wealthy taking advantage of poor people. Those are the people who are threatened by a fair adjudication of disputes. They don't want to see justice done."

Craven smiled to himself while

thinking about some of the personalities he has come across during his time of service. "Most people think Scrooge ends up buying the turkey for Tiny Tim, but I've seen

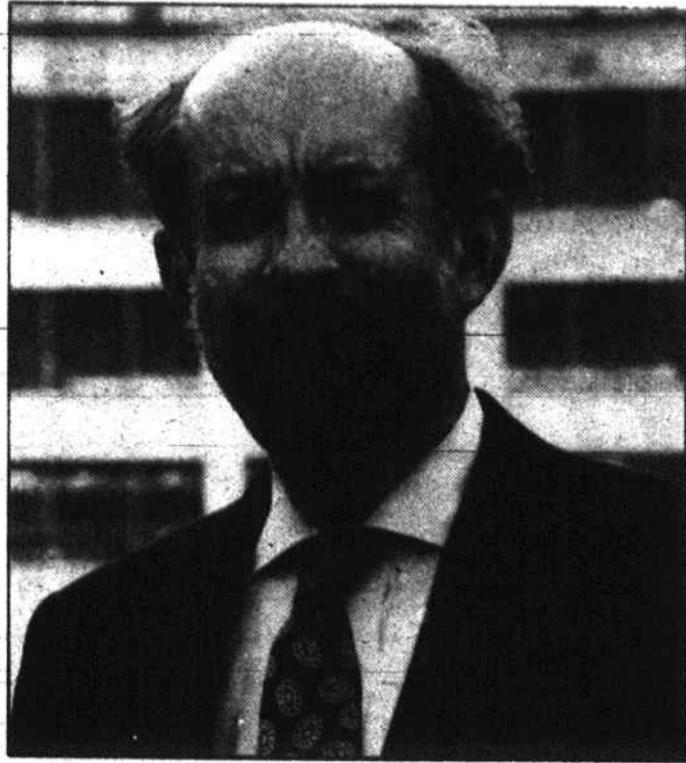


Photo by L.B. Speas Jr.  
**Thoms Craven**

Scrooges that would take that turkey right out of Tiny Tim's arms."

Keeping enough legal help on hand has also been a problem for Legal Aid, Craven says. The Legal Aid staff currently has seven attor-

neys and three paralegals representing clients in six counties. In the early 1980's, the staff included 13 attorneys and six paralegals.

Craven says the Reagan administration tried hard to abolish legal aid for the poor, but that Congress, the nation's bar associations, and state and local officials worked harder to prevent that from happening.

"We lost a great deal of our capacity to provide legal assistance, but we are still in business and doing more and better work."

Still he admits that Legal Aid by and large is seriously understaffed and underfinanced. He said lawyers in Legal Aid aren't paid nearly enough for the services rendered. Even so, he points out that Legal Aid attorneys get respect from other attorneys, judges, and the community.

"Our poor clients know that if we take their case, we are going to be here and that they couldn't get better representation anywhere," says Craven.

Looking back on his 22-year involvement with Legal Aid, Craven says he has no regrets and would do it all over again. "When I started this in 1969, I had no idea I'd

still be doing this 22 years later," he says. But he says it has been worth the effort.

"Look at what's happening with tenants where they have gone from being victims of intolerable conditions to people landlords end up paying money to by the time we are finished," he said with pride.

Craven isn't sure yet what he

will be doing yet but he knows he'll stay active. He continues to serve on a host of advisory boards and community organizations.

Craven is married to Perry Craven, who is involved in the development of housing for the elderly and handicapped. They have one grown son, Thomas, who is a professional bicycle racer.

## Official admits 'Main Post Office' confusing

By RUDY ANDERSON  
Chronicle Managing Editor

A high ranking area postal official admits that the use of the term "main post office" may have caused some confusion for customers who moved their mail boxes to the new Patterson Avenue location thinking they would also get retail services.

William J. Henderson, field division general manager and Postmaster from Greensboro, wrote a letter in response to a letter he received from Mrs. Elaine Pitt, community relations director for the Chronicle, about the lack of services provided at the so-called "main post office."

In that letter Henderson writes that "Winston-Salem was not singled out for special treatment" in terms of postal facility offerings. He makes reference to the fact that the main processing center in Charlotte has no retail services, "not even post office box service." He also writes that a new mail processing facility in Hickory will not offer retail services and that there is a proposal in Greensboro "to move the retail services from the existing main post office location to another area of the city."

Henderson calls it regrettable that some customers mentioned in Mrs. Pitt's letter "inadvertently moved their boxes" to the Patterson

location but were unable to receive the service they wanted.

Henderson wrote he would inform the Winston-Salem Postmaster, Mark Matics, to identify those customers and offer them an opportunity to exchange their box for one nearer their residence.

"Undoubtedly, the term 'full service' has a different meaning for you (Mrs. Pitt) than it has for the Postal Service," Henderson writes. "Full service to the Postal Service are those postal facilities that offer all of the available retail services including box pickup to those customers they serve. It does not include the mail processing operation, which is generally located in only one facility within the city." He continues that the location of mail processing and retail operations as one unit is becoming less frequent within the Postal Service.

He gave no indication that the Patterson Avenue facility would at some point offer full services.

But he insists in that letter that while there were many business reasons why retail services were not provided at the new facility on Patterson Avenue "not one of them had anything to do with the racial or ethnic makeup of the surrounding community."

Several of those who also got copies of the Pitt letter find Henderson's explanation hard to believe.

The Rev. Serenus Churn, president of the Ministers' Alliance and pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, is one of them.

"This affects a lot of people in my church," said Churn. "I think people were sadly disappointed that this new attractive building in their neighborhood offered them no service."

Churn said what has happened in this situation is indicative of the type of token service extended to African-Americans with no real substance. "I can get packages mailed from some areas around here where there is hardly anything. But in the heart of the city, where there are thousands of people, we can't get this type of service," he said. "I think it is ridiculous."

"I'm concerned about it, that's for sure," said Marie Roseboro of the Forsyth County Voters Coalition. "If all they were going to do is

gear up to become some giant mail processing center, why call it a main post office and not offer the people who live in the community and pass this facility daily an opportunity for service," she said. "I'm sure people in that community felt they wouldn't have to go way downtown anymore for retail service. Now they have this pretty new building with nothing for them unless they have a post office box."

Dave Barcio, director of customer said during an interview this week that the new Town Run Lane facility will be providing downtown retail services once it opens. The next closest facility providing retail services for people in the area will be the facility on Patterson Avenue across from Northside Shopping Center. He said for anyone wishing to change their boxes, the post office would be happy to accommodate them.

## Sorry, our mistake

The Winston-Salem Chronicle incorrectly reported that the Columbia Mall in Columbia, S.C. had been sued by the NAACP for discrimination in an April 4 article about bus service at Hanes Mall in Winston-Salem.

NAACP officials said a negotiated settlement was reached and the suit was never filed.

We also incorrectly reported that mall officials in Columbia said the action had been taken to cut down on loitering at the mall. That statement should have instead been attributed to NAACP officials there who say they were told this was one of the reasons mall officials took the initial action to curtail bus service. In fact, mall officials never requested that bus service be curtailed — nor was it.

We are sorry for any inconvenience that these errors may have caused.

## CRA/bank enter pact

Chronicle Staff Report

The North Carolina Statewide Community Reinvestment Act Committee announces that they have entered into an agreement with First Citizens Bank & Trust Company where the bank has committed more than \$21 million over the next three years to assist low- and moderate-income and minority targeted housing and business development programs.

The bank has agreed to develop a single-family homeownership program, as well as a multi-family (one-to-four) housing program. In addition to these efforts, the bank has committed to expanding its farm lending programs to further include small and minority farmers, providing monetary support of the North Carolina Association of Community Development Corporations and the Southeast Raleigh Community Development Corporation.

The bank also agreed to increase its marketing efforts to low- and moderate income markets and to participate in small business and homeownership counseling programs.

The Statewide CRA Committee includes: The Charlotte Organizing Project, Blue Ridge Community Action (Morganton), YMI Cultural Center (Asheville), East Winston CDC, NC Institute of Minority Economic Development, Gateway CDC (Henderson), Pamlico Sound Legal Services, Southeast Raleigh CDC, Rocky Mount/Edgecombe CDC, the North Carolina branch of the

NAACP, North Carolina Association of CDCs, North Carolina Legal Services Resource Center, and the Wilmington/New Hanover CDC.



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**CITY OF WINSTON-SALEM**  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
PUBLIC HEARING

The Housing/Neighborhood Development Department and the Housing Services Department will hold a public hearing to review the **PROPOSED** "Statement of Community development and Projected Use of Funds" for the Program Year 1991-1992. (July 1, 1991-June 30, 1992)

Total **PROPOSED** Community Development Program expenditures for the program year beginning July 1, 1991 are \$4,050,000. Of these expenditures, 70 percent are projected to benefit low and moderate income households.

The Board of Aldermen will consider the submission of the **PROPOSED** Statement to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development during its regular meeting on Monday, May 20, 1991 at 7:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Copies of the **PROPOSED** Statement are available at the offices of the Housing/Neighborhood Department, 225 West Fifth Street, Suite 300 Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101.

**IN ADDITION:** the Housing/Neighborhood Development Department and the Housing Services Department will hold a public hearing to obtain citizens views on the housing needs of the jurisdiction to assist in the development of a **Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategies (CHAS)**, in accordance with Title I of the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990.

Representatives from neighborhood organizations, city-wide groups and any other individuals interested in the Community Development program and the comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategies (CHAS) are invited to attend this hearing.

**DATE:** Tuesday, April 16, 1991  
**TIME:** 7:00 p.m.  
**PLACE:** Benton Convention Center  
Conference Rooms 2 (Lower Level)

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