

# Food Lion Shoppers React to Controversy

▲ Customers express support, disdain for embattled store

BY SABRINA JONES  
Chronicle Staff Writer

A former Food Lion worker in Winston-Salem recently accused the supermarket chain of transporting out-of-date meat from white area stores to the predominately black-patronized Food Lion on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

The racially-tinged story has elicited both negative and positive feedback from the African-American community.

More than economics is involved, according to frequent Food Lion customer Paul France, 59.

"Anywhere else in town it wouldn't be the same," he said. "It has gotten better since the last eight or nine months, but only after the story. Before, you had to be careful about what you bought." Likewise, Viola Lindsay commented that the "reason they put it here is because it's in a black neighborhood — to kill us."

However, some Food Lion customers support the store, saying the meat they buy is not of bad quality.

"I've never bought any bad

meat here," declared Tomasz Crockett, 60. "I've never gotten sick, and I will be shopping Food Lion in the future. It makes it harder on us bus riders if they put Food Lion out of business."

Similarly, another unidentified customer said that in the 10 to 15 years he has shopped at Food Lion, he "hasn't had any bad meat," but allowed that it "was a possibility" that the store was indeed selling dated meat.

"There has to be some reason to put that on TV," he said, referring to last November's report on ABC's "PrimeTime Live."

"I don't think they do that here; maybe at another one in another state," said Lenoir Carter. "If they did, I wouldn't be eating this meat. Stuff that's already packaged cannot be messed with."

Prices and location are factors in 69-year-old Cucell Settle's loyalty to the store. Although Settle said he has purchased spoiled fish and steaks at the store, he said Food Lion is "closer and cheaper."

"The neighborhood store costs twice as much," he said.

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Powers and Smith Associates, a public relations firm, say came forward with tales of date tampering, working off the clock and other allegations.

Jeffrey Zack, an associate at Fingerhut, said the food workers' union had received a variety of allegations prior to the "Prime-time Live" expose last November in which Food Lion meat handlers were shown doing things to meat and fish to make them look fresh.

Danny L. Person of 3017 Theresa Ave. and one of those on the list, said he currently has two lawsuits pending against the grocery store chain.

Person, who hasn't worked in over a year because of an injury he sustained when he worked at the East Winston store at 400 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., said that he has seen meat handlers take meat that is "close to date" discard the old wrapper, re-wrap it and give it a sticker with a new date. The new date, he said, may be a week beyond

the original date.

"The store is in a black neighborhood, you know, and sometimes we don't pay too much attention to dates like we should," Person said.

Jerry Franklin, director of recruitment for Food Lion at its corporate headquarters in Salisbury, said: "As company policy, we do not change dates. (The East Winston store) is a very important store for us. We never treat one store differently than the others."

Woollen and Person also maintain that they were forced to work off the clock in order to catch up with chores that didn't get done during an eight-hour shift.

"If we couldn't get the job done in eight hours, they told us we weren't being productive," Person said.

Person said that if an employee wanted to move up in the company, he would often do what was asked of him, whether he was getting paid or not.

# Greensboro Names Its First Black Fire Chief

By SABRINA JONES  
Chronicle Staff Writer

Greensboro already has its first black chief of police, Sylvester Daughtry. Now joining the list of high-ranking African Americans in Greensboro is Ray K. Flowers, the first black fire chief of the city.

Flowers, a 32-year veteran of the Greensboro Fire Department, will head the third-largest city department with 366 employees and an annual budget of \$15.6 million.

Flowers joined the department in 1961 and eventually was named deputy fire chief, a position he has held since 1988. He received an associate degree from N.C. A&T State University in 1960 and earned certification in municipal administration from UNC's Institute of Government in Chapel Hill in 1978.

Greensboro's fire department is rated Class I, the highest rating awarded by the National Insurance office, and is the only one in North Carolina with that designation and one of only 13 cities nationwide.

In his new position, Flowers will receive \$60,000 a year, or about



Ray Flowers

5 percent more than his current salary as deputy chief.

"I am very proud to have been selected fire chief of Greensboro," said Flowers. "It is a dream come true for me." He said that he will "have a positive impact on the black community" in his new position.

He is married to the former Martha Louise Tatum, and has two children, Dr. Sandra DeLauder of Maryland and Hugh D. Flowers of South Carolina. Flowers' younger brother, Lt. James Flowers, is a firefighter in Washington, D.C.

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