



At a Glance

News briefs compiled from the Associated Press

King takes helm of SCLC

Martin Luther King III, son of slain civil rights leader the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., speaks at a special convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference on Saturday, Nov. 1, at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. King was elected to replace SCLC president the Rev. Joseph Lowery, who is a co-founder of the civil rights organization.



(AP Photo/Erik S. Lesser)

Mel Farr Superstar drives on



Mel Farr Sr. delivers his sales pitch as he films a commercial in Ferndale, Mich., Sept. 30. Farr, who has built the nation's largest black auto dealership with stores in five states, appears in television commercials as the caped Mel Farr Superstar.

(AP Photo/Carlos Osorio)

Prop 209 not going anywhere

Ward Connerly, chairman of the Proposition 209 campaign, speaks at a news conference Monday, Nov. 3, in Sacramento, Calif. Ward said foes of the measure, which bans race and gender from figuring in state hiring or school admission, "ought to give up the fight" in light of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling upholding the measure.



(AP Photo/Steve Yeater)



(AP Photo/Jeff Kowalsky)

Child faces murder charges

Ronnie Green lights a cigarette after a hearing for Nathaniel Jamar Abraham in Oakland County Probate Court in Pontiac, Mich., on Monday, Nov. 3. Abraham, 11, a 65-pound sixth-grader, faces trial as an adult on first-degree murder in the death of Green's son Ronnie Lee Green Jr.

Tyson shares pessimism

FILE — Mike Tyson, shown in this 1995 photo, believes he will not regain his boxing license, suspended by the Nevada Athletic Commission, because he bit Evander Holyfield twice during their heavyweight championship fight. In an interview Monday night, Nov. 3, on ABC television, Tyson was asked by Alex Wallau whether he thought the commission would reinstate him next year. "Truly, I think I'll be banned for the rest of my life," Tyson said.



(AP Photo/Lennox McLendon)

The Chronicle appoints Hodge new editor

By ENGLISH BRADSHAW
The Chronicle Staff Writer

Sharon Brooks Hodge was named editor of the Chronicle last week. As editor, she will oversee the daily news operations of the Chronicle.

In making her appointment to this position, The Chronicle's publisher, Ernie Pitt, said, "Sharon represents a new editorial era for The Chronicle. She is a professional, and I am excited about what she brings to our editorial staff. Since our coverage now includes the Triad, I felt a need to have someone with her credentials at the helm of our news organization.

"She's a pro who sees things in a little different light than what we have been accustomed to. She will

not be predictable, and she will call the shots exactly the way she sees them. There will be no sacred cows, and she will continue to cover and report the news without fear or favor."

Before coming to The Chronicle, Hodge was an editorial writer for the Greensboro News & Record. She was responsible for writing daily editorials on state, local and national political and social issues. She also wrote a column and participated in the overall layout of the editorial page.

She has worked for the Durham Herald-Sun, The Lexington Dispatch and The Martinsville Bulletin as a reporter. Hodge is also a freelance journalist and correspondent. She writes political and social columns

and articles for the monthly magazine Headway and is the southern regional coordinator for Project 21, a black leadership think tank based in Washington, D.C.

She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and received her bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia. She also studied journalism at Marquette University School of Journalism. She holds memberships on the Guilford County Mental Health and Substance Abuse Board of Directors, the Triad Red Cross Board of Directors and the Crescent Rotary Board of Directors.

She has been married to Anzel Hodge Jr. for 13 years. The couple has twin daughters, Ariel and Cameron, 10.



Sharon Brooks Hodge

REVIEW

from page A1

Since then, the 10 appointed members of the review board meet every three months. But what exactly have they been doing for the past four years?

"We don't get that many complaints," admitted Alfred Harvey, review board chairman.

According to Captain B.L. Jones of Professional Standards, there have been 319 citizen complaints received since the board's inception Feb. 15, 1993. Thirty-one of those complaints have been appealed to the review board, but only four hearings have been completed.

Of those four complaints that merited hearings, one concerned an officer's use of force, one a courtesy violation, one dealt with unsatisfactory performance and the fourth complaint questioned an officer's conformance to laws.

None of the four complaints considered by the board ever garnered a recommendation for action. A pending complaint against a city employee is scheduled to go before the board in mid-November.

Some people are beginning to ask questions: Have the problems that sparked the board's creation been resolved? Was the board truly created to address these problems, or has it been set up to fail?

The Oct. 25 death of an African-American man while in police custody has left many wondering if the problems perceived in the department never went away.

Around 9:40 p.m. Friday, police picked up 36-year-old Warnie Lee Patton near the YWCA on Glade Street for disorderly conduct. Arresting officers described Patton as "combative" and said that they used pepper spray on him to control his behavior.

Officers then headed to Forsyth Hospital, because Patton was acting in such an "erratic manner." While en route, Patton slumped over in the seat, and was rushed into the

Emergency Room. Efforts to revive him failed.

While the state bureau investigates the Patton case, other incidents of alleged police misconduct are emerging. The newly revived Black Leadership Roundtable is championing the cause of Tyrone Potter, a black man allegedly assaulted by two white police officers earlier this month.

State Representative Larry Womble indicated that the Roundtable, which formerly focused on matters of the political arena, may step into the shoes once worn by CUJ. Womble, who was on the board of aldermen and an organizer of CUJ, said that the city needs to look at both the objectives and members of the review board.

"Either [the board is] not clear on the goals, or not following them, or it's the make-up of the board," said Womble.

The question is, said Imam Khalid Griggs, Roundtable co-convenor, does the Citizens Police

Review Board need its own review board?

Griggs told Potter to record a complaint with the review board, but only as a formality. "I had no expectations of the board," said Griggs. "They don't do anything to advocate the rights of citizens who have been abused."

There appears to be as many in opposition to the review board as there were four years ago. Republican mayoral candidate Jack Cayanagh and several members of his party who seek alderman seats have said the Citizens Police Review Board is just another example of excessive bureaucracy. Incumbent Republican in the Southeast Ward Robert Nordlander considers the board as an offense, and said that it is his job as an elected official to be the watchdog.

Harvey pointed out that the board does not have hiring-and-firing power. "People think we set policy for the police department," said

Harvey. "That's not what we're about. We're just a group of citizens concerned about the community." Harvey has sat on the board since its inception.

It's the lack of influence that concerns those who first called for a citizens review board.

"I have not seen the review board take an aggressive stance," said alderman Vivian Burke, who chairs the board's Public Safety Committee. "That board needs a tune-up." She said that the aldermen should look into the board's power, but warned that some aldermen, like Nordlander, might use an investigation as a means to dismantle the board altogether.

Harvey still feels that the board serves an important purpose.

"Anytime you have a segment of your community that has a concern or whose voice is not heard, this can serve as a bridge between cultures," said Harvey. "It can eliminate mistrust. I feel it's needed."

PEPPER

from page A1

zens have died while in the custody of the police," said Kalid Griggs, co-convenor of the Roundtable. "We are calling for an outside investigation of these deaths. This is not just basically an FBI investigation, but we are asking for the citizens of Winston-Salem to review this department."

The Rev. Carlton Eversley suggested that the Citizens Review Board (CRB) convene to review these matters. He acknowledged that the CRB has never called for any punitive action against the police department. However, he said the board should act as it was originally intended to or be scrapped.

Three recent cases combined to create the impact felt in the community. Jackie Gearheart, a home-

less man, was killed by off duty officer J.K. Dorn. Anthony Potter was assaulted by an off duty police officer while working for the Forest Ridge Apartments. He was trying to get in to give his sister an insulin shot. Most recently, Warnie Patton died in a police car after being sprayed with pepper spray.

The Roundtable urged the department to establish stricter guidelines concerning the performance of off-duty officers working for private concerns while wearing police uniforms or acting in a law enforcement capacity. The police department is also urged to halt the use of inexperienced officers in socially volatile areas.

"The safety of this substance is questionable at best, state Rep. Larry Womble suggested, "but when it is used in the extreme manner this department uses it, it

becomes a very dangerous substance."

Womble went on to say that Winston-Salem is one of few cities still using the spray. "Where other cities made a choice not to use it, Winston-Salem chose to go ahead and use it," said Womble.

Spurgeon Griggs, a member of the Roundtable, said there is a pattern to the incidents. He noted that with the exception of Gearheart, most of the incidents were against African Americans, committed by white police officers. He acknowledged, however, that it is not the Roundtable's opinion that these acts are motivated by racism. The issue, he feels, should be brought to the attention of the public. The community must address the issue in order to restore public trust in the department.

DISPARITY

from page A1

current efforts to increase black participation in the highway bonanza and contend that North Carolina is doing all it can to give black contractors opportunities to make money off road projects.

Douglas Galyon, for example, believes the state is doing an admirable job of including black contractors in this lucrative industry. Galyon is the Greensboro representative on the state transportation board.

"The department has done an outstanding job in that area," Galyon said in a brief telephone interview. Galyon was asked if he had received any calls from people in his district regarding the participation of black contractors in state projects. He said he had not. Furthermore, he said he was not personally worried about the dispar-

ity. "The state has a very specific procedure" that ensures black firms get a shot at the work, Galyon said. He declined to describe that procedure, though. Instead, he referred The Chronicle to Bill Jones, DOT's public information officer.

According to Jones, the state has a specific goal it hopes to reach regarding minority participation on every single job it puts out for bids. That goal varies from job to job, Jones said.

According to Gibson, the level of minority participation expected is a "goal, not a quota." The goals are set by a goals committee, which takes into consideration such variables as the availability of certified contractors in the area where the road work is to be performed. A goal compliance committee, which includes the chief engineer and a representative from the state Office on Civil Rights, reviews contracts awarded to determine if the prime

contractor exerted a "good faith effort" to use black-owned sub-contractors. He added that the state does not keep statistics that indicate whether black firms are used primarily as prime contractors, responsible for the complete project, or sub-contractors, who do a portion of the project.

Each time the transportation board meets, members are given a report indicating whether minority participation goals are being met. When the board holds its November meeting in Raleigh this week, 10 contracts are expected to be awarded. One of the projects, providing a closed-loop signal system in Cumberland County, will be awarded to a black-owned company.

Although lawmakers have asked for a study, Gibson says he already has some idea why black contractors don't get more work. He says that part of the problem is that often black contractors aren't located in

the same geographical area as the location of the project. Black-owned firms, he said, tend to be smaller and less willing to put employees up in a hotel in order to complete an out-of-town project.

"The disparity study may determine that there aren't sufficient companies out there for the state to meet its goals on minority contracting," Gibson said. The report is scheduled to be presented during the short session of the General Assembly in the spring.

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