



Marshall Bass signs a copy of his book Tuesday evening.

Photo by Kevin Walker

A Full Life

Marshall Bass recalls highs, lows in autobiography

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

On the cover of his new autobiography, Marshall Brent Bass is shown standing at the top of a long stretch of highway and looking back at the road behind him. The picture is symbolic – used to show Bass' amazing journey from a child of the segregated South, to decorated military officer, to corporate trailblazer. But the book cover shows a nearly smooth, straight road, lined with beautiful trees and no traffic congestion or roadblocks in sight.

That has not been the road that Bass has traveled. His book, "The Path of My Pilgrimage," shows that his journey has not always been smooth. There have been potholes, head-on collisions – times when it was hard to keep steering.

Three years ago, Bass thought it was time to chronicle the peaks and valleys of his life, not for fame or vanity but for posterity's sake.

"I wanted to leave some documentation of who I am and what I did for my children and my grandchildren and my lineage to come," he said. If others find strength and wisdom in Bass' story, he says so be it.

A Goldsboro native, Bass grew up one of 11 children. His father passed away when Bass was a young boy. His strong-willed mother instilled God-fearing values in her children and the importance of education. Bass and all of his siblings graduated from college or trade school.

"There was no question that I was going to go to college," he said. "That was just the way we were brought up."

Bass graduated from the University of Maryland and was drafted into the Army, where he would spend nearly a quarter century.

"I can't think of anything I could have done that would have prepared me for life like the military," said Bass, who served in World War II, Korea and Viet-

nam. A good chunk of his book – which was written with the help of freelance writer William Turner – is devoted to his time in the military. He tells the stories of people he met as if the meetings took place yesterday. In one such story, Bass tells of meeting Sen. Strom Thurmond while Bass was commanding a combat team in the DMZ in Korea. Bass recalls Thurmond giving him a half-hearted handshake, and then Thurmond directed all of his questions to Bass' white intelligence officer.

Bass met Vice President Hubert Humphrey around that same time. It was a meeting that would change Bass' life. Bass flew from Korea to the United States on the vice president's plane. Somewhere along the way Humphrey told Bass that it was time for him to get out of the military and make some money.

"I think that he saw something in me," Bass said. The next year (1968), Bass was out of uniform and in a business suit. He came to Winston-Salem to work for R.J. Reynolds, becoming the company's first-ever black manager. He worked at the company for more than two decades, retiring in 1999 as senior vice president of RJR Nabisco.

In his book, he recalls that being the first was not always easy: Subordinates tried to belittle him, and many questioned if he belonged. On top of everything else, Bass said, he had to deal with the fact that white RJR managers enjoyed privileges outside of work in terms of housing loans and access that he did not.

"Those were the challenges for me. It was not the work," he said. Today, Bass' years of work and community involvement have made him well-known and respected in this city, so much so that on Tuesday during his first book signing at the Old Salem Visitors Center, a who's who list of local businesspeople and dignitaries showed up to support Bass.

These days, Bass says he is grateful for the simple things that many people take for granted. He is spry at 77. He plays tennis every Saturday and can run and swim like a man half his age.

He is happily married to the love of his life, Celeste, and often travels to Michigan and Califor-

nia to visit his two daughters and four grandchildren.

Bass also practices what his mother preached to him many years ago.

"She always told us 'to whom much is given much is required and to whom much more is given, much more is required.'"

A few years ago Bass founded the Marshall B. Bass Children's Fund, which provides grants to many agencies that help young people. The man who has worn the titles of officer and executive now is often called a philanthropist. It is a title that he doesn't mind, but Bass doesn't see himself in those terms.

"The term philanthropist is OK, but I like to say I share. I like to share what I have with other people and the reason is, I was taught that."

Marshall Bass will sign copies of his book on May 1 at the Carver Library at 3 p.m. and at Special Occasions on May 15 from noon to 2 p.m.

News Clips

Conrad-Shrader running for N.C. House

Debra Conrad-Shrader, a Forsyth County commissioner since 1994, announced her candidacy for the N.C. House District 74 at a news conference at the Forsyth County Board of Elections.

"Raleigh needs a representative of local government," Conrad-Shrader said during her remarks. "Legislators need to understand the impact that their decisions have on local governing bodies, and the ability of local governments to provide for the needs of the people."

"My 10 years as a county commissioner, my experiences in economic development, education, and my experience in conservative fiscal management of public funds will provide that representation and understanding."

Conrad-Shrader is a lifelong Republican.

She is a graduate of Wake Forest University, and is a listing and buyers agent for Graham & Boles Properties.

Republican candidates forum tonight

The Forsyth County Republican Women are hosting a congressional forum for 12th and 5th District candidates tonight. The moderator will be WXII reporter Angela Pellerano. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m., and the forum will begin promptly at 6. The forum will take place at the Ramada Inn on University Parkway. The event is free and open to all registered Republicans and independents.

British cars at Reynolda House

More than 150 British cars will grace the lawns of Reynolda

House and Historic Reynolda Village on Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The 19th annual British Car Gathering, cosponsored by the Triumph Club of the Carolinas and Reynolda Village, will feature Jaguars, MGs, Austin-Healey, Triumphs, Bentley, Rolls Royce, TVRs, and Aston Martins. The featured marque on the Reynolda House lawn will be a TR-6.

In addition to the gathering of cars, festival visitors can enjoy "wrench wracing" for all ages, beginning at 1:30 p.m.

Reynolda House will be open during its normal Sunday hours of 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the regular admission rates: Adults are \$8, seniors are \$7, students 18 and under and college students with an ID are free. A guided tour at 2 p.m. is included in the price of admission, or visitors are welcome to take a self-guided tour.

Actress to speak at Salem commencement

Actress Celia Weston will speak to Salem College's graduates May 22 at 10 a.m. in the May Dell, an outdoor amphitheater on Salem's campus.

Weston earned a bachelor of arts in art and psychology from Salem College, where she was president of the Pierrettes, the Salem College drama group, and



Weston

Dansalems, Salem's modern dance society.

After graduating from Salem, Weston studied theater arts at the N.C. School of the Arts and the Rose Bruford School in London.

Weston first gained recognition as an actress in her role as Jolene Hunnicut on the CBS sitcom "Alice." She has gone on to appear in dozens of films, television shows and plays, both on and off Broadway.

Old Salem Inc. receives \$30,000 grant

Old Salem Inc. has been

awarded a grant of \$30,000 by the Winston-Salem Foundation. The grant will be used to help fund the Single Brothers' Garden Project.

Funds for this grant were made available from the Anne Hanes Willis Fund.

The Single Brothers Garden will be one of the largest garden restoration projects in America. The gardens will lie in the area formerly occupied by the former Old Salem Visitor Center and will include approximately 38,000 square feet of garden beds set on an enormous, 12 terrace garden. The project is expected to be completed in fall 2004.

"The success of the Single Brothers' Garden represents what is best in our community – people working together to achieve great things," said Keyes Williamson, director of horticulture for Old Salem. "The garden combines the support of local garden clubs, individuals, and the Winston-Salem Foundation. Each is a key player, contributing to the eventual success of what is the most exciting landscape restoration project in a generation."

AARP director to speak at United Metropolitan Baptist Church

Bob Jackson, N.C. AARP director, and Helen Salvage, N.C. AARP advocacy director, will speak and answer questions on the new Medicare prescription-drug benefits today at United Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church, 450 Metropolitan Drive.

The program – sponsored by Senior Services Inc., AARP North Carolina and the Forsyth County AARP – will be held from 10 a.m. to noon.

State Reps. Larry Womble and Earline Parmon will also attend.

NAACP to hold monthly meeting

The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County NAACP will hold its monthly meeting April 27 at 7 p.m. on the second floor of the Winston Mutual Building, 1225 E. Fifth Street. The focus of the meeting will be Community Foot Patrol.

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Sharon Gentry, Patient Navigator

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Jill Dull, Cancer Patient

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Film legends expected for RiverRun Film Fest

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

The RiverRun International Film Festival has announced that Lucy Cabarga will be a "guest of honor" at the festival, which kicks off tonight in Winston-Salem. Cabarga, one of Mexico's most influential film-industry veterans, will also participate in an open forum about filmmaking in Mexico at 11 a.m. on Saturday at the Recording Stage at the N.C. School of the Arts (NCSA) School of Filmmaking.



Spacek

Cabarga has been involved with the film and television industry in Mexico for 40 years. For 25 years, Cabarga served as film commissioner for Cuernavaca, a historic city in the Mexican state of Morelos. Since 1998 she has been the Morelos general director of

promotion of film and television.

RiverRun has also announced that Academy Award-winning actress Sissy Spacek will be on hand for part of the festival. Spacek, who won an Oscar for her role in

"Coal Miner's Daughter," will attend the Krispy Kreme Premiere and Gala on Friday. This year's premiere, "Laws of Attraction," will be screened at 7 p.m. at the Stevens Center. The gala will follow the premiere at the nearby Millennium Center. Spacek's husband, art director Jack

Fisk, is also expected to attend. RiverRun is screening more than 110 new and independent dramatic, documentary, short, student and animated films during the four-day festival. For ticket information, and titles and locations, visit www.river-runfilm.com or call 724-1502.