

# King

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downtown's gentrification. In the late 1990s, King's was one of several black-owned downtown retailers along Trade and Fifth streets. She is the only one still in business today.

She credits her success and longevity to loyal customers who spread the word about her business; family members who help out at the shop when needed; and a great landlord.

"My customers that I had 31 years ago are the same customers I have now," King said. "A lot of my older customers have gotten sick or have died, but even in their death, (my clothes were used to bury) them. I have repeat customers. Everyone that has shopped from me keeps coming back."

Retail is in King's blood. When was 12, she started working for her father, J.C. Bess, at Harding's Shine Parlor. Then, her brother, Melrose Hall, opened up a woman's boutique, Di-



Photo by Chanel Davis

Mels, right beside her father's shop on Patterson Avenue.

When Melrose decided to stop selling clothes, King decided to take over the business.

"I got started watching him and watching my dad," the 64-year-old said.

She searches sedulously for the items she carries. Her customers have come to expect one-of-a-kind, eye-turning outfits.

"I shop hard and long for my suits and my hats," King said. "I have the

accessories to match the suit so everything matches."

Twana Wellman-Roebuck, the executive director of the anti-poverty agency Experiment in Self-Reliance (ESR), has been a loyal customer since the 1980s.

"What keeps me coming back is the professionalism. (King) cares about me as a customer, and I like for my clothes to fit properly," Wellman-Roebuck said. "She knows that I have a number of

public events coming up, and I can call her in advance and she will dress me according to the audience."

King plans to continue to make the women of Winston-Salem feel their best.

"I'm going to keep on doing what I've been doing, because if it isn't broke, don't fix it," she said. "As long as I can get in here, get my stuff, go to the shows and take care of my customers, I will be fine."

# W-S Mutual open house

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

City officials will hold a ribbon cutting and open house Friday, July 11 for the city offices that have been relocated to the Winston Mutual Building at 1225 E. Fifth St. The ribbon cutting will be at 10 a.m., followed immediately by an open house. The public is invited.

The Police Department's Community Resources Unit is on the second floor. The unit conducts various crime prevention and community relations activities, including crime prevention education, organization of neighborhood watch groups, residential and business security inspections, the Citizens' Police Academy and appearances of McGruff, the Crime fighting dog. The unit can be reached by calling 773-7835 or sending an email to [communityresourceunit@wspd.org](mailto:communityresourceunit@wspd.org).

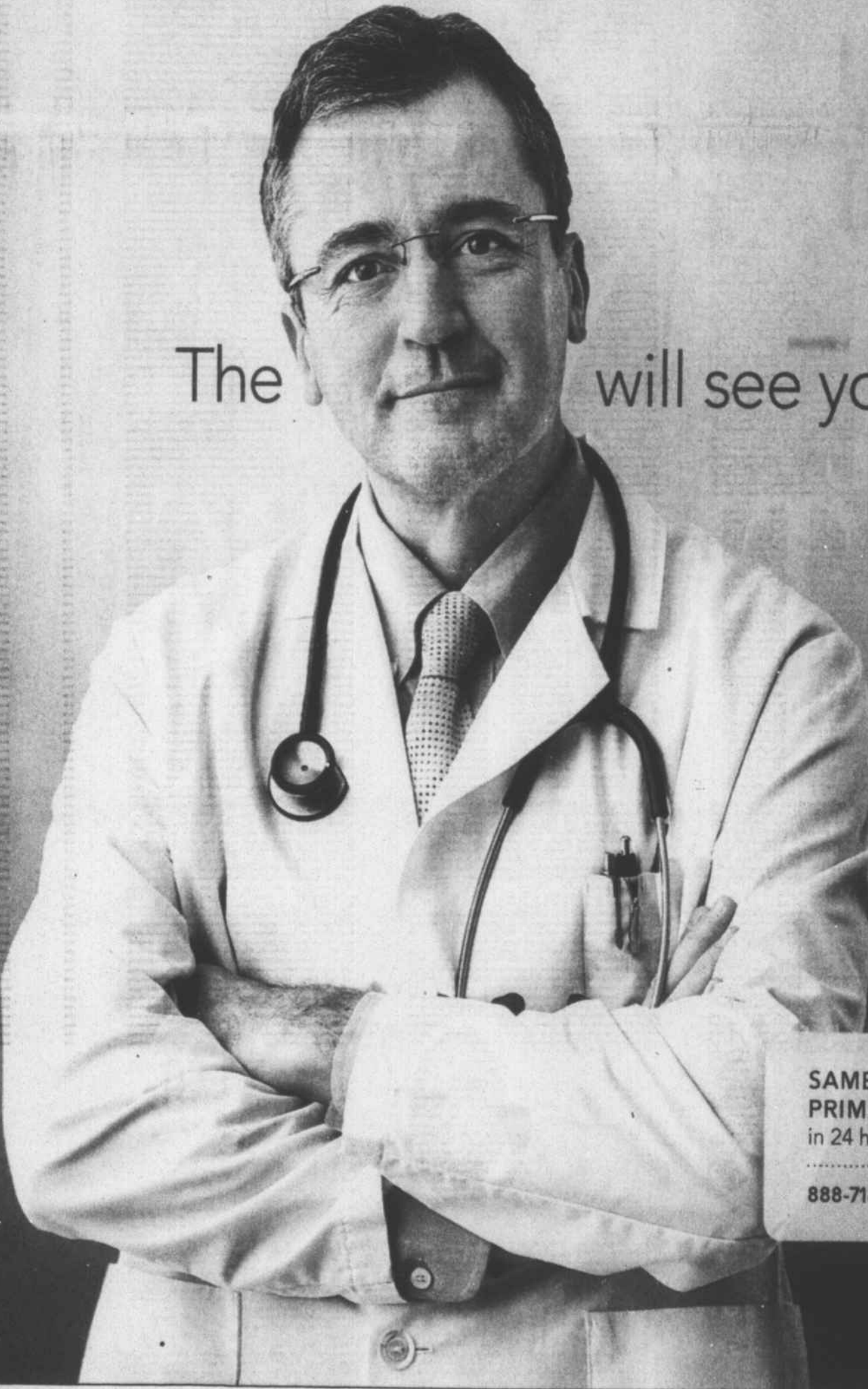


The building's third and fourth floors house the city's engineering field offices, which had to relocate from the City Yard to make room for the Salem Creek Connector road project. They are expected to be in the building for at least two and a half years.

The ribbon cutting will celebrate the city's investment in the Winston Mutual Building, which has been a landmark in East Winston since its completion in 1969 to house the Winston Mutual Life Insurance Co. The company was founded in 1906 to provide insurance and home mortgage products to the African-American community.

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