

2nd annual parade, 10th cookout honoring community legend draws more than 2,000

BY FELECIA PIGGOTT-LONG, PH.D.
FOR THE CHRONICLE

In spite of the heat, more than 2,000 supporters of the second annual Mo Lucas Father's Day Parade and the 10th annual Cookout Festival gathered on Sunday, June 21.

The parade began at the Winston Mutual Building on Fifth Street at 4 p.m.

The Yettes and the Boss Drummers looked like a royal army dressed in purple and white as they crested the hill to march down Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. Three bands brought the beat—The Mo Lucas Boss Drummers, The Winston-Salem High Steppers and the Carolina Stars. The Foundation Drummers and dancers numbered more than 170.

Other participants included The Nation of Islam, the Winston-Salem Fire Department, Winston-Salem Indians Cheerleaders, the Packer Cheerleaders, the Terror Squad motorcycle club, Reve Lip Models and the Galaxy Elite Cheerleaders.

Honoree Moses "Mo" Lucas rode in a black Dodge Charger driven by former Sheriff James Sims. Families stood on the sides of the street and yelled, "Anything for Mr. Mo Lucas!" "We Love You Mr. Lucas!" "Thank you, Mr. Lucas!" "We Love You, Baby!" "You the Father of Winston-Salem!"

Many of the men gathered in front of Lucas just to shake his hand and to offer him well wishes. Others danced and performed in his honor. He still remembered many of their names.

The purpose of the gathering is to honor

Lucas, 88, a former staff member of the YMCA during the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, who continued to mentor youth in the community.

The parade advanced down Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and up File Street to the Rupert Bell Park. Micheal Terry, the founder of the Mo Lucas Community Foundation, organized the parade and the cookout festival.

"This event is usually held at Bloom Park; however, since a wetland area is being built at Bloom, we held the celebration at Rupert Bell Park. I am glad so many people came out to honor Mo Lucas. This celebration is a badge of honor for him. We honor him while he is here. He loves the children," Terry said. "He helped to raise more than half of the people who are out here today. He certainly kept me out of a lot of trouble when I was growing up in Piedmont Circle."

Mo Lucas was escorted to the stage and seated in a special chair.

"Today is Father's Day. I have been a father to so many. Some of you call me Daddy. Some of you call me Pops. I am 88 years old, and I am blessed," Lucas said.

"I spent 63 years of my life serving children at the YMCA. When I retired from the U.S. Army, I got a job at the Y. It makes me feel good because many of them came to see me at the Y. I continued to volunteer because I love young people," Lucas said.

Terry was in the Mo Lucas Step Team when he was 14 to 16 years old. He recalls that Lucas designed more than 100 original

steps himself for the team to perform. Some of the steps were called "The Funky Step," "The Shing," "The CB" and "The DT." The step team won many awards over the years. After college graduation, Terry returned to assist Lucas with the step team, the dancers and the drummers. He wanted to help keep Lucas' vision alive.

Jerry Gilmore, a member of the parade committee, stood in awe at the large crowd.

"Mr. Lucas is a legend in his own time. He has mentored so many young men, two and three generations at the YMCA. He would give of his time, talent and his own finances while mentoring kids," Gilmore said. "This is part of what is missing now. There is no carry-over to help guide and mold minds."

Mentor Antonio Stevenson praised Lucas for his contributions and challenged the young people and leaders to follow Lucas' lead.

"I met Mo Lucas when I was 9. When I saw Mo Lucas, his pants were up, and he was carrying himself like a man. As a mentor, I offer a challenge to all of you over the age of 30. This is your chance to save a life. You owe it to yourself to save a life. Mr. Lucas helped us. You have to pay it back — pay it forward," Stevenson said.

Arnita Miles from the National Black Theatre Festival wished a Happy Father's Day to all of the men.

"We salute Mo Lucas for all he has done for the community of Winston-Salem. ... Again, Happy Father's Day," Miles said.



Mo Lucas looks at the crowd as he is honored on Father's Day.

Photo by Felicia P. Long

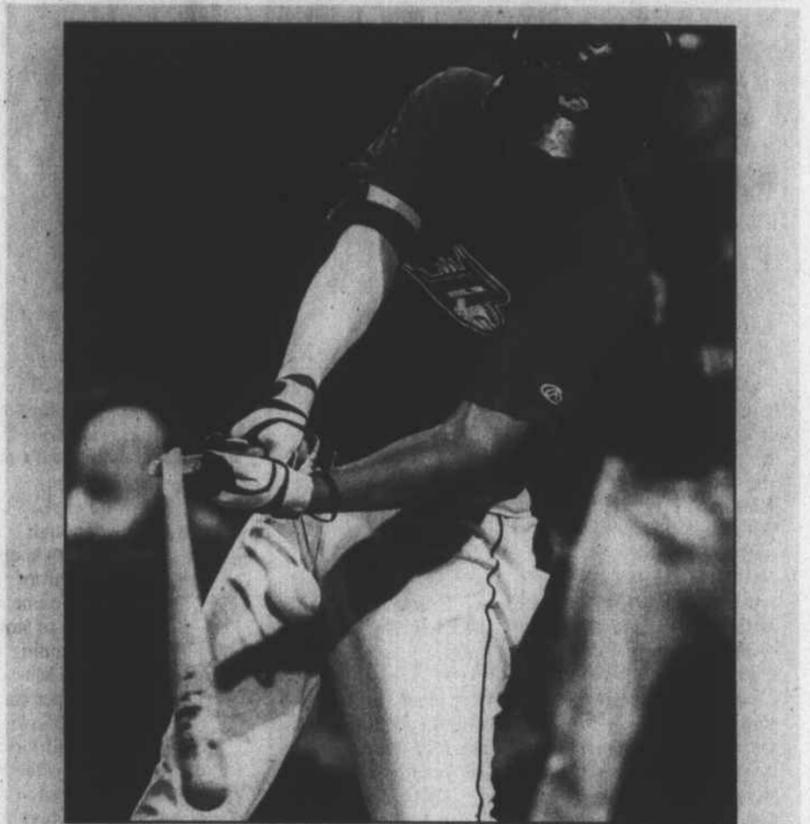


Photo by Erin Mizelle for the Winston-Salem Chronicle

Split decision

Winston-Salem's T.J. Williams breaks the bat during the seventh inning stretch of the Dash's double-header finale against the Salem Red Sox at BB&T Ballpark in downtown Winston-Salem on Saturday, June 20.

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