

## Championship fever grips area

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to see it live and in living color.

"It was unbelievable," she said. "We were high fiving each other and it was exciting."

Mason said she won't be going to Philadelphia for the NFC championship game. "They are calling for temperatures to be in the teens and the Philadelphia fans are awful," she said. "They were awful to us here and I can imagine how they will be in that environment."

But don't think this PSL holder won't be cheering the Panthers to the Super Bowl. Mason said she was preparing chicken wings and dip for Sunday night's big game.

"I'm getting nervous already," Mason said. "But this is way overdue and we deserve everything that we're getting right now."

Another Carolina fan, Kenneth Strong, said the Panthers run into the playoffs has sparked an excitement in Charlotte. The Charlotte native said he plans to watch the game at home. Why?

"I like both teams," Strong said. "It doesn't matter to me who wins. But if I were going to Philly I would cheer for the Panthers. I would just have to take my gun."

But many fans plan to watch the game at one of Charlotte's many sports bars. Champions Sports Bar in the Marriott in uptown is a haven for Panthers fans on game day. The bar is so popular, there is often a two-hour wait for tables about an hour before kick-off.

Some nightclubs, like Mingles, a popular hangout for young black professionals, have opened early to show the game. Mingles opened for the divisional playoff game against St. Louis. There was no word early this week about a Sunday night playoff party.

Grand Central Deli and Spirits on North Tryon Street shows playoff games on eight TVs in its uptown restaurant.

But what about tickets to Sunday's game? Good luck finding them. The only place fans can purchase tickets for Sunday's game is through Ticketmaster, which sold out Tuesday.

## Photographer captured black life in Charlotte

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appears regularly in The Post. "We got to know each other and he told me the ins and outs on what to do and what not to do."

"I remember him as willing to help those coming into photography as a profession," said photographer Frank Williams. "As we continued our careers, we'd give him the respect by giving him the shots he wanted and then we'd scramble to get our shots."

Mr. Peeler's influence on photography reached beyond Charlotte. In addition to the portrait studio the Gaston County native owned in northwest Charlotte, Mr. Peeler was an eyewitness to the Civil Rights Movement as a photographer, which was chronicled a WTVI documentary on civil rights-era photography. A West Charlotte High School and Johnson C. Smith University graduate, his work reached thousands of readers weekly, and those photos are a testament to his determination.

"What he did, he did to perfection and did it methodically," Ferguson said. "He had a lot of knowledge and when you know what you're doing, you don't have to struggle."

Mr. Peeler is survived by his wife of 49 years, Ida Willis Peeler; daughter Latrelle P. McAllister; sister Addie Peeler of Charlotte and brothers Oliver Peeler of Stockton, Calif., and William Peeler of Greensboro.

## Wooing African American voters critical to Democratic candidates' S.C. success

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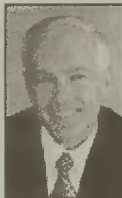
"I just sit back and watch their debates," she said. "They have been so cut-throat."

According to most polls, Dean is the Democrat to beat in Iowa,

which kick off the campaign season next week, followed by New Hampshire. However, in South Carolina, the former Vermont governor is struggling against southerners like U.S. Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina and retired Army Gen. Wesley Clark. Black candidate Al Sharpton of New York and Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois are stumping to woo African Americans, who could make up about half the state's registered Democrats.



Edwards



Clark



Sharpton



Braun

here. Richard Gephardt got a key endorsement in South Carolina. Gephardt got (U.S. Rep.) Jim Clyburn's endorsement. Clyburn's endorsement carries a lot of weight in the African American community and in the community at large.

"Edwards and Clark could do good here. Edwards is from this area and Clark is ex-military. John Kerry never caught fire in South Carolina. And Dean has to keep up his momentum."

Registered Democrat Debra Johnson is leaning toward Edwards, who was born in South Carolina.

"I like John Edwards. I like his policies," she said. "I'm not too happy about his (medical) insurance policies. I'd go with Edwards over Howard Dean."

According to Huffman, Edwards, who is retiring from the Senate after one term, is picking up steam.

"Edwards is improving," he said. "He has been honing his message. His messages have gotten better. He's added real policy issues to his speeches. He doesn't say 'Bush is bad' anymore. He says 'Bush is bad but this is what I can do for you.' He has begun to answer criticisms about his lack of experience in Washington. He has responded with 'Do you want someone who has done nothing but politic in Washington.' If Clark can be a candidate with no experience in politics, then Edwards can be a candidate."

Edwards' candidacy has convinced one habitual non-voting Democrat to go to the polls. An 80-year-old black man who didn't want his name revealed says he has voted only once in his life.

"But I think I may vote this time. If I vote I will vote for John Edwards. I like him. Bush will be hard to beat, but I believe it can be done. The blacks have to vote the right way."

Then there's the voter turnout — or the lack thereof.

One black woman who wanted to stay anonymous says she doesn't vote at all.

"I don't vote because I don't

believe in giving people jurisdiction over me," she said.

"The African American community is such a large part of the Democratic Party," Huffman said. "The main problem is black turnout. The big problem is convincing the blacks in South Carolina you have to go to the polls. The impact of blacks is directly related to turnout."

"A vote not cast is not just a vote for the opponent, but a vote for the irrelevancy of your community. If turnout is low, politicians will not pay attention to you. That goes

across the board for any community."

At any rate, the primary will be hard-fought.

"Who wins in South Carolina will depend on how well the candidates will tailor their messages and how much time they spend in South Carolina," Huffman said. "The Democratic election is exciting. A candidate doesn't have to win the election to pick up some of the delegates from each state. So even if you don't win but finish strong you can make an impact on the platform at the convention."

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