

**B**

Section

**LIFE**

**Neighbors share their historic story**

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH—Except for the piano lessons she has taught for 56 years, Frances Olivette Massenburg McGill spends most days at home, relaxing. She has earned it. McGill, 75, has held more than 30 different jobs, sometimes two or three at one time.

She raised six children, "five good-looking boys and one beautiful girl." She is a college graduate, a semi-retired neighborhood den mother, a former crossing guard and a local television personality.

McGill, born to an Anguillian mother and adopted by a prominent African-American barber and his wife, has done things most people don't associate with a black woman born in 1930.

She worked. She married and divorced, married, divorced and did it again. She managed her own finances and bought her own home.

"In this life, I tried to do things that would challenge my mind," McGill said. "I did everything I could that was decent."

McGill's story is just one of 20 that St. Augustine's College sociology students collected this summer when they interviewed some of the College Park Idlewild community's oldest residents.

The interviews are part of a broader effort to gather the stories, pictures and records that tell the story of a once-stable but now troubled East Raleigh community founded by freed slaves.

In 1867, St. Augustine's College, an institution for black teachers, was built. Around it, the communities known at times as Lincoln Park, College Park and Idlewild grew. By the early part of the 20th century, the neighborhood was home to black teachers, carpenters, doctors, maids, gardeners, shopkeepers, morticians and porters.

These communities had their own bakery, several full-fledged grocery stores and garden and social clubs. They were among the places for working and upper-class blacks to live inside the city.

Today, community meetings are usually punctuated with talk about problems with prostitution and drugs.

"This area, it has a rich, rich history," said Octavia Rainey, a community gadfly and chairwoman of the North East Citizens' Advisory Council. "Really, people think I'm crazy when they hear me say I have a gold mine. We do have our problems. But this neighborhood has a gold mine. We have our story."

An effort to have the community declared an historic area went nowhere. When the community's unofficial historian, Ella Clarke, died, Rainey inherited her effort to collect College Park Idlewild's story.

Then, Rainey got a call from Derek Greenfield.

Greenfield is a sociology professor at St. Aug's. He thought gathering oral histories would give students an opportunity to explore the "symbiotic relationship" between the college and the community. And he wanted his students to learn something about themselves.

"I want them to see that learning is not just something that happens within four walls," Greenfield said. "I want (students) to realize that they can be producers and contributors to knowledge."

So Greenfield sent his students out into the neighborhood to talk with women such as McGill and Sadie Harris, 81.

Please see RESIDENTS/2B

**Shoe ya' right**

Big feet no longer a barrier in women's footwear

By Cherie F. Hodges  
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Tamara Richardson-Williams' frustration in finding dress shoes for her size 12 feet led her to launch the Taceri line of women's footwear. PHOTO/TAMARA RICHARDSON

Please see BIG FEET/2B

**Fla. 'Beach Lady' dies at age 70**

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AMERICAN BEACH, Fla.—MaVynne Betsch, known as the "Beach Lady," who worked to preserve the black community of American Beach, died Sept. 5 at her home.

She was 70. Betsch, known for her distinctive yards-long hair and her foot-long fingernails, had cancer, according to her sister, Johnetta Betsch Cole, president of Bennett College in Greensboro.

There will be a gathering to celebrate her life in about a month at American Beach, her sister said. At Betsch's request, she will be cremated.

According to "An American Beach for African Americans," a book by Marsha Dean Phelts, Betsch was the great-granddaughter of A.L. Lewis, one of the founders of Afro-American Life Insurance Co., and one of the founders of American Beach, a historically black beach. She is also a descendent of Zephaniah Kingsley,

a plantation owner on Amelia Island, and his wife, Anna Kingsley.

Betsch graduated from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and went on to sing opera in Germany, Phelts' book said.

Betsch amended her first name of Marvynne, to remove the "R" as a protest to Ronald Reagan's election as president, said Russ Rymer, in his book, "American Beach: A Saga of Race Wealth and Memory."

But her name was still pronounced as "Mar-veen."

**Research key to cardiovascular advances**

By David D. Dawson  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

David Banks of Shelby has a new appreciation for his life and heart. He can't stop saying how blessed he is to still be on this earth, able to breathe and to have a beating heart.

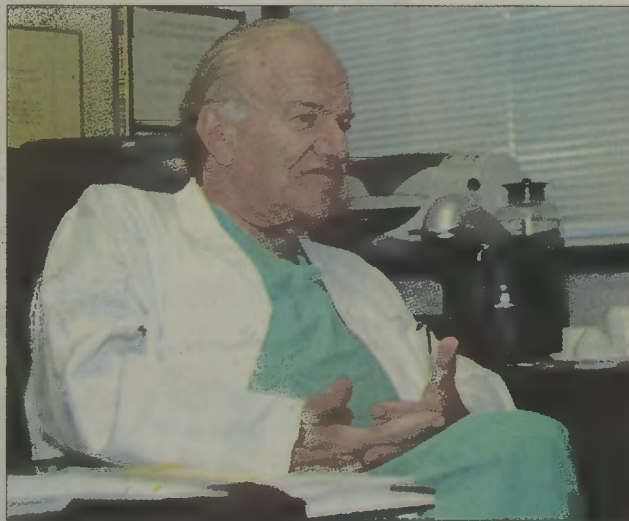
That's because Banks had surgery to receive a pacemaker for his weak heart last January at Carolinas Medical Center's Sanger Clinic. He quickly touts the Heineman Medical Research Center Inc. in Charlotte for the successful surgery.

"They are first class physicians. I give them the highest praise. Charlotte is very lucky to have them, instead of going half across the state for the things they do there. They are a God send to humanity," said Banks.

HMR is a nonprofit organization established in 1940, which is named after Charlotte native Dannie Heineman, a world-renowned industrialist. Heineman and Drs. Paul Sanger and Oscar Miller created HMR to provide a medical library for Charlotte physicians. Now, it operates medical education and research facilities specializing in diseases of the heart, lungs and pulmonary systems.

For the past 40 years, HMR has been led by Dr. Francis Robiscek.

"We hope to contribute in a modest way to the general knowledge and progress of science, but our primary goal is to improve the quality of medicine locally," he said. "Charlotte demands that we produce clinical results equal to that of any academic environment for practical day-by-day clinical



Dr. Francis Robiscek directs Heineman Medical Research Center, one of the region's top cardiovascular research facilities. PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

work. By doing so, we fill a need recognized more than 40 years ago."

HMR has explored heart preservation, heart transplantation and is currently researching Angiogenesis. Angiogenesis involves growing new arteries around diseased or collapsed ones in the body. It is a treatment that could be an alternative to catheterization, bypass and open-heart surgery.

Research on angiogenesis has been conducted worldwide for several years. However, HMR's research has been encouraging enough to form a committee to raise funds to run its laboratory. The staff anticipates it will take three to five years of study and research to complete their work.

Their goal is to make angiogenesis available to the medical community and Charlotte-area patients.

HMR is the only nonprofit heart research center between Winston-Salem and Tennessee. Since the center is not attached to any university like Wake Forest's Bowman Gray, it depends on private contributions from the Charlotte community. The HMR plans to raise \$100,000 on Oct. 8 to help fund the expenses for the angiogenesis laboratory.

Banks, 76, was excited when Robiscek asked if he could help with the fundraiser events. Banks knows what this research means for him and other African-Americans. Heart disease is the number one killer of blacks, claim-

See CARDIOVASCULAR/2B



**Overweight, high blood pressure, at greater risk**

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MILWAUKEE—If you are overweight, new research shows how important it is to control your blood pressure besides trying to lose those extra pounds.

Scientists studying nearly 250,000 people in France found that only overweight people who also had high blood pressure were at significantly greater risk of dying of heart-related problems than normal-weight people. Overweight people with normal blood pressure faced no increased risk.

This doesn't mean that extra pounds aren't dangerous, because overweight people are more likely to develop blood pressure problems.

But it does for the first time show that blood pressure may be an important "mediator" or mechanism by which excess weight can cause heart problems, said one expert who reviewed the work, Dr. Frank Hu, an associate professor at the Harvard School of Public Health.

"This novel finding deserves careful consideration," he wrote in an editorial accompanying the findings of the study, published Tuesday in Hypertension: Journal of the American Heart Association.

Health experts have long agreed that obesity raises the risk of dying, but they argue about how dangerous it is to be merely overweight. A controversial study earlier this year by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concluded that people who were overweight but not obese might even be less likely to die than those who are thinner.

The new study found that overweight people have a greater risk of dying in general as well as from cardiovascular causes. But when researchers took into account things that raise heart risks, like high cholesterol, diabetes and high blood pressure (hypertension), only high blood pressure made a difference in the risk of dying.

"This study shows that hypertension is most important and is extremely common among people who are overweight and obese," Hu said.

The new study was led by Dr. Frederique Thomas at the Medical School of Nancy and involved 139,562 men and 104,236 women who had routine health checkups at a clinic in Paris from 1972 to 1988. The average age for men was 43 and for women, 41.

Forty-two percent of the men and 21 percent of women were overweight, but the study included relatively few people who were obese, so researchers made no conclusions about that group.

During an average of 14 years of follow-up, 2,949 men and 929 women died from cardiovascular disease.

Overweight people with high blood pressure had twice the risk of dying of a heart attack or stroke than overweight people with normal blood pressure. Those who had high blood pressure plus other problems like diabetes had even greater risk.

In the study, half of overweight people had high blood pressure, and Hu said many more likely would develop it in later years. Extra pounds do this in a number of ways — by raising insulin production, causing kidney prob-

Please see OBESITY/3B