



STAFF PHOTO BY LYNN CARLSON

104-YEAR-OLD Mina Mintz serves a piece of her birthday cake to Joyce Hinkle, activities assistant at Autumn Care. The facility's oldest resident can't hear or see well, but remains mentally alert and is quick to speak her mind.

MINA MINTZ TURNS 104

Autumn Care's Oldest Resident Takes The Attention In Stride

BY LYNN CARLSON

Mina Mintz sits nonchalantly in her wheelchair, wearing an orange Trustworthy Hardware cap and sipping a cup of coffee.

If it weren't for all the cameras and the cake and the presents—if you just happened upon Miss Mintz sitting in the solarium on any other day—you'd guess her age at maybe 75 or 80. Certainly not 104.

But today there are reporters, two from newspapers and one from television, buzzing around her chair. Relatives are pressing gifts into her hands and trying to outfit her with some sort of amplification device, which she complains isn't doing a thing to separate the voices speaking to her from all the other noise in the room.

Joyce Hinkle, the activities assistant at Autumn Care, the Shallotte tidy, modern nursing home where Miss Mintz lives, tries to bring organization to the party. "Mina, why don't you cut your birthday cake?" she shouts.

"Honey, I don't want any," Miss Mintz replies.

"Well, why don't you cut it so your guests can have some?" Hinkle urges.

"I'm scared I'll mess it up," Miss Mintz argues. Hinkle takes Miss Mintz's hand gently into hers and together they cut the cake amid a hail of flashbulbs and film-advance sounds.

As the guests begin to sing "Happy Birthday to you..." Mina Mintz covers her mouth and lowers her eyes, moved at the display of affection. It's a rare moment, explains

her niece Jean Smith. Miss Mintz is known as a pretty tough old gal.

On Oct. 28, 1889, when Mina Mintz was born near Grissetown, Benjamin Harrison was president. It was the year the United States declared Oklahoma open to white settlement, the year of the great Johnstown, Pennsylvania flood that killed 2,200 people.

"It's amazing when you think of all the things that have happened in history in the course of her life," one party-goer remarked as the presents were being opened.

Miss Mintz unwrapped a pair of slacks, then a container of dusting powder. Then a third present. "What is it?" she asked no one in particular.

"It's peppermint candy, Mina!" someone shouted as the birthday girl broke into a grin. It was candy and

two cans of Railroad Mills snuff. "She loves her hard candy," explained Teresa Babson, office manager at Autumn Care.

What's a little sugar, or tobacco, or even a little nip now and again when you've made it 104, anyway?

The television reporter asks Miss Mintz's advice for living a long life. "Just love ever'body," she says, quickly asking, "Is that all right?"

But Joyce Hinkle winks and adds, "Sometimes she'll tell you it's because she never got married—and because she has a little brandy every day."

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Brunswick County Ties To UNC Date To University's Founding

While a Davie Poplar seedling planted at Shallotte Middle School Monday forges a new Brunswick County link to the University of North Carolina, the earliest local ties date back to the university's founding and its first major endowment.

On Dec. 18, 1789, the same day that the North Carolina General Assembly passed an act to raise a building fund for the University, General Benjamin Smith, a trustee and state representative, presented the university its first major endowment, warrants for 20,000 acres of land in Tennessee, wrote historian William S. Powell in *The First State University*.

He had been awarded the lands in recognition of his war service. Smith had served as aide-de-camp to General George Washington during the American Revolution, achieving the rank of brigadier general.

Owner at one time of Orton and Blue Banks Plantations and Bald Head (Smith) Island and with Smithville (now Southport) his namesake, Smith was among Brunswick County's most prosperous and influential residents. He died in 1826 impoverished, however, having lost the extensive assets he once posted as security on a loan on which a business associate defaulted.

Smith represented Brunswick County in both the House of Commons and the Senate between 1783 and 1810, and served as governor from December 1810 to December

1811. He was a strong proponent of public schooling. His pleas fell on the deaf ears in a Nov. 11, 1811, address to the legislature, though, in which he advocated that "...a certain degree of education should be placed within the reach of every child in the state..."

He was a member of the University Board of Trustees from 1789 until 1824 and was its president in 1810.

According to Lawrence Lee's *A History Of Brunswick County*, for several unspecified years Smith also served as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Masons of North Carolina.

Sale of the Tennessee lands constituted the university's antebellum endowment, but the proceeds didn't come easily. The gift of the land warrants embroiled the university in decades of litigation involving the state of Tennessee and the federal government over land ownership.

"Some of the lands had also been deeded by the new federal government to the Cherokee and Chickasaw Indians, even as the State of North Carolina and its new university protested," wrote university chronicler William D. Snider in his *Light On The Hill*.

Well after Smith's death the university erected a building in his memory. Designed by distinguished architect Alexander Jackson Davis of New York and completed in 1851, Smith Building was noted for its classical beauty.

It served first as an assembly hall

and ballroom, while also housing all 3,600 volumes of the university's minuscule library in a basement reading room. According to Snider, the hall was remembered for its often lavish dances, but later housed the libraries of the university's two debating societies as well. It remained the university's library through 1906.

During the occupation of the campus by Union troops during the War Between the States, both President Kemp Battle and university supporter Cornelia Phillips Spencer reported that federal cavalry stabled their horses in Smith Hall.

In later years various portions of the building also saw use as a chemistry lab, law classrooms and men's shower room. And, in 1924, Smith Building was remodeled in classical Greek style as a theater for the Carolina Playmakers.

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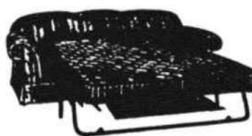
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