

Reflexions on AC Phoenix History

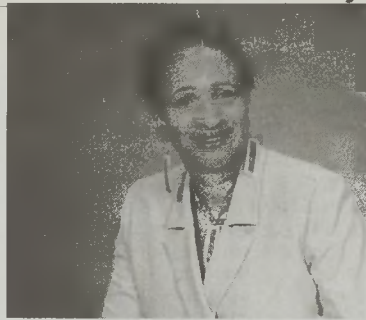
By Sam Davis

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I told him about my plans and we agreed on a contract. He would sell advertising for the newspaper on a commission basis, and I, along with staff member Malcolm Pharr, would supply all of the editorial information. So in September of 1982, the News Argus produced the publication. It was a rousing success and some 10,000 copies were distributed at the Winston-Salem State-North Carolina A&T football game at Groves Stadium.

The partnership between the News Argus and Sumler lasted only about a year however. That's when he approached me about the possibility of starting a newspaper. It would be called the AC Phoenix and Sumler would sell the advertising and I would handle the editorial piece, along with the layout and production work. Thus, in September of 1983 the AC Phoenix rolled out its first edition. I worked with the AC Phoenix for approximately two years on a full-time basis before leaving. With that experience behind me, I have enjoyed a lot of high points in my career. I became the first full-time sports reporter at the Winston-Salem Chronicle in 1984. While at the Chronicle I also had the pleasure of working with some outstanding reporters and editors. I also have won many journalism awards, including Best Sports Page, Best Sports Writing and Best Sports Column in both the National Newspaper Publishers Association and also the North Carolina Press Association. I left the Chronicle in February 1985 to join the staff of the Twin City Sentinel. When it closed, approximately two months later, I became the first full-time African American sportswriter.

Since then I have gone on to several other positions within the field of journalism and have been fortunate enough to win many other awards for my writing. In 2005 I launched Triad Sports Weekly. The paper has gone through its share of ups and downs, but continues to be published today. I have watched as the AC Phoenix has stood the test of time. I have maintained a close relationship with Rodney over the years and I am proud of the fact that I was one of the newspapers founders.



Paula McCoy

Writer From Our Past

Estranged and Feeling Unloved?

By Paula McCoy

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Those holidays can be tough for some, particularly if you are alone or if you are separated from family - you know - estranged. Estrangement is alienation and separation resulting from hostility. Some call it not being on speaking terms. It seems harder when it's a family member. Thanksgiving and Christmas are generally and traditionally times for celebrating good cheer, good fellowship and good food with family and friends. When this is not the case, these can be miserable times with feelings of loneliness, sadness, frustration, anger and fear. It kind of makes you want to sleep from Thanksgiving to New Years, right?

I know many people who live their lives this way. Not relating to family, going years without speaking to brother, sister or even mother. I hear story after story of events that happened 5, 10 and even 20 years ago and we're still holding on to it. Sometimes we don't even know what it was that we were mad about. We pull others into the drama too; family against family. How crazy is that! The children don't even know the story, they're just caught up in it, taught to hate. It's the same madness that causes one race to hate another -- something happened two hundred years ago -- you know the story! Wake up and cheer up! Resolve this year to not spend another holiday or any day without being with the ones you really love. Come this Thanksgiving and Christmas, you don't have to go through this if you take some advice. First of all, it's only as bad as you allow it to be. Take charge of your life. Be the engine, not the caboose. If you value the relationship and it's worth saving, make the first move toward reconciliation. Rebuilding relationships requires a great deal of emotional work and willingness. Ask yourself, is being right worth it? It may not be as easy as it sounds but how committed are you to your own happiness. And even if that doesn't work, you have been responsible. Consider that there may be some things out of your control. As much as we want to, we can't change anyone but ourselves. Forgive those that hurt you; forgiveness is an attribute of the strong. Don't spend any time rehashing events from the past. Finally if all of your effort does not bring about reconciliation, move on. Life is meant to be lived. And there are others out there who would love to be loved by you.

Writer From Our Past

I Have Never Been A Journalist

By Malcom Pharr

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be objective. I wrote to entertain and watch the words flow. I am subjective by choice and chosen by grace.

The AC Phoenix is as much a part of me today as it was thirty years ago. The career path I've chosen; the friends I have gravitated towards and even the soul mate I was fortunate enough to marry all have a connection to The News Argus and The AC Phoenix.

Rodney J. Sumler, Sam Davis and myself probably have three different, but yet similar accounts of how the AC Phoenix came to be.

Sam Davis and I were students at Winston-Salem State University. Sam was a P.E. major from Winston-Salem. He had been a member of a Division III football program before returning to Winston-Salem State University to finish up his degree. I never knew why Sam did not attempt to play football at W.S.S.U, I never asked either. I knew, and know, that he loves the game.

I was recruited to play basketball at Winston-Salem state University in 1978. I chose to go to a small two-year school in Parkersburg, West Virginia called Ohio Valley College. My father was a former football and baseball player at W.S.S.U. (Teacher's College) in the 1950's. He was not happy about that decision. Somewhere between O.V.C and Winston-Salem I lost the desire to compete.

Sam and I were from different worlds. What we did have in common was our love for the games (football and basketball) and how to play a part without physically playing. We both wound up being a part of the News Argus staff at W.S.S.U. Most of the work was put in by Sam, a hand full of underclassmen and myself. Marilyn Roseboro was the advisor at the time.

Sam and I had a conversation at the beginning of the 1983 school year. It involved doing a CIAA Football Preview. I am not sure what Rodney and Sam discussed prior to our conversation. I also did not know what Sam had discussed with Ms. Roseboro. All I knew was... it was on. In September 1983 W.S.S.U. quarterback Michael Winsbush was on the front cover with N.C A&T defenders in pursuit.

The entire process was exciting for me. The articles written; the pictures taken and the laying out of the paper was a long way from the hardwood, but a nice filler for a 1983 graduate with an English degree.

Each morning I awaken there is something different that I can write about my experiences during the early years of the AC Phoenix... the difficult years in

which the Phoenix persisted...and the influence it has had on my life.

When Rodney asked me to write this I thought I could sit down and do what I did so many times...just write and let it flow. Truth is it is a difficult undertaking that has stirred emotions; opened up old wounds; been therapeutic and challenged me as the "story-teller" that I believed I was meant to be.

Sam and Rodney had defined roles. Sam is a journalist/writer. He pulled me along and helped me find a voice through sports and writing. I love him and appreciate him for that always. Rodney is a Publisher/Master Account Executive. He taught me that Mass Communications (which I minored in at W.S.S.U.) were just words heard, seen and written without advertisements to move them.

Needless to say, my role was never defined. I was a writer, lay-out person, photographer, Account Executive, circulation person etc... During these times I was also a firefighter, manager trainee for Kentucky Fried Chicken and material handler for R.J Reynolds. I also was an employee for Forsyth County Schools. While associated with the AC Phoenix, I always had a job. Along with family obligations and personal demons, my life was full beyond belief.

I can associate periods of my life with the AC Phoenix. It has been something that I can associate with almost every job and decision I've made in my life since 1983.

The AC Phoenix is for average black folks. They are written, photographed and editorialized in an extraordinary way. The things that I most remember are the subjects we touched and the relationships we developed along the way.

When I think of those early years I think of the small Black Businesses without budgets for advertising. They dug deep to show the community that both their businesses and The Phoenix were there. Erwin's Beauty Services, Goody's, Crown Drug's, Davis Garage, Park's Chevrolet, Russell's Funeral Home, Ziglar Distributing, Sam's Clothing are some of the businesses that graced the inside of the early AC Phoenix. Individuals like Willie Guess, Benie McBride, Mose Belton-Brown, Wilhelmina Carson, and the late Larry Leon Hamlin supported the efforts of The AC Phoenix.

It would be a travesty to omit people like Asim Rahim Razzak, Avis Nelson, Art Blue, Dennis Schatzman, Brenda Nance, Lateefah Razzak and the many guest writers, photographers and one time account executives who contributed during these 30 years.

For many years after my tenure with the Phoenix I watched Ann Sumler and Tanya Wiley (Rodney's wife and

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