

# Life stays good for Morrisville native

## Nathaniel Mayo is honored with two awards on his recent 80th birthday

By David Loone

Nathaniel Mayo is a young man. He is an active participant and associate minister at Shiloh Baptist Church in Morrisville. He and his wife Ruby Mae make it five days a week to the Luther Green Community Center where they go on walks, play "checks" and other games. When he's not there, Mayo often spends time in his garden.

The only difference between Mayo and a typical young man is his choice of activities and the fact that he just turned 80.

For a man born Sept. 10, 1915, Mayo is a picture of health. He seems to suffer few of the problems associated with the elderly — he is mobile, energetic, and in good physical condition. And, aside from being a little forgetful, Nathaniel Mayo is as strong in mind as he was when he really was young.

His attitude on life is simple. "Live right, do right and go to heaven when you die," is what he says he was told all his life.

Mayo spent his early years working his father's farm. When his father died shortly after World War II, Mayo worked his own farm. He grew corn, tobacco, vegetables and raised hogs and chickens.

For his first 70 years, Mayo lived in the same house. When it burned in 1985, he moved across Kitt Creek Road to a new home. Both houses were situated on land settled by his grandfather.

"When slavery was abolished, my granddaddy came to Morrisville to be on his own," Mayo says, calling up days long past.

Now the land that Mayo's grandfather Dennis Mayo settled on has grown as have his descendants.

In fact, when Mayo steps out of his home on the northern borders of Morrisville, he can look in any direction and see the homes of his children, grandchildren, cousins, nieces and nephews, his children's cousins and their nieces and nephews and so on. He'll point to a big tree across and up the road a bit where his grandfather first decided to make his home, and for miles around that point live the children of his lineage.

And Mayo sees them all the time because most are members of Shiloh Baptist Church.

Mayo has been a member of that church since he was 9.

He has served as associate minister for 15 years and been a member of the choir twice that long. He has seen the church grow from a handful of members to the current 200.

Mayo describes his years in the church as a growing experience.

"When you get into what Christianity really means and after you grow into it, it gets bigger and better," he says, "I'm crazy about it. I go every Sunday — 52 Sundays a year."

So it was appropriate that the church was the setting of Mayo's 80th birthday celebration Sept. 10 — where Morrisville Mayor Protem Billy Sauls and Mayo's longtime friend the Rev. Robert Pace of the Anglican Church of America presented him with two distinguished awards and named that day as "Nathaniel and Ruby Mae Mayo Day."

The Long Leaf Pine Award comes directly from the governor's office. It is the top civic recognition given to community leaders often

who are older and have done a lot for their community, says Pace.

The "Kentucky Colonel" award is a commission awarded by the governor of Kentucky to recognize people for their distinguished service. Pace listed Prince Philip of England and President Lyndon B. Johnson as past recipients of that award.

"He's an outstanding individual," Sauls says, "It's a very distinguished award."

"They are considered by many of us as role models for their integrity and hard work, especially for our younger generation," Pace says of the Mayos. Both have always given their all to helping members of their community, he says.

Pace's ties with the Mayos go back beyond his lifetime. He says that his great-great-grandfather Thomas Markham gave some land to Dennis Mayo and then purchased his wife for him; she was still a slave.

"Thomas Markham said to Dennis, 'Here is your wife,' and said to her, 'Now you are free,'" Pace says.

Nathaniel and Ruby Mae were married in 1936, three years before the second world war began.

Though his brother was an army corporal, Mayo says that at the time he had no desire to join the effort.

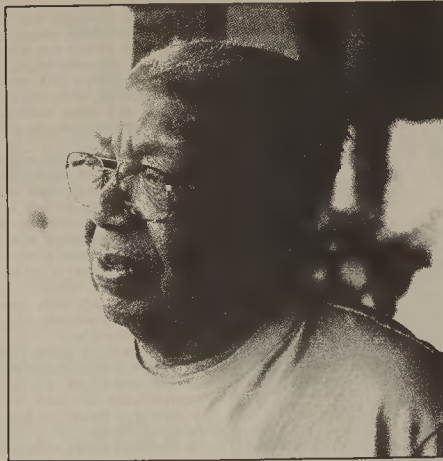
"I was new to her and she was new to me," Mayo recalls.

So he didn't go to fight the Germans. Now, he says, he wished he had because his brother got to travel all over the world. Nathaniel Mayo has never left the South.

In his lifetime he has visited Georgia, Louisiana and Maryland, but when the Luther Green Community Center club took a train to Charlotte this month, it was his first visit to the Carolina city.

And aside from living in Baltimore with his brother for a short time to work the shipping yards — the pay there was \$1 a day instead of the 50¢ a day here — Mayo has lived in the same spot his entire life.

After farming for himself for awhile, he worked for the Robert-



**LOST IN THOUGHT** — Nathaniel Mayo reflects on his long life. "If we understand enough in life to treat one another right and love one another, life will be good," he says.

son Tobacco Co. in Durham but eventually left there to work at the A&P in Raleigh.

"It takes a lot of money to live," he asserts, especially when there are children to feed.

The Mayos have five children — all daughters. Mary Lou Branch is the oldest, and there is Carolyn Peterson, Rita Jackson, Nathaniel Laughinghouse and Esther Hope Dunnington who lives right across the street from her folks.

Mayo remembers when Morrisville was just eight to 10 houses.

"It wasn't a big town then — it isn't a big town now," he quips.

Thinking back, Mayo recalls the electrically-operated hosiery factory where people were employed. A bell would ring in the morning and the evening to let people know when it was time to go to work and when to go home, he says.

"If you listened close, you could hear it ring clear up here," Mayo says. Mayo's house is a good 3 1/2 to 4 miles from town.

One of Mayo's most disturbing memories of days gone by is from a time when he was staying in the

house his mother grew up in because it was a closer walk to school.

He would sleep in the attic with his brother and he claims that one night he awoke to hear something walk into the house on four feet, slowly come up the stairs to the top floor and walk about the beds up there. Mayo never saw what it was — animal or "boogeyman" — because he had buried himself under a pile of covers until the thing crept away.

But most of the time Mayo was happy and unafraid.

"What was nice to me is we were so friendly to each other," he says of all his friends and family, "That was the whole set-up for all of us."

"If we understand enough in life to treat one another right and love one another, life will be good," he says. "Whoever gave us life, it was a good gift."

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## Real Estate Bulletin Board

by **Sharon Zonca**

Buying a home soon? Whether you plan to purchase your first home, move up to a larger one or buy a new one, what steps can be taken to insure a satisfying, successful home buying experience?

The first step might be to evaluate your present situation. Do you currently own a home? If so, will it be necessary to sell before making another purchase? Are you renting? How much time is left on your lease?

If you already own a home, start by asking an agent to provide a "market analysis" of your home. It should include a suggested price range, terms, a list of needed improvements, probably selling time, and a "net" sheet showing the proceeds you may expect to receive when it sells. Once you know what to expect from the sale of your present home, you will be better prepared to make an informed decision about another home. If you are leasing or renting now, the expiration date of the lease will help you set a timetable for your purchase.

Step two, ask the agent for a list of mortgage lenders who perform "pre-qualification" interviews. This procedure allows the lender to determine the maximum mortgage for which you qualify. By obtaining this pre-purchase determination of available mortgage loans, you can begin your home search with the advance knowledge needed to purchase the home of your choice. You will also know the amount of your down payment and other closing costs.

Next, make a list of features you would like included in your next home. Write down desirable locations you would like to consider, an acceptable price range, number of bedrooms and baths, and any other amenities. Be specific. It is unlikely that you will find a home that offers every single feature you desire, however, without a list, it will be more difficult to recognize homes which meet your expectations.


Finally, provide the information you have gathered to the agent of your choice, and ask to be shown a selection of homes which match your criteria. By following a logical, step-by-step, purchase agenda, you can enjoy a worry-free home purchase.

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