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Mr. Joe Chavis, Lumbee Elder: Following Biblical Principles to Make a Difference In Community

by Connee Brayboy

When you come to the sunset of your life, the only thing that matters is whether you have made a difference, according to Joe Chavis. Chavis is 81-years-old and resides in the rural, farming community of Philadelphia, near Red Springs, NC. Chavis has been a farmer for many years and looks on his farm with pleasure and pride. "I have enjoyed farming the land," he said, "but most of all I have tried to make a difference in this community."

And make a difference he has. Recently, the Governor of the State of North Carolina, honored Chavis by including him in the Order of the Long Leaf Pine. This distinction was made because of Chavis' long time dedication to the Democratic Party, his immediate community (Philadelphia Precinct) and the State of North Carolina. According to the plaque that recognized Chavis' dedication, he has provided "wisdom and integrity" to the State of North Carolina. The presentation of this award was made recently by Representative Ron Sutton who is also a resident of the Philadelphia community. "Joe Chavis is a staunch supporter of the Democratic Party," Rep. Sutton said. "Not only dedicated, but he provides wisdom and encouragement. These are two very important ingredients when one is in public life."

Rep. Sutton presented the plaque to Chavis at the Chavis home. Attending were Glenn Maynor, High Sheriff of Robeson County; and JoAnn Locklear, Clerk of Superior Court of Robeson County. Having these public officials gather at his house was not an unusual event. The Chavis home has long been known as the "gathering place" for local and state politicians. Chavis has been very active in the politics in the area for many, many years. For him, however, being involved in politics is just a matter of doing what's right.

He recalled moving to the farm in the Philadelphia community in the fall of 1946. "We bought the farm in

1945 and waited for the previous owners to gather their crops before moving. I remember well that the McNairs called this the 'Frog Pond Farm' because it was so wet. People really didn't want us to buy it." Chavis takes a great deal of pride in the fact that the 100-acre farm is today one of the best in the state. "We worked hard, my wife and I. Interest was 5% and we financed this place for five years. We were conservative, but not selfish and we had a clear deed to this farm in three years."

Chavis married Alice Anderson, the daughter of Jim and Cattie J. Bryant Anderson in 1936. He was 23 and the bride was "three months shy of 16." They worked as tenant farmers until they moved to the Chavis farm. They have five surviving children, Donnie and Roy, Elmer Ray who now does the farm work, Mergie and Joe Jr. Their second child, Delton died at four months of age. The family resided in a small house located across the road from their present home.

Chavis remembered when the Indians took control of the Philadelphia Precinct. "It took us two years to get enough people to attend a precinct meeting and vote for an Indian chairman," he said. "That was in 1968. Up until that time, there were no Indians involved on the precinct level. And that was not right. We lived there, voted there and were a vital part of the community. It was the right thing to do to elect an Indian Precinct Chairman. And we've had an Indian chairman every since," he said.

Chavis has seen many changes in his 81 years. His philosophy has been "We all need to help each other." And with this thought in mind, he has conducted the daily affairs of his life, his church and his community. He is modest about his service on the Board of Directors of Tri County, the forerunner for the now well known Four County Community Services, Inc. He and the late Lester Bullard, he recalls, felt the need to assist with the pro-

gram to provide services for under and low income families of all races. In the late 1960's Tri County was formed to help people with referrals, and other assistance to AFDC, food stamps and other available programs that rural people didn't know how to access. He recalls the organizers who were representative of the three races in Robeson County, including Paul Graham, Mr. Scarborough, Rev. Joy Johnson and Rev. H.E. Edwards. "When there is need, race is not important. The idea was to provide services to all people in need. The Tri-County Board of Directors worked well together and identified needs and funding to provide services," he stated. "When I think of the people who have been assisted in the four county region now served by Four County Community Services, Inc. I am humbled and feel very privileged to have been a part of that beginning. We must all live here together," he said. "So we need to help each other and not be selfish."

He reminisced about events several years back when he served as Chairman of the committee to bring a canal through the area. "The original canals around here," he said were dug in 1928. By 1985 they needed to be cleaned out. The water was standing in our fields and we needed some relief." After the state cleaned out the canal, the farmers had to sign a contract to keep the canal cleaned. The Government paid for 90% of the cost to clean the canal and the local farmers had to pay the balance. Chavis recalled some of the problems caused by the neglected canal. "It was so wet that the oil delivery truck couldn't make a delivery to the late James Henry Locklear. He needed help, and we done what we could." What he could do was enough to have the Soil Conservation workers present him with an award for his efforts toward the cleaning of the 18 miles of canal. He is the only Indian, to his knowledge, that has been so honored. He is humbled by many of the

opportunities he has had to help others, and believes that Christian principle and integrity should dictate whatever a person is doing. The son of the late Dannie Chavis and Aarce Jacobs Chavis, he was born in the Cherokee community. He was saved in August 1925 at Cherokee Chapel Church at the age of 13. Later that year, he joined Prospect Methodist Holiness Church and has been a faithful, dedicated worker since. His mother died when he was ten. His father later married Cordelia Locklear and Chavis remembers her as being a "mother to we children."

"I am not ashamed of my record," he said. "I have served the Lord, worked hard, and am dedicated to God, my family and community." Of course, as with most Indians, family extends to the other members of the Lumbee Tribe. This dedication to Prospect Church was evident in 1950 when the family was talking about building a house. "I remember attending Box Suppers at New Prospect Church," he said, "a week after purchasing the farm. I spent \$150 to help the building fund...I wanted the church built before we built a new house. We started raising money for the church in 1945. In 1951 we completed the church."

In another effort to help with the building of the new church, Chavis brought the old church and tore it down. Some of the material from the old church he used in building his new home. We moved into our new home in the Spring of '52. Some of the sills here on the porch are from the old church. Chavis has served in every position at New Prospect Church except trustee and pastor. For sixteen years he served as Superintendent and has been a class leader since 1939. One of the lessons people need to learn, Chavis said, is that you can't beat the Lord at giving. "I have helped others when I could and in turn, the Lord has blessed me." Relaxing on his porch on a Spring

afternoon, Chavis reminisces about the changes he has seen in his life. "I have seen a lot of things in my time," he said. "I remember when Indians didn't have any doctors or lawyers or any professional people, as a matter of fact. He recalled the movement headed by Joe Brooks in 1934. "Joe Brooks brought a Blackfoot Indian out of Washington here to do a blood test. I was one of the people chosen to be tested from Philadelphia...At that time, we didn't have an Indian who could do the typing needed for that test. We had to hire someone from Lumberton to do the typing. Now," he continued, "we have all kinds of professionals, including the High Sheriff who is Indian and the Clerk of Superior Court." Chavis sees these changes being right and proper. His strong Christian faith has convinced him over and over again that serving the

Lord is the first priority for anyone who seeks success. "The Bible is true," he said. "I have seen it fulfilled over and over again. And God blesses those who give," he said. "The secret is not only to give money, just about anybody can do that. But you have to give of yourself. The Lord has rewarded me over and over again for any sacrifice I might have made in my community. I have seen Indians come into their rightful place in the political arena and I am proud of that. We have always had the ability, but we've not always had the opportunity. Now, thank God, we not only have the opportunity but our people are in positions where they can offer opportunities to others."

"When you're in the sunset of your life, the only thing that matters is whether you have made a difference. Joe Chavis, as evidenced by his life, has made a difference."



McNeill Advances in National Professional Society



Timothy L. McNeill, director of strategic planning at Southeastern Regional Medical Center, has advanced to Diplomate status in the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). In order to achieve this status, McNeill successfully passed the ACHE Board of Governors' examination in health care management. He will receive formal recognition of his new status at the ACHE's 61st annual convocation to be held in August in San Francisco.

Founded in 1933, the College is a Chicago-based international professional society representing more than 27,000 health care executives. With comprehensive programs in credentialing, self assessment, education, career counseling, publications, research, and public policy, the ACHE works toward its goal of enhancing excellence in health care management.

McNeill, a native of Robeson County, joined SRMC in May of 1993. He holds an undergraduate degree from Pembroke State University and a master of health care administration from UNC-Chapel Hill. He joined ACHE as an Associate in 1993.

First Elections Board Appointed Swearing in ceremony scheduled Saturday

The Lumbee Tribal Council has appointed the first Elections Board as required by the Lumbee Constitution. The appointments were made out of a list of names nominated by Tribal Chairman, Dr. Dalton Brooks. The Tribal Council made the appointments. The duties of the elections board are defined in the Constitution, Article VII. Among their duties will be the administration of tribal elections, the first one scheduled for August, 1995. The Elections Board will conduct all tribal elections, recall, initiative and referendum proceedings.

The first Elections Board is comprised of Virginia Jacobs of Lumberton, representing District 1; Joe Brooks of Fairmont representing District 2; Larry Locklear of Pembroke representing District 3; Herbert Moore of Prospect representing District 4, and Gladys Hunt of Fayetteville who will represent District 5.

The members of the Elections Board will be installed at a ceremony on Saturday, April 29, at 9 a.m. in front of Old Main on the PSU campus. The public is invited to attend this ceremony.

Vacancies at Pembroke Housing

Pembroke-The Pembroke Housing Authority has vacancies available for low-income families. Currently, two, three, and four bedroom apartments are available. Applications are taken each Wednesday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. at 606 Lumbee Street in Locklear Court. Interested persons should contact Rhonda Locklear at (910) 521-9711.

The Authority strives to maintain a drug free environment necessary for family living. Therefore, all persons age sixteen years old and older who plan to reside in public housing are subject to a thorough review of their criminal history.



Lumbee Spring Pow Wow Planned for May 12-13

The Lumbee-Cheraw Pow Wow will be held May 12-13 at the Robeson County Fairgrounds in Lumberton. The two day event will feature Indian arts, crafts, food, music and dance. The event is being sponsored by Lumbee Regional Development Association. General admission for the event will be \$4.00.

According to James Hardin, Executive Director of LRDA, the festival will feature outstanding exhibits and demonstrations of Indian arts, crafts, music and dance. It will provide some of the best authentic American Indian arts, crafts, music, and dance in the eastern United States.

Hardin said, "We expect to have some of the best dealers in Indian arts and crafts at this event. Traders will be selling authentic American Indian arts and crafts, including Indian silver and turquoise jewelry, pottery, basketry, and paintings representing the arts and traditions of many tribes."

He said American Indian artisans and craftsmen who produce high quality crafts will be given preference in booth selection.

According to Hardin the pow wow is more than a festival. It is a special event that showcases high quality Indian arts and crafts, distinctive Indian cultural values and pan-Indian ceremonies. It helps to recognize and celebrate the unique history, culture, and contributions of Indians. The pow wows have had a significant positive impact upon the Indian people in Robeson County.

The number of people attending the pow wow has grown tremendously since the first public pow wow was held back in 1970 by LRDA. Thousands of people now attend the event. The number of artists and craftsmen participating in the event has grown tremendously also. Contact Lumbee Regional Development Association at (910) 521-8602 for more information.

An Update From the Lumbee-Cheraw Tribal Council

by the Publicity Committee

The Lumbee Tribal Council held their bi-monthly meeting on Monday, April 17 at 7 p.m. in the Indian Education Resource Center. The public is invited to attend these meetings every first and third Monday night of each month. The following items were taken care of at this meeting.

*Presentation from Mr. Carnell Locklear. Mr. Locklear will be traveling to England in July or August. The Tribal Council gave Mr. Locklear a donation on his trip.

*Tribal Council approved to buy a computer, monitor, copier, printer and fax for the tribal office.

*Resolution 94-1 was passed to be accepted into Tribal Law. Anyone interested in knowing what this resolution says should contact their tribal representative.

*Personnel and nominating procedures for tribal administrator was passed by the Council.

*A letter was sent to Mr. Galashkibos who is president of the National Congress of American Indians, asking for membership to NCAI. The Council will wait for a response from Mr. Galashkibos.

*Chairman Dalton Brooks reported that he will work with the Economic Development Committee to establish some ideas on developing the economy for Indian people.

Saturday, April 29, at 9 a.m. in front of Old Main (PSU), the Election Board members will be sworn into office. Everyone is invited to attend this momentous occasion.

*A Public Relations Committee was put into place to furnish news of tribal meetings to the media.

*A motion and second was made for Chairman Brooks to send letters to funding sources and heads of state on the local, state and federal level on behalf of the tribe and the Lumbee people.

*There will be a meeting in Washington on May 3, 4, and 5 for non-federally recognized tribes. Tribal members have been encouraged to attend these meetings.

*June 9, at 10 a.m. in Raleigh will be the meeting of the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs. Please contact your tribal representative and make plans to attend this meeting in support of your Tribal Council.

Lumbee to be named Miss Indian USA

Natascha Wagoner will be crowned Miss Indian USA on May 4, 1995 at the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Ms. Wagoner, a former Miss Lumbee.

Hagens Named PSU Chancellor's Scholar

Julius K. Hagens, a senior from Purnell Swett High School, has been named a Chancellor's Scholar at Pembroke State University for the 1995-96 academic year.

Hagens is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Alton Hagens of Lumberton. He plans to major in biology.

Chancellor's Scholars at Pembroke State University receive \$3,000 a year to attend PSU. This almost covers the full expenses of a student living on campus with a full-meal plan. Chancellor's Scholars take special courses, do a Master's type thesis, and receive special honors at commencement.

will become the first Lumbee to hold the title of Miss Indian USA. A bus load of community persons will travel to Washington on May 4th to witness the crowning. They will leave at 10 a.m. and return later that night. Those interested in attending should contact Hayes Locklear at 521-1881 or Patricia Brayboy at 521-8751.

Celebration Planned with Sheriff Maynor

A celebration with Sheriff Glenn Maynor will be held at the Union Chapel Community Building in the Burnt Swamp Precinct on Thursday, April 27, from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. Hot dogs, chicken bog, baked beans and cold drinks will be served. Food is free. Everyone is encouraged to come and meet the sheriff.