

Former Hillside Students Remember 1968 Trip to King Funeral

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As the nation commemorated the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, a reunion of former Hillside High School students and faculty members took place at the home of Dr. John Lucas.

Carmen Ellison Dorsey, Garcia Sampson, and Lucas spent an hour together last Friday reminiscing about the April 9, 1968 trip that they took to attend the funeral of Dr. King in Atlanta.

In the aftermath of the assassination, several Hillside students and educators who were so moved by the shooting of the civil rights icon that they quickly arranged to fly from RDU, via Eastern Airlines, to Atlanta to attend the funeral.

Money to purchase airline tickets and money for other expenses was advanced by the treasury of the "Swing School Project," which was an annual musical theater production



Pictured (L-R) Garcia Sampson, Dr. John Lucas, and Carmen Ellison Dorsey. Dr. John Lucas, Bobby Lawrence, John Gattis, and Doreatha Ruth served as chaperons for the Hillside High School students who attended the Martin Luther King funeral on April 9, 1968 in Atlanta. Garcia Sampson was the sophomore class president and Carmen Ellison Dorsey was the editor of the Hillside Chronicle.

that was performed by Hillside students for the community. This project was directed by the legendary teacher and musician, John Gattis.

Principal Lucas quickly selected several of the key student leaders from the Hillside student body to form the delegation. Lucas then sought and received the proper permissions from parents and school officials. During those years, Hillside had only sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Students from each of those three classes were chosen.

Carmen Ellison was the editor of the student newspaper and Garcia Sampson was the sophomore class president. A total of about eight students made the trip. Joining Lucas and Gattis as the adult advisor were guidance counselor Mr. Bobby Lawrence and English teacher Mrs. Doreatha Ruth.

Dr. Lucas' experience as a frequent airline traveler for National Education Association meetings allowed the delegation

to navigate travel arrangements for the one-day trip. Mr. Gattis, who had attended Morris Brown College in Atlanta as an undergraduate, knew the city very well and was able to help with the maneuvering so that the Hillside delegation was always in the best possible positions and locations.

Obviously, this Hillside delegation did not get to sit inside the Ebenezer Baptist Church for the service, but they were able to be among the large crowd that gathered near the church. They were able to hear the service and they were able to mingle with the international throng of people who showed respect for this fallen American hero.

Garcia Sampson and Carmen Ellison Dorsey mentioned seeing Jacqueline Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, Harry Belafonte and other famous people enter and exit the church. They had vivid memories of joining the massive crowd as they followed the mule-drawn cart that carried the casket of Dr. King from Ebenezer Baptist to the campus of Morehouse College.

Garcia Sampson indicated, "This trip to Atlanta for the King funeral played a large part in my decision to begin my college career as a student at Morehouse."

Sampson also joined Alpha Phi Alpha, which also was Dr. King's fraternity.

Carmen Ellison Dorsey shared, "This flight to Atlanta was the first plane trip for most of the Hillside students who attended the King funeral."

She also added, "These students, who were teenagers in 1968, are now at the traditional age of retirement. Our varied careers and our individual lives were motivated and influenced by the experience at the homegoing for Dr. Martin Luther King 50 years ago."

Both of these former students saluted the leadership and the vision of their 97-year-old former principal, Dr. John Lucas, and all of the faculty members at Hillside High School in the spring of 1968.

The Black Business Forum - April

Join us for our free monthly forum on Tuesday, April 21, from 6-7:30pm, at M&F's Corporate Auditorium. This month, we will have a presentation from member business, Ujoba Consulting, on the best HR practices & methods.

The GDBCC (Greater Durham Black Chamber of Commerce) Forum meets on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 2634 Durham-Chapel Hill Blvd # 101, Durham, NC 27707, which is M&F Bank's Corporate Headquarters. The forum enables black business people and community members to connect, learn, network, and share news & developments with one another. The forum is a regular opportunity to share best methods & practices, give referrals, and generally discuss how to improve the black business ecosystem in the Greater Durham community.

Please email all questions to thegdccb@gmail.com.

North Carolina officer shoots, kills man during traffic stop

WINSTON-SALEM (AP) - A white North Carolina police officer shot and killed a black passenger who displayed a gun after a late-night traffic stop led to a physical struggle, authorities said March 31.

The shooting happened after Officer D.E. McGuire stopped a car containing two men and a woman about 10:30 p.m. Friday during a routine patrol northeast of downtown, according to a Winston-Salem Police Department news release.

Edward Van McCrae, 60, was in the rear seat and began making suspicious movements, police say. McGuire told McCrae to stop reaching for concealed areas of the vehicle, but McCrae continued, according to the news release.

"After being removed from the vehicle, Mr. McCrae physically struggled with Officer McGuire and refused multiple verbal commands by Officer McGuire to 'stop reaching,'" the news release said. "As the struggle continued, a handgun became visible to Officer McGuire."

McGuire shot and killed McCrae when he refused commands not to reach for the gun, according to the release. A police report characterizes the exchange as an assault on the officer with a firearm.

The State Bureau of Investigation has been brought in to investigate the shooting, which happened in a residential area of modest homes. A spokesman for the state agency, Brent Culbertson, confirmed in an email that McGuire is white and McCrae is black.

McGuire, who has worked for the department since 2015, has been put on administrative duty pending the investigation.

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