

Payne

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minds and idle hands of young black urban men.

Heroin, which preceded crack as a Harlem drug menace, was more or less imposed on the community by outside forces.

The heroin offensive was opened up in Harlem on a large scale in the late 1950s. Armed young black gang members, intent on bloodying each other, began tur-



Constance Bradley

Bradley elevated to new rank

Constance Bradley, a member of Garden of Iris Temple No. 220, was elevated to the rank of brigadier general of the North Carolina State Antlered Guard Department at its annual encampment in Asheville.

The program was held Sept. 19 through 21, with the Units of Pride of the Mountain Lodge and the Rhododendron Temple as hosts.

Mrs. Bradley was the organizer and the first commander of the Twin City Antlers, the Antlered Guard Unit of the Camel City Elks Lodge No. 1021 and Garden of Iris Temple No. 220 in 1979.

Mrs. Bradley rose through the ranks to major and was honored as the Antlered Guard of the Year in 1984.

In 1985 she was appointed adjutant of the North Carolina Brigade by Brig. Gen. Kornegay, commander of the brigade, and she was commissioned a colonel.

When Winston-Salem was the host city for the Southern Division Encampment in 1984, Grand Please see page A16

ning their ears to the fiery political rhetoric of James Baldwin and Malcolm X.

These polemicists suggested that blacks should direct their anger/energy not at each other but at the society that oppressed them.

There began to emerge the politics of black resistance. Those who ran things reasoned, no doubt in league with the underworld, that tranquility would be better served if young and unemployed blacks were strung out on drugs than if they were high on Baldwin and Malcolm X.

Thomas celebrates at birthday event

A 78th birthday celebration was held Saturday, Sept. 20, in honor of Katie Thomas of Darling, S.C.

The party was held at Union Baptist Church; more than 75 of Mrs. Thomas' relatives and friends attended.

The mother of 11 children, Mrs. Thomas also has several grandchildren and great-grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



Katie Thomas, left, recently celebrated her 78th birthday with her family and friends, including her daughter, Margaret Blake (photo by James Parker).

And since the immobilization of potential black revolutionaries served the purpose of the dominant society, it was not surprising that the major drug pushers were seldom punished.

Heroin flooded into Harlem, and with almost no transition, the gang war era became the age of heroin -- the White Horse. Mafia chieftains are on record as saying that when they controlled heroin, they restricted it to residents of black communities whom they considered inferior and powerless.

Police and politicians -- except

for a few like Rangel -- looked the other way. Casual visitors to almost any of Harlem's boulevards saw legions of black youngsters with glazed eyes, frozen in wretched curves, nodding in putrid doorways or drooping against buildings, their heads canted downward like resting vultures.

For years, residents lived terrorized among these addicts -- who were, at bottom, victims themselves. The outcry from black ministers, civic leaders, housewives, merchants and activists was as futile as pitching

ashes into a strong headwind.

By the early 1970s, the heroin epidemic had spread to white communities. Heroin addicts were financing their habits with suburban crimes and drug sales to white youth.

In 1971, President Richard Nixon declared war on drugs.

The current warriors against drugs should have learned from the previous ones. Participants must insist that the national campaign target all victims of this most insidious drug epidemic, and not just those in white communities. As Mitchell argues, it is

not enough for the black street pushers to be herded off to freshly built jails by all-too-willing cops, judges, mayors and governors.

The top importers and financiers -- as well as the authorities and politicians who aid them -- must be brought to book.

What is needed is not prime-time speeches, but full-time pressure on prime drug outlets -- the black neighborhoods.

Les Payne is an assistant managing editor at Newsday.

Johnson

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ter are as contrived as the writer's name, and that he is satisfied with his job transfer.

"It was an anonymous letter," he said. "It has no credence. The personal attacks are unfounded. The alleged misplaced priorities of the president are unfounded. I don't think my transfer is a dead-end job."

All the same, other angry letters have appeared, and other discontent has surfaced in Normal, where things seem to be anything but.

Covington seems to invite such attacks because he deals poorly with people. He certainly endured his share of innuendo here, where some employees considered him aloof and unapproachable -- a dapper PR man with lots of style but little substance. He could build a building and destroy your trust in one fell swoop, say his critics.

When he left WSSU, morale among employees was alarmingly low.

Thus, the letter that appeared in Alabama is making its rounds these days at WSSU. Many read it with relish.

Bishop Jake Johnson was the guest speaker at the celebration. His topic was "Faith."

Others on the program were Lizzie Settles, Margaret Cooper, Mary Alatt and Dorothy Thomas.

Musical entertainment was provided by family members.

Janet Johnson was the pianist, and Lorene B. Thomas was the mistress of ceremonies.

Close-Up

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Raising additional funds is not easy, but the squad frequently holds bake sales, yard sales and other activities which Mrs. Colbert says "are to raise as much as possible to assist us with our operations or in buying equipment." The unit's home base is also in need of repairs and renovations, and Mrs. Colbert hopes that at some point funds will be available to help the unit with that long-range goal.

Mrs. Colbert also must handle the challenge of easing the concern of patients who are not accustomed to seeing a woman handle rescue procedures.

"Usually the victims are in such a state over their condition that they aren't always aware that a woman is administering the procedures," she says, "but sometimes they'll see me grab one of the big tools, and they don't know how to handle it. They look like, 'Wow, look at what that woman's doing!'"

The equipment used in emergency rescues ranges in weight from very light to heavy. The "jump bags," which include injury care materials, weigh approximately 20 pounds, the oxygen tanks 20 pounds and the suction tank 10 pounds.

During accident responses, unit members must be able to quickly retrieve the materials from the rescue vehicles, affectionately dubbed "Alice" and "Mabel" by members of the team. Some think that having to lift heavy equipment would hinder the performance of a female rescue team member.

They've never seen Mrs. Colbert in action.

"You don't even feel the weight when your adrenaline's flowing," says Mrs. Colbert, who is approximately 5 feet 5 inches tall. "Here I am, a little bitty woman, going up and lifting a big man on a stretcher onto the unit and not even realizing it. After it's all over I wonder, 'How in the

heck did I do that?'"

Mrs. Colbert, who worked with an EMS team in her native Lenoir, says she was "jittery" when she first started with the local team.

"I was kind of jittery when I started here because we were responsible for a much larger city," she recalls, smiling at the memory. "Before, when I first started with EMS, a call would come over the communications system and tell us to 'respond to (Route) 421, go left at Harold's barn, right after you see three cows,' and this and that, so it was a little different here."

She also remembers one of the very first "horror story" calls she responded to.

"One of the first terrible calls I was on was a code orange, which is a suicide," she remembers. "Our instructor had told us to always take three deep breaths and proceed. When we arrived, there was a man who had shot himself by putting a 16-gauge gun in his mouth. The top of his head was gone. There were 100 pieces of his head left everywhere. I took three breaths, but by that time I know I had taken at least a hundred more breaths, and I still could not proceed right away."

Her years as an emergency services team member have not hardened Mrs. Colbert to the suffering she regularly sees. Although she is not panicked by the sight of blood, she is particularly moved when having to handle very young patients and the elderly.


"Seeing injured children and old folks bothers me," she says, lowering her formerly enthusiastic tone. "It hurts me more deeply to see injured little children and elderly people, especially when they've been abused. I just cannot tolerate to see them be abused."

Mrs. Colbert has logged quite a few hours in the business of saving lives. It is an experience that she relishes and treasures.

"It takes a lot of guts to do what we do -- a lot of guts," she says in her true-grit tone. "I don't think anybody could say they could do what we do without really knowing what it's all about. Our guts keep growing each day because you never know

what you'll run into. What I do gives me a feeling of completeness. I like it. I love it. It gives me the satisfaction of knowing that I'm doing something to preserve life, and that's a joyful feeling of fulfillment."

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