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Our Public Safety Award is given to someone in the community, seeing a person in need, who

goes above and beyond the call of duty to assist this person in the time of crisis.

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Winston-Salem Chronicle

Public Safety Award

Leonard Davis, Reginald McCummings, Ervin Williams

By TONYA V. SMITH
Chronicle Staff Writer

It didn't occur to them that they could be endangering their own lives, but valiantly and speedily, three young Afro-Americans telephoned for help and entered a flame engulfed home to rescue a family of four.

Linda Hawthorne and her three children are alive today thanks to Chronicle Public Safety Award winners Leonard Davis, Reginald McCummings and Ervin Williams.

"It's largely because of them that we have four people alive today rather than dead," said Chief Lester Ervin of the city fire department.

The trio was headed home Dec. 7, after watching a Carolina basketball game, when they saw thick smoke clouds hovering over Hawthorne's home at 812 Broad Street. Williams called the city fire department on his car phone, while Davis, 26, and McCummings, 25, ran to the house.

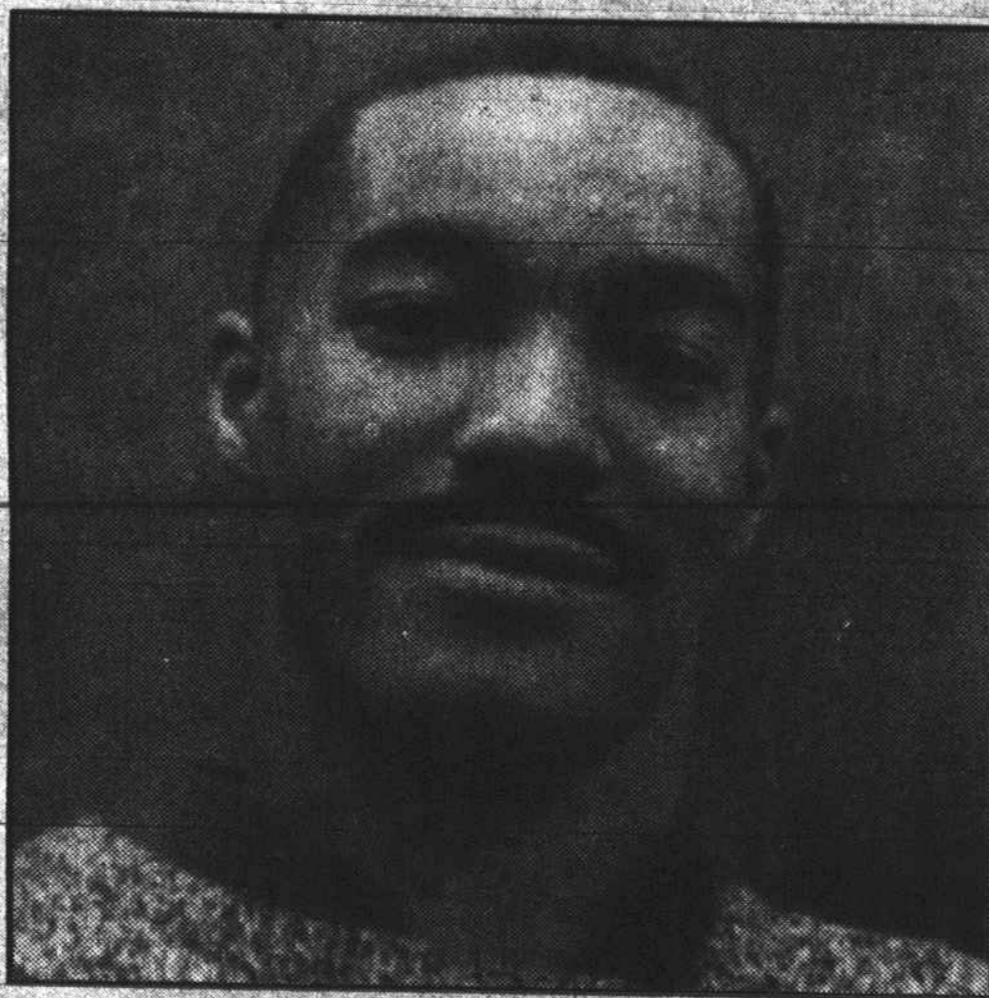
Unable to awaken Hawthorne who was asleep on a couch in her living room, Davis and McCummings entered the house, woke her up and told her the house was on fire.

Hawthorne's three children, Amber, 14; Chris, 11; and Tiffany, 10; also were in the house asleep. The fire was concentrated in a closet in Amber Hawthorne's room. Something in the kitchen, adjacent to Amber's bedroom, had sparked the fire.

"I told Leonard to take her (Hawthorne outside), and then I went to the back room to get her daughter out," said McCummings, a former firefighter with the city fire department. "When Leonard came back he got the other children out of the front bedrooms."

City firefighters spent about 35 minutes extinguishing the blaze. Chief Ervin commended the young men when the city Board of Aldermen's Public Safety Committee presented them resolutions of commendation. Each received a framed copy commending "their quick thinking, their selfless concern for their fellowman in a dangerous situation and their decisive acts of heroism which prevented the possible loss of human life."

Davis, a West Forsyth High graduate, said, "You just don't think about yourself at a time like that . . . I just hope a person would risk their lives to save me the way we did her."



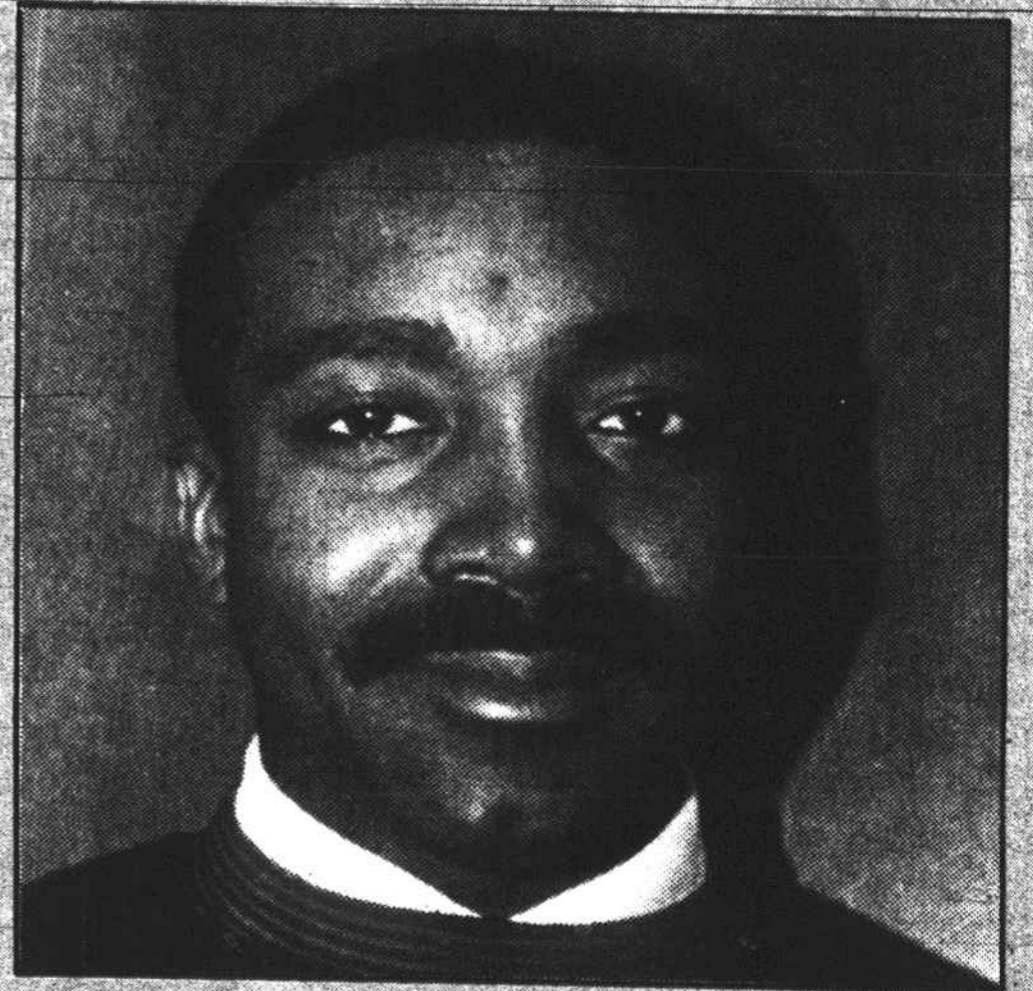
Leonard Davis, left, and Reginald McCummings are to be commended for their selfless concern for their fellowman in a dangerous situation and their decisive acts of heroism which prevented the possible loss of human life.

Davis was a firefighter while serving in the U.S. Navy. "I felt it was a blessing for us to do something like that for someone," said McCummings, a former football star at North Forsyth High School and athletic scholarship recipient at Wake Forest University.

Hawthorne and her children, who lost everything but the clothes on their backs in the fire, are glad Davis, McCummings and Williams were at the right place at the right time.

"If they hadn't gotten here when they did, I don't think we would have made it," Hawthorne said. "I'm just so thankful to those guys for what they did. I mean, if it hadn't been for them, we might not be here today."

"I haven't gotten a chance to talk to the guys . . . but I want them to know how very thankful me and my kids are. We owe them our lives and I want them to know how very much we appreciate them."



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