

# Sturdivant claims unfair treatment

By SAMANTHA MCKENZIE  
Chronicle Staff Writer

JoAnn Sturdivant, the civilian employee who was fired from the Police Department in October for releasing \$5,000 to a woman who identified herself as Beth Tilley, said she's been treated unfairly by the department and the media.

Sturdivant, former property specialist, said the police department wrongfully accused her of taking the money only after the woman who had found the money, Jacqueline Gray, filed a lawsuit.

"I have worked for the department in the property room for 15 years. I have a clean record. This has damaged my character. I would not have taken that money to begin with," she said.

Following her dismissal, Sturdivant said she contacted both Alderman Vivian Burke and the local NAACP to find out what could be done, but was unsuccessful in finding help.

"While I was being questioned the investigators told me, 'Well JoAnn, you might as well tell us the truth. You might as well confess,'" she said.

"I didn't take the money, but it seemed like they had already made up their minds that I did," she said.

Sturdivant said she thinks her termination was just a way for the department to "put the blame" on

someone.

Sturdivant, who is still unemployed, said some of the reports on the events leading up to April 27 have been incorrect and has left the public thinking that she is guilty.

"There was no policy that said we couldn't release property on the weekends. If there is, they must have changed that after I left. It has always been policy that we release on weekends if the person is from out of town. As far as I was concerned the woman was from out of town, she was from Raleigh," she said.

"I remember Saturdays when (the department) called me in just to release property to someone who was from out of town," she said.

Sturdivant admits her one mistake was releasing the money without having a supervisor present.

Sturdivant said she told Internal Affairs investigators that on Saturday, April 27, while on her way to the second floor bathroom, she observed two officers standing in the hallway and said "hello" to them, but the report states that the officers said they do not recall seeing her at that point.

"Why would I say I saw them if I didn't know for sure that I did? If I was trying to cover up something I wouldn't have had to mention them at all," she said.

She said the report states that while counting the \$5,000 she observed a uniformed officer turn-

ing the corner but only got a glance at the back of his head. The report also states that Sturdivant was not able to recognize the officer or pick him out from the Police Department Annual.

But Sturdivant said if she reported seeing the back of someone's head, it would also be impossible for her to figure out who the officer was from a photograph. "If I had seen the officer's face, of course I would be able to identify him. I've been working there for 15 years. I practically know who everyone is," she said.

Sturdivant also said the reason she did not transfer the driver's license number to the correct copy after she had made the mistake of putting it on the wrong copy was because it was accidentally filed away.

"When I realized I made the mistake I put the copies on my desk and planned to get back to it later. Somehow, I guess, it was filed away by accident. It was never entered into the computers, nothing was done to it. I told my supervisor that I couldn't find the copies that I had left on my desk. She was the one who suggested that I look in the files and sure enough when I looked it was there," she said.

Sturdivant said the papers were probably sitting on her desk for less than two weeks when it was misfiled.

# Home Builders' Triad Home and Garden show starts this weekend

Triad residents will have the opportunity to compare the latest products and services of 160 home and garden exhibitors, while also contributing to the efforts of Habitat for Humanity and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Garden Council this weekend.

Four years ago, the Home Builders Association of Winston-Salem, Inc., hosted its first Home Show. Since that time, the show has grown into the Triad Home & Garden Show, a group of over 150 exhibitors with gardening, home improvement, housing products, and building and remodeling expertise.

As the show continues to grow,

so does the Home Builders Association's commitment to the Triad community. For the fourth year, the Forsyth County Habitat for Humanity will receive a percentage of the proceeds from the show, to help make home ownership a reality to those to whom it would only be a dream. In addition, a portion of the proceeds will go to the Garden Council to help fund its community beautification efforts.

Those attending the show will be able to take part in demonstration classes, seminars, view the Standard Flower Show of Horticulture and Design, win valuable door prizes, and of course, get exciting ideas to make the home of their

dreams a reality.

The flower show entitled, "Winter Blooms," will be open to amateurs and held on Friday, Feb. 28.

It will be hosted by The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Garden Council. Viewing of the entries will continue through Sunday, March 1 during the show's hours.

The Triad Home & Garden Show will be held Feb. 28-March 1. Tickets are only \$3 in advance and \$4 at the door. For ticket information, call the Home Builders Association of Winston-Salem, Inc. at 768-5942 or the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Garden Council at 722-5640.

# Suicide?

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mother call Linda Hopson, the assistant principal at Paisley, to clear up the misunderstanding. Hopson talked with both James and Gregory over the phone.

However, while Gregory spoke to Hopson on the phone, the conversation turned from the alcohol to possession of a knife at school, according to James. Although Gregory did not explain the situation about the knife to his grandmother, she stated that whatever was said between Hopson and Gregory is what sent him over the edge. School officials refuse to comment on the incident at the school, citing that it is a confidential school matter.

"When he quit talking to her, he said, 'I'm in more trouble than I thought I was,'" recalled James, 79. "He said, 'Oh, Grandmama, I'm getting cold. So he put his coat on and he came back in the room where I was and kissed me on the jaw. He said, 'Grandmama let me go 'round the house and look at your back yard. I haven't seen around there in a long time.'"

A few minutes later, James heard the shot that fatally wounded Gregory. He died at North Carolina Baptist Hospital a day later.

The gun that killed Gregory belonged to Mrs. James, who kept it hidden in a back room. She said if she had known he had it she would have immediately taken it away from him. She had no idea what he was going outside to do, but somehow she understands why her grandson felt there was no alternative.

"He never had any trouble in school at all. This was his first offense at school, and I say it was just too much for him to take," she said. "And he told me he didn't want to face his foster father, being suspended out of school."

Gregory had been in foster care for the past three years. His

foster parents were Ruby and Abron Griffin of Pfafftown. It was Gregory's foster mother who had brought him to James' home on Wednesday to stay until she got off of work later that evening.

Before being placed in foster care, Gregory had lived with his grandmother on North Cherry Street for 12 years, after his mother, Sylvia Gregory, left him there to stay. James said she and Gregory got along great. He was never any trouble to her. "He was so good. He never sassied me," she said. "He'd say 'Grandmama, I love you so dearly.'"

James added that somehow Hopson is responsible for Alex' death.

"I called Miss Hopson (Friday). I told her I hold her responsible for Alex's death. She said she was so sorry. She didn't think she said anything to him that would have caused him to do that. I told her I had to get that off my chest, because I'm a person who don't carry things against nobody. I felt better after I told her that," said James. "But before she told him she was going to expel him from school, I feel like she should have talked to his parents first, not told him."

Thursday, the day after Gregory's suicide, a Crisis Intervention Team was sent to Paisley to counsel the students and teachers. According to Kay Dignan, one of the seven school psychologists sent to Paisley, Gregory's death was a heavy blow.

"When we got out to the school on Thursday morning, there were a number of students who were visibly upset, mostly the eighth graders who knew him," said Dignan. She also stated that several students who knew Gregory even questioned whether his death was indeed a suicide, an issue which came about when radio station

WSJS reported that Gregory had been involved in drugs.

James emphatically denies any involvement Gregory may have had with drugs.

"No, not at all," she stated. "That old mess was on the air. WSJS said it got that from the public. They never interviewed me."

The same day WSJS aired the story, James called the station management and threatened to sue the station over the false report. She said that station officials claimed that the information from another suicide involving another African-American youth allegedly involved in drugs had somehow been mistaken with Gregory's suicide by the station news reporter. That was despite the fact that the Winston-Salem Police Department's report found no indication of drug use or involvement.

And Captain L. G. Petree of the Police Department told the *Chronicle* that "we had nothing to indicate that." WSJS corrected their mistake on the air.

But even though Gregory was buried last Monday, Feb. 17, the senselessness of his death still lingers on with those who knew him, and even those who didn't.

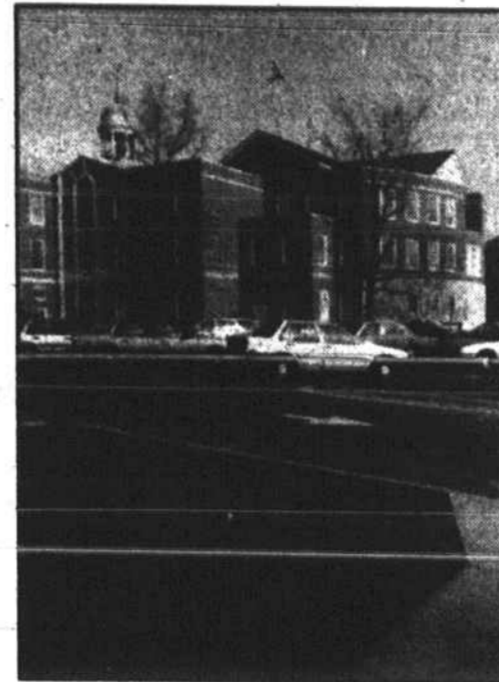
Capt. Petree stated, "I felt really badly about this. It was a real tragedy because I felt like he was a really nice boy."

James said that in a way Gregory is still with her. "Since he didn't live with me I don't feel like he's dead. I just feel like he's out at Pfafftown, and I always say anything God do, I'm pleased with it, because he don't do no wrong," she said.

"I've been taught all my life that Jesus comes along sometimes when a family's all split up or messed up, and He takes the best one in the family to bring the others together. And I believe in that."

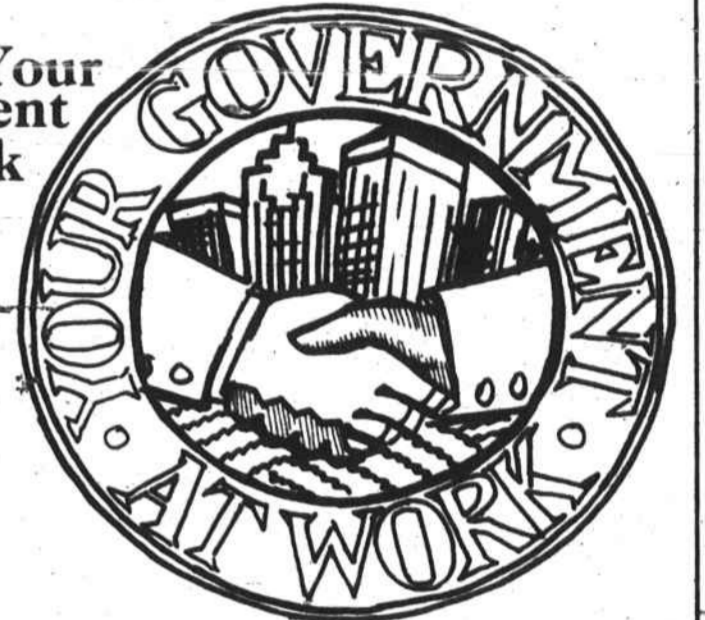
# POSITIVELY WINSTON-SALEM!

## Good News About Winston-Salem and Forsyth County — Where We Live, Work and Play!

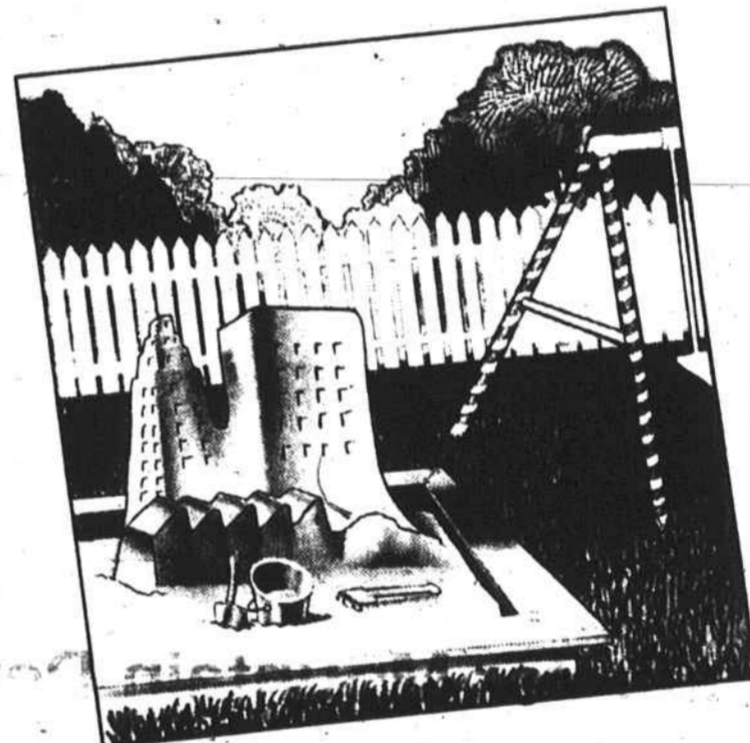


**WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY LIBRARY** — Wake Forest recently dedicated its new \$7.3 million library wing to Edwin G. Wilson, an English professor and vice president at the university. The four-level addition to WFU's Z. Smith Reynolds Library features a computerized card catalog for the library's 1.1 million volumes and personal computers with word-processing software.

Your Government at Work



**INTEGON PARKING DECK AND OFFICE EXPANSION** — Working with Integon Life Insurance Company, the city helped structure a \$6.8 million package to finance building a parking deck and office building in downtown Winston-Salem. Integon is guaranteeing the debt and will operate the facility. The Greater Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce and Winston-Salem Business are merging and will occupy space in the office building.



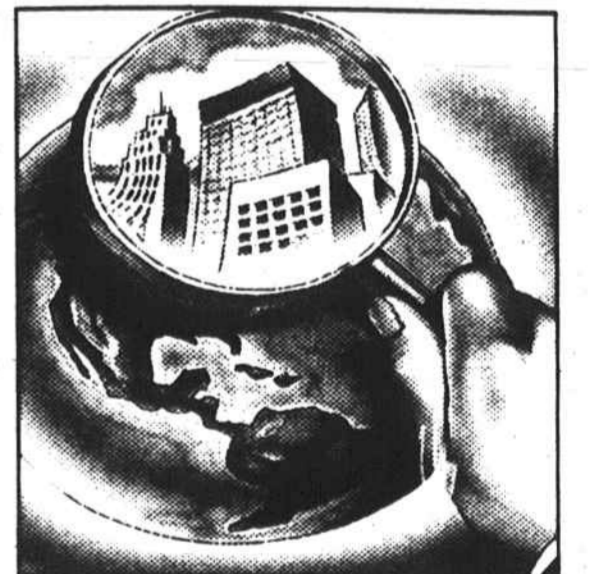
### Our Best Kept Secrets

**THERMCRRAFT, INC.** — Founded in Winston-Salem 21 years ago, Thermcraft designs and manufactures high-temperature heaters, furnaces, ovens and related systems. The company's industrial, laboratory and government customers use Thermcraft products for research and development and for manufacturing such products as semi-conductors, electronic components, petroleum products and nuclear energy. The company recently acquired two manufacturers of related products and merged them into local operations.



### Unsung Heroes

**FORSYTH COUNTY EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES** — Working closely with volunteers from 22 local rescue squads, EMS's 63 certified emergency medical technicians and paramedics answer more than 24,000 calls each year - usually within six minutes, providing skilled emergency care and fast, safe transportation to area hospitals. Many dedicated EMS employees do double-duty as rescue squad volunteers on their days off.



### As the World Sees Us

**R.J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO INTERNATIONAL, INC.** — R.J. Reynolds Tobacco International recently announced plans to build a \$33 million cigarette plant in Poland. International tobacco sales accounted for \$2.68 billion or 17.9 percent of R.J. Nabisco's \$14.99 billion in 1991 sales and 31.4 percent of total tobacco sales. International tobacco profits accounted for \$531.5 million of the company's \$2.73 billion in 1991 tobacco profits.



**ERNIE SHORE FIELD** — Work is underway to renovate Ernie Shore Field, home of the Winston-Salem Spirits, our own Class A pro baseball team. The \$1 million renovation will provide a new locker room, expanded restroom and concession facilities, new offices, improved lighting and approximately 3,000 more seats for the 36-year-old facility. The project is expected to be finished in 1993.

# Winston-Salem

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This message is a collaborative effort of The Greater Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce and The Winston-Salem Retail Merchants Association.