

Awards

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Twenty-five years ago, she met Ernie Pitt, publisher and founder of The Chronicle. She was preparing to take the helm of WAAA, and Pitt was passing out his first copy of "The Winston-Salem Chronicle." She accepted a copy, which she admitted with a laugh that she still had.

"Little did either of us realize the extent to which our lives would parallel," she said.

Evans thanked the Pitt family for serving as a vehicle of honor for the community, and she gave honor to those who nominated her for Woman of the Year. She recognized her family, friends and church family at Carver Road Church of Christ for the role they played in shaping her identity and spirituality. She named all of the women who have shared with her the mantle of Woman of the Year, for the last 16 years. In accepting her plaque, she dedicated it to her parents Dallas and Mabel Evans.

"In honoring me, you honor them," she said.

The Rev. Seth O. Lartey, who was named Man of the Year in 1998, presented Bass. "The moon of last year has vanished - now receive the bright sun, Mr. Marshall Bass," he said.

Bass rose to a standing ovation that lingered after his arrival to the podium.

"It is with a great sense of humility and a feeling of humbleness that I accept this award," Bass said. "In accepting the highest honor that can come from an organization, I want that organization to keep in mind its humble beginnings and the path it has taken thus far."

Bass recalled meeting Pitt when he first came to Winston-Salem. Pitt came to his office early in the planning stages of the newspaper.

"The fruits have grown mightily since that day... I have always been taught that to whom much is given, much is required, much more, and this is spiritual in nature and comes from my upbringing," he said.

After losing his father at age five, Bass found role models in school principals and the parish priest, men who offered assistance to others and were well-respected in the community. These exemplary standards propelled Bass as an Army officer, and as senior vice president at RJR Nabisco, from which he retired in 1991. Since his retirement, Bass has provided moral and financial support to such worthy causes as the NAACP and North Carolina Baptist Hospitals. Last year, he endowed a \$100,000 United Way Fund to help youth service agencies such as the YMCA of Winston-Salem and The Best Choice Center. Through his volunteerism and philanthropy, Bass responds to the call to prepare youth for the future.

The presentation featured a video focus on each honoree, highlighting their contributions. Each honoree was awarded by a representative from the corporate sponsors of the banquet. Jeri Young, The Chronicle's managing editor, presented Vernon Robinson as the Newsmaker of the Year, marking the first time this award was given. Mary Williams of Novant Health assisted with the presentation, honoring a man who grabbed headlines as vice chairman of Winston-Salem's Public Safety and Public Works Committees. In addition to his duties as alderman, he heads the North Caroli-

na Education Reform Foundation which he founded in 1993 to aid charter schools. These schools will receive \$61 million in funding this fall.

The Volunteer of the Year Award went to Floy Howie who remains an energetic volunteer despite a disability that forced her into retirement almost ten years ago. She is chair of the Black Leadership Roundtable Education Committee and a block captain for the Happy Hill Neighborhood Association and Sims Center's precinct chairperson. Janet Frazier of Integon Corporation assisted with this award.

The Human Relations Award went to Crossing 52, a local organization that hopes to bridge the gap between blacks and whites. Six members of this organization designed a ten-week training program based on "An American Dilemma," a 1944 book by psychologist Gunnar Myrdal. Funded by the Winston-Salem Foundation, the pilot program will involve 24 people in discussions of race, racism and the plight of African Americans.

The Community Service Award went to DeValdean Penn who has committed his efforts to keeping at-risk students from falling through the cracks. For 14 years, he has been the in-school suspension director at Cook Middle School. Vickie McMoore of Food Lion gave this honor.

Special recognition awards went to Daniel Piggott and Keith Wilkes of Carver High School. Student test scores at Carver have improved substantially and the Yellowjackets clinched the state 3-A football championship with a perfect record of 16-0. Piggott, Forsyth County Principal of the Year, and Wilkes, Piedmont Triad Coach of the Year represent a banner year for Carver High School. Fannie Henderson, advertising director, "The Chronicle," and Canty Alexander, BB&T offered this tribute.

Also honored with a special recognition was Benjamin Ruffin. In 1998, Ruffin was elected the first African American chairman of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors. D. K. McLaughlin of Time Warner Cable did this honor.

Other special tribute awards went to Maybelle Hedgley, wife of the late Dr. David Rice Hedgley and Mary Chavis, the wife of the late Vance H. Chavis. Rev. Hedgley joined the Rev. W. K. McGee in founding Forsyth Jail and Prison Ministries and served as the seventh pastor of First Baptist Church. Chavis was one of Greensboro's best-known and best-loved educators and civil rights advocates. The Southeast Branch Library is named for him as a fitting tribute to one who believed in education as liberation.

Public Safety Officer of the Year John Gist became Winston-Salem's third African American fire chief in July. He climbed the career ladder, rising from fire fighter to chief of the 266-person department. He received a commendation for rescuing a citizen from a burning building and became the youngest chief officer in the local department and one of the youngest in the state. Michael Suggs of RJ Reynolds presented off this special tribute.

The Carl H. Russell Lifetime Achievement Awards were presented by Cedric L. Russell of Russell's Funeral Home and Helen Watkins of Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center. These awards went to Alderman Vivian Burke, the first female and first African American to chair the Public Safety

Committee and current Mayor Pro Tempore; Richard Davis of Davis Management Services and Specialized Marketing, winner of the Triad Black Business Expo's Pioneer Award and the Greater Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce's Small Business Advocate Award of the Year; Joe and Eunice Dudley, the builders of the largest black-owned manufacturing facility between Washington and Atlanta, launchers of Dudley Cosmetology University, Dudley Cafeteria and DCU Inn, a full-service hotel; Palmer Friender, the first African American assistant superintendent in WS/FC Schools; Maxwell Banks Grier, retired educator of 100 years; Atty. Annie Brown Kennedy, legal and legislative pioneer; and Felcia Mack a mother of six who continues to sacrifice time to the community through White Rock Baptist Church.

Ernie Pitt came forward to offer closing remarks. Humbled by the spirit of the evening, he offered many thanks to the community for their support of the newspaper over its 25-year tenure.

"Twenty-five years ago, I began a journey way beyond any dream I could ever have," he said. "I see people in the audience that I talked to the first time I drove to Winston-Salem. I am deeply proud of what you have made The Chronicle, because you are the ones who have helped to make it what it is, the community."

Pitt recalled the first paying subscriber to the newspaper was Dr. Raymond Oliver who paid \$20 for his subscription.



The Woodwind Quintet, members of the Winston-Salem Symphony, ushered in the procession of honorees.

"All of you out there have helped in many ways, and we will never forget from whence we came. That is why we honor you tonight."

Pitt noted that there will be differences in the paper throughout the year.

"You will see changes and improvements in the way we

deliver our services to you," he said.

According to Pitt, the staff of "The Chronicle" will continue to "inform, enlighten, encourage, and challenge the status quo." He described the black press as thunder, a talking drum, a harvest ritual, a grapevine, bearing the fruits of history. "Capturing the

rhythm of the street, the pulse of the people, helping to shape a better world for future generations," is what The Chronicle is about. "Twenty-five years ago, my wife and I ventured into uncharted waters... as you can see the Chronicle is still afloat... Together we will turn the tide," he said.

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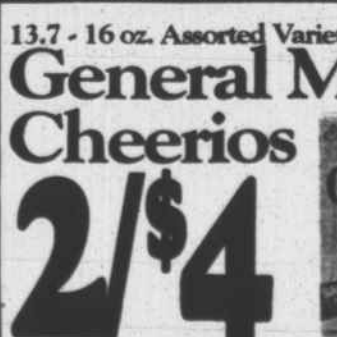
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Publisher Ernie Pitt greets honoree Benjamin Ruffin.