

Discovery of caskets spurs further debate about cemetery

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

For years, members of a group working to restore Odd Fellows Cemetery have claimed that a fence that separates the old graveyard from an apartment community is not an accurate indicator of the cemetery's boundaries. They claimed that the cemetery, a premier burial site for African Americans in the early 20th century, actually extends into the apartments' property.

Members of the group are saying, "I told you so," this week, after two caskets were unearthed last week on the property of Millbrook Apartments.

"That fence separates the cemetery from the apartments, but we have always believed that the cemetery did not stop at that fence," said Henry Stepp, president of the Odd Fellows Cemetery Reclamation Project.

A crew from Duke Power discovered the graves while digging at the apartment complex, which is behind the fairgrounds and Joel Coliseum. The crew covered the graves back up, according to police, and notified the apartment's

department is trying to contact local historians to try to identify the remains.

"Our chief concern is merely to find out who are in the coffins and that they belong there," said Stewart, who added that no one in the

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maintenance personnel about the discovery. The manager of the complex was notified on Monday and she contacted police.

Senior Police Officer Craig Stewart said the Police Department is 99 percent sure that the bodies in the coffins are from the nearby cemetery and that there was no foul play. Records for the cemetery were destroyed in a fire. The

department has experience with a case of this kind.

The apartments now known as Millbrook have changed ownership several times since they were built in the 1970s. The N.C. Housing Foundation has owned the apartments since 1996.

Community Management supervises the units. John Nichols, vice president of property management for

Community Management, said Community Management and the property owners are trying to help the authorities in any way that they can.

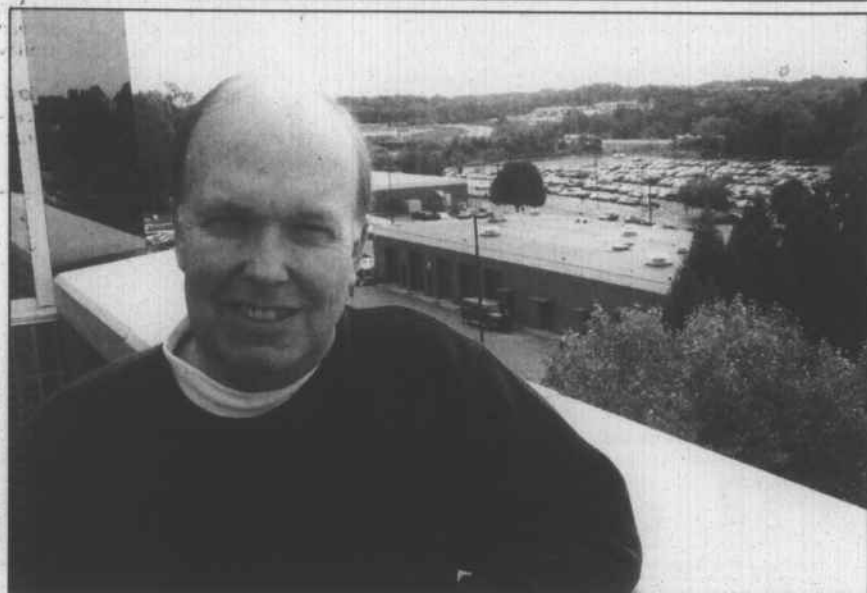
"The owners (of the property) are compassionate and concerned about this situation," Nichols said.

Many people pass by Odd Fellows Cemetery each day and do not realize that it is there. In the 1940s the cemetery began to fall into disarray after members of the Odd Fellows fraternal order, who took pride in maintaining the grounds of the cemetery, began to die off. Over the decades, thick trees, bushes and roots transformed the burial ground into something unrecognizable. Some headstones in the cemetery date back to the 1890s, and some historic African Americans rest there, such as G.W. Hill, one of the founders of Winston Mutual Life, and the Rev. R.L. File, the founder of Mt.

See **Graveyard** on A10



Efforts to improve conditions at Odd Fellows Cemetery have been ongoing for the past several years. Here a headstone is nearly invisible because of shrubs and vines.



Gary Green stands on the roof of one of the buildings on Forsyth Tech's Main Campus.

FTCC's Green to be installed

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Dr. Gary M. Green will be installed as the sixth president of Forsyth Technical Community College by the board of trustees on Thursday, April 4, at 2 p.m. The ceremony will take place at the Stevens Center.

Classes will be suspended for the day at FTCC so that students, along with anyone from the community, can attend the ceremony at the Stevens Center. A reception will follow at McMillan's Cafe at the Stevens Center.

During the installation, Green will unveil the strategic plan for the college. Forsyth Tech's strategic planning directions came from a group of community and college leaders.

Green officially took

office on July 1. Before arriving at Forsyth Tech, Green served as executive vice president of Calhoun Community College in Decatur and Huntsville, Ala., the largest community college in Alabama. While working at Calhoun Community College, Green was active in economic development, leading Calhoun's relocation of its Huntsville campus to Cummings Research Park and developing partnerships with NASA, the U.S. Army, and other high-tech research and development entities there.

He also was instrumental in the planning, design and development of the college's \$40 million Aerospace and Advanced Technology Park on its Decatur campus.

Green is personally com-

mitted to students, learning, and technology at Forsyth Tech. He said the college will continue to be committed to work-force development in the Piedmont Triad, as well as within North Carolina.

"Forsyth Tech was established over 40 years ago to provide the trade and technical training needed by the local community. It is imperative that we not forget the roots from which we came and why we are here. Technology will play an integral role in how we deliver our products," Green said.

Green also serves on the board of directors of the Greater Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce and the board of directors of Idealiance (Piedmont Triad Research Park).

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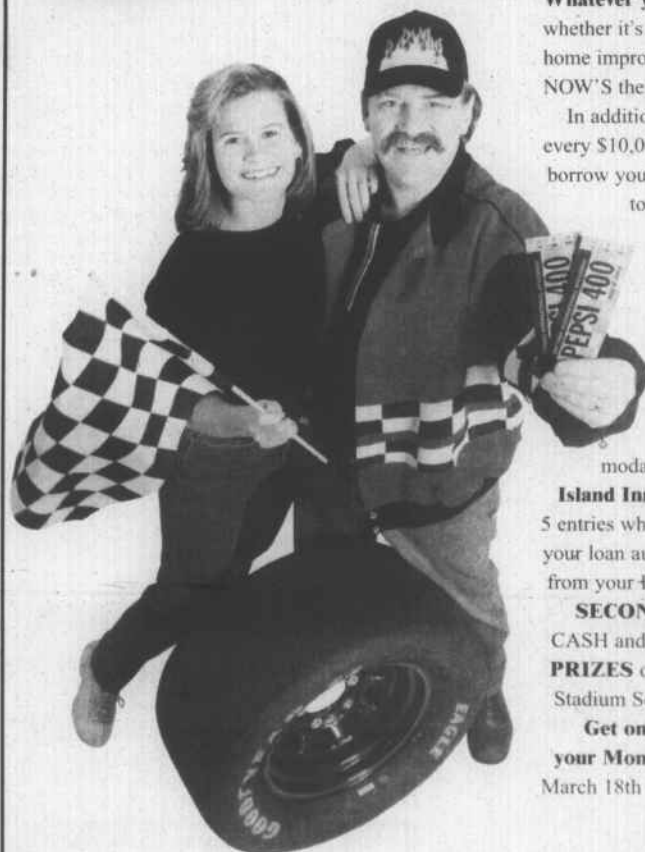
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