

A Taxing Matter

Manager of one tax service says employee of competing service got physical with her

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Liberty Tax Service and ComproTax are battling over more than customers these days. Later this month, the managers of each of the businesses will face each other in court.

Police were called to the neighboring tax businesses in Northside Shopping Center on Jan. 30 after Rosie Smith, the manager of ComproTax, said Tom Ramsey, who operates Liberty, walked into ComproTax and shoved her. Smith said the incident began after ComproTax employees put up a Carolina Panthers balloon display in front of the company's door. Smith alleges that Ramsey picked up the display and threw it into the ComproTax office, yelling his disapproval over the display.

"He said, 'I am doing you a favor. I am pitching them inside tonight, but if they are out there tomorrow, I am pitching them in the garbage,'" Smith told The Chronicle two days after the incident.

Smith said when she tried to take the balloon display back to its original spot, she was shoved in her chest area by Ramsey. In a

police incident report, Smith also claimed that the door was shut on her.

Smith said she was at first shocked by the incident. Her shock later turned to outrage, she said. She went to the Police Department the next day to file a

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- Rosie Smith,
ComproTax manager

complaint against Ramsey.

Ramsey denied that he pushed his way into ComproTax and shoved Smith.

"It is a false charge, and I think it has something to do with the competitive nature of our businesses and nothing to do with any criminal issues," he said. Ramsey said he was "bound by an agreement" from speaking about the case. He referred all

questions to his lawyer. Ramsey's lawyer, David Freedman, would say only that Ramsey will be pleading not guilty and contesting the charges.

Smith denies that competition between the two businesses is fueling all of this. ComproTax, a fairly new and successful African-American-owned tax service, has just been in Winston-Salem for a few months. Smith said she had no problem when her business moved in next door to another tax service.

"I could care less who is next to me. Business is business. McDonald's doesn't care who is next to them. They don't care if Burger King is next to them," she said. Smith said she thinks Liberty Tax was not happy with the new competition. She said Liberty has called the landlord on more than one occasion to complain about ComproTax for "minor" problems such as the size of the company's advertising signs.

A representative from Charlotte-based Development Management, the company that leases space to both companies, did not return phone calls before press time.

Ramsey and Smith are scheduled to be in court Feb. 23.

The black man and the Klansmen

Author will talk about how he crossed color line to befriend members of the KKK

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

A black man who has done the impossible by forming friendships with members of the Ku Klux Klan will give a free lecture Feb. 19 at 7 p.m. at Wake Forest University.

For his book "Klan-Destine Relationships," Daryl Davis explores racism by gathering information from Klan members, many of whom Davis has come to know. Davis says that he even developed friendships with some Klan members and has been able to help some of them change their beliefs.

In his lecture, "A Black Man's Odyssey into the Ku Klux Klan," he is expected to share exciting and amusing anecdotes about attending KKK rallies and holding surprise meetings with Klan leaders who were unaware he was black.

His methods have often made him the center of controversy in both white and black circles. But Davis has said that his detractors have often



Daryl Davis

become his supporters after he has proven his methods do work and issued the challenge: "I have Klan robes and hoods hanging in my closet, given to me voluntarily by members who have quit the Klan since coming to know me. That's what I've done to improve race relations. How many

robes and hoods have you received as a result of your methods?"

Davis is also a Grammy-award winning blues and R&B pianist who performs regularly with his own Daryl Davis Band.

The lecture will be held in Pugh Auditorium at 7 p.m.

Former slave to speak at Salem

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Francis Bok - escaped Sudanese slave, author, and American Anti-Slavery Group activist - will speak Tuesday at 7 p.m. in Shirley Recital Hall of the Salem Fine Arts Center.

Bok's presentation is sponsored by the college organization Black Americans Demonstrating Unity (B.A.D.U.) and is free and open to the public. Donations for the American Anti-Slavery Group will be welcomed and appreciated.

In 1986, Bok was abducted at age 7 during a slave raid on his village in southern Sudan. Bok witnessed the brutality and murder of the villagers, was strapped

to a donkey and taken north. Bok lived for 10 years as a slave to a northern Sudanese family where he was forced to sleep with the cattle he tended, endure regular beatings, and eat rotten



Bok

food.

About 27 million slaves remain in captivity worldwide, according to the International Labor Organization. In a quest to

further understand global inequality, B.A.D.U. has invited Bok to recount his experiences in captivity while educating Winston-Salem and surrounding communities about modern-day slavery.

Since his escape, Bok has dedicated his life to witnessing on behalf of those who are still in bondage. He has spoken on college campuses across the country, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, been profiled on the front page of the Wall Street Journal and on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition," and met with President Bush. Bok's autobiography, "Escape from Slavery," published by St. Martin's Press, was released in October 2003.

Principal Herman gets new job

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The principal of South Fork Elementary School has been named principal of the new Middle Fork Elementary School.

Brenda L. Herman, who has been an administrator in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth school system since 1998, said she is excited about the opening of the new school, which is under construction on the corner of Old Belevs Creek Road and Williston Road and will open in August

2004.

"I am looking forward to getting to know the students and parents who will be part of the Middle Fork family," she said. "I believe that a school should be a child-centered, developmentally appropriate haven for students and a place where parents, the staff and the community are all working together with the best interests of the children in mind."

Herman was assistant principal at South Fork Elementary

from 1998 to 2000, before being promoted to principal in September 2000. She spent nine years in Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Fla., working as a teacher, curriculum specialist and assistant principal. She also was a teacher in the Garland Independent School District in Garland, Texas, for five years.

She has a bachelor's degree from East Texas State University and a master's degree from the University of Central Florida.

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