

A GREETING FROM SANTA



Santa Claus waves to little Sienna Liles Fri-day night at the city's tree lighting ceremony in Corpening Plaza. Holding the little girl is for a unit, Debbie Gough, Hundreds of people attended the ceremony, which also featured music, food and special guests. To read more about the puest heli. event and other holi-day activities that took place over the week end, see page C1.

## **Homebuyers** beware



Pearl Mills and her son, Michael, stand on the front porch of their Lansing Street home.

Watt says with

### Legal Aid helps woman keep her house

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD THE CHRONICLE

Grady and Pearl Mills never missed paying a house payment in 20 years. They bought

their home on Lansing Drive in 1983 from a private seller, who agreed to pay the bank that held the mortgage in Texas. Even after Mr. Mills' death in 1999, Mrs. Mills continued to make every payment on time.

But Michael Mills knew something had

gone awry the day sheriff's deputies arrived at his mother's home questioning the whereabouts of Deborah Thomas, the widow of the man the Millses were buying their house from. The Millses' worst fears were realized when they found out that the mortgage had not been paid in nine months. Eighty-year-old Pearl Mills was days away from being evicted from her home even though Thomas insisted there was no foreclosure pending.

"My mom's money (was being taken) and wasn't (being) sent to (the bank)," said Michael Mills, who is a local contractor. "By the time I had found out anything, we had three or four days before a foreclosure was coming on the house."

See House on A9

Local man steps out on faith with

new Afrocentric political magazine

# **Chief says** residents can trust department

New case has some wondering if police are overzealous in their work

BY T. KEVIN WALKER THE CHRONICLE

Police Chief Pat Norris defended her department last week amid new allegations that a former detective may have withheld evidence in a 10-year-old investigation that led to a black man being convicted of brutally beating a white woman.

The brutal beating of Jill Marker in 1995 has come back to haunt the department after a series of articles in the Winston-Salem Journal contained statements from the lead detective in the case, Don Williams, that he held back information from the defense team of Kalvin Smith, the man who was charged and convicted of Marker's beating. Smith has always maintained his inno-cence. In the Journal series Williams, who is now retired from the department, also said that he was encouraged to with-hold some of his investigation by Assistant District Attorney Eric Saunders, who denied that charge in a Journal article.

It is the second time in less than a year that the actions of police and prosecutors have come under close scrutiny. Law enforcement is still trying to gain public trust after the release a year ago of Darryl Hunt, an African-American who spent nearly 20 years in jail for the rape and murder of Deborah Sykes, a white newspaper copy editor. Hunt was released from prison after DNA taken from the crime scene matched up with another man.



Police Chief Pat Norris has been head of the depart-ment for less than a year.

Hunt supporters had always believed in his innocence and accused the police and prosecutors of ignoring evidence that pointed to Hunt's innocence.

Perhaps fearing that lingering questions about the Marker case would become another debacle like the Hunt case, Norris and District Attorney Tom Keith wasted little time before calling in the State Bureau of Investigation to look into the claim that Williams withheld evidence. Norris and Keith explained why they took this action during a joint news conference last week

See Police on A10



## new senator CBC can make inroads

Watt

### Local congressman is unanimously elected to head caucus

### BY T. KEVIN WALKER THE CHRONICLE

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Rep. Mel Watt said that he was humbled by the unanimous vote Monday by his colleagues that will make him the next chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus

Watt - a six-term member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Charlotte will take over the

chairmanship from Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) on Jan. 4.

Around that same Time, Watt said, the 43-member caucus will hold a retreat to formally organize an agenda for the upcoming congressional session. Watt said it would be premature for him to talk about the agenda issues he would like to see the caucus pur-SUC.

"My role is to understand whit the priorities are of the caucus and to organize the caucus in a way that maximizes the opportunity for us to be successful in achieving those priorities," he said by phone from his-Washington office Monday. "It is not about Mel Watt's agenda as much as it is about lis-

See Watt on A11

BY T. KEVIN WALKER THE CHRONICLE

At 36, Lawrence Long Jr. isn't old enough to remember the time when Malcolm the time when marched,

Martin

preached

and Rosa

wouldn't

Yet Long

is hoping

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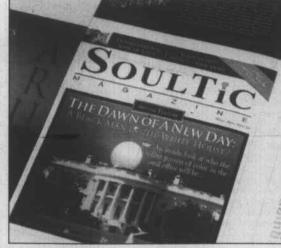
budge





reawak-Long

en the black consciousness that spurred the Movement Rights Civil through the pages of SoulTic, an ambitious political maga-zine he founded. The magazine's name is a play on the word politic. "Life experience has taught



me that politics affects our lives every day as blacks." by having a lack of knowl-Long said. "A lot of people in edge. (SoulTic) is a source of our community don't under-knowledge."

stand politics. People perish

The magazine had its coming-out party Saturday night at Meta's Catered Affair. More than a dozen of Long's friends, family members and supporters came out to help celebrate the release of the first issue 40 slick, color pages of politi-cal commentary diced with a pinch of arts, business and religion.

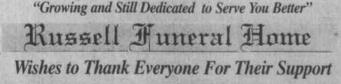
A city native, Long said he first came up with the idea for the magazine three years ago. The idea was God-inspired, he said. "It was a vision," Long said. "I saw it as clearly as I am seeing you right now.

With no political, journalistic or graphic design experience. Long truly stepped out on faith to start the magazine. He says he keeps abreast of pressing Cissues through research and friendships he has formed with people around the globe. He wants to include

See Soultic on A10



In Grateful Memory of Our Founders, Florrie S. Russell and Carl H. Russell, Sr.



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