

Mary Bumgarner is city's 2008 Employee of the Year

When Mary Bumgarner first came to work for the city, she was something of a novelty in her field. With the exception of secretaries, she and Cheryl Byerly were the only women working in the city's wastewater plants.

Thirty-three years later, Bumgarner is still messing with sewage and still enjoying her job – and, doing it so well that last month a panel of outside judges named her the city's employee of the year for 2008.

Bumgarner, a senior chemist at the Manson Meads Complex, came to work for the city in 1975 to fill a new position financed by a grant from the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. At the time she was just 18 months out of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and working at the Research Triangle Institute.

"When I got out of college I wanted to work in either space or the environment, so this suited me to a 'T,'" Bumgarner said. Besides, "I had just gotten married, and this is where my husband is from."

For a chemist, Bumgarner says, sewage treatment is a great field. She and her co-workers are responsible for analyzing plant samples for heavy metals and biological agents, such as fecal coliform, that show if the plant is operating correctly. She also analyzes samples from the

wastewater given off by industrial plants to ensure that they are not discharging more pollutants than allowed.

"Operating a wastewater treatment plant requires a lot of care and thought, or else it's just a tank in the ground to flow through before it gets to the creek," Bumgarner says. "It's a living thing. We actually use bacteria for our treatment process. You have to keep it alive, you have to care for it just like a child. You have to feed it, you have to take care of its waste; it doesn't just operate by itself...."

"Even after 33 years, about the time you start getting bored, something happens. Either you have new technology in the lab or new regulations from the state or the EPA, or there's an upset in the plant and you have some part in solving it."

In addition to her lab duties, Bumgarner maintains the database used by the operations staff and the Industrial Waste Control and Land Application sections, and she is responsible for the monthly

discharge reports that keep the Archie Elledge and Lower Muddy Creek wastewater treatment plants in good standing with state and federal environmental agencies, says Carol Bell, her supervisor.

It's a job with no margin for error.

"Mary's concern for the treatment plants is evident by her constant vigilance of the data," Bell said. "She is constantly checking for unusual results." And when the data turns up an unusual result, "she is relentless in finding the cause."

"It feels good to solve problems," Bumgarner said when asked about her doggedness. "Some people enjoy solving puzzles. I'd much rather do it in real life – I think it's interesting!"

Bumgarner is especially proud that her lab has been certified by the state, but it brings added responsibility. "State certification means we are following all quality control standards and that we can go into a court of law and testify to our results," Bumgarner said. Consequently, when she is compiling laboratory data, she is always asking herself, "What am I willing to testify to?"



CityPage

Winston-Salem

Fire Chief John Gist to Retire

A kindergarten trip to the fire station sparked John Gist's interest in firefighting, but it was a Christmas gift several years later that sealed it:

"My father gave me a radio," Gist said. "It happened to have the police bands on it. I was able to tune it to the fire frequency and kept it on all the time, even at night."

Gist has been listening to the fire frequencies ever since, and truth be known, he'll probably continue to listen in after he retires at the end of November, ending a 10-year tenure as chief of the Fire Department.

Gist has used his years at the top to work with the department staff to bring the department up to what he considers a "full-service fire department." To achieve this, the department added emergency medical response, hazardous materials response, and specialized rescue team to the expected duties of fire suppression, fire-safety inspection and public education.

In addition, the department's technology took a leap into the 21st

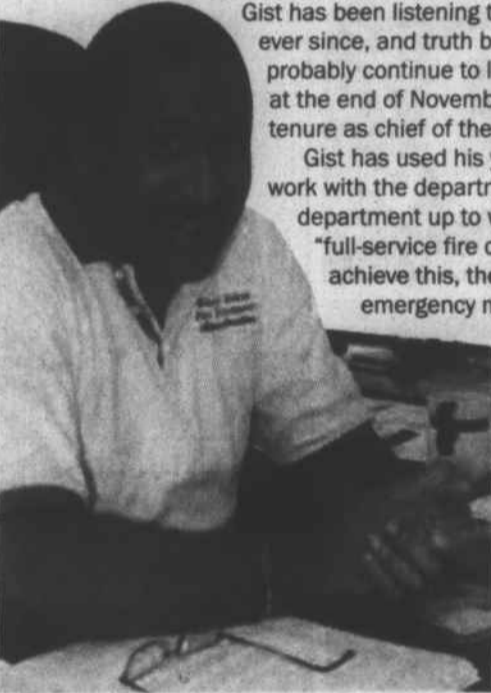
century with implementation of the Integrated Network – Fire Operations (INFO) system, a wireless network that searches for any pre-fire planning information that might be available (such as building floor plans, hazardous waste information, occupants with special needs) and displays it en route in the fire truck.

Gist had been fire chief for less than two months when the department faced the sternest challenge of his tenure: The disastrous fire that destroyed Reynolds Tobacco Factory No. 256, just a block from City Hall, in August 1998. "It was a defining day in the history of the department," Gist said. "It definitely showed the community what we were capable of – the things we were willing to do.... And in some ways it was a catalyst for the progress we have made. Our equipment improved after the fire, additional staffing was approved after the fire; some of our technology started improving."

There are also some intangible differences with the way things were when he started out, Gist said. "We eat healthier now. We're more conscious of physical fitness now. And education is looked at as more and more important than it used to be."

Gist began his career in High Point after graduating from Winston-Salem State University in 1977. At the time, High Point had an opening; Winston-Salem did not. His parents were "pretty quiet" about his decision, but an aunt was less restrained. "She said I was crazy." Some of his fellow firefighters in High Point agreed. "They tried to convince me that I didn't belong there, that (as a college graduate) I could do better for myself," Gist said. His response: "You're here; it must be OK." Eighteen months later the opening he sought in Winston-Salem came along.

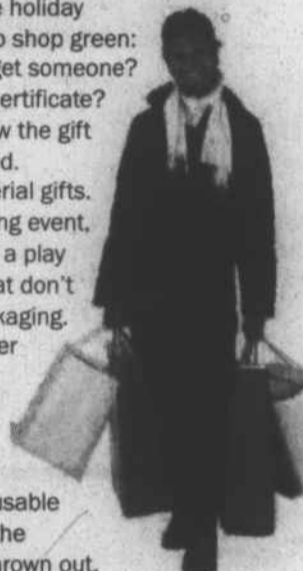
Thirty-one years after coming to work for the city, the aunt is still living, and with her nephew about to retire as fire chief, Gist says, she now allows that things "turned out alright."



Shop green on Black Friday

The day after Thanksgiving – sometimes called "Black Friday" – is the busiest single shopping day of the holiday season. Between Thanksgiving and New Year's, an extra million tons of waste are generated nationwide each week. Twenty-five percent more trash is thrown away during this holiday season than any other time of the year! This year, on Black Friday and during the rest of the holiday season, remember to shop green:

- Not sure what to get someone? How about a gift certificate? That way, you know the gift will be kept or used.
- Consider nonmaterial gifts. Tickets to a sporting event, movie, concert, or a play are a real treat that don't require much packaging.
- Thousands of paper and plastic bags end up in landfills every year. When you go shopping, bring your own reusable bags and reduce the number of bags thrown out. Tell store clerks that you don't need a bag for small or oversized purchases.
- Always look for items made with recycled content.
- Think durable! Consider how long an item will last before you buy it. For more tips on recycling, go to www.cityofws.org/recycling.



Santa Claus is coming to (down)town!

Get in the holiday spirit downtown Dec. 6 with a double-header of holiday fun.

First comes the annual Winston-Salem Holiday Parade. This year's parade will begin at 5 p.m. at Fourth and Poplar streets.

Then it's time for the 18th annual Tree Lighting Celebration in Corpening Plaza at First and Liberty streets. Join city leaders, area performers and mascots for a multicultural festival that has become a favorite holiday tradition. The fun begins at 6:30 with entertainment by the Greater Cleveland Avenue Christian Church Choir, the Academy of Dance Arts and Positive Image Performing Arts, the R. J. Reynolds High School Jazz band and acapella chorus, and the North Carolina Black Repertory Company. Other attractions include Miss Forsyth County and, of course, Old Saint Nicholas himself!

Joining the city and the Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership in staging the Tree Lighting Celebration are sponsors Harris Teeter, BB&T, 99.5 WMAG, the Winston-Salem Journal, and Capture Public Relations and Marketing.

For more information about the Holiday Parade call the Winston-Salem Jaycees at 777-3663; for more information about the Christmas Tree Lighting call the Mayor's Office at 727-2058 or the Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership at 354-1500.



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Register your boarding house, rooming house, or shared single-family house by Jan. 1

Owners of boarding houses, rooming houses, and houses shared by more than four unrelated people have until Jan. 1 to register their property with Department of Neighborhood Services.

Last year, the Winston-Salem City Council and the Forsyth County Commissioners passed zoning revisions that apply to any rooming house, boarding house, or shared single-family house in Winston-Salem or an unincorporated area of Forsyth County and is on land zoned for single-family houses (these districts start with the letters "RS") or on land zoned RSQ (a district for residential buildings ranging from single-family houses to quadrplexes).

The revisions require the owners of these buildings, both in Winston-Salem and in the unincorporated areas of Forsyth County, to register with the Winston-Salem Department of Neighborhood Services before Jan. 1, 2009, and to bring these houses into compliance with current zoning regulations by Jan. 1, 2012.

Owners who do not register by Jan. 1 will be subject to civil penalties of up to \$100 a day or criminal prosecution in Forsyth County.

Complete information about registering your property is available at www.cityofws.org/hns, or by calling City Link at 727-8000.

It's leaf season – grab your rakes!

Fall is here and the leaves are piling up! The Winston-Salem Sanitation division will provide three leaf collections to single-family households this year.

To insure that you receive all three collections, have your leaves raked to the curb by November 3, November 20, and December 29. Inclement weather may force a change in the leaf collection schedule.

- Follow these guidelines:
- Rake leaves to the edge of your yard, behind the curb, and not in the street.
 - Sticks, rocks, and other debris may damage our equipment. Please, leaves only.
 - Do not park vehicles on, in front of, or near your leaves.
 - Do not put your leaves on a tarp.
 - Remember, you MAY NOT burn leaves inside the city limits.

For more information about leaf routes and a map showing leaf collections, go to www.sanitation.cityofws.org.



East Ward Town Hall meeting Nov. 6

East Ward Council Member Joycelyn V. Johnson will hold a Town Hall meeting for residents of the East Ward at 6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 6, in the City Hall Council Chamber, 101 N. Main St.

Topics will include areas and issues that residents are concerned about, both in the ward and the city at large, and suggested goals and strategies to address those concerns.

Members of the city staff will attend the meeting and will be available to address residents' concerns. For more information call 727-2224.



Holiday Collection Changes

Thanksgiving: Observed Thursday and Friday, Nov. 27-28.

Garbage: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday collections moved up one day; Friday collection on Monday, Dec. 1.

Recycling: Thursday and Friday collections postponed one day; Thursday on Friday, and Friday on Saturday.

Yard carts: Monday and Tuesday collected on Monday, Nov. 24; Wednesday collection on Tuesday, Thursday collection on Wednesday.

Christmas: Observed Thursday and Friday, Dec. 25 -26

Garbage: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday collections moved up one day; Friday collection on Monday, Dec. 29.

Recycling: Thursday and Friday collections postponed one day; Thursday on Friday, and Friday on Saturday.

Yard carts: Monday and Tuesday collected on Monday, Dec. 22; Wednesday collection on Tuesday; Thursday collection on Wednesday.

New Year's Day: Observed Thursday, Jan. 1

Garbage: Thursday collection on Friday, Jan. 2; Friday collection on Monday, Jan. 5.

Recycling: Thursday and Friday collections postponed one day; Thursday on Friday, and Friday on Saturday.

Yard carts: Thursday collected on Friday, Jan. 2.

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