

## An example of how not to celebrate Black History Month

As the associate editor of The Chronicle, one part of my job is to review and edit every story that goes into the newspaper. I take that job very seriously as I believe our readers deserve to read stories that are well written, accurate, grammatically correct and of interest to our community. When I say "our community," I am referring not only to the East Winston and the African American community, but also to the Winston-Salem community, because I believe we are all connected and to prosper and thrive, we must support each other.



Judie Holcomb-Pack

However, I must also point out that I am a white woman working among an all-black staff at a black newspaper. My nearly six years of working at The Chronicle has educated me to a culture that is somewhat different than the one I grew up in, although I grew up on Waughtown Street in Southside and proud to be a Parkland grad (Go Mustangs!). Outside of work, many of my friends are white.

That being said, we recently received a submission honoring Black History Month from Lt. Gov. Dan Forest touting a forgotten black man, Thomas Oscar Fuller, the first African American elected to the N.C. Senate in 1899. It started out with the interesting fact that, according to Forest, "There's a framed poster from the year 1899 hanging in the Lieutenant Governor's office, with small portraits of all of that year's members in the North Carolina Senate. You wouldn't recognize the names anymore. But the reason we keep it on the wall is the man hidden in the very bottom right-hand corner. He is listed as Senator T.A. Fuller, though his name is printed incorrectly. He's the only Senator not listed in alphabetical order."

Wow, Forest had me captivated! A mystery ... why was his name misspelled ... why was he not listed in alphabetical order? I kept reading. Forest explained:

"It's time he got his due. Thomas Oscar Fuller of Warrenton was the first black American elected to

the North Carolina Senate. Indeed, he was the only black person elected to the Senate until 1968. Just as he is treated in the poster, he was treated in real life. Sen. Fuller was seated in the back corner of the chamber, next to an open door that subjected him to insults and threats during official proceedings. He was not permitted to serve on any committees. Still, he left an indelible mark on our state's history. Born just two years after the Civil War, Fuller had already earned a bachelor's and a master's degree from Shaw University and served his community as a school teacher, principal and Baptist minister before his election to the Senate. Despite his isolation in office, Fuller was credited with preserving the number of schools serving black children in North Carolina and increasing the frequency of circuit court hearings statewide. He vigorously defended black Americans' right to vote. One of his speeches was described by the press as having "swept the audience away on wings of oratory."

I was hooked! What an inspiring story to tell during Black History Month. And that's when Forest left me reeling. As I continued to read his article, a creepy feeling came over me.

Had he just ended the story there, it would most certainly have made the Forum section of The Chronicle. But my conscience would not let me

approve this piece. The next sentence stated, "I take pride in and draw inspiration from the fact that Sen. Fuller was a Republican."

I take offense to Dan Forest for mentioning this in an otherwise great story during an election year in which he is running as a Republican. In fact, he continues by listing "... others worthy of note" who also happen to be black Republicans.

He ends by saying, "As your Governor, I look forward to memorializing leaders like those through monuments at the State Capital and other public grounds. We must make sure that North Carolina's black leaders finally get their due."

It is my personal opinion that Dan Forest is pandering to the black media and our readers. I can't help but wonder if Forest sent this release to only black newspapers in our state.

A great opportunity to educate us about an unsung hero ... lost due to partisan pandering.

And that leads me to question if that's the real reason that they keep that poster on the wall.

Mr. Forest, a bit of advice from a former Toastmaster: Know your audience. Know your subject. Know when to stop talking.

*Judie Holcomb-Pack is the associate editor of The Chronicle.*

## 4 decisions teach heart lessons

BY SARAH FEDELE  
AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

Betty Speaks, health services coordinator for the City of Winston-Salem, says she has learned a lot in her life. She is not talking about her nursing education or the lessons she has learned throughout her 40-year career as a registered nurse. But her own body has given her some life lessons that she shares with other women in our community.

"I have a cardiac condition called supraventricular tachycardia, which means that occasionally my heart would race out of control," shared Betty. "I had learned all the little tricks to help make it stop and over the years, they had been effective."

However, one morning, while home alone in November of 2015, she had an episode that lasted over 35 minutes. "Eventually I got very dizzy and I felt as though I was going to pass out. So, here I am, a trained nurse for over 40 years. Did I call 911? - Oh, no! I lay down on the couch and propped my feet up with pillows just to keep from passing out. And I laid there until the racing stopped." Betty shakes her head and laughs at herself a little. **Decision number one.**

"When I could collect myself, do you think I called my doctor and said 'Doc, this is something I hadn't had before?' Or even drive myself to the ER?" Betty asked. "Oh no, I got up, got dressed and drove myself to work. As if the City of Winston-Salem can't operate without me." **Decision number 2.** "My decisions could



Betty Speaks

Submitted photo

have ended tragically if I had passed out while driving. I could have killed myself or taken an innocent person with me," she reflected.

When Betty got to work and sat down at her desk, the racing started again. "This time it came on with a vengeance. My secretary, who was talking to me at the time said, 'I could tell that something was wrong. It seemed as though you were looking through me.' She said she could tell I was leaving her," remembers Betty. She slumped over on her desk, sweating profusely and nauseated. "When my medical staff said they were going to call 911, do you think I said, 'Oh yes, it's time to call?'" Betty mused. "Oh no, I said, 'Wait - wait - wait,

it will stop.' Thank goodness, they didn't listen to me and they called EMS immediately." **Decision number 3.**

When she got to the hospital, she was treated with IV medications that stopped the racing. Then in a few weeks, she had an ablation procedure. During this procedure, they were able to find the place on her heart causing the arrhythmia and deaden that place of the heart to stop the erratic heart rhythms.

"After I was officially released from my cardiologist, I knew it was time for me to make some lifestyle changes. I started eating more fruits and vegetables, and a lot of those came out of my Daddy's garden. I also started

See Heart on A9

# Scott Andree Bowen

Winston-Salem City Council SW Ward

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