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Downtown Construction Getting Mixed Reviews From Merchants

By Audrey C. Lodato
Post Staff Writer

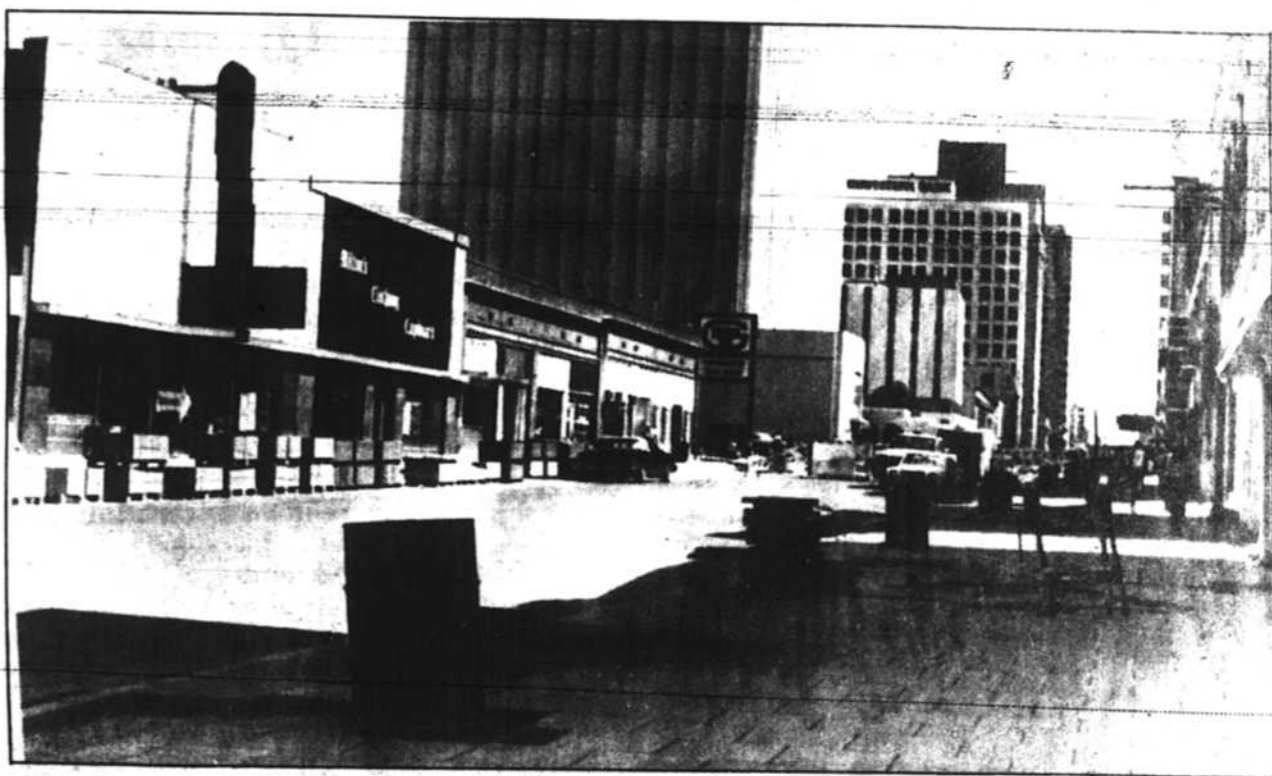
On-going downtown construction is getting mixed reviews from the merchants whose fates and fortunes it is affecting. The inconvenience of torn up streets, the question in the public's mind about parking availability, the dislocation of bus stops - these have all contributed to concerns about the present viability of downtown as a shopping area.

Brownlee Jewelers is presently waging a battle to remain at its downtown location on S. Tryon. According to the owner Al Rouso, the city is condemning his property in order to construct other retail establishments on the site. And that should not be, contends Rouso. The businessman feels he is being discriminated against. "They're going to take out retail that caters to minorities and put in retail that probably won't," he claimed.

Attorney Miles Levine is representing Rouso and another owner whose property is also being condemned. "The city passed a bond resolution several years ago to build Independence Plaza Park," Levine explained. "The park was to contain a retail structure because the city feels for a park to be viable there needs to be retail activity." According to Levine, the two property owners had been negotiating with the city and the NCNB Community Development Corporation to be a part of that retail, but negotiations fell through when such participation was made dependent on the property owners agreeing to a condemnation value of their property. That should have been a separate issue, Levine believes.

At issue is the city's right to condemn and then use the property for other retail establishments. Under law, property can be condemned for public use. In this case, the attorney contends that the property is to be retail development with a courtyard, rather than a park with incidental retail.

Rouso has a lot of questions about "progress" in Charlotte. "Every store that's gone out of business was operated by a minority, whether it be black, hispanic, Jew, Greek, or Oriental," he said. "What is the master plan?" Rouso asked. "What's to bring people into the city? Everyone complained about



S. Tryon, downtown: construction still underway.

people crowding into doorways. Now there's no one to complain about. They're going to hide those people who ride the buses," he charged.

Brownlee isn't the only business affected by "progress."

Ruth Stamey, owner of the recently closed Stamey's Restaurant on N. Tryon, blames present and past construction on her business' demise. The problem began, she said, "when they closed 12th Street and made the connector." The restaurant's parking lot went 85 days without an exit, according to Stamey. Truckers, which made up a large part of the restaurant's trade, had no place to park. But that wasn't all. "Customers would complain that the lot was full," she said. "It turned out city employees were parking on the lot and taking up spaces. I finally had to get a wrecker service to show them I meant business," she remarked.

Stamey's was able to survive that earlier construction project "by much prayer," the proprietor attested. But not for long. According to Ruth Stamey, just when business was picking back up, construction began on Tryon. "They closed Tryon one day after they opened 12th," the restaurateur

Second in series

reported. "You'd never dream construction would play a part in closing you down," she said.

"It seems to me the business person doesn't have any rights."

For Dave Richards of Vintage Girl at 123 E. 5th St., downtown construction has been a catastrophe. If it weren't for his successful fur sales, the clothing part of the business would have had to close, he said. "Customers with furs on lay-away call and say they're afraid to come downtown," Richards stated. Further, he feels the transit and overstreet malls serve to segregate office workers from "street people" and blacks from whites.

A survivor of several relocations, Lucielle's Vogue has been downtown since 1925. For the past several years, the store has been located in the Overstreet Mall. "We had to scramble for a new location," company president Richard Roskind said of the move to the mall. "My rent is more than three times what it used to be. Clearly a number of people who were downtown merchants were unable to find new acceptable locations, or the price

was out of their range. A number of merchants who really kept downtown alive are no longer here."

Roskind believes that when present construction is completed, the downtown area will be the most attractive part of Charlotte. In the meantime, however, business has suffered. "We were most seriously affected last month," Roskind revealed. "We suffered a precipitous drop in August, but we've picked back up the past week."

Roskind said customers have been leery about coming downtown. "They think twice before visiting us," he said, "but those who do, find adequate parking." According to Roskind, moving the bus stops has affected his business. "We always got substantial business from the people who ride the buses," he remarked.

Al Manch's Fields Jewelers is another survivor. A former occupant of the old Independence Building for 30 years, the store moved to its present location at 300 N. Tryon in 1981 when the building was torn down.

Business has been good at the present location, according to owner Al Manch. "I'm getting some old customers back who had been afraid of coming downtown," Manch said. "I'm tickled to death to see some people come back who haven't been here in years."

Manch is one hundred percent behind the city's latest efforts in defending the transit mall concept. he said the goal is to eliminate congestion and give up the square as a transfer point. "People used to be harassed coming across the square," he said. He continued, "It's going to be a magnificent thing when it's finished. It is going to help everyone."

Manch views construction as a challenge for downtown merchants. "You can't just sit back and wait for something to happen," he said. "You have to be aggressive and positive. The smaller merchants have to make up their minds to promote downtown."

Although transit mall construction was not the reason Sterchi's moved out of center city, the absence of other retail in the area had an adverse effect on the furniture store, which had been situated at 425 S. Tryon. According to Sterchi's Jerry Marlin, the company tried to stay downtown as long as possible. "We'd been 43 years at that location," Marlin noted. "There was hardly any retail in that area and we had no walk-in traffic. Everyone had already moved away from us before we moved," he stated.

Still there is hope. A new addition to the downtown business community, Just Choco- See DOWNTOWN On Page 16A



Paulette Ashe
.....First Union Bank clerk

Paulette Ashe's Good Looks Attract Attention

By Jalyne Strong
Post Staff Writer

Paulette Ashe's striking good looks and tall, slender figure attract a lot of attention. At least such has been the case in Ashe's experiences with The Charlotte Post.

A clerk with First Union Bank, Ashe was first recognized by The Post when she was picked as a participant in the newspaper's annual "Best Dressed" promotional issue. When she arrived for the interview, many Post employees took notice of her attractiveness and crisp, confident manner.

Later when a model was needed to compliment an article on Montaldo's fashions Ashe quickly came to mind.

She carried out that assignment with a professional air and much poise and it wasn't long before Ashe was requested to model for The Post again. This time she was to appear in a full-length white fur coat for an Anastasia Furs advertisement. The result, the sultry model and the luxurious mink look like they were made for each other.

Says Ashe about all the attention, "It's great. I'm grateful to The Post for these experiences. I've never received so many opportunities." An extra bonus is that Ashe has been asked by Anastasia Furs to participate in their fashion shows.

She perfected her modeling talents when she attended TRIM modeling school two years ago. Since then Ashe has appeared in "quite a few local fashion shows." But she admits her exposure in The Post has sparked an interest in

becoming more involved in commercials and print modeling. Up to now she hasn't signed with an agency; however, she is considering doing so now.

She enjoys modeling, Ashe maintains, yet the profession is not exactly what she would call an ambition. "It's very competitive and the market in Charlotte is very limited," she explains. Plus, Ashe is the mother of an eight year old daughter. "A modeling career wouldn't leave me much time to devote to her," she points out.

Instead, Ashe sees her modeling endeavors as a means to get to her ultimate goal of free enterprise. "Through modeling I hope to meet people who can help me to gain footage in the business world. I want to pursue real estate," she main- See ASHE On Page 10A

For September 21

Dr. Greene's Inauguration Scheduled

Dr. William H.L. Greene will be inaugurated as the seventh president of Livingstone College and Hood Theological Seminary on Friday, September 21, at 10 a.m. at Varick Auditorium on the Livingstone campus.

Livingstone College, which was founded in 1879, is the only four-year institution of higher learning affiliated with and substantially funded by the A.M.E. Zion Church. The president of Livingstone College also oversees the seminary, which grants the Master of Divinity degree in Religion and the Master of Religious Education.

Dr. Greene, 41, actually took office on July 1, 1983. His year-old administration has already resulted in some major changes and improvements at the college and seminary.

Dr. Greene's early accomplishments at Livingstone and Hood include: Securing a 57 percent combined increase in the annual allocation to the college and seminary from the A.M.E. Zion Church going from a total of about \$700,000 for both in 1983-84 to approximately \$1.1 million for the 1984-85 term; an intensive campus beautification and renovation program that meant that student enrollment is up from 665 last year to over 750 for this Fall; an average 150 point increase in the SAT score of



Dr. William H.L. Greene
.....Livingstone's seventh president

freshmen entering this Fall 1983. Dr. Greene's dedication to the work ethic has resulted in increased

TURTLE-TALK



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