

Editorials

The Charlotte Post

Bill Johnson, Publisher Emeritus

Gerald O. Johnson, Publisher
Jalyn Strong, Managing Editor
Dannette Gaither, Office Manager

Bob Johnson, Co-Publisher
Jaquelyn Carr, Production Manager
Fran Farrer-Bradley, Advertising Manager

Published Every Thursday

Reflections On The Past

Thirteen years ago, the late affable Willie "Bill" Johnson assumed the helm of *The Charlotte Post* to make "the voice of the black community" a medium for "good news". While much of the nation, the world and even parts of our own city were in chaos-war, street crime, domestic violence and drug abuse, Bill Johnson, in his quiet, unassuming way, continued as both publisher and editor to print only "good news". As Post staff writer Loretta Richardson wrote last week, Mr. Johnson was "often criticized for his reluctance to delve into the negative side of the black community or into more controversial issues..."

What was more important to know about Bill is that he was a man of good character, integrity, honesty and strong enough in his personal convictions to not let people sway him from what he thought was right. Surely, Bill Johnson could have bowed to his so-called critics and begun to print "bad news" which might have even increased the Post's sales and circulation and created a few more

superficial friends. Instead, Bill Johnson lived on with his own beliefs.

As we pause and step back from the fleeting moments of history, we can reflect on the strengths of Bill Johnson's character and convictions and begin to understand just why *The Post* has reached a 13th Anniversary under the Johnson Family. It was in part for this reason that Gerald O. Johnson, co-publisher and president, with his brother Bob Johnson, said, "It's not a celebration, but a reflection. This is a time when we look back at where we have been while also looking forward to see where we must go. As we move forward, we will begin celebrating." In looking back we see the legacy of Bill Johnson's character and sense of conviction. As we look forward we see new and greater challenges for service as a voice beyond the limits of the black community in the coming complex world of the 21st Century.

The Charlotte Post reflects on its past and celebrates the challenges of its future.

School Planning, Where Were We?

Recent revelations about the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System's physical development planning first and foremost raises the question: "Where were we when many of these planning decisions, or the lack of them, were taking place?"

Too few people have listened to Mayor Gantt's years past warning about unbalanced growth. Even fewer people listened when some voices in the black community raised concerns about the ever-increasing closing of inner-city schools.

All the finger pointing does little to respond positively to the situation that our community is in on this vital issue. The bottom line is that all of the actors involved in public school planning appear to have different priorities. Coupled too with the fact that the School Board in more recent years has had its difficulties with the County Commissioners about money, has less than full confidence in the Planning Commission's 2005 Plan with regard to the location of schools and the problems with these two make any kind of meaningful understanding with private developers nearly hopeless.

Furthermore, neither the County Commissioners, the Planning Commission nor the developers have shown adequate sensitivity to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System's priorities over the past 15 years, particularly with regard to a busing plan to maintain racially balanced schools and the closely related effort to continue improving academic performance in all schools. From the standpoint of the human condition, these school priorities should weigh heavily upon decisions in financing, planning and the de-

velopment of new or expanding existing neighborhoods which in turn affects the location of schools.

In order to off-set population shifts, to balance busing and to economize in the cost of school construction and programming, some cities have reportedly built three or four senior high schools nearly adjacent to each other in the center of the city. Thus, all students are bused about the same distance. Some high quality, high cost academic programs could accommodate students from more than one high school. Furthermore, the public school libraries at such an educational complex would be far superior to that of scattered high schools. As with the high quality, high cost academic programs, consolidated libraries would greatly enhance academic performance. As we look down the road toward the year 2020, Charlotte-Mecklenburg might better serve its public school needs with four clusters of four senior high schools each to balance busing, enhance academic performance and reduce some of the costly duplication of athletic facilities required at scattered site high schools. Elementary and junior high school youth could attend more neighborhood schools and substantially reduce the need for busing.

Until we can get the chaos out of public school planning-long range planning-by getting County government, the Planning Commission and private developers to blend their priorities with that of our school needs, both public and private funds and other resources will be lost through inefficiency resulting finally in a lower quality of education for all of the country's children.

Queen City Rangers Win

For the fourth year in a row, the Queen City Rangers have captured the championship of the Triple County Baseball League. In the 12-team league stretching from Statesville to Rock Hill, the Rangers went into the champion series with the best overall won-loss

record, 13-6, and swept three straight games from the Davidson Jets by scores of 14-9, 20-10 and 9-7.

Congratulations, Queen City Rangers, and we applaud the Davidson Jets for a good try and wish them well next year.

History Lessons Can Be Used In Future

American heritage would be forgotten without history buffs. Some history buffs publicize their hankering to walk through time warps. But who are these people and what motivates them to attempt to partake in life of other centuries?

In a restaurant overlooking the City of Chattanooga, prior to a business dinner, a history buff once gave me a brief course on Civil War history. This chap pointed out a cemetery which contained the remains of 4 Union spies who were hung during the Civil War. He also spoke of a slave dungeon still intact in the city.

History was not one of my favorite subjects, so I felt little desire to visit these historical sites. Nevertheless, a cabinet salesman, Chuck Lindvig of A & C Wholesale Distributor of Chester, PA sparked my interest with a picture of himself, dressed in a Union uniform on the cover of a magazine, where he was in a Civil War reenactment battle. Lindvig spoke of his role as a Union sergeant during Civil War battles with the zeal of a person who really had experienced these events.

In the dog days of summer, I visited replica Civil War (Confederate and Union) camp sites at The Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation at Ridley Creek State Park in Media, PA. The soldiers lived under actual Civil War battle conditions before putting on a couple of battle reenactments. It was difficult to accept they were wearing wool uniforms in late July and sleeping on straw in the middle of a cow pasture where I had to dodge dung to reach these camp sites.

In chatting with a few of these soldiers, I learned that everything



Miller Says
By Sherman Miller

was a detailed replica or original equipment from the period. They were obsessed with reproducing exact Civil War living conditions. I possessed the question why they put themselves through this discomfort.

"Love of history." "This is our hobby." "We have a common bond that is Military history." "Go out to have fun." "(Spend) life as a soldier." "We enjoy it - it is our high." "Educate the public," were some reasons given for

their passion for history. Although one chap admitted that you had to be a sadomasochist.

I shared a little of their enthusiasm whilst talking with Mr. M. Wilson from New Jersey who was dressed like President Abraham Lincoln. His resemblance to President Lincoln was astonishing. Wilson gave the obvious answer to my why question: "... look like him."

Intentionally focused on non-commissioned officers and front line soldiers to get the common man's view. I found these people came from all walks of life such as businessmen, professionals, and so on.

Another link between some of these history buffs was member-

ship in an organization called, "Sons of the Union Veterans." My maternal grandmother had told me stories of how her grandfather served on burial duty during the Civil War. These historians corroborated her stories on the role of the black soldier whilst expressing strong interest in gaining black membership.

Nonetheless, I did feel discomfort when Andy Waskie of the Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry spoke of their plight in preserving the artifacts of the Grand Army of the Republic. G.A.R. was a fraternal order founded after the Civil War for Union veterans. Waskie spoke of attempting to gain funding from the State of Pennsylvania for a museum of Union artifacts.

I posed the museum idea to other people and I sensed some embarrassment over G.A.R. museum's appearance. Their emotional gestures disturbed me greatly as I recalled walking past the first class edifice of the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, VA.

Although I have not visited the G.A.R. Museum in Philadelphia, I feel compelled to encourage Pennsylvania Governor Bob Casey to honor the men who died in the Civil War to keep the United States of America free on this the 200th Anniversary of our Constitution. Since this G.A.R. museum membership is open to all people regardless of race, sex, or lineage, I trust that the State of Pennsylvania will turn this museum into a significant asset of Pennsylvania's tourist industry.

Hopefully warehouses have not become the museum for other American heroes' artifacts throughout the U.S.

Airline Disasters Clouding The Skies

Guest Editorial

By Michael D. Covington

The recent crash of Flight 255 and other such disasters have triggered speculation about the safety of commercial flight. Auto deaths still outnumber air fatalities but the huge gap is slowly but steadily being reduced. And yes, the cause for concern is heightening as air travel has become more of a necessity as opposed to a nicety.

The "Black Box" that we so often hear about after a crash represents, in many instances, the last utterances from an ill-fated crew. Not once have I read of any last remarks that realistically describe the final seconds of life. For once, I'd like to hear in the news that a pilot said something in his final transmissions that could save the lives of other air travelers.

In recent years, I have had the opportunity to fly quite often. My approach to flying prompts me to dress very professionally and to project an image of disinterest for the goings on around me. Of course, this facade is in place to disguise my obvious fear associated with being 10,000 feet in the air. The first turbulence or air pockets that are experienced trigger recollections of all the air traffic incidences of which I'm familiar. I can always count on one incident years ago in Dallas to give me sol-

ace. While attending a convention in the summer of 1985, a Delta flight crashed, killing most of the plane's passengers. One of the survivors recalled the experience and I've never felt the same about flying. As she remembers, the captain announced that some minor wind and storm activity were present. Shortly thereafter, the portion of the plane in front of her exploded and flew off into the distance while the tail section fell slowly to the ground and rolled to a halt. She unbuckled her seat belt and walked away. The only survivors were in the smoking section at the time of the explosion. That told me something right away: Smoking has saved lives!

This incident points out the uncertainties of air travel and also the possibilities. My fate would have been obvious in this instance since I don't smoke. I'm sure that my Dallas friend will keep a cigarette or two handy for good luck and that's sad.

As we become more affluent and air travel becomes a way of life, the possibilities of being involved in an air disaster are more likely. I won't be comfortable on a plane again, without some assurance that the pilots and air traffic controllers are as competent as technology and training will allow. With all of the furor surrounding

the private plane getting into the same air space with the President and planes nearly flying into each other, one has to wonder if truly competent individuals are in control.

Is it my imagination, or are we really noticing more "near misses" and actual crashes since the PATCO strike and subsequent firing of all of that union's air traffic controllers. The number of fatalities would indicate that we are at greater risk now than before. Alcoholism and other substance abuses were prevalent among that group's ranks but the fact remains-fewer lives were lost.

I recently took a tour of a time share condo at a nearby resort. The guide was among the controllers fired by the President. He was still very bitter about losing his job but indicated that he felt great satisfaction with studies indicating that current controllers were not as good as the old. If the President wants to admit having made a mistake, this may be a good place to start.

Meanwhile, I'll continue to fly with great concern for my safety and for yours. But don't be at all surprised if travel by train becomes a more fashionable mode of transportation for the frequent flyer.

Rann III Wanted For Human Relations

Special to the Post

This editorial is reprinted from the Winston-Salem Chronicle, Thursday, August 27, 1987. Emery L. Rann III is a native Charlottean living in Raleigh, NC.

The city's Human Relations Commission, after extensive searching, researching and interviewing of prospective candidates, has submitted the name of Emery L. Rann III as its top choice for executive director of the 9-year-old anti-discrimination law enforcement agency.

Mr. Rann, Gov. James G. Martin's state director of minority affairs, is a well-qualified candidate. The Chronicle urges the city to put the good news into effect and hire Rann immediately.

Last week, the Chronicle reported that a special personnel committee of Human Relations Commission board members, on their own time, sifted through 52 prospective candidates and came up with Rann, "a very top candidate," confirmed one board member, "that we felt strongly about."

Rann is an excellent choice and his eventual selection would come not a moment too soon.

The commission has been without an executive director since May, when Herman L. Al-

dridge, its first and only chief administrator, was fired by City Manager Bill Stuart.

In an information-intense society, sometimes good news travels as fast as bad news. The Emery Rann recommendation is one example. A lawyer from a prominent Republican family in Charlotte, Rann is known among friends and colleagues as a stern, competent administrator who is not known for keeping his mouth shut in the face of injustice and adversity.

Rann studied law at Howard University, the birthplace of civil rights law. (Thanks to such noted scholars as Charles Houston, Robert Carter, George E.C. Hayes and Thurgood Marshall). In the minds of search committee members, there was no question that he could not only understand the law, he could also accomplish its enforcement.

In an age where race, sex, age and ethnic discrimination still often rears its ugly head, the city needs an executive director at the Human Relations Commission's helm yesterday. That is why the commission has recommended such a worthy candidate.

This is serious business for the commission and the city administration should treat it as such and hire the commission's first choice, Emery Rann, a man they "feel strongly about."

