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REGIONAL

Voter education needed to maintain N.C. progress

By Brian Powe
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

SALISBURY — A Rowan County civil activist says that if North Carolina suffers from its decisions at the polls, the blame should be placed on the indecision of those who did not cast their ballots.

Struggling with the results from the election, Gregory Moss believes that it is a mis-

conception for African-Americans to think that former Charlotte mayor Harvey Gantt was not elected senator because he did not receive enough support from the community.

"Statistics show that Harvey Gantt received 4 out of 10 white votes. Anyone running for an office, whether they are white or black, getting 40 percent of the white vote in the state of North

Carolina should not have a difficult time being elected to their desired position."

The past moderator of the Rowan Baptist Association, Moss attributes some of the confusion that North Carolina voters are confronted with at the polls stems from the lack of education. The ordained minister says that "having a large group of people who are functionally illiterates and not nec-

essarily politically astute leads to awful decisions on election day."

Moss says this type of conduct is the offspring of North Carolinians still hanging on to the good ole' boy mentality.

"There are persons in this state who still aspire to reclaim the days of times past. We have many who embrace the statutes and principles of the confederacy of generations long gone," he said. "And, then

when you try to apply the principles of the 1700s-1800s to a 20th century society, you will more often than not end up with disorder."

The indecision to try to change one's personal position begins with someone being conscious in all ways of life, Moss said.

"The reason we fail to attempt to cause or start a change in society is because

most people in North Carolina cannot see beyond their own situations," he said.

"That mind set is caused by observing the demands for tobacco falling and these huge plants and mills that once carried our communities closing down."

The pastor of Zion Baptist Church said, "People stop looking and thinking holistically, whether its internationally, See VOTER on page 7B

Employee:
Avis is
racist

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WILMINGTON, N.C. — A former manager at an Avis rental car outlet owned by a Wilmington man says she told corporate managers of complaints of racist practices as early as 1993.

Three black women have filed a lawsuit against Avis and John Dalton, who is the owner of five Avis outlets in North Carolina and South Carolina. The women claim they were denied service, while former employees said Dalton trained his staff to avoid renting to black people.

Civil rights lawyers who helped file the suit said Avis Inc. knew about complaints but did nothing to stop Dalton. Avis said earlier this week that executives were not aware of any racial discrimination by franchise owners.

Cindy Smith, a former manager at Dalton's Avis outlet in Wilmington, said Thursday she told regional managers during a New York training seminar in the early 1990s that her boss discriminated against black people and low-ranking military personnel.

They did nothing, Smith told The Morning Star of Wilmington.

"Some of them laughingly said, 'Well, you're from the South,'" said Smith, who worked at Avis for nine months.

Smith said she told the managers that Dalton had a policy of charging black customers and low-ranking military personnel a higher deposit when they tried to rent a car. Many car rental agencies charge deposits, but lawyers say Dalton hiked the charge for black people.

Smith is believed to be the first Avis employee to publicly claim she went to corporate managers and told them about Dalton's policies, the newspaper reported.

Three former managers who signed statements for the lawsuit told of similar policies involving potential black customers. Dalton told them that black people likely were drug dealers and wouldn't pay for damage to cars, the employees said.

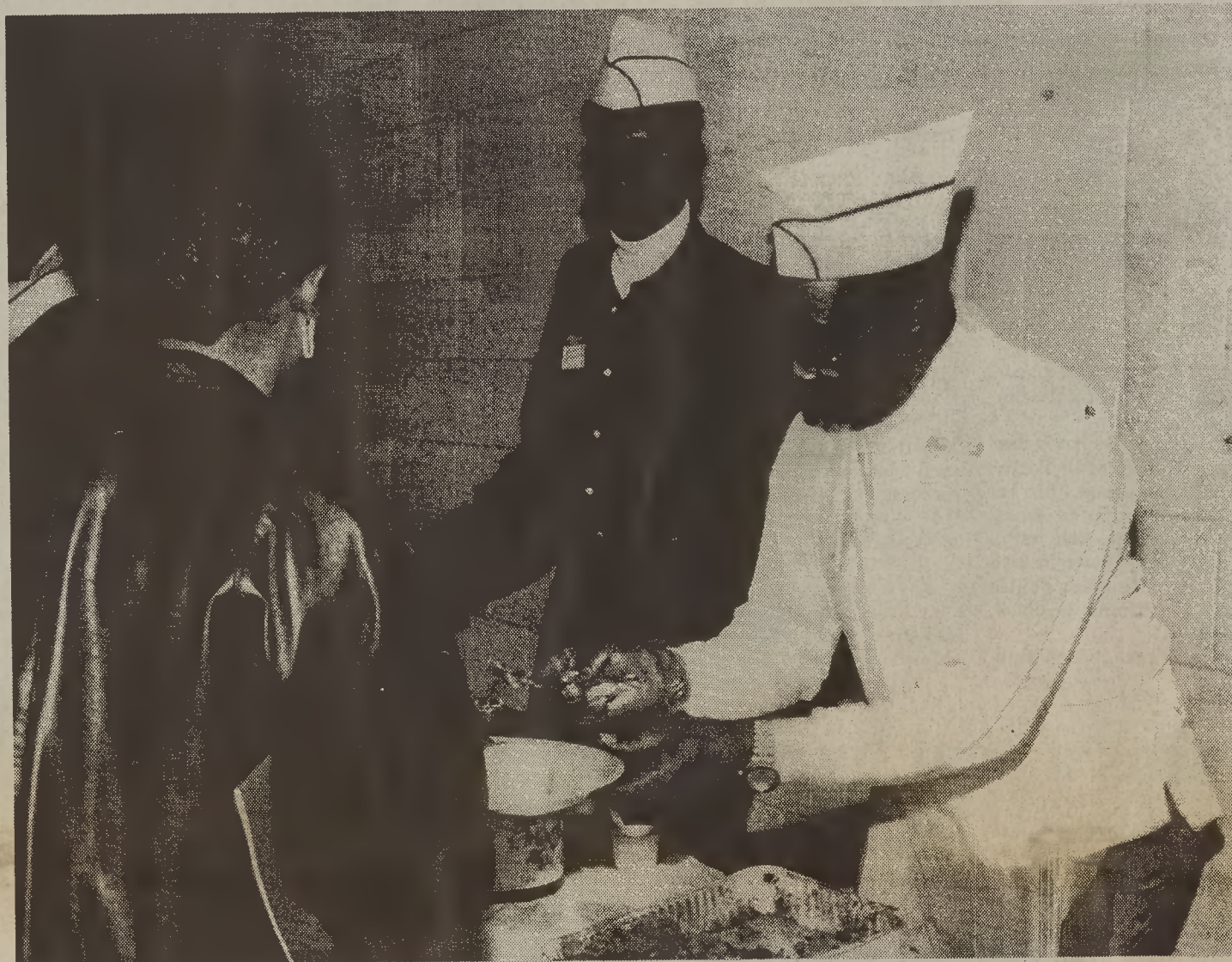
Smith was not one of the ex-managers who signed the statements.

Dalton denied allegations of racism.

The former managers said they received nearly three dozen calls from the Avis reservation center in Tulsa, Okla., regarding complaints from blacks who were denied car rentals. Often, the customer-service representatives were aware of Dalton's reputation, the former managers said.

Joseph Vittoria, the chairman and chief executive officer of Avis Inc. said Dalton will lose his franchise if the allegations against him are true. Vittoria said the company will investigate the allegations for itself.

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PHOTO/SUE ANN JOHNSON

James Bullard (left) prepared gumbo for 100 Men Who Cook at First Presbyterian Church last week, while Grady McMiller dishes up cherry venison.

100 Men
cooking
dishes

Gaston County men whipped up some down-home cooking last week in Gastonia.

The men prepared some of their favorite dishes for "100 Men Who Cook," a benefit for Third Street Presbyterian Church's building fund. Proceeds go toward building a new church after the county relocated several government buildings on Third Street Presbyterian's property.

The 107-year-old church was awash in the smells of culinary excellence, with participants preparing dishes ranging from ham and barbecue to desserts.

Herbert L. White

Child didn't make up beating: prosecutor

By Bruce Smith
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MANNING, S.C. — A 9-year-old black child who said he was tied to a tree and beaten by a white couple had no reason to make up the story, a prosecutor told a state court jury Monday.

"It has completely changed his life," Assistant Solicitor Ferrell Cothran said, pointing to Dwight Miller, who sat in a tall leather chair at the prosecutors' table. "You assess why he would be here if this hadn't happened."

Benjamin and Betty Mims of the New Zion community are charged with second-degree

lynching and aggravated assault and battery in the Jan. 5 incident. A jury of seven whites and five blacks began hearing testimony Monday in the case, which is expected to last several days.

Authorities allege Dwight was tied to a tree, beaten with a crowbar and choked with a belt and that a shotgun was fired past his head.

Cothran said the evidence would show that the Mimses, who are neighbors of the Millers, accused the boy of stealing something from their pickup truck and then assaulted him.

Dwight testified that Mims grabbed him and told his wife to "come outside and hold my

feet. Then they put me into the truck," the boy said.

He said they drove him to the woods and carried him to a tree. Then Mims hit him on the toe with a crowbar and Mims and his son, Benji, each fired a shotgun blast at his head, Dwight said.

Mrs. Mims put a belt around his neck and squeezed it so hard he passed out, Dwight said.

But defense attorney Chip Finney, who is black, argued that the child had told several versions of the story.

"Everything the solicitor told you about what Dwight said is just that — what Dwight said," Finney said, telling jurors they would hear testimony that the

Millers waited almost six hours to contact police.

The first witness, Dwight's aunt, Patricia Miller, who lives with the family, testified they had no car and no phone and feared for their lives if they tried to walk past the Mimses' house to summon help.

She said the Millers waited until a friend stopped by that evening after a funeral and borrowed their car.

But she also testified her family had no trouble with the Mimses before the incident. And she said there was no blood or tree bark on Dwight's white shirt and yellow pants when he came home.

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UNC close
to settling
bias caseSeeks pact
with school's
housekeepers

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the UNC Housekeepers Association are close to resolving their 5-year-old discrimination dispute, the school's chancellor said.

UNC-CH and the Housekeepers Association Steering Committee "have agreed in principle to resolve their disputes and have made substantial progress toward finalizing that agreement," Chancellor Michael Hooker said Friday.

Hooker said more time was needed before presenting a definitive agreement to the presiding administrative law judge.

John Harkavy, a Greensboro attorney and court-appointed mediator, said he hoped the dispute could be resolved in the next 10 days to two weeks.

A discrimination lawsuit was filed in 1991 against the university by the housekeepers and some other black UNC workers.

The housekeepers are asking for better pay and benefits, better training and opportunities for promotions and an end to armylike supervision, the housekeepers' attorney, Al McSurely, has said.

Hate crimes on rise in South Carolina

By Jesse J. Holland
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Hate crimes were rising in South Carolina a year before Ku Klux Klan members were arrested for burning black churches and drive-by shootings, according to the latest law enforcement statistics.

Charles Shepard, FBI spokesman in Columbia, said preliminary figures for 1995 show 26 hate crimes reported to the U.S. Justice Department from South Carolina.

That compares with 20 reported to the State Law Enforcement Division in 1994, SLED spokesman Hugh Munn said. Although the FBI says it has a report of 33 hate crimes

for that year, it could not explain the discrepancy with SLED's figures.

In 1993, there were 25 hate crimes statewide, the first year for which SLED has figures, Munn said.

Local law enforcement agencies report suspected hate-related crimes to SLED, which reviews them with the FBI annually to see whether they match federal definitions.

A hate crime is one that stems from the target's race, religion, sexual orientation, nationality or other characteristics a person cannot or is unlikely to change.

So far this year, two Klan members pleaded guilty to burning black churches and assaulting a mentally impaired black man. Two others were recently arrested and

charged with the drive-by shooting into a mostly black crowd at a nightclub near Pelion.

Gov. David Beasley has ordered prosecutors to make hate crime prosecution a priority. State Attorney General Charlie Condon says he wants the law to include stiffer penalties for hate crimes and funding for a unit in his office to prosecute them.

"Recently, it appears that the climate for hate crimes has gotten worse," Condon said.

Breakdowns by race are not available yet for last year, but in the two previous years hate crimes against blacks led all categories in South Carolina, with eight in 1994 and 12 in 1993, Munn said. There were seven hate crimes against whites in 1994 and eight in

1993, Munn said.

Homosexual-related hate crimes came in third, with three in 1994 and two in 1993, Munn said.

Tawanda Shaw, a researcher at Klanwatch, a division of the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Ala., said the numbers tend to be underreported.

"I think when you talk about the FBI's hate crime statistics, the thing that has always been real problematic has been the reporting," she said. "Hate crime reporting for law enforcement historically has always been spotty."

For example, Arkansas had seven reported hate crimes, Mississippi six and Louisiana seven in 1995, while neighbor-

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