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Political plots thicken

Democrats, Martin going separate ways for 1998 elections

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Politicians on both sides of Mecklenburg County's ideology line — three if you count maverick Democrat



Martin

Hoyle Martin — are gearing up for what could be a bruising election next year.

Democrats announced Monday that former county commissioner

Jim Richardson, 71, will come out of retirement to seek an at-large seat on the board. That move is designed to squeeze Martin out of support he could've counted on for an at-large campaign.

On Tuesday, Martin, the incumbent in District 2, announced he will run as an independent for one of three at large seats.

Community activist Norman Mitchell has said he will seek



Mitchell

District 2's seat in the 1998 election. He is expected to make a formal announcement Monday.

Martin, never one to shy away from controversy, angered Democrats and

some African Americans by breaking with the party to help elect Republican Tom Bush commissioners chairman. Martin, who was elected vice chairman, said he voted to oust former chairman Parks Helms because Helms was supporting a homosexual candidate who planned to run at-large.

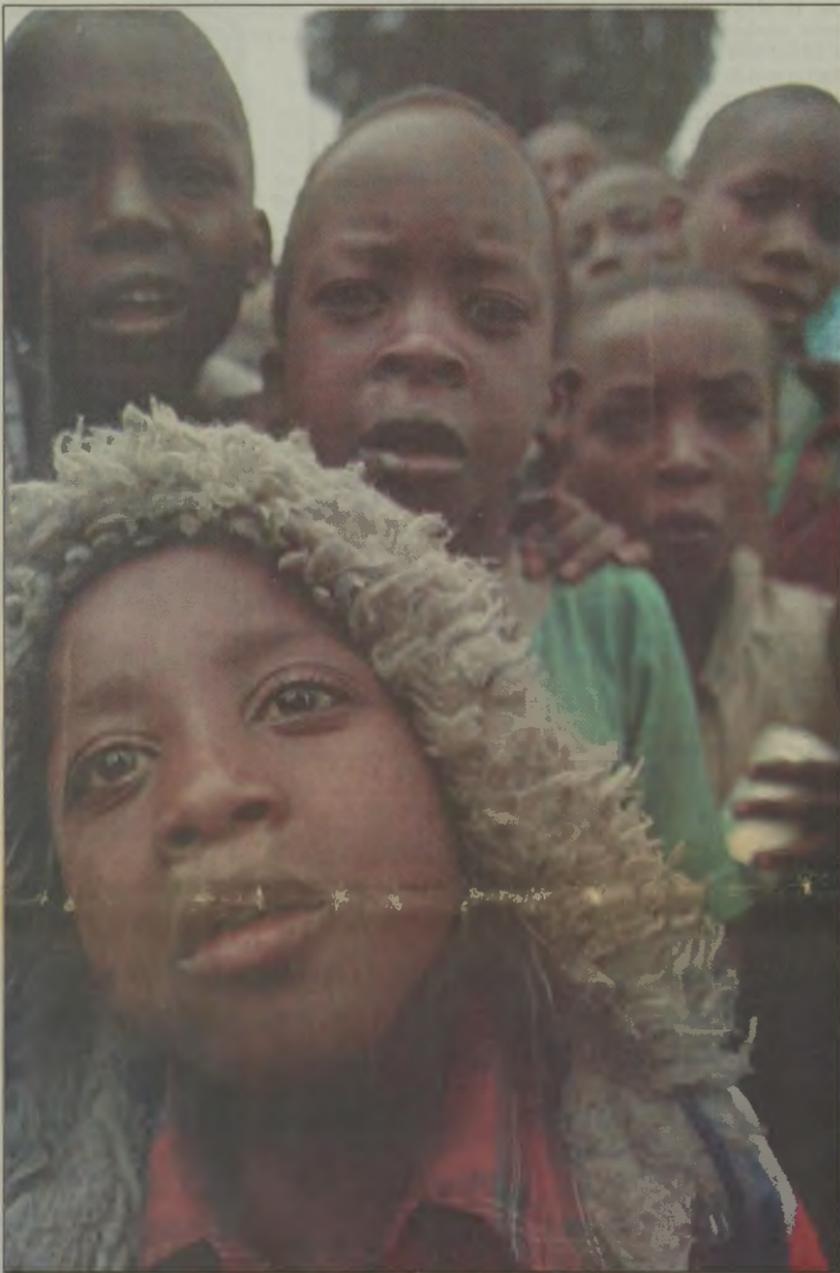
Martin fumed in reaction to comments made in the wake of his Dec. 3 vote, including attacks by several westside political activists who suggested that he join the Republican Party.

The brouhaha began last spring when Martin broke away from the Democrats to join the so-called "Gang of Five" and cut county funding for the arts.

Martin said the Arts and Science Council supported the play "Angels in America," which had a homosexual theme.

Many African Americans were curious about Martin's vote then, but accepted it as an expression of a personal view. However, the See RACE on page 2A

Survivors of Congo violence



APPHOTO/ BRENNAN LINSLEY

Congolese Tutsi refugee children who survived an attack last week by Hutu extremists guerrillas at Mudende camp, pass the day at another refugee camp, in Nkamira, Rwanda, Sunday. Over 100 children were reported to have been among the roughly 300 people who were killed when Hutu rebels entered the Mudunde refugee camp.

U.N. can't verify massacre

By Robert H. Reid
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS — U.N. investigators withdrew from a town in northwestern Congo after residents protested their investigation of alleged massacres of Rwandan refugees.

Juan-Carlos Brandt told reporters Monday the United Nations was not sure when the investigators could return to Mbandaka, where the team began field work last week after months of delays.

Brandt did not say when the team left Mbandaka. He said they had returned to Kinshasa,

the Congolese capital, and was awaiting instructions.

The U.N. team is in Congo, formerly called Zaire, to investigate

allegations that President Laurent Kabila's forces massacred

thousands of Hutu refugees during the seven-month war that ousted Mobutu Sese Seko from power last May.

Kabila has denied his fighters

massacred refugees. The United States has tied any direct economic aid for reconstruction in Congo to Kabila's cooperation with the U.N. investigators.

Last June, U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson secured a promise from Kabila that the team could carry out its investigation. But the work was delayed for months because of what the United Nations said were repeated obstacles raised by Kabila's government.

The government finally agreed to let the team visit Mbandaka, where they were

See U.N. on page 2A

disintegrating bullet."

And while Cogswell didn't examine Brown's corpse, Ruddy wrote, he (Cogswell) did interview colleagues who were part of the examination team. Cogswell also reviewed reports, records and photographs of the crash scene and victims.

Other Cogswell findings include the Air Force ignoring a two-step investigation process that calls for a safety board, in which all crashes are treated as suspect. Instead, Ruddy wrote, the Air Force went immediately into an accident investigation of the crash.

Shortly after the crash, the Bosnian airport maintenance chief was found dead, reportedly a suicide victim, the expose said.

Ruddy also wrote that investigators report the hole in Brown's

See CRASH on page 2A

School board looking for a replacement

Winner will fill the remainder of Susan Burgess' unexpired term

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Wanted: Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board member.

Qualification: Ability to satisfy parents' demands for integrated schools and neighborhood schools; discipline in the classroom and high academic achievement; and upgrading inner city schools while building new ones to meet soaring growth in the suburbs.

Pay: Not much.

The school board must appoint a new board member since former chair Susan Burgess resigned last week after a coup elevated Arthur Griffin to the top slot and John Lassiter to vice chairman.

Griffin, the second African American to chair the nine-member board, was passed over for the chairmanship in 1992 when he was the top vote-getter. He said he sought to oust Burgess after fellow board members approached him about the position.

Tuesday night, the school board established the procedure for replacing Burgess by Jan. 13. Interested citizens should apply before Dec. 30. Applications are available at the Education Center. Applicants will have an opportunity to address the school board on Jan. 6 during a special public hearing.

The board will make nominations and vote a week later at a regular board meeting. The successful applicants must get a majority of the votes of board members present and voting.

The new school board member could tip the balance closer to or further away from the ending of forced integration with busing toward neighborhood schools. Currently, three of the eight members are considered neighborhood school advocates.

Report: Former U.S. Commerce chief's death could have been cover-up

By Elaine Hegwood Bowen
CHICAGO NEW CRUSADER

After the death in April 1996 of U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, some in the African American community said the crash of his plane in Bosnia reeked of conspiracy.

Now, more than 18 months later, a Pittsburgh Tribune Review expose, while not clearly substantive, points to tragic circumstances.

A hole in Brown's skull could have been a gunshot wound, wrote reporter Christopher Ruddy. Ruddy interviewed several major players in the ensuing plane crash investigation, which didn't prompt an autopsy of Brown's corpse.

One reason that an autopsy wasn't performed is because White House officials were pressured to speed up the return of Brown's body to the United States for his funeral, Ruddy wrote.

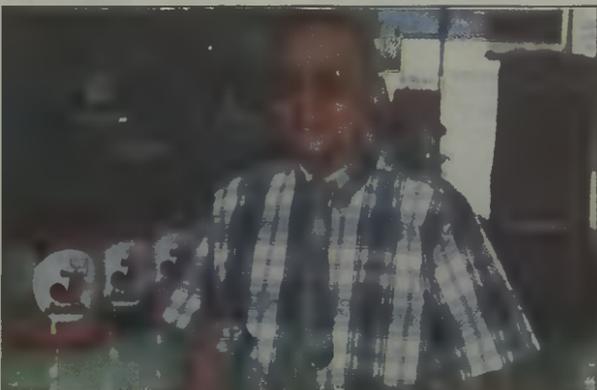
According to Ruddy, Lt. Col. Steve Cogswell, a doctor and deputy medical examiner with the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, said that evidence that Brown may have been murdered has been ignored. A 22-volume report issued by the Air Force said the crash, which killed Brown and 34 business executives and others, resulted from pilot error and faulty navigation equipment.

Cogswell said an X-ray showed small metal fragments inside Brown's head and he claims according to Ruddy, that this X-ray has disappeared.

Ruddy wrote, "The pathologist said the fragments could be what pathologists sometimes call a 'lead snowstorm' pattern from a



Brown



FILE PHOTO/PAUL WILLIAMS III

Elbert Patterson Phillips, owner of Queen City Pharmacy, and later Queen City Sundries, died Monday at age 85.

Elbert Phillips, owner of westside pharmacy, dies

By Ken Koontz and John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Elbert Patterson Phillips loved the children who frequented his westside drug store and sundry shop, a community landmark.

He'd even call their parents rather than police when he caught kids stealing. He'd often give young thieves a lecture on his own.

They loved him for it.

Phillips died Monday, after a brief illness at age 85. He ran Queen City Sundries on Beatties Ford Road until he got sick just before Thanksgiving.

Phillips, fondly called "Doc," ran Queen City Pharmacy and later Queen City Sundries for four decades. Queen City Pharmacy opened in 1946 on East Second Street in Charlotte's old Brooklyn neighborhood.

Working as a clerk and a deliv- See PHILLIPS on page 3A

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