

Mayor dies (Continued from page 1A)

dinner, Gentry seemed to be in jovial spirits and feeling fine.

"He ordered a very rare tenderloin steak and joked with the server about what he meant by rare," Leach said. "When the meal came, he took a bite and began to cough into his napkin. We asked if he was okay and he nodded yes.

"Thirty seconds later, I recognized something was not right as his head slightly slumped forward. He was still sitting when he died. We placed him onto the floor."

In an urgent rescue attempt, Leach mistakenly thought at first the mayor had choked. He immediately proceeded to perform a maneuver to dislodge any substance. When Leach wrapped his arms around Gentry, he said, he could not feel a heartbeat. Leach realized that Gentry had apparently suffered a heart attack. Simultaneously, restaurant staff located a cardiologist dining in the restaurant who came to help while medical technicians and an ambulance were rushing to the emergency call. A server and Jackson performed CPR under the supervision of the cardiologist, but Mr. Gentry could not be revived.

"There was no pulse," Leach said. "Everything possible was done to save him. By that time, we knew that he had passed. It occurred between 8:45 to 8:50 p.m.," he said.

"I remained calm, but I was shaking. I called Mrs. Gentry from the restaurant and told her to meet us at the hospital because Bob had some medical trouble. At the hospital, I finally broke down crying. It was overwhelming."

Leach thanked the support of people at Beekeepers for coordinating rescue efforts, saying the owners refused to allow his group to pay for their meals after the tragedy.

Mr. and Mrs. Gentry celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in June.

"I remembered when he left home that morning that I told him to have a good time," she said.

"He hollered that he loved me, and I told him I loved him. Those were our last words.

"I am truly grateful Bob died doing something he enjoyed and did not suffer or have to linger on. He would not have wanted that."

She said he had just received a flu shot and had a cold last Thursday

morning. She said she was somewhat worried because her husband did not feel well. She commended his friends for trying to save him.

Honoring the mayor's life of service to his fellow man, the Rev. Michael Elliott spoke to an overflowing group of mourners at his funeral held on Saturday at Raeford United Methodist Church.

During the service, Elliott said Gentry had "taken the tears of the whole town." He described Gentry as a man of energy and drive.

"He lived well and fully and had a great love for his community, family, nation and church," Elliott said in tribute.

Gentry was also honored by remarks of Congressman Robin Hayes, a close friend of the mayor's. Among his pallbearers were Raeford city councilmen Eddie McNeill, mayor pro tempore; Earl McDuffie; John Jordan; Wayne Mills; and James McLeod.

Gentry served as a city councilman from 1977-1990. He was a stickler for not only starting the city council meetings on time, he preferred to begin the sessions early. One of his greatest challenges was the recent battle waged to prevent 21,000 acres of Hoke land from being placed in a one-mile buffer around Fort Bragg. He was working on an alternate joint land use plan with the Hoke Preservation Committee when he died.

After an "absolutely close" relationship that encompassed 30 years, Raeford City Manager Mike McNeill said he was stunned by Mr. Gentry's death.

"Bob was a super guy, and he was well liked by everyone," McNeill said. "I think there will be a tremendous vacuum with him gone. I do not know if it will ever be filled.

"He broke the mold. He was always upbeat, and wherever you traveled with Bob he knew everybody."

McNeill admired Mr. Gentry, saying he had never known anybody exactly like the mayor.

"He told you what he thought, and he never beat around the bush," McNeill said. "He was truly a special brand."

Gentry was serving his fourth term on the Lumber River Council of Government's board of directors and was chairman at the time of his death. In 2002, he was recognized as the

LRCOG Co-Board Member of the Year. Gentry nurtured a close relationship with his best friend and colleague, L.E. McLaughlin Jr., a Hoke commissioner, who died nearly three years ago. He fondly referred to McLaughlin as his "brother."

"Even those who did not see eye-to-eye with Bob could count on receiving a helping hand if they were down on their luck," LRCOG officials said. "Race or social background was really not important to Bob."

"What was important was the kind of person you were. At every statewide meeting, Bob took the opportunity to sing the praises of his city, county and regional (LRCOG) council.

He constantly sought opportunities to improve the conditions of his home community and its citizens."

Gentry was a past president of the Raeford Hoke Chamber of Commerce and on the board of directors of The Lions Club. He was also a member of the N.C. Joint Regional Forum, an advisory group to the NC League of Municipalities and the Association of County Commissioners.

He was employed as a supervisor with Burlington Industries for 17 years, transferring constantly around the state until he finally returned to Raeford with Mrs. Gentry. He served as the proprietor of Gentry's Tire and Muffler Center on South Main Street for 25 years, selling the firm in 1998.

He was born in Person County to the late Melville D. and Mable Whitt Gentry. A tobacco farmer, his father died in an automobile accident in Wagram when Gentry was a youth. He attended McLaughlin Elementary School, but moved back to Roxboro with his mother, who supported her family after his father's death. After marrying Eleanor, the mayor returned to Hoke County, where he remained for 40 years.

He is survived by Mrs. Gentry; two sons, Gary Gentry of Raleigh and Mark Gentry of Raeford; a daughter, Marsha Robeson of Stafford, Virginia; two sisters, Hazel Niven of Raeford and Almeida Garrett of Roxboro; and seven grandchildren.

Pat Allen Wilson, editor, contributed to this article. A special tribute to Mayor Gentry is on page 1B and another will be published in an upcoming issue of The News-Journal.

OBITUARIES

Lena M. Eleby

Mrs. Lena Mae Eleby, 69, of 1524 McPhaul Road, Shannon, died Tuesday, October 28, 2003 in Cape Fear Valley Medical Center in Fayetteville.

Funeral services were conducted at 1 p.m. Saturday, November 1 at the home with Evangelist Mary Brooks officiating. Burial was in Elby Cemetery.

Survivors include five daughters, Evangelist Mary Brooks, and Doris McNeill, both of Decatur, Georgia,

Aline Hence and Darline Eleby, both of Raeford, and Gearline Eleby of Durham; one son, Jimmy Eleby of Raeford; five sisters, Lannie H. Bratcher and Clara Hollingsworth, both of Raeford, and Barbara A. Monroe, Gloria Hollingsworth and Dorothy L. Godfrey, all of Red Springs; four brothers, Robert L. Hollingsworth of Wagram, George Hollingsworth of Red Springs, Lacy Hollingsworth of New York and Roger Hollingsworth of Texas; 20 grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren.

Doby Funeral Home of Raeford served the family.

James G. McMillan

James Green McMillan, 73, of 419 McMillan Avenue, Red Springs, died Wednesday, October 29, 2003 in his home.

Mr. McMillan was born on January 8, 1930 to the late Douglas and Annie Belle Williams McMillan. His wife, Marjorie Lovett McMillan, and a son Douglas McMillan preceded Mr. McMillan in death. He was a member of the Red Springs Presbyterian Church, a 32nd Degree Mason with the Red Springs Masonic Lodge #501 and the Sudan Temple in New Bern, Mecca Shrine Club. He was in the National Guard for 11 years and was a member of the Red Springs Fire Department for 30 years. Affiliated with Red Springs Ford Dealership, he was a farmer in Robeson County.

Funeral services were conducted at 11 a.m. Friday, October 31 in Red Springs Presbyterian church held by the Reverend Michael McGhee. Burial was in Alloway Cemetery with full Masonic Rites.

Survivors include two daughters, Jo Anne M. Schell of Lumberton and Janie M. Goudy of Houston, Texas; and four grandchildren, Brandon Schell, Jamie Schell, Dyan Goudy and Hannah Goudy.

Memorials may be made to Masonic Home of Children, 600 College Drive, Oxford, NC 27565.

Crumpler Funeral Home and Cremation Services Inc. of Red Springs served the family.

Marvin Chavis

Marvin Chavis, 69, of 360 Chavis Road, Red Springs, died Thursday, October 30, 2003 in his home.

Funeral services were conducted at 3 p.m. Sunday, November 2 in Pine Grove Holiness Church in Raeford held by the Reverends Samuel Henderson, Hedrick Jones and Jimmy Locklear. Burial was in Chavis Family Cemetery in Red Springs.

Survivors include his wife, Annie Mae Chavis of his home; two sons, Tony Marvin Chavis and Donny Chavis, both of Red Springs; three daughters, Cara Mae Spaulding of Red Springs and Nicole Locklear and Crystal Chavis, both of Maxton; two brothers, Arvin Chavis of Maxton and Luther Gerald Chavis of Red Springs; two sisters, Annie V. Goins and Orene Harris, both of Pembroke; and six grandchildren.

Crumpler Funeral Home and Cremation Services Inc. of Red Springs served the family.

Columbus Chambers

Columbus Chambers, 77, of 424 W. Fifth Avenue, Raeford, died Tuesday, October 28, 2003 in FirstHealth Regional Hospital in Pinehurst. Mr. Chambers was an Army veteran.

Funeral services were conducted at 2 p.m. Sunday, November 2 in Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses on Palmer Avenue in Raeford held by

Norman Perry. Burial was in Highland Biblical Gardens in Raeford.

Survivors include his wife, Marjorie Chambers of the home; one son, Andrew Chambers of New York; four daughters, Mary Ann Shelton, Linda Alston and Audrey Johnson, all of Raeford, and Connie Chambers of New York; one sister, Beatrice Mason of Laurinburg; nine grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

Buie Funeral Home of Raeford served the family.

Donald F. Fix

Donald F. Fix, 64, of 1722 Andrews Road, Red Springs, died Friday October 31, 2003 in his home. Mr. Fix was a veteran of the Vietnam War and a former member of the Army Golden Knights. He was a former instructor at the U.S. Military Academy and was a pilot and flight instructor for Sunbird Airways.

Funeral services will be conducted at 2 p.m. Wednesday, November 5 in Mount Elm Baptist Church held by the Reverends Tony Brewington and Carl Pevia. Burial will be in the church cemetery.

Survivors include his wife, Catherine Fix of the home; five daughters, Debbie Miller of Lettinger, North Dakota, Cindy Bertsch of Warner, South Dakota, Helen M. Womack and Selena A. Beatty, both of Red Springs, and Rhonda Locklear of Pembroke; his mother, Elsie Voller of Moberg, South Dakota; four brothers, Michael Fix of Red Springs, Jerry Fix of Lumberton, Bruce Fix of Sioux Falls, South Dakota and Kelvin Fix of Iowa, Louisiana; and 16 grandchildren.

Boles Funeral Home of Red Springs served the family.

Charles E. Bowers Jr.

Charles E. Bowers Jr., 73, of Raeford, died Friday, October 21, 2003 in Cape Fear Valley Medical Center in Fayetteville.

A memorial service was conducted at 11 a.m. Tuesday, November 4 in Highland Funeral Home Service & Crematory in Fayetteville.

Survivors include his wife, Agnes Bowers of the home; one son, Charles E. Bowers III of Buffalo, New York; one daughter, Mary Jane Faraguna of Hope Mills; one brother, Frank W. Bowers of Amherst, Ohio; one sister, Marlene Petrie of Angola, New York; three grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to the American Lung Association, 3801 Lake Boone Trail, Suite 190, Raleigh, NC 27606.

Highland Funeral Service and Crematory in Fayetteville served the family.

Wade Lindsay Jr.

Wade Lindsay Jr., 52, of 248 Frontier Drive, Parkton, died Sunday November 2, 2003 in FirstHealth Moore Regional Hospital in Pinehurst.

Funeral services will be conducted at 11 a.m. Wednesday, November 5 in Reeves Funeral Home Chapel in Hope Mills held by the Reverends Donnie Price Jr. and Cella Lee. Burial will be in Alloway Cemetery in Red Springs.

Survivors include his fiancée, Carolyn Byrne; his mother and stepfather, Mary H. and Albert F. Davis of Fayetteville; his father, Wade Lindsay Sr. of Lake Wells, Florida; one brother, Randall Lindsay of Fayetteville; one sister, Tammy Levanger, of Pooler, Georgia; two stepbrothers, Albert C. Davis and Dale Davis, both of Troy; and one stepson, Audra Culbreth of Roseboro.

Reeves Funeral Home of Hope Mills served the family.

Other Stuff

(Continued from page 1A)

Festival Christmas parade, and yes, Santa will be there.

You children: if Santa doesn't do right by you, come see The Turkey. ❖

I celebrated Halloween by going to a Mexican restaurant and then watching a scary football game. (Hoke High got clobbered by 71st.) But from what I hear, the little trick-or-treaters roaming the streets were as a whole exceptionally courteous this year. That was the consensus from several who handed out candy. Could it be the days of pickups loaded with trick-or-treaters who shave are behind us?

A lady from the phone company was in the office the other day and heard all the Halloween talk.

She said when she was little, her mother sent her out early to trick-or-treat the neighborhood, then made her return and give all the candy to her. This is how she stocked her bowl for other trick-or-treaters.

I won't give the lady's name because she's in therapy now. ❖

We all have our heroes I suppose, and because their faults might obscure the characteristics we admire, they're usually people we don't know well. But knowing them only through their writing, music or reputation doesn't lessen the sadness when they die.

One of mine, Mike Yaconelli, was killed in a wreck last week, just a few days after I'd seen him at a convention in Charlotte.

He was a gifted speaker, a writer and the founder of Youth Specialties, an outfit that trains thousands of youth workers each year. Some have called him a prophet.

I admired him because he told the truth, particularly because he cut through the mess of church yet managed to hold on to the gold buried in it. And he was passionate about it.

When you live in a small town - or just maybe when you live, period - it's easy to settle into routines, and grow dull with age.

The object of church and life becomes being comfortable.

"Yac" fought against this. He said we should rejoice when kids ruin the Jones Memorial Carpet - isn't that what it's there for? - and he praised folks who were fired for attracting the "wrong kind of person." "I always thought the wrong kind of person was the right kind of person," he frequently said. He said it's not about coloring inside the lines; it's about the joy of coloring.

In the last speech I heard him make - a few days before the accident - he said he hoped when he was about to die, he would have enough breath left to say, "What a ride. God, what a ride." ❖

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