

Charleston Club Tattler

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Piggly Wiggly Leaving Charleston

Carving up the Pig: Charleston's Piggly Wiggly to sell 22 stores to Bi-Lo; and 7 stores to Harris Teeter



The Charleston-based grocer is selling off 22 of its roughly 100 stores to Bi-Lo Holdings, including several corporate-owned supermarkets in the Charleston area. Among them is the “Piggly Wiggly No. 1” Meeting Street store on the peninsula. The family-run business also is selling seven Charleston-area stores to Harris Teeter, which is in the process of being sold to Cincinnati-based Kroger Co. Those stores include Piggly Wiggly’s upscale Newton Farms gourmet supermarket on Johns Island and a future location being built on the Isle of Palms. The sales prices were not disclosed and none of the acquired stores is expected to be closed!

The sales mark a dramatic retreat for Piggly Wiggly in its own backyard. It is selling 11 stores in the tri-county area, leaving it with about 10 stores. Downtown Charleston, where the local supermarket empire got its start just around the end of World War II, will be without a Piggly Wiggly by the end of the year. The same goes for Mount Pleasant, James Island and much of West Ashley, all large suburban residential markets. Piggly Wiggly will be left with 26 corporate-owned supermarkets in South Carolina and one in coastal Georgia. It will continue to service and distribute inventory to 31 independently owned stores in the franchise, mostly in the Palmetto State. Once the deals are finalized, the chain’s nearest stores to downtown Charleston will be near Sam Rittenberg Boulevard and Old Towne Road in West Ashley and on Ashley Phosphate Road and Rivers Avenue in North Charleston.

“It’s bittersweet for us,” said spokesman Ibsen. “There is a certain measure of sadness that the company will have a very different profile in the Charleston community than it’s had in the past 66 years.” “We ultimately will be a smaller company,” he said. “We are in the process of working on a new distribution model. It is nearly finalized.” He also

could not say what effect the sell-off will have on Piggly Wiggly’s corporate offices in West Ashley except to say, “The overall size and structure of the company will be impacted. We are looking to grow the business as it takes shape in its new form.” David Schools, Piggly Wiggly Carolina Co.’s president and CEO, said employees in the affected stores will be offered job opportunities with the new owners. “The departure of employees and stores from the Piggly Wiggly team will be acutely felt, but we know that both Harris Teeter and Bi-Lo will benefit from these outstanding folks,” Schools said in statement.

N. Charleston’s Seven Mile – “Iron Dog” Community Reunion



Members of the Seven Mile – “Iron Dog” Community of North Charleston started gathering on October 10, 2013, to begin to “Reflect, Rejoice & Renew” friendships, ole times and remembrances, which led into their reunion activities. Activities included a Gullah tour on Friday, October 11th, which included a lot of Charleston history and the legacy of Philip Simmons, the Master Blacksmith and his works, a picnic on Saturday, the 12th, with lots of delicious “Low Country” cuisines and a spirit-filled church service on Sunday, October 13th at New Tabernacle Second Missionary Baptist Church, where the Pastor is one of Seven Mile-Iron Dog’s own, Rev. Herman Smalls.

Charleston Club members who grew up in the “Iron Dog” community are Mary Simmons Gourdine, Cornell Osborne, Janie Osborne Robinson and Cynthia Osborne Coulter. Other Charleston Club members who traveled to join in on the reunion activities are George & Bernice Johnson who grew up in neighboring communities of Union Heights and Accabee/Six Mile/Victory Park area. Ben and Rose Randall, who were in Charleston during the same time for a tour of Edisto Island and Adams Run churches and plantations, joined us at the Sunday worship services and dinner. Also in attendance at the picnic was Augustus

Jimmy Holt of the Cannon Street All-Stars Little League team. Jimmy played little league ball with, and is a good friend of Ted Simmons, and he worked with Jesse Osborne (deceased), both from the Seven Mile – Iron Dog community. Jimmy also shared with us his remembrances and connection to the community.

The committee members who worked so hard to put together this most touching and enjoyable reunion are: Bettie Keitt Holmes, Mary Simmons Gourdine, Cynthia Osborne Coulter, Percelll Keitt Collins, Carolyn Smalls Burnette and Louise Chislom Haynes.

A grand time was had by all! ~Janie Osborne Robinson

Dart Hall Library celebrated their 85th Anniversary



Last year, 2012 the John L. Dart Branch (Dart Hall) Library celebrated their 85th Anniversary. This year the MOJA's 2013 Historic Site Designation awarded the John L. Dart Branch of the Charleston County Public Library, located at 1067 King Street in Downtown Charleston. A program was held on October 2, 2013 to commemorate the 85th anniversary of Charleston's first free public library for African-Americans. The original Dart Hall Library was located at the corner of Bogard and Kracke Sts. The program celebrated the legacy and groundbreaking spirit of the Rev. John L. Dart (1854-1915) family, pioneers in the Charleston community who dedicated their lives to improving the educational opportunities for blacks. Realizing that local black children were being crowded out of the city's segregated schools; Rev. John L. Dart (Avery 1872) founded the Charleston Normal and Industrial School in 1894 (Burke H.S.). And, in 1927, Dart's daughter, Susan Dart Butler, used her father's extensive collection of books to establish the first free public library for area blacks in the school's Dart Hall.

Meet Charleston Club Member ~ Karen L. Bennett

Karen L. Bennett was born in Charleston on September 17th to Leroy & Leola Bennett. She is the 5th of 7 children: Everett Robinson, Jacqueline McNeil-Graham, Debra McNeil-Foxworth, Misherale (Sherale) Bennett-Laramore, Gretchen Bennett-Winston and Antoinette Bennett-Brown. The family lived at 26 Blake Street; the front door of Charles A. Brown High School while she was in elementary school at Columbus Street (K-6).



The family moved to 37 Charlotte Street when she was in the 7th grade attending Buist Elementary School (Calhoun St). Her parents worked at The Citadel and the College of Charleston. In early school, Karen enjoyed reading; singing and performing in plays...**she loves to sing!** In the fall of 1972 Karen entered the halls of C.A. Brown H.S. and soon became an active member of the Brown Panthers. While in the 10th grade she represented C.A. Brown as Secretary of the County Student Council. In her senior year, she served as Student Government President (1977-78). She was 4th Honor Graduate in her class, a member of the Honor Society, the Beta Club and selected in Who's Who of American High School Students.

Karen selected N.C. A&T State University (Greensboro, NC) as the perfect choice for her college education; a relatively large HBCU environment, a renowned Engineering School, marching band and Air Force ROTC! Karen majored in Electrical Engineering; was an active member of the AF ROTC Angel Flight Society and graduated in the Class of 1984. Her first job ever was as a Teacher's Aide for a North Charleston Autistic School where she had a very rewarding learning experience working with autistic children. This job taught her patience, tolerance & understanding. Unfortunately, she was one of two Karens working during the summer program and was not asked to return the following summer; they thought she was "the Karen" who was being lazy and not interacting with their students. The school later realized they mistakenly chose the "other Karen" to come back and then made an attempt to correct this by asking Karen to return (to their school) the following summer. However, she was already selected to work as a pre-engineering student at the Navel Electronics Systems Command (NAVELEX) in North Charleston.

She completed her M.S. Degree in Info Tech-Project Management at University of MD University College (UMUC, 2011). Professionally, her career started as a Project Engineer for Naval Electronics Systems Engineering Center (NESEC) at Patuxent River, MD. NESEC supported the P-3 Aircraft Communication Systems (Uniquely suited as the world's premier multi-mission maritime long-endurance aircraft, the P-3 performs air, surface and sub-surface patrol and reconnaissance tasks over extended periods and far from support facilities.) Karen has worked as an engineer for GE, RCA, other companies and is currently a Systems Engineer for Lockheed Martin IS&GS (Information Systems & Global Solutions) in support of a FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.) contract. Although her main career path has been in engineering, she has always wanted to start a business. She is now working (with a very special person in her life) to expand their catering business. While the business has been operational for over 12 years, serving groups via word of mouth, they are now expanding their services to a larger clientele. Their company, "[What's Your Pleasure Catering Service, LLC](#)" has been growing by leaps & bounds.

Karen is the proud mother of a son, Germaine Bennett, he graduated from the University of Delaware ("UD

Fightin' Blue Hens”), where he was a football running back leading the Blue Hens in rushing for two seasons; one of which they won the I-AA Championship. Germaine is married to the former Leah Scavella-Batey, who also graduated from UD and has some Charleston roots. They are the proud parents of her beloved grand-daughter, Gianna Bennett who is now 6 years old.

Meet Charleston Club Member ~ Tony Gaston

Anthony “Tony” Gaston was born in Coosawhatchie, SC on January 25, 1952 to Wilhelmina Gaston and William Mackey. Coosawhatchie is located in Jasper County, the southernmost county in the state on the Atlantic Coast. It sits in the middle of SC Low-country area and the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor; just south of Beaufort and Hilton Head. Tony as he has been called since “way-back” was reared by his grandparents. Leo Gaston, his maternal grandfather worked at Savannah River Plant, which opened in the 1950’s to produce tritium for nuclear weapons. His early education was at Coosawhatchie Elementary School and he graduated from Ridgeland High School in the Class of 1970. He enjoyed History & Geography in high school and was the first black to integrate the Ridgeland Tiger’s basketball team. Tony was a prosecutor while a member of the Tiger’s student court, and he drove a school bus making \$1.20 per hour during his senior year of high school. As a teenager he had many summer jobs; horticultural assistant, garbage man (trash collector) and a factory worker. He attended both South Carolina State College and Bowie State University, (B.S.) in Business Administration; while in college he was Student Government representative at Trident Technical College.

In 1971 he joined the U.S. Navy with the intention of doing four years. His First Assignment was at Washington’s U.S. Ceremonial Guard; he was temporarily transferred to Navy Recruiting Command, but never returned to the guard. He volunteered and was accepted for the elite Submarine Duty and went to New London, CT for training. He completed two tours aboard USS Kamehameha (SSBN 642) [called “Kamfish” by her crew], a Benjamin Franklin (SSBN 610) class ballistic missile submarine, it was the only ship of the Navy to be named for Kamehameha I, the first King of Hawaii. His next submarine was USS George Marshall (SSBN 652). At the ten year mark, he was transferred to Naval Base Charleston at the Polaris Material Office Atlantic and lived West of the Ashley from 1980-1985. While preparing to leave the Navy, he was selected for the Education Advancement Program and assigned to the Citadel for two years and advanced to Chief Petty Officer. He served on another Submarine, USS Sand Lance SSN 660 (SSN 637 Sturgeon class attack submarine), from 1982-1985. Following this sea tour he was assigned to Boston College, but before he

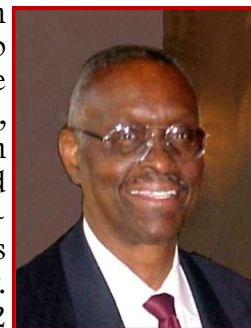


moved to Boston he was offered another job in Washington DC, Naval Security Group Command. After four years in DC and having 16 years of service he decided to take one additional assignment, and then retire. He selected a new construction submarine, USS Asheville (SSN 758) [SSN-688 Los Angeles-class] in Norfolk, VA and Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) was the sponsor; “*in person Helms was not that bad a guy.*” After the construction was completed and the ship was being transferred to San Diego, CA he chose to stay on the east coast and was assigned to his first surface ship; USS Emory S. Land (AS 39) that was manned by an integrated crew of Sailors and Civilian Mariners. He was now promoted to Master Chief Petty Officer, the highest enlisted rank in the Navy, he considered retirement. His final assignment was a return to U.S. Ceremonial Guard, his first duty station in the Navy; then he retires in 1997 after 25 exciting years. In retirement he has worked for the Navy Marine Corps Relief Society, the Census Bureau and the Naval District Washington Regional Inspector General were he has been since.

Today Tony lives in Upper Marlboro, MD with his wife, Michelle Dean Gaston and his stepfather. The couple has two sons, Kenyada and Morgan; and a daughter, Victoria. They are the grandparents to four grandsons and one granddaughter. The family attends Suitland Road Baptist Church (Suitland, MD) where Tony is treasurer and teaches Sunday school. In his free-time Tony enjoys playing golf, hunting, fishing and working out at the gym.

Meet Charleston Club Member ~ Clarence H. McNeill

Clarence Harry McNeill was born in Charleston on April 23, 1941 to Mrs. Lillian M. McNeill. He is the oldest of 9 children and his brother, Eric is the youngest, between them are 7 sisters. They are Madeline and Brenda (deceased), Jacqueline, Sandra, Gwendolyn, Rita, and Gloria. His mother worked at The Cigar Factory. As a child the family lived at 12 Sheppard Street (Sheppard and Hanover), which served as the start of a city block roller skating zone where he honed his skills using Union #5 roller skates and advancing to Streamliners. That corner also aligned perfectly for a mean game of “Kick-the-Micket.” Clarence’s early schooling was at Hopkins’ Kindergarten (Hanover and Jackson) and Henry P. Archer Elementary School (Nassau and Jackson). In early school he enjoyed; playing Half Rubber (street baseball), Little League and Pony League baseball where he earned the nickname “Muscle-head” which was later shortened to “Muscle.” Clarence’s fondest childhood memories are the days he spent on Martin Park where he learned to play basketball. He enjoys reminiscing with his best friend, Isaac “Pop” Reid about the good old days. In the fall of 1954, he entered Burke High School; there Muscle began “his life as a Bulldog.” Clarence played the saxophone in the Band, selected Captain of 1959 Basketball Team, elected President of Student Council and was a



member of the Honor Society. He was a member of the Dramatic Guild and performed in *“Death Takes A Holiday”* and his Senior Class Play where he had the lead role in *“The Defender.”* Clarence graduated from Burke High School in the Class of 1959.

Clarence’s early work experiences were many including the following: dishwasher at Robinson’s Cafeteria, busboy at Everett’s Restaurant and the Buccaneer Restaurant, and waiter at Henry’s Restaurant. At Everett’s he worked with Mr. William Deas, the recognized originator of Charleston’s “She-Crab Soup.” He also delivered prescription drugs while working at Brody’s, Kennedy’s and Conway Pharmacies; delivered groceries while working at Knight’s Food Store and served as a paper boy delivering the *Charleston News and Courier*.

In fall of 1959, Clarence entered SC State College on a competitive City of Charleston Scholarship. He was inspired to major in Chemistry by Mr. Hutchinson, who made high school Chemistry fun and easy. While at State, he was President of his Sophomore, Junior and Senior classes. Clarence participated in the student civil rights protest in Orangeburg on March 15, 1960. Clarence was an Army ROTC cadet and upon graduation in 1963 was commissioned as a 2LT in the U.S. Army. Professionally, Clarence spent 20 years in the U.S. Army and had numerous stateside and overseas assignments including Italy, Germany, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam, where he was awarded the **Bronze Star** and the **Purple Heart**. After his military retirement, he worked in Corporate America for 5 years as an Information Technology (IT) Specialist for Computer Sciences Corporation and International Business Services, an 8(a) company. In 1989, he returned to the Department of Defense where he spent 22 years with the Defense Logistics Agency in varying IT positions. Along the way, Clarence attended several graduate-school courses at Carnegie Mellon University’s Software Engineering Institute.

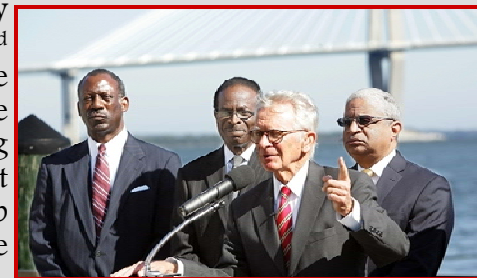
Today, now divorced, he is the proud father of Terri McNeill Rose and Darryl McNeill and proud grandfather of two, Desmond and JourDyn. He has been an active member of the Charleston Club since the 1990s and currently serves as its Corresponding Secretary. When Clarence was asked about something most people don’t know about him?: *“...As President of the Student Christian Association, at SCSU, I shared the stage with Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, President Emeritus, Morehouse College, who was the annual SCSU Easter Sunday Speaker. I was inspired by his book “Born to Rebel” and his quote: “...the tragedy in life doesn’t lie in not reaching your goal...the tragedy lies in having no goal to reach.”* Clarence now spends his time supporting the Veterans of Foreign Wars activities, lunching with his fraternity brothers of **Omega Psi Phi Fraternity**, watching sports, playing cards, trying to solve the *Washington Post* crossword puzzles, and raising money for his Alma Maters (Burke and SCSU). Something Clarence has always wanted to learn – *“How to solve all sides of the Rubik Cube puzzle.”*

Charleston Club Tattler ~ One liners . . .

- **Marlon E. Kimpson** (79.6%) won the South Carolina Senate District 42 race in Charleston on October 1st. Kimpson represented the Democrats in the race and took on Republican Billy Shuman (19%) and Libertarian Alex Thornton (1.2%). Following a day of last-minute campaigning, the candidates joined their family, friends, and supporters to watch the results come in. Thornton held court at the Mellow Mushroom in Avondale and Kimpson's watch party was held at the Charleston Marriott on Lockwood Boulevard. Kimpson was the favorite to win the race. He defeated Maurice Washington during the Democratic primary run-off in late September. There was no Republican Primary. The Dist. 42 seat was formerly held by long-time SC Senator Robert Ford, who served in Columbia for 20 years but resigned at the end of May, citing health issues.



- **International African American Museum (IAAM) News:** Mayor Joe Riley on October 23rd announced the kick-start to the project, saying the time is right to ramp up pursuit of the much-needed



public and private dollars to construct the \$75 million museum. Inside the museum, the stories of black influence in America will be told through slavery, Emancipation, Jim Crow, the civil rights era and beyond. And if the timetable stays to schedule, the **International African American Museum** will be open to the public in 2018. “Everyone understands the time has come,” Riley said during a press conference. Charleston has a unique and historic responsibility to accurately tell the story of black migration to America, he said; since records indicate 40 percent of all enslaved Africans who came to North America entered through the port of Charleston. The 42,300-square-foot building is scheduled to go on land across from the S.C. Aquarium that’s adjacent to the parking garage that supports the various tourist sites on the Cooper River. But the building funds are still far from being in hand. The proposed cost breakdown is: \$12.5 million coming from Charleston City Council; \$12.5 million coming from Charleston County; \$25 million from the S.C. General Assembly, and the remaining \$25 million to be raised from private donations.

- Did you know that it was April 2004, that Mount Pleasant became one of the first cities in the United States to pass a **"pay-before-you-pump"** gas ordinance. The ordinance was designed to immediately have a positive effect to decrease “drive-away” crime. **- The Fly on The Wall !**