

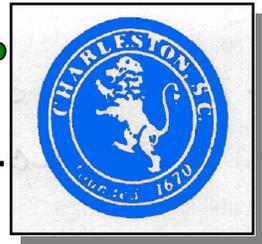
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Louise J. Cox - Centenarian at 102 y.o.

Meet a Charlestonian at 102 years old, and Going Strong

"I declare, I didn't know that I would live this long!" That was the exclamation Louise Cox made when asked how she felt about celebrating her 102nd birthday. As she sat on her step ladder and talked about her life, her zest for living seemed boundless. Louise Johnson was born on November 15, 1913 in St. George, SC (40 miles NW of Charleston). She was the second of four children born to Lucious and Beulah Reed Johnson. Woodrow Wilson (#28 - March 4, 1913 - March 4, 1921) was President and Mrs. Cox has seen sixteen presidents since!



At 102 years old, she lives the independent life in Charleston's Ansonborough Houses for Seniors. She is affectionately called "Momma" by so many that she says, "to count them all I would need more fingers and toes." Her nieces, simply call her "Aunt Louise." But it took a while for the name Louise to stick. As she tells it, "You see, my big sister, Elizabeth, was born first. My father just knew that his second child would be a boy, so he had chosen the name Louis, but he was surprised at my being a girl, it did not stop him from naming me "Louis." And Louis is what stuck. Everybody called me Louis and I answered to it. It wasn't until I enrolled in school that my teacher added the "e." "She said, Louis is a boy's name, and you are certainly not a boy!" After that, I started calling myself Louise and I've been Louise ever since."

"My dad nearly had conniptions when my sister Christine came after me. But finally, my brother Lawrence was born. It wasn't long after Lawrence's birth that my father died. By the time I was eight, we moved to Charleston." A lifelong Catholic, as a child she grew up in a small cottage on Sheppard St. near the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church/School (Sheppard and Coming Sts.). She recalls, "Momma did house work and most of her family lived in Charleston. With four kids, she needed to be near family." She attended Shaw Elementary School on Mary Street and then on to Burke High School. After high school, she looked for and found work in the Box Shop at the Cigar Factory on Drake Street. She worked there for three years.

It was at the Factory that she met and two years later married Robert Cox. Later, Robert Cox, Jr. was born and when he was about four years old, they moved to New York City. The story of how Mr. Cox (called "Robbie" by Ms. Louise) left the Factory was a story in itself... "Robbie told his supervisor he was going on vacation and took his

brother-in-law, Lawrence Johnson, to work in his place for two weeks." The truth was, Robbie's cousin told him that there were many jobs in New York and he was sure that Robbie could get one making more than he was earning at the Cigar Factory. Robbie left to find out if what he was told was true. He found a job, a place to stay, and sent for us. He never returned to the Cigar Factory. What started as a two-week fill-in position, became his job for more than 40 years until the Cigar Factory closed in 1973.

When Robert Jr. was born, Ms. Louise decided that one experience of child birth was enough. After his birth, Mr. Cox affectionately started calling his son "The Kid." Eventually, Ms. Louise started calling him The Kid, too. The Coxes decided that their only child would go to college and they diligently saved towards his college education. But The Kid had other plans. As soon as he graduated from high school, he joined the Army. He went to the recruiting office on 125th St. and Park Ave and served for six years as a paratrooper. Ms. Louise sighed, "We were disappointed, but didn't fret too much about it because it was during peace time. Robert Jr. contracted some illness while he was in the service. After he returned home he would get these terribly high fevers from time to time."

Ms. Louise remembers life in New York City as being very different. She recalls, "I got my first job in the Garment Center through Robbie's cousin, Alberta. Working on 28th Street and 9th Avenue, I started as a "lacer." Then when World War II broke out, the company started making children's clothes, and I started working of the sewing machines. The machines operated by applying knee pressure to a lever to start them. Well it took me awhile, but I got the hang of it. Eventually, I became a supervisor and stayed there at that company until 1975 when I retired at age 62."

Mr. Cox retired in 1974. They had both worked at only one company for their entire work lives. Even when Mr. Cox stopped working to serve during World War II, he returned five years later right back to his old job at the clothing company.

Ms. Louise continued "while I never got use to the cold weather, I enjoyed living in Harlem. There were so many big churches. Even though I'm Catholic, I always enjoyed visiting the other churches. I remember hearing Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. preach. Oh, he was quite a preacher. I remember shopping on 125th Street and at La Marquette. You could buy everything at that market. I saw many shows at the Apollo Theater. All the big entertainers came there and I saw as many as I could. Robbie and I saw the Five Blind Boys of Alabama, Sam Cooke, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Sammy Davis, Jr., Jackie Wilson, Redd Foxx

and Moms Mabley. We even took The Kid to see the shows. He liked Otis Redding the Supremes, the Temptations, the Four Tops and the Dells. Oh there were so many, I can't name them all. The thing I enjoyed most about life in New York City was being able to work, earn, save and spend money. We were able to work and live a decent life in New York City. We could send our son to decent schools, take care of our needs, save a little money and take care of our wants, too."

"In 1975, before I retired, The Kid was out with one on his friends when he suddenly took ill with one of those high fevers. By the time we got to the hospital, it was too late. He died, unmarried and without a child. He had a military funeral. I'll never forget the song at his service, *"Nearer My God to Thee."* Later in 1975, Mr. and Mrs. Cox returned to South Carolina. Ms. Louise continued, "Robbie had always talked about going home, but I must admit, I hated the thought of returning to his home in Jacksonboro, SC (32 miles West of Charleston). Jacksonboro was in the country. I had grown up in Charleston, and we had lived in New York City for most of our lives. When Robbie insisted on returning home, I felt like that woman on "Green Acres." One fond memory I have of life in Jacksonboro was my meeting, Larry Campbell, a little boy who was a neighbor. His mother enjoyed fishing and so after school Larry would come over to our house to eat and do his homework until his mother got back. He was a nice child and has become a wonderful adult. Despite living in California with his family, he's never forgotten me and he even visited me this year. "Before we left New York, Robbie's health had started declining. His health didn't improve in Jacksonboro. And after nine years, he died in August of 1984. In September 1984 I moved here in Ansonborough. I always liked Charleston and was so happy to have been one of the first residents to move into The Ansonborough Houses. That was 31 years ago. I have met many people here and have many friends. God's been good to me." "I'm happy to be alive and very thankful to still have a sound mind. Last year I started having pains in my leg. I didn't know what was happening. We were all so worried. My niece took me to the doctor and after blood tests and X-rays, the doctor finally told us that I have arthritis. When I told my neighbor, Lillian, she said that I was truly blessed. She said, "you've lived to be 100 years old before finding out what arthritis is." "She's right, I am blessed. I'm in good health. I have good neighbors, my relatives, (niece Barbara and cousin Gretta), visit me regularly, I enjoy good meals, reading the daily newspaper and monthly magazines, watching television, looking out of the window, and enjoying good fellowship with my special friends...Larry Campbell is among those who call me Momma. There's also Art, who works here, and Bernard Mack, my nephew in New York, and many others. I'm happy that they think of me as their mother. After all, I

survived my son, my husband, all my siblings and many of their children. Yes, I am blessed and I count my blessings every day." - Interviewed by **Sandra McNeill Simmon**

Benedict Graduate Beats the Odds

A Benedict College graduate has re-written his story. A few years ago, college was nowhere near a priority to James White, III. At 17 years old, he dropped out of high school in 11th grade while living in Georgia. He spent 2005-2007 in prison for armed robbery, assault and burglary. White said he did not have a strong support system. As a teenager he was often alone and got into trouble. "I was forced to sleep in cars some nights, sell drugs, do all types of things to survive," he said. "When you're in the environment it seems normal. it seems normal to sell drugs. It seems normal to do things that right now I would think is preposterous."



White was released from prison on November 3, 2007. His freedom from that cell was the beginning of his future. In a succession of chance meetings with the right people, White stopped seeing his life as a cycle of crime but as limitless possibilities. He was introduced to a minister through mutual friends who brought him to Benedict College. For the first time, White said he started seeing his purpose and academic ambition. He majored in education and excelled.

While at Benedict he met a mentor through a workshop on campus: Gilbert Knowles. Knowles travels across the country mentoring young men. The two formed a bond they continue to share today. "Many of our young people live in the environment they absorb," said Knowles. "That is all they know. So they must go beyond their three mile radius. Go beyond. It's a whole new world out there." White pushed through challenges and obstacles including learning the limitations associated with being a convicted felon. He did not let his background stop him from pursuing his goals.

On Saturday, Dec. 12, 2015 Mr. White donned his cap and gown and a bright smile. He graduated from Benedict with honors; summa cum laude with a 3.9 GPA. He was awarded Most Outstanding Student for the School of Continuing Education. He was also awarded Outstanding Senior out of the entire December graduating class. "Benedict College gives anyone a second chance to make a first impression," said White. White is planning to go to law school and find a way to help steer other young people toward their potential. "He has kept his humility which is incredibly important. He wants to give back and pay it forward." "I'm just in such a great space looking back on where I was...it's unbelievable," he said. "It's unbelievable!"

Black Population Plummets as Gentrification Rolls-up the Charleston Peninsula

Since the 1980s, there's been a stunning decline in the number of blacks living on the peninsula. Some neighbor-



hoods - Wagener Terrace, Hampton Park Terrace, and Cannon-borough/Elliottborough - lost roughly half of their black population in just one decade, starting in 2000. Economic forces and demographic

change - gentrification - are quickly transforming the upper Charleston peninsula. Those neighborhoods are the last downtown refuges of the middle class, and they have been increasingly attracting real estate investors, student renters, and affluent young adults seeking a more urban lifestyle. The resurgence of urban centers is a national trend. It's also a generational trend, a reversal of the "white flight" that saw a predominantly white middle class move from cities to suburbs in the 1960s. In downtown Charleston, that trend has been picking up speed. Ten years ago, half the single-family homes sold on the peninsula north of the Septima P. Clark Parkway (the Crosstown Expressway) sold for \$170,000 or less. So far this year, half have sold for at least \$325,000. While home prices have been rising fast, much of the peninsula's population change is due to rising rents. Most peninsula residents are renters and the voracious demand from college students, who now account for about a third of the peninsula's population, has driven prices higher.

Around Hampton Park, strong demand for homes drove up the median sale price by \$50,000 in just the past year. "That neighborhood, it is on fire," said a Realtor, who lives in Wagener Terrace. "It is back, and everyone wants to be there again." The 'War of attrition' & 'Neighborhood changes' - The Charleston peninsula is a diverse center of culture and commerce. Rich and poor, black and white, young and old all share a piece of it. But the peninsula has seen significant change in recent decades, economic development and real estate projects that are transforming both how the city looks and the makeup of the resident population. In the last two years, many new restaurants have opened on upper King Street, Morrison Drive and Rutledge Avenue, including some featured in regional and national magazines, such as Butcher & Bee, Park Cafe, Leon's and Edmond's Oast. A many more are on the way. The upper Meeting Street and Morrison Drive corridor is the focus of city officials, nonprofits and civic leaders who want to encourage sustainable growth, artistic creativity and entrepreneurship while at the same time protecting established residents and small-business operators. This area could become a hub for high-tech businesses and include new apartment buildings and retail.

Black residents went to black schools and shopped in black shopping districts, such as upper King Street - now a trendy dining and shopping area with few older businesses left. The schools were desegregated in the 1960s, the same decade when nearly half the white population vanished from the peninsula. It was part of the nationwide trend dubbed "white flight" wherein the white middle class

moved, seemingly in masse, from cities to places such as West Ashley. The post-World War II baby boom was in full swing, developers were essentially inventing the suburbs and the government was paving new roads to get there. Interstate 26, the Crosstown Expressway, and the now-demolished three-lane Pearman Bridge between Charleston and Mount Pleasant were all built on the peninsula in the 1960s. These projects provided easier ways for people to commute but also tore through urban neighborhoods.

From Zimbabwe, to Morehouse to Oxford



Morehouse College student, Prince Abudu was selected on December 10th to the 2016 International Rhodes Scholar class representing his home country of Zimbabwe. The Rhodes Scholarship supports students who demonstrate a strong propensity to emerge as future leaders.

Abudu is the fourth Morehouse student to be selected for the prestigious scholarship to attend the University of Oxford in England. Morehouse is the only HBCU represented in the 2016 Rhodes Scholar Class and one of only two Georgia Colleges in this year's prestigious class. The Rhodes Scholarship provides for two or three years of study at Oxford. Abudu, whose e-mail signature *Destinato Alla Gloria*, "Destined for Greatness," best girds his determination to excel. The Morehouse leader plans to pursue a master's degree in computer science and a MBA at Oxford. He said... "I'm blessed and excited. This would not have been possible without the support of my family in Zimbabwe and the new family I have been favored with at Morehouse College. This is an opportunity that I have dreamed of all my life!" Mr. Abudu grew up on a rural farm in his homeland of Zimbabwe, which is a small landlocked country in southern Africa known for its dramatic landscape and diverse wildlife.

Charleston Club Tattler ~ One liners...

- **Mt. Pleasant Town Council** voted December 8th to join with Charleston County to widen **Highway 41**. Council members said they hope widening the road will help ease congestion. The four-lane plan will expand **Highway 17** to the **Wando Bridge** area and would require more than \$29 million from Charleston County and \$400,000 from Mount Pleasant.
- **Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity** has been awarded a grant funded by the U.S. Department of Justice to provide mentoring to students ages 6 -17 years old, in twenty-five (25) targeted cities across the country. The Alphas are recruiting for a program director to manage the fraternity's **Go to High School, Go to College** (GTHS-GTC) national initiative. The position will play a critical role in the development and oversight of this national mentoring initiative. The program director will contribute to building organizational capacity, offering technical knowledge, and leadership and support of the program's

consistent achievement of its mission, vision, and financial objectives. Additional information about the Go-To-High-School, Go-To-College program is on their website; www.apa1906.net.

- **Charleston City Council** approved a referendum on December 15th to plant 15 trees downtown to honor the victims of the Mother Emanuel shooting. The trees will go on Calhoun Street, in front of the Gaillard Center and across the street from **Mother Emanuel A.M.E. Church**. The council meeting was also Mayor Joe Riley's last as mayor. "Trees are memorials in and of themselves, for they live beyond us," said Mayor Riley, before the first reading was passed unanimously.
- **NBC News** will co-host the next **Democratic Debate in Charleston**, Lester Holt will moderate. The debate will be the fourth of six such events, it will take place on Sunday, January 17th, during the observance of the Dr. Martin L. King weekend and to be hosted by the Congressional Black Caucus from 9-11 p.m. The S.C. Democratic primary, in which Republicans and independents are also allowed to participate, will be held February 27, 2016.
- **A Vanishing History: Gullah Geechee Nation** ...On the Sea Islands along the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia, a painful chapter of American history is playing out again. These islands are home to the Gullah or Geechee people, the descendants of enslaved Africans who were brought to work at the plantations that once ran down the southern Atlantic coast. After the Civil War, many former slaves on the Sea Islands bought portions of the land where their descendants have lived and farmed for generations. That property, much of it undeveloped waterfront land, is now some of the most expensive real estate in the country. But the Gullah are now discovering that land ownership on the Sea Islands isn't quite what it seemed. Local landowners are struggling to hold on to their ancestral land as resort developers with deep pockets exploit obscure legal loopholes to force the property into court-mandated auctions. These tactics have successfully fueled a tourism boom that now attracts more than 2 million visitors a year. Gullah communities have all but disappeared, replaced by upscale resorts and opulent gated developments that new locals - golfers, tourists, and mostly white retirees - fondly call "plantations." Faced with an epic case of déjà vu, the Gullah are scrambling for solutions as their livelihood and culture vanish, one waterfront mansion at a time.

Happy Birthdays!

January Birthdays:

Juanita Wilder - Jan. 2nd ~ **Carl White** - Jan. 4th ~ **Lois Pearson** - Jan. 6th ~ **Karen D. Champaign** - Jan. 8th ~ **Marion Rhodes** - Jan. 10th ~ **Herbert Pittman** - Jan. 12th ~ **Erie**

Rambert - Jan. 16th ~ **Kenneth Devine** - Jan. 19th ~ **Tony Gaston** - Jan. 25th ~ **Carolyn Young** - Jan. 25th ~ **Charles Fields** - Jan. 29th ~ **Mildred Green** - Jan. 30th.

with deepest Sympathy

- **Mrs. Myrna Lum Richardson** entered into eternal rest Wednesday, November 25th, following a courageous battle with **ALS** (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, often called Lou Gehrig's Disease) in Atlanta, GA. Both Myrna and her husband Benny were graduates of I.C.S.~1958 and they lived in Willingboro, NJ for many years before moving to Atlanta for her treatment. Myrna is survived by her husband of over 50 years, Dr. Benjamin Richardson, Jr.; son, Kevin; grandchildren, Jerome, Benjamin, IV, and Brandon Richardson. She was predeceased by her son, Benjamin, III. Myrna recognized the vital role of science and research in finding a cure for ALS. To that end, she granted the use of her cells to the Emory ALS Center Research Program. It was also her wish that donations be made in Myrna's honor and memory to further Emory's research. Myrna was the cousin of Charleston Club member, **LeRoy "Bobby" Palmer**. She leaves two sisters (Pamela and Deborah) and three brothers (Herman, George and Adrian) and a host of In-laws, nieces, nephews, cousins and friends to mourn her passing.
- **Mr. David Campbell, Jr.** entered into eternal rest on Tuesday, December 2, 2015 in Charleston. He became well known in the mid-1950s as "**Bo Peep**" on Burke's football team. Bo Peep was an outstanding running back and star during Burke's championship years of the '50s. David Campbell, Jr. graduated in Burke's Class of 1957. He lived in New York City for many years before returning to Charleston and working at the Charleston Naval Shipyard. David Campbell Jr. became a very active member of the Nehemiah Lodge No. 51 F 7 AM and Past Master of his Lodge. He was the beloved husband of over 50 years to Mrs. Gladys Campbell; beloved father of David Campbell, III, Derrick Campbell, Sr., and Desiree Campbell; he was the beloved brother of Thomas "Tommy" Campbell. Celebration of Life Services were December 7th at Bethany Baptist Church, 790 Meeting Street, in Charleston. Interment was at Sunset Memorial Gardens in North Charleston.



- The Fly on The Wall !