

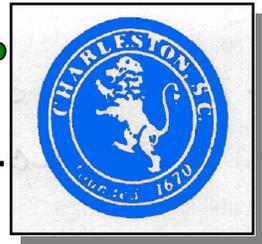
Charleston Club Tattler

Volume 19, Issue 90

A publication of The Charleston S.C. Club of Washington, D.C. Area

Website: <http://charlestonsclub.org>

February 1, 2016



Charles D. Foster - An Overlooked Pioneer

Charles DeLesline Foster – The Citadel Trailblazer

February is “Black History Month,” and this year the Tattler honors an “over-looked trailblazer” from our midst! His name was Charles DeLesline Foster, he was born on November 26, 1948 in Philadelphia, PA. He and his older brother, William C. (Jr.) were the sons of William Clayton (Sr.) and Blanche DeLesline Foster. The family lived in Philly for a few years before relocating back to their mom’s hometown of Charleston. As kids, the family lived at 16 Wall Street on the east-side of town. Both Charles and Bill, Jr. attended Buist Elementary School around the corner at 103 Calhoun Street. The entire family were faithful members of Emanuel A.M.E. Church. Charles and Billy participated in Little League on Ansonborough Park (Boroughs’ Park, Calhoun and East Bay). Charles as a catcher and Billy as an outfielder on a Veterans’ sponsored little league team. The two boys were very close and both very competitive in their studies and in sports. When it came time for high school, Bill completed his freshman year at Burke H.S. and Charles attended C.A. Brown H.S. his entire four years. At Brown, Charles played “guard” (#30) for the C.A. Brown Panthers, for 2 seasons he played against the likes of Art Shell (BWHS ‘64-tackle) when the panthers faced the Bonds-Wilson Cobras. The brothers were just over a year apart and they did almost everything together. Billy (now, Bill) would graduate from C.A. Brown in 1965 and Charles a year later in 1966.



A driving force in the family was their grandmother, Mrs. Naomi Wilkerson DeLesline (*the unheralded hero and matriarch of the family*). Grandma Naomi (an Avery classmate of Septima Poinsette Clark), was a 1916 Avery graduate, she became well-read and very knowledgeable in the Negro Spirituals during her senior year at Avery. She is credited to have written an essay for their yearbook “*The Pinnacle-1916*” on “The Negro Spirituals.” The Allen graduate served as president, of the United Order of Tents (local chapter) on 73 Cannon St. Grandma Naomi was “the guiding light” to their mother’s (Blanche) graduation from Avery Institute in 1938. Blanche received her B.S. in education from Bennett College (Greensboro, NC) and became a 32 year career high school teacher at W. Gresham Meggett and Haut Gap. Grandma Naomi and her family were true Averyites and life-long members of Emanuel. When Bill decided to attend college, he was one of the first to enroll in the University of South Carolina in Columbia and graduated in 1969. Charles decided to be-

come *the first – Citadel Man!* Their grandmother had always encouraged them “...do what you need to do...”

Charles was a very studious kid, he did exceptionally well grade-wise in elementary and mid-school, and he was an honor graduate from C.A. Brown in June 1966. The family, now living at 171 Fishburne St., between Rutledge and Ashley, ~ The Citadel was right down the street. Charlie had been motivated mostly by his grandma (to do what he thought was best for him!). After serious consultations with church & civic leaders, friends and school advisors he decided on The Military College of South Carolina - The Citadel! The climate was right, Harvey B. Gantt (who lived a half a block away on Larnes St.) had successfully integrated Clemson in January (1963). Henrie Monteith (Treadwell) would become the first black at the University of South Carolina (1963, the school’s first black graduate since 1877). And then, his older brother, his alter ego, had just become a University of S.C. Gamecock. Simultaneously, and not known by either family, Bernard W. Deas, Jr. was preparing to become the first black medical student at the Medical College (now MUSC) in the fall of 1966. Bernard Deas lived in the adjacent block on Fishburne Street as Foster. Both men were scheduled to report to their respective schools in August 1966.

Foster was one of six black applicants who sought entrance into the Citadel in the fall of 1966. Three of them failed to meet the college’s requirements for admission, two others were accepted for admission but failed to pay their reservation fees. A school spokesman said that... the two other students decided to go to other colleges. One of them had been awarded a full scholarship at another school. The Citadel’s Summer School program had successfully enrolled black students (both sexes) during the 1965 and 1966 school years. So, The Citadel officials made its announcement on July 12th 1966 that Charles D. Foster, the son of Mr. and Mrs. William C. Foster, Sr. of Charleston, had completed all requirements for acceptance into the corps of cadets and paid all necessary reservation fees.

Freshmen Class cadets report to The Citadel a week early before classes start for their registration and orientation. Over the weekend of August 26th, then 17 year old, Charles DeLesline Foster accompanied by his mother (Blanche DeLesline Foster), his brother (William C. “Bill” Foster, Jr.) and his grandmother (Mrs. Naomi Wilkerson DeLesline) entered the Padgett-Thomas barracks as a “plebe” (a military trainee at military academy) at The Citadel. The Fosters attended the receptions without fanfare and virtually unnoticed. The college had asked the media not to make a big fuss, not to single him out, in order to avoid chaos about Foster’s arrival on campus. Reporters

agreed to the rules designed not to single out Foster. The national media filed 2 low-key stories (Jet Magazine, July 1966 and Afro-American Newspaper, August 1966) then they left town. A short story about Foster's arrival, his battalion assignment, and roommate appeared in The Charleston News and Courier. The story about his 1970 graduation, received a short article about the first Black graduate in the News and Courier.

Looking back on that day, Foster's brother Bill, Jr. remembers an undercurrent of resentment on campus that day, noting "People didn't want him there, but they treated him as any other plebe coming into the system." Cadet Officers and the Assistant Commandant of Cadets said they "would watch over Foster," but they seldom intervened. As one of his classmates recalls, "for the entire freshmen year, Charlie was one of us and he caught it just the same as we did."

He was assigned to be a member of "G" Company and majored in Business Administration. Charlie Foster would be the only black cadet in ALL of his class for his entire four years at The Citadel. His first roommate would be David Blake Hooper of Cherry Hill, NJ. He is said to have recalled: "Name-calling was common. Cadets yelled out windows to camouflage the source of the insults. And the abuse didn't end with his knob (freshman) year. Whatever punishment other cadets received, it was worse for Foster because he was Black. Cadet Hooper said he received letters warning him never to associate or go home with Foster. Upperclassmen pressured our classmates to pressure Charlie to quit. In most cases plebes banded together. "I would get the same question every time I went into one individual's room. The question was always, 'Did you kill him yet?' in reference to my roommate," Hooper said.

The practice of demanding freshmen do "on the spot" push-ups originated towards the end of the 1950s, and quickly became one of the most zealously guarded corps wide "traditions." The beginning of the 1960s saw the introduction of the "knob" haircut whereby each new cadet had his head shaved practically to the scalp.

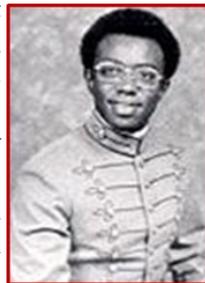
The Citadel is a school steeped in tradition. The incoming freshmen are fourth classmen and are referred to as "Knobs" (or "Plebes"). The reference "Knob" is to the shaved heads of the fourth class that make them look like door knobs. Knobs are always called by their last names and are not allowed to know or utter the first names of upperclassmen. All upperclassmen are referred to as "Mr." (or "Miss."). Knobs must survive a week of military indoctrination that is referred to as "Hell Week" followed by eight weeks of military training alongside of academic coursework to be formally accepted into the Corps of Cadets as cadet privates. From that point they must endure months of rigid discipline under the Fourth Class System. The culminating point of their training is Recognition Day that occurs sometime around final exams. Recognition Day is a brutal crucible of Military Drill, Cleanliness, Inspections, and Physical Training. Recognition Day ends in a final "Spirit Run", a number of pushups (called a class set) that



indicates the year the cadet is graduating, and finally the ceremony where all of the upperclassmen (sophomores, juniors, seniors) shake the hands of the knobs, call them by their first names, and welcome them into the Corps of Cadets as upperclassmen.

In 1967, Joseph Dawson Shine followed Foster as the school's second African American cadet and two years later, six more black men joined the corps. The number of black cadets increased over the next few years, but not by much. As with all cadets their experiences differed, and in their own way, each young man left his mark on the school. Most endured some form of racial discrimination, both overt and discreet. Shine was a graduate of I.C.S. '67, The Citadel in '71, he would go on to receive his Juris Doctor from Harvard in 1974. Joseph Shine died on September 10, 2003, at the age of 53. The story is told that: one day, as the "G" Company freshmen stood in formation, Charlie Foster braced in horror as cadets from another company dressed in white sheets and raced towards him screaming and yelling. His "mate", Joe Shine noted that as freshmen, Shine "went through ten times more than we ever went through, both physically and emotionally." One night, some cadets poured fingernail polish remover in the shape of a cross in front of Shine's room. They lit it, knocked on the door, and scurried off. From the moment George Graham ('74) arrived on campus in 1969, he "understood one thing early on, there were a lot of people that did not want me there." White cadets screamed racial epithets at him, and one junior questioned African Americans' right to come to, what he called, "his school."

In 1971 The African American Society was founded. It was the concept of Joseph D. Shine '71 and Larry J. Ferguson '73 (first society president). Dr. Ferguson is now a successful dentist in Charleston.



In the 1972 yearbook, the organization made its debut, the caption underneath reads that it was founded for "the purpose of providing members with a spectrum of Black History, fine arts, and American life style. Members were involved with social work, which gives them knowledge and insight about problems facing Black people today."

Norman K. Seabrooks '73, the first African American to play football for the Bulldogs, he enrolled and faced the same challenges Foster did as one of few black men among hundreds of white cadets. Amid the challenges, Seabrooks distinguished himself on the gridiron. A three-year starter on the football team he earned first-team All-Southern Conference recognition in 1972 and he served as team co-captain. He was inducted into The Citadel Athletics Hall of Fame in 1994. A Dean's List history major who obtained the rank of cadet first lieutenant, he graduated in 1973 and went on to a successful career in the health insurance industry with Aetna Inc. Seabrooks is known for 1973 graduation protest... as he walked across the stage, he

clutched his diploma in one hand; the other hand was balled in a fist (John Carlos raised fist in a black power salute at the 1968 Olympics). He accepted his degree from The Citadel in honor of **Charlie Foster** and **Joe Shine**, who came before him; **Herb Cunningham** and **Flossie Gordon**, who sheltered him; the anonymous faces who stuffed his pockets with extra desserts and milk after late-night practices; the maintenance staff that publicly embraced him like a son and privately prayed for Norm's strength and safety. But this, he thought as he left the stage with his degree in hand, was for William Thomas Seabrooks (his father). "I chose The Citadel to please my dad," said Seabrooks, more than four decades after his graduation." That was the only reason. Out of loyalty and the need to really appease him, I said yes." Seabrooks' father dropped out of school when he was in fourth grade, and never returned. He was drafted into the Army as a teenager and after spending 47 years working to support his family. It was easy to see why his father was excited about the idea of his son getting a college degree from a military school. Norman would be the first person in the family to earn a college degree. His higher education would represent a demarcation of the family's past and future.

In 1980, Pat Conroy wrote a novel *"The Lords of Discipline,"* the story of several white cadets whose lives are intertwined with the arrival of the first Black cadet (Charles Foster) at a fictionalized version of The Citadel. Though the college was originally resistant to change, Conroy believed the administration wanted Foster to succeed in 1966. Conroy (The Citadel '67), who was a senior when Foster was a knob, said, "This was a tough kid. I never heard one kid called ni__er more in my entire life." During "roving mess," when the athletes ate with the other cadets, freshmen were forced out of their usual seats and had to find another place to eat. It was obvious when Charles was looking for a seat Conroy said, because the chant "rigger, rigger" was heard. "I told Charles to always find me. When he would sit down with me, all the southern boys would leave." The novel was adapted for the screenplay of a 1983 film of the same name.

The Alumni Association Awarded its first Scholarship in Name of First Black Graduate (Charles D. Foster) in fall of 2001. The Citadel African American Alumni Association established their scholarship for minority students in honor of the school's first Black graduate. "I'm embarrassed to say it, but while I was there at The Citadel, I didn't know who the first Black graduate was," says Hillery Douglas Jr., who created the scholarship. "I just didn't ever think about it." Douglas, who graduated from The Citadel in 1982 and now works for a software engineering firm in Cleveland, says there has not been much involvement on behalf of Black alumni with the university in the past. But he says the Black alumni, who number approximately 300, have expressed interest in establishing the scholarship to honor the first Black graduate. "Nobody else is going to do it," Douglas said. "We felt like it was incumbent on us to do something."

June 1996, the Supreme Court ruled the all-male admis-

sions policy at Virginia Military Institute was unconstitutional; and the Citadel opened to women. Nancy Mace ('99), was the first female cadet to graduate from the Citadel. The Citadel passed another milestone on May 11, 2002



with the graduation of its first black female cadets. Seven black women were among 298 cadets (20 of them female) receiving diplomas. They were: Genieve Hardney, Toshika J. Hudson, Renee E. Hypolite, Jamey McCloud, Natosha Mitchell, Lesjanusar "Sha" Peterson, and Adrienne "A.J." Watson - *"We are paving the way for other Black women, all women really, to have the chance to be here."* - **First African American women to graduate from The Citadel, Class of 2002**

Cadet Charlie Foster was commissioned as a 2nd Lt. in the U.S. Army upon graduation in 1970 after a tough four years at The Citadel. He worked in explosives at the Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), in Aberdeen, MD. All tanks and wheeled vehicles for the past 50/60 years have been tested at Aberdeen. He became an Explosives Expert while working at Aberdeen. In 1973 Capt. Foster separated from the United States Army and moved to the Dallas suburbs of Garland Texas. He worked in the moving company industry throughout the Dallas area for over 10 years, and became the Manager in a moving company. Sadly, Charlie Foster and two other house-mates died in a house fire in Garland, TX on March 29, 1986. Next month, March 2016 will be the 30th anniversary of his death. Charles Delesline Foster was 37 years old. He was the first of several outstanding African-Americans to graduate from The Citadel during a turbulent era. This August 2016 will mark the 50th anniversary of his entrance into The Citadel.

Charlie Foster never married and had no children, his body was returned to Charleston (via train) in April 1986 for his funeral at Emanuel A.M.E. Church, with full military honors. He is buried at Emanuel A.M.E. Cemetery in North Charleston, near his beloved mother (Blanche) and grandmother (Naomi). "I don't think Charles received the recognition he deserves," his brother said. "He was a trailblazer, and they always get the shaft." It took The Citadel twenty-two years to recognize Foster for his achievement. In contrast, a display about the admission of women has already been added to The Citadel's history museum. "The Citadel was [Charles'] toughest challenge," Bill said. "He won, but never got the prize or the recognition. But he's still a *Citadel Man*."

Mildred Carr Dies at 86 Y.O. - The Voice of An Angle !!!

Mrs. Mildred Georgette Ellison Carr entered into eternal rest on Friday, January 1, 2016 in Charleston, she was 86 years old. Mrs. Carr was born October 9, 1929 and reared in Charleston, the wife of the late John Wesley Carr, Sr. a former principle of Wallace High



School (West Ashley). She was a beloved English and History teacher at Burke H.S. for 36 years and greatly admired by her 9th Grade homeroom students at Burke.

Mildred Ellison attended grade school at Immaculate Conception School (I.C.S.), then graduated from Burke Industrial School in 1947. She attended South Carolina State, initiated into her beloved Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and was crowned “Miss S.C. State College –1950-51.” Mildred Ellison Carr made a name for herself in the choir at S.C. State. She was known for her magnificent voice... *she had the voice of an angel!* Mildred Carr was a local favorite at weddings, social events and for her soulful rendition of Mahalia Jackson’s – *“I’ve Done My Work”* at funerals in the Charleston area for over 40 years.

Mrs. Carr was the beloved mother of John Wesley Carr, Jr., Georgette E. Carr, Mildredadella Carr Jordan, Aurelia Carr-Olverson and Joye Carr-Gore; sister of Arthur Ellison and the late James B. Ellison, Jr. An overflowing assembly gathered for Celebratory Services for the life of this outstanding and greatly admired “First Lady of Ashleyville/Marysville” on Saturday, January 9, 2016 in the Burke High School Performing Arts Center on President Street. Mrs. Carr was in repose at her former residence at 1039 Main Street in Ashleyville/Marysville on Friday evening, January 8th and interment services were private.

Pinckney’s Widow at Obama’s Gun Announcements

Jennifer Pinckney, the widow of slain S.C. State Sen. Clementa Pinckney stood behind President Barack Obama at the White House Tuesday (January 5th) as he announced a series of executive actions to help curb gun violence. After he spoke, Obama hugged the family members of victims of gun violence, embracing Jennifer Pinckney and giving her a kiss on the cheek. “They are a part of a group that nobody really wants to join...” Mrs. Pinckney is intent on carrying out her husband’s legacy of working for those with no voice through The Honorable Rev. Clementa C. Pinckney Foundation.



United States Navy Ship (USNS) John Lewis T-AO 205



A United States Navy replenishment oiler has been named in honor of Georgia congressman and civil rights legend, John Lewis (D-GA). Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus, made the announcement on January 6th in Washington. When the surprised congressman asked him, “How can you do this,” Mabus responded, “I am the Secretary of the Navy; I have the power.” The SECNAV announced the next generation of fleet replenishment oilers will start with USNS John Lewis (T-AO 205). The USNS John Lewis will be the first of the Class, they will be responsible for providing fuel replenishment as well as fleet cargo and store to ships at sea.

Lewis, who never learned to swim, said he kept reflecting on growing up in rural Alabama. “In Troy, we couldn’t use the swimming pool, so I never learned to swim,” he said. “All these years later, to hear the Secretary of the Navy say he wanted to name a ship after me ~ we cried a little together and we hugged.” During the ship-naming ceremony, Mabus pointed to Lewis’ role in the civil rights movement as reason enough for such an honor. “As the first of its class, the future USNS John Lewis will play a vital role in the mission of our Navy and Marine Corps while also forging a new path in fleet replenishment,” said Mabus. “Naming this ship after John Lewis is a fitting tribute to a man who has, from his youth, been at the forefront of progressive social and human rights movements in the U.S.” According to Lewis’ office, all of the ships within this class of fleet replenishment oilers will be named after Civil Rights heroes. It is that focus on freedom that Mabus says will live within USNS John Lewis. “T-AO 205 will, for decades to come, serve as a visible symbol of the freedoms Representative Lewis holds dear, and his example will live on in the steel of that ship and in all those who will serve aboard her...” said Mabus.

Charleston Club Tattler ~ One liners ...

- **Raven Saunders** ~ Best Shot-Put in the world this year! The former Burke High School standout has her Ole Miss career off to a flying start. Saunders, the two-time NCAA shot put champion, transferred from Southern Illinois U. to Ole Miss after her SIU coach, Connie Price-Smith, was hired by Ole Miss. In her second meet with the Rebels, on the weekend (January 16th), Saunders uncorked a personal-record effort of 61 feet, 3 inches. That’s the best women’s shot put in the world this year, and makes Saunders the No. 4 female shot-putter in NCAA history. She’s also the first Ole Miss Athlete, male or female, to break the 60-foot mark.
- **Fourteen cadets** have been punished; dismissed, suspended and/or serving on-campus punishments at The Citadel after several of them appeared in photos with pillowcases on their heads similar to Ku Klux Klan garb in Dec. 2015. The photos of seven freshmen cadets surfaced on social media. An investigation found they were ordered by upperclassmen to sing Christmas carols while they were dressed in costumes. The event was said to be a skit concerning the “Ghosts of Christmas Past.”

Happy Birthdays!

Charleston Club February Birthdays:

Marian Bennett ~ Feb. 3rd ~ **Arnette White-Cobb** ~ Feb. 4th
 ~ **Elizabeth Alston-Santos** ~ Feb. 7th ~ **George Johnson** ~ Feb. 8th
 ~ **Ralph McNeill** ~ Feb. 9th ~ **Rosalie “Rose” Randall** ~ Feb. 13th
 ~ **Bernice Johnson** ~ Feb. 18th ~ **Velveta Black** ~ Feb. 21st
 ~ **Brenda Owens** ~ Feb. 25th.

~ The Fly on The Wall !