



Black History Month-Hidden Figures

The Black Woman Behind GPS Technology

GPS or the Global Positioning System is something that we use every day. From finding your local supermarket, checking your directions if you get lost or mapping out your daily commute to avoid traffic, GPS is with us everywhere we go. It has literally changed the way we work, play and live. While millions of people use GPS in their car



or on their phone, many don't know that a Black woman is behind the creation of it. **That's right, Dr. Gladys Brown West, a Black woman from Virginia was instrumental in creating the device we use today.** And now, she's finally getting her recognition that's long overdue. On December 6th, 2018, the 87-year-old West was inducted into the Air Force Space and Missile Pioneers Hall of Fame by the United States Air Force during a ceremony at the Pentagon.

As a girl growing up in Dinwiddie County south of Richmond in the late 1930's early 1940's, all Gladys Brown knew was that she didn't want to work in the fields, picking tobacco, corn and cotton, or in a nearby factory, beating tobacco leaves into pieces small enough for cigarettes and pipes, as her parents did. ***"I realized I had to get an education to get out,"*** she said.

When she learned that the valedictorian and salutatorian from her high school would earn a scholarship to Virginia State College (now University), she studied hard and graduated at the top of her class. She got her free ticket to college, majored in math and taught two years in Sussex County before she went back to school for her master's degree.

In 1956 West began to work at Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division (Indian Head Maryland, Rt. 210), where she was the second black woman ever to be employed. West began to collect data from satellites, eventually leading to the development of Global Positioning System. Her supervisor Ralph Neiman recommended her as project manager for the Seasat radar altimetry project, the first satellite that could remotely sense oceans. In 1979, Neiman recommended West for commendation. West was a programmer in the Dahlgren Division for large-scale computers and a project manager for data-processing systems used in the analysis of satellite data.

In 1986, West published "Data Processing System Specifications for the Geosat Satellite Radar Altimeter", a 60-page illustrated guide. The Naval Surface Weapons Center (NSWC) guide was published to explain how to increase the accuracy of the estimation of "geoid heights and verti-

cal deflection", topics of satellite geodesy. This was achieved by processing the data created from the radio altimeter on the Geosat satellite which went into orbit on 12 March 1984. She worked at Dahlgren for 42 years, retiring in 1998. Her contributions to GPS were only uncovered when a member of West's sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, read a short biography West had submitted for an alumni function.

West's humble nature actually kept people from knowing how instrumental she was in the development of the device for decades. West admits that she had no idea, at the time, when she was recording satellite locations and doing accompanying calculations - that her work would affect so many. ***"When you're working every day, you're not thinking, 'What impact is this going to have on the world?' You're thinking, 'I've got to get this right,'"*** she says. And get it right she did, according to...those who worked with her or heard about her. Ralph Neiman, her department head in 1979, acknowledged those skills in a commendation he recommended for West, project manager for the Seasat radar altimetry project. Launched in 1978, Seasat was the first satellite designed for remote sensing of oceans with synthetic aperture radar.

In a 2017 message about Black History Month, Capt. Godfrey Weekes, then-commanding officer at the Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division, described the "integral role" played by West. ***"She rose through the ranks, worked on the satellite geodesy [science that measures the size and shape of Earth] and contributed to the accuracy of GPS and the measurement of satellite data,"*** he wrote. "As Gladys Brown West started her career as a mathematician at Dahlgren in 1956, she likely had no idea that her work would impact the world for decades to come." ***"I was ecstatic,"*** she said. ***"I was able to come from Dinwiddie County and be able to work with some of the greatest scientists working on these projects."***

S.C. Post office to be Renamed for Black Postmaster

Lavinia Baker, pictured here with her five surviving children after the lynching of her husband Frazier B. Baker and baby. She moved the family to the Boston area following the 1898 lynching.



A post office in a small South Carolina town will soon bear the name of Frazier B. Baker, the first black postmaster of Lake City whose lynching death in 1898

garnered national and international attention. Rep. Jim Clyburn (D-SC), introduced the legislative effort to rename Lake City's post office on West Main Street. It had the backing of South Carolina's entire Washington delegation to rename the post office after Baker, saying it would ensure that his story won't be forgotten. The bill was signed into law just before the government shutdown began on December 21st.

President William McKinley (the 25th president of the *United States*, serving from March 4, 1897, until his assassination six months into his second *term*) chose Baker, then 42 and a school teacher, as postmaster in 1897. The next year, a white mob burned his house and post office, and fatally shot him and his baby daughter. "As a former history teacher, I believe it is our duty to heed the words of George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Around 1 a.m. on Feb. 22, 1898 an armed white mob approached Baker's house and the town's post office, which they set ablaze in a plot to lure him outside to his death. Then, the mob started shooting. "Come on, we might as well die running as standing," Baker reportedly told his wife, Lavinia, before he and his infant daughter, Julia, were shot and killed inside the burning house. Baker's wife and their remaining five children narrowly escaped.

"This will be a great honor for Postmaster Frazier B. Baker who gave his life serving the citizens of this community," Mayor of Lake City Lovith Anderson said. Baker's great-niece Dr. Fostenia Baker praised the bill's passage upon hearing it had become law. She has dedicated much of her life to speaking about her great-uncle's sacrifice and will soon publish a book about him and his place in history. "We would be remiss if we didn't recognize that we are coming close to 121 years since the painful event against Frazier and the other members of the family," she said. "We, as a family, are glad that the recognition of this painful event finally happened. It's long overdue."

Anderson, who is also black, said the renaming of the town's only post office will serve as a reminder of the sacrifices made for racial progress and equality.

A grand jury was convened in Williamsburg County, but failed to return any indictments. The McKinley administration conducted a robust investigation of the murder, initially offering a \$1,500 (\$45,174 today) reward for the arrest and conviction of members of the mob. Despite resistance by witnesses to testifying, on 1 July 1898 prosecutors indicted 7 men on the charge of murdering Baker. Ultimately, thirteen men were indicted in U.S. Circuit Court on charges of murder, conspiracy to commit murder, assault, and destruction. The trial was held in federal court from 10-22 April 1899, with 13 defendants. The all-white jury was composed of businessmen from across the

state. The jury deliberated for around 24 hours before declaring a mistrial; the jury was deadlocked in reaching a verdict, five to five. The case was never retried. Following the mistrial, Lake City whites asked that the post office be reopened and mail service restored. Many African Americans derided this as hypocritical.

On May 2, 1898, a mass meeting was held at the Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston which passed a resolution condemning the attack. The congregation collected \$16 (\$460.61 today) for the Baker family. Lavinia Baker and her five surviving children remained in Charleston for several months after the verdict. Dr. Alonzo C. McClenan, the Charleston physician (at the Charleston Colored Hospital (old Cannon St. Hospital)) chairing a committee charged with the Bakers' welfare, and arranged a meeting with Lavinia. She agreed to be accompanied to move to Boston, and with her children relocated there. The Baker family received help in fundraising efforts in order to buy a home for the family near Boston. The Bakers remained in Boston but out of public life. The surviving Baker children fell victim to a tuberculosis epidemic, with four children dying from the disease. Lavinia's last surviving child, Rosa Baker, died in 1942. Having lost all her children, Lavinia Baker returned to Florence County, where she lived until her death in Cartersville, S.C. in 1947.

An estimated 185 African Americans were lynched in South Carolina between 1877 and 1950, according to a 2017 report from the Equal Justice Initiative. A ceremony will be planned to dedicate the Postmaster Frazier B. Baker Post Office at a later date in 2019.

Lake City is a small city in Florence County, with a population of 6,675 at the 2010 census. It is the hometown of Dr. Ronald E. McNair (1950-1986) who was born and raised in Lake City. He came from a low-income family but was determined to excel in academia and life. He graduated as valedictorian of Carver High School in 1967, and in 1971, he received his bachelor's degree in Physics, magna cum laude, from North Carolina A&T. In 1976, at the age of 26, he received his Ph.D. in Physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Charlestonian - DC Medical Center Veteran Honored

Meet Navy Veteran Lt. Commander Zenobia Shepherd at a ceremony recognizing her as the First African-American Female to Earn the Vice Admiral Batchelder Award last summer. The DC area veteran was honored by the National Capital Council



Navy League. Zenobia attended Bishop England in the early 80's and graduated from Burke, in the Class of 1984.

Lt. Cdr. Zenobia Shepherd was a Logistics Naval Officer on the USS Ross (DDG-71) in 2001. After the attacks on September 11th, she, like many active duty men and women, sprang into action to make significant contributions to the readiness of the U.S. armed forces. *"I've always been the person who jumps in when there's a fire,"* Shepherd said. *"As a Supply Officer, I readied the ship as it surged for forward deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom."* For her superior performance after the attacks, the USS Ross was nominated as the most combat-ready ship in the U.S. Navy and LCdr Shepherd earned the prestigious Vice Admiral Batchelder Award in 2002.

The Batchelder Award, created in 1983, is awarded annually by the Navy League of the United States to recognize Navy supply corps officers who have performed extraordinary acts and have had the most significant impact on the supply readiness of the U.S. Navy's operating forces. She was unaware at the time, but she was the first African-American female Naval Officer to earn the coveted award.

This distinction was not lost to the National Capital Council Navy League, who recently honored her in a ceremony at the Black History Museum of Alexandria, VA. Shepherd received formal recognition of this accomplishment from the National Capital Council Navy League at the Black History Museum of Alexandria in May 2018. The recognition letter was presented by Captain Michael Salvato, USN (Ret.) former commanding Officer of the USS ROSS (DDG-71). Also in attendance were Alexandria Mayor Allison Silberberg, Maryland Congresswoman Donna Edwards.

"I'm so honored, I really just can't believe it, and especially after all I've gone through" Shepherd said. Shepherd deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and her recovery has been long, arduous and short of amazing. She credits the multidisciplinary team of the Washington DC Veterans Affairs Medical Center with her recovery. *"The VA team helped me to get my life back,"* Shepherd said choking back the tears. Shepherd says she is feeling like there is hope now and has a therapy dog named Angel that is a big help and is able to get out and go to Pilates and chapel, something that seemed impossible years before. "My advice to all veterans is to trust in the care and be open to a life long journey of therapy, and quality care at the DCVA.

Charleston man nominated for Stellar Awards

A Charleston native is making a name for himself in the gospel music business. Jarell Smalls is nominated for four Stellar Awards. The Stellas are the equivalent of the Grammys in the gospel music industry. Smalls and his group, Jarell Smalls & Company, are nominated for Traditional



Duo/Chorus Group, Traditional Male Vocalist, Traditional CD, and Quartet of the Year. The Stellar Awards ceremony takes place March 29th in Las Vegas.

According to the bio on his website, Smalls released his debut album in 2013 titled "Jesus Is the Reason" to infuse his southern gospel roots with Christmas music. From this album he released his first single "Rock the Baby." The new album, "A New Season," is a combination of "that Sunday morning feeling," mixed with quartet. It reflects the new generation sound and is sure to warm the hearts and souls of all ages.

Charleston honors G.B. Packers player, Burke H.S. graduate

Burke H.S. graduate and Green Bay Packers defensive end Fadol Brown now has a day named after him. Mayor John Tecklenburg and city council honored the Charleston native on January 22nd at City Hall. Brown said it's something he never expected. "I never really envisioned this," Brown said. It's still crazy when I think about it. Just being consistent and working hard. Dedication and just having an actual drive when things get hard, being able to fight through, that's the biggest thing." The Charleston native is a 2011 graduate of Burke where he excelled on the football field. Fadol received a Bachelor's degree in General Studies from Ole Miss in 2015 upon completion of a triple minor in education, park and recreation management, and physiology. An exemplary student, Fadol also made the Dean's Honor Roll three consecutive years at Ole Miss. Fadol has a passion for working with inner city youths and helping mentor children to become successful adults.



LA to Re-Name the 'President Barack H. Obama Hwy

A portion of the 134 Freeway in Los Angeles was named after former President Barack Obama on December 20th. A portion of Freeway 134 between the Glendale CA-2 and the 210 Freeway was re-named the President Barack H. Obama Highway. The highway will run through parts of Glendale, Pasadena and Eagle Rock, according to the station. The 44th president lived in Pasadena, CA, and attended Occidental College in Los Angeles from 1979 to 1981. California State Senator Anthony Portantino announced he wanted to name the freeway after Obama in September 2017. State lawmakers gave the final approval for the renaming change in Sept. 2018.

"The President has often mentioned his fond memories of living in Pasadena and attending Occidental College, so it was very appropriate to name the portion of the freeway he traveled after him," State Senator Anthony Portantino said in a statement. "Our community came together to make this happen. It is an honor to be in a position to have helped facilitate this wonderful symbol of our collective

respect for the grace and dignity embodied by our 44th President.” An official unveiling of the newly renamed freeway will take place sometime this spring.

Charleston Club Tattler ~ One liners ...

- ◆ **Col. Charles E. Fields**, (U.S. Army Retired) entered into eternal rest on Tuesday January 22nd in Ft. Washington; he was 88 years old. Charlie was a former Charleston Club president in the 1970s. He is survived by his wife, **Irene Wright Fields** of Charleston and their five (5) children: Charles E. Fields II, Thomas E. Fields III, Karen E. Fields, Allen E. Fields, and Kirk E. Fields. Viewing and services will take place at St. Paul United Methodist Church, 6634 St. Barnabas Road, Oxon Hill, MD on Friday, **February 1, 2019** from 11 a.m. until the time of Funeral Service at 12 noon. A tribute to Col. Charlie Edward Fields will be in the March edition of *The Tattler*.
- ◆ During our January 2019 Meeting, there was a consensus that the members wanted to get together to celebrate **BLACK HISTORY MONTH**, the **RIGHT WAY!** The Charleston Club will host a Black History Celebration Luncheon on **Saturday, February 9th, 2019** from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m. at the DeSoul Café, 7651 Matapeake Business Drive (104), in Brandywine, MD 20613 (just North of Costco) telephone # 301-782-9752. The MENU will be...Fried Chicken, BBQ Pork Ribs, Fried Whiting with sides of Collard Greens, Green Beans, Mac N Cheese, and House Salad ...Cornbread...drinks are Iced Tea, Lemonade, Water, Soft Drinks. RSVP to Clarence by **FEB. 1st**.



- ◆ **February Free Rides in The District!** As part of the #FairShot program, during February, the **DCCirculator** will be joining with **DCStreetcar** is offering **FREE RIDES!** Between Jan. 28th ~ Feb. 28th you hop on a free circulator ride and explore all DC has to offer!



Henry J. Bennett, Sr. Dies in Savannah
Henry J. Bennett, Sr. entered into eternal rest on

Thursday, December 27, 2018 in Savannah, GA. He was the brother of Charleston Club members **Carolyn Knowles** and **Leroy Bennett**, brother-in-law of **Gilbert Knowles** and cousin of Charleston Club president **Rose C. Randall**.



Brother Bennett was born on April 10, 1943 to Leroy Bennett and Lucille Floyd, in Charleston. He was educated in the public school system of Charleston. He entered the U.S. Army at an early age, and faithfully served in the Army during the Vietnam War, and was awarded the meritorious Purple Heart. He traveled all over the world and retired in 1984 with an honorable discharge. Henry Bennett began and retired from a second career in a civil service position in Georgia. He later was a successful entrepreneur in many other personal endeavors. Bennett was joined in holy matrimony to the love of his life, Myrna Johnson in June 1962 and the young couple had five children; Kendrick (Monique) Bennett, Kimberly Brown, Alisha (Gary) Guy, Lisa R. Bennett, and Henry J. Bennett, Jr.

In 1984 he became a member of the Progressive Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in Hinesville, GA. He faithfully attended the Progressive Church until his health declined. During his tenure at the Progressive Church he supported brotherhood activities, construction projects and regularly supported his church pastor and witnessed many gifts and loved his church.

Brother Bennett leaves to mourn his passing a devoted wife and loving mother, Myrna J. Bennett, and their eight children. Many in-laws, grandchildren, great grandchildren, great-great grandchildren, and a host of nieces, nephews, relatives and dear friends, all of whom are saddened by his departure. Funeral Services started Friday evening, January 4, 2019, at the funeral home with the services at noon on Saturday, January 5th at the Progressive Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, on Pipkin Road, in Hinesville, GA. Interment was Monday, January 7th at the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Glennville, GA. 1975.

Happy Birthdays!

February Birthdays:

Marian Bennett – Feb. 3rd ~ Arnette White-Cobb – Feb. 4th
 ~ William Hagan - Feb. 9th ~ Ralph McNeill - Feb. 9th ~
 Mary Lou Palmer - Feb. 10th ~ Rose Randall - Feb. 13th ~
 Bernice Johnson - Feb. 18th ~ Velveeta Black - Feb. 21st ~
 Brenda Owens - Feb. 25th. *- The Fly on The Wall !*