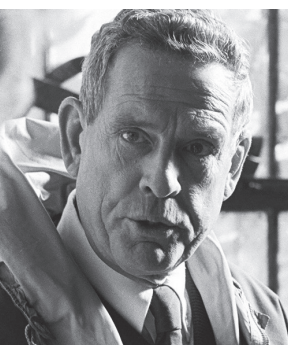
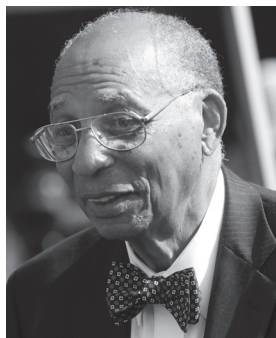


# BridgeBuilders

2001-2016  
Charlottesville, VA



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**DREWARY J. BROWN** was a Charlottesville community leader who worked across racial and economic barriers to create opportunity for all within the community.

The Bridge Builders are honored because they exemplified Drewary's spirit in their own lifetimes building bridges between people to improve the lives of all.

Preservation Piedmont, the nonprofit grassroots organization sponsoring this project, is dedicated to preservation, public awareness, and advocacy of historic resources in Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and adjacent localities.

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## INTRODUCTION

When Charlottesville's West Main Street Bridge adjacent to the Amtrak Railroad Station was redesigned in 1998, the City Council proposed naming it for Drewary J. Brown, a beloved and longtime civil rights leader who was in the last stage of his life. Truly a modest man, Drewary told me at the time that he was touched by this even being considered. After his death, I had the honor, as mayor, to dedicate the bridge to Drewary.

The Council ultimately decided not only to name the bridge after Drewary but also to use it as an opportunity to recognize others who, like Drewary, had built bridges within the community to bring people together and to make Charlottesville a better place for everyone. The bridge would have a sign, and Bridge Builders would be honored by memorial plaques mounted on the railings.

A committee was formed, and criteria were established to recognize people who had made memorable contributions to our community life. "They are those who have worked to reduce barriers, to bridge differences among groups and individuals, to enrich the lives of all our residents, to increase opportunity and understanding, and to encourage all of us to work together to build a better community."

The criteria stipulated that individuals, not groups, be recognized, that accomplishments must have taken place during the lifetime of Drewary Brown or thereafter and that nominations be made in writing by three supporters of the nomination.

All the people designated as Bridge Builders from 2001 to 2016 had worked to bridge the gaps between various parts of society: between African American and white citizens and between those of varying economic status. One Bridge Builder, Franz Stillfried, devoted his brief life to bettering the situation of persons with disabilities; Walter Washington and Jay Worrall spent considerable time helping ex-offenders readjust to the world outside jail.

The first Bridge Builders named in the spring of 2001 were Sarah Patton Boyle, Mary Ann and William Allen Elwood, Edith "Winx" Lawrence, Mary Pierce Reese, Franz Gerhard Stillfried, and Grace Quarles and Robert L. Tinsley, Jr.

Of the first group, only Sarah Patton Boyle and Franz Stillfried were deceased, while the Elwoods, Tinsleys, Winx Lawrence, and Mary Reese were very much alive and still active. I had nominated Sarah Patton Boyle, a woman I knew only through reading and hearing stories about her as a white woman who took a stand for desegregation in the 1950s, for which she had cross burned in her yard by the Klan.

The living honorees and their families were present for the awards, held that first year at the Amtrak Train Station near the Bridge. The awards continued every other year until 2005 and 2006, when the Bridge Builders were named two years in a row. A 10-year hiatus followed perhaps because of city staff changes. The program was revived in 2016.

As Charlottesville moves beyond the trauma of August 12, 2017, and looks to the future, I believe it's important to remember the people who have united the community, not only to honor them but also to inspire others to act for the love of this community. The lives of the Bridge Builders remind us that there is much good right here in our own backyard, as people have stepped up at important junctures in our history to make a difference.

These brief biographies introduce the Bridge Builders, which we hope to supplement with other activities, such as online presentations and stories, additional screenings of *Working for A Better Day: The Drewary Brown Story*, along with panel and audience discussions, and a walking tour of the Drewary Brown Bridge.

Virginia Germino, an original member of the Bridge Builders Committee, urged both me and Jean Hiatt, former president of Preservation Piedmont, to take on this project. We feared these powerful stories might otherwise be lost. The three of us pooled our efforts to put together the original draft.

Since then, I have worked with many people, including Charlene Green of the City of Charlottesville, members of Preservation Piedmont, including former president Ellen Wagner, Board member Genevieve Keller, Advisory Board member Peggy Van Yahres, and Coy Barefoot of the Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society. Virginia Daugherty kindly edited and made suggestions. Many other family members and friends of Bridge Builders have contributed photos and memories.

We all want to find ways to keep the Bridge Builders' stories alive as we seek new ways of reaching out and embracing our community. We are grateful to the Board of Preservation Piedmont, a Charlottesville-Albemarle regional nonprofit grassroots organization, which agreed to sponsor this publication and provide the initial seed funding. Thanks also to Lynwood Napier and T&N Printing for its generosity in making this a community project, and the City of Charlottesville for its support of production costs.

I trust that the short sketches published here about these incredible heroes will inspire our citizens, old and new, to learn more about Charlottesville's rich history and also to do their part to make the story continue to be one of a transformed and beloved community.

— Kay Slaughter

*Former Mayor of Charlottesville, 1996–98*

*Charlottesville, VA , March 2019*



1998 HONOREE

## DREWARY JOHN BIRCHARD BROWN

Drewary J. Brown, born in Albemarle County in 1918, died in 1998 in Charlottesville. Mr. Brown, as he was known to some, Drewary to others, grew up poor in the county, his mother working to provide for several children.

While Drewary never forgot his roots, he was able to befriend others from a wide variety of backgrounds—very poor people and the very privileged. With his charming personality, he built bridges between the races, poor and affluent, as well as across the generations.

During World War II, Drewary joined the military. Returning to his base after a visit home, he was directed by the driver to sit in the back of the bus. According to Drewary, he and another friend in the military, Sonny Sampson, refused to do so, explaining that they were fighting for the USA and should be able to sit where they pleased.

Back in Charlottesville after the war, Drewary worked in a number of positions, eventually taking a job to manage the Alpha Tau Omega (ATO) fraternity house at the University of Virginia (UVA) where his wife was the cook.

According to ATO member Bill Schmidt, Drewary approached the fraternity in 1965 to sponsor an integrated concert with James Brown at the University. In return, ATO would receive \$1000 of the proceeds. As Schmidt recalled, members, who generally supported Drewary's civil rights efforts with the local NAACP, agreed. Because tickets cost only \$2.50, the show did not net much money for James Brown, but young black kids from Charlottesville sat in the front row in a largely collegiate audience to watch a great performance by the "Godfather of Soul." This integrated event marked a small step toward recognizing that the University should treat African-Americans equally in all realms of the University.

Later, Brown worked as community organizer and job training director for Monticello Area Community Action Agency (MACAA), a program started as part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. In the 1970s, he helped found the Central Virginia Opportunities Industrialization Council (OIC) to educate and train unemployed and underemployed people in Charlottesville and nearby rural counties. (He had also become a mentor to Alicia Lugo, who later became OIC's first director.)

Drewary served as chair of the Charlottesville Chapter of the National Association for Colored People (NAACP), member of the Albemarle-Charlottesville Jail Board, and the City Police Review Board. His many honors included the 1985 Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration Award, the Paul Goodloe McIntire Award for Community Leadership, and the first Drewary Brown Award presented by the Charlottesville Democratic Party in honor of his political service.

Throughout his life, Drewary acted with strength and dignity, connecting with young and old, white and black. He often repeated a saying, “You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar,” an adage many community members have reprised when recounting memories of him.

The purpose of honoring Drewary Brown and other community leaders is to recognize citizens who have reached out to others who have been neglected or discriminated against, often citizens different from themselves in terms of race or economic class. The Bridge honorees—like Drewary Brown—have made it their life’s work to build bridges within the community. ■

First Baptist Church 1963–67,  
likely an NAACP photo.

*Front.* Drewary Brown, unidentified  
man

*Left to right.* Bea Fowkes, owner,  
Carver Inn; Rev. Robert Albritton,  
assistant minister Westminster  
Presbyterian; Rev. Henry Mitchell;  
unidentified woman; Floyd Johnson;  
Gertrude Hamilton; Mr. Scott, from  
Greene County; Virginia Carrington;  
Charles Fowler; Rev. Benjamin Bunn







## 2001 HONOREES

### SARAH PATTON BOYLE | 1906-1994

A daughter of privilege during the era of segregation, Patty Boyle spoke out on behalf of thousands of white Virginians who believed in racial equality even as she sought educate herself on African-American viewpoints.

A writer for *Saturday Evening Post* and other publications, she forged a close relationship with T.J. Sellers, editor of the *Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune* in Charlottesville, the first black person she knew as a peer and friend and who was crucial in pointing out the paternalistic aspects of her initial thinking about race relations. As she began to challenge the racism within herself, she also recognized its pervasiveness in southern institutions and culture. She wrote letters to the editor of *The Daily Progress* campaigning for removal of signs instructing blacks to sit in the back of the bus. A charter member of the Virginia Council on Human Relations, a group seeking to bring whites and blacks together to abolish segregation, Patty travelled throughout the state speaking in favor of integration. She was also active in the Charlottesville chapter of the group.

Ostracized by many in her social circle, she had a cross burned on the yard of her home near UVA. Later, she was arrested in a civil rights demonstration in St. Augustine, FL. Sarah Patton Boyle was recognized for her efforts by the Virginia Voters League and the Charlottesville Chapter of the NAACP. The National Council of Negro Women named her Woman of the Year in Human Relations. She chronicled her journey in a memoir, *The Desegregated Heart: A Virginian's Stand in Time of Transition*. ■





**MARY ANN ELWOOD** | 1932–2011

**WILLIAM ALLEN ELWOOD** | 1932–2002



When the Elwoods moved to Charlottesville in 1964, school desegregation dominated public debate, and black and white citizens had little interaction. The Elwoods challenged the status quo by enrolling their sons in desegregated public schools, joining the local chapter of the NAACP, and worshipping at the predominantly black Trinity Episcopal Church. Their home became a hospitable gathering spot for people from all races and walks of life.

Mary Ann Elwood combined her passions for integration and education by co-founding a preschool for disadvantaged children. She also taught for seven years in the city's alternative school, which served at-risk students. She founded the "Book Buddies" program, training volunteers to help teachers ensure that no child would leave second grade without reading and writing skills. As ardent Democrats who understood the power of politics, the Elwoods registered many first-time voters. Their organizing efforts, working with African Americans, wrested the Charlottesville Democratic Party from the white power structure. In 1970, the City elected its first black city councilor, Charles Barbour, who became mayor in 1974. Mary Ann went on to become the first woman to chair the Charlottesville Democratic Committee.

For almost a decade, Mary Ann served as president of the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce. From that position, she evoked broad support for minority businesses. For her community leadership, she received the 1998 Paul Goodloe McIntire Award. She was also honored as Woman of the Year by the Virginia Women's Forum (VWF).

Meanwhile Bill Elwood, a professor of English at UVA, revolutionized the Department's curriculum by including African-American literature. As a dean, he vigorously recruited minority students and faculty. In 1989, Bill produced a deeply moving documentary film, "The Road to Brown," about the legal challenges that led to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision calling for desegregation of public schools. For his success in improving race relations, Bill was presented the 1999 Martin Luther King, Jr. Award.

This couple brought people together: rich and poor, blacks and whites, Republicans and Democrats, business and academia, newcomers and natives. ■



## EDITH “WINX” LAWRENCE | B. 1950

A native of Albemarle County, Winx worked quietly and consistently to help people in social and economic difficulty join mainstream society. While at Hollins College, she traveled weekly to Lewisburg, WV, to work at a small mental health clinic struggling to serve underpaid employees of the nearby resort hotel.

In Charlottesville, Winx, a professional educator and counselor, reached out to the parents and children who lived in less-privileged circumstances. A middle-class mother of three, she forged relationships with families at Friendship Court that led to the establishment of the Soccer Outreach Program. She successfully mentored numerous children and families living in subsidized housing.

As a faculty member of UVA's Curry School of Education, Winx founded the Young Women's Leadership Program and the Family Empowerment Project. She introduced a new major in Youth and Social Innovation.

Throughout her professional and community work, including the mentoring of young women, Winx maintained her cheerful and caring demeanor while making deep connections with youth. With her colleague David B. Waters, Winx co-authored a book about an approach to family therapy, *Competence, Courage, and Change*. The title aptly describes Winx herself. ■



## MARY PIERCE REESE | 1931-2014

Before moving to Charlottesville, Mary Reese worked her way from secretary to teacher to principal of the same school, serving over 21 years in the Greensboro, NC school system. She then became Director of Teacher Education and Staff Development for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Mary moved to Virginia in 1980 to work in the Charlottesville City Public Schools, acting as assistant superintendent until 1993, after which she worked with the National Association of School Administrators in Washington, DC. Upon retirement in 1995, Mary didn't rest but renewed her service to area nonprofits, including the Barrett Early Learning Center, MACAA, Head Start, and the Senior Center.

For her many efforts, Mary was honored with the 2011 Martin Luther King, Jr. Award, the Home Instead Salute to Seniors Award, and the Junior League of Charlottesville's Emily Couric Community Advocacy Award. Throughout her life, Mary Reese retained her can-do spirit, always pitching in where help was needed and bringing great skills to working with a broad variety of people. ■



## FRANZ GERHARD STILLFRIED | 1960-1988

Franz Stillfried was a major force for the rights of people with disabilities. One of the organizers of the Independence Resource Center, he served as the Center's first advocacy director. As a result of his leadership, the City of Charlottesville established a goal of making 10% of its housing stock accessible for people with disabilities. Notably, Charlottesville also became the first US city to commit to having a 100% accessible public transit system.

Franz was a dogged advocate who pushed UVA toward providing more accessibility on grounds. Tragically, on a day Franz was heading to a meeting with UVA officials, the absence of a curb cut led him to follow a path without a sidewalk. Wet grass caused his wheelchair to tumble down an embankment, killing him instantly. His shocking death spurred a flurry of belated improvements at the University, but the community lost an amazingly creative citizen far too soon. ■



**ROBERT LEE TINSLEY, SR.** | 1927-2011

**GRACE QUARLES TINSLEY** | 1933-2006

Together and separately, Robert and Grace Tinsley spent their lives building bridges in their home town, and they made a significant difference in the lives of many Charlottesville residents by dismantling barriers to social and economic justice for all citizens.

Born in Charlottesville, Robert served in the U.S. Army during World War II and the Korean Conflict. After military service, he returned to school, graduating from Burley High School in 1956, where he had met Grace. The Tinsleys married, raised their children, and worshipped at Zion Union Baptist Church. Robert, who had attended Morris Hanly Business College, worked for Brown's Dry Cleaners for four decades.



Early in their life together, the Tinsleys recognized the need to provide a voice for the African-American community in the cause of social justice and equality. The couple, together with their good friend Drewary Brown and others, joined the local Democratic Party whose membership had been previously almost entirely white. Robert's tenacity and sense of justice led to many planning and organizational meetings, making their home the unofficial headquarters for civic activism beginning in the early 1970s.

Robert Tinsley was an executive board member of the local NAACP and was chair of Carver Precinct for the Democratic Party. At dawn, each Election Day, he set up a table at the polls, remaining there until they closed in the evening. He, Grace, and fellow Democrat Ethel Brown Lockett ensured that every Democratic voter was greeted, and they kept a list of those who had voted, calling and sometimes sending a car to transport those who had not yet appeared. The Democratic Party presented Robert and Grace the Drewary J. Brown Award for dedicated service to the community and to the Democratic Party.

Grace attended local public schools and Allen University in South Carolina. While at Burley High School she participated in a joint program with UVA that allowed African-Americans to become nurses before the hospital and university were fully integrated. She worked at the UVA Hospital for 18 years while raising three children. Grace became the first nurse at Charlottesville High School, retiring from the Charlottesville City Schools as nursing supervisor in 1992.

Grace Tinsley was the first African-American woman appointed to the Charlottesville School Board, and she became chair of the board of Charlottesville-Albemarle Technical Education Center (CATEC). She served on many other boards including the local chapter of the NAACP, Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC), Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA), and Hope House, which provided housing and other services for families who were homeless, in danger of becoming homeless, or of being split up and housed in separate locations.

Concerned with the treatment of the poor in the criminal justice system, Grace advocated and worked with Virginia Delegate Mitch Van Yahres on state legislation to establish a local public defender's office and then helped raise funds to staff it. She also advocated for passage of legislation to restore the voting rights of non-violent felons.

An extraordinary community activist, Grace was confident, eloquent, and dedicated. Former PVCC President Deborah DiCroke described Grace as "a consistent voice for inclusion and diversity, a creative thinker, and a builder of bridges." Grace received many honors, including the PVCC President's Medallion (the highest non-academic award given by the College), the Virginia Women's Forum Woman of the Year Award, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Award, and a Resolution from the Virginia General Assembly, recognizing Grace's wide-ranging contributions to the Charlottesville community. ■



## 2002 HONOREES

### FRANCES C. BRAND | 1901-1990

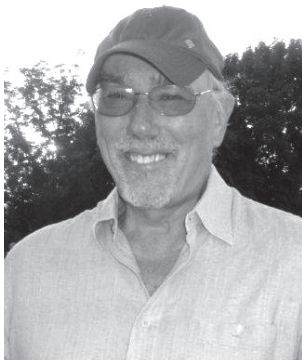
“Brandy,” as she was known to her friends, was a true original, a spunky white woman widely known as “the purple lady” because she always wore that color, standing out at every gathering not only for her wardrobe, but also for her outspoken honesty and dedication to equal rights and inclusiveness.

Frances Brand embraced issues of peace, civil rights, and justice at a time when they were not popular. In spite of a successful military career, Brandy was a fervent pacifist as well as a stalwart champion of civil rights and a devout churchwoman.

After retiring from the U.S. Army, Brandy used the G.I. Bill to study painting in Mexico City. When she returned to Charlottesville, she dedicated her talent to painting “Firsts,” portraits of people who broke gender and racial barriers and whose character and achievements she admired. She built a gallery in her home for these portraits, which are now preserved by the Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society.

Brandy honored African-Americans, women, and others who had been the first to attain positions previously closed to them. Some were prominent citizens; others had been little noticed, but Brandy’s special attention to their lives inspired people to follow their own dreams with courage and persistence. Her “Firsts” included firefighters, mail carriers, carpenters, police, mayors, school board members, librarians, and teachers. Each had overcome some form of prejudice. Striking examples were Gregory H. Swanson, the first African-American admitted to UVA, Jill Rinehart, the first woman elected to City Council, Charles Barbour, the City’s first African-American mayor, and Nancy O’Brien, the City’s first woman mayor. Brandy painted many of those now recognized as Bridge Builders.

In 1983, Frances Brand was feted by the NAACP at a community-wide celebration hosted by Zion Union Baptist Church. Civil-rights heroes Imogene Bunn, Grace Tinsley, and Eugene Williams all testified to her extraordinary achievements; the Charlottesville Community Choir sang for her; and Drewary Brown presented the honoree. In her 80s, Brandy received the 1987 Martin Luther King, Jr. Award for her contributions to equality, peace, and justice. ■



## **JOHN G. CONOVER** | B. 1945

A longtime resident of Charlottesville, John Conover has been known as a great storyteller and listener who always seems truly interested in everyone he meets and communicates well with people whose views diverge from his own. John has encouraged many citizens to take leadership roles in government.

Over the years, John created metaphorical bridges between people as a member of City Council. He also built physical bridges and trails with the Rivanna Trails Foundation, as a founding member and later as president. He worked for Friends of Blue Ridge House, a service center for people with mental health problems, City Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, Children, Youth, and Family Services (now operating as “Ready Kids”), and the Charlottesville Democratic Committee, among others.

For 25 years, John and his wife Virginia Daugherty owned and operated Papercraft Printing, a thriving business that provided free or reduced printing costs for many nonprofit organizations. After selling the company, John became a staff attorney with the Legal Aid Justice Center. He specialized in the housing problems of low-income residents. As chair of the Board of Live Arts Theater, John helped the group meet its goal of building community. The theatre, which frequently performs works by local writers, has attracted a large, diverse group of actors, directors, backstage people, and ushers. ■



## **ALICIA B. LUGO** | 1941-2011

Alicia’s voice and presence were charismatic and strong: when she spoke, everyone listened.

Alicia Lugo attended Charlottesville’s segregated Jackson Burley High School and then earned her college degree from Hampton Institute. She returned to her hometown for her first three years of teaching, shortly after schools were desegregated. Drewary Brown recognized her talent and urged her to become more involved in the community. Under his mentorship, she became a community leader, a worker in the MACAA Job Training Center (later renamed for Drewary Brown), and the chief administrator of Central Virginia Opportunities Industrialization Council (OIC) and Drewary J. Brown Job Training Center.

From her experience in the school system, Alicia learned that many black students dropped out. In a 1995 interview, she said,



“I’ve never forgotten about those youngsters.” That knowledge drove her to serve on boards for Piedmont Virginia Community College, Habitat for Humanity, Charlottesville-Albemarle Technical Education Center, Region 10 Mental Health Board, Planned Parenthood of the Piedmont, the AIDS/HIV Services Group, the City’s Electoral Board, the Quality Community Council, and the Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

Alicia served on the Charlottesville City School Board for 11 years, five of them as chair. She later became executive director of Teensight, a program of FOCUS Women’s Resource Center that provided education and support services to pregnant teenagers and teenaged parents. She extended her influence into more unusual venues, such as the Darden School’s summer LEAD program, which provided business education for minority teenagers (founded by Bridge Builder John Snook). A powerful public speaker, Alicia inspired high-school students to reach beyond customary ambitions and consider higher-level careers.

She also operated Rose Hill Market for a few years and was a founding partner of the first black radio station in Charlottesville. For many years, Alicia shared a multi-generational home with her mother, Inez Brown Bowler, and her daughter, Angel Nichelle “Nickie” Lugo.

Named 1978 Woman of the Year by the Virginia Women’s Forum, Alicia was also honored as a recipient of the 1988 Martin Luther King, Jr. Award, The March of Dimes Outstanding Woman of Achievement in 1990, and the Skyline District Girl Scouts of America Woman of Distinction in 1992. In March 1998, she was honored by Rotary Clubs International for her contributions to women and their families.

Alicia Lugo was an outspoken advocate for youth, the poor, and minorities. She worked in interracial settings, bringing together people of different backgrounds to solve common problems. ■



## **BOOKER T. REAVES** | 1915–1996

Booker Reaves played a crucial role in Charlottesville's school system, from fighting for equal resources for black schools during segregation and providing a transition to desegregated schools in the wake of massive resistance.

One of six children, he grew up in Free Union and later on Hartman's Mill Road in the City. Booker attended Jefferson Elementary School (since demolished), which stood on the current Jefferson School site, and Jefferson High School. After his graduation from Hampton Institute, he briefly taught at Abrams High School in Fluvanna in 1938. The next year he began teaching classes in history, government, sociology, and math at Jefferson High School, where he later acted as athletic director and for some years as assistant principal. In 1951, when Burley High School opened, Jefferson became an elementary school, and Booker became its first and only principal. The school was overcrowded with at least 1,000 students and very limited resources. Booker worked with the superintendent to obtain books and supplies for Jefferson equal to those in other schools.

In 1958, in the midst of legal actions by black parents, rulings by the Federal Court about Charlottesville School Board's pupil assignment plan, and the subsequent late opening for Venable Elementary and Lane High School, Governor Lindsay Almond informed attorneys for Charlottesville School Board that he would close the two schools rather than have them desegregated as ordered by the federal court.

Finally in September 1962, after the African-American plaintiffs won their case for full desegregation, the School Board sought review by the U.S. Supreme Court, which denied review. As a result, Jefferson School was subsequently closed, and children placed in other schools. Booker Reaves became principal of the previously all-white McGuffey Elementary School and was assigned the task of finding positions for the black teachers in the newly desegregated system. Well-respected by both black and white members of the community, he played a key role to a relatively smooth transition to desegregated schools, working closely as an administrative assistant to Superintendent George Tramontin. He retired in 1979 as Assistant Superintendent.

Booker Reaves is known for a number of Charlottesville firsts. He was the first African-American from Charlottesville to earn a Master's degree from UVA, the first Director of Head Start, first black principal of a previously all-white school, first black administrator for the Charlottesville City Schools, and first black

assistant superintendent. He was a founding member of the local chapter of the NAACP.

Booker built bridges across barriers in our black and white communities. He believed the groups actually had much in common, and he worked to support, mentor, and empower students, teachers, parents, and members of the larger community. Booker believed that when the playing field was level, people from all groups could succeed and that if decisions were made for the betterment of all, then everybody won.

Booker provided guidance and encouragement to generations of children, finding scholarships for many students pursuing higher education. In a time when the market did not fully welcome African-American employees, he located contacts for job seekers.

Grace Tinsley wrote, “Booker Reaves effectively and successfully served the people of this city’s public school system for 40 years.” She added, “The community and school system recognized his outstanding contributions by naming the Charlottesville High School Media Center in his honor.” ■



## 2003 HONOREES

### **THE REVEREND BENJAMIN F. BUNN |**

1906-1989

### **IMOGENE BUNN |**1912-2002



The Bunns arrived in Charlottesville in 1944 when Rev. Bunn was called to serve as pastor at First Baptist Church on West Main Street. In the 1940s, Rev. Bunn organized a Young Adult Fellowship at First Baptist, inviting members from several churches. Because of community racial issues, a number of progressive whites were also invited to join the discussion from time to time, including Bridge Builder Francis Fife, who was then representing the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Over time, this group evolved into the Church Council on Human Relations, and it became part of the Charlottesville Inter-racial Commission. Rev. Bunn chaired the Commission, and approximately 30 white and black citizens worked together to improve schools, housing, and employment for African-Americans. That group eventually became the Charlottesville Chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations. Among their early activities they held interracial meetings without incident at the Carver Inn, the sole hotel for blacks in the city.

Rev. Bunn established the Interracial Ministers Association. Early in his years in Charlottesville, he confided to his wife, Imogene Bunn, that he wasn't sure he could live in a town without an NAACP, to which she replied, "we can fix that." Rev. Bunn with the assistance of his wife Imogene founded a branch of the NAACP in 1945.

The couple worked to get out the vote in elections, getting support in the black community for like-minded white candidates, and taking people to the polls. After the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, *The Daily Progress* had editorialized on a policy of voluntary segregation. But Rev. Bunn stated that most blacks did not favor segregation: "It's not because they want to be next to white people, but because they want to be free."

Rev. Bunn also worked for open occupancy in housing, increased employment opportunities, and desegregation in all aspects of community life. According to his wife, Rev. Bunn integrated the public library by using it. In 1991, Rev. Bunn was posthumously awarded the Martin Luther King, Jr. Award.

Imogene Bunn excelled as a public health nurse. She received her BS in Public Health Nursing from the University of Michigan, but she also had studied nursing at St. Philip Hospital in Richmond, the Medical College of Virginia (now VCU), Virginia Union University, and University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

As a public health nurse, Imogene Bunn broke many color barriers beginning in the 1940s when she was hired by the Instructive Visiting Nurses Association of Charlottesville and became the first black nurse assigned to visit both black and white patients in their homes. In the Albemarle Charlottesville Health Department in 1970, she served as Nursing Supervisor, becoming the first black public health nurse administrator in Virginia. She also served as Nursing Director in the Thomas Jefferson Health District.

Challenging segregation at the UVA hospital (“colored” patients were relegated to inferior facilities in the basement), Mrs. Bunn, a patient for elective surgery, demanded a private room in the Barringer Wing. After much consultation within the hospital, which included recognition that she was determined, if necessary, to take the matter through the courts, Imogene Bunn was accommodated, thus desegregating that hospital. She also integrated the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center and the Blue Ridge Sanatorium.

Mrs. Bunn worked to get black nurses employed by the city and state, black students admitted to the UVA School of Nursing, and qualified nurses, such as Grace Tinsley, hired by the Charlottesville City Public Schools. For her lifetime of achievement, she was honored as 1996 Woman of the Year by the Virginia Women’s Forum. ■



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Bridge Builder Imogene Bunn, left, receives an award from the Commonwealth of Virginia.



## EMILY COURIC | 1947–2001

Emily was a gifted writer and successful author, who was drawn to broader social and political activism, especially in the area of education. She believed that all children are capable of great achievement. With a vision of educational and social reform to accomplish this goal, Emily served on the Charlottesville School Board from 1985–91. In her term as chair, she transformed her vision into action.

Emily served young people on the boards of Charlottesville Youth Commission and the Boys and Girls Club of Central Virginia. She was also active in a host of other area agencies and businesses, including Jefferson Area Board for Aging, Virginia National Bank, Virginia Festival of the Book, Heritage Repertory Theatre, WVPT Public Television, Camp Holiday Trails, and Downtown Charlottesville Inc.

In 1995, Emily was elected to the Virginia State Senate and later reelected to a second term. During her campaigns, Emily reached out to a diverse group of people regardless of party affiliation to find common ground and to increase public participation in the political process. As a state senator, she sought views from all her constituents, reaching across party lines and racial divides to forge progressive legislation in education, health care reform, and environmental issues.

Emily was a superb listener. By welcoming a variety of ideas and opinions, she made people feel comfortable and useful. Her political allies and opponents all agreed that she served ably and gracefully until her death from cancer in 2001 at age 54. Because of her powerful advocacy for the UVA Medical Center and for cancer prevention and treatment, the Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center is one tangible memorial to her years of service to the community. Her legacy also persists through the Emily Couric Leadership Forum, which annually awards scholarships to young women leaders from area schools. In addition, the Forum selects a woman leader—from the arts, politics, business, science, education—to deliver the annual keynote address.

Emily knew how to build bridges with grace, charm, and wit. Her service to the community embodied Drewary Brown's adage that "you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." ■



## FRANCIS H. FIFE | 1920-2015

Francis Fife, a Charlottesville native, was a Virginia gentleman in the best sense of the term. Guided by a sense of justice and fairness, he was modest about his many achievements. He was a model of kindness and consideration. His affirmative character and generous spirit brought forth the best from everyone, even those whose opinions differed profoundly from his, and he had friends from every segment of the community.

Francis contributed in many ways to Charlottesville. He was elected to City Council for two terms and served a term as Mayor. He supported the development of Downtown, and he helped strengthen city-county relations by creating the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority and cooperating with the Thomas Jefferson Planning District and the Piedmont Housing Alliance.

For Francis, housing remained a constant concern. He helped create the Charlottesville Housing Foundation and was a perpetual advocate for improving low-income housing and increasing affordable housing. When the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) delayed a decision on funding for local housing, Francis sat outside the office of a HUD director until he was invited in for a conversation, which persuaded the official to see the problem from Francis's point of view. Francis had learned that being quietly persistent would get his message across. He served on the Virginia Housing and Development Board and the Virginia Housing Development Authority. He found a way to broaden the definition of family so that all couples could qualify for home ownership programs.

Francis spoke out at local meetings and at state legislative hearings about financial support to various agencies. He always lent support to many groups he felt could change lives, such as Planned Parenthood, Camp Holiday Trails, the Free Clinic, Albemarle and Charlottesville Housing Improvement Programs (AHIP, CHIP), Children, Youth, and Family Services, UVA School of Nursing, Rivanna Trails Foundation, and Miller School. Once, when he was mayor, he arranged for the city to provide interim funding to OIC jobs program until state grants were released.

Francis cared passionately about the environment and historic preservation. A nature lover and avid birder, he participated in the annual Christmas Bird Count, and served on the board of the Ivy Creek Foundation. He envisioned that the Rivanna Trails Foundation could bring the natural world into urban Charlottesville, and he worked with Piedmont Environmental Council to help preserve rural areas. He also served as chair of the Perry Foundation, which contributed toward many community projects.



Toward the end of his life, seeing the opportunities for people struggling with drugs to improve their lives through the criminal justice system, Francis became an advocate for the Drug Court. For his lifelong service to the community, Francis Fife received the 1985 Paul Goodloe McIntire Award and the 1992 Martin Luther King, Jr. Award. ■



## JANE B. FOSTER | 1924-2014

Jane Foster enriched the community in countless ways, working her entire adult life for integration, fair housing, social justice, and equal employment. In public forums, in City Council meetings, and in beautifully crafted letters to *The Daily Progress*, Jane spoke out. As Democratic precinct co-chair, she worked tirelessly to register new voters and get them to the polls. As a former teacher, she tutored scores of newcomers in English and with her husband Eugene generously offered hospitality to them, thus demonstrating the best side of American society.

Well into her 80s, Jane weekly carried her anti-war signs in front of the Federal courthouse and demonstrated for the living wage on West Main Street, on the Downtown Mall, and at UVA. Wherever she saw need, she jumped in, supporting Virginia Organizing, the NAACP, the League of Women Voters, the Public Housing Association of Residents (PHAR), the Legal Aid Justice Center, the Charlottesville Housing Foundation, literacy campaigns, and the Charlottesville Center for Peace and Justice. Having founded the city's first integrated Brownie Troop, she continued to work for children in Head Start, Play Partners, MACAA, and Children, Youth, and Family Services ("Ready Kids").

Jane Foster built friendships across the entire spectrum of the city, seeking always to improve the lot of the poor, the isolated, and the neglected. Jane and her husband Eugene received posthumously the NAACP's Virginia Banks Carrington Humanitarian Award. ■



## 2004 HONOREES

### **RAYMOND LEE BELL** | 1927-2004

Caring, respectful, and principled, Ray Bell was a quiet warrior who worked to tear down obstacles to integration and to promote social justice throughout his life.

Born in Charlottesville and a graduate of Jefferson School, Ray served in the Armed Forces during World War II and was graduated from Boston University. He returned to Charlottesville to start a family and to manage the family business, J. F. Bell Funeral Home. It was established by his parents in 1917 and was the first black-owned funeral business in Charlottesville. His son Mark recalled that his father often sat in the back of a segregated train despite being mistaken for white and offered a seat up front.

Ray served as a member and trustee of First Baptist Church on West Main St. In a gentle, firm manner, as the first African-American member of the City School Board, he was instrumental in desegregating the city school faculty and student body. Former Mayor Nancy O'Brien wrote, "This was a time when many tempers were tested, and Mr. Bell maintained a steady, determined course as he helped desegregate City schools."

Dedicated to promoting job placement and entrepreneurship, Ray was a founding member of the Opportunities Industrialization Council (OIC), which helped to educate, train, and find jobs for adults. He served as a trusted mentor and advisor to many city leaders.

Serving on many boards, including the NAACP and UVA Health Services Foundation, Ray also belonged to the Starr Hill Neighborhood Association. He was a board member of Preservation Piedmont with a deep interest and broad knowledge of Charlottesville history. A popular speaker, he believed a thorough understanding of the past helps to build a better and more just future.

To summarize by quoting his obituary, "Throughout his life Raymond Bell has been instrumental in facilitating many programs within the church and community, including lobbying for crucial food and shelter programs, driving human relations efforts, and helping to ensure fair wages and break down employment and housing barriers in the City." ■



## THOMAS JEROME SELLERS | 1911–2006

Born in 1911 in Charlottesville, T.J. Sellers was one of the first graduates of Jefferson High School. He married Eleanora Brown, a Charlottesville teacher, and in 1931–34 founded *The Reflector*, Charlottesville's only Negro weekly. Sellers wrote in an issue dated August 26, 1933, "In outlining the program of *The Reflector*, we made loud the boast that we could not bring you all of the news, but that we could present to you that which was closest to you. We are proud of that boast and it sums up, in a few words, our aim. It was a statement, meant for real citizens and honest-to-goodness race lovers who enjoy community pride and a keen sense of loyalty to worthwhile negro [*sic*] endeavors."

After serving as editor of *The Reflector*, Sellers attended Virginia Union University and graduated in 1939 with a degree in history. He taught for a year at a rural elementary school before joining the staff of the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*. In 1945, he became the district manager of the Richmond Beneficial Life Insurance Company in Charlottesville and then founded another newspaper, the *Roanoke Tribune*, which was later renamed *The Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune*.

In the 1950s, T.J. Sellers became a founding member of Charlottesville's Inter-racial Commission, which advocated equality and justice for all. Not agreeing with the gradualist approach to integration, he thought facilities in the South should be immediately integrated.

When writer Sarah Patton Boyle approached him about desegregation, he was direct in a way few blacks were with whites at the time, pointing out the paternalism in what she thought was equality and helping her to understand his divergent view. Reaching across the racial divide of the times, he became her mentor and teacher.

In 1953, Thomas Sellers moved to New York City to become editor of Harlem's *Amsterdam News*. He worked in New York City Schools for over 20 years, as a teacher and an administrator in the human relations unit of the school system. After retirement, he lived with his daughter in San Francisco, where he learned about being honored on the bridge in his hometown. ■



**HELEN B. "SANDY" SNOOK** | 1927–2018

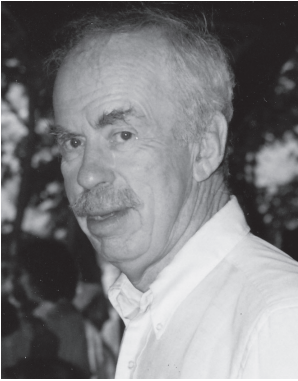
**JOHN L. SNOOK, JR.** | 1924–1989

The Snooks helped bridge many gaps between the African-American and white communities in Charlottesville with original and effective projects.

With Henry Mitchell, the vicar of Trinity Episcopal Church, Sandy began a summer program for inner-city children that grew into Camp Faith, an integrated summer day camp in Albemarle County. Rich and poor, black and white parishioners from local churches contributed their skills, and an integrated staff helped hundreds of previously segregated young campers to play and learn together to develop lasting friendships. Sandy ran the remarkable camp for eight years and also co-led with Commora Snowden the City's first integrated Girl Scout troop. For many years, Sandy taught government at Charlottesville High School, instilling in her students the value of civic involvement.

In 1964, during the fierce debate over local school desegregation, John Snook became PTA president at Venable Elementary School, calming the waters and defusing the opposition. At UVA's Darden School, John helped future corporate leaders understand the need to work with the minority community. He co-founded LEAD, which exposed minority high school students to the world of business including black entrepreneurs. With Drewary Brown and Ray Bell, John helped establish Central Virginia OIC, offering a job-training program for poor and minorities. With Venable neighbors and friends, John and Sandy founded Charlottesville's first neighborhood association, using it to stop the city from widening a road that would have bisected the neighborhood.

Together, the couple provided a splendid example, devoting prodigious energy and skills to increasing opportunity for all. ■



## JAY W. WORRALL, JR. | 1916-2010

Jay Worrall recalled meeting Drewary Brown at a bus station in 1966 and talking about helping the poor. He had come to Charlottesville to work for the US Community Action Organization (CAO), and decided to stay even after the regional office moved away. Jay became the founding director of the Charlottesville-Albemarle CAO, now known as the Monticello Area Community Action Agency (MACAA), which still strives to lift people from poverty to better lives.

Jay had served as an active-duty officer in the US Army Signal Corps during both World War II and the Korean War at domestic and foreign posts. His experience with the military police and military prisons sparked Jay's interest in prison work. During his final years of service, he was posted in Petersburg, where he and his family became active and highly visible participants in the civil rights movement. At first, his superior officer was hostile to Jay's involvement, but over time, friends convinced the officer of Jay's importance to the effort. He took early retirement in 1966 and devoted the rest of his life to working full-time for peace and justice. A dedicated Quaker, Jay began this second career in Charlottesville.

After serving as MACAA director for several years, Jay founded Offender Aid and Restoration (OAR) and was its first director. OAR became a national program working to reintegrate released prisoners into society. Jay believed that helping offenders maintain contact with family and finding employment after incarceration would be a great bridge to a better life. He educated many people to bring support to these efforts.

Jay Worrall and Drewary Brown were honored together in the early 1980s with the first Peace and Justice Award presented by the Charlottesville Center for Peace and Justice. In the 1990s, Jay shared his wisdom, leadership, and experience as a Quaker to envision Tandem School's historic transition to becoming a Friends' School. For the first time, a school founded outside the Quaker tradition was accepted into the family of Friends' schools.

Jay and his wife, Carolyn, opened their home to many who, in Jay's words, were "down on their luck" and needed a bridge across troubled waters. This kind and principled man built many such bridges.

Paraphrasing poet Robert Frost, retired OAR Director Pat Smith said, "Jay took the road less travelled, and that has made all the difference to the community." ■



## 2005 HONOREES

### **PAUL M. GASTON** | 1928–2019

Paul Gaston arrived in Charlottesville in 1957 to teach American history at UVA, teaching there for 40 years. He soon was involved in Charlottesville's civil rights movement, joining the NAACP and becoming active in local protests. In the 1960s, with few local restaurants, theaters, motels, and hotels open to minorities, African-American activists Floyd and William Johnson and others tried talking to owners and finally conducted sit-ins at Buddy's at Emmet Street and Ivy Road, to convince the owner to open the restaurant to all customers. During their sit-ins, they were ignored and ushered out at closing time. Later, during a peaceful protest outside of Buddy's, Paul, a distinguished UVA professor, was knocked down and injured and thus became a local civil rights icon. The public took notice. The direct action at Buddy's was a pivotal event, accelerating movement toward desegregation in the Charlottesville area. (After the 1964 Civil Rights Act was enacted, Buddy's closed.)

At UVA, Paul was instrumental in starting the first African-American Studies Program, which expanded into the Carter G. Woodson Institute. He wrote extensively about the southern United States and civil rights and was made a life fellow of the Southern Regional Council. He and his wife, Mary, opened their home to people who, in ordinary local settings, might never have met. Lasting friendships were forged.

In 2008, he received the legendary Civil Rights Activist Award from the Charlottesville-Albemarle NAACP. He also received the Outstanding Professor Award from the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Community Leader Award from his alma mater, Swarthmore College.

Paul never disparaged his southern roots; instead, he turned them into assets in the fight against racism. His own background in Fairhope, a utopian community in Alabama founded by his grandfather, helped him explain the misunderstandings and gross differences among people who often did not want to deal with each other. His unusual childhood seemed to inspire his healing efforts. Paul's writing and teaching educated many who otherwise would have been ignorant of the cultural conflicts in the South and blind to the opportunities for change. ■



## **MATILDA KOBRE MILLER | 1908-1994**

After her parents died, Matilda Miller, known as “Miss Tillie,” became the owner of Victory Shoe Store at 219 West Main Street, now on the Downtown Mall. She was known for her kindness and fairness to all customers, black and white, poor and rich.

Her parents, Isaac and Freda Kobre, were Orthodox Jews who emigrated from Russia where her father had been a shoemaker. The family moved to Lynchburg where Isaac worked as a shoe store clerk; the family again relocated to Charlottesville, living in a house on Ridge Street and opening a store on Main Street in 1922, naming it for the U.S. victory in World War I. As a teenager, Tillie worked in Victory Shoe Store after school, and she continued to work there the rest of her life.

Miss Tillie was a successful and generous businesswoman who was well regarded by many in the African-American community. Her customers would confide in her, and Miss Tillie would share advice. Former Sheriff Cornelia Johnson remembered that she would let you pick out a pair of shoes even if you didn’t have the money. She would trust that you would pay her back. If you were a new customer at Victory Shoe Store, she would let you use her layaway plan for a \$2.00 down payment. Miss Tillie gave credit to black customers at a time when many white merchants did not. “The color of your skin did not matter to her, and she would have a long line of customers trying on shoes and making deals so people could have a decent looking pair of shoes on their feet,” Johnson recalled.

Tillie’s daughter, Ethel Miller Crowe, said: “She gave folks a sense of pride.” Many people told Ethel that if it had not been for her mother, their children would have gone without shoes. Ethel also said that her mother worked with the Santa Fund, providing shoes for needy school children.

Perhaps understanding her customers’ economic struggles because of her own family’s history, Tillie Miller reached out and helped those with lesser means, regardless of race. ■







## THE REVEREND HENRY B. MITCHELL |

1912-2002

In the two decades that Rev. Mitchell lived in Charlottesville (1958-1977), serving Trinity Episcopal Church, his words and actions influenced not only his largely African-American congregation but also school officials, political gatherings, public forums, and all people of good will.

Beleaguered by conflict over segregation in the schools, the city sorely needed leadership, and Rev. Mitchell believed disparate groups could unite to make Charlottesville a better place, and they did. He never avoided the hard work of change. After joining the lawsuit to end school segregation in Charlottesville, he then served eight years on the City School Board.

From Rev. Mitchell's Trinity Church came life-changing projects: Camp Faith, the ecumenical summer program established with Sandy Snook's help; the excellent Trinity Childcare Center with sliding-scale fees; tutoring programs open to the poor; and Hope House, a refuge for struggling families. Rev. Mitchell gave time and energy to Big Brothers, the Charlottesville Housing Foundation, Children, Youth, and Family Services, MACAA, and the NAACP.

He continued to make common cause with those who wanted to wipe out segregation, vanquish hunger, and end war. With his friend Drewary Brown, Henry was "a fellow soldier in the war against poverty."

A man of great courage and dogged determination, Rev. Mitchell demolished imposing boundaries and melded his religious convictions with political action. When he spoke of justice, his words transcended political rhetoric as he quoted the words of the prophet Amos, "Let justice roll down like the waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Rev. Mitchell inspired many to join the struggle for the greater good. ■



## **NANCY K. O'BRIEN** | B. 1936

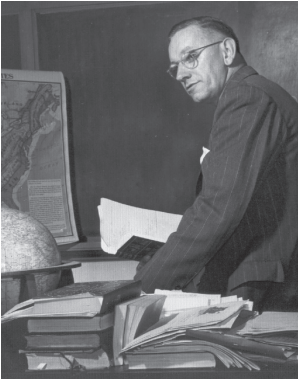
Nancy O'Brien is known for her forthrightness, sense of humor, and advocacy for a diverse Charlottesville community. Moving to Charlottesville in 1967, Nancy began her public service working as a volunteer with the Charlottesville-Albemarle League of Women Voters, the City Planning Commission, and the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission.

In 1976, she was elected to City Council and was selected as mayor, the first woman in Charlottesville history to serve in this position. Nancy's hallmark at the time of her election and afterward has been getting citizens involved in community issues. She has continued to encourage many women and African-Americans to run for political office, helping them in finding supporters and funds.

Nancy has given generously of her energy to the community, chairing the Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority (CRHA) and serving as a founding board member of the Shelter for Help in Emergency (SHE). She has also served on the boards of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and the Virginia Housing Development Authority.

After earning a Master's degree in public administration at UVA, Nancy worked as executive director of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, fostering regional cooperation on social, economic, and environmental issues. She received the 1993 Paul Goodloe McIntire Award.

After retiring from the workplace, Nancy spearheaded the formation of a citizens' group to undertake discussion of race relations, and she worked tirelessly to preserve Jefferson School. With her husband Francis Fife, Nancy opened their home at Oak Lawn for many political and civic events. Nancy O'Brien has spent her life building bridges across the Charlottesville community. ■



## GERALD C. SPEIDEL | 1902-1977

Gerald Speidel spent 50 years in Charlottesville, first as a UVA student and then as a teacher. By the life he led and through his teaching, Gerry encouraged others to break society's barriers, especially those of racial segregation.

At Lane High School, he taught American history and government and urged his students to speak out, especially on questions of war, segregation, and narrow prejudices. As he involved himself in grassroots movements for change, he strove to build links between diverse communities and interests in Charlottesville.

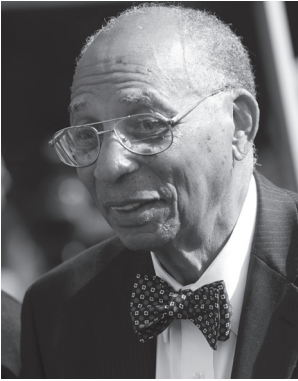
Gerry was first and foremost a teacher. His career in Charlottesville spanned decades from 1926–1968 with only one intermission. As a dedicated lay leader in the Methodist Church, he spent six years in the 1930s as an educational missionary in Korea, advocating cooperation among people of different faiths and religious denominations. He expanded the vision of his students, and believed that open minds would lead them into lives enriched by compassion, service to others, and an undying thirst for justice.

Far ahead of his time as a voice for justice, inclusiveness, and social responsibility, Gerry was unafraid to express his opinions boldly, evoking both controversy and social action. His message was one of compassion, principles, and deep faith. In a time when many were afraid of change threatening the customary social mores, Gerry Speidel argued fearlessly for engaging in the world, not turning away from it. He spent his life building bridges of understanding. ■

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Gerry Speidel with some students on steps of Lane High School.





## EUGENE WILLIAMS | B. 1927

A lifelong resident of Charlottesville, Eugene Williams became an impassioned advocate for desegregation of the schools. He attended Southern University, the Agricultural and Mechanical College in Baton Rouge, LA, and then served in the Army. After his tour of duty, he returned home in 1949 to marry his high school sweetheart, Lorraine Payne. Eugene started working in the insurance business, eventually becoming Regional Vice President of Universal Life Insurance Company.

Eugene became president of the Charlottesville Branch of the NAACP and was in the forefront of the civil rights movement in Charlottesville for many years. Most notably, he and his wife, Lorraine, formed a committee of parents to integrate the Charlottesville Public Schools. Eugene remembers that during this period, John and Sandy Snook were the first white people in Charlottesville to invite him into their home.

Determined to ensure their children received the best possible education, the Williamses were part of a lawsuit by African-Americans against the School Board of the City of Charlottesville that took seven years before resulting in an order to end segregation of all Charlottesville schools. When the schools finally desegregated in 1962, the couple's two daughters, Karol and Scheryl, aged respectively ten and eight, along with another child, were escorted by police to previously all-white Johnson School.

In 1980, Eugene, with Lorraine, his brother Albert, and sister-in-law Emma bought and within 18 months, completely rehabilitated 62 housing units scattered throughout Charlottesville. This was a limited partnership called Dogwood Housing, which they owned and operated until 2007. It provided rental apartments to low-income and underserved families.

Throughout his life, Eugene has been a determined advocate to protect the Ridge Street neighborhood where he and Lorraine live and to upgrade historically African-American neighborhoods. He also supported other significant City projects, such as rehabilitating Jefferson School, improving public housing, and revitalizing Tonsler Park. An early board member of Preservation Piedmont, he was instrumental in the designation of the Ridge Street neighborhood as a local historic district.

Eugene Williams received the Martin Luther King, Jr. Award in 2001. He and Lorraine were named Paul Harris Fellows in 2014 by the Blue Ridge Mountains Rotary Club for their work to remove racial barriers and provide affordable housing. The couple was also honored by a resolution of appreciation for their lifetime of service by the 2015 session of the Virginia General Assembly. ■



## 2006 HONOREES

### **VIRGINIA BANKS CARRINGTON** | 1914-2004

Virginia Carrington, a Charlottesville native who lived to age 90, dedicated her life to serving her church, the African-American community, and the poor.

Virginia attended Jefferson School and was graduated from Peninsula Business College in Newport News. After returning to Charlottesville, she became a leader in the local NAACP, serving as membership chair for over 40 years, and also as chapter president. During her tenure, the local NAACP was recognized for recruiting the highest number of members in the state and the nation. Virginia faithfully worked toward ending segregation and racial discrimination and for promoting equality for all citizens.

Her pastor, Dr. Bruce Beard, recalled that Virginia, a longtime member of First Baptist Church on West Main Street, was passionate about social justice, devoting many hours over the course of her life to services such as the soup kitchen, food bank, and missionary groups. She joined with other organizations that strove to improve housing, wages, and working conditions. Likewise, Virginia worked within her neighborhood association to advocate for improved housing conditions and better race relations.

According to friend Cindy Stratton, Virginia, a teaching assistant in the Charlottesville City Schools, “provided an exemplary role model for all children through encouragement and the highest expectations for performance, self-improvement, and achievement.”

Because Virginia demonstrated her dedication to breaking down the barriers to racial integration and to economic, educational, and social equality in myriad ways, she was awarded the Martin Luther King, Jr. Award in 1997. Since her death, the Albemarle-Charlottesville NAACP has established a humanitarian award in Virginia Carrington's name. ■



## **ELIZABETH "BETZ" BEHRENDT GLEASON |**

**B. 1924**

## **CHARLES H. GLEASON, M.D. | 1924-2017**

Charlie and Betz, natives of Charlottesville, have given generously to every facet of community life, participating in government, civic associations, and their church, St. Paul's Memorial.

When racial problems arose, they were among the first whites to sign a petition for open housing for all citizens.

Charlie, a pediatrician, helped found the ARC of the Piedmont for people with developmental disabilities. He worked with Offender Aid and Restoration, and Children, Youth, and Family Services, providing pro bono physical exams for Camp Faith campers. Within his own practice, he founded a center dedicated to adolescent medicine.

Betz was elected to the City Council in 1980 and became the first woman to serve as vice-mayor and the first woman to serve two terms on Council. She supported scattered-site housing for low-income people rather than concentrated low-income housing. She promoted programs for senior citizens and for preservation of Charlottesville's history. Betz also served on many boards concerning youth, including the Barrett Early Learning Center and Trinity Preschool Program. In 1990, she received the Paul Goodloe McIntire Award.

Throughout their lives, the Gleasons built bridges across racial and economic lines to improve the quality of life for everyone in Charlottesville. ■



## **WILLIAM W. WASHINGTON, JR. | B. 1964**

William Washington built bridges between the community and men who had been excluded from it. As a very young man, William was involved with drugs and was repeatedly charged with criminal offenses. He became a regular inmate in the local jail and then was ordered to serve time in an alternative residential facility. There, he realized how he was wasting his opportunities and that he must change if he were to have a meaningful and useful life. After completing the alternative program, he and his wife began visiting inmates in the local jail, and he founded the Bridge Ministry to help these men navigate the transition from jail or prison back into the community and to break from lives as criminal outcasts to become productive, responsible citizens.

Knowing that freeing inmates to return to the same destructive environment often led to a revolving door back to jail, William determined to rescue these men. As he gained community support, his ministry opened a halfway house in Charlottesville, where men could live temporarily and prepare themselves to return to their homes as better fathers and husbands.

As the need expanded, so did the Bridge Ministry. Gaining respect and support from people who believed in his dream, William founded another institution in nearby Buckingham County, where ex-offenders could live in supervised living quarters and learn discipline, life management, job skills, and responsibility. In helping men rejoin the community from which they were separated, William Washington created bridges in the lives of those who were otherwise without hope. ■





## 2016 HONOREES

### **LUTHER DOW COOLEY** | 1905-1973

L.D. Cooley, known either as Dow or L.D. by his friends, owned many area eateries, including the University Cafeteria on the Corner, the Thomas Jefferson Inn and Dining Room (now the Federal Executive Institute), the Blair House and the Albemarle Hotel and Coffee Shop. He also operated the Mimslyn Motor Inn, near Luray Caverns.

L.D. bucked the practice of segregation in public establishments by opening his restaurants to all people before the law required him to do so. When the first black students were admitted to UVA, L.D. welcomed them warmly, although he lost many white customers and incurred the wrath of some white community leaders. Banks called in their short-term loans, but L.D. stood firm in the face of social and financial pressures.

Bridge Builder Eugene Williams commended L.D. for bringing his black employees into public positions of responsibility. He remembered that L.D. hired a black cashier when none was at other establishments owned by white proprietors. He also recalled an incident when he and Sarah Patton Boyle (also a Bridge Builder) were denied entry to another restaurant so they went immediately to the friendly University Cafeteria.

L.D. hired many black men and women in his restaurants and hotels, paying them a fair wage, giving them secure employment, and providing training that allowed many to pursue other employment opportunities. Over the years, he trained black cooks, chefs, and waiters, and he helped other workers in kitchens and dining rooms develop appropriate skills.

He also gave pensions to long-time employees when fair wages and pensions were not usual practices. Not only did L.D. provide these in his small businesses but also he encouraged other Charlottesville businesses to do the same.

During massive resistance, when the Governor closed schools rather than desegregate, L.D. petitioned the Governor to reopen the schools with the inclusion of black students and helped organize classes for students in other locations. His daughter Nancy, a ninth-grader, went door-to-door to obtain petition signatures. He also helped to establish what is now known as the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church -- Unitarian-Universalist, a consistent voice for equal rights and equal opportunity.

For his efforts to treat every citizen with dignity and respect and for his courage to open his businesses to all, regardless of race, L.D. Cooley has been recognized as a Bridge Builder. ■



## HOLLY MARIE EDWARDS | 1960–2017

Holly Edwards lived her calling to tend to the needs of our least-privileged residents. As a public-health advocate, as a community organizer, and as an elected official, she dedicated her life to serving people, to bridging differences, and to forging positive connections for those who need the most help and encouragement. She has been called “a walking miracle of compassion, perseverance, love of people, and community building.”

Holly’s efforts in Charlottesville always cut across lines of race and class. Her mantra was “to meet people where they are.”

As a member and vice-mayor of City Council, she pressed for creation of the city’s Dialogue on Race and also promoted the establishment of Charlottesville’s Human Rights Commission. Thanks largely to Holly, Charlottesville declared itself a City of Second Chances, supporting citizens who need help re-entering society after being released from mental-health facilities or incarceration. Holly brought together community volunteers, UVA students, and low-income residents to improve health outcomes for residents in Westhaven, our oldest and largest public-housing neighborhood.

Concurrent with her doctoral studies, she served as a clinical instructor in the School of Nursing for undergraduate nursing students. Many people who knew little or nothing about public housing learned from Holly, a parish nurse who combined healing skills, scholarship, and teaching with a deep personal faith.

She made both Westhaven and Crescent Halls her second home. Holly’s reach never failed to surprise: with her encouragement, Charlottesville stretched beyond Europe to adopt Winneba, Ghana, as a sister-city. Building a bridge to Africa was no leap for Holly, but from that action many local residents learned to take pride in the rich, ancient culture of West Africa.

Holly was also founder and past president of the Black Nurses Association in Charlottesville. She was a lifetime member of the NAACP and an executive board member of the African American Heritage Center at Jefferson School. She was posthumously awarded the Martin Luther King Award in 2017. A staunch supporter of the African American Teaching Fellows, she was awarded the John E. Baker Education Award and the 2016 UVA Graduate Student Diversity Award for Excellence.

In everything Holly did, she always walked the second mile. This quiet, brilliant, soft-spoken person lived her love for the community and acted consistently for the common good. ■



## TERESA JACKSON WALKER PRICE | b. 1925

Teresa Price builds bridges with her telephone, gathering people to work on her projects, which have been formed both within the neighborhood and the larger community. Teresa improves relationships among people who without her might never have known they had any relationship.

When federal Community Development Block Grants were established, Teresa's cherished Starr Hill neighborhood was among the first selected to receive federal investment funds. Nancy O'Brien, former Charlottesville mayor, remembered that many residents were understandably suspicious. Realizing the possible benefits, the quietly persistent Teresa, a natural community organizer, kept her neighbors involved and City staff working hard to answer their questions. In the end, the neighborhood benefitted greatly.

Teresa has inspired many by her example, her achievements, and her knowledge. She is a repository of local history, especially of the destruction of the Vinegar Hill neighborhood, and of the turmoil of school integration after the end of massive resistance. She was always a behind-the-scenes force, working with Drewary Brown to change our city for the better.

In 1966, Teresa was hired to teach at Lane High School as one of the cadre of African-American teachers assigned to formerly white schools. Later, as a librarian at Clark School, she eased the transition for many black elementary school aged children. Teresa still picks up her phone to round up volunteers for Clark School.

Meanwhile, UVA began what Paul Gaston called its "long, painful process" towards integration. "Black students felt isolated and were still unwelcome in many public places," he said. Again it was Teresa who eased their difficult entry into the UVA community. In Teresa's home, they found a haven. Paul continued, "Teresa offered calm in place of chaos, belonging instead of isolation, inspiration instead of despair, and a dose of courage to continue the fight for equality by pursuing their education."

Teresa's legacy continues to build. When the historically black Jefferson School was threatened with abandonment, over 100 people, black and white, gathered to discuss its future. The meeting made clear that the entire community felt the school was far more than a building, and thus originated a strategy for its preservation.

On the phone again, Teresa got to work. Through her efforts and those of many community members, the school and adjoining Carver Recreation Center were saved. Today Jefferson School serves many purposes: housing a day-care center for children,

programs for senior citizens, counseling, a meditation center, Literacy Volunteers, and the African American Heritage Center, which contains a permanent exhibit about the school and race relations. The Center partners with the Virginia Festival of the Book, the Minority Business Council, and the Virginia Film Festival to host important events.

At the Center's first anniversary celebration in 2014, Teresa was honored with the Reflector Award, as the person most influential in the successful effort to save Jefferson School. Teresa remains a stalwart volunteer at the Center and continues to use her phone to persuade others to join her remarkable cause.

At the annual 2019 Martin Luther King Community Celebration, Teresa was presented with the MLK Award. Teresa, always modest, responded to the honor by saying she has always tried to be a good volunteer.

Teresa Jackson Walker Price never gives up. Her example will continue to inspire present and future generations in the quest for a better community. ■



## **MITCHELL VAN YAHRES | 1926-2008**

Mitch Van Yahres, a Charlottesville political leader for four decades, was sometimes called the patron saint of unpopular causes; yet his persistence and frequent success in these causes came to define him as a leader and a bridge builder.

In the 1960s, Mitch, an arborist who owned a tree-care business, worked with his church, Holy Comforter, to provide affordable housing for the poor. Recognizing his principled activities coupled with his business acumen, the local Democratic Party urged him to run for City Council in 1968. At that time, desegregation of the city schools was new, and no federal laws yet prohibited racial discrimination in the sale and rental of housing. During the campaign, candidates were asked at a forum whether they would be willing to sell their home to a black buyer. While most hedged their answers, when Mitch's turn came, he simply said "Yes." This triggered a storm of criticism and hate mail, but also much appreciation from African-Americans and progressive whites. Mitch was elected by a wide margin.

Mitch served on City Council for eight years, two as mayor. His tenure was marked by an increase in city projects that included public swimming pools and recreation centers in diverse neighborhoods, and the important decision to create a tree-lined Downtown Mall. Despite lots of opposition to closing Main Street and developing the pedestrian mall, forty years later it is a hallmark of the city. Mitch's support was crucial.

Later, Mitch served for 24 years in the Virginia House of Delegates. There, his unpopular causes included support for planting hemp across Virginia as a cash-crop substitute for tobacco in a state once dependent on tobacco production. More important was his introduction of a resolution regretting Virginia's unconscionable policy from 1927 to 1974 for the eugenics-based sterilization of 8,000 poor people deemed "genetically inferior," an action for which Virginia, through its Governor, later apologized.

One of Mitch's most dogged campaigns aimed at creating a public defender's office in Charlottesville-Albemarle that would give better representation to the poor and to minorities, who had previously been represented by underpaid, court-appointed attorneys. To end this inequity, Mitch worked closely with Drewary Brown and Grace Tinsley, friends and political allies on civil rights. After a series of newspaper articles proved that defendants with court-appointed lawyers were convicted more often and drew longer sentences than defendants who could pay their lawyers, Mitch's team held a community meeting to show the need for a public defender. Mitch's bill passed by a wide margin but was vetoed by Governor George Allen. In 1998, it passed again and was finally signed into law by Governor Jim Gilmore.

Mitch spoke his mind with unusual candor and never feared to espouse an unpopular cause that would help people. He was most proud of having helped increase minority and female participation in city government and was passionately dedicated to expanding early childhood education, believing in its eventual payoff.

When Mitch decided to retire from the House in 2005, state Senator Creigh Deeds declared that the General Assembly was losing "the conscience of the House." After his death, his family wrote "Mitch tended trees for a living and people for a lifetime."

In each of his unpopular causes, Mitch chose the high road while bringing people together instead of planting seeds of harsh political division. A man of rare courage and vision, he was truly a builder of bridges. ■

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The preceding summary was compiled from the nomination forms, oral histories, and additional research by Charlottesville citizens Kay Slaughter, Jean Hiatt, and Virginia Germino so that future generations might remember the extraordinary contributions of those whose names have been placed on the Drewary Brown Memorial Bridge between the years of 2001–2016. If you have any corrections of facts, please contact Kay Slaughter, [katherineslaughter61@gmail.com](mailto:katherineslaughter61@gmail.com), as we will periodically update the information. Thank you.

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1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12

**Front Cover**

- 1 Paul Gaston
- 2 Imogene Bunn
- 3 Drewary Brown
- 4 Grace Quarles Tinsley
- 5 Teresa Jackson Walker Price
- 6 Robert Lee Tinsley, Sr.
- 7 Emily Couric
- 8 Eugene Williams
- 9 Mitchell Van Yahres
- 10 Jane B. Foster
- 11 Booker T. Reaves
- 12 Alicia Lugo

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12

**Back Cover**

- 1 Raymond Lee Bell
- 2 Nancy K. O'Brien
- 3 Drewary Brown
- 4 Sarah Patton Boyle
- 5 William W. Washington, Jr.
- 6 Jay W. Worrall, Jr.
- 7 Edith "Winx" Lawrence
- 8 Francis H. Fife
- 9 Holly Marie Edwards
- 10 Matilda Kobre Miller
- 11 Luther Dow Cooley
- 12 Mary Pierce Reese

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## Colophon

### Design

Anne Chesnut

### Photography

p5 courtesy of Carole Bentley, daughter of Drewary Brown

p36 courtesy of the UVA Nursing School and family of Holly Edwards

p38 Tom Cogill

All other photos courtesy of the families and friends of the Bridge Builders.

### Printing

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