

December 2018 / January 2019 Vol 14

Philippians 4:4 (KJV) 4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

Faith & Soul

News Magazine

Refreshing the Mind, Body and Spirit!

The magazine cover features a large, close-up portrait of Shelley 'Butch' Anthony III on the left side. He is wearing black-rimmed glasses and a light-colored suit jacket over a white shirt. To the right of the portrait is a photograph of a modern, two-story building with a tan facade and large windows. A sign on the building reads "This Is It! Fitness Center" with a logo of two people. The address "415" is visible on the right side of the building. The background of the cover has a subtle pattern of snowflakes and Christmas ornaments.

SHELLEY "BUTCH" ANTHONY III
GEORGIA'S RENAISSANCE MAN SHARES HIS VISION OF THE FUTURE

GOD HAS A PLAN FOR THE UNDERDOG
By Butch Anthony III
With Dale C. Brown

FASMG CONNECTING SISTER CITIES:

MAYOR ED JOHNSON OF FAYETTEVILLE, GA AND MAYOR JOEL ROBIDEAUX OF LAFAYETTE, LA

BUT GOD:

The Faith and Rise of Shelley “Butch” Anthony III

by Dorothy Potter Snyder

photography provided by Shelley Anthony

*A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches,
and loving favor rather than silver and gold.*

Proverbs 22:1 (KJV)



Fifty years ago, in Tampa, Florida a little boy named Shelley got bullied for having a “girl’s name”, but his Mother told him he was a king, and that’s exactly what he grew up to be.

The life of Shelley “Butch” Anthony III reads like a fairy tale, but the real story behind the glory is thirty-five years of setbacks, long workdays, patience and prayer. Now, with his new book *God Has a Plan for the Underdog* (available on Amazon), a major franchise deal for his brand *This is it! BBQ and Seafood*, a host of awards, and recent recognition by the Georgia House of Representatives for his contributions to the Atlanta metro community, the little boy from Tampa is living proof of Matthew 20:16: “so the last shall be first”.

Says Georgia State Representative Deborah Bazemore, “Shelley Anthony allows our young people to see what’s possible, and he gives back...he’s teaching all of us, not just through his words but through his actions, how to be good citizens in our communities.” When he’s not working twelve-hour days, Anthony mentors several young men, supports the Georgia Greater Black Chamber of Commerce, employs 348 people, and models manhood and entrepreneurial success through Christ. Says Bishop Dale Bronner, pastor at Word of Faith Cathedral in Austell: “Butch has taken the ordinary and made it extraordinary.”

“Mr. Butch” is the recipient of a restaurant heritage that extends back two generations.

Cover Story



*Butch has taken the ordinary
and made it extraordinary.*

- Bishop Dale Bronner

Mr. Anthony at Corporate office with Rolls Royce

"My grandfather started a little shack in Camilla, Georgia in the '30s. My daddy had one of the first black-owned restaurants in Tampa, Florida, and my parents' diner was open 24-hours a day because blacks [in the days of Jim Crow] didn't have anywhere else to go." After the young Anthony tried his luck in other businesses, he returned to serving soul food, guided by the indomitable Anthony women, Aunt Dot and his mother, "Muhdear". Anthony's children, including eldest son and VP of This is it! Telley, and his grandchildren will carry this legacy on into the fourth and fifth generations [one grandchild currently works in the business; and hopes the other grandchildren will follow suit].

Anthony left school in tenth grade when he became a young father and, imitating the "man among men" model of the times, he developed a gambling addiction and committed other youthful indiscretions which he fought to overcome. Later setbacks included a contractor absconding with his money, leaving Anthony to complete the build-out of his first location, Butch's Slide-In BBQ, with his own hands. There's been personal sorrow: two early divorces

Entrepreneur means a man of faith, a risk-tasker. Faith is evidence of things hoped for but not seen.

- Shelley "Butch" Anthony

and, in 2009, the loss of daughter Angel Lydia in an auto accident. But, giving his life to the Lord in 1987, he stayed the course; with a foundation in Jesus, his entrepreneurial efforts made a steady upward climb. "Entrepreneur means a man of faith, a risk-tasker," he says. "Faith is evidence of things hoped for but not seen."

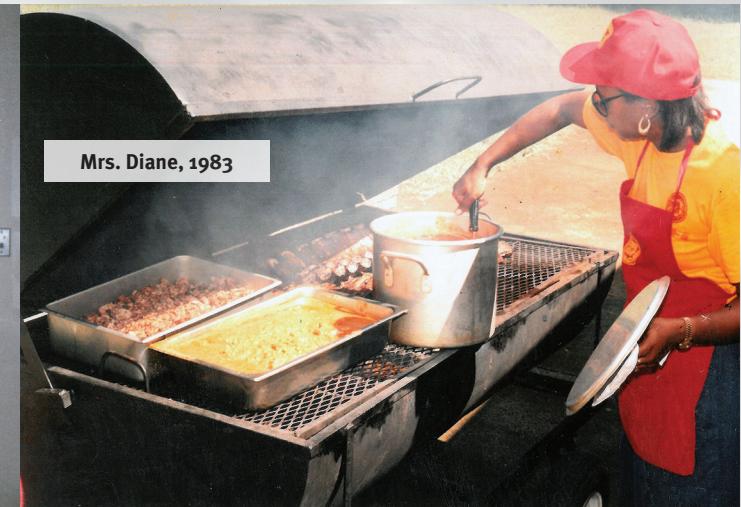
Anthony hoped big. "I used to pray for God to have an entertainer or athlete reach back to a small, black community and endorse what somebody was doing that was right. It didn't have to be This is it!" As it turned out that entertainer was comedian Steve Harvey who, at the 2011 Hoodie Awards, awarded Best BBQ to This is it!. Anthony has walked alongside many VIPs: President Barack Obama, Oprah, celebrity chef Pat Neely (host of the ribbon cutting event at the new Stockbridge location), and Tyler Perry. For 26 years, "I prayed for God to send somebody that knew franchise business, because I didn't have the expertise." Sure enough, in 2015, he entered talks with Belief Brands. Result: over the coming decade, 300 This is it! BBQ & Seafood restaurants will open across United States and Canada. Perhaps even in Tampa, "so I can serve the people that my Daddy served, you know, back in the day," he says, smiling. "That would be very good." We have come full circle.

Line servers at the Evander Holyfield Fourth of July Cookout, July 1999

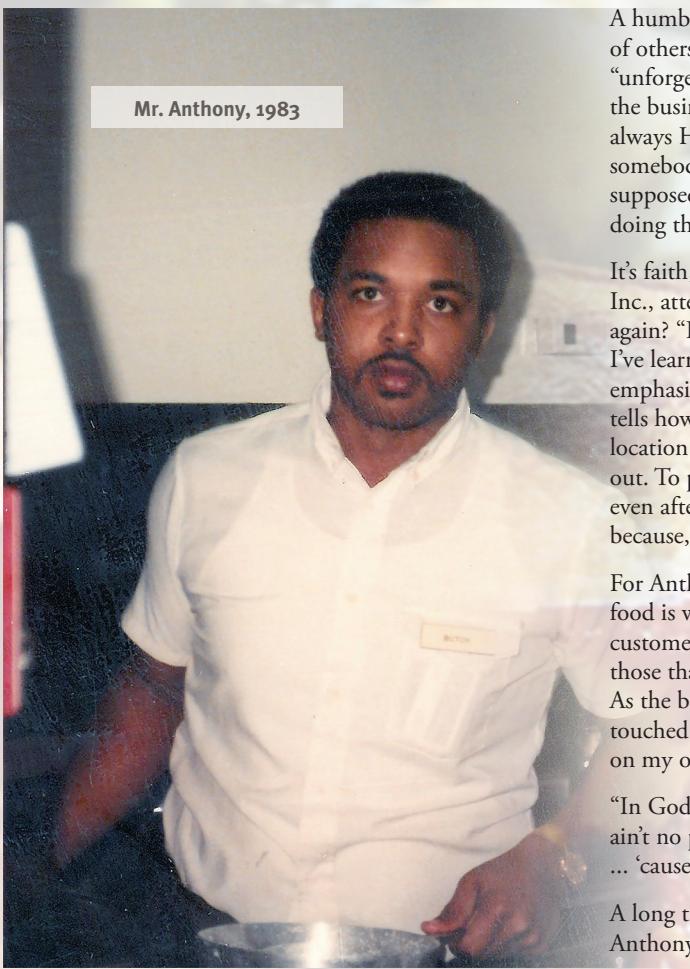
Cover Story



Mrs. Diane, 1983



Mr. Anthony, 1983



A humble man, Anthony marvels at his own life, emphasizing the contributions of others over his own. Business partners like Ed Neely, Ed Larkin (among his “unforgettables”), his wife of 35 years Diane (“my queen” and the Vision Keeper of the business), his parents, Aunt Dot, his kids — all are stars in his firmament. But always He gives to God the glory. “I know where I started from. God is the only somebody that can take nothing and make something out of it. I know I’m not supposed to be in the position that I’m in today, based on the world’s standards of doing things. But God.”

It’s faith, family and food in that order, as the name of his company, Jesus & Butch Inc., attests. “Jesus is first, I’m second,” he says. And if he had it to do all over again? “I would find Christ earlier. I try to model Jesus Christ to my children, what I’ve learned down through the years about how to be a man of God.” Anthony emphasizes listening to “that quiet, still voice inside” before making decisions, and tells how not doing so once cost him dearly: offered financial incentives to open a location at the West End Mall, he bought in — right before major tenants moved out. To preserve his good name, he paid an expensive lease on the kitchen equipment even after he had to sell the location. He’ll never be deaf to that quiet voice again, because, “God, he’s the only real fortune teller there is.”

For Anthony, his product is half food, half love. “You know, the soul part of soul food is when a chef comes to work, he or she has to be at peace, because what the customer tastes is what the chef feels. The Bible says the greatest among you are those that serve. So, I would pray that God would touch my food with his anointing. As the business grew, I knew I couldn’t continue to be in the kitchen, but if God touched it with His anointing, the taste would be better than what I could ever do on my own.”

“In God’s purpose for your life, there will always be pain,” He says softly. “If there ain’t no pain, I don’t believe personally that’s God’s purpose. You got to stay humble ... ‘cause if you’re humble, God can use you, he can speak through you.”

A long time ago, they bullied him because of his name, but it turns out that Shelley Anthony is a very good name to have after all. ▲

Left: With oldest employee, 1985; Right: Still works for This Is It! Camp Creek Plaza, now store manager, 1985

