

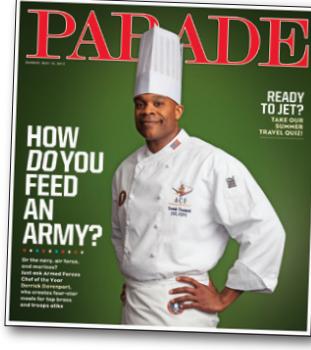
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Winston-Salem Centennial

Wilson house's roots remain

BY PAUL GARBER
Special Correspondent

Thomas Johnson Wilson Jr. built the first house in Winston, a two-story beauty on the corner of what is now Second and Main streets.

At the time, Winston was only 53 acres, and Forsyth County was two years away from coming into existence.

And while the house is long gone, the deep roots Wilson put down here remain — the prominent lawyer has descendants who still live here seven genera-

"He brought his bride there in May of 1847. He said he built that house so he could be out in the country."

Gene Wilson
Thomas Wilson Jr.'s great-grandson

tions after the Wilsons first arrived.

The story of the Winston Wilsons begins in the 1820s, when Thomas Wilson Sr. arrived from

Eastern North Carolina. He settled into a neighborhood near what is now Waughtown and for a while ran the Salem Tavern.

At the time, there were many houses in the Moravian-run town of Salem — but none in Winston until Thomas Wilson Jr. built his. A historical marker at Main and Second streets commemorates the house.

"He brought his bride there in May of 1847," said Thomas Wilson Jr.'s great-grandson, Gene Wilson. "He said he built that house so he could be out in the country."

Excerpts of those letters appear in a 1949 story in the Winston-Salem Journal, part of a

Old pencil drawings depict a two-story house surrounded by an ornate fence.

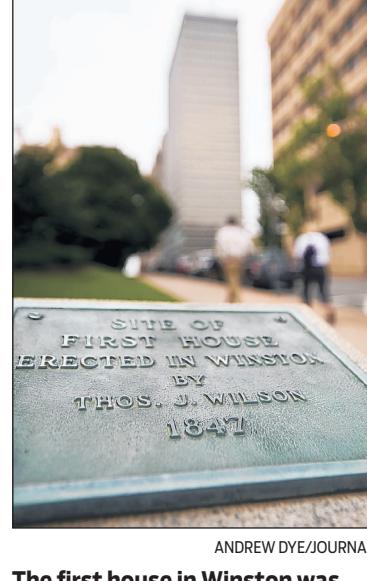
"It's been described as a New Orleans-type house," Gene Wilson said.

In the back was a small brick building that Wilson used for a law office.

Letters that Thomas Wilson Jr. wrote while building the house describe his negotiations to get the supplies he needed.

Excerpts of those letters appear in a 1949 story in the Winston-Salem Journal, part of a

WILSON, Page A16



ANDREW DYE/JOURNAL

The first house in Winston was built on what is now the corner of Second and Main Streets.

Man on a Mission



MELISSA MELVIN-RODRIGUEZ/JOURNAL

Derrick Black checks in with his children (from left) Rashad Muhammad, 10, Nadirah Muhammad, 11, and Kamaal Muhammad, 8, as they eat breakfast in their home Friday. Black earned a bachelor's degree from Winston-Salem State University.

WSSU graduate balances more than most on way to math degree

BY SCOTT HAMILTON
Winston-Salem Journal

This is normal — right?

That's the question Derrick Black is frequently asked. After all, so many facets of his life tend to raise eyebrows, if not elicit outright shock. The stunned reactions occur so often he wonders himself about the true definition of "normal."

Does that word apply to a 33-year-old man obtaining a bachelor's degree 16 years af-

ter he attended his first college class? Maybe. Black was joined by about 1,000 other undergraduate and graduate students Saturday morning at Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum during Winston-Salem State University's spring commencement ceremony.

Surely there were others in that cap-and-gown crowd who waited nearly two decades to complete their degrees. Those such as George Banks, 52, and his 49-year-old wife, Kath-

leen, who not only graduated later than most, but did so in less than four years. Oh, and George Banks earned his diploma while running a business with his wife and fighting off cancer. Those are definitely unusual circumstances.

But Black's case is still a little different than most. Could it be because of his desire to

relieve life's burdens by diving headfirst into pools of math problems? Numbers, for Black, provide an escape others would instead condemn as mental punishment.

Perhaps it's completely normal for a married man with eight children to finish his college education by focusing on a two-pronged mission: to improve his family's quality of life and creating a legacy that can alter his family tree for generations to come.

GRADUATE, Page A6

Charter school funding bid fall shorts in N.C. House

BY ARIKA HERRON
Winston-Salem Journal

Those who oversee public school district coffers are breathing a collective uneasy sigh of relief, at least for now, after a renewed attempt to funnel more money to charter schools is likely put to bed for this legislative session.

Up until last week, two bills



On Facebook

What do you think of the decision by the N.C. House to table a bill that would have forced traditional public schools to share some funding with charter schools? Tell us at Facebook.com/winstonalemjournal.

still on the table in the N.C. House contained provisions that would have eliminated an ac-

counting practice used by public school systems known as Fund 8. Created in 2010, Fund 8 allows districts to separate certain types of revenue, like direct federal grants, donations and special program funding. Previously, those dollars were often included in districts' local current expense fund — the bulk of which is made up of funds distributed from the county commissioners.

Because charter schools are still considered public schools, but exist outside of traditional districts and without some of the regulation, local school districts have to share the dollars in their local current expense fund on a per-pupil basis with charter schools in their district.

Supporters of Fund 8 say the revenue sources in Fund 8 shouldn't be shared with charter

schools because they are dollars earmarked for specific schools, uses or programs that charter schools don't offer.

Getting rid of Fund 8 could threaten crucial programs, like pre-K, and unfairly give charter schools larger proportions of local dollars, said Leanne Winner, director of governmental affairs for the North Carolina School

FUNDING, Page A17



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Graduate

From Page A1

But consider this: that same "normal" guy works full time on the third shift at a manufacturing plant and suffers epileptic grand mal seizures, though he still completed his final semester by carrying a full load of 18 hours. Black had a 3.9 cumulative grade-point average Saturday when he received his bachelor's degree in math.

He's already planning how he's going to earn his master's degree and eventual doctorate.

"Oh, it's not over," Black said. "Now that I've actually done this, I see what I can do. Now I'm hyped to get my Ph.D."

Rest, for Black, has been tough to come by, especially since he dedicated himself two years ago to finishing his college degree.

Black graduated from high school in Oxford in 1997 before attending N.C. A&T State University. There he majored in industrial engineering, but after finishing his math requirements, Black realized he didn't want to stop taking math classes. He would crack open a calculus book in his spare time for fun.

But the traditional college life wasn't in the cards for him.

Prone to seizures if he doesn't get enough sleep, Black was forced to withdraw from school a couple of times and had difficulty keeping up when he was enrolled. Off and on he went, with the pattern seeing him complete lots of classes without a degree for his efforts.

'Just do it'

His last semester at A&T was in 2005. Black met his wife, Sonya Muhammad, a year later, and the two were married and living in Winston-Salem by July 2007.

Black and Muhammad, 42, both went back to school shortly after that and earned associates degrees from Forsyth Tech (he in math, she in business administration) in 2011. His wife was also taking classes at Winston-Salem State and was closing in on getting a bachelor's degree of her own.

Black, meanwhile, began a new job at RockTenn Merchandising Displays in June 2011 in the manufacturing department. For eight hours starting at 11 p.m., he collects corrugated board scrap and feeds it into a machine to be ground down and pulverized. It's not a math-related task, but a job that's helped him maintain the family's home off Speas Road that houses their daughters (ages 5 and 3) as well as Muhammad's six children prior to her marriage to Black.

Shortly after starting at RockTenn, he still had an itch for school. He wondered if he could juggle it and his new job. Black met with officials at Winston-Salem State two years ago and developed an academic plan but didn't follow through.

Sonya, meanwhile, kept taking classes and graduated from Winston-Salem State last year. She kept encouraging her husband until he finally relented.



Carlisa Haggler (front) decorated her cap for the Winston-Salem State University commencement ceremony.

BRUCE CHAPMAN/JOURNAL



Hakim Nelson-Wilder acknowledges the commencement crowd at Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

was pretty full until I met him."

There have been difficulties.

His expanded schedule has put a premium on monitoring his health. Without enough sleep, Black said he can slip into a grand mal seizure ("the big, scary ones where I lose consciousness and shake"). He said he's medicated for the condition, but still has to monitor his lifestyle and make sure he doesn't overdo things.

Still, there have been instances during which he's pushed himself too hard or forgotten to take his medicine. Muhammad said her husband's seizures are irregular, but the last occurred about six months ago.

"That's been hard," Muhammad said. "It's scary, but we were able to get him to the hospital ourselves or called an ambulance to come and take him there."

Time at last

Most of their family was at Saturday's ceremony. It was appropriate because Black says he pushed himself not only to achieve a personal goal, but to give back to others who supported him along the way.

Earlier in the month he printed off and laminated a copy of his final grades, a semester he completed

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gree is the gift he gave the children. It's proof, he said, of what hard work can achieve.

"Yes, they somewhat understand his sacrifice, but not really," Muhammad said. "They probably think the way we live is normal, because when I met Derrick, I was working full time and going to school part time."

As for himself? Black said he'll catch up on chores around the house, maybe get more involved in the children's activities.

"I've just got to make sure I don't get too comfortable," Black said. "I've got time on my hands. What in the world?"

Black chuckled after that remark.

It was a perfectly normal response for a guy now caught up on his rest.

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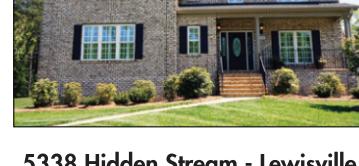
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