

Remembering David Mason Sr.

Last month our neighborhood lost one of our community's heroes, David Mason Sr. We hope that sharing some about his life will be an inspiration for you as you continue to take part in our community. Mr. Mason passed away February 20th at the age of 93.

Mason helped define what it means to have a neighborhood with bonds throughout the generations. He played a central role in the formation of the tight community bonds that formed an "extended family" across the neighborhood. In the late 60's, he did this by helping to convene neighborhood leaders to address the tensions that rose when the schools desegregated in a way that threatened to wipe out the memory of Lincoln High. He helped work out proposed solutions for the schools to better incorporate the history and strengths of Lincoln High. His sons grew up learning how to respect all people and challenge the unjust racial systems that prevailed at the time.

David and his wife, Emma, raised their family of four sons and a close knit extended family on N. Graham St. and Craig St, both in the historic Sunset neighborhood, now a part of Northside. He and Emma met right here in this neighborhood. Their love for one another was clear to all who met them. If you visited them on Craig St, you would often find them sitting on the couch or on their porch holding hands.

Mr. Mason also believed in providing a strong education for his children. Every one of his sons received at least a college degree. His sons recall him saying, "I will come to your school to support you in your successes, but I will not come for disciplinary problems." His sons knew what it meant to "represent the Mason name."

Many in the neighborhood talk about the way he lived with the utmost integrity: a family man, a person with a strong work ethic and dedication to his neighborhood. Like many in his generation he demonstrated this strong work ethic in the service during World War II, and was also was equally dedicated after wartime.

In the early years after WWII, Mr. Mason was a master brick mason, which required extensive travel. After a few years, he decided to take on two local jobs so he could be close to family and help raise his four sons. He worked for decades at the Carolina Inn and the Pi Kappa Gamma Fraternity House. He often worked 14-hour days to help provide for his family and never complained. He was so beloved at the fraternity that he was named an honorary member in the 1960's—the first African American in Pi Kappa Gamma. He also worked extra for several years to make sure his son Douglas could receive needed medical care for a kidney disease.



When he wasn't at work, he was determined to spend time at home. He loved his family deeply and made sure the family gathered each year for a reunion. He wanted to make sure his sons got to know the network and history of the Mason family.

Despite his many commitments, Mr. Mason never owned his own car. He walked everywhere, knowing it would keep him healthier. In between his Saturday jobs he would often attend football games; he was an avid Carolina fan.

Late in his life when Emma was in the hospital, he would take the EZ rider to the hospital early every day to sit by her side. Mason loved his wife of 73 years so much that he died soon after he could no longer hold her hand.

In addition to Emma and his sons, Mason loved jazz music and taking family trips to the beach. His family still has photographs of him and Emma on Ocean View, the segregated beach in the 50's and 60's. Late in life, the entire family traveled to Maui, Hawaii, where Mason couldn't have been happier.

Many will remember Mason for his incredible dedication to family and work, great sense of humor, and his commitment to enjoying life through even the most difficult of times.

Mr. Mason's motto was "Let the good times roll." We give thanks for a man who dedicated his life to building the foundations of our community and for enabling the good times to spread to all in his reach.

Material for the article was made possible through interviews with David Mason Sr. and his son David Mason Jr. in 2012, as well as with his sons Don Mason and Daryl Mason in 2014.

Annual May Day Festival!

You are invited to join us Saturday, May 3rd from 11:00AM-3:00 PM on the grounds of St. Joseph CME Church for the Jackson Center's annual May Day festival!

Free Food
Kids Games
Local History
Celebration

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

The Jackson Center is accepting applications for two positions for the 2014-2015 year:

Civic Media Coordinator

The Civic Literacy and Education Coordinator will play an integral role in the Jackson Center's literacy and education efforts. This person will spearhead the publication of *Northside News*, facilitate FYR, and implement K-12 workshops.

Community Action Coordinator

The VISTA staff member will play a major role in the Jackson Center's collaborative initiatives to combat poverty, primarily through housing and food justice work. This person will oversee volunteers, improve the neighborhood database, and spearhead organizing and home preservation efforts.

Applications are due by April 23. For more information visit us at www.jacksoncenter.info

Community Board

- Birthdays in March: If we missed yours or someone else, call us to submit birthdays so we can make sure to remember them for the future.
 - Pat Jackson's Birthday- March 11th
 - Prince Thompson's Birthday- March 12th
 - Jackson Center Bonner Intern Zack Kaplan- March 17th
 - Stella Farrar – March 18th
 - Dolores Bynum- March 23rd
 - Regina Merritt- March 24th
 - Jerome Long- March 29th
- Shout outs:
 - Legal Aid and the Black Law Student's Association for collaborating to bring forth a free Wills Clinic on March 22nd.
 - Brush with Kindness for the repair of Effie Merritt's home at 315 McDade Street on March 21st and March 22nd.
 - Congratulations to Fusion Youth Radio for having another amazing program about Female Rappers on Sunday the 16th
- Congratulations to Paris Miller and Hudson Vaughan for completing half marathons on Sunday the 16th of March.

Anything you want to share with the community; birthdays, celebrations, losses, shout-outs and other events, please call or send them to contact@jacksoncenter.info

Northside News is produced by the Marian Cheek Jackson Center for Saving and Making History with support from EmPOWERment, Inc. It is meant to be a vehicle for communication among Northsiders, Midway business owners, and friends across the town and county. Do you have a special photo or recipe to share? A local event to report or concern to raise? Please contact the Center at contact@jacksoncenter.info or (919) 960-1670. Or come by St. Joseph C.M.E. Church to visit us. We look forward to your contributions!

Northside News

March 2014

A print-link for neighborhoods of change

Vol. IV Issue 5

How do we Rebuild the Village?

Neighbors past and present weigh in on how to strengthen this neighborhood in light of its historic past as a village where people "just looked after each other."

"I would have to say that we have to rebuild the village one person at a time, then one family at a time, then one neighborhood at a time, and all that starts with prayer. Can we get our local churches to come together? They have always been the heartbeat of our communities. It has been proven that "prayer changes things." That's just what I believe and what I stand on." - Kathy Atwater

"If neighbors come together, cooperate and respect each other, then it can be better." - Jane Farrar

"It takes a bond through the generations—treating the neighborhood like an extended family." - Don Mason

"Keith Edwards always reminds me that it is based in love: being willing to take the time to be with and care for neighbors, to know one another. And I love how Esphur Foster says it is about knowing our history—which empowers our future together." -Hudson Vaughan

Welcoming to the Table: The Story of Home



Jackson Center Staff and Minister Albert Williams facilitating a workshop with students from Smith Middle.

By: ELIZABETH McCAIN

In my growing up, we would sit for hours after family dinners, working on whatever was left on the table while everyone would tell and retell family stories. Once I ventured away from home, I realized that those stories were much more than entertainment. I stood steadier knowing about my home and the people who made it that way.

Last fall at Northside Elementary, we worked with several students whose families made and continue to make history in Chapel Hill. One such student was sitting at a table by himself, and we recognized his last name. We told him that we had learned much of what we were teaching that day from oral histories with families like his, and spoke about his family's historic involvement in Northside. Throughout the workshop, he kept us on our toes with wonderful questions and observations about Civil Rights.

The teacher came up to the Jackson Center Staff after our workshop to tell us that the student had never before been so involved. In fact, she said, it was usually difficult to get him to ask a single question. Learning about your home gives you power, and Northside has already done great groundwork in telling its story through the over 120 oral histories housed at the Jackson Center. During my time at the center, I have had the humbling privilege to begin to bring more chairs to the table to listen to this shared history. The

main ways that we are doing this is through making these oral histories more accessible for listening at the Jackson Center and also through facilitating opportunities to share this history in K-12 school workshops.

We had about 250 eighth graders from Smith Middle here to visit a few weeks ago. This is the third time that they have visited and we brought the lessons and stories we have learned through oral history to the group and we brought some community teachers themselves. We were sharing the story of the sit-ins on Franklin Street that happened just 27 days after the ones in Greensboro, one of our community teachers and tour guides, Albert Williams stood up to talk.

Reverend Williams shared his memories about "Big John" the owner of Colonial Drug store. He said, "Big John was not a bad man. In fact, Big John was a really good man who took care of people, but he was caught by the lines of race that had been drawn. He was not prepared for us to step over them. But we had to; it was time to step over those lines."

The students were rapt with his narrative. They asked: Did Big John realize that what he was doing was wrong later? Why didn't you just give up after all that trouble? How did you decide what to do? How did you keep going on Reverend Williams?

Last week, one of our staff members was doing a workshop with students at UNC. One student raised her hand to tell us they had been involved in a Jackson Center workshop at Chapel Hill High the year previous. She said "learning about Chapel Hill and about Northside completely changed the way I thought about home and is one of the reasons that I decided to stay here in Chapel Hill."

To tell your story, to learn how to get more involved or more about the history and educational initiatives of the Jackson Center, visit us at the Jackson Center or contact us at 512 W. Rosemary Street.