

Davidson College Janitors and Building Grounds Employees During Jim Crow

Following the Civil War and the destruction of slavery, Davidson College continued to rely on the labor of African Americans. While no longer enslaved, African American employees continued to perform many of the duties and roles as they had done on the antebellum campus. They now received wages.

During the Jim Crow era, African American men, women, and children worked on campus as janitors, building grounds workers, and laundresses. Initially called “servants” as had been used under slavery, all earned low wages in comparison to white campus employees. Some, like Enoch Donaldson, saw the transition in their official titles from servant to janitor. Some secured positions for other family members, spouses, and neighbors. As such, student publications and local newspapers occasionally published biographical sketches of these employees whose interactions shaped the entire campus community.

On the eve of desegregation, *The Davidsonian* and other local newspapers published a series of articles recognizing several men who worked on campus. Below are some of the profiles collected and placed in a D-File.

Davidson College Recognizes Its Staff, 1953¹

Davidson College, the scene of the awarding of innumerable degrees, citations and diplomas throughout her 116 year history has at long last given public recognition to the member of the staff of faithful employees who have made possible her service in the field of education.

This first annual employees awards day was originated by Treasurer D. Grier Martin who presided at the Martin Science Building as Davidson recognized her loyal corps of employees who have served as her indispensable hewers of wood and drawers of water for the last 40 years. A group of ninety-two of them, until now unheralded and unsung, heard President Cunningham’s warm words of appreciation and received artistic emblems from the college (lapel pins for the men and pins for the ladies) inscribed with a numeral representing in each case their number of years of service. Members of the group represented a total of 983 man-years – almost a millennium – of diligent and effective labors. A typical observation made by Frank Reid, assistant superintendent of grounds and buildings, was this, “I have been at Davidson College 32 years. Since my first pay check I have never missed a regular weekly payment from the college, sick or well.”

¹ “Honored For Long Service,” *The Gazette*, August 27, 1953, 1.



Figure 1: 30 Years or More – Shown above are the four members of the Davidson College ground crew who have labored more than thirty years with the college. From left to right: Lee McCorkle, 38 years; James Donaldson, 32 years; Frank Reid, 30 years, and Sidney Hunsucker, 30 years.

Pride in their work has been characteristic of the members of the group particularly with the real oldtimers like Mary Lee Hicks, a laundry worker now in her thirtieth year of service. She speaks with satisfaction of the fact that last year she ironed 49,229 shirts, which is an average of 1,500 shirts per week, or 60 per hour.

The 38-year button representing the greatest number of years of continuous service was presented to Lee McCorkle by President Cunningham. Before he assumed his present duties as custodian of the Martin Science Building he performed the same function for 28 years in the old Martin Chemical Laboratory, which was razed in 1941. Lee has served through the administrations of three presidents and three wars and his service to the college has been inspired by his humbled belief in her heritage and destiny.

Superintendent Don Hobart, to whom credit is due for the smooth operation of Davidson's labor battalion, came to the college on June 6, 1925. At that time his working force consisted of three shop men, two firemen, two laborers, fifteen janitors, one mail carrier, four boys from town (for summer work) and one pair of mules. The payroll amounted to \$357.75 per week for the twenty-six employees, as contrasted with five times that amount now paid to twice the former number.



Figure 2: Long Time Laborers – A total of 192 years of service is represented by the seven employees of Davidson shown in this picture. They are, left to right, John Heath, 27 years service; Mary Lee Hicks, 29 years; Everett Mayhew, 28; Mrs. Everett Mayhew, 26; Gabe Reid, 27; Don Hobart, 28, and Craven Howard, 27.

The first to receive their emblems were the following members of the Business Administration: President John R. Cunningham for more than ten years of service; Mrs. R. A. Little, Supervisor of Dormitories, 5 years; Myron W. McGill, Bursar and Assistant Treasurer, 30 years; Oscar J. Thies, Jr., College Engineer, 30 years; and F. D. Hobart, Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, 28 years; and Clyde W. Stacks, Manager of the College Laundry, 4 years.

Others who received awards included: Members of the Department of Maintenance of Buildings and Grounds – Lee McCorkle, 38 years; James Donaldson, 32 years; Sidney Hunsucker, 30 years; Frank Reid, 30 years; Everett Mayhew, 28 years; John Heath, 27 years; Craven Howard, 27 years; Gabe Reid, 27 years; Toy Withers, 24 years; Crawford Donaldson, 22 years; Perry White, 20 years; John Brice, 19 years; Oscar Gant, 15 years; Tom Johnston, 15 years; B. L. Sherrill, 14 years; Ed Linker, 13 years; L. W. Nelson, 11 years; Graham Goodrum, 10 years; Mable Brawley, 8 years; Joe Black, 7 years; Curtis Brandon, 7 years; Lawrence Moore, 6 years; Janie Springs, 6 years; John Withers, 5 years; Sam Caldwell, 4 years; Talmadge Connor, 4 years, J. H. Donaldson, Jr., 4 years; James Howard, 4 years; Lloyd Honey cut, 3 years; O'Dell Black, 2 years; Charlie P. Donaldson, 2 years; Ephriam Tucker, 2 years; Ed White, 2 years; John McNeely, 1 year, and Clinton Torrence, 1 year.

Dining Room – Hubert Leon Brice, 11 years; Isado Davis, 11 years, India Houston, 3 years; and Naunie Lynch, 3 years.

Laundry and Dry Cleaning – Mary Lee Hicks, 29 years, Julia E. Mayhew, 26 years; J. C. Washam, 22 years; Willie Louise Johnson, 21 years; Clara C. White, 21 years; Fannie B. Cashion, 19 years; Harry Lee Johnson, 19 years; Ophelia Harris, 17 years; Walter E. Johnson, 16 years; Alice Poole, 16 years; Maude Neill Irvin, 14 years; Charles A. Dove, 12 years; Blanch E. Goodrum, 12 years; Q. H. Readling, 12 years; Rosa Bell Jones, 11 years; Gertrude Knox, 11 years; Sara Monica Readling, 11 years; Rachel Lucille White, 11 years, Mason Wilson, 11 years; Marjorie Heath, 10 years; Addie Mae Johnson, 10 years; Grier A. Wilson, 10 years; Julia Lee Cashion, 9 years; Frances Beaver, 8 years; Annie P. Brown, 8 years; George T. White, 8 years; Grace Wilson,

8 years; Mary Lewis Archer, 7 years; Arrvester Brandon, 7 years; Curlee Dubose, 7 years; Edna Hampton, 7 years; Lelia C. Potts, 7 years; Melvin Stinson, 7 years; Castella B. Torrence, 7 years; John Lee Torrence, 7 years; Ferrell H. Honeycutt, 6 years; Flora Graham, 5 years; Gladys L. Honeycutt, 5 years; Gertrude A. Stacks, 3 years; Cecelia Forney, 1 year, and Mary Elizabeth Parsons, 1 year.

Source: "Honored For Long Service," *The Gazette*, August 27, 1953, 1.

*Charlotte News Recognizes Enoch Donaldson, 1956*²

Enoch Donaldson has been standing there to greet the graduating class of Davidson College every May since 1883, which is a lot of Mays.

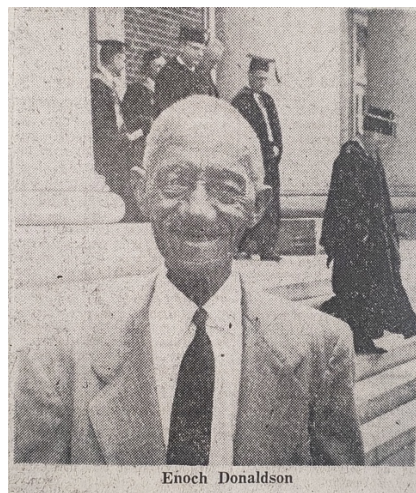


Figure 3: Enoch Donaldson in front of Chambers Building, Davidson College, Davidson, NC, ca. 1956.

And when Davidson's graduates stepped out into the sunlight from Chambers Auditorium last week, with the tassels on their caps swinging in their faces, Enoch Donaldson was there.

Some gave him unknowing looks, and he was sorry about that. He didn't know them.

BUT HE KNEW their fathers and their fathers' fathers, and some of these men old men themselves now, were there to greet him and to inquire about his health after the fashion of old men.

Remarkably little of the education that Enoch Donaldson worked around for so many years ever rubbed off on him. He isn't even sure how old he is, exactly, but he thinks, he was born three years after "the freedom," which would make him 90.

He can't read and he can't count, but a man doesn't have to know how to count to understand the value of things.

² Charles Kuralt, "People: When a Man's 90, Memories of Boys Grown Old Crowd 'Round," *Charlotte News*, June 4, 1956, 5A, clipping.

What Enoch Donaldson values is the friendship of the campus and the town and he likes to say the names of the old men of Davidson: "Dr. J. B. Shearer," he'll say, "and Dr. Douglas and Dr. Jackson and Dr. Lingle, all friends of mine."

The BOYS DIDN'T know who it was they were walking by in their moment of pride and accomplishment, but their fathers did, and they walked up to Enoch Donaldson and slapped him on the back.

"Enoch," they'd say, "do you remember the time you were sweeping out my room and the mouse came out..."

Or, "Enoch," they say, "do you remember the night the train wrecked and spilled liquor all over the tracks..."

Or, "Remember when President Wilson came to the campus and how the Secret Service men tried to keep everybody away..."

AND OF COURSE, Enoch was able to summon up all those memories.

The old grads really didn't have to ask.

They should have known that when a man is 90 years old and doesn't have a broom to push or classrooms to clean up or horses to tether on the south campus any more, the memories are what he lives on.

Source: Charles Kuralt, "People: When a Man's 90, Memories of Boys Grown Old Crowd 'Round," *Charlotte News*, June 4, 1956, 5A.

[The Gazette Profiles Enoch and John Donaldson, 1987³](#)

Born "befo' de Freedom"

The people at Davidson College and the citizens of Davidson remember Enoch Donaldson as a friendly, loyal, and dedicated person whom everyone shared a mutual respect for.

He lived a long distinctive life and most of it was spent working as a custodian at Davidson College. He was also called the vice president of the college when Dr. John B. Shearer was president because there were no telephones and Dr. Shearer utilized him to carry messages to students and professors.

Donaldson was paid \$1 a month by students who wanted their rooms cleaned and their beds made. While working for the students, Enoch also worked in the old physics building.

In the 1950s some decided he was too old to work, but he refused to hear anything about retiring. To him, it was a privilege to work at the college and he would not be deprived of doing so.

Out of friendship and deep respect, he was kept on the payroll. His new job was to keep the front steps of Chambers clean. When students would return back to campus for homecoming or graduation or other events, Enoch Donaldson would greet them on the steps of Chambers.

Mr. Enoch Donaldson died February 25, 1962. His age was based on when he got married and when he began working at the college. It was estimated that Enoch was 93-years

³ Marjean Torrence, "Two Generations Serving Davidson College," *The Gazette*, April 22, 1987, clipping.

old. He was a lifelong member of Reeve's Temple A.M.E. Zion Church and served on many committees.

"Hujohn"

Everyone in Mecklenburg and other surrounding counties, except the very, very young knew and adored "Hujohn," as we he was so affectionately known.

He and his wife Eugenia were blessed with 12 children and took in three more, who were treated as their own.

Mr. Hujohn was a member of Reeves Temple A.M.E. Zion Church but he always found time to attend all other churches in and around the community.

He was the son of Mr. Enoch Donaldson, who was a custodian at Davidson College and helped Hujohn to get odd jobs at the college when he was eleven years old. He later became a custodian and painter.

For 60 years he worked at Davidson College as a custodian, handyman, painter and as he used to say, "I'm a counselor for the students."

Mr. Hujohn never retired and he said he never would. He would not know just what to do with himself if he could not work.

In his 60 years at the college, he would always look forward to attending the homecoming games. He would say he had to go see his old friends and his students.

His most favorite poem was "Let Me Live in a House By the Side of the Road and Be a Friend To Man."

He really was a friend to everyone and he will always be remembered in Davidson.

Source: Marjean Torrence, "Two Generations Serving Davidson College," *The Gazette*, April 22, 1987, clipping.

[Student Newspaper Profiles Louis Conner, 1961⁴](#)

The Davidson student does not take long to become friendly with members of the college maintenance crew. One of the most personable figures among these men is Louis Conner, whose present domain is the College Union.

⁴ Dave Pusey, "Army Veteran Louis: Experience, Service," *The Davidsonian*, December 8, 1961, 4.



Figure 4: Louis Conner, a World War II veteran, shown at work on campus.

Louis was born in Mecklenburg County near Cornelius and went from high school into the service in 1943, where he remained for the next thirty months. He took his basic training in Greensboro (where he met Sgt. Pendleton, then a rifle range officer and now with our ROTC department) and Montgomery, Alabama. He became a member of an airplane maintenance crew at Stuttgart, Arkansas and later went to Fort Benning, Georgia for overseas basic training. At Fort Benning Louis learned the delicate art of packing parachute and airborne supplies.

Of his overseas trip, Louis says, "From Fort Benning we went to Fort Wayne, Indiana, and from there to California for briefings and a going-away party.

"The summer months were terribly hot and the men could only read, play cards, write letters and talk about going home."

During his voyage to the Philippines, word came that the A-bomb had been dropped, and rumor had it that men with two years or more of service would be going home. Says Louis, "It was only rumor."

When he finally arrived home, he spent a semester at Greensboro A&T College in 1946, before illness put him in Columbia Veterans Hospital in South Carolina.

In 1947 he was married, and worked at construction and public roads work until 1955, when he came to Davidson.

Louis is hoping that in a short time he will be able to continue his education. "I would like to learn some trade that would be beneficial to me and would permit me to continue my work around Davidson," he says. "First, I'm sending my wife (Colleen, who was Union Snack Bar manager last year) to school. She'll be finishing a practical nursing course next March."

Source: Dave Pusey, "Army Veteran Louis: Experience, Service," *The Davidsonian*, December 8, 1961, 4.

Student Newspaper Profiles Clint Torrence, 1955⁵

Note: This is the first in a series of articles paying tribute to those men who have the sometimes terrible task of making our “home away from home” a little more comfortable. To those janitors who have been associated with Davidson College for many years and have become almost a tradition here we dedicate this column.



Figure 5: Clint Torrence shown at work in a *Davidsonian* student profile.

Today, in the first of a series of articles, we salute the true workers of our college, the men who keep our secrets, such as where we hid the remainder of that “Homecoming Bottle,” the men who wet nurse us, shake us out of bed, and clean our rooms while we, under terrific burden, struggle through another day at Davidson College.

We salute the men who listen to our petty gripes, our snide remarks and our stale Davidson humor. These men, by definition, are not the faculty nor even the administration, but rather our noble friends, the Janitors.

The first of these men is Clint Torrence, janitor on the first and second floors of Watt’s Dormitory. Clint has been employed by Davidson College since 1924, except for a period of seven years during which time he worked for a local asbestos concern.

Clint’s first job at Davidson was as janitor in the “barracks” located at the time, in front of East Dormitory. This structure was the World War One counterpart of our present cardboard village. Clint’s heart, however, belongs to Rumble Dormitory, where he served as sole janitor until this past year, when due to accumulated filth and evil reputation, it was razed.

Rumble graduates will long remember Clint’s dependability, friendliness and generally happy nature which have made him an integral part of our campus life.

To get out of bed at seven a.m. on a particularly cold morning when the heat is not functioning properly, which could be any morning, is not exactly a rewarding experience nor one that leads to a truly Davidson out-look on the coming day. But to see Clint pop his head in the door and, with a twinkle in his eye, say, “you gotta git up sometimes, might as well smile,” gives one the feeling that at least something is right in an otherwise dreary world.

⁵ Andy Watson, “Ode to A Janitor,” *The Davidsonian*, October 21, 1955, 4.

It is these traits of friendliness and humor and the ability to project them into all who know or come in contact with him, that make Clint the popular and likeable person that he is.

When asked how he felt about the recent removal of Rumble from our midst Clint replied, "Progress and development are the main objectives of Davidson College. Only those through continual pursuit of these aims may we enhance our position and maintain our leadership in the field of liberal education." Yep, that 's what he said...

We might add that in cooperation with Davidson College, Clint has carried on a life long experiment in the field of Social Economy, the title being, "How to raise eighteen children on thirty dollars a week." We feel that his progress along these lines, while not being the greatest achievement of our decade, rate along side noteworthy accomplishments as the invention of space satellites and the production of Color Television.

It has been said that books and courses determine one's curriculum and that associations govern one's education. If such is the case then the majority of us as a student body says thanks to Clint Torrence for helping us a part of the way along the road to a better education.

Source: Andy Watson, "Ode to A Janitor," *The Davidsonian*, October 21, 1955, 4.

[Student Newspaper Profiles John Heath, 1955⁶](#)

This week we salute John Heath, janitor of Georgia Dormitory. John has been employed by Davidson College since March of 1928.

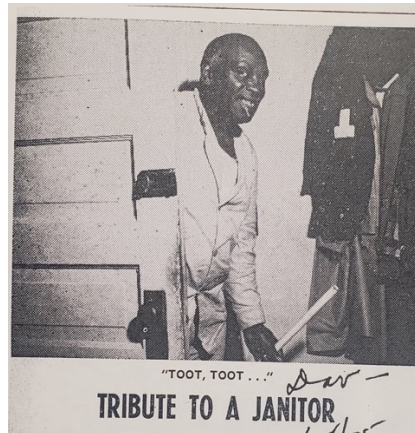


Figure 6: John Heath shown entering a dormitory room in a *Davidsonian* student profile.

John was born on a farm here in Mecklenburg County and has lived here all his life. As John grew up, he decided to leave the farm and find a different type of work. After his application for a job at Davidson had been accepted, he began his long and devoted tenure of work as a janitor. Since that time, John has become head janitor of Georgia Dorm.

⁶ Billy Akers, "Tribute To A Janitor," *The Davidsonian*, October 28, 1955, 4.

If you walk along Dormitory Row sometime in the late afternoon, you will probably observe a small crowd of students standing in front of Georgia Dormitory. The students will be laughing and talking with a janitor whose name is John Heath. The conversation is probably about who put the chicken in Pete Andrews' room or who led the "Rapid Shave" attack on the first floor, but whatever the conversation is about, you can be sure it is on the lighter side, and that John Heath is navigating it.

Every morning between the hours of 7 and 8, you will hear that the residents in Georgia call "The Human Alarm Clock," John Heath, going from room to room, shouting, "Beep, Beep, time to get up and go to breakfast." One morning Bill Pfefferkorn found he was being shaken out of bed to the tune of "Oh, Davidson," because he did not heed the first warning blast.

Some residents may not be like this means of being awakened, but Doug Anderws, when asked how he felt about Heath's means, replied, "I have been living in Georgia three years, and I would have overcut my classes fifty times if it were not for John Heath."

Heath, when asked his opinion on which administration has accomplished the most for Davidson College, replied, "I think Dr. John has done more for this here college than any other President, and I agree with Clint Torrence about the building of all these new buildings."

One of the influences that John Heath has on the residents of Georgia is that of neatness. Every room is, on the average, quite clean. There are very few clothes on the floor. When asked why the students in Georgia are neater than the average, John answered, "I tells them if they don't be neater now, they will keep on being sloppy until they get married and their little woman straightens them out."

"The Class of '59,' say's John, "is the best that has come to Davidson so far."

Already those freshman that live in Georgia have agreed that John Heath is one of the best janitors that Davidson has ever had or ever will have.

Source: Billy Akers, "Tribute To A Janitor," *The Davidsonian*, October 28, 1955, 4.

[Student Newspaper Profiles John Brice, 1955⁷](#)

The Davidsonian salutes John Brice this week for his long and excellent record at the college. He has been employed by Davidson for twenty-one years. Starting his work here as a janitor in Georgia Dormitory, he has served as janitor in East, Watts, and Chambers. During his nine years of work in Georgia, John did not miss a single day. For the past eleven years, Brice has worked in Chambers as mailman and supervisor of the mimeograph.

⁷ Billy Akers, "Tribute To A Janitor," *The Davidsonian*, November 4, 1955, 4.

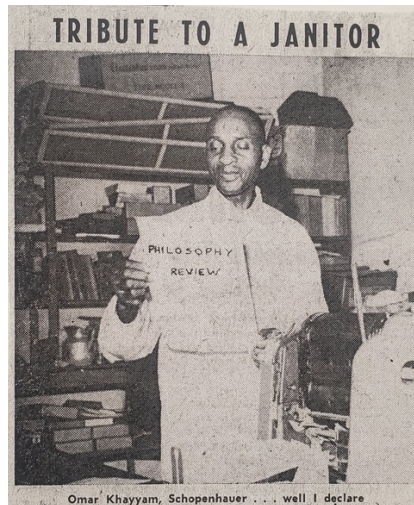


Figure 7: John Brice shown entering a dormitory room in a *Davidsonian* student profile.

Brice is perhaps the most informed on what is going on on the campus, knowing most of the students by name and activities. There are few things that happen in the town of Davidson which are missed by his keen perception and not given full benefit of his bright outlook on his life. He knows all the routines and schedules of the various professors and soon learns the student's reaction to any writ or review given.

It is Brice who opens Chambers in the early hours of the morning, and he also who is the last to lock the main door at night. He believes in devoting his life to work and never doing a job half way.

When asked who were some of the students he remembered and why he remembered them, John replies, "I remember Sam Spencer because he was always hard to get out of bed during the cold winter mornings. I also remember C. Shaw Smith because he was a good magician and he was always showing me some new 'tricks' or was helping him with his pigeons.

Brice is a strong supporter of Davidson's football teams. Some years ago at the big football game one was likely to see John marching in front of the Davidson Band with a mop and pail yelling his "let's mop'em up Davidson!"

Source: Billy Akers, "Tribute To A Janitor," *The Davidsonian*, November 4, 1955, 4.

Student Newspaper Profiles Toy Withers, 1955⁸

The Davisonian points with pride, this week, to the janitorial services rendered by Toy Withers, the sage of Duke. Toy, as he is called by those who know him, was born in Iredell county in 1896. In 1928, at the ripe old age of 32, he arrived on the Davidson campus.

⁸ John Toumaras, "Tribute To A Janitor," *The Davidsonian*, November 11, 1955, 4.

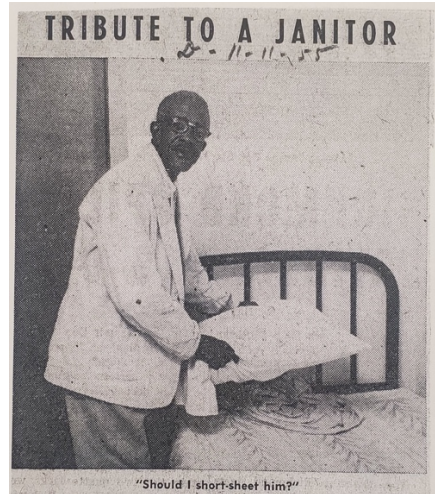


Figure 8: Toy Withers shown at work in a dormitory room in a *Davidsonian* student profile.

Toy served at the old barracks until they were torn down. He then moved to Georgia and worked there for a few years. In 1941, when Duke was opened, he moved there and has remained its janitor ever since. From the standpoint of service, Toy is Davidson's senior janitor.

It is a well established fact that the primary duty of a dormitory janitor is to wake up his charges in time for classes. Sometimes this can be a difficult task. Toy recalls, that in order to wake up one student, he had to remove everything from the head of the bed and then wake the young man up by going to the foot of the bed and yanking one of his legs. The removal of objects from the head of the bed was a step taken to insure not being hit by flying objects. Toy also recalls that the only way he could ever get another student out of bed was take off his shoes and coat and attempt to get in bed with him.

When asked if he could remember anyone who was eccentric in his habits or hobbies, such as collecting interesting photographs of the human anatomy, he replied, "Aren't we all?" The question: "How do you think we could achieve world peace?" was answered: "Well, if we could get the Russians on our side, we could have world peace." When further asked how this could be done, he said, "They want too many things. I don't know what would pacify them."

Source: John Toumaras, "Tribute To A Janitor," *The Davidsonian*, November 11, 1955, 4.

[Student Newspaper Profiles L. W. Nelson, 1955⁹](#)

"Hey man, you got any extra clothes hanging around"..."Joe you already slept through two classes, you better get out of bed."..."Joe, Joe, don't hit me, you hit me last week"..."Mrs. Little says you all got to clean this mess up, and quit writing on those damn walls..." "I have seen you move that dresser over that hole in the wall"..."Hey, man, you got any extra clothes hanging around?..."

These are the words of a Davidson immortal; he is a part of a tradition. One sees him standing majestically, broom in hand, on the wooden back porch of a village apartment. A

⁹ Chuck Wright and Jim Kuist, "Tribute To A Janitor," *The Davidsonian*, November 18, 1955, 4.

generation of Davidsonians in their college careers loved the village as their home. L. W. was a member of the household. He was the official alarm clock; a conspirator in gayety; the best of jokes; confidant in sorrows; and guardian of the dresser drawer. As long as the spirit of the Village shall remain, in the memories of those who lived there, L. W. Nelson will stand as a monument to this institution.



Figure 9: L.W. Nelson shown on a schedule break in a *Davidsonian* student profile.

This gay young blade hails from Cornelius, a thriving little community a few rods down the road from the City. Married to his childhood sweetheart, at the height of his virility, he is a happy family man. He is a pillar of his community. Davidson students, however, know little of L.W. as a family man. To them he is recognized as one of the rising young janitors on the Davidson campus, known for his wit and beaming smile. He has been taken in as an honorary member of a number of the campus social fraternities, his presence being most conspicuous at the conclusion of the spring semester along the many beach resorts sprawling the Carolina coast.

Today L. W. sweeps his beat along the second floor aisle and recesses of Belk dormitory. This is a new environment for him, as it is for those who moved with him from the shady lawns and picturesque little rooms of the village opposite the college; to these yawning gaping painted walls and long corridors, this mammoth brick and mortar edifice that stands to the ingenuity of our administration. Undoubtedly he yearns for the good ole' days. But the good ole' days, and pleasant memories, and where quiet tradition must sometimes be submerged, as creative independence is submerged to the martinet authority of modern educational technicians.

Here's to L.W.!

Source: Chuck Wright and Jim Kuist, "Tribute To A Janitor," *The Davidsonian*, November 18, 1955, 4.

Student Newspaper Profiles Talmadge O. Connor, 1955¹⁰

“Hey, Tam! What’d you do with last Sunday’s paper? I hadn’t read the sports pages”...“Hey, Tam! How ‘bout getting your wife to do these shirts for me”...Ta-am! Ta-am! I want to make a room check this morning”...“Talmadge! We need some more janitors over here moving these beds.”

So it goes, through the day and through the week. To each call comes a pleasant whistle or a “Hey – hey” that lets the caller know where he will find Talmadge O. Connor, janitor for the first and second floors of East Dormitory.



Figure 10: Talmadge O. Connor shown at work in a *Davidsonian* student profile. Note the original profile added an apostrophe to his last name. The “O” reflected his middle name and is inconsistently spelled in various publications. It has been corrected in this transcription.

The present school year is number eight for Tam. He has spent all eight years making beds, sweeping floors, picking up papers, and being a friend to the Davidson Gentlemen of East Dorm. He worked on the third and fourth floors during his first year – “my freshman year,” he calls it – but since then he has held his present post of the lower floors.

Tam and his wife Cecilia are the proud parents of five children who range in age from one to fourteen years. The Connors live on Mock Circle in Davidson. Tam is at present the local secretary of the Christian Aid Society.

But Tam’s “students” know little about the domestic environment of their janitor. They know him as a daily visitor who listens to their gripes, discusses the latest campus gossip, and reminds them that “it’s ten o’clock. You better get up for chapel.” More important, he makes up the beds that twisting feet have pulled loose overnight. “That Ken Cloninger kicks like a baby. I have to make his whole bed over every morning.” Stray socks and handkerchiefs, to say nothing of occasional tennis shoes and keys, often show up at the business end of Tam’s mop after a whisk under the bed or dresser.

Every Monday morning Tam collects the Charlotte Observer Prize Crossword Puzzles from the many papers in the trash and mails off the answers. But so far the judges in Charlotte

¹⁰ Hank Daniel, “Tribute To A Janitor,” *The Davidsonian*, December 2, 1955, 4.

have never come up with the right answers. Tam keeps trying, but he's not very optimistic. "Can't nobody win that thing. It's fixed. That's what it is, it's fixed."

Whether he's winning or losing, joking or griping, working or loafing, Tam is generally well-liked by the boys who live on his beat. "Yep," one of them remarked recently, "you gotta admit it. Tam's a damn good janitor."

Source: Hank Daniel, "Tribute To A Janitor," *The Davidsonian*, December 2, 1955, 4.

Student Newspaper Profiles Daniel Franks, 1955¹¹

A South Carolina hamlet, Laurens, can claim two native sons who have made names for themselves here – Daniel Franks and John Harmon. If AP were to run a popularity poll on janitors we feel that Dan would come out with top honors also. Indeed, Daniel has a completely clean record for his four year reign on the lower halls of West.

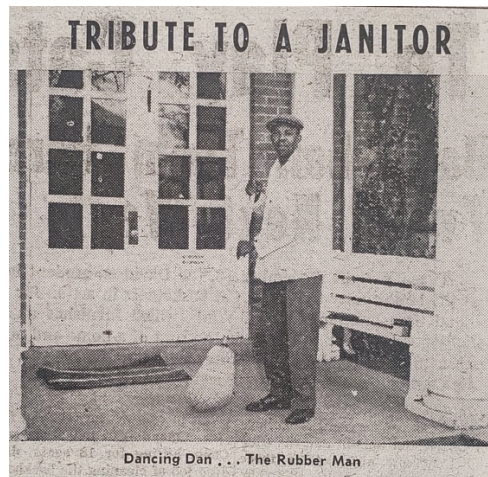


Figure 11: Daniel Franks shown at work in front of campus building in a *Davidsonian* student profile.

This cleanliness is earned over in Dan's humor which is neither canned nor corny, but is a spontaneity that is as rare as a good steak. Dan's virtues are not limited to work and wit, but a basic wisdom is his primary asset. He can cracker-barrel philosophize with the best of them.

Dan does not feel obliged to go through stereotyped antics in a 7:15 effort to stir various globs of protoplasm from fetal positions to upright, respectable gentlemen by 8:10. He feels that college is where responsibility and independence should be developed. As an active Mason Dan is a competent counselor, but never a substitute Mother.

Many of the West alumni who have chosen to end their college careers in the eminently respectable names of Duke and Belk will not forget the sunken spirits which pervaded West two years ago when Dan suffered the loss of his wife. Our hearts were heavy for him then as they were proud for him when we heard of his children's success at Bennett College and A&T.

¹¹ Jim Marshall, "Tribute To A Janitor," *The Davidsonian*, December 9, 1955, 4.

There is a fraternity on campus which feels that a hamburger fry or a clandestine jaunt to King's Mountain is empty without Dan. At the latter point Dan can often be induced to throw away his inhibitions and do the "rubberlegs," a dance somewhere between the mambo and beach boogie. All who have seen it are sure that could only have learned it in the twenties. A vicarious satisfaction is acquired from this spirit, and no one then feels that it is necessary to swallow a goldfish.

Dan serves in other chaperonage capacity at such gemotes – he is also the curfew. As a Trustee and Steward of the A.M.E. Zion Church for 18 years the Dean of the stags insists that he be back in Davidson in time for Sunday School.

Source: Jim Marshall, "Tribute To A Janitor," *The Davidsonian*, December 9, 1955, 4.

Student Newspaper Profiles James William Howard, 1956¹²

"James, James" echoes the raucous voice of Dr. John Gallent through the environs of Martin Science Hall. To all those unfamiliar with the Davidson Chamber of Science, these words probably sound like the beginning of a reprimand for a student who has erred in his laboratory technique or who has committed some other lesser sin, but to all those who chose to call themselves pre-medical students it means that James William Howard, Professor of Chemistry (without portfolio) will soon be seen running to answer his boss' call. During his 6 year tenure on the Davidson campus, James has performed assiduously his tasks of caring for his building and its students and in doing so he has endeared himself to many Davidson science student.

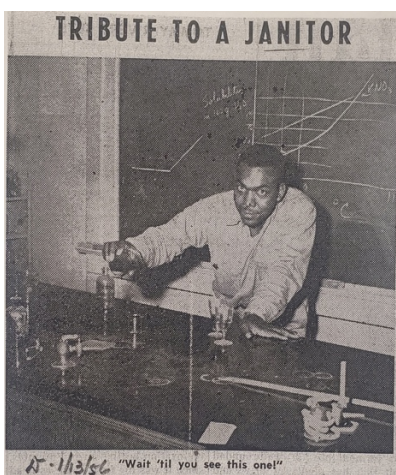


Figure 12: James William Howard shown at work in science lab classroom in a *Davidsonian* student profile.

James was born January 19, 1929 in Charlotte. In the midst of the Depression, his folks moved the family out in the country near Huntersville High School (now Torrence Lytle High School) in June of 1947. James started summer school at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College in Greensboro. As he puts it, "Financial problems soon forced a strategic

¹² Bob Majors, "Tribute To A Janitor," *The Davidsonian*, January 13, 1956, 6.

withdrawal.” Late in the fall of 1947, he joined the Air Force, completed basic training there, and then applied for Officer Candidate School. He passed the mental tests, only to be stymied on the physical by a chronic ear disease. After 9 more months in the Air Force Medical Department, he was medically discharged.

Trying again for higher education, he found the G.I. Bill closed when he applied to Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte for admission. After a brief stint at the S & W Cafeteria in Charlotte, James worked as office boy for Cannon Mills in Kannapolis. Laid off during 1949, he wandered onto the Davidson campus looking for a janitor’s job. Finding Mr. Hobart on two-weeks vacation, he took on a job as a common laborer at the then-under-construction Johnston Gymnasium. Upon the return of Mr. Hobart and after a 1 hour conversation with him, James finally landed a job here at Davidson. He’s been here ever since. His only complaint about working here echoes the sentiment of the whole janitorial service, “You’ve got to pay a good man to keep him.”

A pillar of his community, James was married to Dovie Houston in February of 1949. He has two daughters – Brenda, 6 years old and Cassandra Alise (named in part by former Davidson Professor Alex Vavoulis) who’ll be 1 year old today. A member of Davidson Lodge No. 511, Prince Hall Free & Accepted Masons, James is a Master Mason in that group. As a Trustee and Acting Deacon of the Davidson Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), his dreams at present center around the building of an educational building for his church. Using some of the wallet-feeling methods of John Slickensis, he hopes to raise money and pledges enough among his own community to begin such a project.

In his leisure time, James is an ardent TV fan. Another of his manias is the weekly puzzle in the **Charlotte Observer**. He sends one of these puzzles in faithfully almost every week and encourages the Faculty members under his control to do likewise.

Commenting on the general Davidson scene, James says, “Boys are goin’ to be boys as long as there are boys. Now ya got three classes of boys – the do, the won’t do, and the will do – I think that we’ve more of the “will do’s” now than we’ve had in a long time. Students today want to be prepared for anything that’s comin’ as compared with those several years ago who frittered away Uncle Sam’s money under the G.I. Bill.” This guardian of Davidson’s Ivory Tower foresees a need in the future for two secretaries and another janitor to staff his building (and more pay for the present inhabitants – including the professors). James and his cohort in the Martin Science Hall, Alonzo Jackson, are the originators of the janitorial “staff meeting.” Held very frequently, these meetings seldom solve many problems, relating to the building but they’re good as far as campus bull sessions go.

Our hats are off to James Howard, Janitor of the Week, who wouldn’t be at home without hearing the cry of “James! James!” from Dr. Gallent at least twenty times a day.

Source: Bob Majors, “Tribute To A Janitor,” *The Davidsonian*, January 13, 1956, 6.

Student Newspaper Profiles Crawford Donaldson¹³

Crawford Donaldson, the library janitor, probably is not too well known among the students, for by the time most of us awake, he has completed a large portion of his work and has retired to his “office” in the library basement.



Figure 13: Crawford Donaldson shown on work in front of the library in a *Davidsonian* student profile.

Crawford arrives on the campus at 5:30 A.M., so he will be able to have the library in an orderly condition by the time it opens. When one considers the amount of paper strewn on the floor every night, this in itself is a sizeable job.

Crawford also is responsible for washing the library windows and for keeping the floors waxed. Several times each day, it is necessary for him to sweep the first floor and the “eminaries” and carrels upstairs.

But one must not think that Crawford’s talents are limited to using a mop and a broom. After many years’ experience, he has become an excellent amateur plumber. Very few plumbing difficulties arise with which Crawford cannot cope. In addition, he has developed into a fair embryo electrician.

Another phase of Crawford’s work, and perhaps his favorite, is his frequent number of trips to the Post Office. Over the past years, he has made so many of these jaunts that he feels he is almost qualified for a Civil Service position.

Crawford has been employed by Davidson College for many years. Much of his time was spent in the science building, and it was only relatively recently that he “graduated” to the library. Crawford feels very close to the college, for not only he, but several other members of his family have worked and are still working here.

To use a cliché, it can be said that Crawford Donaldson “has served long and well.”

Source: “Tribute To A Janitor,” *The Davidsonian*, February 10, 1956, 4.

¹³ “Tribute To A Janitor,” *The Davidsonian*, February 10, 1956, 4.

Resources

E.H. Little Library, Davidson College, Davidson, NC

- File: "Janitors" at Davidson College
- *The Davidsonian*, Davidson College Library Digital Collections

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