



# From newsprint to the Internet

*'Around Davidson' column has 50 years of history; now moving onto DavidsonNews.net*

**BY LAURIE DENNIS**  
*DavidsonNews.net*

It is, in some respects, an unfathomable transformation. What began as handwritten scraps of paper assembled into articles for a weekly newspaper is about to be transformed into online postings that can be read anywhere in the world. "Around Davidson," a society column that dates to at least the 1960s, will debut Thurs-day, Jan. 10, as a regular feature on *DavidsonNews.net*.

As envisioned by its writer, Brenda Barger, the column's internet incarnation will carry on a tradition started by the late Elizabeth Woods, who spent 40 years detailing births (but not deaths), visits, travels, luncheons, marriages, baptisms and other assorted happy news of Davidson.

"Everybody read it," said Judy Schuh, who was an occasional ghost writer for Mrs. Woods and has written it in recent years with Ms. Barger. The Schuh/Barger partnership produced "In and Around Davidson" for a 10-year period that ended with the Jan. 2 issue of the *Lake Norman Times*.

Now Ms. Schuh is retiring and Ms. Barger is taking the column to the Net, hoping to keep a new generation of Davidsonians connected.

## **COLUMN BEGINNINGS**

Elizabeth Woods was the wife of the town doctor, Jim Woods, and the occasional receptionist in Dr. Woods' South Street office. As an involved community member, she was privy to much of what was happening in



**Elizabeth Woods**

Davidson.

That's probably why at some point, no one can remember exactly when, she was approached by the publisher of the *Mecklenburg Gazette*, Davidson's

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**

## **Read Around Davidson on DavidsonNews.net**

This is a special printed edition of information from DavidsonNews.net, a volunteer community information Website at <http://davidsonnews.net>. Beginning Thursday, Jan. 10, you'll find "Around Davidson" on our site.

## Around Davidson

### FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

weekly newspaper from 1948-1997, to write about town folks. Mrs. Woods agreed and gave a sheaf of handwritten notes to *Gazette* staff member Belle Banks, who requested that Mrs. Woods try typing things up. Thus was born the "Around Davidson" column.

For much of the rest of the century, Mrs. Woods regularly turned in several inches of dense newsprint with no pictures. Her columns were a record of local happenings, delivering items of interest as well as details residents may already have known about themselves, but still enjoyed seeing in print.

"The standard phrase after saying so-and-so entertained was 'delicious refreshments were enjoyed by all,'" said Ms. Barger.

"Around Davidson" occasionally contained "the whimsical stuff," especially when Mrs. Woods went on vacation and turned the column over to friend Ann Currie, who addressed such topics as the tendency to wave at familiar cars rather than the indiscernible drivers inside and the interesting names of local dogs.

"I have very clear memories of my mom gathering 'news' about town and, as a teenager, demanded - as only a teenager can - that she NEVER mention me in the column," recalled John Woods, who nonetheless made a few appearances in "Around Davidson" and remains newsworthy today as the town's new mayor.

Mrs. Woods typed her columns on a manual typewriter and did not always hear the bell signaling the end of the line, which caused a few lost words here and there. And she still had those little handwritten notes to decipher.

"She had scraps of paper all over the house, which could make things jumbled, but that was part of the charm of her column," said Ms. Barger. "People talked about it and laughed about it and loved it."

## Around Davidson with Elizabeth Woods

*Elizabeth Woods wrote the Around Davidson column for years in the Mecklenburg Gazette. Here are a few samples.*

**(May 28, 1970)** Much interest is being shown in taking entertainment to the ladies at the Nightingale Home. Last Wednesday Around Davidson evening, Frances Cole took a projector and showed pictures of England and Ireland, taken when her family spent some time there last year. Mrs. Martha Thompson went along and her contribution was also very much appreciated. (All Davidson folks know that Martha is a famous cook.) On Friday morning, the members of Mrs. D.A. Barnes' nursery school class went to the home and talked to the ladies and sang and gave them a happy half hour.

**(Sept. 3, 1970)** Who but the Shaw Smiths would waste hours in New York looking for each other? Nancy with Curtis, Nancy King and Mary Mig arrived about three driving from Davidson, and Shaw came in by plane and got there about three-thirty. Both parties haunted the lobby and desk, hunting each other and did not discover they were in the same hotel all the time, for a good many hours. (We understand the hotel apologized.) They made up for lost time and took advantage of matinees and evening shows for the rest of the weekend, they say!

**(Nov. 12, 1970)** The Centennial Book Club met with Wendell Gable on Nov. 6th. Bob Manning gave a talk on "The science of cryogenics" which is the science of making things cold. Members thoroughly enjoyed the subject as presented by Bob. Refrigeration and thermos bottles were among the things mentioned.

**(Jan. 14, 1971)** Patty and Richie King entertained Friday evening at a buffet supper honoring the Tony Dicks who recently arrived from Germany. The delicious meal featured shrimp neuburg, country ham, homemade rolls, aspic salad and tarts. About thirty guests enjoyed the evening.

### FROM READERS TO WRITERS

As Ms. Barger and Ms. Schuh explain it, in the 1960s and 70s, "Around Davidson" was essential reading in a place where newcomers were provided an official sponsor and introduced in September at a "newcomers' picnic."

Mrs. Woods was known to show up at the home of a new neighbor, ready to take notes for her column.

One day in February 1975, shortly after Ms. Schuh moved to Davidson, "there was a knock on the front door and here's this little old lady with a notebook in one hand and a pencil in the other," Ms. Schuh recalled. Mrs. Woods did not realize that the man moving boxes in the house was Judy Schuh's visiting father from Indiana, not her husband Merle Schuh, the new chemistry professor at Davidson College. The news item that soon came out stated "Dr. Schuh has arrived here with

his young wife."

Ms. Barger and her husband, Hugh (a Davidson College alum), moved to Davidson four months after the Schuhs. Brenda and Judy became friends through mutual book clubs and church activities. They were faithful readers of "Around Davidson," but involved in their own work - Ms. Schuh as a high school French teacher and Ms. Barger as the mother of four children living at the family farm on what was then the outskirts of town (and now borders the McConnell development).

By 1988, Ms. Schuh was helping out at The Pines at Davidson retirement community during a brief hiatus from teaching. At the same time that Elizabeth Woods, now a widow in her late 70s, was moving into The Pines and still trying to keep

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**

## Around Davidson

### FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

her column going.

“She said, ‘I just can’t write it’ - she was talking about stopping it altogether,” Ms. Schuh recalled. “People said ‘No, no, we’ll help you.’”

Ms. Schuh soon became one of the “ghost writers” who kept the column alive. It was taken over for a few years by Ethel Rhodes, and then by 1997 fell into the lap of Ms. Schuh, who immediately called in her friend, Ms. Barger.

“I said I wouldn’t do it alone,” said Ms. Schuh.

“And I said I wouldn’t do it alone,” added Ms. Barger.

So began the partnership that lasted for a decade.

### ENTERING THE WEB

They started out at the *Mecklenburg Gazette*, but eventually had a falling out with the editor.

“He started chopping off our endings,” Ms. Barger explained.

The two were introduced to Scott Hinkle, who was starting a new paper - *The Lake Norman Times* - and was interested in making it the new home for “Around Davidson.” By April 1998, the column was back in print, this time under the slightly revised title of “In and Around Davidson.”

“With Scott we had a nice run,” said Ms. Barger.

The column was published every Wednesday, with the exception of one issue from which it was mistakenly left out.

“But we had it up,” Ms. Schuh stressed. “They just forgot to print it.”

Elizabeth Woods had three rules for her column - save the death notices for the obituary page, wait until families returned home before writing about their vacations and always get permission before running someone’s news.

“In and Around Davidson” in the *Lake Norman Times* continued that tradition. However, the two new



Schuh and Barger (front)

partners added photos, and also subheads and a listing of upcoming events called “Noteworthy notes.”

Week after week, the pair produced an entire page of news about Davidsonians - their travels, their honors, their marriages and more.

In July 2003, the two commented on the tenth birthday of the *Lake Norman Times*: “Hard to believe it has been that long, but we feel strongly that our weekly column does perhaps keep our town ‘connected.’”

As 2008 approached, the veteran columnists faced new uncertainties. Ms. Schuh was ready to retire, especially since her husband is retiring from his work at the college. Ms. Barger felt ready for a change, but not one that ended the column.

After discussions with DavidsonNews.net founder David Boraks about how he was using the internet for community journalism,

Ms. Barger decided to take her work to the web. “Coming on board with David Boraks seems a perfect fit for ‘Around Davidson’ at this time when residents of Davidson are looking for a way to stay connected,” she said.

Working out the intricacies of how to turn a traditional society news column into an internet feature may take some finagling. Some of Ms. Barger’s friends - including Ms. Schuh - do not have email, to say nothing of internet savvy. But they do have a keen and insatiable interest in the arcana of life in Davidson, the kind of interest that has always sustained “Around Davidson,” and will hopefully bring the old standard new life in the world of clicks and links and jpegs.

### MORE ON DavidsonNews.net

■ A timeline of the history of the Mecklenburg Gazette.

## Also on DavidsonNews.net this week ...

*Here are a couple of samples from among the many stories published on the site in recent days.*



*Robert McCrary is opening The Egg at Davidson Café next week.*

### The Egg at Davidson opening soon

A new breakfast and lunch spot called The Egg at Davidson Café plans to open next Monday, Jan. 14, at Sadler Square on Griffith Street. It's the second "The Egg" restaurant for Robert and Eileen McCrary, who promise "awesome food at affordable prices," from Eggs Benedict to Reuben sandwiches.

Mr. McCrary is a Los Angeles native who moved east two years ago as a manager with The Cheesecake Factory. He said business has been good at The Egg at the Lake, his first location on Brawley School Road in south Iredell. Often, there's a line of folks waiting to eat, he says.

"We've been blessed with good business, so much so that we can do this second venture here," Mr. McCrary said.

Mr. McCrary worked with the Cheesecake Factory at South Park in Charlotte. For a time, he was a manager at Mickey & Mooch, in Huntersville. Then last year he started The Egg at the Lake.

The Egg at Davidson will serve a mix of traditional breakfast items, with specialties like Eggs Benedict, French toast, waffles, egg sandwiches and omelettes. Breakfasts range from \$3.25 for a fried egg sandwich to about \$9 for steak and eggs or a dish called "Fiesta Bene" - poached eggs on a tortilla with vegetables and Hollandaise sauce.

Lunch includes sandwiches, hoagies, burgers and quesadillas, many priced between \$6 and \$7.25.

The Egg at Davidson has 102 seats in about 2,200 square feet, in a space once occupied by Davino's Restaurant. Mr. McCrary expects to draw all kinds of Davidsonians, from students to businesspeople. The eatery could get a boost from the early morning commuter crowd, since it's near a stop for the 77X Express bus.

#### **THE EGG AT DAVIDSON**

**Address:** 231 Griffith Street in Sadler Square (in the former Davino's).

**Hours:** Mondays to Saturdays: 7-3, with lunch menu available at 10:30. Sundays: 8-2, serving breakfast all day.

**Telephone:** 704-987-1885 **Web:** [www.theeggrestaurants.com](http://www.theeggrestaurants.com)

### Davidson to get a farmer's market

Downtown Davidson Inc. will launch a farmer's market downtown this spring, running Saturdays May to October at a site still to be determined. The announcement follows months of work by a group of citizens and downtown merchants hoping to provide access to locally grown and organic produce.

Edie Surratt, who is co-chairing the effort along with Mary Jane Leach, said the group will be at the Jan. 22 Planning Board meeting to seek endorsement of a proposed site downtown. The group held focus groups this fall to gauge interest and generate ideas.

By working with non-profit Downtown Davidson Inc., the farmer's market organizers will be able to apply for grants and seek sponsorships and donations, Ms. Surratt said.

The group envisions that the Davidson Farmer's Market "will become a vibrant, community gathering place. Locally grown agricultural and horticultural products will be offered, and as the market expands, plans include educational programs and family-friendly activities," a press release said.

The market would sell local seasonal fruits, vegetables, and meats. Organizers are looking for foods produced using sustainable or organic methods whenever possible. Wares also may include dairy products, cheese, breads, flowers and soaps, the group says.

Two local vendors, Grateful Growers and New Moon Farm Organic, have signed up as Founding Farmers. Local real estate firm Market Properties Inc. has agreed to be the title sponsor.

To comment, sign up as a sponsor, or get more information, contact Edie Surratt at 704-502-2413 or [ediesurratt@mac.com](mailto:ediesurratt@mac.com), or Mary Jane Leach at 704-987-3501 or [leach4800@bellsouth.net](mailto:leach4800@bellsouth.net).