



A Nose for News

By Wilson Davis
Photos by Lynn Hey

Jim Schlosser has been
telling Greensboro the story
for four decades

After more than 39 years of meeting deadlines at a daily newspaper, **Jim Schlosser '65** still has the boyish enthusiasm and drive of a reporter half his age. Like a prospector mining for gold nuggets, he knows there are more good stories out there for him to unearth and write – and he's always searching for the next one.

"I'm going to Eden (N.C.) Wednesday night to talk to a guy who tells me he has made a major discovery about Jesse James and Frank James," Schlosser said in an interview earlier this year. "And he tells me that he's found the James brothers had a connection to the Triad."

Never mind that Jesse James and his gang pulled robberies in Missouri more than 130 years ago, and that the notorious desperado was killed in 1882. The tip that Schlosser received from Eden stirred his curiosity, and that's how he gets started on many stories as a reporter for the *News & Record*. This one paid off in a front-page story. Schlosser's article revealed that material uncovered by Ralph and Julie Ganis of Eden and Alamance County historian Jay Shouse suggests that the James brothers had ties and visits to the Triad, and that the two may have joined the Ku Klux Klan in attacks in Alamance and Caswell counties in 1870. Moreover,

records show that Frank James stayed at Greensboro's McAdoo House hotel in 1881 and once before that.

"I'm trying to find some new aspects of history, stories that have never been told before," Schlosser says. "There are still some others out there and I keep looking for them. I don't get bored too easily. In fact, I've got more to get to than I can handle. I rarely turn down a good story idea when people call. I worry that if I turn them down, they will go to somebody else and the next person will win a Pulitzer Prize with it."

Many times, the tips pan out. A few weeks earlier, a call to Schlosser from a former curb hop at Greensboro's defunct Paragon Drive-In led to a story revealing that the city had its own Rosa Parks during the segregated 1950s. John Harris, an ex-curb hop at Paragon, told Schlosser that Charlotte Hawkins Brown (an African American who ran Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia) in those days habitually ignored the strict Jim Crow laws at Paragon. Instead of ordering her food at the rear of the eatery as other colored people did, Brown parked at the front of the Paragon and gave her order to the curb hops just like white people. Harris told Schlosser that Paragon's boss didn't like what Brown was doing, but chose not to confront her. Harris said he believes Brown's actions equaled the courage of Parks' refusal in 1955 to move to the rear of a bus in Montgomery, Ala.

Schlosser loves to write about Piedmont area history, trains, preservation, architecture, interesting people and other folklore. His online blog is entitled "Architecture, Artifacts and Antiquity."

He writes about many other subjects as well, ranging from breaking news in the Triad to coastal hurricanes. In addition, he has covered four presidential conventions, three presidential inaugurations, and once gained access to the Oval Office to watch a photo taken of President Jimmy Carter, Jim Hunt and Robert Morgan. He also went to the White House during Bill Clinton's presidency to interview chief of staff Erskine Bowles, whom Schlosser knew from childhood. He has done color stories at a plethora of major sporting events, ranging from the ACC men's basketball tournament to the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta (17 stories in 17 days), and countless renewals of what is now the Chrysler Classic of Greensboro, among others. His best assignment involved a trip to Japan to write



Al Thomy '52

Reviewing his illustrious career of more than 60 years as a sports writer in Greensboro, Atlanta and Houston, **AlThomy '52** says that if given a choice, he would do it all over again.

"Jesse Outlar, my former boss in Atlanta, used to say, 'We don't make a lot of money but we live like millionaires,'" Thomy says. "I've just had a great time. It seems like I've been on expense accounts for 61 years with people paying me to go out and enjoy great games."

Thomy started as a sportswriter with the *Greensboro Daily News* right out of high school, working there from 1944-50. In those latter years, he also attended Guilford part time, and earned two years of credits. Thereafter, he studied journalism at UNC Chapel Hill. In 1952, he began work for the *Atlanta Constitution*, staying until 1962. Thereafter, he went to the *Houston Press* to cover baseball's Houston Colt .45s (now Astros) and the NFL's Houston Oilers.

After the *Press* was sold nearly two years later, Thomy returned to Atlanta,

spending a year with the *Atlanta Times* and 13 more with the *Atlanta Constitution*. He covered the Atlanta Falcons of the NFL, among other assignments, and has fond memories of Falcon Coach Norm Van Brocklin. Thomy says Gale Sayers of the Chicago Bears was the greatest back he ever saw play and that linebacker Tommy Nobis was the Falcons' best player.

After his mother fell ill, Thomy left Atlanta in 1978 and produced an Atlantic Coast Conference sports magazine in Durham for a year. Later, he moved back to Greensboro and wrote part-time for several publications. Now at age 80, he covers NASCAR for *Speedway Scene* of Boston, Mass., and has won 32 journalistic awards.


Thomy holds fond memories of his years at Guilford, including professors Dorothy Gilbert (English), Ernestine Milner (psychology) and **J. Floyd "Pete" Moore '39** (religion), among others. He recalled that professors hosted seminars for students in their homes and really "took a personal interest in you."

about a visit by area high schoolers.

"Jim Schlosser is the best day-in, day-out reporter in this state," says Don Patterson, a *News & Record* colleague. "I don't think there is a reporter that I know of who can

top him. There might be some who can out-write him, but no one writes a more interesting story than Jim."

Earlier, when he was city editor of the *Greensboro Record*, Patterson said there



Writing-intensive Curriculum Leads to Awards

Jim Schlosser says the emphasis Guilford placed on writing when he was a student paid dividends in preparing him for a career in journalism. “They made us write, and it helped me a lot,” he says. “We also had a senior thesis and I wrote mine on H.L. Mencken. You also had to make a junior and senior speech and take oral exams. It was hard, and I appreciate it now.”

Among his favorite Guilford professors, Schlosser mentions George Cobb and **Mildred Marlette '35** (English) and **Algie Newlin '21** (history).

Schlosser met his wife of 41 years, **Catherine Matteson '73 Schlosser**, at Guilford. A few years ago they moved from the suburbs to Governor’s Court in downtown Greensboro. “We wanted to downsize our lives...and we really enjoy being downtown,” he says, adding that he is close to the *News & Record* offices and enjoys seeing the trains pass in the distance from his balcony.

Schlosser continues to have a special loyalty to his alma mater. For the past 10 years, he has been shooting photographs at Guilford football games. This past season, he attended nine of the Quakers’ 10 contests.

Although he has collected his share of awards as a journalist, Schlosser says his “most prized honor” was the Alumni Excellence Award he received from Guilford in 1997 after being nominated by Congressman **Howard Coble '53**.

He received another special award in 2004 when the Joseph M. Bryan Foundation honored him with its first “Unsung Hero” Award. The foundation made a \$25,000 donation to the Atlantic Coast Conference in Schlosser’s name (the money paid for 1,600 children to attend the ACC women’s basketball tournament that year).

Jim Melvin, president of the Bryan Foundation, says that he considers Schlosser “one of the best reporters I’ve ever had the privilege of working with. He brings whatever he’s writing about to life. He does a great job.”

Among other awards, Schlosser has won three first places from the N.C. Press Association and eight first-places in the *Record/News & Record’s* Landmark Award contest. Five years ago, the paper instituted the Rugaber Prize, which recognizes intense curiosity, depth of research and enterprising drive. Schlosser was its first recipient.

“was no better feeling than to drive into the company parking lot and to see Jim’s blue VW parked nearby.” Because he was there, “you knew that day there was going to be something interesting to put in the newspaper.

“What makes Jim such a good reporter is that he has such a wide range of interests. He’s very well-read, he’s living in his home community and is interested in it. Plus, he thinks, lives, breathes stories.”

A stellar career continues for a guy who readily admits his earlier shortcomings as a student, both at Greensboro’s Page High and later at Guilford. Schlosser began at Guilford’s downtown campus in 1962, and after taking three courses there was able to gain admission to the college’s main campus. Schlosser says he “barely” earned his degree in English from Guilford in 1965, and by that time had decided to try newspaper work.

PGA Tour. Schlosser also played on the Guilford golf team and as a senior tied for third in the Carolinas Conference Tournament. But as years passed, he didn’t have time for golf and quit playing in his 30s.

Jerry Bledsoe, a former Greensboro newspaper colleague, calls Schlosser “the heart and soul of that newspaper. He’s the ultimate. He writes about things that people are interested in, and he’s such a good storyteller... I admire him for staying in the newspaper business all these years and keeping up the good work and writing all those good stories.”

Stan Swofford, another former *News & Record* colleague, says Schlosser’s “innate curiosity” makes him a good reporter. “He’s curious about everybody and everything. He can see a story in everybody. And he’s more knowledgeable about Greensboro than anybody I know.”

“I’m trying to find some new aspects of history, stories that have never been told before. There are still some others out there and I keep looking for them. I don’t get bored too easily.”

After graduating from Guilford, Schlosser spent a year at UNC Chapel Hill taking journalism courses. Following six months of active duty in the Marine Corps, he was hired in January of 1967 as a reporter by the *Greensboro Record*.

Golf was an earlier passion of Schlosser’s. As a member of the Page High golf team, he made it to the semifinals of the Carolinas Junior Championship. “My claim to fame was that I beat in an afternoon match the golfer who had beaten Raymond Floyd in a morning match,” he says. Floyd later did well on the

Schlosser’s talents are fully recognized by John Robinson, editor of the *News & Record*. “Without question, Jim has been the most valuable reporter—actually the most valuable journalist—at this newspaper in the 21 years I’ve been here,” said Robinson. “He knows everyone, has a rich and accurate institutional memory of Greensboro and Guilford County, writes like a dream, and has a dead-on sense of what’s news and what readers want to know about. He is normally the first reporter in each morning and is one of the last reporters

to leave each day.

“One thing that may set Jim apart is that he feels a deep sense of loyalty to our readers. And our readers return that feeling. ...Readers know his name and do talk about that ‘Jim Schlosser story.’ One reader even told me proudly that he got the ‘Jim Schlosser treatment’— meaning that the story about him was accurate, fair and well-done.”

Robinson said when a big story breaks, the first person he thinks of turning to is Schlosser. “That said, it’s the smaller stories that Jim writes that are the best because he writes them in a way that makes them big stories.”

Schlosser’s colleagues in the newsroom say they can tell how his day is going by the condition of his hair. If it’s a little messed up, they say that means he has been struggling with a story and running his fingers through his hair while trying to write.

They also kid Schlosser about his trademark blue blazer. “I’m sure I must have seen him in something other than blue blazers, but I would be hard pressed to describe when it was,” chuckles Patterson, who was joking recently with Schlosser about his attire. “I told him I had seen him out jogging the other day, and the main reason I knew it was him was because he had on a blue blazer.”

Schlosser considers himself fortunate to have worked with and learned from some top Greensboro journalists over the years, and mentioned former city editors Ralph Lancaster and Dave Alexander, the late copy desk chief **Bob Register ’41** and former staff writer Greta Tilley (now Medlin), plus former managing editor Alfred Hamilton, among others. He lists Tilley and Jerry Bledsoe as the best writers he’s worked with in Greensboro newsrooms.

“Greta could make a story

so readable and fun,” Schlosser says. “She could catch the essence of the person she was writing about. I still remember the piece she wrote on Joe Bryan [Sr.]”

Schlosser marvels at the way Bledsoe “would put a story together. No one can tell a story like him. I still remember the great series of stories he wrote on the Fritz Klenner murders in 1985.”

Schlosser thinks reporters today can’t always see the good things happening because they look for the bad stuff. “I believe in investigative journalism, because it has done a lot of good,” he says. “But I also believe in the journalism of hope. I read *The New York Times*, and some of their columnists give you no hope. I don’t feel that way. There are people out there doing good stuff. I am always amazed at the number of people who do volunteer work for nothing.”

At age 63, Schlosser says there are at least two things he still would like to do in his career: to “cover a war” and put together a book of his Greensboro area stories. “I really want to go to Iraq,” he says. “I’ve talked to John Robinson about doing a book (compiling some of his Greensboro stories) that would tie in with the Greensboro bicentennial in 2008.” Schlosser says no final decision has been made.

“I’m dreading the day when Jim Schlosser retires,” Patterson says. “I am a reader of the *News & Record*, and I know if Jim has a story in the paper, there is going to be at least one real interesting story in the paper that day. Jim has done more to entertain, educate and inform readers of our newspaper than anyone in my professional generation. That’s his contribution.”

Wilson Davis is a retired university public information officer living in Summerfield, N.C.



PAUL MAGANN

A. J. Carr '65

For **A.J. Carr '65**, a long career as a sports writer for the *News & Observer* of Raleigh, N.C., has been both enjoyable and a true calling. In June of this year, he will have completed 41 years as a sports writer, not counting four years of work as a part-time sports scribe for the *Greensboro Daily News* while enrolled at Guilford.

After earning his degree in physical education, Carr worked at the *Daily News* for a year before moving to the *News & Observer*, where he has remained since while covering various teams in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

“I am just thankful to the good Lord for it,” says Carr of his journalistic career. “It’s been very enjoyable and very rewarding.”

Carr has especially enjoyed all of the people he has met through sports writing, from the coaches, players and athletic directors to others who worked in the gyms. “The way I look at it, everybody is important and whatever team you are covering, that’s the most important team and the most important game,” he says.

A native of Wallace, N.C., Carr has received several journalistic honors, including the North Carolina Sports Writer of the Year Award in 1978, three national college-baseball writing prizes and two N.C. Press Association awards. He is also a member of the college’s Athletics Hall of Fame for his work as student sports information director while earning his degree.

“Guilford was the perfect school for me,” Carr says. “It was exactly where I should have gone, and I am thankful I had a chance to go there.” He remembers the “excellent relationships” between faculty, coaches and students and the “family atmosphere.” The faculty and coaches “would make an extra effort to help students and always had the best interest of students at heart,” he says.

Now 63, Carr says he still enjoys his work and isn’t thinking much about retirement. He is married to the former Nancy Huntley. The couple has two grown sons, Greg and Brad, and three grandsons.