

# Former Fire Chief Jerry Watts dies

By DEUCE NIVEN  
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Former Tabor City Fire Department Chief Jerry Wayne Watts died Tuesday morning, New Year's Day, at McLeod Loris hospital, where he had been taken following a sudden illness. He was 84.

Watts served the TCFD for 48 years, just 18 when he joined the department his father and four other men had formed in 1929.

Watts was chief for nearly 28 years, resigning during the summer of 1999.

A procession of Tabor City firefighters, with an engine and tanker, escorted Watts' body to Inman Ward Funeral Home in Tabor City shortly after 7 a.m. Tuesday.

Jeff Fowler, due to be sworn as Tabor City's new-

est fire chief this morning (Wednesday), said he began his fire career under Watts.

"I learned a lot from him," Fowler said. "He was a good chief."

### Family business

Watts father, Bruce Watts, was one of five men who formed the Tabor City Fire Department in 1929, 24 years after the municipality was incorporated. Bruce Watts was also fire chief for many years.

Jerry Watts' brothers, Howard and Maxie, were also firefighters for many years.

All were volunteers, involved in business ventures that paid the bills. Jerry Watts operated an auto mechanic shop on Lewis Street for many years.

Jerry Watts was also a

former Tabor City Council member. At about the time he retired in 1999, he voted in favor of a new town budget that funded Tabor City's first full-time paid fire chief.

Jerry Hodges, who had served under Watts for nearly two decades, became the town's full-time fire chief later in 1999. His last official day as fire chief was Tuesday, his retirement formally beginning just hours after Watts' death.

### Arrangements

Funeral arrangements will be announced later, possibly today, with family coming in from out-of-state to make those plans. Those arrangements will be announced by Inman Ward Funeral Home and posted at tabor-loris.com when available.

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Cluck Norris says join us for the Loris Chamber of Commerce Annual Banquet January 21, 2019

Tickets on sale now  
Call 843-756-6030

ANSWERS ON PAGE 9

## ITALIAN MENU WORD SEARCH

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Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

# OPINIONS, Too

## Updates, thoughts, & other musings

An update on Tabor City's neighboring congressional district number 9.

The North Carolina State Board of Elections has not certified a winner in the 9th NC Congressional district election because of possible fraudulent activity with the election.

When the next Congress of the United States is sworn in tomorrow, January 3, one seat will be missing. The 9th of North Carolina.

The NC State Board of Elections has scheduled a hearing to resolve the matter for Jan. 11 in Raleigh. It will feature witnesses and cross-examinations by attorneys. The hearing will take place in the courtroom of the North Carolina State Bar in Raleigh. Any number of witnesses have been subpoenaed to testify.

Shenanigans regarding the election in November occurred in neighboring Bladen County. Just what will be the outcome of the Jan. 11 hearing?

I predict that the State Board of Elections will not certify a winner and will vote to have another election in the 9th. Just a guess. I have no clue as to the extent or merits of the issue with absentee ballots and whether or not it significantly affected the outcome of the election. My gut tells me that North Carolina will not have a full complement of elected members of the US House of Representatives until March or April of this year. How

about them apples? Time will tell.

I remain amazed by America's fascination with socialism. The past elections in November delivered a significant number of elected officials who declare their affinity for a socialist government in this nation of ours.

I can only look to all the failed socialist governments throughout the world and cannot come up with a one that the United States should emulate. All are colossal failures and have only succeeded in increasing poverty and misery whenever tried.

The most recent and glaring example is Venezuela. In 1970, Venezuela had become the richest country in Latin America and one of the 20 richest countries in the world, with a per capita GDP higher than Spain, Greece, and Israel and only 13 percent lower than that of the United Kingdom. It was a democracy. It was a jewel of Latin America.

Now, with the advent of Hugo Chavez and socialism, Venezuela is Latin America's most impoverished nations and its newest dictatorship. Schools are deserted and destitute. Their health system is in ruins. Malaria and measles have returned with a vengeance. Only a small group of elite

can afford food to eat. Violence is endemic and it is now one of the most murderous countries in the world.

The economy of Venezuela is in free fall. The annual inflation rate reached 83,000 percent in

July. Prices have been doubling every 26 days. Most Venezuelans are struggling to afford basic items such as food and toiletries. A cup of coffee costs 2.5 million bolivars. Venezuelans needed 25 of their highest denomination notes, the 100,000-bolivar bill, to pay for a cup of coffee.

Hugo Chavez hooked up with Cuba's Fidel Castro to engineer this disaster. Many a politician in America wants to hook up with the world's socialists. God help us. At least the Cuban refugees in Florida may be a backstop against America's slide to socialism.

Ergo, welcome to our future socialist nirvana. Will America be next? Hope not. It was certainly not on the minds of our founding fathers. Freedom and liberty do not remain unless fought for day in and day out. Our politicians will sell out our country in a heartbeat to be elected. The end of our great nation and our grand experiment in self-government and freedom and liberty may be numbered. Time will tell.



On My Mind  
Dr. Frederick Hamilton  
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## A year of turmoil

(Continued from Page 3)

"No one saw that coming," Nelson said. "We sure didn't. All of a sudden the business just dried up."

### 10) Passing's

Two of Tabor City's best known business leaders passed away less than a week from each other, the Rev. James Pervis Jones on June 4, Jimmy Woodard Garrell on June 10.

Both men were better known in abbreviated terms, Rev. Jones simply as J.P. Jones, Garrell forever branded as Jimmy G, the face and voice of his Time Saver and Cash 'n Dash convenience stores.

Jones had been in declining health for months, and was 93 when he passed away in Angel Care Hospice House in Whiteville.

Born the first of ten children to a farm family near Fuquay-Varina on Oct. 20, 1924, Jones came to Columbus County in the 1940s to pastor a church, his third, after accepting a call to preach at the age of 19.

He was soon called to

Emanuel Holiness Church in Tabor City, where he served for nearly 15 years. He preached at several area churches during most of the remaining years of his life.

His outlook on life was reflected in a 1994 interview, when he was 70.

"I am more thrilled and excited to be alive today than ever before," Jones said then. "Every day is a great day if you are alive and there is always reason to be happy."

Providing for his family while serving as a preacher Jones used the skills he had learned in his younger years working in a meat business, saving \$3,000, enough to open his first store in Bladenboro, the beginnings of a business empire that grew to be a chain of 40 Jones discount stores that would thrive for nearly half a century.

Garrell had been active and in good health before suffering a fall at home in early June and passing away just days later at Grand Strand Regional Medical

Center in Myrtle Beach at the age of 82.

"Give a smile away... every day" was both an advertising slogan for his business and a living representation of the spirit he shared throughout the community.

"A voice that loved Tabor City has been silenced," local attorney Richard Wright said. "We almost have to call him Mr. Tabor City, he boosted it wherever he went."

Founding Yam City Gas & Oil in 1973, after fire claimed Tabor City Foods, a cannery in a warehouse where his father had once sold tobacco and stored sweet potatoes, Garrell later opened the convenience stores.

He was a civic leader, the chairing the Tabor City Committee of 100 for more than three decades, and well known as a booster of this home town, of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and of shag dancing, which he demonstrated everywhere.



## Words from the Mayor

Royce Harper, Mayor, Town of Tabor City

Last week, the employees of the Town of Tabor City met for our annual Christmas supper.

Most of the municipal employees were in attendance. The highlight of the evening was entertainment by the music students of Tabor City Middle School. They gave a great performance that included music from the band students, and songs by several other students. We even got to hear some guitar playing by the Director, Mr. David Barkley. I am sure that he is very proud of his students who are obviously very talented. They did a great job of getting our employees into the Christmas spirit.

Now that 2019 is here, it is that time of year that many people set goals, or New Year's resolutions. Council will be setting goals for our municipal departments later this month. Our overall priorities remain the same: operate within a balanced budget, be responsive to our citizen's requests, seek out state and federal grant resources, and operate in conformance with the tremendous guidelines and regulations imposed upon us.

There are some other community goals we hope to build upon in 2019 such as continued improvements in our local street conditions, keeping the effort going to replace aged water or sewer lines, and we look forward to cooperating with the school system as plans for the new K-8 school are being put together.

Town Council has taken a preliminary step to recognize one of our former police officers who was later

killed in the line of duty as a DMV officer.

Many folks in our area remember Franklin Perriette, who was on the job as a DMV officer in 1995 when he gave his life in service to our state. Mr. Perriette's family has asked that an effort be made to name a bridge in Columbus County in his honor. The Town has begun the paperwork on this request and the initial application is in the hands of the Department of Transportation for review.

If the request gets the initial approval from the DOT, council will have to take several other procedural steps in to comply with the DOT bridge naming regulations. Council is very happy to honor the request by the Perriette family and we hope to see this process move forward in 2019.

I'll wrap up the column this week by thanking the many property owners in Tabor City who decorated their homes for the Christmas season. Much of the town looked great. It is said that we only get one chance to make a first impression. I'm sure that anyone passing through Tabor City during the holidays saw a small town that really looked decorated for the season.

All of us have a role to play in the appearance of the community. Sometimes that role includes the inmate laborers picking up litter. Sometimes that role includes our code enforcement officer carrying out the demolition of a derelict building.

But, in most cases, Tabor Citians take a lot of pride in just how their property looks, and we appreciate that pride.

# Tabor Talk

Cynthia Nelson, Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce

The New Year of 2019 has arrived.

In last week's column, we challenged you to think of at least one way you could "give back" to our community. A community is only as great as its people and their efforts to make it the best it can be.

The Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce appreciates you and would love to receive any ideas you may have for the future. We'd like

to do what we can to help make those ideas a reality.

Please call us at 910-377-3012 or drop a suggestion off at our office by leaving it in the mailbox next to our door.

Chamber members will soon receive ballots to vote on board members for a three year term. Please take a few minutes to review the names and vote for your preferences.

Mark Tuesday, Feb.

19 in your calendars as the date of the Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce Annual Banquet. More information will be provided in the weeks ahead.

Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce office hours are 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. each Tuesday through Thursday.

Please note, the chamber office has been closed for the holidays and will re-open Tuesday, Jan. 8.

## Service honors officer (Continued from Page 1)

Safford said, whipping her eyes.

Her mood lightened as she recalled learning much later that Gerald had a fear of frogs.

"If I had known that," she said, hinting at retaliation for the pranks Gerald was known for.

Gwendolyn said she wondered about those pranks after her husband's death, but eventually came to terms with the fact that Randy would not be coming home.

"This is our new normal, life without him," she said.

Christmas and New Year's, she said, are always difficult, the days surrounding Randy Gerald's death approached with a sense of dread.

But she smiled at the cemetery Saturday, the focus there on how Randy Gerald lived.