

Thacker celebrates a century

Article by Brian McNeill
DailyProgress Charlottesville, VA
Published Monday, October 12, 2009
bmcneill@dailyprogress.com



SCOTTSVILLE — Hundreds of Scottsville residents on Sunday afternoon wished A. Raymon Thacker, the town’s mayor emeritus, a happy 100th birthday. Thacker served as Scottsville’s mayor for three decades, playing a pivotal role in the growth of the town on the James River in southern Albemarle County. When Thacker stepped down from office in 1996, he was Virginia’s longest serving mayor. Then-Gov. George F. Allen declared the day of his retirement “A. Raymon Thacker Day” across the commonwealth.

Thacker’s contributions to Scottsville are myriad, including:

- *He convinced Virginia to build a bridge over the James in 1968;
- *He secured \$4 million from the federal government to build a levee — which today bears his name — to protect the town from flooding;
- *He engineered an annexation deal with Albemarle County to boost the size of Scottsville from 105 to 990 acres and 239 to 521 residents;
- *As a member of Scottsville’s Town Council in the early 1940s, Thacker was instrumental in bringing to town a Uniroyal Tire factory.

“One hundred years from now, people will still be talking about Mayor Thacker’s contributions to Scottsville,” said Del. Rob Bell, R-Albemarle, at Thacker’s birthday party in the Old Scottsville High School auditorium. Bell said he admires the length of Thacker’s tenure, allowing him to make plans to improve the town and then seeing them through all the way. “Any elected official couldn’t dream of having the impact he’s had on this community,” he said.

Thacker, who greeted his friends and neighbors Sunday with hugs and handshakes, said he was delighted that an estimated 400 to 500 people showed up to mark the occasion. “It’s wonderful,” he said. “Most all of them are my very good friends I’ve known for years.”

Thacker’s public service began when he was first elected to the Scottsville Town Council in 1941, a decade after he and his brother opened *Thacker Brothers Funeral Home*. Thacker retired from his funeral home business in 1998. He still visits a few times a week, he said.

While Thacker decided to step down from office in 1996, he tried to make a last-minute comeback as a write-in candidate in that year’s mayoral election. He lost that bid, but told The Daily Progress at the time it was a “relief.” “All these years I’ve been tied up with the harness on,” Thacker said in May 1996. “Just like a wild horse, when you turn him loose in the field he’s going to jump around and kick and carry on.”

Does Thacker ever look at how Scottsville is run today and think about how he might handle things differently? “Well, sometimes they do some things that are a little peculiar,” Thacker said. “But I find a way to overlook it.” Duane Karr, a longtime Scottsville resident and the town’s former police chief, said Thacker “brought a lot to the community,” but he was especially liked and respected because he was always approachable and willing to listen. “Along the streets, you could talk to him,” Karr said. “He always knew what was going on in the community.”