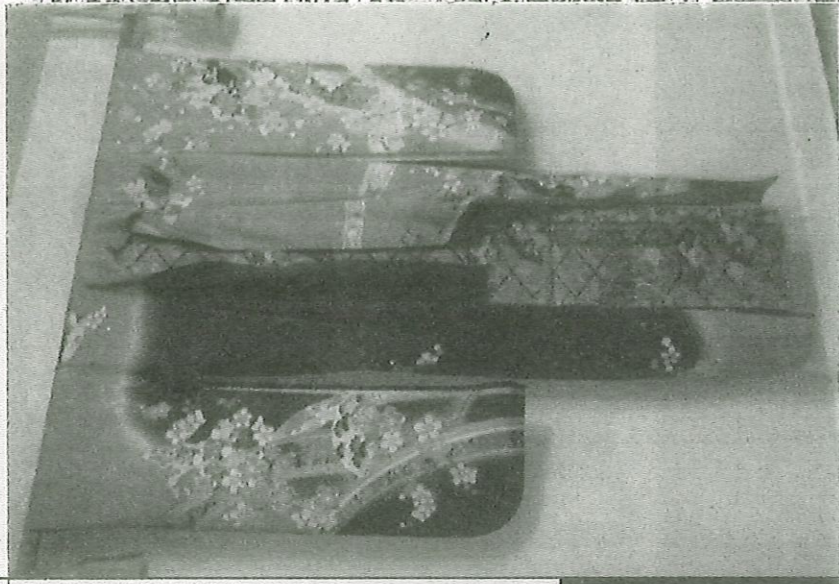
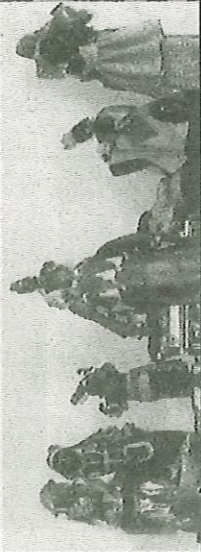


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# at home with Marcia and Chuck Burris

By Gale Horton Gay



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Chuck and Marcia Baird Burris know all about protocol and decorum. Whether they're attending the State of the Union message at the special invitation of President Clinton or dining with a foreign head of state, the Burrises have mastered the art of being gracious guests. But away from the public eye, Chuck and Marcia shed their roles as "Mayor" and "First Lady" of Stone Mountain and become just regular folks.

Stroll by their small, quaint house on a quiet street in Stone Mountain and you might hear the faint strains of John Coltrane, Carmen McCrae, Theolonious Monk, the Modern Jazz Quartet or P-Funk. The self-described music fanatics boast of a collection of 400 compact discs that they recently began painstakingly cataloging.

In private, Chuck and Marcia love to laugh, tease each other, listen to music and dance. In fact, they love to dance so much that even at a public event they are likely to hit the dance floor if the music is right.

"We try to have a really good time no matter where we go," says Marcia. "We like to let our hair down," says Chuck.

The Burrises kick back in a house that is more than 100 years old. The two-story house, which was standing in 1830, originally was a log cabin. A previous owner put sheet rock on the interior to cover most of the logs. However, in some areas the logs exposed giving it a distinctive, rustic





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and feel. But the four-bedroom, two-bath house offers an ironic and historic twist - it previously was owned by James Venable, one-time mayor of Stone Mountain and the Imperial Wizard of the National Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

Chuck, the first African-American mayor of Stone Mountain, met James Venable in 1991 while campaigning for City Council. After Chuck discussed his platform, the former leader of the KKK said he would vote for him, says Chuck. He even allowed Chuck to place

campaign signs in his yard, the mayor recalls. In 1996, three years after Venable's death, the Burris purchased the house after a real estate agent told the pair that she had found the perfect property.

History aside, Chuck and Marcia have transformed the house into a home that speaks volumes about their personal passions. The house is decorated in an eclectic fashion with a combination of antiques, heirlooms and Caribbean, African and African-American art. An original

bentwood rocker that belonged to Marcia's aunt and an antique rocking chair that belonged to Chuck's mother grace a front sitting room. Goombay masks from Bermuda and a Senegalese wall hanging accent the walls of their bedroom. In the living room, the couple's favorite spot to relax, 22 family portraits in individual frames are artfully arranged on a Lane cedar chest that has been in Chuck's family for 50 years. Marcia, whose parents are from the South American nation of Guyana and the Caribbean island of Barbados, has an eye for international art. A Japanese kimono, presented to Marcia as a token of appreciation by the organizers of a Japanese event, has been turned into a dramatic wall hanging in the dining room.

With their child-rearing duties complete, (they have five grown children), Chuck and Marcia focus their attention on each other, three cats and a Rottweiler named Ito. They maintain a demanding schedule involving political, social and international affairs, but enjoy closing the doors on it all when they get home.

So if you stroll by the Burris' residence and see shadows dancing by the windows, it's just Chuck and Marcia letting their hair down.



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