

1825 Glen Ridge Dr  
Kernersville, NC 27285  
6 March, 2015

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley  
Office of the Governor  
1205 Pendleton St  
Columbia, S.C. 29201  
Dear Governor Hailey

Please lend me your eyes and ears for just a few minutes. There is a man sitting in a South Carolina prison that does not belong there; it's a colossal waste of taxpayer's money. The man is Lt. Colonel W.E. Ritter, an honorable discharged military veteran who served his country and did his duty for 24 years in the U.S. Army.

Colonel Ritter distinguished himself as a commissioned officer in both Vietnam and Desert Storm. However, an unfortunate accident at his Ritter Child Care Center landed him in prison to serve a 20 year sentence that is nothing short of a miscarriage of justice. A child died at his day care center and Col. Ritter was charged with a crime he *did not intentionally* commit. It was a total accident!

After his retirement, the colonel returned to his home in Columbia, S.C. and began work as a volunteer at an early childhood development center that he founded in 1984.

One day in May of 2007, *a shortage of van drivers* left him no option but to drive a van himself and pick up children; otherwise parents would have been left stranded and unable to work. Upon his arrival back at the Center, the *child care attendants* whose primary responsibility was to take the children out of the van and prepare them for the daily schedule. They did, but overlooked one child, a 10 month old baby.

Unfortunately, *the attendants left the baby in the van all day*. The child died. And because Col. Ritter *drove the van*, picked up the children and drove it back to the day care center where the attendants main job was to take the children out of the van, which was normal standard operating procedure (S.T.O.P), a child was left behind and Col. Ritter was *charged with homicide by child abuse* and sentenced to 20 years in prison. All because *he drove the van!* He would not be *languishing* in a South Carolina prison cell today had he NOT driven that van!

Now, I've known this man for well over 30 years, and I know first hand his many years of charitable work, especially years of spending his own dime and time to help inspire, uplift and educate black youth; especially young black males. It has been determined that the colonel was given inappropriate or *misleading legal counsel*, which resulted in his *pleading guilty* to homicide charges.

Smith, Sohn Raye

I attended the sentencing hearing. I heard the colonel express grave remorse. I heard *the mother* of the deceased child express *her forgiveness* for the colonel. If she can forgive him, why then can't our justice system? The colonel is now 71 years old and has already served 5 years of a 20 year sentence. This man is not a criminal, not a murderer, nor a thief, not a crook or immoral individual. Both families have already suffered enough. Nothing is gained by keeping him locked up for another 15 years and wasting thousands of taxpayer's dollars that could better be used elsewhere. Please sir, just look at his background in the materials enclosed. This man was on the front lines, in combat in both Vietnam and Desert Storm.

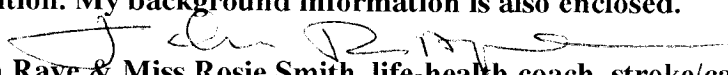
Admittedly, it was a terrible accident. Someone had to pay and the colonel will forever be paying for a death he did not intentionally cause. This punishment does not fit the crime. So, I ask you, kind sir to please, please consider helping us to secure early release for this upright and righteous man who has long done so much, with so little to help so many people.

Years ago, I used to hear the old folks declare that, "a tree is known by the fruit it bears. Well, the record will show that long before and after his distinguished military career, the trees planted by this kind-hearted, sharing and caring military trooper, continues to bear much fruit.

In the 20 years that he was associated with the dare care center, Colonel Ritter never took a child off a van. Instead he provided free transportation for all the children attending the center. He paid a transportation staff to transport the children to the center and a separate staff to unload the vans at the center. Drivers were prohibited by State Regulations from removing children from the vans. On May 18, 2007, Col. Ritter drove a van, picked up four children on the last morning trip, and brought the four children to the center, turned the van over to two staff members who met him at the door.

When he left the van, there were two infants strapped into the required safety mechanisms. The other two had gone into the center on their own. With the two infants that were left in the van, there were two staff members there on the van. One of the infants was removed and the other one left on the van. The infants were seated next to each other... less than 18 inches apart. Had he not jump in that van, Col. W.E. Ritter would be a free man today.

Please hear our cry, Governor Hailey and help us to obtain early release for this good and just man. He, like the mother of the deceased child, and the rest of us, has suffered enough. Please note the attached materials and the colonel's many years of service, surely this is not the mind of a criminal. Thank you for your time and attention. My background information is also enclosed.

  
John Raye & Miss Rosie Smith, life-health coach, stroke/cancer survivors, now celebrating our 52nd wedding anniversary

## Bio: John Raye

## Career Highlights



\* Born and raised in Winnfield, Louisiana. In the early years chopped and picked cotton for two dollars a day.

\* At age 14, became an apprentice meat cutter at age 15.

\* At age 16, rode a bicycle every day for three years, delivering newspapers on an 8.5 mile paper route that took three hours to complete.

\* Church and family played a pivotal role in character and personal development.

\* Has authored three audio books: "Make Yourself Great: Inspiration for Dark Days and Long Nights", "Dreamtime: Finding Success in America" and his latest work, "Why Cancer Couldn't Kill Me: 7 Essentials for Living a Better Life"

\* Writer: inspirational articles for newspapers and magazines.

\* At age 27 broke into television as a reporter for KREM-TV (ABC affiliate) in Spokane Washington.

\* At age 29, became television anchor at KING-TV (an NBC affiliate) in Seattle, Washington.

\* At age 34, relocated to Washington, D.C., and anchored television news programs for WTTG-TV (FOX Network) with Maury Povich and Al Roker, now with NBC's Today Show.

\* Travel: London, Monrovia, Liberia, Johannesburg, South Africa, Soweto, Zimbabwe, St. Thomas, Hawaii, etc.

\* Awarded bachelor's degree in Agriculture from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

\* Received two Ford Foundation Fellowship awards to study advanced training in journalism at the

\* Washington Journalism Center in Washington, D.C., and Columbia University

\* Graduate School of Journalism in New York City.

\* Awarded doctorate of humane letters from the Breakthrough Bible College, Washington, D.C.

\* Founder of Majestic Eagles, a Washington, D.C. business development organization for aspiring entrepreneurs.

\* In 1986, purchase three-story, \$375,000 headquarters building; now valued at three million dollars.

\* Started his first business venture, selling and writing advertising copy, using a public telephone and trunk of his car for office space.

\* Organized and opened a Washington, D.C. Federal Credit Union by raising \$100,000.00 in one-day.

\* Organized, and raised over \$30,000 dollars to save the home and national headquarters of famed historian, Dr. Carter G. Woodson from being sold at a public tax auction.

\* Stricken with colon cancer on his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, Raye pressed forward by writing his best-selling audio book, "Dreamtime: Finding Success In America" and "Why Cancer Couldn't Kill Me". He travels frequently conducting health and wellness seminars nationwide, with a strong emphasis on eating a plant-based diet. Currently, he holds the rank of Senior Manger with Forever Living Products, the world's largest producer of stabilized Aloe Vera gel. See: [www.johnraye.flp.com](http://www.johnraye.flp.com)

\* Married for 52 years to his high school sweetheart, Miss Rosie; children: Dexter, Michelle, Karen, Sharon; two granddaughters, Tabby and Tera... He lives in Kernersville, NC with the motto of "the greatest joy is found when we live our lives for the sake of others".



## House of Representatives

State of South Carolina

**Leon Joe Howard**

District No. 76 - Richland County  
2425 Barhamville Road  
Columbia, SC 29204

425 Blatt Building  
Columbia, SC 29211

Tel. (803) 734-3046

**Committee:**

Medical, Military, Public and  
Municipal Affairs, Chairman

**Chairman,  
SC Legislative Black  
Caucus**

May 4, 2009

TO WHOM THIS MAY CONCERN:

The original resolution presented to Retired Colonel W. E. Ritter, on motion of Representative Leon Howard and members of the SC House of Representatives, on April 27, 1996 was lost. This has been brought to my attention, and I have agreed to re-issue a duplicate resolution to Retired Colonel Ritter on this day of May 4, 2009. A copy is attached.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leon Howard".

Leon Howard

/bmc

Enclosure

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY  
OF ORIGINAL FILED,  
*James B. H. H. H.*  
C.O. H. H. H.  
RICHLAND COUNTY  
SOUTH CAROLINA

# State of South Carolina



## House of Representatives

*On Motion Of*

REPRESENTATIVE LEON HOWARD  
MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
HONOR AND RECOGNIZE

RETIRED COL. W. E. RITTER

EXPRESSING APPRECIATION TO THIS OUTSTANDING CITIZEN, ESPECIALLY DURING THE OCCASION OF THE 8<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BEAUTILLION HELD ON SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 1996; THROUGH HIS DEDICATION AND CARING EFFORTS, HE HAS SET AN EXAMPLE FOR ALL CITIZENS TO FOLLOW; HIS GRACIOUS AND UNEXHAUSTING SUPPORT AND CONTRIBUTION TO PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO THE YOUTH OF OUR COMMUNITY IS UNSURPASSED; HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF CITIZENS, INCLUDING THE YOUNG PEOPLE, THE ELDERLY, EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED AND YOUNG CHILDREN HAVE BENEFITTED BY HIS EFFORTS; HISTORY WILL RECORD THAT THE COMMUNITY OF RICHLAND COUNTY AND THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA ARE BETTER BECAUSE HE HAS PASSED THIS WAY; WE WISH HIM CONTINUED SUCCESS IN ALL HIS FUTURE ENDEAVORS.

GIVEN THIS 27<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF APRIL, 1996, STATE HOUSE, COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

*Charles F. Reed*

Clerk of the House of Representatives

*David H. Walker*

Speaker of the House of Representatives

# EDUCATION

## Giving Back To The Community: W.E. Ritter



Lt. Col. Willie E. Ritter

*By Ronnie Nixon  
Staff Writer*

Lt. Colonel Willie Ritter, a native of Columbia and founder of the W. E. Ritter Center for Early Childhood Development, understands the need for early development in youths.

"If a child is taught early and is given an opportunity to learn, there is no limit to what he or she might accomplish," Ritter said.

He said the learning process for children is the same as an adult, but adults just have a greater source of reference to call upon.

"We need to teach our children to set their goals realistically," Ritter says. "There is a need for role models in the Black communities. Everyone won't be able to be a sports or TV star. They need role models they can see everyday such as a banker, lawyer, accountant, etc."

Ritter added, "We also need to stop teaching our kids to compete with each other and teach them to

People are gifted in different way. There is no challenge in beating person who has less ability than you have in a particular subject event. You never get a chance to exercise your own ability."

A graduate of Booker Washington High School at Virginia State University, Lt. Colonel Ritter started the W. E. Ritter center after he witnessed a community run by mentally retard persons while teaching Military Science at Mississippi University. "Even though they were mentally retarded, they still had the potential for production."

In addition to the W. E. Ritter for Early Childhood Development, Ritter has also established scholarship fund that gives deserving young men an opportunity to further their education at the institution of higher learning of their choice after high school graduation. "I've been blessed with certain things," Ritter says. "This is my way of giving back to the community."

## **WILLIE E RITTER**

Lieutenant Colonel  
U.S. Army Retired

2316 High Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29203

Telephone: 903-765-0611

### **EDUCATION:**

B. S. degree, Physical Education and Health  
Virginia State College, 1967  
Masters degree, Education  
University of Southern Mississippi, 1982

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

After being drafted in the U. S. Army in August, 1968, was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in January, 1987; military awards include: The Bronze Star; the Legion of Merit; the Meritorious Service Medal (Third Oakleaf Cluster) Army Commendation Medal; and numerous other campaign and service ribbons; founder president, chief executive officer and chairman of the board of the W.E. Ritter Center, Inc., sanctioned by the IRS as nonprofit.

Was the recipient of a state "Resolution" from the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina in recognition and appreciation of service and contributions made to his community and the state.

### **ATHELETIC:**

Lettered, football, track, was selected the all commonwealth Collegiate Conference Team, 1968. Led the team in individual defense with 89 unassisted tackles, 1965; received the A.G. Blakely MVP Award, 1965; received the silver and bronze medal for the discus and shot put respectively at the NAIA regional track meet held at Virginia State College, spring 1964. Inducted into the Virginia State Sports Hall of Fame in June 1991.

### **PERSONAL:**

Founder of the W.E. Ritter Center. The purpose of the Center is to provide a variety of community services that will address the significant components of total life cycle management so as to enhance the quality of life for those served by the Center. Elements of the Center include a center for early childhood development, a scholarship fund, and a community care home. The center for early childhood development provides services to approximately 370 children ranging in age from six weeks to twelve years. The scholarship fund has provided over 150 thousand dollars in scholarships and developmental training since 1988. In June of 1993, the foundation sponsored a trip (an exchange program) to Russia for one of the program participants. The

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J. J. J. J. J.  
C.C.O. J. J. J.  
RICHLAND COUNTY  
SOUTH CAROLINA

community care home is licensed by the state of South Carolina to provide domestic care for the socially, emotionally, and physically disenfranchised.

#### EXPERIENCES:

July, 1991 - August 1992 Chief Logistics Branch Office of the Program Manager, Saudi Arabian National Guard. Responsible for training supervision and material procurement for the logistics branch of the Saudi Arabian National Guard. Budget 5.6 billion dollars.

July 1989 - July 1990 Commander 187<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Battalion, Third Training Brigade, Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Responsible for training and administration for twelve hundred soldiers and three hundred cadre.

August 1986 - July 1987 Faculty member at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Responsible for the direct training of selected U. S. Army Captains and Majors in preparation for high command and staff positions.

July 1985 - August 1986 Commander, Division, Material Management Center, Second Infantry Division, Republic of South Korea. Responsible for obtaining, accountability, maintenance and disposal of two billion dollars worth of Army material. Also responsible for the training of all personnel within the Division's material management arena.

July 1984 - July 1985 Student at the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

December 1982 - July 1984 Inspector, Inspector General, First United States Army, Fort Meade, Maryland. Responsible for inspecting and training Army Reserve and National Guard units under the jurisdiction of the First U. S. Army.

July 1981 - December 1982 Three key positions with the Division Support Command, Second Infantry Division, Republic of Korea: 1. Division Property Book Officer: Responsible for the accountability of 1.6 million dollars worth of Division property and material. 2. Executive Officer of the 702<sup>nd</sup> Maintenance Battalion - responsible for third category maintenance for all Divisional equipment. 3. Commander Camp Edwards and the Forward Area Support Team. Responsible for the logistical support the Third Infantry Brigade.

January 1978 - July 1981 Assistant Professor of Military Science, University of Southern Mississippi. Responsible for training development and training of more than fourteen hundred basic and advanced ROTC cadets.

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October 1976 - January 1978: Senior Instructor, Command and Staff Division, Ordnance Center and School, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. Responsible for Training Development and Training more than two thousand Lieutenants, Captains, Warrant Officers, and senior non-commissioned officers.

May 1975 - October 1976: Commander, F. Company Student Battalion, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. Responsible for training more than 400 soldiers in two military occupational specialties.

August 1974 - May 1975: Student Advance Career for Ordnance Officers at the Ordnance Center and School Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. Studied a variety of military subjects pertinent to logistics and logistics training.

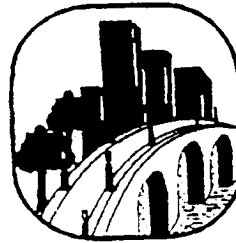
July 1972 - August 1974: Technical Supply Officer, 517<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company, 189<sup>th</sup> Maintenance Battalion, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Responsible for providing Technical Supplies and Technical Supply training for all non divisional units at Fort Bragg.

July 1971 - July 1972: Operation Intelligence and Training Officer, 79 Maintenance Battalion, Long Binh, Republic of South Vietnam. Responsible for supervising overall operations, Intelligence and Training for a non-divisional maintenance Battalion.

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JUL 25 1978  
C.O.C.R.&G.S.  
RICHLAND COUNTY  
SOUTH CAROLINA

# COLUMBIA

A Capital Place To Be



October 28, 1992

Dear LTC. W.E. Ritter,

On behalf of my fellow members of Columbia City Council, I am pleased to extend heartfelt congratulations to you on your retirement from the United States Army.

Through 24 years of unselfish service to our nation, you have proven yourself a leader of the highest order. Not only did you serve our nation, you embraced it. You were not content to simply do what was expected of you, you went far and beyond the normal duties. Your medals, ribbons and commendations are testaments to this dedication.

You are to be highly commended for your past efforts as well as your present endeavors. As founder of the W.E. Ritter Center, you are taking the knowledge, the expertise, and the discipline you learned in your military experience and using it to help future generations as well as the disadvantaged. By shaping the young lives of Columbia's children as well as helping those who cannot help themselves, you should be commended.

If I can ever be of any assistance to you, please feel free to call my office at 733-8228.

Very Truly Yours,

Mayor Bob Coble

MAILED 10/29/92  
CITY OF COLUMBIA  
CLERK OF COURSE  
CITY OF COLUMBIA  
SOUTH CAROLINA

City of Columbia / Bob Coble, Mayor

1737 Main Street / PO Box 147 / Columbia, SC / 29217 / (803) 733 - 8221 / FAX (803) 733 - 8317



Lt. Col. W.E. Ritter

## Beautillion Ball Held to Highlight Accomplishments of the African-American Male

by A. Copeland

Lt. Col. W.E. Ritter Founder of the W.E. Ritter Center Inc. will hold its Second Annual Beautillion Ball on February 25, 1989, at 7 PM, in the Officers Club of Fort Jackson.

The W.E. Ritter Center Inc. has a commitment to Cultural Arts and Educational Excellence. The program of the Beautillion is dedicated to the young African-American male and his accomplishments. It is to salute the young men, our future leaders, who have exemplified the unified goals of the W.E. Ritter Center Inc.

The objectives of the program is to provide motivation, direction and guidance where needed, but more significantly, confirm that these young men are special gateposts in the new society. The Beaus are placed into the spotlight; consequently, it will provide them an incentive to always shine and glow in their endeavors.

It is the desire of Lt. Col. Ritter to provide a program for young high school seniors; giving them a concen-

leadership training and a scholarship program. Each senior goes through a competitive program in order to win a post-secondary scholarship award. This award is developed by the work of the Beautillion, which will be held every February.

Lt. Colonel Ritter is native South Carolinian and has been a member of the armed services for 19 years. He is now the commander of the 187th Ordnance Battalion, 4th Combat Service Support Brigade at Fort Jackson. The W.E. Ritter Center Inc. is a non-profit organization, whose purpose is to provide needed services to the community.

Last year the guest speaker at the Beautillion was The Honorable James C. Clyburn, SC Commissioner of Human Affairs. Commissioner Clyburn expressed his joy that this event was held in the month of Black History. This year the guest speaker will be Dr. Milton Kimpson. Dr. Kimpson is an associate higher education commissioner; he serves as a Liaison between funding sources and higher education.

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*Janetta W. McBride*  
C.C.C.R.G.S.  
RICHLAND COUNTY  
SOUTH CAROLINA