

Former Creedmoor resident David Martin is Jack Of All Trades

By AL WHELESS
Daily Dispatch Writer

David J. Martin has been — among lots of other things — a car dealer, an architect, a blacksmith, a printer, a machinist, a bank director, a shopping center developer, a barber, a welder, a teacher, a sign painter and a motel owner.

He said he read in the *Wall Street Journal* that the average millionaire fails in 16 ventures before hitting it big.

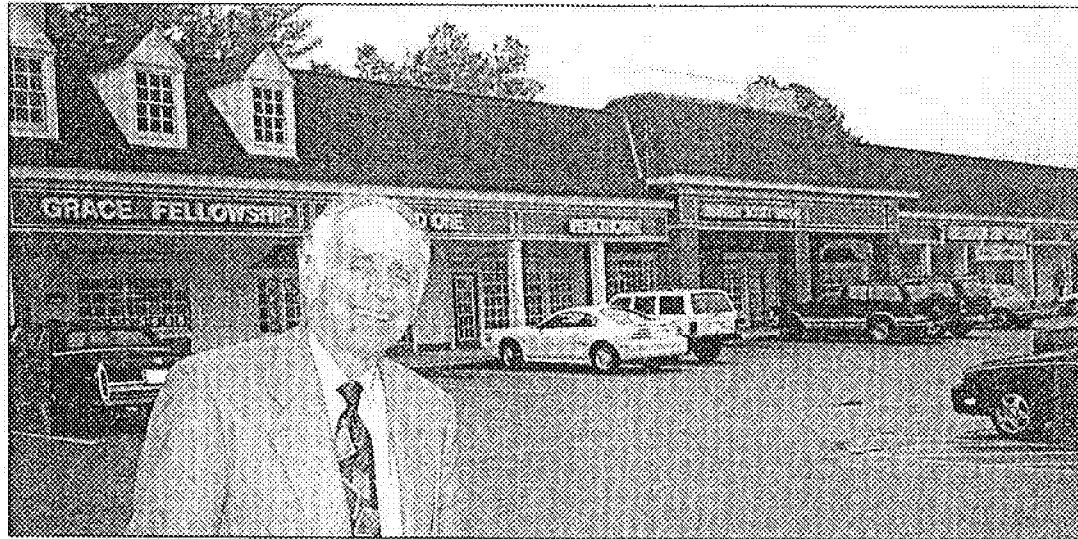
A framed Christmas gift from one of his 19 grandchildren describes the 68-year-old former Creedmoor resident as a Jack Of All Trades who has been in 60 businesses, large and small. Some of them were more successful than others.

Martin's company in Cary, called Martin Properties, owns South Hills Mall & Plaza and many other developments. He has a 4A1 rating by Dunn & Bradstreet.

He and his wife, Marilyn, have five daughters and a son. They all have spouses.

Martin, who calls himself a workaholic and a conservative Christian, said he isn't bragging about his success. "I've been blessed to have property where things happened around it. It looks like every time we've turned around, we've gotten something that turned out to be fairly valuable."

Back in the early 1960's, the manager of Belk's Department Store downtown told Martin that Cary was beginning to grow and someone was



Daily Dispatch photo by AL WHELESS

David Martin stands in front of the Plantation Square Shopping Center, which he owns.

going to build a shopping center there someday. "Have you thought about it?" Raymond Morgan asked.

Martin owned some apartments in Raleigh. "I read everything I could get my hands on about shopping centers because I didn't know anything about them...I had to have a vision of a good site. When I saw the land I now have (on Buck Jones Road), it fit the textbook of what I needed."

He bought 78 acres for \$110,000 which worked out to about \$1,250 an acre or three cents a square foot. "I'll bet it's worth twice that now," he joked.

Land in the area is selling for up

to \$17 a square foot. His property is at the intersection of Interstate 40 and the 440 Beltline.

God has been good to us, Martin said.

"The ability to work and enjoy it is a gift from the Lord."

But he said he isn't greedy. "Pigs get fat. Hogs get slaughtered."

A member of The Gideons, the group that leaves Bibles in motel rooms, Martin gives them to people in prisons and at the military entry process center in Raleigh.

Martin is on the board of visitors of Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest.

His mother, who was very

religious, struggled to keep her children fed during the depression in the 1930's. She was widowed twice.

He considered himself to be one of the poorest kids in Creedmoor. "I would go barefoot all summer and buy tennis shoes for 50 cents in the winter."

Martin remembers snow soaking through his tennis shoes while he was visiting his Aunt Mary Curl. "One of my uncles asked if my feet were cold, I said 'Naw suh, they're numb.'"

When Mary Curl died recently, Martin attended her funeral in Creedmoor.

A native of Randolph County,

Martin and his family lived in Northside when he was 2 years old. They later moved into Creedmoor, next to an old hotel.

Boots Mangum would herd wild western horses off railroad cars and down dirt streets to his stables back when Creedmoor was the horse and mule capitol of the entire state, Martin said. He recalled that Mangum would train the horses across from the Baptist church on Main Street.

"I was small, but I remember splitting wood to keep warm," Martin said. "Things were so hard and tight there."

When he was about 8, the family moved to Raleigh.

"I remember my first day of school there. My brother and I had a lunch that cost 2 1/2 cents each. We had a honey bun that cost a nickel and we shared it."

They moved to Cary about a year later and rented a house for \$12 a month. Martin started enterprising to help contribute to the family's income.

"I'd buy apples for \$1 a bushel and sell them for 50 cents a peck, so I was doubling my money. I rented Bob Saul's mule for 25 cents an hour and I charged people 50 cents an hour to plow their garden. When I was making as much as a mule made, I thought I was somebody."

Martin was about 12 years old when he built a chicken house out of two Tru-Aid signs and some used lumber. He didn't have any money to

buy chickens, so he rescued dying chicks from a trash barrel at the Cary Hatchery and forced food into them with a medicine dropper. All but two lived.

Besides selling chickens throughout Cary, Martin delivered newspapers, peddled cow's milk for 10 cents a quart and sold blackberries for 5 cents a quart.

"Anything you could do to make it," Martin said.

"There wasn't a blackberry in Cary that ever fell to the ground because I was there to get it. All we didn't sell, we'd can. We had as many as 200 quarts canned"

Even after he got married, Martin couldn't bring himself to eat a can of blackberries his wife, Marilyn, brought home from the store. He told her it would be too soon if she ever bought any more.

At age 13, he was working on a chicken farm for 12 hours a day, six days a week for a total of \$6.00.

He also worked awhile at a grocery store and dug outdoor toilet pits for \$5.00 each.

Martin didn't have time to study. What he learned, he got from class because he was always working after school. But his efforts to earn money trained him to think. He attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"When I got to Cary, I knew I was in the Promised Land," Martin said. "I had to fight, to battle, to struggle, but I made it."

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