

CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT COLLEGE'S "OLD MAIN BUILDING":

McMURRAN HALL, FORMERLY CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT HALL.

1964-1986

Agnes Logan Braganza
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CNC's Silver Anniversary
(Archives Copy)



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THE BUILDING'S RELATIONSHIP TO STATE GOVERNMENT AND HIGHER EDUCATION: WHY McMURRAN HALL WAS SELECTED FOR THIS RESEARCH

Lewis Archer McMurrin Hall had been Christopher Newport Hall since its construction in 1964 among pines and grasses on the outskirts of Newport News. In the fall of 1985 the college's Board of Visitors approved the new name. Seventy-five of the one hundred and eight Christopher Newport College faculty members signed a petition to the Board protesting the decision to "rename Old Main, thereby erasing tradition associated with years of memories in the original building on our campus."¹ Nevertheless, at its November meeting the Board affirmed its decision to honor the elderly and ailing Mr. McMurrin who during his long legislative career sponsored the establishment and early survival of the college. The Board felt that renaming the original building was a greater honor than giving his name to one of the three unnamed buildings on campus.² The faculty was displeased and felt that the renaming was a political move timed to appeal to the General Assembly for the nearly \$300,000 requested for renovation of the building that had been rejected by the executive branch of the Commonwealth's government even following a tour of the building by legislators and executives in August, 1985.³ The building was renamed on December 14, 1985, in an impressive ceremony with state dignitaries and Mr. McMurrin present among two hundred invited persons of the college community.⁴ In the 1986 session of the General Assembly, Christopher Newport College received the full amount of funds requested to remodel McMurrin Hall.⁵

THE BUILDING AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE COLLEGE

Aside from the newly discovered and quickly forgotten sentimentality surrounding the former Christopher Newport Hall, what is its function at Christopher Newport College today? What changes in structure and functions has it undergone since its construction? What are renovation plans for the building in 1986-87? What do the changes in the building across the years say about the growth of the college, about its mission, about its curriculum?

In at least nine of the building's twenty-two years major events occurred affecting its space utilization:

- 1964: building completed and occupied
- 1965: student lounge and student activities room moved to the newly completed Gosnold Hall; library expanded into the vacated student lounge in Newport
- 1967: Smith Library and Administration Building completed; library and administrative offices moved from Newport Hall and the student lounge returned to its original site there. The bookstore moved into space vacated by the library. The move to the Smith Administration Building vacated three offices in Newport for faculty office space. Two former administrative offices became classrooms. The former College Director's office designated for new Director of Students
- 1968: computer center established in Newport Hall in location originally used for the Business Office
- 1973: Campus Center built; student lounge moved, opening space for two classrooms. Dean of Students moved to Campus Center, allowing space for student computer lab in his former Newport office, room 105.
- 1983: Former classroom 214 divided into faculty offices
- 1984: Campus Center addition completed and bookstore moved there; music practice area/classroom moved into old bookstore. Computer center expanded to include another classroom.
- 1985: student computer lab opened in one of the first floor Newport classrooms
- 1986: another first floor classroom used for student computer lab

1987: expect to renovate music room, to expand computer facilities, to renovate the lecture hall and to create faculty office space in the covered passage between the two sections of the building.

The College Before Christopher Newport Hall

As a branch of The College of William and Mary, Christopher Newport College opened in September of 1961 in the John W. Daniel School building, a converted elementary school on 32nd Street in downtown Newport News, which was leased to the college for five years by the city.⁶ Peninsula civic leaders and legislators had worked since the mid-1950s toward a junior college to serve the Newport News and Hampton area.⁷ Selecting the permanent campus site was an equally challenging task. Hampton wanted the college; Newport News prevailed when its City Council in 1963 donated a seventy-two acre site for the campus. The Shoe Lane site was chosen rather than the site north of the current campus; the vote was five to two in the Newport News City Council chambers with a standing room only crowd of 160 persons, about half black.⁸ The Council used condemnation procedures to forceably purchase portions of the suburban plot being developed as a black middle class neighborhood among relatively affluent white developments.⁹ The racial feelings have not yet been resolved since the controversial 1961 site selection and the 1963 condemnation procedures. Nor has Hampton forgotten its disappointment about the college's location in Newport News.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the land was purchased parcel by parcel and the deed given to Christopher Newport College in August of 1963.¹¹

The 1962 General Assembly approved funds for the initial building phase in the 1962-64 biennium: the humanities building (now McMurran) and the science building (Gosnold). The downtown Daniel School was CNC's only site during the college's first three years. Ground was broken for the new building on December 23, 1963;¹² construction was to begin in July.¹³ The name was selected:

"At its annual meeting May 9, 1964, the Board of Visitors of the College of William and Mary named the new building on the Shoe Lane campus Christopher Newport Hall in honor of the illustrious mariner, Admiral Christopher Newport, from whom the college derives its name...Christopher Newport Hall will be ready for occupancy late this summer. The

building will contain eleven classrooms, faculty and administrative offices, the library and student center space."¹⁴

Christopher Newport Hall Stands Alone: 1964-65 Academic Year

The humanities building opened on the new Shoe Lane campus in September of 1964;¹⁵ the science classes used Daniel School until the new science building opened in the fall of 1965 at which time the entire college moved to its permanent site.¹⁶ Dedication ceremonies for the new campus and its first two buildings were held on September 11, 1965.¹⁷

Christopher Newport Hall was completed in 1964 for \$320,000. The architects were Forrest Coile & Associates who have done a great deal of the work on the CNC campus for two decades, including donation of three modernistic metal sculptured "ships" in memory of Mr. Coile's son.¹⁸ Landscaping was mentioned several times in the newspapers as the first building was completed. Then as now, the grounds' appearance seemed important to the college and its neighbors.

In September of 1964 orientation for the academic year began at the college's old Daniel site in downtown Newport News, but later that evening moved to the Shoe Lane campus after the initial meeting and registration. The orientation ended with a reception in the Christopher Newport Hall Student Lounge sponsored by the Student Government Association. The Director of the College, Dean Cunningham, greeted the students and commented on the new building: "Christopher Newport Hall, a unique and extremely functional building, provides an excellent physical nucleus for the college's future growth patterns."¹⁹

The building opened with administrative offices and student services occupying nine spaces that were planned for classrooms,²⁰ eight double faculty offices, and eight usable classrooms plus a two hundred seat lecture hall.²¹ (See floor plans in Appendix) Offices on the first floor were those of the Director and his secretary, the Business Manager, the Cashier, the Registrar, the bookstore and a receptionist for these offices. The first floor also housed the library, the student center and three classrooms. The second floor appears to be unchanged in 1986 from the initial use with four exceptions:

1) There is no Evening College now; the office allocated 1964 to 1967 for that function currently houses two faculty members.

2) Since the student activities office moved to Gosnold in 1965, that room has been used as a classroom as originally intended.

3) In 1964, the office of the Dean of the Faculty was on the second floor. His office also served as a counseling center until the center was established in Gosnold in 1965.²² Two faculty members currently share this space.

4) One second floor classroom has been divided into six small offices for faculty members and their secretary.

Discussions about Christopher Newport Hall will focus on the first floor where there have been numerous changes through the years.

The Lecture Hall in Newport

When the building opened in 1964, the lecture hall appeared as it does now, except for its present deteriorated condition. Student publications chronicle fascinating activities in what was then called Christopher Newport Hall 110: lectures, foreign movies, student and community dramatic productions.²³ CNC's Patrick Henry Forum and the Lecture Series both heavily utilized the hall in Newport; neither activity remains intact today. Rooms in Newport and the lecture hall were used for departmental and divisional faculty groups and other administrative meetings such as President's Briefings. Faculty meetings were in the Newport lecture hall from 1964 until at request of faculty they moved to the Administration Building Auditorium less than two years ago.

The lecture hall was the alternate site for the college's first formal graduation ceremony:

The new gymnasium will be the location for graduation

exercises to be held Friday, June 2, at 4:00 p.m. If the gymnasium is not completed, the lecture hall of Christopher Newport Hall will be used. For the first time there will be a procession with caps and gowns. The choir, candidates for degrees and the faculty will march in the procession.²⁴

Before the Campus Center was occupied in November of 1973, many civic and student organizations met in Newport including the James River Civic League, CNC's Black Student Union, the student Government Club, Students' International Meditation Society, student Assembly Meetings, the Christian Science Organization. Student and community art shows were conducted in Newport, using the walls for display spaces and the lecture hall for lectures and announcement of winners.²⁵ Flora Crater's speech in the hall on September 26, 1973, made news since her campaign for Lieutenant Governor was the first Virginia woman's effort for state-wide political office. The student newspapers, the college's administrative calendars and internal newsletters indicate that from 1964 until 1973, Newport Hall, especially its lecture hall, was a central meeting place for the faculty, the students and the community.²⁶ Since early 1974 Newport Hall has infrequently been mentioned in the Captain's Log or newspapers; the Campus Center and its theater became the college's "gathering places."

The Library, the Bookstore, and the Student Lounge

In 1964 the library was in one room in the front section of Newport Hall. With a seating capacity of thirty-six, it contained 11,000 volumes, 153 periodicals and four newspapers. When CNC's second building was completed in September of 1965, the student lounge was moved to Gosnold from Newport 109, allowing the library to move into this area and to expand its holdings. The former student lounge became a reading and reference area, seating thirty-two. It was scheduled to open in October, and I could find no indication of delay. Library Director Bette Mosteller, who died in a tragic accident in 1982, extended the library's hours to accommodate the growing student body.²⁷ The library work space in room 108 of Newport Hall is not mentioned except on the original floor plan. I assume it remained there since work space is a library requirement and reasonable journalism would not demand discussion of work space!

At the 1965 dedication ceremonies for the humanities building (Christopher Newport Hall) and the new science building (Gosnold Hall)

Governor Godwin spoke about the combination library-administration building expected to be built in 1967, commenting that

"...this building is necessary because presently in Christopher Newport Hall there are nine classrooms that are being occupied as office space; consequently classroom space has been cut short." 28

In December of 1966, the College's Director Wescott Cunningham addressed the need for the new library already approved by the state:

"To be located southeast of Christopher Newport Hall facing the faculty parking circle, the building will contain the new library as well as new offices of the Registrar, Business, Dean of the Faculty, and Directors. The space currently occupied by these administrators in Christopher Newport Hall will be converted into five or six classrooms." 29

When the library moved into its new building in 1967, three rooms were cleared in Christopher Newport Hall. Newport 108 became a classroom; Newport 109 once again became the Student Lounge; and the bookstore moved from its small area in 104 to a larger room in the front wing of the building in which it remained until moved to the new Campus Center addition in 1984. From the January 19, 1984, Captain's Log:

"The biggest project [of moving into the Campus Center addition] is moving the bookstore to the location in the old cafeteria. Books will be sold at the old location [in Newport Hall] until spring break or sometime this summer when the supply of books and office materials can be transported...The old bookstore space will be renovated and used by the Music Department if state funds are appropriated for this project. The space is planned to be used as a recital hall and office." 30

From 1964 to 1967 the bookstore was quite a different situation, according to Jacqueline Haskins, the college's only bookstore manager in its

twenty-five year history:

"When I came in 1967, the bookstore had been a closet in Newport Hall carrying only textbooks. When a student wanted to purchase a book, the Cashier unlocked the small room and made the sale.

"I moved into the room in the front section of Newport when the library moved out. When I set it up I had textbooks, four kinds of composition books and no more -- not a pencil or pen for sale. I felt as though I had so much room, and I did then. But you remember how crowded we were before we moved out of Newport into the new store two years ago!"³¹

A professor who was in Newport Hall its first three or four years recalls that the bookstore at one time shared the first floor space with the student lounge.³² A telephone call back to the bookstore manager seemed to offer clarification. As she recalled, the bookstore was never in the area at the end of first floor; the library reading and reference room had been there for about two years. However, she did recall hearing that before the bookstore moved from its "closet space" to the front of Newport Hall, an empty classroom on second floor of the building was used as a dispensing point.

"Textbooks were boxed and stored in an unused classroom. A few of the most needed books were kept in the small space in the Business Office, but the system was the same. When a student needed a book the Cashier or Business Manager went with him, unlocked the room and sold him the book. In fact, I remember the clunky old cash register they had used upstairs."³³

The student lounge was on the first floor of Newport Hall 1964-1965, and 1967-1973.³⁴ As mentioned earlier, it moved into Gosnold in 1965 for two years until the library could be transferred to its new building in 1967. The lounge with its vending machines and tables for four was then back in Newport until its spacious building with a cafeteria, gameroom, theater, sitting area and student activities offices opened in 1973. Following an

addition and renovation in 1984, the Campus Center is a showplace used by the students, faculty and community.

The Dean of Students' office was in Newport 105 from the time the President moved into Smith in 1967 until late 1973 when the Dean's office moved to the new Campus Center. An announcement in the Captain's Log of March 26, 1973, informed students that voting in student government elections was scheduled there. A Captain's Log article August 28 offers evidence that the Dean of Student's office had not then moved from Newport 105.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE

From 1964 until 1967, the Business Manager, the Cashier and the Registrar shared in Christopher Newport Hall one large room divided into cubicles. The Business Manager acted as Personnel Officer until Elizabeth Welch joined the staff in 1967 when the Business Office moved to the Smith Building.

"Everyone continued to pitch in as needed. On registration day we closed the Business Office in Smith and went over to Newport Hall. There were unbelievably long lines of students waiting to register in one of the classrooms. We worked the lines, standing behind a podium-like table. We wrote receipts by hand on those old fashioned metal receipt dispensers from which you push out the receipts and carbons with a pen. After the students were registered, we all went back to the Business Office until midnight if it took it to count the money and justify the books."³⁵

The business office complex now occupies more than half of the four-story administration building with admissions and registrar, personnel, cashier, purchasing and others, as well as having a warehouse and maintenance building and separate offices for duplicating and other services.

The Computer Center

The Computer Center was set up in 1968 in the old business office in Newport Hall by Graham Pillow, a CNC mathematics professor and husband of the college's Registrar. He started out working with the faculty who were interested in academic applications. Within a year or so he got another computer, still located in Newport Hall, that connected with the computer at The College of William and Mary by long distance telephone lines. Because of the heavy expense involved, the college was able to "work a deal" with the telephone company and get special rates.³⁶ In the early 1970s efficiency was improved with a Data 100 in Newport Hall to connect with the computer at The College of William and Mary. The key punch machines and decks were in the back part of room 104. In the mid-1970s there were no visual screens in the center; there were some in the Business Office.³⁷ According to Cal Hones, former CNC Vice President for Financial Affairs, Graham Pillow was the force behind computers at CNC in the late 1960s and on into the mid-1970s: "He really got into them." Mr. Hones recalls that in the early 1970s only expense records were computerized; all other administrative and fiscal record-keeping was done manually. The present Director of the Computer Center, Shahram Amiri, agreed that CNC was late getting computerized: "When I came in the late 1970s, they were still registering students in the theater with pencils and paper."

The Computer Center expanded into room 105 before the first day of January in 1974, according to CNC's Chief of Police Johnnie Capehart:

"That was my first day on duty, and I remember the Computer Center being in the set of rooms in the middle of Newport. I also recall there being computers then in the small corner room (room 105). Officer Thibeault came before then and could tell you more about when the computers were put there."³⁸

The Hewlett-Packard 3000 supplemented the Data 100 in 1978. Not long after that the Data 100 was discarded. Shahram Amiri recalls that it could hardly be given away because it was so obsolete by then.

In eighteen years the Computer Center has gradually expanded on the ground floor of McMurrin Hall. In addition to the HP3000 for administrative support, the Prime computer in room 102 services student needs. The Center also encompasses three major microcomputer and terminal labs that provide computer support to students from almost every department in the college.

Today the Computer Center seems to be consuming the first floor of McMurren Hall, and that does not even house the academic Computer Department! In addition, almost every faculty office on the campus and certainly every administrative office bristles with personal computers or with terminals connected to the Computer Center's Hewlett Packard 3000 or its Prime computer. The HP 3000 is now out-dated and inadequate. An appeal will be presented to the General Assembly in 1987 for a replacement computer which will go into McMurren Hall after the completion of renovations funded by the 1986 General Assembly:

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Lewis A. McMurren Hall in 1986 is more focussed in its mission than it was as Christopher Newport Hall in 1964. The English Department upstairs and the Computer Center and Music Departments downstairs fill the building except for the lecture hall which serves numerous departments as a classroom lecture facility. Twenty-two years ago this building stood alone on a new campus housing the college's entire administrative structure as well as its student services and humanities division. One by one other buildings on the growing campus provided space into which various functions could expand: the library, the administration building, the Campus Center, the other classroom buildings and the gymnasium. When the building opened, the college curriculum did not include a course in computers nor in music. Students using computers and participating in the music program now fill the ground floor of McMurren. The administration operated completely without computer support in 1964 and without dependency on computers for the first half of the college's life. Computer support is now absolutely crucial to the fiscal and academic administration and to most student services. The bookstore that operated from a closet and then from a classroom in Newport Hall in the 1960s and early 1970s is now a major service and profit center for the college in spacious new surroundings in the modern student building. McMurren Hall's renovations that were recently funded by the General Assembly for an amount approximating the original construction cost will enable the music program to function in reasonable surroundings, streamline the services of the Computer Center, make the faculty offices on second floor more comfortable, provide more faculty space on first floor, and give the lecture hall a long over-due face lift. In the Silver Anniversary year of Christopher Newport College it is hard to predict

changes that will occur in the next quarter century, but it is safe to assume that changes will occur and that they also can be tracked through alterations in this and other buildings that house the programs, the students, the faculty, the staff and the community.

APPENDIX

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Faculty petition presented to the Christopher Newport College Board of Visitors prior to its November 20, 1985, meeting.
- 2 No action to reverse its decision to rename Christopher Newport Hall was taken at the CNC Board of Visitors' meeting, November 20, 1985, based on reading of the official minutes and on my observation of the meeting.
- 3 On August 14, 1985, a delegation of legislators and members of the executive branch of the Virginia government visited the CNC campus. This was a part of the annual tour of this group, about fifty members of the Senate's and House of Delegates' Finance and Appropriations Committees and officials from the departments of budget, buildings and engineering. The purpose of the tour was to examine capital expenditure requests from state agencies so that informed judgments could be made on these requests. Governor Robb, local legislators, and members of the college's Board of Visitors and faculty accompanied the group as it toured Christopher Newport Hall and were shown computer labs in need of more space, the unremodeled bookstore being used by the music department, the unattractive twenty-one year old lecture hall, and the covered passage that needed to be enclosed to provide faculty office space. Daily Press, August 15, 1985, and from personal observation.
- 4 Daily Press, December 15, 1985, and from personal observation.
- 5 The 1986-88 Budget for the Commonwealth of Virginia as adopted by the House of Delegate and Senate, March 7, 1986, and signed by the Governor.
- 6 Daily Press, November 17, 1963, "December 10 bid Opening Set for 1st Building of Newport College."
- 7 Scrapbook in Christopher Newport College archives: undated newsclippings and collection of letters from the late 1950s.

- 8 Daily Press, May 21, 1961, page 1. "Council votes 5-2 for Shoe Lane Location for Christopher Newport Junior College."
- 9 Daily Press, March, 1963 (undated clipping), "Council Authorized Condemnation of 26 Parcels for College."
Chris' Corner, 1:2, February 23, 1962, page 1, "New Site for CNC."
- 10 Personal conversations over a period of years with Hampton and Newport News leaders, legislators, Newport News City Council members, and Christopher Newport College Board of Visitors members.
- 11 Captain's Log, 1:1, November 7, 1963, page 1, "CNC to Begin Permanent Site."
Master Site Plan of Christopher Newport College prepared by architects Forrest and Coile, 1963.
Chris' Corner 2:5, May 1, 1965, page 1, "Building Plans Set for July."
- 12 Captain's Log 1:3, March 5, 1964, page 1, "Ground Broken at New Christopher Newport Site."
- 13 Captain's Log 2:5, May 16, 1963, "Building Plans Set for July."
- 14 Captain's Log 1:5, May 20, 1964, page 1, "New Building Named Christopher Newport Hall."
- 15 Trident, 1965 Annual of Christopher Newport College: color photograph of the new building with mud puddles in front.
- 16 Captain's Log 2:1, October 28, 1964, "Orientation September 15 Marks Start of New School Year"
- 17 Daily Press editorial, September 12, 1965
- 18 Daily Press, January, 1963 (from scrapbook in CNC archives; exact date not given) "City Records \$2.7 Million Drop in January Building Work."

The "ships" stand beside McMurran Hall, in the courtyard bordered by

Newport, Wingfield, the John Smith Library and the Administration Building.

- 19 Captain's Log 2:1, October 28, 1964, "Dean Cunningham Greet's New Students"
- 20 Captain's Log 3:1, September 14, 1965
- 21 Christopher Newport Hall Floor Plan, 1964-65, from Christopher Newport College archives
- 22 Captain's Log 2:2, December 16, 1964
- 23 Captain's Log October 18, 1966 and Captain's Log September 23, 1971
- 24 Captain's Log 4:7, May 19, 1967, page 1, "Graduation Set for June 2."
- 25 Daily Newsletter 1:6, March 29, 1972, among other items announced a Computer Workshop in N107 and a Social Science Division Faculty meeting April 10 noon to discuss dispersement of library funds 1972-73.
- 26 Captain's Log March 6, 1973
- 27 Captain's Log 3:1, September 14, 1965, page 3, "Library's Expansion Program Looks to New Reading Room."
- 28 *ibid.*
- 29 Captain's Log 4:4, December 16, 1965, page 1, "Construction of Library to Begin; Authorization for Additional Classroom Building Realized, Cunningham Will Request Student Center Building."
Note the mention of the faculty parking circle, an area with space for no more than a dozen or so cars in which parking is now strictly prohibited. It is used as the bus stop for the city transportation system.
- 30 Captain's Log 15:15, January 19, 1984, page 1, "Renovations Begin on

Old Campus Center."

- 31 Interview July 21, 1986, with Jacqueline Haskins, CNC Bookstore Manager since 1967
- 32 Interview July 23, 1986, with Doris Reppen, CNC faculty member since 1963
- 33 Interview July 23, 1986, with Jacqueline Haskins, CNC Bookstore Manager
- 34 Captain's Log of December 15, 1971, discusses plans for the Student Activities Center (later named the Campus Center) which included moving the student lounge from Newport. Vol 1, no. 20 of Daily Newsletter, May 22, 1972, noted that a student lounge was still in Newport Hall.
- 35 Interview July 21, 1986, with Elizabeth Welch, CNC Personnel Officer since 1967
- 36 Telephone conversation July 31, 1986, with Cal Hones, CNC's Business Manager/Vice President 1968-1981, to whom the Computer Center staff reported. The first Computer Center Director came in the mid-1970s and also served as Director of Institutional Research.
- 37 Conversation July 31, 1986, with Shahram Amiri, Director of the Computer Center for the past six years. Interview July 31, 1986, with Sheila Higgins, Operations Supervisor of the CNC Computer Center, who joined the CNC staff in the center in 1976.
- 38 Conversation July 31, 1986, with Johnnie Capehart, CNC Police Chief

NOTES TO MYSELF

Needed:

news article on the August, 1985, Budget Tour
~~Jim Hines~~ materials used at the General Assembly in 1986 for
lobbying for renovation funds for the music room in McMurran Hall
news articles about the December, 1985, renaming of the building
and the ceremony.

*Unanswered questions to complete before placing paper in the
CNC Archives as requested by librarian. Have the paper
reviewed by Barry Wood, senior CNC faculty member and
assistant professor of English, Director of Development and
Chair of the CNC Silver Anniversary Celebration Committee.*

Was the May 1967 graduation was held in the gym or in Newport Hall?

When were the rooms in Newport renumbered? Were there several
renumberings?

Where was Richard McMurran's job placement service which was set up in
the fall of 1966? How long was he in Newport Hall? Did it
move in 1967 with the other major moves? Did it go to the new
Campus Center in 1973? Was he on the faculty prior to 1966? (This
was Lewis McMurran's brother who taught history at CNC from its
inception and was on the college administrative faculty until his
retirement in 1984.)

Where was the faculty lounge? From when to when? Why was it
closed?

What was in N105 from 1967 to 1973?

Where was the Dean/Director of Students prior to 1967...or was
there one? Was that Dr. Windsor?

Confirm date that 214 was divided into faculty offices.

*the first graduation
at CNC is New campus
ever held in the
"Sociology Hall" - N125
Interview 15 class
remains in N125
out. 9/30/84*