



[Ken and Barbara Jo Davis papers](#)

## **Copyright Notice:**

This material may be protected by copyright law (U.S. Code, Title 17). Researchers are liable for any infringement. For more information, visit

[www.mnhs.org/copyright](http://www.mnhs.org/copyright).

# Everyday

BY CLARK ULYSSE AND TAMI ATHENS

# ENTREPRENEURS

*Profitable Advice from  
Genuine Entrepreneurs*

*based on  
The Everyday Entrepreneurs Show*



*Dorothy Dolphin*



*Kenan Aksoz*

*Barbara Davis*



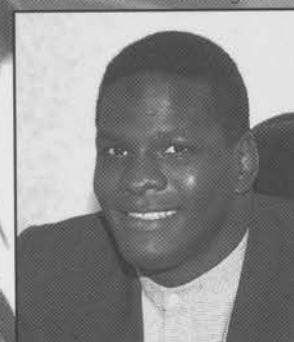
*Don Craighead*



*Brenda Williams*



*Michial Foy*



*Michelle Bloom*



Copyright © 1998 by Clark Ulysse, Tami Athens

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages for review purposes.

ISBN 0-9664352-0-6  
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 98-092906

First Printing, 1998  
Printed in the United States of America

Cover and Graphic Design by Rebecca Johnson  
Adam Oreck Featured on Cover

Published by



PO Box 290284  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55429

Distributed by



PO Box 290284  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55429  
612/924-2442



## **Partially Scanned Material**

The remainder of this page/item has not been digitized due to copyright considerations. The original can be viewed at the Minnesota Historical Society's Gale Family Library in Saint Paul, Minnesota. For more information, visit [www.mnhs.org/library/](http://www.mnhs.org/library/).

*The American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences*  
*and the*  
*Council for Certification*  
*present to*

**Barbara J. Davis, CFCS**

*this certificate verifying that all standards and qualifications for certification  
have been met and that this professional has attained the distinction of being*

*Certified in Family and Consumer Sciences*

NOVEMBER 2002

*Expiration Date*



*Cynthia M. Smith, CFCS*

*Chair, Council for Certification*



*Celebrating the Backbone of our community*

Presented by



# WOMAN!

## Behold... WOMAN!

Today's woman has a lot to be proud of. History has chronicled the joys and triumphs of women worldwide from time immemorial. One example is Queen Amina of Northern Nigeria, a successful warrior princess who reigned prosperously for decades. And then there's Wu Ze Tian, a young Buddhist nun who became the only female Emperor of China in almost 5,000 years of Chinese history; she ruled for close to 50 years.

Today, women are daily winning battles and making strides politically, economically and socially. We've come a long way from the Women's Suffrage Movement of the early part of the last century — from the Condoleezza Rice covering the political sector, to the Sylvia Rhones and Kathy Hughes holding down the male-dominated entertainment industry, to the Twin Cities' own first Black female mayor, Minneapolis Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton. Even a once male-dominated morning show on KMOJ Radio has been affected by the winds of change, and it now features two female personalities.

Those are just the obvious examples; many more are impacting science and technology and, yes, business and economics. Despite the odds and statistics, women globally are coming of age — with or without a partner, with or without a formal education and with or without children. And while there is yet to be equality in earnings, positions or in government, we have achieved more in the last 20 years than in our entire history...and we have only just begun. Baby, we're bad! (In a good way!)

The Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder and American Family

## WOMAN OF NOTE

### BARBARA DAVIS

**HARD WORK & PERSISTENCE PAVE THE WAY TO SWEET TASTE OF SUCCESS!**

To hear Barbara Davis speak is like listening to a nightingale: she's as sweet and smooth as the barbecue sauce that bears her surname.

For those of us from the Twin Cities (or if you've lived here for any length of time), Ken Davis Barbecue Sauce is a household name, and Barbara Davis is the reason why.

Barbara Davis grew up in a multicultural environment in Cheyenne, Wyoming. As the daughter of a chef and a home economist, her love of good food and cooking was cultivated early in life and has become the hallmark of her career. As the owner and president of Ken Davis Products, Barbara Davis has effectively developed and maintained a brand of barbecue sauce to be reckoned with.

#### Humble Beginnings

Ken Davis Products was launched much like today's enterprising rap artists launch their collections — out of the back of a car trunk. In this case, it was a station wagon...and the year was 1970.

Barbara met her future business partner Ken Davis when she was working at the Betty Crocker Kitchens of General Mills. Ken had recently closed his restaurant, Edina Chicken, and was focusing his energies on developing a line of barbecue sauce. Barbara was referred to Ken as someone who could help him develop his line, and Ken hired her.

From that point on, having sealed their relationship (personally and professionally), Ken and Barbara — and whomever they could get to help — would make and bottle the sauce at

home, using his grandmother's recipe. Ken would then go from store to store selling the sauce on consignment. With each batch sold, he'd buy another from the manufacturing company that agreed to bottle his sauce. Some of the first stores to carry the Ken Davis sauce were Byerly's — which was in its infancy stages of development as a premiere grocer — and the now defunct Red Owl stores, which incidentally was the company that manufactured and bottled the sauce.

In less than two years, Ken Davis Products was incorporated in the State of Minnesota and quickly became the leading brand in the state.

#### Untimely Death

In 1991, Ken Davis passed away after having seen his dream of building a successful business come to fruition.

Of course, the question arose about the future of Ken Davis Products. What may have seemed like a difficult decision for some was a natural one for Barbara: to assume ownership of the company she helped found and develop.

"One of the challenges I faced was establishing credibility," Barbara recalls. "People came forward with offers to buy the company...they assumed I couldn't or wouldn't run the company."

For Barbara, that was just the fodder she needed to prove them, and most importantly herself, otherwise.

#### Turning Obstacles Into Opportunities

The ironies of being a Black woman in business are many. Many have felt the pangs of "undercover" racism that

exists, least of all Barbara — despite the fact that when she assumed sole ownership, her company had been established for well over 20 years.

"Black women tend to be ignored by [White men]...I could be standing in the room with people talking about me or the company, but not address me directly," Barbara says.

However, on a positive note, that same 'handicap' has worked to her advantage. "There are businesses [and organizations] who seek out or like the idea of doing business with minority business owners," she says.

Twelve years after her husband's untimely passing, Barbara Davis has made a smooth transition at the helm of the barbecue empire, overseeing every aspect of the day-to-day operations. Today, Ken Davis Products have gone from being available in just a few stores to being regionally distributed in North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska and of course, Minnesota. She has developed new products and has launched the company publication, *Ken Davis News*, in which she debuts recipes and cooking tips. She has, in fact, become the voice of Ken Davis Products as the national spokesperson. Barbara is also a radio personality; her "Barbara & Friends" show on food and cooking and can be heard weekdays on WFMP-FM 107.

These days Barbara stays very busy. She believes strongly in giving back to the community and is heavily involved in numerous community organizations, including the Stairstep Foundation and a mentoring program at North High School. She also chairs the Global Women's Network and is vice president of the African American Chamber of Commerce. In her spare time, she travels extensively and collects recipes along the way.



Barbara Davis, president of Ken Davis Products.

#### Advice to the aspiring entrepreneur

"Do your homework!" Barbara emphasizes to anyone who's thinking of starting a business. "Bankers (and investors) want to see a solid plan...know what you are selling and how you plan to do it...and most importantly, how you are going to pay them back." Commenting on the common misconception that business owners don't have to go to work every day she says, "Don't think you're NOT going to work!"

And she adds, "Never go into business to make money; do what you really enjoy."

And so what about retirement? Will Barbara Davis ever stop working?

Her answer: "I'll be here 'til I'm so old, they'll carry me out babbling."

Spokesman-Recorder, Thursday, March 13-19, 2003

[Insight News, Monday, Nov. 13, 2006, p. 7]

# Watts addresses Black Chamber of Commerce annual meeting

The Minnesota Black Chamber of Commerce annual meeting will take place at 11 am to 1:30 pm, Wednesday, November 15, 2006, at St. Paul Travelers, 325 Washington Street, St. Paul. St. Paul Travelers also sponsors and hosts the event. There is no charge for MBCC members to attend the event; however, there is a \$10 charge for non-

members. Lunch will be provided. According to Barbara Davis, Chamber president, the meeting will feature a presentation by Debra Watts, author of 101 ways to know you're "black" in corporate America. In addition, Davis said there will be an update on the Central Corridor Transit Project, and a 20-minute break for partici-

pants to get to know each other. There will also be a series of networking information gatherings on financing a business, telecommunicating and education. There will also be an election of the board of directors, a review of 2006 and a discussion of the vision for 2007.

The Minnesota Black Chamber of Commerce serves as a major clearinghouse, referral service and business tool to assist members with information that is necessary to succeed, according to its homepage [www.minnesotabcc.org](http://www.minnesotabcc.org). The Chamber initially came into being because of the obvious economic disparities among people of color particularly Blacks. It is also dedi-



Barbara Jo Davis

cated to securing funds needed to build a strong community of Black entrepreneurs.

Current board members include Barbara Davis of Ken Davis Products; Dorothy Richburg of Keystone Computer Solutions; Mike Essien of Blackwell Igbunugo P.A.; Alfred Babington-Johnson of Stairstep, Inc.; Reynaldo J. Lyles, of YFI Technology; Lea Hargett of JOG Associates, LLC; Karen Finney of Finney Clean Communities; James Jackson of Smith-Barney; Michael Fondungallah of Fondungallah Law Offices; Karen DeYoung of DeYoung Consulting; Jae Bryson of Blackheart Publishing Inc.; Fred

Green of Ault, Inc.; Donald Hall of Encore Credit Corp and Sheryl Kasdan of Kasdan Communications, Inc.

When asked what advice she would give to those interested in starting a business, Davis said, "Go for it! I feel strongly that we need to own our own businesses to have a legacy for our children."

For more information on the event or joining MBC, call Barbara Davis at 952-922-5556.

# **AFCHRON**

## **AFRICAN- AMERICAN CHRONICLE**

QUARTERLY

VOLUME XII

NUMBER XXIX

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



**Barbara Davis**  
**President**



Ken Davis Products, Inc.

### **INSIDE FEATURE STORIES**

- *Barbara Davis, President, Ken Davis Products*
- *Frederick Douglass- An American Slave*
- *Hatshepsut, Female Pharaoh of Egypt*



# AFCHRON

## AFRICAN- AMERICAN CHRONICLE

QUARTERLY

Publisher  
Rashad Hasan  
Editor  
Angela Johnson  
Associate Editor  
Research  
Cindy Sims  
Graphic Design  
Office Manager  
Sales Manager  
Sales Representatives  
Distribution  
Legal Affairs  
H.K. Bernstein  
Research Advisor

Address all correspondence to African American Chronicle P.O. Box 11754  
Minneapolis, MN 55411 U.S.A.

Email [afchron5@aol.com](mailto:afchron5@aol.com)

[WWW.AFCHRON.COM](http://WWW.AFCHRON.COM)

612-385-4536

Copyright © 2006 AFCHRON

Copyright © 2006 African- American Chronicle

# YOUR SPICE KIT IN A JAR



MINNESOTA'S #1



## **Partially Scanned Material**

The remainder of this page/item has not been digitized due to copyright considerations. The original can be viewed at the Minnesota Historical Society's Gale Family Library in Saint Paul, Minnesota. For more information, visit [www.mnhs.org/library/](http://www.mnhs.org/library/).

# engaged!

THERE MUST HAVE BEEN  
SOME MAGIC...

You're invited to celebrate  
the engagement of  
**Deborah Best and John Hamper**

Saturday, November 11, 2006  
5 o'clock p.m.

9120 Flyway Circle, Eden Prairie  
Hosted by Barbara Davis and Phyllis Olin

Let us know if you're NOT coming  
952-922-5556



# Business & Labor

Spokesman-Recorder

## Ken Davis Products' prez gives sound business advice

By Vickie Evans-Nash  
Associate Editor

How do you keep a business going for over 30 years? Barbara Davis, president of Ken Davis Products, says you do it by getting to know your customer, managing money wisely, having a strong business plan, and doing what you do best. From the original signature recipe to the Smooth and Spicy and Sweet and Smokey, Ken Davis Products have maintained its Midwest appeal.

Knowing your customer is not something Davis takes lightly. Although she does market research and focus groups, and sends out surveys, don't be surprised to see her in your local grocery store.

"Sometimes I just stand in the barbeque sauce aisle. I'll actually walk up to people, and they'll be standing there trying to decide what barbeque sauce they want, and I'll hand them a dollar and I'll say, 'I'll give you a dollar if you try the Ken Davis', and they'll be thinking, 'What is wrong with this woman?'"

"And then I'll have to give them my card and say, 'I'd really like you to try it if you haven't tried it before,' and they'll get excited that someone is asking them."

Davis says that they often go to trade shows that are usually focused on institutional sales, where chefs, dietitians and school food service people are in attendance. And even though some will say that barbeque isn't on their menu, they will also tell her that they use the products at home, and in that way it is still a venue for finding out how people are using the products.

Davis says she stays up-to-date with food magazines. "The trends in the food magazines are always a little ahead of what's happening in the real population, but it gives you an idea of where it's going."

Prior to being an entrepreneur, Davis worked for General Mills for 20 years in Betty Crocker Kitchens. "Our clients were the marketing people. And they were responsible for the bottom line, so you learn a lot from just being in that environment."

But she says that it was through her experiences growing up poor that she developed an edge when it came to managing money. "My mother was a champion at managing money. It's because she had to be — there wasn't that much money. I always had a savings account — you always had to put money aside. A lot of small businesses try



Barbara Davis, president of Ken Davis Products

Photo courtesy of Barbara Davis

to get too big too fast. And they outstrip their resources — both their financial resources and their human resources. And the next thing you know, they're out of business."

Davis says that their decision not to expand was one of the reasons why they've been able to be successful for so long. "A lot of people say, 'You should be expanding nationally.' Do you know how much it costs to expand nationally and how much debt you can get yourself into?"

Distribution, manufacturing and advertising across the country would all affect their bottom line. Currently, the majority of their business is in Minnesota, but they also sell products in North and South Dakota, Wisconsin and Northern Iowa.

"We made the decision a long time ago that we are going to build our business in this area, and we are not going to expand out of the capacity of our manufacturer and our shipping to get to a better market."

Davis says that it is important to know your business. "This happened with General Mills in the '70s when I was there. They decided to get into businesses that they didn't know anything about. They went out and bought all these businesses — Lionel Trains, some fashion businesses, jewelry

and stamp collections...The next thing you know, they went, 'We're losing money on these businesses. We don't even have anybody who knows how to run them,' so they then sold them all off."

She learned from her experiences with General Mills how important it is to focus on the things you do best. "I think every businessperson has failed at least once before they make a success of their business."

Without expansion, how does Davis know that her company is a success? "I measure success, as I tell my staff every day, in the fact that I can still pay their salaries. The lights are on. I haven't been evicted. And I have enough time where I can give back to the community, and that's important."

She says that having money as a goal is what often leads to a company's downfall. "When we started out, it was Ken's philosophy — he only wanted to make enough money to keep himself going in the lifestyle that he wanted to live. He didn't worry about excess money, and so he was astonished when all of a sudden we became the leading brand. But money was never the objective; he just set out to make a living."

Although much about the business has changed, the original recipe is exactly the same as it was when they started. "We add a few more flavors, but the original recipe — we just don't want to mess with that. It's grandma's recipe. It's tradition. It's got to stay the same; we'll fight tooth and nail to keep it the same."

Based on Davis' experience as an entrepreneur and as president of the Minnesota Black Chamber of Commerce, she lends sound business advice to individuals interested in starting their own business:

"Number one, you have to know what kind of business you want to be in, and often they [new entrepreneurs] don't. They'll come and say 'I have this sweet potato pie and I want to be in the sweet potato pie business.' Well, yeah, but do you want to be a caterer, do you want to sell

it to restaurants, do you want to sell in the grocery store, do you want to sell it fresh, do you want to sell it frozen, do you want to sell it refrigerated? What business is it that you want to be in?"

"The second thing is to have a plan. Most often I see businesses go out just because they're under-financed. What happens is, they'll get the money to start their business, but they don't have enough money to keep it going. They've got start-up money. And you've got to have enough money to pay your own personal [debt]. Your house still has to be paid for while you're building your business up. And most businesses are not going to be able to pay you when you start them up."

"I always say: Make sure you have enough money or you have somebody in the family that's working so that you can still pay your bills. And that helped us, because I was working at General Mills and Ken could devote full time to the business."

"The other thing is, be prepared to work harder than you've ever worked in your life. But you'll love it because you're working for yourself."

Vickie welcomes reader response to [vnash@spokesman-recorder.com](mailto:vnash@spokesman-recorder.com)

### MARVIN SMITH

Realtor

**AGENT • INVESTOR • APARTMENT RENTAL**

- Servicing clients in Minneapolis, St. Paul and suburban communities
- Find the home of your dreams with a great mortgage
- Rental units available in North and South Minneapolis
- I purchase fixer-uppers, rehabs and foreclosed properties

**DIRECT 612.827.9475**  
**CELL 612.327.6362**  
**FAX 612.827.0255**  
**FREE2INVEST@AOL.COM**

MINNEAPOLIS OFFICE  
5516 LYNDALE AVE. S.  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55419

**COLDWELL BANKER**  
**BURNET**



*You're invited to celebrate*  
***Barbara Davis's Birthday***

*On August 12, at least 9 million people will  
have birthdays... but only one of them counts-Mine!  
It's the **Big One** (65) and I intend to party!*

*Join me for cocktails  
Saturday, August 11, 2007  
4 to 7 p.m.*

*at the home of  
Koleen and Larry Rosenberg  
11406 Louisiana Avenue South  
Bloomington, Minnesota  
(Directions enclosed)*

***Barbara Jo Davis***  
*Respond by August 6*  
*Barbara@kendavis-bbq.com or 952-922-5556*  
*No gifts, please*

