

# A Front Royal success story

## ▼ Sacrifice and determination bring rewards for Preston L. Travis

By *KEVIN KING*  
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**FRONT ROYAL** — Born and raised on Front Royal's South side, Preston L. Travis, 61, witnessed firsthand the school integration debate that gripped Warren County in the late 1950s.

The pros and cons of this debate had ultimately produced some sweeping changes to the educational structure of the school system, eliminating the elementary school he once attended (the original Front Royal Colored School, later Ressie Jeffries School, where the school maintenance office is now located). A pro-integration group, headed by James W. Kilby, was pushing the envelope to ensure blacks would eventually get full access to education. Travis's siblings were approached by this group and asked to be a part of the original 22 students to integrate Warren County High School. That proposal created a family crisis, with some family members in favor and others against.

In the end, all of the siblings eventually decided to attend the new Criser School, which covered grades 1-12, for blacks, being built at a fever pitch in the pastures not far from where Travis lived. Criser opened its doors in 1959 but became a middle school for grades 6-9 in 1966 due to mounting pressures to fully integrate Warren County High School.



Preston L. Travis

Travis was one of the 15 graduating seniors that year, the last graduating class of Criser High School. Travis was also voted the most likely to succeed in his graduating class. He had made plans to matriculate at the fairly new Northern Virginia Community College located at Baileys Crossroads in Fairfax County. A tinkerer of electronics, he sought to pursue his lifelong ambition of becoming an electrical engineer.

“In order to attend NOVA, I hitched rides with construction workers and later with Front Royal residents Penny Oliver and McKinley and June Matthews in order to attend classes at NOVA,” Travis recalled. He would return home to study after 10 p.m. every night. Eventually, he was able to rent a room in Washington, D.C., so that he would be closer to the school. Travis not only earned an associate degree from NOVA but he also completed his BS in Data Processing Management in 1978, and MS in Information Systems in 1995, both from Strayer College (now Strayer University). As a student at NOVA he was listed in Who’s Who Among Students in American Junior and Community Colleges.

All of his hard work and sacrifices paid off when he got his first job in the military as a result of his studies at NOVA. After his military career, Travis was gainfully employed for many years with Mobil Oil Corporation, the Bureau of National Affairs and Howard University. He said his career with Mobil Oil provided a great insight into the world of corporate America that helped him develop his own business.

Travis & Associates, which Travis founded in 1986, is a Woodbridge-based firm that provides such services as software development, user training and data analysis. Over the years, Travis said, the company has achieved sustained growth and profitability by maintaining professional excellence, personal integrity and alliances with large and small firms to provide clients with a broad spectrum of the highest quality integrated technology systems.

“If the desire and drive is there, people will help you,” Travis said as he remembered the early days of his company. When he first started the company, Travis said, his goal was to grow by delivering the highest quality services and solutions both to industry and government at cost effective prices. This concept has been the beacon that has guided growth over the past two decades. Today the Travis and Associates client list consists of such well-known companies and organizations as The United States Coast Guard, Ernst and Young, IBM, MCI, AT&T, Hewlett Packard, Howard University and the city of Atlanta Police Department.

At the age of 61, Travis has no intentions of retiring and said he plans to continue along the same path that has enabled his company to grow into the sophisticated operation that has become the trademark of his company.

“At the dawn of our new decade,” he said, “you can be assured that our course is and will always be set on the guiding principles of this company, which are commitment, devotion and producing quality services and solutions, and on this you have my word.”