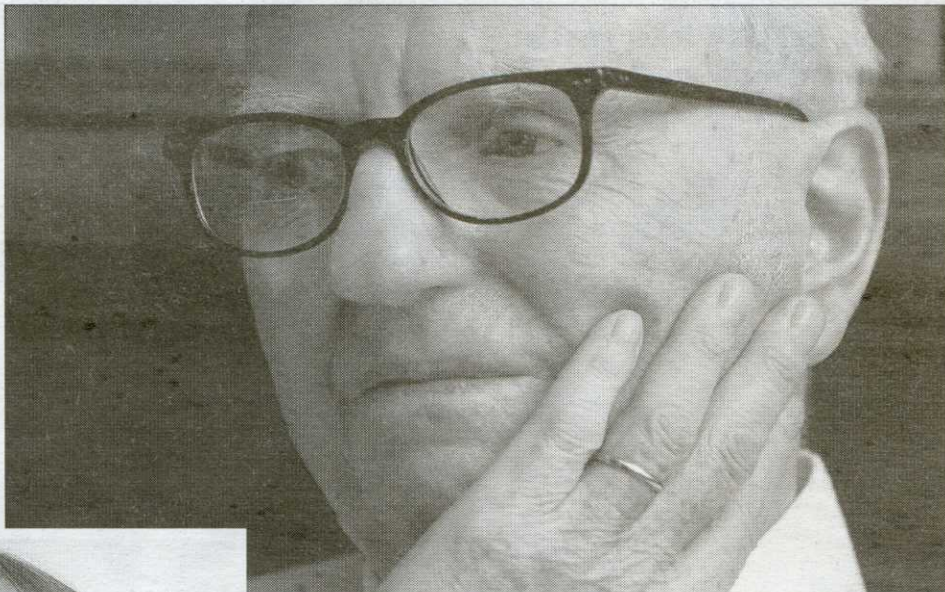


# Real Life HEROES

These are their stories

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Businessman, Nacogdoches visionary

# Charles Bright

# A 'Bright' spot in Nacogdoches

BY ROBBIE GOODRICH

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**C**harles Bright has always been a man with a vision. ... a vision for his business, Bright Coop Company. ... a vision for his hospital, Nacogdoches Memorial. ... a vision for his hometown.

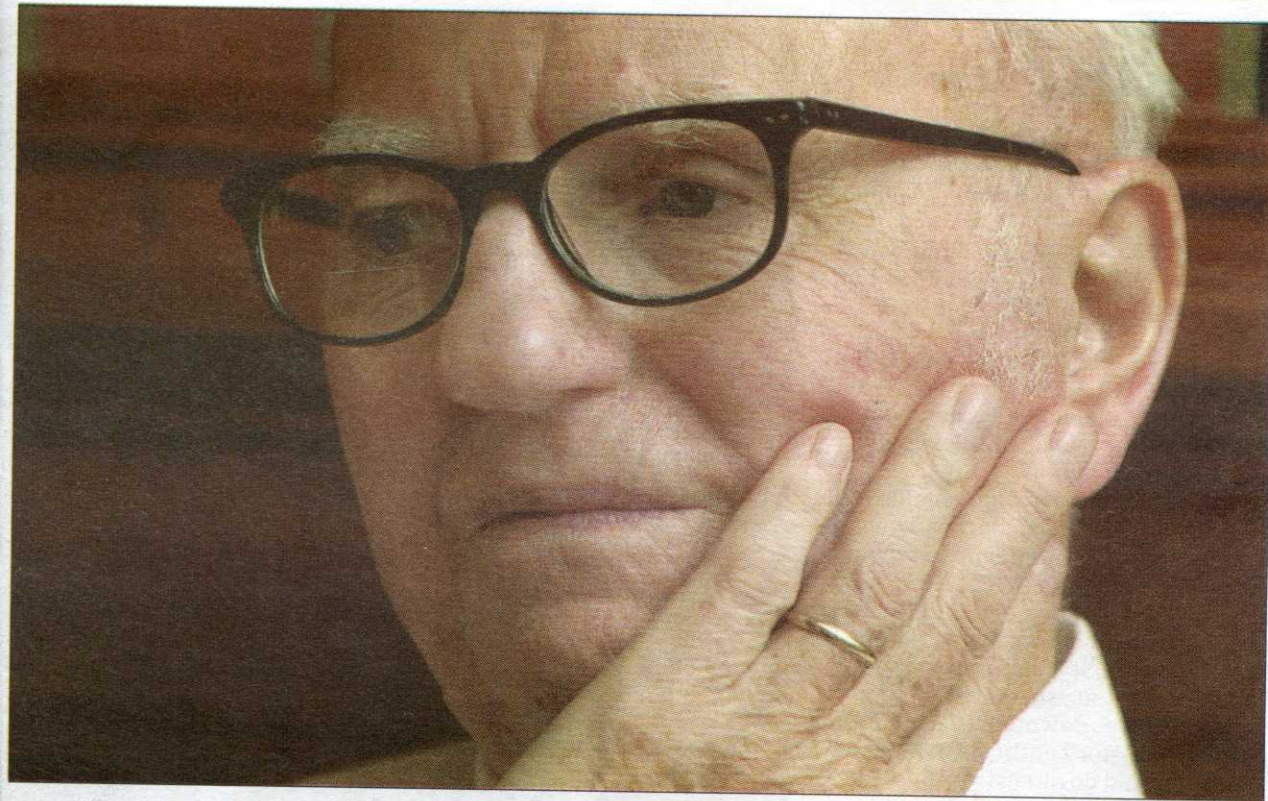
A stroll through downtown Nacogdoches also reminds one of the love Bright has for the city.

The entire Plaza Principal project that revitalized the downtown square was Bright's dream — one that he continues to expand on today.

Bright was an advocate of making the structure in the center of the square — the old U.S. Post Office turned city building — the home of the Visitors and Convention Bureau.

There are monuments and statues to the leaders of





Andrew D. Brosig/The Daily Sentinel

Charles Bright reminisces about his business in this 2003 file photo.

yesterday and the pioneering spirit that founded this community dotting the downtown streets and surrounding area, thanks in great part to Bright's desire to preserve the rich history of the town and showcase

its story for visitors to the community.

Erecting old-fashioned street lights along the main

Bright » 14

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thoroughfare through downtown “from creek to creek” was among his many ideas.

“Somehow, when we come up with a good idea, we ruin it,” Bright said. “We either over do it, or don’t do it.”

Much of Bright’s life has been spent giving back to the town that gave him his start.

It’s for this reason and others that he was selected as one of this year’s real life, hometown heroes.

“Mr. Bright almost single-handedly saved downtown Nacogdoches,” downtown business owner Gerry Larabee wrote in nominating Bright as a Real Life Hero. “It was through his efforts, contacts and monetary contributions that Plaza Principal has become the center of our tourism efforts.”

Bright “loves downtown,” said friend and fellow history enthusiast Jeff Abt, “and he would do almost anything for downtown Nacogdoches.”

Abt worked with Bright on the Plaza Principal project, which transformed the downtown square with landscaping, statues, benches and engraved bricks donated by Nacogdoches residents in honor and in memory of local families.

“His view was to spare no expense and to do it perfectly,” Abt said. “His vision was for it to, one day, be a shady, wooded square. He was a complete joy to work with.”

“Not only did he provide much of the funding for this project,” Larabee wrote in her nominating letter, “he could be found crawling around placing bricks on the sidewalk.”

Abt and Bright also spent time walking through Oak Grove Cemetery where Bright would share his memories of Nacogdoches families, pointing to grave stones with prominent and important names that shaped the town’s history.

“He’s just a gold mine of wonderful facts about our town,” Abt said.

