

JOSEPH CHARLES, LONG MAY HE WAVE, SPREADS JOY IN BERKELEY

Joseph Charles remembers the exact day the wave started to roll. On Oct. 6, 1962 he stepped out of his newly purchased white clapboard house in Berkeley, Calif., and waved to some neighbors down the block. They waved back. Soon Charles's neighborly waves became a morning ritual, and he began greeting people in passing cars as well. "At first people thought I was crazy," Charles says. "They called me a Communist and said I would cause a wreck." To the contrary, his only intention was to spread a little joy. "By waving," he says, "I let lots of people know I love them."

Charles, 77, a retired Navy supply yard warehouse worker and widower, has been making waves in Berkeley ever since. Every morning from 7:45 to 9:30, rain or shine, he dons one of his 20 pairs of yellow gloves and waves to commuters from the busy street corner outside his home. Leaning and turning in every direction to make contact with as many people as possible, Charles shouts an endless stream of salutations in a deep and resonant voice: "Have a good day . . . Keep smiling . . . Hello, beautiful . . ." More often than not, passers-by smile and wave back. "One morning," says Cedric Bones, a local, "I got up and felt like punching somebody in the face. Then I drove by Mr. Charles. He was waving and yelling, 'Have a nice day.' I did."

Last Oct. 6, Charles's 25th anniversary of waving, Berkeley Mayor Lonni Hancock joined him on the street corner and borrowed a glove to help spread some morning cheer. Charles is "a real institution in Berkeley," says Hancock. Even when he was sick for a few days this summer, Charles waved through his living room window. "I go to bed thinking about my wavers, and I wake up thinking about them," Charles says. "And as long as the Good Lord allows, I'll keep waving." □

Every morning Charles, yellow gloves in place, stands on the corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Way and waves at motorists.

