

THE PILOT



Gardner-Webb College

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1977

BOILING SPRINGS, NORTH CAROLINA

Academic Affairs Dean

GWC Welcomes Dean Robert E. Knott



The new Dean of Academic Affairs at Gardner-Webb College, Dr. Robert E. Knott, from Winston-Salem, N.C. is truly an impressive individual who apparently has the broad scope and flexibility needed to fill his new capacity as Dean to the maximum. Only 37 years old, Dr. Knott received his B.S. degree in Mathematics at the then Wake Forest College in 1962. He then earned his B.D. degree in Social Ethics at the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1965. After some graduate studies in Mathematics at N. C. State University, Dr. Knott received his M.A. degree in Philosophy-Religion at Wake Forest University in 1969. In 1975, he received his Ph.D. in Higher Education-Philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo. While completing these studies, Dr. Knott served as minister at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., as assistant chaplain at Wake Forest University, as director of the North Carolina Governor's School, as an instructor in advanced placement mathematics at R. J. Reynolds High School, also in Winston-Salem, as assistant chaplain at Wake Forest University, as an instructor in philosophy and director of institutional research at Mars Hill College, as educational development officer and assistant professor of philosophy at Mars Hill College, as associate dean for general studies also at Mars Hill College and as Dean of the College at Arkansas College in Batesville, Ark. Complimenting these credentials, Dean Knott has displayed an avid, active interest in student needs that, ideally, would provide for a more balanced educational process at Gardner-Webb College.

Dean Knott married Brenda Sue Harris of Mooresville, N. C. in 1962. They have two children, Andrea Leigh is nine years old and Robert Eugene, Jr., six years old.

The following is an interview with Dean Knott conducted by *The Pilot* on October 5, 1977.

PILOT: How do you view your role as Dean of Academic Affairs at Gardner-Webb College?

KNOTT: I've had the opportunity to work and teach at a number of different institutions all the way from the large state universities to the small private liberal arts colleges and I've found that the large university teaching experience was not what I thought to be conducive to a good number of undergraduate students . . .

I firmly believe that education in its best sense is really an interaction between student and professor . . . and I've found that the environment which is not conducive to creating that kind of exchange is the small, and I think, the private college. The public college tends to be highly controlled by decisions of State Legislatures and by decisions of the Board of Higher Education so that they're not free to move their curriculum, changing and designing the learning experiences at the times may call for.

You find, for example, at public universities or undergraduate colleges that if you want to change the curriculum, generally, you've got to go through four or five major steps and it's often finally controlled by the graduate professors who have the most seniority and sit on the policy committees. Very seldom do you get much that's exciting going on. But now, that's not the case in these kinds of institutions if you work hard to keep them alive, to keep them fresh, to keep them moving.

PILOT: What do you view the student's role as in determining academic policy?

KNOTT: I see the student as, well, it depends on where the student is in his own educational development. For example, I think that the professor is here because, he's supposed to know or she's supposed to know, something about what you need to study . . . on the other hand, you may not have a particular program available to you, a set of courses that meet your needs. You should have some opportunity and options that create the kinds of programs that would benefit you, that may be input in creating course experiences, to be able to make a request that certain things be put together for use of flexibility or it may be requesting that certain courses come to be and topics explored. The task, then, would be to convince some of your professors to get involved in it . . .

The students can provide an input that I, as a professor or a dean, cannot provide. I wouldn't have the same perspective on it. I have to continually be reminded of what it's like to sit on the other side because you often get a distance there. And therefore students can provide and should provide and should have vehicles for providing that perspective in a curriculum. The student input is a significant one, but I would have to be very open and fair in saying that I don't see it as a controlling one.

I think that the faculty, if we're worth anything, should know something about what's needed for you in your education. But we should also be placed in some circumstances where we have to listen very carefully to you . . . what I'm giving you is sort of a philosophy of the college.

I'm very much a believer in shared governance and by governance, I mean decision-making in an institution. I believe that that should be shared by the faculty, administration, and students, and by staff, by people who are not any one of those first three. A person who works in an assistant capacity also needs to contribute to the community. They need to have a say-so, too.

I once found a gardner who was planning to be a professor who spent more time standing at the corner talking to students. So I just put him on the payroll as a counselor and hired another gardner and let him stand out there with his shears talking to students. But it was so meaningful to them . . .

PILOT: What sort of hobbies do you enjoy?

KNOTT: Oh, I've started playing the piano. I've always wanted to do that . . .

I like to read quite a bit and my reading is eclectic. I am a generalist in the sense that I just like to keep up with a lot of different things. My background, of course, is in philosophy which lends itself quite well to this approach.

Other hobbies I like . . . I like to spend time on rivers canoeing and kayaking. I jog, swim, go to plays . . . I like folk music . . . I like the music of the people, so to speak . . .

Story-telling fascinates me. It can give you an awful lot of insight into where people come from in the sense of what their values are . . . I got that interest in stories from read-

(Continued on Page 3)

Baptist-Jewish Professor?

Dr. Dan Proctor, Hebrew and Greek instructor at Gardner-Webb College, spent a unique five weeks this summer. He attended the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York City, where he was one of two Gentiles in his class and the only Gentile in his dormitory. He was there to take two courses: one in modern Hebrew and one in the Jewish liturgy, a study of the Jewish prayer book (*The Siddur*), the guide to the Jewish worship service.

How did a Christian react to living in a Jewish atmosphere? "It was interesting to me, because I had a feeling of what it is like to be a minority person, and all the insights you get," commented Dr. Proctor. "It was not the attitude toward me that made me a minority person, but my realization that I was different from them. Of course, you're immediately recognizable as being different, because all the Jewish men wear head coverings, either hats or a skull cap.

"They were very open with me. We tried to learn from each other. I came out with a great appreciation of them," he acknowledged. "I learned that Judaism was not a monolith and they learned that Christianity is not. They tend to speak of the church in terms of the Roman Catholic Church. There are different factions in Judaism, just as in Christianity. The Jewish Theological Seminary is the headquarters for conservative Judaism. Conservative Judaism is somewhat like Southern Baptists. They range from those who are quite conservative to those rather liberal. They take Biblical scholarship like middle-of-the-road Baptists do," he noted.

Dr. Proctor's instructor in Modern Hebrew was a native of Tel Aviv, Israel, Edna Nachshon; his instructor in Jewish liturgy was Rabbi David Freedman.

The liturgy is rigid," he discovered. "We surveyed the services practiced in the synagogue. We examined the philosophy and theological ideas in the services. It

(Continued on page 3.)