

LOCAL LEADER HONORED FOR BIRTHDAY

Richardson, Others Recall Past

At last week's First Baptist Church supper and program honoring Sam B. Richardson—in connection with his 84th birthday which falls today (Thursday), two old friends—W. L. Baker of Southern Pines and J. Talbot Johnson of Aberdeen—reminisced about Sandhills business and other ventures ranging back to half a century and more ago. A partial report of the program appeared in last week's Pilot.

Active Builder

Mr. Baker, a close friend for 34 years, summarized the life story of "Mr. Sam," a native of Jefferson, Maine, who moved to Southern Pines as a young man in 1906, and became a busy and active builder of the town. He had various business interests through the years, was one of the first growers of Sandhills peaches and made probably his greatest contribution to the community's development as organizer and promoter of the Knollwood subdivision, in partnership with J. Talbot Johnson of Aberdeen. Through their activity, both the Mid Pines and Pine Needles resort hotels (the latter now St. Joseph's Hospital) were constructed in the 1920's and an area of fine homes built up.

Mr. Baker recalled that Mr. Richardson served on the town board and school board, was mayor for seven years, was a charter member of both the Kiwanis and Lions Clubs, and served in every office of the Baptist Church from janitor (without pay) on up to Sunday School superintendent.

Trusted Adviser

"He has been a trusted adviser and counselor in this church for more than 50 years and his life can best be summarized in four words, 'a spokesman for God,'" Mr. Baker concluded.

Mr. Johnson, an attorney and member of the Bethesda Presbyterian Church, reminisced concerning those early years, when fortune alternately frowned and smiled on two young men seeking their fortunes in the Sandhills. He summoned up a picture of the two gaily riding the trolley to Pinehurst and back, dashing figures admired by all the girls.

(Editor's Note: A local historian tells us that this trolley line went out of operation the year before Mr. Sam came to Southern Pines—but, as Mr. Sam said himself, this week, "One of the advantages of being so old is that there's nobody around to dispute what you say.")

While Sam "lost his shirt" in Sandhills peaches, Mr. Johnson gave him credit for great vision and enterprise in the development of the Knollwood section, which greatly expanded the town, spread its fame and brought many fine people and families here. Though the depression later wiped out their personal investments in this project, the course had been set for the best sort of resort community.

Mr. Johnson summarized, "Nothing finer has come into my life by way of friendship than my association with Sam. He is honest to a fault, one of the Sandhills' best-loved men and one of God's chosen gentlemen."

One Advantage

"Mr. Sam," responding, declined to take all the credit that was handed him about Knollwood—"We were in that together"—and noted that, after nearly



GROW WITH TOWN—S. B. Richardson, in this photo made several years ago, examines a pine tree which is one of several he planted along Bennett St. about 50 years ago. The tree has grown since then—and "Mr. Sam," still spry, is marking his 84th birthday today (Thursday). (Pilot photo)

60 busy years, "retirement isn't all it's cracked up to be." It has one big advantage—"It's wonderful to wake up in the morning and know you don't have to get up."

Expressing appreciation for the birthday observance, he said so many changes had taken place, "when I go to the post office except for Whiskey McNeill and Glen Rounds I hardly recognize anybody any more, and even in the church, I don't know half the people. But we all have our pride—we want so much to be remembered. So I thank you."

He recalled that when he came to Southern Pines, there were just four churches here, the Baptist, then at the corner of Page and Connecticut; the Episcopal, at Page and New Hampshire; the Catholic and Congregational Churches.

Small and Poor

"Our church was very small and poor, made up practically entirely of old folks. Each time a new church opened up it took some of our members. I remember when they built the Presbyterian church, it almost cleaned us out.

"We became a training ground for young ministers on their way to larger churches. We have had fine men, who built up the church while the rest of us had a lot of errands to run. That is the way I look on anything I have done—errands I could run for the church.

"When I brought my new bride here, she started immediately teaching Sunday School; our son and three daughters, as they came along, came to Sunday School and were baptized here; in this church my four teen-agers looked for the last time on their mother; my three daughters were married here; my second wife and I were married here. When the time comes, not too soon, I hope, I want my services held right upstairs. But," he reminded his hearers, with a laugh, "I'm not dead yet."

His wife, who, he reminded his audience, "isn't a heathen just because she doesn't come to church with me—she's the oldest

member of the United Church of Christ"—sat beside him. Also an honored guest was Mrs. Talbot Johnson, with her husband. "Mr. Sam's" son George, of Waterloo Iowa, died in June of this year. His daughters are Mrs. Emily Simmons of Jefferson, Maine; Mrs. William Wonderly of Mexico City, Mexico, and Mrs. Raymond Johnson of Ashburn, Ga.

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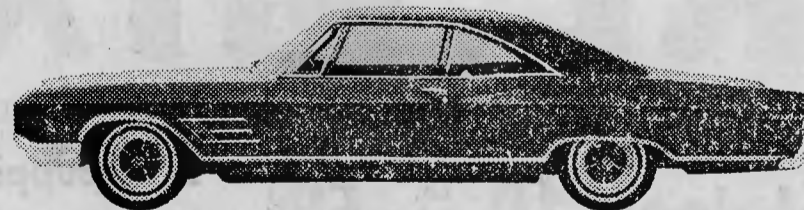


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