



SHALLOTTE RESIDENT Noel Hathaway talks about his efforts to spread the gospel by visiting jail inmates and teaching Sunday School to people who can't get out to go to church.

Shalotte Man Practices What He Preaches

BY ETTA SMITH

Noel Hathaway has a reputation of practicing what he preaches.

The Shalotte resident has touched hundreds of lives by visiting inmates in jail, elderly residents of nursing homes and by being a foster parent to over 700 children.

The message he preaches is to "love thy neighbor." "It's one of the most important of the 10 commandments that God gave to Moses," said Hathaway. "The disciples didn't wait for Sunday to go around preaching God's salvation, and to visit the sick or the sinful. And I believe that there's no certain day or time that we are supposed to do those things—We are supposed to do them daily."

The 80-year-old man and his wife, Eunice, have had over 700 foster children live in their home during the past 30 years. He said they had a special love for each child, and have kept in contact with many of them.

He also visits the Brunswick County Jail every other Saturday night, where he talks to the inmates about God.

He teaches the children's church sessions at the Church of God on N.C. 179, where he is a member and serves on the pastor's council and the finance committee.

Another of his regular routines is to visit the Brunswick Village Residential Care Center and teach Sunday school to those who can't get out and attend services at a church.

Hathaway said that doing these things isn't something for which he's looking to be rewarded. "The only reward I can hope for is the salvation of someone's soul," he said.

"Salvation is a continuous cycle," he continued. "It's not something that can be left in one place, it has to continue daily. The church is like a filling station, it's there for a place to gain the inspiration—inspiration to go out and do something."

But his efforts at helping spread the gospel to many people are rewarding, he said, because of the good feel-

ing he gets thinking he may have helped someone.

One of the persons whose life he feels he may have touched was a three-year-old foster son who once lived with him.

"He came to our house dressed in a Roy Rogers suit," said Hathaway. "He was so fascinated with being Roy Rogers that he wouldn't hardly let us take that suit off of him when we put him to bed at night."

Then one Sunday Hathaway said he took the boy to church. When they came home that afternoon the aspiring Roy Rogers decided he wanted to be a preacher.

"He took off his hat and threw it down and said, 'Mama Hathaway (to Eunice) I'm not Roy Rogers anymore. I want to be a preacher.'"

Hathaway said that after that day the little boy would pull up a chair and pretend it was a pulpit. He would ask questions constantly concerning the Bible.

The boy told Hathaway and his wife that he was "preachin'" about that Jesus the preacher talked about.

"I'd love to know what happened to that little boy," said Hathaway. "After we had him about six months someone adopted him and his brother."

"I know without a doubt that the boy had a special talent given to him by God," he added.

Hathaway said he believes that children are so impressionable that it's important to teach them about God while they are still young. "They are also so honest, they can often be teachers to adults," he said.

He said that it was as a child that he was taught about God. A teacher, who also taught him in Sunday school, was like a spiritual counselor to him as a child.

"I was 13 years old when I found the Lord," said Hathaway. "And I've been a believer ever since."

And he has practiced his belief by telling others about Christ.

"It's been rewarding for me," he said. "I just hope that somewhere down the line my testifying will have helped make someone else's life richer."

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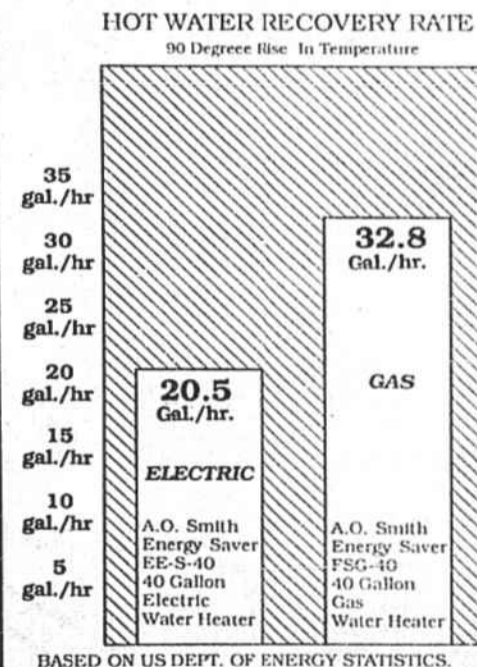
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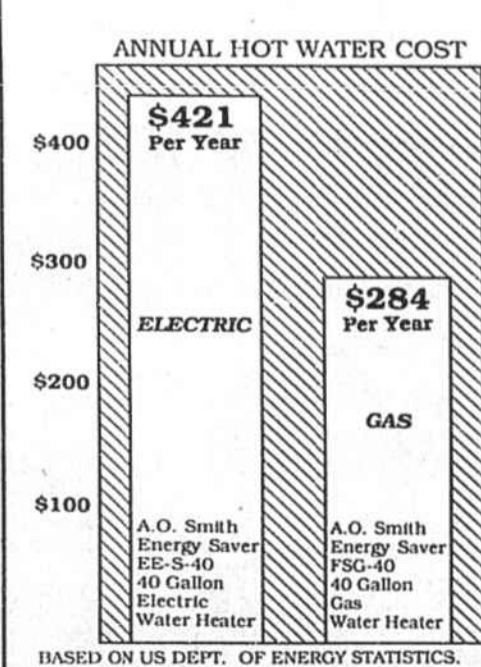
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