

Week Before Christmas Special For Cloningers

The week before Christmas is a special time of the year for the Rev. and Mrs. L. Glenn Cloninger, retired Kings Mountain couple, who traditionally decorate a Christmas farmhouse with angels and crosses which have been given to them during their 45-year ministry.

Mrs. Cloninger, director of the Junior Choir of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, of which her husband is retired associate pastor, bakes Christmas bread and turns out many of her yummy recipes of chicken and dumplings which she serves to various church and community groups during the holiday season.

Their home in Dallas, "Twin Oaks," the five bedroom, two story white frame house on a 25 acre dairy farm, has been their retirement home since they returned to this area in 1973 after serving the St. Luke's Church of Waukesha, Wisconsin for 31 years and before that Lutheran churches in Billings, Montana and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

For five years Rev. Mr. Cloninger served as the associate pastor of Kings Mountain's St. Matthew's Lutheran Church of which the couple are active members.

Born on a farm in Gaston County, Pastor Cloninger lived in his present house and he and his six brothers helped their father in a large dairy operation during their growing up years. After graduation from Lenoir Rhyne College, he attended Northwestern Lutheran Seminary in Minneapolis and it was while he was a student that he met Grace Hollenbeck, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Young Glenn Cloninger was a houseguest, along with another young man, in the Hollenbeck home while they were participating in a college sponsored play. Grace said the two corresponded for some time and Glenn Cloninger returned to serve his first pastorate in Milwaukee and it was his first job as the new assistant pastor to make calls at homes of all the members. The Hollenbecks were Presbyterians, but needless to say, their house was on his list.

Rev. Mr. Cloninger started his extensive cross collection in 1945 with a Roman Catholic

cross brought to him by a friend from the Holy Land. In his collection are Crusaders crosses, a Russian cross, a Roman Catholic cross blessed by the Pope, and brought to him by a young serviceman on Christmas Eve, crosses from Egypt, Spain, Turkey, Norway, Iceland, crosses made of horseshoe nails from Mexico, a cross from Israel, and a Fairy cross from the mountains of Western North Carolina. The beautiful Crusaders Crosses are of native stone from the Holy Land, the Cicily Cross, Greek cross, Huguenot Cross, and The Cariboca, all of which have special meaning and relate the complete story of the Crucifixion with the crown of thorns, the nails and whip and other symbols. The double crosses from Spain were used as weather-vanes, the minister said in relating the history of his crosses.

Pastor Cloninger estimates that his unique collection includes some 175 crosses and he plans to do some cataloging after the Christmas holidays. Most of the crosses are used in decorations year-round but are enhanced at this season of the year with the traditional green and red family trimmings and Grace Cloninger's extensive collection of angels, also brought to her by members and friends in their travels. Blue Swedish glass angels, wooden angels and china angels are in various sizes and shapes from all over the world. One of the most beautiful angels in her collection is one from a church secretary from Bavaria. Kissing angels, angels atop music boxes, and lace paper doily angels are among this beautiful collection.

"It takes a while to unpack all the angels at Christmas," said Mrs. Cloninger.

Another highlight of the Cloninger Christmas Farmhouse is that Grace and Glenn Cloninger roll out a Christmas red carpet at the entrance of their home and keep it there throughout the holiday season. Friends and visitors receive a warm welcome at the Cloningers and are also invited to sample Christmas stollen with coffee and enjoy chicken and dumplings and other delicacies in the dining room.

The Cloninger Farmhouse is ideal for holiday entertaining. Mrs. Cloninger opens all the rooms on the first floor and uses them to seat her guests. The four fireplaces are decorated with Christmas greenery and red bows and enhanced by angels and Christmas scenes. The solid oak antique dining table, which seats 14, is overlaid with a Christmas cloth and decorated with candles. A 200-year-old corner cupboard has the original hardware and was once used by Pastor Cloninger's mother to store her homemade cakes and pies. The buffet is graced by a beautiful nativity scene, a gift from a church secretary, from Germany, and the silver creche on the mantel was a Christmas gift from the architect who designed the 2300-member Waukesha, Wisconsin St. Luke's Church, which was constructed and almost all paid for during the last 10 years of Pastor Cloninger's ministry. A unique altar points to the mission of the church to preach the gospel to every creature, said Pastor Cloninger. Twelve five-foot figures carved of Linden wood from Italy are symbols of the 12 apostles which are used, along with a cross, on the altar. A fish net effect is also used, again to point to Jesus as fishers of men and anchors are the hope of the world. There are also faceted glass windows and the communion railing is at the floor level with a ramp utilized to give easy access to the church. The Cloningers returned to Wisconsin for the noteburning ceremony in 1974.

Cedar from the Cloninger farm was used to fashion a bedroom suite. A solid black walnut bedroom suite also came from the farm and a grape design high headboard features a third antique bedroom suite. The red bedroom features a modern bedroom suite with an old timey trunk. The Cloninger master bedroom is on the first floor.

Grace and Glenn Cloninger have done some renovation to the house, which was built in 1913. They enclosed a screen porch and removed a wall between the porch and kitchen. A den-kitchen area is a comfortable spot for entertaining and opens into a knotty pine panelled den. The stairway is also garlanded for the holidays and candles burn from every window. The family Christmas tree is in the living room and the house grounds and adjoining tool shed are decorated in red and green. "Merry Christmas" is used on the toolshed and Pastor Cloninger has constructed lights to form a tree shaped design in the front yard. Another "welcome" sign is the yellow ribbon attached to the twin oak tree in the yard.

Grace and Glenn Cloninger like to entertain. They took the Junior Choir on a hayride, using the wagon, etc. from the farm, hosted the Senior Citizens of St. Matthew's to a chicken and dumpling dinner, and the Senior Choir of St. Matthews. The Dallas Readers Book Club was entertained at dinner Thursday and Tuesday the Cloningers served chicken and dumplings to 35 members of the Senior Citizens Club of St. Paul's Church of Dallas.

Mrs. Cloninger, who has a wide reputation as a good Southern cook, hails from the North but has shared a Southern recipe for chicken and dumplings with many friends over the years. She is also a talented musician, likes to knit and crochet, and made afghans for all 10 of her grandchildren. Pastor Cloninger lists gardening and working in the yard as his hobbies. The family estate requires lots of yard work.

The Cloninger sons, Dr. Leonard Cloninger and Dr. Paul Cloninger of Sacramento, California, and Dr. John Cloninger of Boston, Mass. will not be home for Christmas but some of the family were here for a Thanksgiving visit.

Friends are always dropping in for a holiday visit with the Cloningers whose home epitomizes the message on a needlepoint pillow: The music of Christmas is laughter, the warmth of Christmas is friendship, and the spirit of Christmas is love.

Kings Mountain Herald Section B

Thursday, December 18, 1980



GARLANDS - The staircase leading to the second story of the Cloninger Farmhouse is garlanded with Christmas trimmings. Mrs. L.

Glenn Cloninger, dressed in a Christmas red blouse, black shirt and pearl studded tie, stands in a Christmas setting.



CHRISTMAS IS A SPECIAL TIME FOR COUPLE - The week before Christmas is a special time of the year for Rev. and Mrs. L. Glenn

Cloninger who fill their house and yard with decorations and their kitchen with the aroma of baking bread and chicken and dumplings.

Story and photos

by Lib Stewart



RELAX IN CHRISTMAS SETTING - Pastor and Mrs. L. Glenn Cloninger relax in the living room of their home in Dallas, a Christmas house at this season of the year. The Cloningers have been busy this season entertaining friends.