

The Belk Tower: Will it Ever Ring Again?

By Jennifer Woodward
Editor

It stands alone. Silent. A symbol that oversees the happenings of a college campus. However, not all has been silent in its short lifetime. There once was a time when the 16 bells of the Katherine Whitner McKay Belk Tower charmed the St. Andrews and Laurinburg communities.

The Belk Tower was dedicated April 21, 1978. The tower was named after Katherine Whitner McKay Belk, a member of the Board of Trustees at that time. She served as the chairman of the Trustees Student Affairs Committee, where she took a very active interest in the student life of the college. The Belk Tower was given in tribute of his wife by Thomas M. Belk, also a former chairman of the St. Andrews Board of Trustees.

The Belk Tower rises 60 feet above the surface of Lake Ansley Moore and includes a carillon of 16 bells. They range in size from a 10-inch bell weighing 30 pounds to a 23-inch bell weighing 260 pounds. The carillon may be played from a keyboard or from a timed automatic roll player. The bells were cast and installed by VanBergen Bellfoundaries, Inc., of Greenwood, SC. The tower was designed by A.G. Odell and Associates of Charlotte.

John Williams, a former associate professor of organ and resident of Laurinburg, played at the dedication of the Belk Tower in 1978. He explained that he was asked to play at the last minute simply because, "I was the only one who knew anything about bells." However, Dr. Herbert Horn of Laurinburg, and former professor of music, was the official player of the bells during the eight years it worked, 1978-1986. He would play the bells at graduation, baccalaureate, and any other gala occasion which usually existed of a processional across the lake. Horn explained that the keyboard could play a variety of melodies

including single and chords.

But the keyboard only worked well for two or three years, "It gradually got worse and worse until it no longer worked." Horn blames the problems on neglect, adding, "Presumably, St. Andrews didn't have a maintenance contract with the company that installed the bells." Horn pointed out that the problem with St. Andrews is that everything is great when it is new but, as the years go by they soon deteriorate.

Many members of the St. Andrews community would like to hear the bells ring again on a regular basis, as evident by the petition posted outside President Reuschling's office with approximately 230 signatures.

Tom Wilson, resident director of Granville, has led the effort passionately throughout the year. He and others, including Professor of Chinese Gordon Wang, Albemarle's Resident Director Carl Mayes, and students Bill Peters and Chris Hock, have been working hard cleaning out the interior of the tower. "Bill Peters, alone, has scooped 100 gallons of pigeon droppings," stated Wilson signifying the horrendous mess that has accumulated.

Wilson has invited members of the administration to see the damage that has evolved over the years. "There are no administration officials here when the Belk Tower last rang." President Reuschling visited last semester admitting, "It was pretty bad in there. I wanted to take a shower right away after I got out of there." Purchasing agent Jim Blue added, "Honestly, I was embarrassed to even show it to the people who were repairing it."

At the moment, the electrical device is in the shop at a Charlotte firm. The device has been at the firm for the past one and a half months. With the Easter Season and many bells in for repairs, there hasn't been much time for the firm to concentrate strongly on St. Andrews'. Blue is hoping to hear from them again on Wednesday as to

their latest findings. "We're pushing them to get back to us," adds Reuschling.

Obviously much damage has been caused by the bird droppings, however, it is now believed that the tower may have been struck by lightning. If so insurance may be able to cover some of the costs. "There are some indications of surges but, it's not definite," states Blue. Until word is received by the Charlotte repair firm, no one knows what the problem is and when it can be resolved.

Expenses have been a major concern. Estimates of total renovation have been \$72,000. But, as Wilson describes, "That's the Cadillac version." He believes that the entire renovation of the tower could be \$5,000-\$15,000.

For now the administration is only trying to fix the clock so that it will be able to ring on the hour and quarter hour. "We're presuming it's a small fee to get the basics done," Reuschling explains. "Every dollar is a precious dollar on a small campus." He's hoping that the initial costs will only entail \$1,000-\$1,500, "One way or another we can finessese such a small sum."

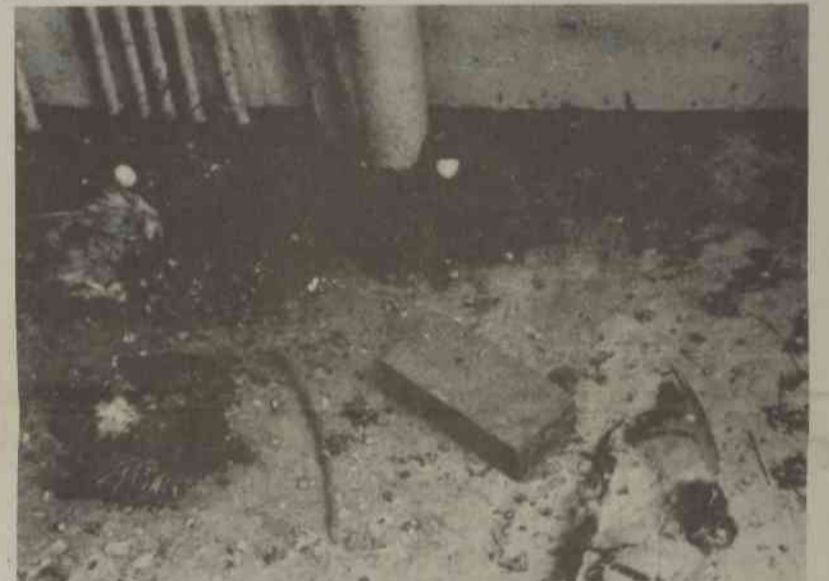
Reuschling realizes that the Belk Tower has been important concern of the community and he stresses that the administration has taken the matter seriously. However, he points out that the Belk Tower is a matter of priority, "Is it more important to put a roof on Granville or fix the Belk Tower," he asks. He adds, however, that the bells are on the list, "We're closer to it now than ever before."

Reuschling is hoping that by the time school is out, there will be a full update has to the development of the tower's renovation.

In regard to graduation, "One way or another, they will hear the bells ring on graduation, even if it means just tapping out the hour," he promises. "If we have to, we'll just have someone crawl up there and do it."



Tower's Carrillon - Tom Wilson points out the carrillon, which is the main device that allows the tower to ring.



What a mess! - This is only a small view of the interior of the Belk Tower. Tom Wilson and others, have been working hard this year to clean it out.

The ringing of the bells is a very important issue to many, and most people would like to hear it on a daily basis rather than just on graduation. Blue who lives a mile from the St. Andrews campus recalls, "I used to sit in my yard and listen to the bells chime and it was absolutely beautiful." Horn adds, "A bell is a pleasant sound. It was always pleasant to hear when across the lake." Wilson, however, speaks for all, "This is the symbol of our school, the pinnacle of the city. We see the Belk Tower on everything that symbolizes St. Andrews. We must restore it back to working order again, as soon as possible."

Baker Retires After 30 Years at SAGA

By Sharon Frain
Assistant Editor

A unique aspect of St. Andrews is how everyone contributes in some way, no matter how small or big it may seem. This factor extends to all parts of the community, from the faculty to the students, from the administration to the staff. Everyone has some hand in making the community survive.

Students have to admit that survival even depends on the Marriott Corporation, better known as SAGA. Every morning for the past thirty years Elizabeth Leak has been making sure

there would be enough food to feed the starving students, since the beginning of St. Andrews. After thirty-one years as the college's baker, Mrs. Leak has retired in order to "take life easy."

On March 8, Mrs. Leak was honored with a retirement dinner. The Director of Dining Services, Steve Tuchten, presented an engraved plaque recognizing her years of dedicated service. Other Marriott workers presented red and yellow roses, a cash gift, and a gift certificate.

Reflecting on her years at school, Mrs. Leak said, "Not all that

much has changed since the college started." Though she said that she would miss getting up before dawn, Mrs. Leak can sleep a little later. Mrs. Leak added another thing that she will miss in her retirement, "I will miss the people I worked with because they mean so much to me."

Fellow worker Vinnie Johnson praised Mrs. Leak as a great person. Vinnie jokingly added, "If the students wonder where the doughnuts are, the doughnut baker retired!" Don't worry, Vinnie assured that Steve Tuchten is looking for another doughnut maker for SAGA.



Retiree Honored - Elizabeth Leak gets a warm hug from Jeannie Coy following the ceremony honoring her 31 years of service at the St. Andrews cafeteria. (Photo by Rooney Coffman)