

# Church office reflects experiences of retired minister

By Roxanne Powers

If you were looking to make a quick appraisal of Good Hope Baptist Church's recently retired Reverend Robert L. Weatherspoon Jr. (better known to his neighbors and parishioners as Bobby), you should have checked his former office.

After all, out of 40 years service as a minister, he spent his last 25 at the Carpenter church. And as rooms have a way of doing, this one seemed to have taken on his persona during that quarter of a century. It was a simple, almost humble kind of room that seemed to have little value for material possessions.

The few exceptions were what appeared to be an over-sized silver tea service placed in a plexi-glass fronted wooden case mounted to the wall. When asked about it, Rev. Weatherspoon's expression seemed to soften. He reached up to remove

the pieces, and with a gentle stroke across the surface of the pitcher, he spoke as if talking of an old friend.

"Do you know what this is? Have you heard the story on this set? These are 'common cups' or goblets and the matching pitcher that were once used in this church for communion. They were found by Joella Horton...in her attic, I think; no one knows for sure how old this set is, but it is speculated that it dates back to the church's beginning. Look here at the engraving [Good Hope Baptist Church]. When it was initially recovered, it was so tarnished you couldn't even tell that it had the engraving on it. We were all so excited when it was recovered...to know that it was back where it belonged. Grover Lewter built this case for it."

Also in prominent positions on his office wall were three photographs. One was of a man who, as I pointed out, appeared to be stand-

ing in front of a life-sized photograph of the baptismal.

"That's right," Rev. Weatherspoon nodded. "That's exactly what that is. That is a photograph of my Uncle Jules Hirsch, who was an artist living in New York. One year, not long after this building was finished, I caught him standing in front of the quite bare baptismal, and he inquired what we were going to do with it. I told him that the plan was to hire someone to paint a mural of the Nile. When they got back home, he called and said that he had done some research, and found that with the exception of one very small stretch, the Nile was a quite unattractive river. He said that he would like to paint the mural based on that bit of the Nile and give it as a gift to the church. So when he died, and my aunt asked if I had any requests for any of his belongings, I naturally asked for this photograph and was very pleased that she saw fit to give it to me."

If visiting Rev. Weatherspoon in his church office was revealing of his personality, listening to him speak of his family is even more telling. He seems to get great enjoyment from telling the story of the first time he laid eyes on wife Jackie, who also retired from her position as the church's choir director.

"She was just this cute little girl in pigtails...just the cutest little thing. Of course, a few years later I didn't see her quite that way," he said with a chuckle.

Rev. Weatherspoon, who is now

living in Hillsborough after retiring in late August, also speaks frequently and with great affection of his four children, Jennifer, Bob, Amanda and Bill, and his five grandchildren (another is on the way). One favorite story is about his son, Bill, who, when in elementary school, was asked what it was like to be the son of a minister, and Bill responded, "Well, to me he's just a regular dad."

One can't help but feel that Rev. Weatherspoon had the same personal qualities in 1956, when he first preached at Good Hope Baptist Church as a recent graduate of Wake Forest College and a newly-enrolled student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is a humble and introspective man whose philosophy in life, as well as his ministry, has been laced with analogies and gentleness...and an eagerness to participate with good humor, even when the joke is on him.

It was a laughable situation in 1957 when Rev. Weatherspoon, then a newlywed, acquired some pullets. Born and raised in Durham, this "city boy" proudly built a chicken pen, nourished the pullets, and eagerly awaited the day they would begin to lay eggs. When that day arrived, he began to joyfully report their progress almost daily to anyone who would listen. After a while, some of his hens began to lay not one, but two eggs a day.

After a few days, he became suspicious and parked himself by a window, where he watched the hen house through a crack in the

curtains. Sure enough, along came good friend and prankster Busby Ennis with a basket full of eggs. The young seminary student quietly stepped outside and into Busby's path. Says Rev. Weatherspoon today, "Busby just grinned and said, 'Well, preacher, you sure can't get me for stealing.'"

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## Duke grid coach's wife not really home alone

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Clay had graduated, he called and asked if he'd like to be a graduate assistant at Duke.

"Clay and I were married in February 1995 and we had two weekends to choose to sandwich in between player signing deadlines and spring football. But it all went wonderfully."

And what about life as the wife of a college football coach?

"It's great," she said. "Although Clay works seven days a week, it's not like being left alone. The wives interact. My best friend is Laura DeForest, who lives nearby. Her husband Joe is special teams coach at Duke. We all go out together, and the wives can eat at the team training table, and when we go to the games we're able to sit in one of the offices of the press box. We help with recruiting by talking with parents and explaining the programs. I feel very much a part of the whole process, and not having any children makes it easier for me to make time. And what more can I say...it's Duke...which means respectability."

She and Clay did have plenty of

time together when they enjoyed a lengthy summer vacation fishing and relaxing with Clay's grandparents in Everglades, Fla. Clay's grandfather, George Turner, played pro football for the Philadelphia Eagles.

Angela graduated from Houston with a degree in marketing and worked for a time in hotel sales in Durham, where the couple lived before coming to Preston. She currently works at the Toy Chest in Preston.

"Clay's degree is in math and interdisciplinary science," she noted. I say he would have been wonderful with a career in science, but he says he would have been miserable."

Meanwhile, Clay Helton continues his around-the-clock schedule as a coach. It is a profession of peaks and valleys.

After Duke's loss in its home opener against Northwestern, Angela waited outside the locker room. "This isn't the best time to see Clay," she said.

The running backs coach emerged after 20 minutes with his players. He was clearly disappointed, but he smiled when he looked at Angela.

## Passersby spy pot patch


Continued from page 1

plied on the pages could improve the economy of the town. "With so many people involved in browsing the Internet, it places the town in a position whereby someone looking to relocate a business or a residence can get detailed information," he said. "And both the town and chamber pages will interact. If, for instance, someone calls up the chamber page and wants to know about the history of the town, it will automatically switch to the town page. And vice-versa, if someone is on the town page and wants information on retail stores, they will automatically be switched to the chamber offering."

Hodgkins said the town page is likely to include a greeting from the mayor, area places of worship, civic and fraternal organizations, education, history, newcomer's guide, real estate and relocation information, sports and recreation, a calendar of events and important phone numbers.

The Chamber Page will have a greeting from the president, history, a member directory, information on how to become a member, membership privileges and important phone numbers.

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