

BIRTHDAY GIRL TURNS 98

Maggie Bennett Recalls Early Years In Brunswick County

BY DOUG RUTTER
Maggie Bennett comes from a time when people lived without electricity and automobiles and families had to work together just to survive.

"We worked hard and cleared a farm and lived off the farm," the Brunswick County native recalls. "Everything was scanty but everybody was willing to do their part."

Emma Margaret Jenrette Bennett, known to family and friends as Maggie, celebrates her 98th birthday Thursday, which the Town of Shallotte has proclaimed "Maggie Bennett Day" in her honor.

Born April 2, 1894, she was the daughter of Elias "Bud" and Emma Norris Jenrette. After living her whole life at Hickman's Crossroads in southwestern Brunswick County, Mrs. Bennett now resides at Autumn Care in Shallotte.

"I worked for the Lord," Mrs. Bennett replies when asked how she's managed to live so many years. "I put my life in the Lord's hands. I called on him and tried to walk in his footsteps."

A devout Christian, Maggie says she has always tried to follow Jesus Christ's example of holy living. "I've lived it every day. I don't look back, I look up to God."

Mrs. Bennett says she tries to love everyone she meets. Leaning forward in her chair, she whispers, "I think if you go down (Hwy.) 17 and inquire about me, I don't think you'll ever hear of a bad act I've done."

At 98 years old, Mrs. Bennett admits she

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—Maggie Bennett

doesn't have the memory she once had. "I'm getting old and I can't remember like I could a few months back," she says.

But she has no trouble remembering the things that are most important in life. Her father, for instance, was exactly six feet tall and wore a size 12 shoe. "He was a sturdy man, straight as an iron rod," she says.

At the age of 16, Maggie married the Rev. Samuel Luther Bennett. "I went to school as long as the state said I had to," she explains, "but I got married young."

Bennett preached for some time at a Missionary Baptist church in Fort Smith, Ark., while she sang and played the piano. "I'm getting old but I can still sing like a mockingbird," she says, going into a chorus of "Holy, Holy, Holy."

For a while, Mrs. Bennett said she and her husband traveled all over the region to different churches.

"We'd preach a week and sing and then go to another place," she said. "We tried to spread the good news, the gospel and a good way of life."

They raised seven children. "I tried to raise them Christ-like so they'd fear God," Mrs. Bennett said. "I just prayed to God to

keep them in his care."

Two of her daughters, Emily and Lou Nell, live nearby in Wilmington and Loris, S.C.

Leston lives in Bolivia, Jack resides at Hickman's Crossroads and Bill and Beth live in Texas. Wams died in 1990.

Mrs. Bennett, whose husband died in 1965, also has 14 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren.

She says everything in the county has changed so much in her lifetime. "It isn't even the same place. You have almost anything you want now."

Mrs. Bennett said food and clothing were in short supply in the early 1900s, when people had to work hard just to get by. "People don't do nothing now. They don't have to work hardly," she said.

She said her family didn't suffer during the Great Depression like many others in the area. They lived off their farm and the hogs they raised.

"God was good to us. We always had it good," she said. "We didn't suffer like a lot of people, but some people won't work and we worked."

The Bennetts had the first radio in the neighborhood. "That was the grandest thing," she recalled with a sparkle in her eyes. "But it never played good like they finally got them."

Mrs. Bennett also remembers the first automobile in the area. "An old man got one," she said. "It was not fit for nothing. People can't get by without one now."



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

MAGGIE BENNETT, who celebrates her 98th birthday Thursday, still loves to sing gospel songs.

Landscape Show Exhibit Opens Friday In Southport

Entries in the Brunswick County Landscape Show held this past weekend will be on display at Franklin Square Gallery in Southport April 3 through 26.

An opening reception will be held Friday, April 3, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the gallery, said Emily Weinstein, the former Brunswick Community College visiting artist who judged the show and conducted landscape painting workshop held in conjunction with the show. Light refreshments are planned. No admission

will be charged.

Approximately 59 pieces were submitted for consideration, with 45 pieces exhibited in the show.

Recognition was given in four categories, mixed media, oil and acrylic, watercolor and three-dimensional, with the winners as follows:

Mixed Media: Marily Harness, first for a watercolor and ink, "Seaside Sampler"; Sidney Ulmer, second for a

watercolor and pastel, "Spring's Arrival"; and Pat K. Hoskinson, third for a watercolor and ink, "Conversations".

Oil and Acrylic: Erinn Cronin Webb, first, an acrylic, "Storm Over Oak Island"; Thomas "Rusty" Hughes, second, acrylic, "Under the Bridge"; and Joseph L. Harness, third, acrylic, "Local Shrimpers". Honorable mentions went to Nell U. Moretz for an oil, "Caswell Beach," and to Betty Place, a diptych acrylic,

"Coastal Sand."

Watercolor: Jennie M. Tomlin, "Price Creek Lighthouse," first; Mary Ellen Golden, second, "Bald Head," and Joyce K. Martz, "From Caswell Point," with an honorable mention to Hall Sellars, "Passing Storm".

Three Dimensional: Mike Radovich, "Rainbow Tea Time," first, with an honorable mention to Kimberly Smittle-Caroon, "Great Day In Mornin'."

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