

He Gets Involved

Ronnie Loves Flying, Photography And Helping People

By JIM HEFFNER

To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, "Ask not what Kings Mountain can do for you, ask what you can do for Kings Mountain." That could be Ronald J. Hawkins' motto.

Called Ronnie by virtually everyone, the energetic, cheerful Co-Manager and Vice-President of Harris Funeral Home will probably be embarrassed by that comparison, but is there anyone more involved in the community?

Hawkins serves on the Board of Directors of the Cleveland County Cancer Society, he's a Mason, he's active in the Big Brother Program, he's Cadet Commander to 15 cadets in the Civil Air Patrol as well as a 1st Lieutenant who flies missions for the CAP, he was a Jaycee, he drives the van for the youth program at his church, First Presbyterian, where he has served on the Board of Deacons in the past, and he is active in the local chapter of Kiwanis, handling most of their public relations.

Add to all that the fact that he won the Jaycees Young Man of the Year award in 1982, and you begin to wonder if Hawkins ought to have a spot reserved in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Born and reared in Kings Mountain, Hawkins has three passions: flying, photography and helping others, especially young people.

"When I was in grade school and early high school, he said, "my brother and I had a friend whose father was a chemist at Lithium. We both became interested in science and, at that time, I decided I wanted to be a bio-chemist."

The chemist, Dimitri Pouchak, encouraged the Hawkins brothers and before long they were experimenting with rocket propulsion and any number of chemistry experiments.

"Not only that, but Dimitri taught me scuba diving," said Hawkins.

But Ronnie Hawkins' principal interest turned to flying. Former Mayor Glee Bridges, according to Hawkins, was a pilot who used to fool around at low altitudes, spot a group of children at play and toss candy and gum from his plane. Most of the kids chased the goodies, but Hawkins attention was riveted on the airplane.

"I really got the bug," said Hawkins. "I knew Tommy Bridges was a pilot so I went to see him. He offered encouragement and urged me to get someone to take me up. I got together with Worth Davidson and he gave me a ride. As soon as the wheels cleared the ground I was hooked. Now Worth and I own a Cessna 172 in partnership."

The flying and his penchant for helping youngsters made the CAP a natural choice.

A while back, Hawkins and Tom Brooks got a call from their CAP unit, the Shelby Composite Squadron, to help search for a downed plane on Roan Mountain near the Tennessee border.

"It had been snowing hard but the sun was bright when we got there. That made the search a little tough. When we came in from one direction, the glare prevented us from seeing anything and when we approached from directly over the top of the mountain, we had a problem with shadows. We knew we were right on top of the downed aircraft because of the emergency transmitter, so we just kept at it and, in about thirty minutes, we spotted the wreckage. The



RONNIE HAWKINS
Relaxes For A Moment At Harris Funeral Home

plane had crashed into the treetops about fifty feet from the peak. It took about an hour and a half to direct the ground crew to the location. Unfortunately, the three people aboard were killed."

More recently, Hawkins and two others flew the

path of the tornadoes that hit in Cleveland and Lincoln Counties, taking still photographs and making a video tape of the devastation. "The stills were for the Raleigh Emergency Operation Center as an aid to damage evaluation. We made the video for Cleveland County to

pinpoint any damaged homes off the main roads that might have been missed by the rescue people."

But all the flying isn't work. Hawkins gets a kick out of taking people for plane rides who've never been before, young and old alike. "I get the same thrill they do. It's just like the first time I flew with Worth Davidson everytime I take somebody up who's never had an opportunity to fly."

"Ollie Harris and Otis Falls have been the two big influences in my life. Otis was my Scoutmaster. He has been a driving force in the lives of many people in Kings Mountain."

Ronnie Hawkins

Not long ago he was in seventh heaven when he took 27 adults and kids from the Cleveland County Youth Assistance Program flying.

Besides the flying and community service, Hawkins is an avid photographer. "I love photography," he said. "I especially like developing black and white. Unfortunately, I just don't have enough space for a darkroom."

He uses his photographic skills in his work with the Kiwanis, taking photos of youngsters who've won Kiwanis awards. "Then I usually badger Gary Stewart until he publishes them in the paper," said Hawkins.

Ronnie Hawkins journey to his present position in his job and the community almost didn't happen. He dropped out of high school in his senior year and joined the U.S. Army, serving most of his time at Fort Bragg, where he finished his schooling via the GED route. After his discharge he went to work part-time at the Kings Mountain Hospital. Most of the nurses took an interest in him and pushed him to get back into school.

"I'll never forget that wonderful group of nurses," he said. "Eventually, at their urging, I entered Gaston College and later Cleveland Tech."

Enter Ollie Harris. "Ollie came to see me one day and offered me a job. I went to work for him and, after about six months, decided this was what I wanted to do. I entered Gupton-Jones in Atlanta and graduated a year later, then got my license. I've been in this business for fifteen years. I guess I'm here to stay. I owe a lot to Ollie. He and Otis Falls have been the two big influences in my life. Otis was my Scoutmaster. He has been a driving force in the lives of many people in Kings Mountain. He used to buy Scout uniforms for those who couldn't afford them and he used to take us places where, otherwise, some of us wouldn't have been able to go. Otis even took a couple of kids under his wing, gave them jobs and saw they had what they needed to become productive citizens."

Public service appears to be a way of life with the Hawkins family. Wife Libby is a Sunday school teacher and a deacon, as well as Chairwoman of Property and Grounds for the church. Hawkins' mother, Aloyse Jones adopted one child, a daughter, and has been a foster parent to 52 others.

The world is filled with takers and givers, in Kings Mountain, Ronnie Hawkins falls into the latter category.

Bud Medlin Won't Stop Helping People

Veteran Postal Clerk Retiring And Will Spend His Time Witnessing For The Lord

Two weeks after throat surgery in 1986 Bud Medlin was back at work at Kings Mountain Postoffice. Instead of talking to his customers he wrote notes.

"The prayers of Kings Mountain people helped me through that bout with cancer and I've tried to give them something in return by helping them, not only at work, but through church and community work," said the popular postal clerk who has retired after 26 years as a postal clerk and carrier.

One of Kings Mountain Postoffice's most popular employees, Bud Medlin has made many friends over the years. "I will really miss those friends but I want them to know I appreciate them and if at any time they need anything they know where to call me," he said.

Medlin, 60, took an early retirement and plans to devote full time to being a Christian witness and to help several churches in charity work.

Medlin believes that work is good therapy for most everything that ails a person. "When I was diagnosed with throat cancer and then had surgery I came back to work two weeks following surgery on Jan. 4, 1986 but I couldn't talk. I wrote then-Postmaster Fred Weaver a note that I could work four hours a day for a while and the note-writing went on when someone came to the front desk to see me. I really found I had a lot of friends," he said of that experience.

Bud Medlin earns his reputation as a compassionate man, not only from the postal patrons who come to him to buy a stamp or money order, but from others he has helped from all walks of life. He counts heavily on prayer and faith.

"I always took time for people. When they couldn't read or write, I tried to help them and I found that the Postoffice was the best place to witness because I saw

so many people who came through the doors," he said.

On Friday, his last day at work, Medlin received his 568th cap to add to his collection. Coincidentally, it came from a fellow postal worker in Canada. Medlin has also started collecting soft drink bottles. When his friends go on trips they come back with caps or soft drink bottles from far-away places and give to Bud. Medlin has caps from all over the world.

Medlin has worked for three Postmasters. Charles Alexander hired him in January 1963 as a city carrier in City I and after a year he operated the parcel post truck for four years and then became a clerk. He and Postmaster Fred Weaver supervised the moving chores from the old building to the new postoffice three years ago. His current boss is Postmaster Mike Howard.

A Kings Mountain native, Medlin is the son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Everett Medlin. A 1948 graduate of Kings Mountain High School, he attended Gardner-Webb College. A football official for 18 years with the N. C. District Conference, he played semi-pro football three years for Gastonia Volunteers. He served in the U. S. Army during the Korean Conflict in 1952-53. Before coming to Kings Mountain Postoffice, he worked at U. S. Rubber Co. in Gastonia nine years. Mrs. Medlin is the former Dorothy Cothran of Gastonia. They have two children, Barbara Horne of Greensboro and Cindy Gillespie of Gastonia. The Medlin family includes two granddaughters, Lauren Gillespie and Mary Lee Horne. He is active in First Wesleyan Church.

Bud Medlin doesn't expect to be idle during retirement. He plans to be busy doing the same thing he did on-the-job, helping people.



Bud Medlin, left, congratulated by co-worker Quay Moss, Jim Anderson, Mike Loveless, right, look on at Kings Mountain Post Office.