

REFLECTIONS

I remember when Susan Agner worked in the Development Office

I can't remember when Carolyn Peeler did not work in the Development Office

I remember when there was no Development Office and that space was a typing classroom, later the Bookkeeping area for the Business Office, and later my office and later a print shop, which I ran. Tonia Black-Gold lives in there today.

I even remember when Linda Hamilton was not in the President's Office.

I remember when Tom Childress coached basketball at Pfeiffer College — it was "College" back then, not "University"

I remember when Ken Clapp was running the church camp retreat center in Blowing Rock

I remember when Tonia Black-Gold was at TV Channel 36 in Charlotte

I remember when Dennis Davidson was a student, sat in my office and wrote sports news releases on an IBM Selectric typewriter

I remember when Margaret Faust was but a spritely coed

I remember Carol Gamble back when.. .but she's been in the Registrar's Office forever

Catawba College was a very different place when I came to work here November 1, 1961. We had about 800 students, about half the buildings you see on campus today were not here. A number of faculty and staff had been called back into the Army for temporary duty due to the Berlin Crisis created by the former Soviet Union. In fact, that is how I got a position here. I was hired as a temporary Director of Public Relations and as soon as the recalled PR guy was released from the Army, in about a year, he reclaimed his old job and I moved downstairs in the Ad Building to the Admissions Office and hit the road, telling tender young ears all about the wonders of Catawba College.

I did the North Carolina circuit. . . .Murphy to Manteo, driving a huge Pontiac station wagon full of catalogs and applications for admission.

The first day I was on campus, I went to the dining hall which was where the Student Center lounge and bookstore are today. Lunch was served by dietician and fabulous cook Mary Emma Knox and her great staff. I got into line and chatted with a lovely senior coed standing behind me and a student friend Ned Cline. He invited her to have lunch with us. Eight months later she and I were married and still are today. She was a New Jersey Yankee. Barbara remembers that she went from a member of the senior class to a member of the Faculty Wives club in less than a year.

Catawba was struggling in those times. But when hasn't it struggled? Struggles or not, I always felt we had a lot of pride in who we were and what we were doing. The President during my early days here, Dr. Alvin R. Keppel, was nearing the end of his tenure. He had been prez over 20 years, and was fond of saying to any and all assemblies of students, faculty, and staff...."YOU ARE CATAWBA!" And we never forgot it.

We were challenged to do more with less. That may be a cliché, but it was the truth. Innovation was key, stretching those quarters into half dollars. Raises were hard to come by, but I got one, early on.

(tell Keppel story with Sidney Blackmer)

I remember Mary Dearborn, the widow of President Dearborn, working in our Alumni Office compiling news of alumni for our publications and keeping addresses and files up to date. She loved doing it and we loved having her with us. We had a good group of folks.

My early years here was a period of typewriters, carbon paper, and mimeograph machines. There were no copiers, no computers, no digital anything. Primitive by today's gigabits, LCD screens, and high-speed copier-printers. I was charged with developing a publications program to increase enrollment. I learned how to literally cut and paste. My tools were an X-Acto knife, gallon cans of rubber cement, a pair of large shears, and graphic design layout paper. My drawing

board/layout table was made by the carpenters in maintenance, and we set it on an 6 foot folding table whose legs were jacked up on wooden boxes. It got the job done.....for years.

Evelyn Lowman came to work for Catawba way back when our first computer was a huge IBM contraption that punched holes in cards and she thrust steel rods into those cards in some sort of magic like way to sort them. Somehow she got the job done and took the College through several incredibly complicated evolutions of technology that only she and Carol Gamble understood. I remained good friends with her because I knew where the power was. She took care of me. Today she works from home, mostly, on a super-doooper laptop wirelessly connected to the WellsFargo-Wachovia Technology Center in Charlotte. She's one of the most talented women I have known and she was pure Catawba. I stayed on her good side and that was no mistake.

I worked here for 36 years and it went by in a flash. I had several opportunities to work elsewhere and sometimes I looked for a change, but I never moved. I looked around me at some of the folks who had spent their working lives here and whom I admired for their professionalism and their humanity. . . Dr. Donald Dearborn, Marion "Chub" Richards, to name two. . .I looked at them and reasoned that if they thought enough of this place to make their careers here, then I could, too. There were also several alumni with whom I developed good relationships and their support in my career and with what I was doing for the College was invaluable. One of them was Luther Hoopes of Baltimore, Maryland, one of the

most respected graphic designers and publications experts in the national higher education market. I sent him one of my first publications and it came back drenching red ink. He was merciless, but fair and oh, so right.

Another source of pride for me is to look back at the leadership of the board of trustees, especially those who do not have a tie to the college such as being an alumnus, or a member of the church denomination. People who agreed to serve on the board and make contributions over and over because they believe in the mission and believe in that almost mythical role that a small, private liberal arts college must play in our world. They are special people and I deem it a special pleasure to have known quite a few of them over the years and, in fact, still work for several of them.

There were always challenges waiting for us "around the corner." Not just making the budget, but making sure our particular departmental missions were conducted as efficiently as possible. We were all responsible for telling "the Catawba Story," because telling that story well benefited the entire institution, and especially in the areas of admissions and fund-raising.

Dreams came true during my years here. First was to build dormitory space and get the male students out of the second and third floors of the Ad Building, where they had lived. History professor Bruce Griffith had a bathtub in his office suite for years, left over from the dormitory days. Another dream promoted by President Keppel for years with architect's renderings and drawings keeping the dream alive

. . . a chapel and a real auditorium, both stand alone structures. Ironically, the Chapel and the College-Community Center were both built at the same time-- 1963-64, by the same construction firm with the same construction foreman . . . a genius. By the way, the auditorium for years was on the second floor of the Ad building, where a conference room and the Provost's office are now.

It was the first job of the Development Office when it was officially created in the mid-1960s, to contact delinquent donors to the two projects and get their unpaid pledges in the College treasury.

You might be interested in knowing that the conceptual plans for the College-Community Center were much grander than what the final product became, as attractive as it is. There was to be a full size and fully-equipped motion picture projection booth in the auditorium, as well as a hydraulic lift in the orchestra pit for the band to be raised and lowered with the flip of a switch. The separation of the auditorium and little theatre was to be a sound-proof arrangement so that presentations could be staged simultaneously. And, of course, storage and prop construction space was seriously cut back.

But all in all, it was a tremendous addition to the College and to the greater Salisbury-Rowan Community. Retired theatre arts professor Hoyt McCachren managed the Center for years as well as serving his faculty position and made the building a true College-Community Center.

We used to have astronomy in the curriculum and the observatory with its telescope on the roof of the Science Building got a lot of use for a number of years. But it became expensive to maintain, plus the lights from Salisbury began to be a reflection problem. It was also the target of springtime pranks for a while with creative graffiti.

I worked for six presidents during my time at Catawba.

There was diversity in leadership, talent, approach, education, but never in the essence of what their job and its mission was, as difficult as they all got at some point in the process. Being a college president is a very difficult job. Being a juggler in the circus would be a good training profession for it. Especially, a juggler who used daggers in his act. There is always the danger of getting the wrong end of one.

And it is interesting how relationships personal and professional figure into things. Fred Corriher, Jr. is a 1960 graduate of Catawba. He and his family have been Catawba people for generations. He was part of the Army callup in the 1960s and when he came back, he worked for the College as Director of Alumni Relations. We got to know each other. He left the college and reentered the textile world in his family's mill operation in nearby Landis. He asked me to be in his wedding. He was later voted to membership on the Board of Trustees, so he became my boss. He was active in the Alumni Association and I was a support person for the group so we remained friends. On the death of President Wurster, Fred was named interim

president and then elected president and served ten years. I served in his cabinet. When he decided to step down from the presidency he asked me to help him organize the announcement and prepare the written materials. I later served as clerk for the search committee seeking his replacement. He was named to the board of the Robertson Family Foundation in 1997. He told me about the Foundation as I was preparing to retire from the College and asked if I would be interested in working with it. I was, and here we are, 13 years later. It has been a great ride!

What does all this have to do with. . . anything? It has to do with legacy, memories, character, integrity and doing a job, as good as you can, because you can. And because. . . it's the right thing to do.