



News from the Blue Ridge

Claire & Lovin Cranford

April 2001



Volume 4

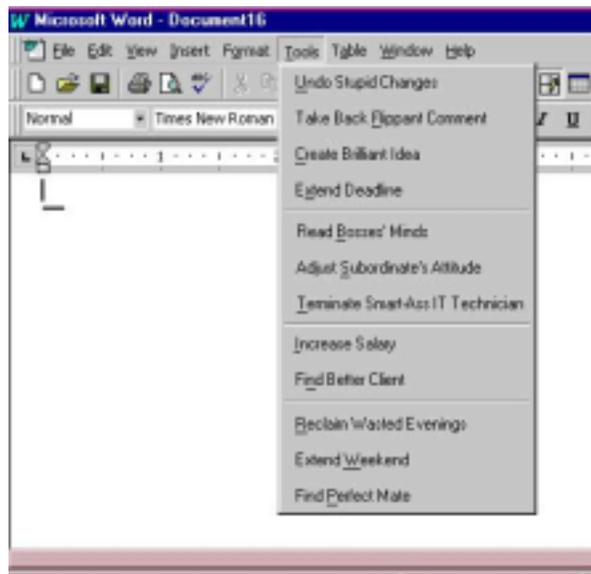
Issue 4



Family Events:

March has flown by much too quickly! The plans to get a lot of yard work done during spring break at the beginning of the month quickly melted away with a week long period of cold weather and rain. At least, that's my excuse for not doing any outside yard work. Of course, the subsequent weather has made it clear that to have planted flowers etc. during this week would have been disastrous and a waste of money. Spring seems to be coming later this year. The perennial's are just now starting to sprout out, although the daisies have been looking good for some time. Hopefully, planting can begin very quickly now that warmer weather seems to be the pattern. I love to work in the yard, especially the flower beds. It's a good break from sitting at the desk in front of the computer working on school materials. Once things begin to bloom out, I'll place pictures on the web site for everyone to enjoy.

The rest of the month has been consumed by school responsibilities. The weekend after spring break meant the professional meetings in Charlotte described in the University Happenings column. The older I become the harder it is to keep up with everything. Increasingly, retirement in 5 1/2 years looks more and more attractive. Both Claire and I have additionally struggled with some health problems leaving us more tired each evening than we feel we should be. Nothing really serious, but just nagging problems that are a permanent challenge to deal with. Having Daniel and Carrie close by has been the uplift to spark a burst of energy to get things done. Their energy and enthusiasm are contagious! We're really looking forward to Angie and Brian's visit the second week of April.



Continued from column on the right:

have a gene in our makeup that pushes us toward isolation from, and suspicion of, the rest of the Christian community -- much to our detriment. Participation in these kinds of meetings is a crucial part of helping our future leaders overcome this deficiency. Plus, interacting with individuals of such diverse backgrounds as found in these meetings is a wonderful way to sharpen one's own belief system.

GWU has become a leader in helping its students in these areas! We have more students in these meetings than most other schools in the southeast.



University Happenings:

The weekend of March 15-18 was very fulfilling. On Friday some faculty members and students attended the southeast regional meeting of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion (NABPR) meeting at Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte. This annual meeting helps promote understanding and networking among Baptist professors who teach in the field of religious studies at the undergraduate level and in seminaries in the southeastern part of the U.S. The program emphasis focused on sharing creative ways of teaching religion in the classroom and handling a huge diversity of religious backgrounds by the students. The president's address by Glenn Jonas from Campbell University provided a fascinating summary of the life of W.W. Finlator. This pastor and denominational activist reflects the so-called 'left-wing' of Baptist life in the south. Glenn is coauthoring a soon-to-be-released book highlighting this side of Baptists -- a story which isn't very well known.

Friday evening through Sunday morning was the regional meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) and the American Academy of Religion (AAR) meetings at the Adam's Mark Hotel near downtown Charlotte. Additional GWU students joined us for this meeting, some attending for the first time. As a New Testament specialist I usually attend the New Testament seminar sessions and was quite pleased with the overall quality of the paper presentations this year. Sessions focused on themes such as Jewish-Christian relations, studies in Paul and Hebrews, and studies in the Gospels,

Acts and early Christian writings. Some 16 papers were presented by professors and doctoral students, along with one of the four NT sessions being devoted to a panel discussion without formal papers. This was only the New Testament section, one of over a dozen sections among the sponsoring organizations.

Some former seminary students of mine were among those presenting papers -- something I take great pleasure in. Also, just as significant to me is the growing participation of our GWU undergraduate religion majors and divinity school students in both this annual regional meeting and the national meeting of these same groups each November. Each of us can learn from one another even though many times our belief systems and religious heritage are vastly different. We Baptists

Continued in column to the left:

For all kinds of info about us as well as a PDF copy and an expanded HTML version of this newsletter, check out our homepage [Cranfordville](http://Cranfordville.com) at <http://Cranfordville.com>

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Claire's Musings:

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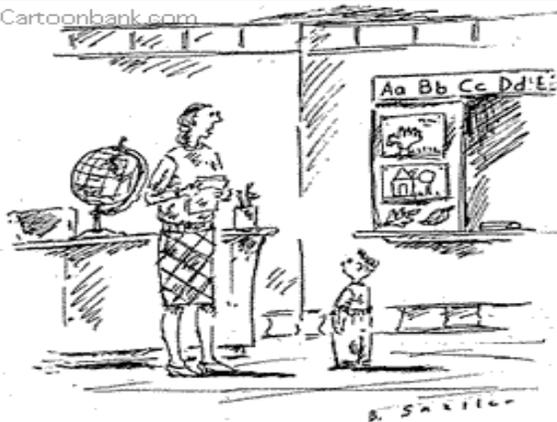
We have been enjoying Carrie's occasional weekend visits. It's like having a youngster in college again, complete with dirty clothes for washing. Thank goodness she takes care of everything. For our "city" girl, she has adjusted well to life in the Nantahala National Forest area. Her thinking of Boiling Springs as an extremely small town has changed. All of a sudden it's looking pretty good and not quite so small. It's great to see how happy Carrie and Daniel are in their new life.

One Saturday morning I met with several ladies from our Sunday school class for breakfast. We had the greatest time just visiting and of course that included lots of laughter. Lorin is substitute teaching more and more in different Sunday school classes at our church and I am enjoying getting to hear him (after all he is my favorite teacher). But, at the same time we do miss things going on in our class and there's not much time for visiting. This was an excellent opportunity for getting to know some of my friends better. I am looking forward to more times like that especially this summer when school is out.

I have not been keeping up with the housework very well lately because I have been going through another "picture binge". I have the biggest mess in our living room with everything set up for the Creative Memories, which is requires changing over from old picture albums to the newer acid free materials. It requires a lot of creativity to design the pages and at times that is not easy for me. But, it is so much fun. At the rate I am going it will take years, I have too many pictures.

We are now looking forward to Angie, Brian, Clay, and Taylor coming to see us on spring break. I am so thankful I will be off for spring break at the same time. These kids love it up here as much as Carrie and Daniel do. Hopefully Angie and I will have some time to work on both our pictures together. We are looking forward to that week of just being together. Carrie and Daniel will be having orientation that week on their jobs, so it may be a little difficult for all of us to get together much. And, Lorin has already had his spring break. Somehow, someway we will find a way to get together. Brian has not seen their place yet, so we might possibly go there and not only be together, but enjoy being in a beautiful national forest. How perfect!

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"Please remind your mom and dad that it's a parent-teacher conference, not a parent-teacher-attorney conference."



Lorin's Musings:

For the sixth segment of NC Baptist history, we will take a look at the period from 1964 to the present -- a period insightfully

labeled A Rope of Sand by Don Gordon in his *Like Drops of Morning Dew: A Concise History of North Carolina Baptists*. This has been essentially the period of my ministry beginning with my first pastorate in Graford Texas from 1964 to 1968. Of course, nationally these years have experienced enormous upheaval and change in American society. JFK's assassination, the Vietnam War and protest movement, the Jesus Movement and the hippy movement, the Nixon scandal and national embarrassment over Watergate, the baseless 'feel-good' years of the Reagan era. Not as well known but perhaps even more important has been the explosive growth of pluralism with ethnic groups collectively becoming as significant as the white European based segment. With this explosion of different people groups immigrating into the U.S. has come an explosion of non-Christian religious groups, with Islam now the fastest growing religion in the U.S. All this has produced high level anxiety and change in our country. Many could identify well with the declaration in the old Negro spiritual Green Pastures: "Ever'thang nailed down done comin' loose!"

Of course, the central story of this era for Southern Baptists is 'the Controversy.' From the late 1970s on the right-wing segment of SBC life has expended unbelievable effort and energies in its attempt to "save the SBC from encroaching liberalism." This 'take-over' movement could not have happened in a different atmosphere. With the assumption of a 'white-knight triumphal deliverer' mentality, key fundamentalist leaders have plotted and succeeded in taking control of the national organization of Southern Baptists by the late 1980s. Unfortunately, I lived out that nightmare as a denominational seminary professor from 1974 until 1997, being caught on the front line of the battlefield.

Gone forever from Southern Baptists is the level of respect and trust that was at the heart of SBC growth in the post-war years previously. Systematically, the national SBC organization is being turned into an ecclesiastical hierarchy enforcing rigid control from a 'top-down' approach, thus reversing the tradition of Southern Baptists from their beginning in the 1800s.

North Carolina Baptists have not escaped impact from all this. Growing numbers of NC churches have participated in the Alliance of Baptists begun in 1985 and especially in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship started in 1991. These two alternative Baptist groups have growing statewide organizations in North Carolina. In 1990 the state convention began providing alternative giving plans for churches and individuals no longer able in good conscience to support missions and education through the national SBC Cooperative Program. Expansions of this plan were added in 1994 and 1998. The net effect has been to encourage decentralization and increasing diversity among NC Baptists. The establishment of alternative divinity schools began with GWU, was followed by one at Campbell University, as well as the Baptist House at Duke University. Also a couple of Baptist universities have severed ties to the state organization, with several others poised to follow if deemed necessary. The result of all this has been a flat growth rate for the past 35 years, except for the ethnic oriented congregations. The fundamentalists have succeeded in accomplishing what they claimed liberalism was pushing Southern Baptists toward.