



News from the Blue Ridge



Volume 4

Claire & Lorin Cranford

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Issue 5



Family Events:

The chaos of end of semester responsibilities has made us late getting out this edition of the newsletter, but finally we have gotten the needed time to get it done.



One very delightful weekend in April was the visit of Sheila and Kevin Griffith. They have been at the University of Virginia working on advanced degrees for the past few years and are now in the process of moving back to Texas this June to begin the next phase of their journey. We have stayed in touch and see one another at professional meetings, but we had

a most delightful time with them over the weekend here in Boiling Springs. Of course, we had to take them to Chimney Rock which is one of our special places to go, along with the greenway along the river just south of our house. They are an exceptionally bright couple with a wonderful future ahead of them. We treasure our friendship with them.

The most significant family item has been the move to NC by Brian and Angie. This winter and spring they made several trips to NC looking for a place to live and for Brian to explore job opportunities. They made the final, complete move out here at the end of April. (See the pictures of all this at Cranfordville.com on the web under Photo Albums. They are purchasing two acres of very scenic land just south of the Broad River some 8 miles from us, and will eventually build a permanent home on the land. Until then, they found a wonderful rent house in Forest City about 15 miles west of us and are fixing it up as their temporary home for the next year or so. Clay is finishing out the school year in the Forest City Elementary School.



Brian is in the process of moving Kelley Floors from Texas to North Carolina. He will have to make some trips back to Texas while finishing up the remaining contracts there. But a number of contractors out here have expressed serious interest in contracting with his company for carpet and floor installations. So he is excited about getting the business underway here. The rent house has a shed out back that will initially provide a place to set up and store equipment for the company.

Needless to say, we're thrilled to have them here close by. Our dream of having both girls and their families living reasonably close by has now come true. Daniel and Carrie are about two and a half hours away in the mountains, and Brian and Angie about fifteen minutes away. We will be able to see them often and enjoy doing many things together.



University Happenings:

Finally, school is out for the spring semester! What a demanding four months for me personally! With the heavy teaching load and growing amounts of outside activity I felt like I was playing catch-up most of the semester, but never quite able to catch-up!

The classes this spring produced mixed results. Some of the students seemed to excel while others struggled to understand what was going on in the classes, including both the New Testament survey and the Greek classes. One very positive side has been the expressed appreciation for the classes by several students. Those who are eager to learn and make the commitment to better themselves are the ones who provide the real satisfaction in teaching.

One of my growing concerns is the repeated demonstration of extreme biblical illiteracy by the freshmen students coming out of our churches. I'm finding that growing up in Sunday School and church makes virtually no difference in how well individuals read and understand the Bible. One of my Buddhist students who had never seen a Bible before coming to GWU from overseas excelled far above most of the students with extensive church background! Our children's and youth programs in church are miserably failing when it comes to teaching just the basics about scripture. One especially discouraging aspect of this that is becoming increasingly apparent: young people coming out of Southern Baptist church are much more illiterate about the Bible than those coming from Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Methodist and Presbyterian churches. The SBC claim to be devoted to scripture rings very hollow in light of the ignorance about the scripture that these churches are producing. More often than not, the SBC background the students have create so many bias against serious study of scripture that they find it almost impossible to take the words of scripture seriously.

Gratefully, occasional exceptions to this come along and wonderful things begin to happen. More than one student in the NT survey classes indicated to me this semester that their exegesis paper assignment helped to bring about either a conversion or a deep spiritual renewal in their lives. For that I'm very thankful.

Summer school begins on May 24 and promises to be challenging. I will be teaching a New Testament survey class on campus every day from 10:00 to 12:00 in one of the multimedia classrooms, and then travel the one hour plus trip to our other campus at Statesville to teach a second NT survey class every Tuesday and Thursday evenings. This will just be for the first summer term through June 26. The remainder of the summer will be free from teaching responsibility.

Ron Williams and I are working with Wadworth Press on developing a CD-ROM for the Freed NT textbook during the summer. This should keep us busy.

105 Twin Lake Drive
Shelby, NC 28152-0660

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>

Ph: 704 434-5657
Fax: 704 434-0472
webmaster@cranfordville.com



Claire's Musings:

May, 2001

I thought I already had more excitement than I could have ever thought possible around here with Carrie and Daniel moving close by. Now things are more wonderful than ever with Angie, Brian, Clay, and Taylor moving in this area. They are staying with us as they are getting some repair and painting jobs done on their rent house in Forest City. It is only about 16 miles from our house. It's hard to imagine life getting much better than this. Brian is still finishing up jobs in Texas. This will require a couple of trips back to Texas. Angie and Brian have been working hard on the house, but without much help. Lorin and I have been involved in end of the year testing and unable to help them much. At least I was able to baby-sit some after school. It is amazing to see how much their house has improved already.

The End-of-Grade testing is continuing to get worse and more ridiculous each year. Whoever is coming up with all these ideas has evidently never taught school. It is my belief that the EOG is hurting the public schools more than it is helping. The school children are losing out on just basic learning, so that they can learn how to take a test and how to bubble in answers. Teachers are losing valuable time in teaching so that they can teach students how to take tests. The children are bored and the teachers would love to teach more Social Studies and Science etc. A lot of the teaching is reading and math, which of course, is very important. But, some of what makes school more interesting and more fun, like science experiments is being taught less and less. I have seen this quote, "Our children may not be breaking any records for reading, but they have developed an intimate relationship with the No. 2 pencil."

I waited many years to be a teacher, only to be in the middle of this controversy. I do enjoy teaching children and enjoy seeing the joy on their faces when "the light bulb comes on". But so much joy has gone out of teaching and learning. Increasingly there are also more and more children with various disabilities, physical, mental, or emotional. It breaks my heart to see children who do not have much of a family life. The emotional scars are too much of a burden for children so young to have to bear. It is obvious in working with them what some of their lives must be like. That's what breaks my heart. Teachers give a lot of love and compassion to their students, but it's difficult to break through barriers already built up in their few short years.

Something needs to change to bring back the joy in learning and in teaching. I am only giving my opinion, but I know that I am not alone in my feelings. Perhaps some teachers are better able to cope with this, but many are leaving the profession -- at the rate of 40% within the first three years of teaching. Many are new teachers with enthusiasm that is smothered in the first year or two. What a sad loss for our children. We need to keep these loving and caring teachers.

A BRAIN TEASER: How can being a good poker player make a preacher a much better minister? I'm convinced good poker playing skills are essential to the preacher. Share your thoughts with me on this via email at webmaster@cranfordville.com.



Lorin's Musings:

For the past several issues of the newsletter, we have been exploring the history of North Carolina Baptists -- at least the Southern Baptist segment. In the fascinating exploration of days gone by I have come to some conclusions about Baptists in the Tar Heel state.

(1) We have overcome some large obstacles in order to get the message of the gospel out to the people. In the very early years, spreading the message of Christ had to overcome high levels of illiteracy and lack of educated leaders, extremely difficult travel conditions from one part of the state to another, at times great poverty economically, doctrinal objection to missions, as well as numerous other challenges. Yet, through the years Baptists have spread the gospel message extensively over the entire state. As some visitors have noted, "there appears at times to be more Baptists than people in North Carolina." One doesn't travel very far into the state before beginning to notice the massive numbers of Baptist churches.

My prayer and hope is that this spirit of missionary/evangelistic concern will never die among Baptists in NC. The hyper-Calvinism being taught in some of the SBC seminaries today, especially Southern Seminary in Louisville, KY, stands as a spiritual cancer that eventually will kill this missionary spirit and the denomination as well.

(2) North Carolina has been a very diversified state culturally etc. almost from the very beginning. The three geographical regions in the state from west to east -- the mountains, the Piedmont, the coastal plains -- have defined the state way beyond geography. We have a wide diversity of ethnic groups living in the state. Much older European influence is still strong, all the way from Scotland to Germany. But as the 2000 census is revealing, that diversity has mushroomed in the past decade. The almost 500% growth of the Hispanic population of the state; the reversal of migrants for decades previously leaving the state and now flooding into the state by the thousands; the expansive growth of non-Christian, especially Islam, and peripheral Christian religious groups -- all these factors and more are contributing to a much wider diversity of people in North Carolina. The tensions, as the old South gradually disappears and is replaced by the new cosmopolitan South, are very real. The nostalgic side of religion can quickly contribute negatively in a resistance to change. The next decade for NC Baptists will challenge us to learn flexibility and openness to new ideas, as never before.

To pull back into a nostalgic shell living in the past will make Baptists irrelevant and our witness to the gospel unheard. Preachers playing on this 'old time religion' deception must be quickly and decisively rejected. We must as NC Baptists learn to speak the gospel in Chinese, Spanish, Croatian, Vietnamese, and dozens of other languages, as well as Southern English!

In that diversity we will have to learn cooperation and acceptance of others in new ways than ever before! Different cultures, languages, and viewpoints will become increasingly present in the Baptist community of faith. Rigid legalism demanding that everyone walk in lock-step unison won't work. NC Baptists will need to reach down deep into the well of our heritage and learn to work together in the midst of diversity.