

Twenty-Two Years of Hard Work, Excitement, Institutional Memory

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A farm boy without a career plan had retired after an eventful 26.5-year career in the United States Army. After retirement, he filled the days with substitute teaching, cutting wood and planting trees. Nothing challenged him like the years at Clemson when it was an all-male military college and most jobs he had in the military including leading an organization for 6 years with about a hundred military personnel and more than ten-thousand civilians. At night he watched television news, studied history, including the Bible and read everything he could find about current events.

It was the 1980s and the nation had barely survived the incompetent administration of Jimmy Carter and had taken a chance on Ronald Reagan. The leftists that had forced the abandonment of South Vietnam to the Communists hated Reagan, but were unsuccessful in destroying him as they had successfully destroyed President Nixon.

The normally patriotic people of Upstate South Carolina didn't know how to deal with Vietnam Veterans. Walter Kronkite, the "most trusted man in America" had told them that Vietnam Veterans were "evil, aggressive baby killers." The veterans avoided controversy and conflict with their home grown enemies. They had already suffered enough.

He had served six Commanders-in-Chief. Military Officers on active duty avoided discussions of politics and religion. The nation was in a state of turmoil. Now with no limitations on his political activities and a firm belief that the oath he took to Protect and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies Foreign and Domestic, remained binding, he became involved in party politics at the grass roots, and writing letters to editors.

He knew from experience that actions had consequences, and he quickly learned that rule also applied to letters to the editor.

He attended a meeting of the Greenville County School Board on the evening that one of the Superintendents resigned. He had a long conversation with Dr. Tom Kerns who was to become the replacement. After a long discussion, Kerns said the District needed the services of someone with the experience of the retiree and that he would be calling him to pursue the matter.

The next morning the local daily newspaper printed a heavily edited version of a letter he had written to the paper critical of the district administration, school board and reporters from the paper. Despite the editing, they left in the comment he made about the paper rarely printing anything factual about the district unless it was favorable. The letter stated that the district was "playing the young inexperienced reporters like a violin." He never received a call from Kerns.

Over the months and years he filled the trash cans in his basement office with unsent letters. He spent three years writing gratis for a small weekly. He quit that and went back to being retired full time.

The home phone began ringing. He did not realize that he had developed a group of readers that insisted that the Upstate needed a Conservative, Judeo-Christian newspaper. He resisted and

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eventually the retiree and his spouse made it a matter of prayer.

Was there a reason his life was spared on several occasions when others did not survive? Did God have a plan for his life that he had never sought to have revealed? The couple had never worked together. He had never run a newspaper or even had a journalism class. She could not type, but had managed a personnel office in Alexandria, Virginia and worked as a volunteer at the White House for First Lady Pat Nixon for a couple of years. Neither knew how to put a newspaper together.

They decided that if it were not God's will, the venture would fail. The newspaper would incur no debt except their free labor and funds. They hired an African- American woman who was in the first integrated class to graduate from Greenville High school to be editor and paste the paper together. They bought a computer that none of the three knew how to operate.

They learned that God does not require ability. All he needs is availability and commitment. Now 22 years since the first paper was published, thanks to God and the helpers he has sent their way, The Times Examiner has survived. It has been a costly labor of love, and a valuable education in dealing with people and learning who is a user and who is a friend in good and bad times.

God has blessed them with strangers who have become like family.