

“Gleanings of Zion”

*A Collection of Stories, Sketches,
Photos and Tributes*



*Therefore, thus says the Lord God,
“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone,
A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed.
He who believes in it will not be disturbed.”*

(Isaiah 28:16 – NASB)

Foreword

In addition to the occasion where we as a church will celebrate 200 years of faith at the end of August, the members of Zion Baptist were tasked with commemorating this accolade with several different activities and mementos. What you will find in the following pages is a small monument to the past 200 years.

In no way can this brief compilation come close to the array of vast memories that have taken place within the walls of this church. As with any compilation, the authors of the individual stories and excerpts have taken great care to express their thoughts and put down what their feelings are about what this place means to them. Very little editing has been done so as not to detract from the wishes and intentions of the writers.

In an attempt to convey their feelings, the writers have composed memories which will make us laugh, but will also stir the heart and enlighten you as to the many different ways a church can minister to any given person at various points in our lives.

Some 200 years ago, God placed a desire in the hearts of several men and even more women to establish a house of worship in this community. The stories following will certainly reveal that Zion Baptist Church may have changed physically on the outside since this time, but the inner workings have remained the same; that is our love for God and community has enabled the will of the Lord to display itself beyond the walls of a church building.

As a committee, we would like to thank the members of Zion Baptist Church, the writers of the memories and especially Ms. Ora Trivett for her persistence in accumulating most of the things which are contained in this book.

May God bless us as we continue to build memories and impact the community around us by displaying the love that He has for each of us.

-200th Anniversary Committee (2016)

‘Farmers Church Growing Strong’



(Photos of the Family Life Center during Construction)

SHELBY – After 184 years, Zion Baptist Church still has some growing to do.

Founded in 1816, Zion Baptist is in its fifth building on this sacred patch of land north of Shelby. The current sanctuary, which was built in 1959, is still going strong; it just needs to be a little bigger, according to Zion’s pastor.

“We’re just out of Sunday school classroom space,” said the Rev. Randy Bridges. “The kitchen facility we currently have is just too small.”

That’s where a new \$1.3 million church addition comes in. Zion plans to build a new classroom wing, kitchen and multipurpose room onto its existing building.

The addition will give them plenty of space for Sunday school and other church functions, Bridges said, while the multipurpose room can be used for everything from wedding receptions to basketball games.

“We think it will be a place not only for people in the church but for people in the community,” Bridges said.

Zion Baptist has always been a community-oriented church, according to member Bob Cabaniss.

He ought to know; he’s been going to church here since 1949.

“When we first started going to Zion, the men sat on one side and the women on the other,” he said.

Zion was a farmer’s church back in those days. Cabaniss estimated about 75 percent of the congregation farmed back in the 1940s and ‘50s.

So when the time came to build the current red brick and white column building, which opened in 1953, the members of Zion Baptist Church looked to the land to help them out. Farmers in the church family donated a portion of their goods – be it cotton, eggs or fresh fruits – to the church.

“We had a sale on the steps of the old church,” Cabaniss said.

He said the current building cost \$120,000 to build back in the early 1950s, or less than one-tenth of what the building addition would cost today.

Carolyn Horn, who, like Cabaniss, has been attending Zion Baptist for 50 years, said Sundays revolved around Zion for families in the area.



(View of Family Life Center during Construction from the Caretaker's Home)

“Sunday consisted of going to church and having a big Sunday dinner,” Mrs. Horn said.

“You went visiting friends and family in the afternoon. People from church would invite you to their home and there was always plenty to eat.”

She said the church remains tightly knit, and worship attendance averages around 220 per week.

Bridges said once again, the people of Zion Baptist have stepped to the plate to help the church grow. The church received \$807,000 in pledges for its building campaign with groundbreaking still months away.

“We feel pretty good about that,” Bridges said.

Many of Zion’s most interesting stories can be found in its cemetery.

Church members built a brick garden to honor Libby Tarlton Senter and her 10-year-old daughter, Rachel.

Mrs. Senter, daughter of former Zion pastor Rev. William Tarlton, and Rachel were killed in the West African nation of Liberia 14 years ago on a mission trip.

“We usually have our sunrise Easter service out here at the garden every year,” Bridges said.

One granite marker near the cemetery honors Oran Pruett, who actually died *in* the cemetery.

Pruett wasn’t a church member; he wasn’t even from Cleveland County. Bridges explained that on June 13, 1956, Pruett fell out of a commercial airplane and fell thousands of feet to his death, landing among the tombstones.

-From an Article written before the New Addition

‘Luther Haynes’

Sometime in the mid 50’s the newly built Zion Baptist Church stood proudly about 150 (feet) west of the church it replaced. The tall steeple towered over everything nearby. People were seeing the results of the Lord’s Acre sales and of the sacrifices of its members. The smelly old cold furnace and oiled oak floors of the old building are replaced by warm carpets and quiet central heat. This beautiful new facility was over twice the size of the previous church. For a short time members did the janitorial work while a new caretaker was being found. A short while later, Mr. and Mrs. Luther G. Haynes took the full time position and moved into the basement of the old church. Mr. Haynes soon became a beloved figure to the members for his hard work and dependability. The church was always well kept and open for service.



(Group Photo on Front Steps of Present Church circa 1950s)

Mr. Haynes was usually found on Sunday morning nodding and welcoming people at the often used west side entrance. Parents favored that entrance because the nursery and children’s department were up just a few steps in the new building. Mr. Haynes was a balding, stocky man with grandfatherly appeal. One Sunday in the late 50’s, members Frank and Mary Beam and young children Betsy and David, entered through the side door as usual to begin the church morning in God’s house. Later, four year old David asked “Mama, where is God?” Mary explained God was everywhere, but seeing that did not answer his need to know, realized that he had not seen Mr. Haynes at the side door. Even with a child’s imagination little David could not understand why Mr. Haynes “Alias God” was not at the door to his house.

-Sam Wilson

'Zion Memories'

Sunday school is a special memory of Zion for me. When I was very young I would sit on the piano bench beside Delphia McCurry while she played and we all sang. I remember being happy to get to sing with her. My Mama was my teacher when I moved up to an older age class and her example of teaching the Bible lessons showed me the importance of knowing what they could teach me.

My Daddy and I sang a duet when I was about seven or eight years old. We practiced a lot and the song "I Guess God Thought of Everything" taught me that the simplest parts of life are the most important. I remember Daddy smiling down at me so I wouldn't be scared when I looked out at all the faces in the congregation.

Seeing my parents in the choir is the strongest memory I have of growing up at Zion. I would hear them singing at home practicing their cantatas and the performances were the best part of the holidays. Hearing all the voices together and the stories the songs told made me feel so close to God and they still do today.

-Leslie Cabaniss Davis

'Betty Eaker Wilson – Volunteer Church Organist 1953-1980'

I would like to share my memories of Betty Eaker Wilson, who was organist when I came to Zion in 1961. I was informed that Betty began playing for us the first Sunday in 1953, when we moved into this church building.

The organ was in the choir loft, and the organist had to use a mirror to see the Director. When Betty was sick and couldn't come to church, I filled in for her. That's how I know this made playing difficult, but Betty was perfect. She knew her music.

She was a very good organist, and there was something else special about her. She was very faithful to her church, and Zion loved her. Betty was a volunteer; she would not accept pay. She served as a witness to God, through her music. In addition to playing on Sunday, she was always attending funerals, ready to play, when needed. Because Betty had a full-time job, she had to practice on her day off or at night.

Betty was married to Jack Wilson, and they had two daughters, Barbara (Wilson Hilton) and Susan (Wilson). They came with their mama, when she practiced. The girls played out in the parking lot. They roller-skated and soon learned the pavement was pretty hard. To pass the time, they had fun climbing trees too.

Betty had her share of difficulties, but her commitment to her church was strong, even when she survived cancer. She was volunteer organist for 27 years, retiring in 1980. My memories of her are special.

-Hazel B. Wilson

'Betty Jean McGinnis Walker'

When Ed and I were married in 1961, Betty Jean Walker was Zion's part-time music (choir) director. She served Zion from 1958-1981...23 years! (She had been hired away from a neighboring church, Eastside Baptist.) During her years of service, we brought in extra chairs, because we had a full choir loft. Along with planning special music each Sunday, Betty planned Christmas and Easter cantatas and plays. She would take off from work to sing solos or provide other special music (duets and /or quartets) for funerals.

When the choir was asked by Nina Rudisill (the counselor for women at the Grace Home beside of Hebron Colony, which is the house for men) to go to Hebron Colony (Elk's park in Boone), we went to witness though singing. We had this opportunity several times. Betty led us, too, when the choir went several times to our preacher, Russell Fitts', previous church. I remember that the acoustics were very good there, and the music sounded extra-fine, as we sang choir specials and hymns with solo, quartet, and full choir voices. The congregation seemed to have a great time rejoicing, and we all praised God through music.

In addition to being dedicated to her church family, Betty Jean loved her family...husband Grady, son Eddie and daughter Cheryl.

Betty was a graduate of Westminster Choir College, and she had a beautiful voice and personality. When needed, she could even play the piano or organ. She was a mentor and positive influence for the youth. Some went on to further their study in music...Susan Wilson, Barbara Hilton, and Robert Hendrick. Betty had the choir members singing in trios, duets and quartets, using their voices in ways they didn't realize they could. She was very strict, but the choir loved her, and she believed in all of us. My memories are special.

-Hazel B. Wilson

'Cross Placed in Sanctuary'

When she was meeting with a church committee several years ago to write a vision statement for Zion, it was mentioned that our sanctuary didn't have a cross. Kathi Fletcher carried that thought in her heart for a good while, being intentional to notice crosses in other churches. After praying about how, when and details, she contacted Ron Alexander, another Zion member. He agreed and, accepting no pay, he hand-crafted our beautiful cross, painted red in the center for the blood shed for each of us. Leonard and Kathi hung this cross beside the baptistery in May 2015. In every service of our church, we see this symbol and remember our Savior's love, mercy, and grace. Thank you, Jesus!

-Hazel B. Wilson

‘Favorite Memories of Zion’

I have many wonderful memories of Zion one of which was Bible School every June with delicious snacks prepared by Miss Mozelle (as we called her) and other precious ladies of the church served outside on the concrete tables under the beautiful shade trees. I had many wonderful Sunday school teachers who taught me about Jesus and His love for me...Beth Cabaniss, Teala McSwain, Linda Cornwell, and my own precious mother! But, for me, I think my most precious memory is that of my grandfather, Turner Cabaniss. We picked him up *every* Sunday morning for church...he did not drive. He always greeted us with his sweet smile and words of encouragement! I sat next to him many, many Sundays on his usual pew (left, near front) sharing a hymn book and worshipping together. He loved me unconditionally and I knew it early on. I still think of him (and see him in my mind) each time I return to Zion.

-CeCe Cabaniss Grigg

I joined Zion Church after Hal and I were married. I moved my letter from Double Springs Baptist Church in 1959.

I have many memories at Zion Baptist Church. Actually I began making memories at Zion when Hal and I were dating. I remember coming with Hal on Sunday nights to BTU. After church, Frances Cornwell (Mrs. Graham Greene) would invite the young people to her house for fellowship and singing. Lee and Helen Cornwell, her parents, were always glad to see us come.

We loved going there and looked forward to BTU and our fun times at their house.



(Photo of BTU Meeting – Spring 1952)

One memory at Zion I remember was when Hal and I were dating; we went to Winston-Salem with Miss Ruby Irvin to Wake Forest College for a musical festival. It lasted all day and there were young people from Baptist churches all over the state. It was quite an experience, especially riding with Miss Ruby.



(Lee Cornwell, Rev. Russell Fitts & Miss Ruby Irvin)

One memory I have at Zion happened when our oldest daughter, CeCe, was about two years old. At the time I was working in the nursery for Sunday school with Irene Cornwell, Inez Whitaker, and Lou Ella Jones. We took turns keeping the children during worship service.

One Sunday after worship service, I went to the nursery to get CeCe and Kelly. As always, I asked how the girls behaved, etc. Neither Lou Ella nor Inez answered me and they really wouldn't even look at me. All week I wondered what had happened.

The next Sunday during Sunday school, I asked Lou Ella about the previous Sunday. She told me that CeCe had climbed up in the window and swung around the middle post. The windows rolled out on each side with a center post. Lou said she almost had a heart attack when she saw CeCe. The nursery was where the library is now and on the second floor. Needless to say, screens had already been installed on the nursery windows.

I always wondered why the nursery was on the second floor. Now it is in the basement. Every time I go in the side door I see the window above me and remember how CeCe scared the wits out of Lou Ella and Inez. CeCe did get around fast at that age. It's funny now, but it wasn't then.

Not only do I remember events, I have great memories of some of Zion's members.

A few people really stand out in my mind.

Frances Cornwell Greene, who was so sweet and great with the young people.

Betty Walker, choir director, and Betty Wilson, organist who worked for years with the choirs.

Hubert Wellmon, who, to me, was a true southern gentleman.

Teala McSwain, a true angel. I watched her grow up at Zion. She and Delphia McSwain worked with the children for years. Teala had a beautiful voice and often sang solos. One of my favorites she sang was “Without Him.”

And of course I must include Turner Cabaniss. My father in law. A true Christian through and through. I never saw him get angry, he always told people “you are doing a good job” and said to always call people by their name. It made them feel good. I can almost see him sitting in that same pew Sunday after Sunday.

The world needs more Frances’, Bettys, Huberts, Tealas and Turners.

These are just a few people who have influenced my life.

-Martha Cabaniss

One of my favorite memories at Zion was when I was in the RAs. Frank Barbee was our leader and he would take us camping at Mount Mitchell. Also, he would take us fishing at Lake Wylie. Larry Dixon, Harold Metcalfe, Benny Grant, Jim Gantt and Dean Wright and I were in the group that went. Frank and Bob Gantt, the other leader, always made sure a good time was had by all.

-Hal Cabaniss



(The Fourth Church House at Front Entrance)

‘Zion’s Outside Cement Baptismal Pool’

One of my early remembrances of Zion Church was the cement baptismal pool. This was sometime between 1936 and 1942. It was located on the right side of the fourth church building near the road that goes around the present building and above the cement picnic tables. I never remember seeing anyone baptized in this pool but it was a fun place for the children to play. The pool had a set of steps on each side of the pool. It was so much fun to run down one side and up the other side. After church services, while our parents were still talking with each other, the children had lots of fun there.

-Beth Davis Hafer

‘Picture of the Jordan River in the Baptismal Pool’

The beautiful picture of the Jordan River in our baptismal pool was painted by Miss Lyda Poston, a member of Zion Church. Miss Lyda lived near the home where I grew up, so I can remember going to her home to watch her paint this picture. She had never traveled to the area of the Jordan River but had many books with pictures of the river. The picture was painted on a large canvas that could be moved to the church when it was finished. It was placed in the fourth church building and then Miss Lyda painted around the edges of the baptistery. I think this was in the late 1940’s or the early 1950’s.

When the fifth building for Zion was completed in 1953, the canvas was moved into the new building. Later, Terry Clark touched up the painting where some of the paint had cracked off.

-Beth Davis Hafer

‘Memories of Zion Members’

Mr. and Mrs. Webb Kiser were active members of Zion for many years and were Cleveland County school teachers.

Mr. Kiser was a dedicated deacon and served for many years as chairman of the deacons.

Mr. and Mrs. Kiser taught classes at Zion. Mrs. Kiser was very interested in Zion’s history and was chairman of the history committee from 1956 until 1980.

Over the years they did many things for the community and at Zion they contributed generously to the choir and music department.

Mr. and Mrs. Mills Cornwell were longtime active members of Zion. Mr. Cornwell was a farmer and dealer in farm equipment. Mrs. Cornwell was a teacher/supervisor for many years. They had no children.

Mr. Cornwell was instrumental in building the Boy Scout hut of Zion. He gave a substantial amount of money toward the construction and also gave financial support to Zion's Troop.

After Mr. Cornwell's death, Mrs. Cornwell's will left part of her estate to create the Mills and Earcie Scholarship Fund. This amount was in excess of \$800,000. The will indicated that a scholarship fund be established for a deserving active Zion youth who has been a member for at least three years. The recipient can select a four year college or university of their choice. Many Zion youth have benefited from this scholarship.

My parents and Cabaniss grandparents were members of Zion – so I attended Zion before I was born.

Reverend Bill Tarlton (we called him preacher Tarlton) baptized me in the old church, after I accepted Jesus as my Savior.

One of my favorite memories was of the youth going to the preacher's house and having parties in the basement.

A great memory is of the Lord's Acre celebration. Sitting on hay bales on a truck to watch the auction, was always fun. One year our Sunday School Class sold popcorn during the auction. This was our contribution.



(Children on Truck during Sale)



(Lord's Acre Sale)

My parents, Cabaniss grandparents and Cabaniss and Horn great grandparents are buried in Zion Cemetery.

I have so many great memories of Zion.

-Jane Gragg

'In Memory of W. V. Tarlton'

He took my hand that glorious day,
when I walked down the aisle and nervously did say.

I've come to begin a new life, even though I'm only ten.
I know I love Jesus and want to be born again.

He stood so straight and his smile so wide,
the tears on my face began to subside.

He influenced my life, as did all of Zion's best!
What a joy to have worshipped there; I've been richly blessed.

As the years passed, and I chose a mate for life,
he was one of the preachers who pronounced us man and wife.

As he grew older and all the heartaches he faced;
He kept right on smiling, and was a tribute to the human race.

The last time I saw him was in his hospital bed.
I walked through the door, and he reached out his hand and said...

"It's so good to see you"...His face was still a glow.
Although he was in pain, only his Christian love showed.

The lord called him home, and we're saddened at his passing.
We rejoice for our salvation, because God's truth is everlasting.

-Brenda Curtis (1990)



(Rev. & Mrs. William V. Tarlton)

‘Hubert Wellmon’

I remember the first Sunday we attended church at Zion. We were greeted by Hubert Wellmon. He spoke with us a minute or two and got us seated. For the service, preacher Fitts had a really good message. When we started to leave after the service, Hubert followed us out and invited us to come again.

We walked to our car with him. While we were getting the children in the car, we noticed he and others taking food containers from their cars. We asked him what was going on and he said it was Memorial Day and there was always a lunch after church. He invited us to stay and eat with his family.

This dear kind man will always be special to me.

-Myrna Hollifield

‘Lunch Time, Movies & Rev. Biggerstaff’

Many years ago and even today, some wives prepare Sunday lunch before coming to church. We did not have lots of places to eat out. Most people had lunch at home. Fast food was not available in those years.

I do not remember who the minister was, but he was long winded or he was on a roll. It was past the lunch hour when he said, I just have one more thing to say. You could almost hear the congregation exhale. Mrs. Melba Propst was sitting at the piano waiting to play the closing hymn when the book fell on the keys and the pastor said it was his key to stop. Everyone began to laugh.



MONEY'S NOT EVERYTHING—Rev. W. P. Biggerstaff took a thousand dollar annual salary cut to accept a call to two rural churches, Zion and Polkville Baptist, that pulled him away from a flourishing city charge, but that fazed him not at all because he saw a challenge in the new work. Against a background of the new \$13,500 parson-

age the Zion church provided, into which the Biggerstaff family recently moved, are shown the minister and the sleek new Buick automobile given him last week by members of the two churches to justify fully the faith he had shown. (Ellis Photo).

(W.P. Biggerstaff – From Article Published May 11, 1948)

Many years ago, the rule was, when the church doors were open for any type of service, you were there. Most of us teenagers were brought up with that rule. There was a movie on in town and the only time we could see it was on Sunday evening. We decided to beg out teacher to ask if we could. None of us could drive, so our teacher would have to take us. However, we needed permission to go. Somehow, Rev. Biggerstaff (he believed in working with the youth) got to our group and we told him our problem. We were sure God had a plan in it. Rev. Biggerstaff must have checked with the theater because he was okay with the teacher taking us. This was a really big thing for us and we attended all of our Sunday services like clockwork after that. I do not remember the name of the movie; well it *was* in the 1940s.

It was when Rev. Biggerstaff came to Zion that church began to change for me. He was interested in the youth. I believe that he believed the youth should be kept busy. We started a girls softball team (it was only fair since the boys had a ball team) and our coach was Jim Wilson. I do not remember if we played a game with any other team, I think we just played each other. We also had a Girl Scout troop. Mrs. A. V. Irvin was our leader. Of course the boys had a scout troop also.

-Ora Trivett

‘Memories of Betsy’

Some of my favorite memories of Zion are the first dinner theater programs that our youth started 25 years ago as a fundraiser for their mission trips. Their youth minister at that time was Faith Cooper Beam. Many of the skits were written by Debbie Harris, who had ALS and was confined to her bed at home. Parents stepped in to plan, prepare and serve the meals as well as decorate the fellowship building. Their program was performed downstairs with a makeshift stage and props from basements, garages and anywhere else they could salvage something of use. The skits were always hilarious and the kids did a super job every year. Serving around 150 people for 2 nights in the fellowship building proved to be quite a challenge. We begged for and borrowed enough card tables and chairs to provide seating. They were so close together, we could hardly get through. We had to bring glasses and silverware from home because the church did not have enough.

We served drinks out of a storage closet. One year, we picked ivy and pansies from Mrs. Jewell Blanton’s yard to use as centerpieces. We took them off the tables and put them in buckets of water so we could use them the next night. All the dinnerware, glasses and silverware had to be washed and dried by hand because there was no dishwasher. It was a full and busy weekend, but a great time of fellowship for the ladies of the church. Boy! Things sure changed when the family life center was built.



(Photos From a Zion Church Hee-Haw – A Precursor to Youth Dinner Theater)

When I think of the many wonderful people at Zion Baptist Church, one person comes to mind...my grandfather, Lee Cornwell, or as he was affectionately called, Papa. For me he was the most godly man who ever lived. I never heard him say an unkind word about anyone, complain even when he had physical ailments that sent him to the hospital many times, question why he lost an infant daughter, and two wives or struggled with the ups and downs of being a farmer. Papa was always happy and had a smile that I will never forget. He was the most giving person I know, always willing to lend a helping hand to anyone who needed help and he never expected anything in return. One of his favorite pastimes was watching Zion softball games, bring his lawn chair and sit on the top of the hill watching till the last game was over. He was Zion's biggest cheerleader. Papa loved the Lord and his church. He was so proud of Zion and the ministry here. I've always said that I hope I have lots of Cornwell genes in me because in my eyes Papa was the best.

-Betsy Boatwright



(Photo of the Zion Ball Team)



(Church Parsonage Located on Hwy 226 – Private Home Today)

‘Revival Meeting’

About the year 1935, I was just a young girl and a member of Zion Baptist Church. We always had Revival meetings the first week of August. We had a meeting in the morning and met again at Seven O’clock at night Monday through Friday. Our visiting minister was Reverend Sylvester Elliott, who was married to Pearl Cornwell (Frank Cornwell’s sister). That night he was preaching for our Revival and it was a very hot night. We did not have air conditioning so the windows were raised. A lot of bugs came in the church as we had no screens on the windows. That night he was preaching and waving his arms and a big bug almost flew into his mouth. He let out a scream and said “I got him.” We thought the bug went into his mouth but he had caught it in his hand.

-Dorcas Barbee

‘Thoughts on Zion Baptist Church’

My name is David Gonzalez and I live in Belize Central America. My perspective of Zion Baptist Church is somewhat unique in that while I benefitted directly from a rare short International Mission Team sent by Zion in 1994 to Belize, the Lord chose to bring me to this wonderful community to bless me even further. For 3 years, I stayed with and enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of the Alsobrook and Wellmon families while I attended Gardner-Webb University. After graduation I moved to Charlotte and launched my career at the Shoe-Shoe Corporate Headquarters where I was in charge of managing the entire computer network.

I could list the various tangible ways that Zion either influenced or directly impacted my life; deciding to go to Belize that faithful year (since you don’t traditionally go to Belize), petitioning GWU to accept me as a student, fostering in the Alsobrook and Wellmon families their well known generosity and kindness. The level of acceptance and inclusion that I felt at Zion was tremendous. Not once did anyone from the church say or otherwise make me feel like an outsider. Nevertheless, that is not, in my opinion the best that Zion taught or instilled in me, that lesson I believe, is the concept of what a church should be.

Prior to my coming to live in the Zion community, my concept of church was completely different. Church was a building which was to be respected and revered as a house of worship, which we visited once a week. I think this is a concept that most people outside of the US and perhaps even within the US, in the big cities, have. What Zion taught me was that church is an ecosystem, it should not be limited to just Sunday service. I believe Zion does this very well, Wednesday dinners, sports events, even the outreach to the homebound members. All these activities and I do believe I left out a few, that the church organizes or sponsors were all new to me. I haven’t been there in years, but I pray to God that all these activities are still going on because from the bottom of my heart I can tell you that, those activities make a big difference in the health of the church. I believe that these activities, while appearing insignificant at first sight, are actually the glue that keeps members close to each other. I believe that the fellowship of the church beyond the walls of the temple is just as important as a well prepared sermon.

In closing, I want to thank you all for opening your hearts and your doors to me and allowing me to be a part of your wonderful community. You’ve left a big mark in my heart and in my life and I sincerely hope that this concept of church can be preserved for many generations to come. Even if we have to setup church presence on Facebook or some other social media that future kids might be into. God bless ya’ll!

P.S. – Please make sure to thank the few faithful members of this church who are the unsung heroes of the planning, organizing and executing the various events for the rest of us. It always ends up being the same few members who do the hard work, so we should thank them at every possible occasion and may I even go so far as to suggest a special day of recognition for them. Now that I am an adult, I can tell you that if I had known how busy my adult life was going to

be, I probably would have refused to grow up, so please, let's appreciate those who selflessly sacrifice their precious free time for our enjoyment.

-David Gonzalez



(Oldest Members of Zion on Steps of Fourth Church during Construction of Present Church)

‘A Member of God’s Family at Zion Baptist Church’

The young girl went to church with Grandma, near every Sunday. There were lots of pretty statues to look at and a picture of Jesus. Grandma had a pretty necklace and she touched a small stone as she whispered something for each one. I learned much later Grandma was Catholic. I liked to go with Grandma to church and back to her house. She always had something good to eat. Grandma didn't have much to eat but she always wanted me to eat but she wasn't hungry. I was because at home there wasn't food. My sister and I looked for food in neighbors yards trash cans, the baby boys got the food in bottles. One day a lady came and put my sister and me in her car and we rode quite a while then she took my sister in a house and left her there. Not long after, I was taken in a house and left with a lady who said she would love me

and take care of me. And oh boy did she take wonderful care of me. She taught me about God our Father and Jesus the Son and my Savior and Lord.

Since moving here I've been loved and cared for by my Zion family for nearly forty years. I have learned much about God's love for us and I have been *blessed* to have my Zion family.

-Anonymous



(Photo Taken in Front of the Fourth Church on Easter Sunday in 1952)

'Zion Memories'

As I remember my early years, one constant is Zion Baptist Church. We joked that "when the doors opened at Zion, we were there." One reason was that my mother, Betty Eaker Wilson, was the organist. The organ in the "new" church was given by our family in memory of my great-grandparents, James Monroe and Ann Elizabeth Elliott Wilson. Mother was a pianist, not an organist. She had to practice a lot in order to get hands and feet together on the correct notes! She would practice on Saturday afternoons. My sister, Susan Wilson, and I got to go with her. I remember roller skating all around the sidewalks at church while Mother practiced.

It was great! There was no fear of anyone bothering us while we skated – times were a lot different in the 1950s.

Sometimes, in addition to skating, Susan and I would explore the old church if it wasn't locked. That was sort of scary! The stairs were narrow and dark. Of course, when Mr. Haynes, the janitor and his family moved into the basement, our "old church adventures" were over. They lived in the old church basement while their house was being built.

Preacher Tarlton is also someone I remember. He was a good preacher and an excellent pastor. Susan remembers skating and was told that she and Preacher Tarlton used to eat watermelon on the Saturdays when he was there getting ready for his sermons the next day. Preacher Tarlton baptized me, Susan and many others. My cousin, Delle Wilson Kiesling, told me that she was the first person to be baptized in the present church baptistery.

I remember coming home one Thanksgiving after I was grown and married. My father, Jack Wilson, said "there has been a tragedy in our church family." He explained that Preacher Tarlton's daughter, Libby Tarlton Senter and her daughter had been murdered in Africa. After my father died, I found he had written about Libby on the calendar where he kept important notes. No matter the span of time, Libby Tarlton was part of our church family with special memories for each of us.

I have other vague memories of the old church – not just exploring. The first time I remember seeing Santa was in the old church. Santa gave me a stackable wooden block set that I played with for many years. I remember that the sanctuary had large brown wooden doors. I now know these were used to create different Sunday school classes for the adults. These doors evidently made lots of noise which I remember. The adults didn't have to move from their classes for preaching; they just stayed in their groups. Maybe that's why I remember my grandmother, Della Hamrick Wilson, always sitting with her friends during preaching in the present church while my grandfather, W. Grady Wilson always sat with his age group. These "old" men always sat near the front in the rows with the headphones for those hard of hearing. I don't remember Preacher Tarlton using or having a microphone then.



(The Choir with Marla Bralley as Music Director)

Okay, back to where I began – MUSIC! The first choir director I remember is Frances Cornwell, Dorcas Barbee's sister. Not only was she the choir director but she was my first piano

teacher. Frances left Zion when she married Graham Greene and moved to Elkin, NC. Mrs. Betty Walker became the new choir director when I was about twelve years old. I have recently learned that Mrs. Walker came to Zion from Eastside. She was a beautiful woman and had a beautiful voice. She had gone to Westminster Choir College and her dedication to God and to the music program at Zion was an inspiration to many of us growing up. She is one of the reasons I majored in music in college. My sister Susan agrees with me. Without Mrs. Walker's influence, Susan might not have retired as the Minister of Music at Eastside Baptist after serving 43 years! (Of course, Susan did tell me about one incident involving music and Mrs. Walker that is possibly noteworthy. It seems that Susan and friends crawled out a window during one choir practice and went to the creek to play. Mrs. Walker was frantic because she had no idea where they were! I, of course, have no memory of this so I'm sure I wasn't involved!)

I remember traveling to Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem for choir festivals. There were no interstates, no church bus/van and certainly no GPS! We traveled in cars and went through a lot of different small towns. For some reason I remember Mocksville, NC. Maybe we got lost! One year in addition to singing, we played some sort of instrument – recorder, kazoo? I can't remember. I do remember that those trips were inspirational and lots of fun.

Another memory of growing up at Zion and Mother being the organist was revival week (first full week in August) and FOOD! Each night of revival a circle group would feed the preachers, choir director, organist AND their families. Zion cooks were and are the absolute best! Not only was there good preaching and good music, but each night there was really, really good food.

Memorial Day at Zion (first Sunday in May) is another occasion where food plays an important part. My great aunts, Mrs. Florence Wilson Lackey, Mary Wilson, Vernie Wilson and my grandmother, Della Wilson, would cook for days in preparation. Each had their special dishes. Delicious fried chicken, banana pudding, coconut and chocolate cakes, chess pies and various vegetable dishes all fit into their picnic baskets. These dishes were homemade and homegrown.





(Memorial Day & Dinner on the Grounds Photos – Date Unknown)

Another Memorial Day tradition, of course, is placing flowers on the graves of family members. No florist shops were available. Aunt Mary Wilson had a beautiful flower garden as did my grandmother. Everyone brought flowers from their own gardens.

As a child, one memory of Memorial Day besides food and flowers was playing. Cousins and friends I didn't see each week at church would attend Memorial Day. After we finished eating, we would play tag and hide & seek. We also played cops & robbers in the graveyard. One grave site had a wrought-iron fence with a gate around it. This was the jail for those unlucky ones who were "caught"! I don't recall whose grave it was; probably because I was too young to read but not too old to remember.

Vacation Bible School is also a happy memory. I remember marching in, saying the pledges, singing songs and a special anthem each year. One anthem I vaguely remember is "Lift Up Your Heads, O Ye Gates". Wish I had a copy of that one now. We made crafts, sang more songs, had snacks, played games and learned about Jesus. One year our craft was painting by numbers. We are still using the tray that I painted more than 50 years ago at VBS. Another year we heated vinyl albums and shaped them into fruit/candy dishes. Crafts were fun and very useful.

Another activity at VBS was to learn the Books of the Bible. We also had Bible Drills during the week. I am still benefitting from this knowledge when I look up scriptures today.

We had dedicated teachers at VBS and in Sunday school. I remember Webb and Elaine Kiser, Bill and Elaine Horn, Maxine Raynor, Veva C. Gold, Miss Ruby Irvin, my Aunt Ann Wilson, Barron Paxton and many others whose names I've forgotten. They were dedicated to pointing young hearts and minds toward God.

I can't fail to mention one more wonderful memory before closing. At Christmastime we'd go caroling to shut-ins in our community. Later we'd stop by different pre-arranged homes for snacks and goodies. I always loved going to Miss Johnnie Blanton's house. She was another of Zion's fabulous cooks.

I'm sure I'm not the only one with fond memories of growing up at Zion. I hope you have enjoyed reading some of my memories. As we celebrate our 200th anniversary, may we be reminded of a long ago speech by "our" missionary, Miss Faye Tunmire. She said that even if

we couldn't cross the ocean, we could all be missionaries right here at Zion by "Letting Others See Jesus in Us."

-Barbara Wilson Hilton

'Letter to Zion'

Dear Zion Baptist Church,

I felt led to share with you the impact Zion Baptist Church has had on my life. Please indulge me as I attempt to express myself. One Saturday I was cleaning my nasty house. I hate to clean so I pacify myself by listening to music. I was listening to the old hit, "Thank You for Giving to the Lord" by Ray Boltz. As I listened to the song's words, I was compelled to write a letter to my home church.

My name is Callie Hendrick Ashley. I was blessed to be raised in a Christian home by my parents, Jim and Betty Hendrick. My parents took me to church faithfully throughout my years at home – to quote my Daddy – "If God gave you seven days, you can at least give him two hours of your week!" Zion Baptist Church was an integral part of our family life.

My childhood was full of kool-aid and crème cookies at Vacation Bible School, Mozelle McSwain making her yummy gofer balls, making a fan out of the bulletin to make a breeze in the sanctuary, going to Mrs. Shirley Mayes Sunday School class to learn about Jesus, and so much more. As I grew into a young adult the memories included youth choir with Mrs. Betty Walker, Tim and June Lail taking the youth to Troutman, NC for the weekend or Chapel By The Sea for a week, Terry Clark agreeing to be my ping pong partner for youth day (we lost because of me), Leonard and Kathy Fletcher teaching our youth Sunday School Class. Renay Cooke teaching me in Sunday school a line that I used to guide me throughout my teenage years – "If you have to ask if something is wrong, then it probably is."



(Memorial Day – More Recently)



(Typical 'Milling Around' After Preaching)

As I grew into adulthood, Zion continued to fill my life. When I went to college, Betsy Barbee and Linda Raynor would send me care packages. When I got married, all of the ladies in the church helped to celebrate this lifetime event. Even when my first husband left me, I

remember Preacher Fitts and Mrs. Fitts spending a Sunday afternoon visiting with me and playing with my eighteen month old daughter, Olivia. Zion has celebrated with me in the good times in my life and Zion has carried me through some of my darkest valleys.

The memories of the people of Zion are like precious jewels that I can pull out and reflect upon, but the impact that these people made on my life is eternal. When Preacher Pope sat in our living room and asked me if I was ready to give my life to Jesus – that was a culmination of years of dedicated people who had invested in my life teaching me about God, Jesus, and Christian love. Zion’s Christian love never failed me from childhood through my adult years. When I didn’t think I could make it on my own after my divorce, Karen Gold and Louise Gold wrote cards and prayed with me often. Sis Gold, Marcia Alsobrook, Joy Fortenberry, and Sally Ange helped me see that life after divorce is possible. We did bible study and prayer and I learned from some of Zion’s great prayer warriors how to storm the gates of Heaven with our petitions.



(Marcia Alsobrook and June Lail Presenting the Zion Cook Book)

So many other Zion folks influenced my life, but space and time don’t permit me to name them all. The crux of the letter is this: What if the people of Zion had not taken the time to teach my Sunday School Class, lead my GA group, lead my youth group, lead my youth choir? What if no one in this church had invested in me? What if no one in this church had ever shown me love? Which leads me back to the words of Ray Boltz’s song – “Thank you Zion Baptist Church for giving to the Lord, I am a life that was changed, Thank you for giving to the Lord, I am so glad you gave.”

There is also a lesson to be learned here as well – love one another well. The people who have gone before you loved each other and supported each other. I reaped the benefits of Zion’s saints that loved the Lord and served Him in all that they thought, said, and did. These people weren’t just Christians on Sunday, their spiritual walk was daily and was shared with everyone. I hope one day I can be half the servant those saints were. One of my favorite quotes from Clyde

Gold sums it up best for me, “I ain’t as good as I should be, but I’m better than I used to be.”
God Bless You Zion Baptist Church – I am a life that was changed and I owe it to the good Lord and you!

-Callie Hendrick Ashley

‘Rabbit Hunt’

Zion has a history of having long carried traditions within the community. From annual Dinner on the grounds at Memorial Day and ZionFest to more recent traditions involving Barbeques and Dinner Theatre, these events have given rise to stories, which have carried from generation to generation linking the past with the future.

One such event that has been lost to all but a few remaining is the traditional rabbit hunt that Zion played host to in the community for a number of years. The picture shown below was published in the Star in December of 1957 and an accompanying article relays the *success* of Zion’s rabbit hunt for that year to the community. A few of the members of our church congregation participated in this hunt, one of which played “hooky” to attend. But we’ll leave that story to him.



(Photo of the Zion Community Rabbit Hunt)

The article accompanying the photo tells of the hunt’s inception, which began in 1945 under the leadership of Jim Wilson, Bob Jones, Ellis Spurling, Earl Wallace and Warren Wallace’s organization. No guns were used in the hunt, only dogs and the skillful aim of a stick that was thrown to kill or reroute the rabbit back into the pack of dogs. Amongst the stew that was eaten following the hunt, stories of the hunt ensued, we’re sure of which none were

“stretchers.” Bob Cabaniss’ dead aim with a stick is, to this day, recounted by the memory of Franklin Barbee.

Stories abounded all around on this certain day as Forrest Lutz stated, upon taking a bite of stew, “Better be careful, some of the dogs were chewing on that piece of beef, but it was too tough for them, so they threw it in the stew” and from another unnamed hunter, “They didn’t tell me that big tom cat was missing until after I’d already eaten the stew.” From the article we can tell that the hunters were not just full of *stew*.

As Zion continues to grow, it is important to recount these events not just for posterity but also for reminiscences of times gone past and the days of Sunday afternoon porch talks.

-Matt Cornwell



(The Lord’s Acre Sale – Auction on Front Steps of Fourth Church)

‘Memories by Marcia Alsobrook’

Preacher Matt asked me to share my memories—59 years, 5 months and 14 days’ worth.

As many of you did, I grew up at Zion, attending Sunday School, preaching, revivals, G.A.’s and choir. Everyone was in choir when you were a kid, whether you could sing or not.

That's sort of like my time on the softball field. If the team thought they might have to forfeit, they called me!

The Zion family rejoiced with my parents at my birth and baptism, just as yours did at my children's births and baptisms.

Patrick asked me last night what I was speaking about. I told him it was for the 200th Year Anniversary and Preacher Matt had run out of people to ask!

When my kids were in youth, I chaperoned many mission trips, with one in particular that made a lasting impression. Faithe Beam planned a trip to Colorado in 1999, not knowing it would be the summer after the Columbine High School massacre. We went to the school's memorial fence where our youth touched the teddy bears, smelled the flowers and read the notes from fellow classmates to their loved ones and friends who had died. Many lasting memories are made on church trips.

In the early 1990's I joined a group of adults who went to the Vo-Tech Boys School in Belize, Central America. Along with the men doing construction, we taught Vacation Bible School in a poverty-stricken mountain area. I can clearly remember those precious little brown-eyed children sitting on my lap. Some had ringworm boils on their arms and legs; others suffered with pink eye. When God chooses you and lays it on your heart to be a part of a mission team, these sorts of things really don't matter as you share the love of Jesus. I will have to say as we look back, this ended up as being one of our best mission trips.

I didn't know it at the time, but as I reminisce, the greatest memory is the years I traveled with my dad and mom on senior citizen trips. In 1985 my dad, Hubert Wellmon, started the Golden Years Club. He loved people and catering to the needs of senior citizens. I started assisting with this group for several years until Gary and I became directors. I had no idea back then that I should be soaking in, appreciating, and cherishing every minute of making memories and sharing hugs and laughter.

Traveling on day trips or overnight trips was never dull. There were times when the van would have to turn around because someone left their luggage at the motel or left a pocketbook at a restaurant. The biggest laugh was when a set of dentures were left behind! Again watching my dad's gentlemanly ways, laughing and loving as he patiently accommodated the needs of others will never be forgotten.

Ray Wright's funeral is today. My mom just told me that Ray told my dad how much she appreciated his starting the Golden Years Club. She had never been out of Cleveland County until she traveled with him.

Gary found an old composition book just last month, and I have enjoyed reading the minutes of the Golden Years Club meetings taken by Sue Blanton from 1985 through 1990.

I am honored to have been able to travel, laugh and make memories with the first membership of the Golden Years Club:

Hubert & Betty Wellmon
Sue Blanton

Mr. & Mrs. Tarlton
Mr. & Mrs. O. C. Dixon
Irene Blanton
Nell Metcalf
Beatrice Cabaniss
Jeanette Horn
Mr. & Mrs. Fitts
Vernie Sue Wright
Mr. & Mrs. Lee Cornwell
Jodie Wright
Ruby Irvin
Dorcas Barbee
Mr. & Mrs. Mills Cornwell
Maxine Raynor
Jonnie Blanton
Mozelle & E.K. McSwain
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Cornwell
Hugh & Sarah Gold
George & Janice Cabaniss
Sue Cabaniss
Ray Wright
Ruth Price
Nina Rudasill
Jack Moore

Cherish your experiences today. Make memories that will last a lifetime.

‘Shade Tree Mechanic by Jim Ramsey’

Our preacher, Matt, was appealing to the Brotherhood one Sunday morning for someone to do the “Past Story.” He had no one for that spot and was begging. My friend, Larry Cornwell, an ex-marine (no such thing as an ex-marine, once a marine, always a marine) had on several occasions advised me to “never volunteer”. But for some unknown reason, I raised my hand and said, “I will give you two minutes.” Wrong! Never volunteer! Good advice!

As I approached the podium after two hours of wondering what I was going to say, I had this gloom and doom look on my face, tripled with a pious gait and pastoral swing of my arms. In one hand was a bottle of water and in the other was a notebook. I took one look at the congregation and particularly the preacher, and realized that the first part of my story had already worked.

I began: Do ya'll know what a "gotcha" is? Well, when I got up here with my notebook and water bottle, most of your eyes drooped, mouths closed, and everyone settled in for a long speech. "Gotcha!" This will take two minutes. When two minutes are up, Bruce is to say "thrant". Bruce you can say "thrant," can't you? Remember "thrant".

When I approached the podium, you people thought I was going to be serious. Wrong! "Gotcha" again! I don't remember any serious phrases. But the best "gotcha" in this series of "gotchas" is my wife, Tap. Tap did not know I was doing this. Hey Tap, "gotcha"!

Do you people know what a Shade Tree Mechanic is? He is a guy who pretends to work on cars with no experience and no clue as to what to do next. But sometimes he gets lucky and usually can repeat a task if he had done it before. It all began when in church I noticed Dorcas Barbee was coughing a lot. I saw her after church and asked if she was taking blood pressure medicine. She said she was and I suggested that the side effects of some blood pressure medicine was coughing. I saw her a couple of weeks later and she was all excited as her coughing had stopped. Her doctor had changed her medicine after she mentioned it to him. She asked how I knew that. I told her I had been married to a nurse for 50 plus years, read a lot and had always been interested in medicine. All this is true, but I forgot to mention to her that I had personally had the same experience.

Later on a Wednesday night, Ora Belle had a spell where she had chest pains, cold sweats, dizziness and a lot of the classic heart attack symptoms. As she was waiting for her sister to pick her up and take her to the hospital, I asked if she still had her gall bladder. She said she did and I told her sometimes a gall bladder attack will mimic a heart attack in symptoms, and to make sure the doctor checked that. Well, lo and behold, she was actually having a gall bladder attack and had to have surgery to correct it.

Several weeks later, I saw her at church and she was all excited that I knew that and wondered how I knew. Well, you know the drill. I told her that I was married to a nurse for 50 plus years, read a lot and was interested in medicine. I failed to tell her that we took my dad to the emergency room one night with heart attack symptoms. A doctor came out to us and said that it did not look good. Later he came back and said my dad was going to have gall bladder surgery. I asked if that was in addition to his heart attack and the doctor said he had not had a heart attack.

Later after those two episodes, several older ladies would approach me and ask me about some knee pain or belly ache, etc. etc. I realized then that I was in over my head and laid low for a while.

Since then, I have decided that I could be of some help to some people in the church. So I will be at the church every Thursday from 2 to 5 pm in a room in the basement. You will recognize the room by the sign over the door. It will read, "SHADE TREE PHYSICIAN".

Remember, I don't take money, but I do take produce.

**This personal story appeared in the 2008 *“Book of Inspiration, The Journey of Surviving a Burn Injury”* published by Doctors Hospital – Joseph M. Still Burn Center in Augusta, GA.
Written by Clyde Gold**

It was a very cold day, January 30, 2007 and I was at work. The time was 9 a.m. A friend called “Diesel” and I were working outside of a building that morning. Before the rest of the crew arrived we would build a fire in a barrel for heat. What I didn’t realize was the next few moments were about to change my life forever. The best that I can remember, I was starting the fire and a gas can that was in my right hand exploded. My entire body was covered in flames. The blast knocked my friend down but he was safe from the flames. He came over to me after I fell to the ground and I tried to roll on the ground but with the ground being frozen it didn’t help at all. I was burning and the flames were taking my breath away. I ran to the water hose only to find it frozen. I had begun to tear my clothes off and Diesel took a knife and cut the hose off the water faucet. Still no luck, it was frozen from the faucet. I thought to myself I will surely die. I managed to get all my clothes off and the only fire left was a pile where my clothes lay. As I looked down I could see my skin had melted and was hanging around my ankles and wrist. The pain was horrible and the cold had me shaking badly. I was burned on most of my body and I knew I wasn’t far from going into shock as I could hear the ambulance in the distance. I fell back against a brick wall and I began to pray to God, “If you take me today, please take me to Heaven.” I was a Christian but somehow I wanted that assurance and I received it right away after my prayer. As the ambulance pulled up and they helped me in, immediately the techs started working with me to help me from shaking so badly. They took me to Cleveland Regional Medical Center in Shelby, NC. There I was first evaluated and they called for a chopper to come from Augusta. They took me to the Joseph M. Still Burn Center in Augusta, GA.

The next couple of weeks I had several burn surgeries and the pulmonary team worked on my lungs. I was in a sedative state and don’t remember any of it. The next conscious moment I had was when I noticed a rather nice lady standing beside my bed. I asked her who she was and the response was, “I am Karen, your wife.” She was in a sterile mask and gown and I didn’t recognize her. She asked me if I knew what had happened and I said yes and then she told me where I was. It was a rough time in the weeks to come with surgeries every week and breathing treatments every four hours.

I was very sick as my nutritional level was low and I had lost over 40 pounds. Depression had overcome me and time was at a standstill. My middle daughter was in England studying abroad, I began to wonder if I would ever see her again. I had a Caring Bridge site that a friend had set up so my friends and family could keep up with my condition. My wife kept it updated and had petitioned for prayers on it, mostly that I would not have any infections or develop pneumonia. I had been to Central America on various mission trips in the past years and

these missionaries were praying for me. There were people praying for me in several countries and many states and I know that this had a lot to do with my survival.

I know now that God had sent me to the Burn Center in Augusta, The doctors and nurses were instrumental in my being able to type this story today. I was in good hands there and had the best care. I went through tough times of awful pain that at times I thought I could not stand another day and wondered; why they didn't just take my right leg off at the knee it hurt me so badly. Later, I learned to tell the nurses when my pain first started and before it got really bad and they would start meds early and it made the pain easier to deal with.

Sometime in the middle of all this I decided it would be better to just die. One night I had the nurse call my oldest daughter in Asheville, N.C. I told her to come see me as quick as she could because I thought the next day would be my last one. As I awoke the next morning, I was looking at a bulletin board that was in my room where my wife had put all the get-well cards from my 4th and 5th grade Sunday school class that I helped teach. And at the bottom was a picture of my youngest daughter. She was 8 years old and I thought if all these people are taking the time to pray for me then surely I need to do my best to get well.

I had many teams that worked on me and I always wanted to go back and thank them all. The surgeons who gave me their lifesaving work on most of my body, the wound team that kept me from infection, respiratory who one night when I was very depressed held my hand and showed compassion for me when I needed it the most, and last but not least PT. I came to one day, only to find a tall man named Dennis wanting me to move my legs, arms, and fingers. Let me tell you it was hard to do, what he wanted me to do and he came by several days. I thought to myself, "He has to take a day off before long and I will have a break." He did, but he sent this beautiful lady who was as aggressive as he was but I owe so much to the PT department. They knew that I had to keep moving to keep my scars from contracting and they made sure of that. It seemed like forever but days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months and things got a lot easier. I spent 47 days at the Burn Center. My surgeon, Dr. Hassan, thought I would be better off at home and I wasn't about to say no to the idea so I was released and went home. The first week at home was bad as my back rejected the bio brane that was covering my donor sites and I had to go back every 3 weeks and then things got a little better. My visits stretched out to 4 weeks and then 6 weeks and then 3 months.

They say that I was nothing but a miracle to have been burned as badly as I was and to heal as fast as I did. I will agree, I did heal well but without the good care that I received it would not have been possible and for the prayers I thank everyone. I am still out of work and don't know what kind of work that I will be able to do. I am still looking at maybe one more surgery on my foot and I know that I will never be the same as I was before the accident. But I want everyone to know that if they are in a situation similar to mine that you can get better. But

it's a one day at a time kind of thing. Burns heal slowly and therapy is tough but it gets better. When I look back, the one thing I wanted to do was talk to someone who had been burned to give me some idea of what to expect in the months ahead with pain, depression, scars, and other related burn problems. I never really found anyone and figured most of it out myself. I am able to do most of the things that I was able to do before the accident. I think that I take time to stop and appreciate the little things in life more than I once did. I live with my scars and ailments that keep me from forgetting that day. But I do live and love, and people love me. I hope that I can help someone that might be in a helpless state like I was at one time because there is hope. It might not be easy but you can get through it and you can be able to go on with your life.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13