

SWEETHEARTS FOREVER

By Sam Hatcher
The Wilson Post, TN
8 July 2009

From their early days in school at Cumberland University, J B and Jo Doris Leftwich probably knew they would be sweethearts forever.



This past Sunday, while many were still celebrating the independence of our nation, others gathered at Lebanon's First United Methodist Church to celebrate the 70th anniversary of a marriage that must surely have been made in heaven.

Friends for life, former students, well wishers from church, and family members all came, many from other states, to congratulate and pay tribute to this couple on an achievement many marriages never see.

It was a special day. Mayor Philip Craighead proclaimed Sunday Jo Doris and JB Leftwich Day in the City of Lebanon; Rep. Stratton Bone presented a resolution adopted by the State House of Representatives in their honor; scholarships to be funded by the Leftwich family to Cumberland University were announced, as was the construction of a new Habitat for Humanity home to be built in their honor and funded through an effort by their church in which contributions are being sought as a tribute to their service to the community.

To better tell the story about this couple's marriage and to provide insight that only a family member can, our newspaper asked Lynda Leftwich Newton, one of the couple's four children, to make the following contribution.

By Linda Leftwich Newton
Special to The Wilson Post, TN

It was not an auspicious beginning and would hardly have foreshadowed a 70-year marriage.

JB Leftwich and Jo Doris Prichard drove across the Tennessee state line into Kentucky to be married. They planned to keep this union a secret, but Jo Doris' Mother was not fooled and so they began their life together living with Jim and Alta Prichard, parents of the bride.

Both were students at Cumberland University, JB had completed two years at Cumberland and Jo Doris one. He continued as a student while Jo Doris interrupted her college education to work as secretary to Wilson County Extension Agent Jim Ward. JB worked part-time at *The Lebanon Democrat*.

Jo Doris' job often involved association with farm animals. Once, while JB was at *The Democrat*, there was a picture of Jo Doris walking with a sheep. As a joke, *The Democrat* crew made a dummy front page with the picture of Jo Doris and the sheep with a headline referring to her as "Little Bo Beep." At the time, she did not enjoy the joke.

After his Cumberland graduation, JB began his long career with Castle Heights Military Academy. He maintained this association until the demise of Castle Heights in 1986. While at Castle Heights, he was advisor to the award-winning student newspaper, *The Cavalier*.

As children began to arrive, the couple began building a house at 136 Castle Heights Ave. – only a block-and-a-half from the Heights campus. This was important, as families in those days were fortunate to have one car. Today, that location is a part of the parking lot for Immanuel Baptist Church.

Having four children (Lynda, Jim, Barbara and Jack) to educate was a driving force for JB and Jo Doris. In addition to his teaching career, JB was county correspondent for *The Nashville Tennessean* and he developed a photography business. As a part of that business, he took pictures at all the Heights functions including graduation. He would often stay up all night before the graduation developing pictures of the pre-graduation activities. His family was always happy for him to have a few days rest following that event.

Jo Doris began her teaching career when a vacancy occurred mid-year at Castle Heights. One of her students was Greg Allman who grew up with his brothers to form a singing group called the Allman Brothers. She still has a necklace give to her at Christmas by Greg. So, she began a time of teaching, going to school, being active in the First United Methodist Church Women's group, and, of course, raising a family. She spent most of her career at Lebanon Junior High School teaching science and later as a librarian at Sam Houston Elementary.

So what accounts for the longevity of this marriage? They have endured the highs and lows of anyone who lives for over 80 years. They have supported each other in "sickness and in health." She nursed him 20 years ago when he had a heart attack resulting in by-pass surgery. He has nursed her through back surgery and a ruptured appendix. As a result of the heart surgery, he was advised to walk 2 miles a day. He has continued to do that, probably contributing to his longevity and alertness at 89 years old.

They have continued to be interested in life. They read newspapers daily. They keep up with children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren though e-mail. He has correspondence from former students, especially those who were associated with the student newspaper.

Habitat House to Honor Couple

First United Methodist Church will build a Habitat for Humanity House this fall, beginning August 29 though October 31 in honor of Jo Dorris and JB Leftwich, the church announced at a celebration of the couple's 70th wedding anniversary last Sunday.

"They have been active community supporters and served in many capacities at First United Methodist Church," the church said in its announcement.

According to the church, the Leftwich family has "spear-headed this endeavor and First United Methodist Church will follow though and make it a reality with volunteers, team leader and funding."

Contributions for the house in honor of Jo Dorris and JB Leftwich may be mailed to First United Methodist Church, 415 West Main Street, Lebanon, TN 37087, marked "Habitat." The family will receive acknowledgement of your gift.

Note: The above articles were given to the Denny-Loftis Genealogy website from Howard Thumon, Editor of *The Leftwich Heritage*.

Anyone interested in joining the Leftwich Historical Association, Inc. the membership is \$15. They have a website at: www.leftwich.org.

*Read more stories written by J. B. Leftwich at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>