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Foothills Magazine

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Ring in the new

Gardner-Webb carillon considered most advanced in the world



By Nell Perry Bovender

Ringing in the new year took on a new meaning on the campus of Gardner-Webb University this year. The Lake Hollifield Bell Tower now chimes in each hour, and selected musical works are periodically played on the 48 bells of the tower.

The carillon (did you know that anything with fewer than 18 bells is a chime?) is considered the most advanced in the world, according to Frank DellaPenna, a master carillonneur who serves as a consultant to the Verdin Co. of Cincinnati, builder of the structure. The company has built such towers throughout this country and in Europe.

DellaPenna and other Verdin representatives were on hand for the premier performance of the carillon one bitter winter morning just before Christmas.

Wyndolyn Hollifield of Winston-Salem, the benefactor who made the bell tower possible, was on hand for its premier performance. With her is Dr. Chris White, president of Gardner-Webb University. Photo by Nell Perry Bovender.

It is a beautiful structure of brick with a glass base that allows viewers to stand outside and watch the carillonneur at the keyboard. It overlooks Lake Hollifield, itself a new addition to the campus. A walk lines the lake, with benches along the way for rest and/or quiet meditation.

It is a peaceful oasis right at the edge of the school's campus.

The carillon has many unique features, DellaPenna explained to those who had gathered to hear it first. It can be played on site but is also wired so that it can be played from a remote site or programmed to play a particular piece at a particular hour, he said. Each bell also has three tones, making it touch-sensitive. Notes, therefore, can be played loud, medium or soft.

None was more delighted with the rich sounds of the bells than Wyndolyn Hollifield of Winston-Salem, the benefactor who, along with her late husband, Hughy, a member of the Class of '35, gave the funds for the lake complex and bell tower. He died last spring, not before seeing the lake a reality but before the bell tower was begun.

BELL TOWER
LAKE HOLLIFIELD
HOLLIFIELD, WYNDOLYN

Her lively blue eyes danced with excitement as members of the music department and DellaPenna demonstrated its potential. "It's beautiful," she said simply. "It's so beautiful."

The whole project is in memory of

the Hollifields' only son, Forrest, who died in Vietnam.

The six-acre complex will eventually feature a plaza around the bell tower, designed by Fred Blackley, an architect in Shelby. Weather has held up its completion.

**It is a peaceful
oasis right at the
edge of the
school's campus.**

The carillon will be used for more than entertainment, according to Dr. Terry Fern, chairman of the department of fine arts. It will be used in several music classes, including composition and keyboard. Fern will supervise the use of the carillon.

But on this winter morning, "O Holy Night" ringing from the bell-fry, the deep blue of a winter sky overhead, well, Mrs. Hollifield said it best:

"It's beautiful. It's so beautiful." ■

CHARLOTTE
OASIS (1)

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