

Mildred Tunstall

By: Kimberly Hopkins

It's a nice quiet morning. The air is still damp and chilly because the sun has not yet fully extended over the horizon. The birds are beginning to peek out of their nests. The moist dew has not yet started to evaporate off of the crisp, green grass and the only sound in her ear is the coffee pot percolating a fresh pot of Maxwell house coffee. Mrs. Tunstall pulls her glasses up to her face and sits down to study her daily lesson in the Bible.

Mildred Tunstall was born April 9, 1932. Her parents are Mae Respass Ormond and George Pink Ormond. Mrs. Tunstall is one of the nine children born into the Ormond family. She has 5 other sisters and 3 brothers. Mrs. Tunstall was raised in Bath, NC in the Possum Hill Community. Her family's house found ground on a farm.

Since Mrs. Tunstall was raised on a farm, she had loads of chores to do. Her siblings and she had chores like milking the cows, and gathering the eggs the chickens lay. She had to participate in the indoor chores as well. She helped her mom set the table, cook, and cleaning up the dishes after the meals. Of course she had to do school work first, but chores were also expected to be done before bedtime.

Mrs. Tunstall went to school in Bath. She graduated from Bath High School on May 25, 1950. Three weeks later she started her very first job as the Secretary of Bath High School. Mrs. Tunstall was excited about starting a new job, but nervous as well. She worked at the high school for two school years.

Around that same time, Mrs. Tunstall met her first husband and they got married. Mrs. Tunstall had two children, a girl and a boy. Mrs. Tunstall and her husband lived with Mrs. Tunstall's parents for about a year and then decided to move into their own house.

Shortly after moving to Belhaven, Mrs. Tunstall started working at Wachovia Bank as a book keeper. As a book keeper, Mrs. Tunstall had a huge responsibility. She had to make sure every stitch of money coming in the bank and going out of the bank was documented. She also rechecked behind every teller to make sure no mistakes were being made. After working a while as the book keeper she moved to a teller position. Mrs. Tunstall worked at Wachovia Bank for about three years. She quit that job in the event of her mother getting deathly sick. She stayed out of work for a while to take care of her mother. Mrs. Tunstall's mother died in 1970.

While coping with the death of her mother, her family needed money so she went out in search for a job. She took a job as the book keeper of Southern Bank in Belhaven. After working a while as the book keeper, Mrs. Tunstall then took a teller position for Southern Bank. As a teller, Mrs. Tunstall had to manage deposits and withdrawals from all of the clients, and organize daily money reports. While working for Southern Bank, her father got sick. He died in 1975. Shortly after Mrs. Tunstall's father died she left Southern Bank and took a job for the town of Belhaven as the Town Clerk.

Mrs. Tunstall's job as the Town Clerk was to make sure the correct bills were being sent out, oversee that the bills were paid on time, filing necessary paper work, and giving out government reports. After working as the Town Clerk for about two and half years, Mrs. Tunstall left and went to work for the North Carolina Ferry Division.

The North Carolina Ferry Division consists of about sixteen ferry boats. Mrs. Tunstall worked on the ferry boat out of Bayview named the *Sea Level*. Mrs. Tunstall was the first

woman ever hired as a deckhand for the Ferry Division. She began her work as the deckhand in 1980. She was the first woman to ever receive an AB Certificate to work as a deckhand for the Ferry Division.

While working on the ferry, Mrs. Tunstall embarked on many adventures. She was recognized for saving an infants life and was then nominated for the Governor's Excellence Award. Mrs. Tunstall said, "I didn't get the award, but it was an honor to just be nominated."

If being nominated for such an award as the Governor's Excellence wasn't enough excitement, the several articles written about the Ferry Division that Mrs. Tunstall was featured in, most certainly would be the ultimate thrill. Mrs. Tunstall's picture was featured in the Publication Two-Way Traffic: Pathways to Progress in July of 1984. She also spoke about her experience with the Ferry Division in an article published in 1995's "The State" Magazine (which is now called Our State). Mrs. Tunstall worked for the Ferry Division for sixteen years.

During those sixteen years with the Ferry Division, she met her husband Graham Tunstall. Mr. Tunstall had moved to North Carolina from Delaplanes, Virginia. In Virginia Mr. Tunstall worked for Fernie Laughinhouse as a farm manager for commercial cows. When Mr. Tunstall moved to Belhaven he went to work for Lowe's. After working for Lowe's for 3 years he went to work for Motor Parts, where he is still currently working.

Mrs. Tunstall retired from the Ferry Division with sixteen years under her belt. After retiring Mrs. Tunstall started volunteering with cancer patients. If someone around her town needed transportation to their doctor's appointments or needed transportation to their treatment sessions, Mrs. Tunstall would give them a ride.

Volunteering with the cancer patients isn't the only thing that Mrs. Tunstall has a passion for. Mrs. Tunstall enjoys working with her husband Graham in their spectacular garden. After

her and her husband grow their own vegetables, Mrs. Tunstall takes them inside to can them. She also has a knack for growing flowers. She has several beautifully arranged flower beds in her yard.

Gardening with her husband is only one of the many activities that keep Mrs. Tunstall on the go. Mrs. Tunstall also enjoys sewing. Throughout her entire life Mrs. Tunstall has sewn wedding dresses for family members, and she has sewn clothes for her children and herself. She has also made a pair of shoes for herself.

On top of the sowing and gardening, Mrs. Tunstall also paints. She doesn't stop with little things like dressers and shelves. She sets her goals high. She told me just recently that she wanted to paint her house, so she began taking down the items that were decorating her walls. After stripping the border from the wall she began painting. In the last two weeks Mr. and Mrs. Tunstall painted 5 rooms in their house. Along with changing the colors of their home, Mrs. Tunstall redecorated the rooms herself. She added new borders and new wallpaper in one room. She bought new bedding, new accents, and even made some new seat covers for her dining room chairs.

Painting, sowing, gardening, and volunteering should be enough activities to fill up Mrs. Tunstall's time, but she still has other things that occupy her time. Mrs. Tunstall always keeps a neatly arranged home. She keeps all the laundry clean, starched and ready for use. The kitchen floor is always swept and the rugs are always vacuumed. The upstairs bedrooms are mainly used for the family that lives far away and that comes to visit when they can, but Mrs. Tunstall still keeps those rooms polished and looking cozy.

Mrs. Tunstall has 2 children, 3 step children, 7 grandchildren, and 1 great grandchild that take up the rest of her time. Mrs. Tunstall's daughter lives in Mocksville, NC and don't get

to visit that often, but Mrs. Tunstall's son lives just outside of Belhaven. His family comes to visit on Sunday afternoons after church services. Mrs. Tunstall and her family usually spend their time gathered around in the living room talking about upcoming events, what is happening in school with her grandchildren, what is going on at the adults jobs, local gab, and any other news or conversation that may get started. Sometimes the adults start talking about the old times and when the grandchildren hear "back in the day" they usually scatter. One may go get on the computer, the other watching television, and the other is usually trying to pet the neighborhood cat. Even though they all have there own favorite thing to do when at grandma's house, they all have one thing in common; they all love a very special woman.

Mrs. Tunstall has lots of family that love her dearly, just as much as she loves them dearly. She is a very kind hearted woman, who would do anything in the world to help her family. As every other person in this world, Mrs. Tunstall has problems of her own, but it don't matter what is weighing on her heart she always has a smile on her face.

That very same smile continues everyday even on Sunday night when it is time for all her family to go home. As everyone departs, Mr. and Mrs. Tunstall says goodbye. Mrs. Tunstall makes sure all the lights are shut off, while Mr. Tunstall double checks the door locks. They return to their bedroom to get ready for bed. Mrs. Tunstall kneels beside her bed to say a quick prayer, and then climbs into bed. She drifts off to sleep while thinking of what she is going to do the next day.