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PERSONALITY IN THE NEWS

Rev. Bill Bradley

By BETH HUTCHINSON

He was named after a baseball player and once signed a contract with the St. Louis Cardinals. However, the Lord had other plans for Rev. Bill Dickey Bradley, pastor of Gethsemane Baptist Church.

"I was called to preach as a young man," says Bradley of his profession. "But I wanted to play ball so badly that I got out of the Lord's way."

Bradley, named after New York Yankees catcher William Malcolm Dickey, was born to a father who had played professional ball for the old Philadelphia Athletics.

"My brother was named Lou Gehrig Bradley," said the pastor. "He wanted to play professional ball, too, but he refused to play on Sunday."

The brother is now a minister in Salisbury, Md., the state where both youths were raised. Born in Mardela, Bradley attended the public schools in eastern Maryland.

He then went on to the Philadelphia Bible College and later spent one year at the University of Maryland on a baseball scholarship.

Bradley's education was cut short when he signed with the Cardinals but he was never able to play for the team.

"They wanted me to get my service time out of the way so I enlisted in the Marine Corps," said Bradley. "I stayed in ten years."

Bradley explained that he injured his arm while playing ball in the service. He was a catcher and said the Cardinals



REV. BILL BRADLEY

"I always had winning teams when I managed in the service," said Bradley. "But never enjoyed coaching or managing as much as playing."

It was at Camp Lejeune near Jacksonville where Bradley made the decision to get out of the Marines. He had been in the service 10 years and was half-way to retirement.

Bradley said he had joined a church in Jacksonville and began teaching the college age Sunday School class. Then he had the opportunity to fill in as an intern pastor at the Pine Grove Baptist church in Trenton.

According to Bradley, he was still in the Marines when the church asked him to be a pastor and he made a decision not to fight what he felt to be calling.

"I had put the Lord off as long as you can't do that successfully," said Bradley, who has been preaching ever since.

Unfortunately, Bradley's church could not afford a full-time minister and he "needed to be one." That was

decision which brought him to Kinston.

Bradley began the Faith Baptist Church there at the same time he was working for E. I. Dupont.

And, with the help of parishioners and friends, Bradley also helped build the church. "I worked until they made me go home. I was bending too many nails."

After three and one half years in Kinston, Bradley came to Goldsboro and has been here for the last 14 years - 10 at Grace Baptist and four at Gethsemane.

Bradley, who enjoyed singing as a child and performed with his college choir, recorded his first album about eight years ago and now finds himself in as much demand as a singer as a preacher.

In fact, the title song on his fourth and latest album, "O Glorious Love" is No. 2 on at least one gospel chart.

"People kept telling me I could do it," said Bradley. "Then one of my parishioners offered to loan me the money to make my first album." The last album was paid for as a gift from the church.

Bradley said he is lucky to have some disc jockeys as friends for they are pushing the album.

Since Bradley has begun recording his songs he has also received many more invitations to preach, having been in pulpits as far west as Oklahoma, as far south as Florida and as far north as Rochester, N.Y.

"It's gotten me invitations

to sing, too," said Bradley, who spoke and sang this week at Liberty Baptist College in Lynchburg, Va.

Bradley also does some singing when he accompanies his ventriloquist wife, Joyce, to hospitals and rest homes for puppet shows.

His preaching, singing, revivals, gospel sings and special meetings take up most of Bradley's time, and he told the News-Argus he is currently limiting himself to one meeting a month outside the church.

He does, however, photograph some weddings (that's a hobby) and officiates at high school games through the East Carolina Officials Association.

Bradley adds that baseball has helped him identify with young people and his experience in the Marines taught him about dealing with individuals in all walks of life.

"In the Marines I learned that I didn't know it all," said Bradley. "Maybe that helped me avoid the mistake made by a lot of preachers. I learned that I wasn't infallible."

Bradley, who is happy with his current assignment, is looking forward to the start of a new building program at the church. The project, a new fellowship hall, is one he won't work on himself.

The Bradleys are the parents of two daughters, one a graduate and the other a student at Liberty Baptist College, and a son who attends Faith Christian School.

NEWS
NORWOOD, N. C.

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Singer-Preacher To Lead Revival

Homecoming, a gospel concert and the beginning of a series of revival services have been scheduled by First Baptist Church of Norwood starting Sunday, Sept. 8.

The homecoming will be held at 11 a.m. Sunday with evangelist Rev. Bill Bradley as the guest speaker. Dinner will be served in the fellowship hall at noon.

Rev. Bradley, who is known for his singing as well as his preaching, will present a concert at 2 p.m., according to the pastor, Rev. David Ayers.

The evangelist, who once signed a baseball contract with the St. Louis Cardinals, served 10 years in the Marines before filling in as interim pastor at Piney Grove Baptist Church in Trenton, near Jacksonville. His first regular pastorate was at Faith Baptist Church.

After about 14 years of pastoring at Kinston and Goldsboro, Bradley now works as a full-time evangelist.

Bradley, who enjoyed singing as a child and performing with his college choir, recorded his first album about 10 years ago and now finds himself as much in demand as a singer

as he does as a preacher.

His preaching, singing, revivals and gospel singings take up much of his time but he does photograph some weddings and officiates at high school games through the East Carolina Officials Association.

The revival here will continue through Thursday, Sept. 12, with services starting at 7 o'clock each evening. The pastor and congregation invite everyone to attend.



REV. BILL BRADLEY //