

SOUTH CENTRAL BELL AND CHURCH GROWTH

"Walk in all the ways that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess" (Deuteronomy 5:33).

What do the Beatles, the Animals, and the Rolling Stones have in common with Bill Johnson, Boyd Walton, Pat Tatom, and Atley Kitchings? They were all invaders.

In the mid-1960s there was the cultural, or better countercultural, revolution dubbed the British Invasion, an invasion of pop music from England. At the same time Birmingham and Mountain Brook Baptist were experiencing the South Central Bell Invasion. South Central Bell was just as transformative for the Birmingham area and for Mountain Brook Baptist as the Beatles were in music.

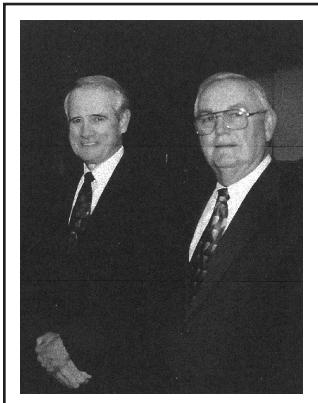
In 1967 South Central Bell was created with headquarters in Birmingham. Hundreds of families from the predecessor Southern Bell and AT&T were moved to Birmingham to form the management of the new entity. Many of these families found their church home at Mountain Brook Baptist Church. Bill Johnson was transferred from North Carolina and reported meeting Bud Johnson, who had recently been transferred to Birmingham by his company, Southern Life and Health. Bill and Carolyn told Bud they would be looking for a church to which Bud replied, "You don't need to shop for a church. I've already done it. Come to Mountain Brook Baptist." And they did!

Over a few years so did many others including Charlene and Milton Berryhill, Pat and T.L. Cloar, John Paul Jones (who married Bee Talford McLaughlin), Marion Teel and Martin Paul Jones Sr., Betty Jane and Atley Kitchings Jr., Marjorie and Carlton Randleman, Anne and Pat Tatom, and Rachel and Boyd Walton Jr.

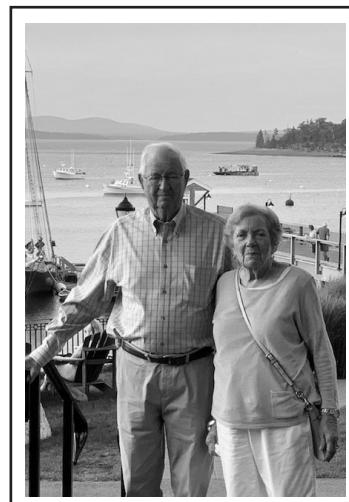
Also included in the Mountain Brook Baptist invasion was Ben Brown, who was head of South Central Bell for Alabama and longtime Samford board member serving as chairman for 13 years—not to mention Wallace Bunn, who was president of South Central Bell and later chairman and CEO of Bell South Corporation. As with so many of the other Bell invaders, they both took leadership positions in the church including Deacon chairmen as well as being elected Life Deacons.

Not only did these invaders join Mountain Brook Baptist Church, they and their families all became active engaged members transforming the church with their involvement and leadership. They have served as Sunday School teachers, church council members, and Deacons, and they have led mission trips and projects. Most importantly, the South Central Bell families have all been committed members.

In the '60s the Beatles were as controversial as they were transformative. Few might list guitarist George Harrison as an influential theologian, but likely many a sermon has been preached on a lyric from one of his songs: "With our love we could change the world."



T.L. Cloar and Boyd Walton



Charlene and Milton Berryhill



SEPTEMBER 8, 2019

A DREAM COME TRUE FOR LOCAL FAMILIES: OUR EARLY LEARNING CENTER

(This story was originally written for the 20th anniversary of the Early Learning Center on August 25, 2013. Looking toward 2019-2020, the Early Learning Center has 341 children enrolled with 65 teachers. At this time, the chairman of the Early Learning Center board is Chris Rice and the board members are Eric Kelley, Jennie Pickett, Jansen Voss, and Meredith Welch.)

In the early 1990s after receiving numerous phone calls and letters from young families requesting full-time childcare for their children, a dream was prayerfully planned to accomplish that goal. On a cold Friday in January 1992, returning from a ministry road trip with Dr. James D. Moebes, I shared this plan. He listened intently, endorsed the concept, and asked that it be presented to the church council at their meeting on Sunday. The church council approved, and a daycare study committee was formed, chaired by Carole Wills, with ten faithful members. The work of the committee was completed on schedule in August 1992, and the concept of starting a daycare was approved and work began.

Bill Johnson, chairman of the finance committee during this endeavor, worked with the committee to plan our finances. The church advanced \$120,000, which has since been repaid, to equip the spaces which were and still are adult Sunday School rooms on Sunday while doubling as childcare rooms Monday through Friday. Bill Johnson and the finance committee made it possible to open our Early Learning Center with state-of-the-art, high quality equipment and teaching supplies. Thank you, Sunday School classes, for your continued willingness to share your rooms to meet the needs of young families and their children. Our then



Emma Laura Patrick (center) pictured with Early Learning Center employees Johanna Kantor, Vickie Duckett, Martha Moyers, and Bethany Stewart.

minister of education, Hoyt Wilson, was a great encourager during this process.

The first Early Learning Center director was Barbara Bell Horn. Our doors opened in August 1993 with 45 children enrolled, 19 staff members, and over 100 children on the waiting list. Our goal to provide childcare in a Christian environment was fulfilled. As of August 2013, we had 144 children enrolled in the full day program which operated 7 a.m. until 6 p.m., and 147 children in the half day program operating from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. You as a church can be proud to know you minister to 291

children and their families. There continues to be an extensive waiting list. Not all of our families attend or worship at Mountain Brook Baptist Church, but several consider us their church.

Children and their parents are here five days a week. A fine staff of Christian teachers and coordinators minister to them on a daily basis; care for their children, show love, teach Bible stories, and provide appropriate learning activities. We want our children to grow as Jesus grew: in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

Jo and Ed Wills volunteered to assist us with our financial records and bookkeeping when we first opened. Our first board of directors was chaired by Ralph Coleman, with David Bryan, Norma Lyons, Carole Wills, and Janice Wolfe. Thank you to all board members past and present. They continue to be a vital asset to this important ministry. Billie Cope has always been a strong advocate and encourager for our Early Learning Center. Dr. Alvin Pelton helped the Early Learning Center to find space for additional children.

To this day I am grateful for Dr. Moebes' faith in this undertaking and for his leadership and guidance throughout the process of developing the day care. I am grateful that Sharon Howard has continued for your staff supervision, and thankful to Dr. Doug Dorch for endorsement of this ongoing ministry endeavor.

And, I commend Mountain Brook Baptist Church, for your continued support through prayer, offerings, donations, gifts, volunteer efforts, sharing of space, sharing of your children and grandchildren, and encouragement. The Early Learning Center continues to meet the needs of young families. We remember that Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me" (Matthew 19:14 ESV).

Emma Laura Patrick, Former Children's Director

A VERY SPECIAL BIRTHDAY

Happy Birthday today (September 8)
to
Jane Moorman Moore
the only living charter member
of Mountain Brook Baptist Church.

