

## THE DAY THE COW GOT LOOSE

Amid snarled traffic and auto horns blowing, people stood beside their cars and laughed. A cow was loose in Crestline. This scene set the stage for a record attendance at Mountain Brook Baptist Church's third Christmas pageant in 1966.

Mountain Brook Baptist Church again wanted to stage a Living Nativity as a Christmas gift to our community. Our Associate Deacons enlisted actors to be brightly robed wise men, shepherds, and angels to recreate with music and narration the ageless story of the birth of Christ. They also constructed a stable and filled it with sheep, a donkey, and a cow. All the animals seemed okay, but the cow was not too happy. She continued to move and kick her stable stall.

At mid-morning, a frantic caller to the church office said, "There is a cow wandering around the busy intersection in front of Crestline School. I think it's yours. Come and get it."

Bryant Strain, our associate pastor fresh from the seminary, was sent to the scene. After several attempts, Strain was able to tie a rope around the cow's neck and tried to lead it back to the stable. The cow wouldn't move. Then he tried to lead her up a ramp into a pickup truck that was passing by. Things got worse! The cow stepped on the truck driver's foot sending him to the hospital. By now the crowd was cheering for the cow.

Strain, using his recent training in theological problem solving, called the farmer who owned the cow and discovered that the cow was carried off without her young calf. Now it all made sense. Momma cow wanted to get to her baby. The whole affair was solved when cow and calf were reunited, and to top it all off, both had a starring role in the Christmas pageant.

The story of the escaped cow spread quickly through the community which guaranteed a record attendance for the pageant. Our church became known as, "Oh, that's the church with animals at Christmas."

No more escaped animals, but even now we attempt to share the good news of Christmas in every way possible!

*Hoyt R. Wilson*



*Dr. Bryant Strain with his wife Ruth Colley Strain (Ruth is also the daughter of Mountain Brook Baptist Church's founding pastor the Rev. J.O. Colley), pictured at Brookwood Baptist Church's fiftieth anniversary celebration. Dr. Strain was the founding pastor of Brookwood Baptist Church, one of Mountain Brook Baptist Church's church plants, and served as their senior minister for over thirty years. (Photo provided by Spoiled Rotten Photography)*



FEBRUARY 24, 2019

WE'VE A STORY TO TELL  
75th Anniversary Memories of Mountain Brook Baptist Church

## STITCHING PAST TO PRESENT

A treasure quilt came to visit our church recently. Maybe you will have a chance to see it. It was brought by Ruth Colley Strain and Emily Colley Ritchey, the daughters of our first pastor, the Rev. J.O. Colley. Ruth and Emily were toddlers when they moved into the little Crestline house that served as the first Chapel of Mountain Brook Baptist Church. That was in 1944. The house was located on Jackson Avenue, where the office of the Mountain Brook Board of Education now stands. One end of the house was opened up to allow for a Chapel seating about 90 people. The other end of the house was a little three-room apartment for the pastor, his wife Mary, and three children.

On Sunday, classes met in the children's bedroom, and also in the chicken coop, coal bin, tool shed, and even in portable garages and in Crestline School. The young church was saving money to build the Colley family a proper house, or even to rent a house. As World War II ended, housing was extremely scarce and expensive.

At the same time, Deacons were frantically searching for land suitable for a church of the future. Land was at a premium in Mountain Brook then, just as today. When they found the best available land, there was no money to buy it, and other bidders wanted it. The land was at the corner of Montevallo Road and Overbrook Road (which wasn't yet paved or opened past the curve). Pastor Colley selflessly told the Deacons to use the pastor's house money to help buy the church land. The growing Colley children heroically crunched into the Sunday School rooms on Jackson Avenue.



*The quilt was made by ladies of the church as a goodbye gift to Mrs. Mary Colley, when Rev. J.O. Colley resigned as pastor in 1947. In the upper right of the photo is the quilt square made by Mrs. Herbert A. Harris; Dr. and Mrs. Harris were charter members and their two children were also members. In the upper left of the photo is the square made by another charter member, Mrs. Perna Armstrong, representing her family including Billie Jo Armstrong Gowens who continues as a member today.*

*The Rev. and Mrs. J.O. Colley's daughters, Emily Ritchey and Ruth Strain, hold up the quilt given to the Colleys by Mountain Brook Baptist Church.*



By the way—there was no office or quiet study for the pastor, either. The Crestline neighborhood was just as charming and appealing then as it is today. The living accommodations required daily sacrifice by the Colley family.

At last, in April 1947, God provided Mr. Colley a calling to another church with a real house for the pastor. They left Mountain Brook Baptist Church one Sunday and began serving on the next Sunday at First Baptist Church of Albertville, Alabama. Knowing that the Colleys would be leaving, the ladies of Mountain Brook Baptist Church got busy to make a memory quilt for them. This would be a nice gift from a church like Mountain Brook Baptist Church. Usually the best that Mary Colley got was when a half-dozen Deacons passed the hat at Christmas to give her \$5 each.

Every stitch of the quilt was made by loving hands. Each woman made a square and embroidered her name or her family's name on it. So, the names of charter members and newer members went with the Colleys as they lived in Albertville and other pastorates through many years of service. The quilt was well used and well loved. It got a bit frayed, collecting many stains through 71 years. But the stitches held together, and the embroidered names did not fade—neither from the quilt nor from appreciative memory.