

Haffye Sewell Cox
Interviewed by Sylvia Nash
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Haffye arrived in Tarboro in 1957, and was greeted by Hyman Philips, Bud Shook, and Jaquelin and Pem Nash. The greeting committee arrived on Philips St. along with the moving van, having been told by the Nashes that a "good Episcopalian" was moving to town.

When first here, Haffye attended Calvary Church without Jack. (Although he became a very valuable member of the Church in time, he was not a "cradle Episcopalian," and so Haffye came alone.) On an early visit to church, she sat in a pew which was, as it turned out, the "claimed seat" of a parishoner named Robert E. Lee Cook. When Mr. Cook arrived, he studied the trespasser, looked long at the number on the end of the pew, studied Haffye some more and finally sat down beside her and regarded her throughout the service. And even after that, she returned!

When Haffye arrived, Calvary was without a minister, and there were no interim ministers in those days. Lay readers took charge of the services of Morning Prayer on Sundays, and once a month, a supply priest would celebrate Holy Communion. Three months after Haffye began to attend Church, Jack Spong arrived. He knew only three People in Tarboro: Mrs Henry Bourne (Marian), Mrs Joe Bourne (Edith) and Haffye, whom he had met at Vade Mecum.

Jack made quite an impact on Calvary Church. He was a very dynamic speaker and preacher. In his twenties at the time, he was a powerhouse in the community. An advocate of social justice, he was considered by many to be ahead of his time in Tarboro.

In 1958 or '59, Jack Spong asked Haffye to accept the leadership of the junior YPSL (the Young People's Service League) which she did with great success. Some of her young people were Daisy Walston, Bill Pitt, Stumpy Havens, Strud Norfleet, and Mary Ella Ruffin. This crowd won the prize as the best-prepared junior YPSL in the Diocese.

In 1962, Jack suggested to a crowd of 25-40 year old parishioners that they give up social Saturday nights during Lent, and take on Bible study instead. We read Paul Tillich, Diedrich Bonhoeffer, and several others of that ilk. We discussed the reading at our Saturday evening sessions, with Jack helping us to verbalize our thoughts. About 10 couples did this for 2 years.

Misses Mamie Bryant, Emma Parker, Sarah Hargrove, and Elise Horne taught Sunday school when Haffye's son Robert was of the proper age, and he and she both noted that in the class, girls were not allowed to participate in any part of the service - not as acolytes, collection plate passers, crucifers.

Before Memorial Hall was built, The parish kitchen was in the basement under the stage of what is now Clark Hall. A doorway/pass through was located in the front of the stage wall, and the women of the Church would send through that opening such fare as scalloped oysters, and other time-consuming delicacies. Also, at Easter, the Church was dressed in yard flowers -brought by parishioners, and according to Haffye, "It was gorgeous - a church **full** of flowers!"

During the Spong years, Memorial Hall was built, and Jack started the Holy Hoopster basketball league, which brought young people from all denominations to Calvary. It was a very successful program, supported and loved by the parishioners.

With the coming of Charlie Riddle, a new chapter began for Haffye. Charlie started a pre-school for 3-year-olds in Memorial Hall, and Haffye was asked to teach it. (Aside from SCN: Haffye was, and is, magic with children. She gathers them into her world and travels into theirs with an agility never before seen.)

Haffye remembers a funny story from the "Charlie era": Robert, memorizing the Catechism for Confirmation, recited, "Thou shall not admit Adultery".

After Charlie Riddle came Mayo Little. Haffye's best memory of Mayo is that he had to drag us into the new Prayer Book, and managed to make it comfortable and easy.

Haffye's favorite service for Calvary came with Bill Smyth, who began the Wonderful Wednesday program for children, which was a joint effort with Bill, Haffye, and Ann Anderson. Gifted teachers all, they had 33 children in the program, and Haffye describes those years as "my best time".

Running out of time, I wanted to further question Haffye about her choir years - which were many and faithful. She remembers fondly Jaquelin and Pem Nash, George Penington, Dinksie Gillam, Polly Hooks, Jacksie Aycock (then Jacksie Berwick), Itsy Ruffin, Jane and Pete Long, Joan Spong, Elise Horn, L.P. Hornthal, Libba Roberson...

And then, we could get into descriptions of the Choir parties - or maybe not.....