

Interview with Jacqueline Ann Berwick Aycock by Betty Temple

Jacqueline Ann Berwick Aycock was born in Tarboro on August 31, 1935 at home on the westernmost end of St. James St. Her mother was Anna Lillian Ellis from Northampton County and her father was John Lewis Berwick, born in Rhode Island. She was the youngest of four.

“When I was 6 years old, we moved into what was to be our home for the next 31 years, 1004 St. James,” she says. “Mama said to me ‘your daddy was an Episcopalian and there is a little Episcopal Church just around the corner. I want you to go to it because church is what you do on Sunday.’”

‘That church was then Calvary Chapel, one of Calvary’s missions. Jim Simmons Jr. was the superintendent. I was baptized there when I was 10 years old and confirmed very soon after that by Bishop Penick (Charlie Penick’s father).

During the 1940’s, Miss Emily Putnam was hired to be the director of religious education and organist for the Calvary.

“ In that position she came to Calvary Chapel to work with our choir. Russell Messer, Buddy Whitley, and I started taking organ lessons from her around 1948. The reason for the free lessons was so that we could play for Calvary Chapel and the other mission churches – St. Ignatius, St. Andrew’s located on Fountain Street and St. Anne’s.

“We took turns rotating around to the missions. I went to church as many as four times some Sundays. When St. Andrew’s merged with Calvary Chapel, their congregation moved to Calvary Chapel and St. Michael’s and All Angels began.”

Jacksie graduated from Tarboro High School in 1953 and went to work for Leggett and Fountain Law Firm as their secretary.

In 1954, Miss Putnam invited Jacksie to sing with the Calvary Church Choir – “Palm Sunday was my first Sunday and the rest is history, as they say,” says Jacksie. “Carter Darrow was choir director and Miss Putnam the organist. Upon Mr. Darrow’s retirement, Miss Putnam assumed choir director duties.”

Jacksie changed her membership from St. Michael’s to Calvary in 1961.

Jacksie went to Washington , DC in July 1963 to work for Congressman L.H. Fountain and was there until December of that year. Her mother was in poor health so she returned to Tarboro and back to the law firm which was Taylor and Brinson by then.

Since those earlier days, Jacksie has served her Church in many ways.

“When I came to Calvary,” she says, ”there were three Episcopal Church Women’s chapters – St. Margaret’s and St. Catherine’s which met at night and Calvary which met in the morning. The chapters met once a month and were all very active. I was in St. Margaret’s. In 1961, St. Margaret’s published a cookbook - *St. Margaret’s Cookbook*. Around 1970-71, the ECW published a chapter-wide cookbook *Favorite Recipes of*

Calvary Parish and in 2002 the *Taste and See* cookbook. I put in recipes and helped with typing. I also did some typing for Jaquelin Nash when she published *A Goodly Heritage* printed in 1960.”

Jacksie has been singing in the Calvary Church choir for 58 years. She reports that she has enjoyed choir the most of all her church activities because of her great and abiding love of music.

“When I first sang in the choir, women choir members were required to wear choir caps. They were a nuisance and not becoming. We did it because that was the custom. And this was true when we went in the church to rehearse something. It wasn’t just when church was going on. It was all the time. On duty altar guild members had to wear choir caps, too, if they came to church without a hat. At that time most all women wore hats for church services.”

During her era, the choir directors have been Carter Darrow, Miss Putnam, Nettie Bunn, Nancy Cooper, Warren Bass, David Saunders (he was different; sported a long, woolen scarf and kept a parrot in his upstairs office) and Lloyd Owens. Some of Jacksie’s favorite works performed over the past 58 years include Handel’s *Hallelujah Chorus* from *The Messiah*, Brahm’s *Requiem*, and especially *How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place* from the *Requiem*.

“Sometimes the choir lacked finesse and we tended to cover the lack of musicality by singing loudly,” Jacksie reports.

“The choir has sung at rest homes, TV stations, at many funerals in our church, in other churches, in peoples’ homes, and all sorts of places. There were two particularly memorable funerals. One was at a home out on Howard Avenue. The deceased was the husband of a long-faithful member of St. Anne’s. When we gathered on the front porch of the house, Julia Holland, George Rimmer, choir director Nettie Bunn and I comprised the choir. Needless to say, the singing was lacking in numbers and weak to the listening ear, but we did the best we could. Another time those of us who were there will never forget was the 1955 funeral of Marshall Staton, a prominent member of the legal profession and good solid parishioner. There was a large congregation including many distinguished visitors. With funerals in the churchyard it was customary to sing a graveside hymn. The hymn was *Now The Day Is Over*. We didn’t even have a pitch pipe to get us started. It must have been raining because the choir gathered in the cloister and started the hymn with each section in a different key. It got worse and worse. The general feeling in the choir was we would like to jump into the grave and be buried along with Mr. Staton. We quickly departed at service’s end, changed into our regular clothes and slunk home. We commiserated (and with time laughed) over that truly awful effort.”

“I believe that the work of the choir, singing at funerals and weddings, in addition to the Sunday Services, is a great ministry,” Jacksie added, “and requires a large commitment.”

Jacksie has served on the Vestry twice and has been a Sunday School teacher and EYC advisor and member of various church committees. Presently, she is chairman of the Worship Committee and a member of the Churchyard Committee weeding group. On the

Diocesan level, she served as Diocesan ECW secretary and as a member of the Committee on Liturgy and Worship.

One of her favorite Calvary services - gone by the wayside - was the Feast of Lights which celebrated Epiphany on January 6.

“I kind of miss that,” she says. “It was fun watching everybody get dressed up in the bathrobes, headdresses, sheets and angel wings. Does anybody remember Larry Lane’s memorable portrayal of Judas? Pete Long, LP Hornthal and George Rimmer were the three Kings. Pete and LP were perfect in their roles but George frequently mixed up his lyrics. I also remember Brent Nash’s being Isaiah. (‘Arise, shine for thy light has come’ in Brent-speak.)”

Jacksie worked as church secretary from 1985 until 1989. She also did fill-in work for Charlie Riddle and Mayo Little those periods when their secretaries were out of the office.

The rectors, all of whom she remembers fondly, who served Calvary during Jacksie’s years here were Grayson Clary, Jack Spong, Charlie Riddle, Mayo Little, Doug Remer, Bill Smyth and now Janey Wilson. “Doug Remer started the binding of the bulletins – he was definitely interested in our history. He also was responsible for the capital campaign that redid Clark Hall, turned the Guild Room into the rector’s office, enlarged the chapel sacristy and added space to the church office.”

“Along with the devotion and dedication of the congregation, all of those rectors, in their different ways, contributed to Calvary’s on-going strength.”

“In 1958 the Parish House kitchen was underneath the stage in the auditorium and you got to it in the back of the building. There was a pass-through in one of the panels under the front of the stage where lawn equipment is kept now and there is a well-appointed small kitchen now off to the right as you look toward the stage.”

“An event which sticks out in my memory was the 1990 celebration of the 175th year of the founding of the Diocese of North Carolina. It was a splendid celebration. The presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church and many of our former rectors came, including Jack Spong, Bishop of Newark. Also, many former parishioners were here to help us celebrate.”

Jacksie sums up her comments as follows:

“When I was a child the children of the missions were invited to Calvary for an Easter afternoon service where we’d form a procession and go into and around the interior of the church singing *Onward Christian Soldiers*. I thought then I was in heaven and I now know I was, and am. Calvary is a holy place, made so by generations of faithful believers who revere and respect this place and its ongoing ministry. Thanks be to God.”