

Carter shares lifetime of memories with hometown crowd

Special event sponsored by Rector Community Museum

BY JANE GATEWOOD
Times-Democrat News Staff

Rector native Bill Carter shared a lifetime of memories during an event in his hometown on Sunday, Sept. 1, sponsored by the Rector Community Museum. In his reminiscing he noted, perhaps the difference maker was the sheriff who, after Bill Carter's expulsion from school and night in jail, insisted the young man be re-admitted to high school with the understanding of what would happen if he should get into one more speck of trouble. This critical intervention happened his junior year, prompting him to remember, "imagine if I had not finished high school. What that man saw in me, I do not know," said Carter. "I was afraid not to do right. He scared me into a diploma."

Carter shared inspirational stories with a large crowd at Rector United Methodist Church in the Wesley Center, introduced by Rev. Jacob Lynn and interviewed by Joanna Carter, his daughter. Wife Marlo operated the book sales and signing sessions throughout the afternoon program on the Sunday of this year's Labor Day weekend.

If the pivotal event were



Keith Hill, Bill Carter along with Sherland and Barbara Hamilton visit with Kevin Sigsby during the Rector Community Museum's event.(TD photo/Jane Gatewood)

life would not give the man credit for seizing opportunity when it presented itself. "That's the lesson," Carter said, "making the most of situations placed before me."

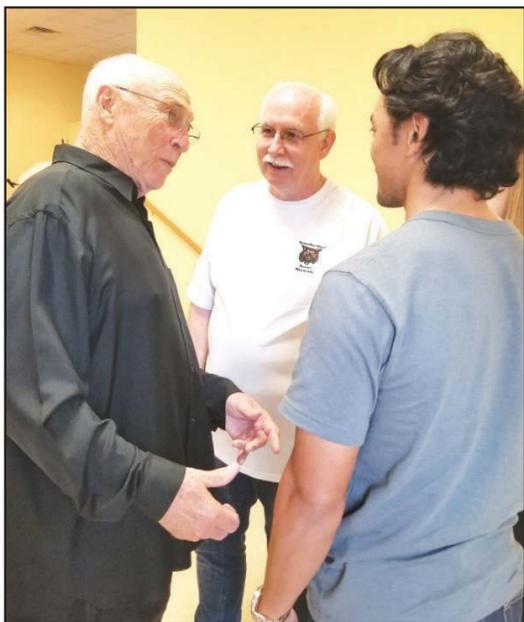
To further suggest that he had connections or knew the right people negates the fact that his personality engaged people and he forged friendships. He worked hard, played hard, and made successful inroads with a savvy ability to close deals, and people noticed. Of course, he had no connections that he

people he met never left him void of an enriching experience. "Wilbur Mills was always a mentor for me throughout the years and at every turn," he said of the former Congressman from Kensett, and powerful chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

The assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the years Agent Carter was involved with the White House and the Kennedy family profoundly affected him. The days after the fatal shots from the Texas Book Depository haunt Carter and bring him to tears as he remembers witnessing personally what the public viewed on television. The months he spent in the Warren Commission interviews and with Marina Oswald in Dallas gave him solemn insights and profound experiences to last a lifetime.

Serendipity or happenstance might be words some would use to explain Bill Carter's varied career moves and successes and he would agree but only to a point. "Someone always stepped forward to help me, introduce me to someone," he explained. Or he'd find himself on the same trajectory as another he would later remember as a powerful influence. His work ethic and magnetic persona cemented relationships such as the one with a Vietnam era acquaintance and veteran. He'd met the young Fred Smith, who had a novel idea. But, he needed help in negotiating the Capitol Hill scene while creating what later became Federal Express.

Carter continued with stories, explaining the crazy route that took him on the road with Keith Richards and the Rolling Stones, sharing tales that brought knowing chuckles from the audience. One audience member reminded Carter of the irony that during high school,



Bill Carter visits with Joey Pruett, and former exchange student Carlos Tayag, during his visit to Rector on Labor Day weekend.(TD photo/Jane Gatewood)

not the RHS diploma, maybe it was the stint in the U.S. Air Force where he bargained for early release and found himself in Jonesboro on the college campus with friends. Having no place else to go, "I just stayed," using the GI Bill to pay his way.

Or, after those academic years, it could have been the ride to Dallas and the week on the SMU campus. He traveled with his brother who took the Civil Service exam. "I didn't have anything else to do, nowhere to go because I was just riding along, so the lady there convinced me to take the exam," he explained. "It was free so I took the test."

Carter spent a few weeks at SMU where he recognized the economic level of the students there was beyond him. He drove his rattle-trap Ford north to Fayetteville and used the remainder of his GI Bill for a few semesters in the University of Arkansas law school. It was there he answered an important phone call for a new career. The man on the phone asked that he come to Washington D.C. for training with the Secret Service. "You are Bill Carter and you did take the Civil Service exam, right? I want you in D.C. tomorrow."

That surprise call was during the early 1960s and Carter was on his way to more life-changing events.

To suggest Carter drifted willy-nilly through his own



Bill Carter poses for a photo with the members of the group TRIPPP, who later entertained at the Labor Day Picnic.(TD photo/Jane Gatewood)

To the youth in the audience, Carter advised, "Work hard and get as much education as you can."

He and daughter Joanna Carter agreed that the music industry and business allows but few success stories.

"If you're bound to play, do so because you love it," he shared. "If it's inside you, hold on and don't let go, pursue your dreams, regardless of the doubters."

The Band TRIPPP attended the program and sought Carter's advice and philosophy after his remarks concluded.

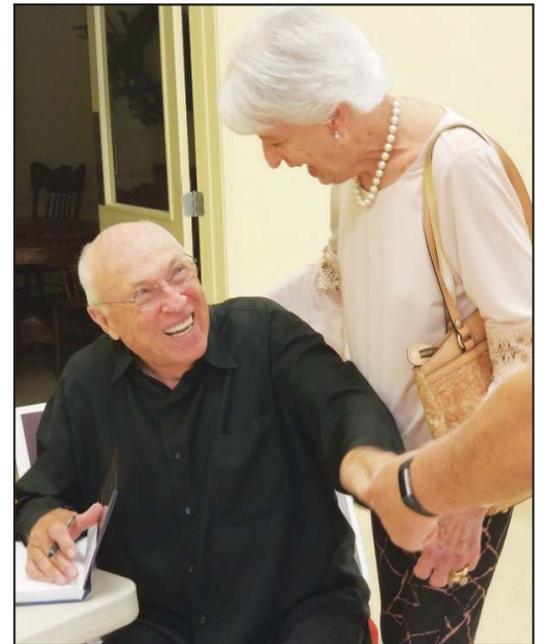
When Carter's various stories closed and he searched for a single point, he concluded it was being raised in Rector that made the difference in the life of a poor, directionless kid.

"I'm blessed to have had

that background and heritage of people being beside me to help, of having to dig deep and work hard. That's what my parents gave me," he explained. "They taught me to work hard. That's all they had to offer us and they gave that ethic to me."

Carter readily extended love and appreciation to his daughters and his wife for their steadfast love. He acknowledged that he and General George Barker's founding of the Helping Hands Foundation in Rector which benefits economically disadvantaged students may be his finest accomplishment.

To end his stories and remarks for the Rector audience, the event sponsored by Rector Community Museum, Carter insisted, "I want to be remembered as Henry and Faye's kid from Rector."



Bill Carter shares a moment with Jesselyn Glaub-True at the RCM event.(TD photo/Jane Gatewood)

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