By Gerald Harris  
Editor

MOUNT VERNON – Camden County championship wrestler Nathan “Nate” Pristavec wasn’t sure where he wanted to go to college. He just knew he wanted to become a collegiate wrestler. He was second among Georgia wrestlers in the 6A high school classification, but no one was recruiting him.

Since his phone was not ringing from college wrestling coaches Nate had just about decided to enlist in the military. However, Brewton-Parker College contacted him and offered him a scholarship to wrestle.

He admitted, “I did not come to BPC because I wanted to be in a Christian college. I only came to wrestle.

“My family attended a Baptist church when I was very young. I remember going to activities for children; and I was baptized when I was about ten-years-old, but I am not sure I was really saved at that time.”

First a believer, then an atheist wrestling with God

Nate continued, “When I was in middle school my family had a bad experience in the church, so we stopped going to church for awhile. During those years away from church I wandered away from God. I turned away from God; and I was baptized when I was about ten-years-old, but I am not sure I was really saved at that time.”

Baptist Campus Ministry makes the difference

“We were required to go to chapel, but as a result of that I was reminded of who Jesus is and what He did for me. Many people took an interest in me, especially Baptist Campus Minister Youmans, who was the one God used to actually led me to Christ. It was during my sophomore year that I decided to give my life to Christ and after that I did a complete 180-degree turn-around. I forsook my old way of life and started putting God as my first priority, changing my major from business to Christian studies; then I became a leader of the Baptist Collegiate Ministry. Although I had a great year in wrestling, it was no longer my first priority.

“Last summer, before the beginning of my junior year Zoey and I got married. Life was a challenging year, because I was a full time student, full time athlete, full time husband and I was working 25-30 hours a week. It was a difficult schedule, but I gave all my worries to God; and He helped me through it.

“All of this season I was ranked 2nd in the nation in the 157 pound weight class. But I dislocated my hip and that ended my career.

“My scholarship paid for most of my school, but I am not worried or upset, because I know that God will provide for me and Zoey and we will be fine. I am not upset that I can’t wrestle, because God has already been opening new doors in my life I just got a job as a part-time youth pastor at Bay Springs Baptist Church in Adrian.”

Nate concluded, “I am stepping out on faith and trusting God to lead me. I am currently growing so much in my faith; I can constantly see God working in my life and God is using BPC to grow me into a Godly man. I do not know what I want to do with my degree, or what kind of job I want to have, but I am trying to listen for my call and I am trying to be obedient to God’s will.”
Meet 90-year-old pastor Maurice Crowder

By Gerald Harris
Editor

CARTERSVILLE — He looks good. He says he feels good. He is still serving as pastor of a church. He is preparing new sermons every week. He just drove his car 450 miles round-trip to see his grandchildren and great grandchildren. He was born on November 22, 1926.

That is a succinct description of 90-year-old Maurice Crowder.

Crowder was born in Saluda, SC, but his family moved to Batesburg-Leesville when he was a child. He lived there until midway through his senior year in high school, when the family moved to Charleston. He enrolled in Charleston High School, an all-boys’ school, and graduated from there months later.

However, Crowder was saved as a 12-year-old boy at First Baptist Church of Leesburg. He recalled, “My mother was the spiritual leader in our family. She took me to see our pastor and he explained to me how to become a Christian by trusting Christ as my personal Savior.

Running from a call

In high school Crowder worked for an auto auction, but also found time to play football. He stated, “I was not that good a player. I was an end and guard and sat on the end of the bench and guarded the water bucket” (Gatorade didn’t come along until 1965).

After high school Crowder worked at the shipyard in Charleston. He attempted to join the U.S. Navy, but was rejected because of his eyesight. He then joined the Merchant Marine, but was not happy with his decision and finally joined the U.S. Army near the end of World War II.

He was in Brazil when Germany surrendered and back in the states when Japan surrendered. After the war he enrolled in a local business school to study accounting, but sensed God calling him into the ministry.

60 years, four months, 14 days

“One night the pastor’s wife at Dorchester Waylyn Baptist Church, where I had become active, asked me to stay after our youth group met and told me she and the pastor had been praying God would call me to preach the Gospel. That is when I decided to quit running from God’s call. Her conversation with me was at the beginning of a week of revival and it was that week in April of 1948 I surrendered to God’s call.”

Crowder knew he needed to prepare for the ministry, so he enrolled in North Greenville Junior College. On the first day of chapel he remembered, “There was a pretty girl, a voice major, by the name of Mary Rector who sang that morning. I was told she was almost engaged to be married, but I dared to invite her to the welcome banquet. She accepted my invitation and we got married the following August.”

Upon graduating from North Greenville, the Crowders went to Furman University and by 1952 were on their way to Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, TX. There, Maurice not only continued his education but also served as minister of youth at Arlington Heights Baptist Church.

Following his seminary education Crowder returned to South Carolina and served as associate pastor of First Baptist Church of Fort Mill for five years. He was then given the opportunity to become pastor of Plum Branch Baptist Church in Plum Branch, SC, a small church near Clark Hill Lake and not far from the Georgia state line.

After Plum Branch, Crowder pastored East Athens Baptist Church (5 years), Millen Baptist Church (14 years), and First Baptist Church McCaysville (10 years) before retiring in 1993. Since retiring he has preached multiple interims, one lasting over seven years.

He has also served three times as an interim director of missions.

Currently, Crowder is pastor of Big Horse Creek Baptist Church on Buttermilk Road very near Millen, where he has his home.

Maurice has one son, Alan, who has two children, Kari and Matthew, who have provided the Big Horse Creek pastor with seven great grandchildren. He considers himself blessed, but one thing is sure: he has been a blessing to multitudes of people during almost seven decades of faithful and fruitful service.

If you enjoyed this inspirational story, visit our website for even more uplifting content.

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At your service 24-hours a day.
Recently I had the opportunity to be in the chapel at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to hear our Jubalheirs, Georgia Baptist Singing Women, singing in concert at the 8th Annual Crescent City Praise. The concert came at the conclusion of a week of ministry in which our Jubalheirs were all over the city of New Orleans participating in various ministries to bring comfort, friendship and help to people of many varied needs.

It was my privilege that night to present a check on behalf of the Georgia Baptist Mission Board to assist the Suburban Baptist Church that sustained significant loss in a recent tornado. Pastor Dr. Jeffery Friend and his wife, Stephanie, were present to receive the check. Dr. Friend gave me a long embrace as he wept with gratitude. In that moment, I knew he was hugging Georgia Baptists and saying thank you for caring for Suburban Baptist Church in their time of need.

The Crescent City Praise event is patterned after the much-acclaimed Prom Praise event that occurs in London each year. Dr. Greg Woodward and Kathy Duren, a member of the Jubalheirs, helped present a Georgia Baptist version of Prom Praise during their tenure at Truett McConnell College. Known as Mountain Praise it became a greatly anticipated event among the churches in North Georgia.

Crescent City Praise which this year featured the Jubalheirs has increasingly become a hallmark of the worshipping community in the greater New Orleans area. It was a great crowd that evening as the chapel at New Orleans Seminary was filled with what Dr. Chuck Kelley, president of the seminary, told me was the best crowd in his memory.

For me one of the most inspiring moments in the evening was when the leaders of the various social ministry groups in New Orleans came forward and expressed their appreciation for our Jubalheirs who had ministered among them so effectively in the preceding week. Our ladies were wonderfully impacted as well and many of them told me that they would love to be able to stay longer and do more work.

According to U.S. News and World Report, Atlanta is number nine in terms of the worst traffic among the cities of the nation. with the collapse of a portion of I-85 near downtown Atlanta, we could become number one.

However, we are not particularly interested in that ignominious distinction. Thankfully no one was injured and no one died as a result of the blazing inferno that caused the collapse of the section of the interstate highway. And, we can be grateful that no one was on the section of the highway when it fell into the conflagration below.

Commuters have been urged to take MARTA or reroute their path into and out of the city. It is likely that the gridlock on I-75 and I-285 will be more horrendous than ever. I live near I-75 and I-285 and the traffic congestion combined with the road construction near our home could give one a good cause for justifiable road rage.

Last week some traffic analyst determined how long it would take people to get to SunTrust Park, the new home of the Atlanta Braves at the interchange of I-75 and I-285. In essence, they calculated that it would be a breeze and that anyone within 30 miles of the stadium could get to a Braves game in a matter of minutes. I don’t know what planet they were living on.

However, here are some suggestions for those of you who dare to venture out into the maze and madness of Atlanta traffic.

First, begin your journey early enough in order to give yourself plenty of time to arrive at your destination on schedule.

Second, make sure your car has plenty of gasoline in case you get in a traffic jam that causes you to use more fuel than you thought would be required.

Third, make sure you have water and something you can do if you get stopped in traffic for a long period of time. You can make phone calls, dictate letters, make out a grocery list, pray, etc.

Fourth, resolve not to let the traffic master your emotions. Refuse to get angry with motorists who fail to display courtesy, cut in front of you, and let their emotions run wild. Do not become filled with rage. Develop a Christ-controlled temperament.

Fifth, allow the fruit of the spirit to control your thoughts and behavior.

Sixth, thank God you don’t have to walk to work or to your destination.

Sometimes, I wish I was back in my hometown of Valdese, North Carolina – a Mayberry kind of town. The town has only gained 2,000 new residents since 1940; and the population has actually decreased in the last five years. The only time we ever had a traffic jam in Valdese was after the Friday night football games when everyone flocked to the Rat Hole (a sandwich shop one block from the football field). They called it the Rat Hole because that is what it looked like with all the students scurrying in and out of the place.

However, God has placed me here in the Atlanta area and I realize I need to bloom where I am planted, even if I am planted for hours on I-285.
ACROSS
1. There was one between Abraham and the rich man (Luke 16:26)
10. Organization (abbr.)
14. Main artery
15. Black and white snack
17. Pierced Jesus’ side
18. “Mary. . .which anointed the ____ with ointment” (John 11:2)
19. Moray and conger
20. Jesus, Mary, and Martha’s broke when Lazarus died
22. “Why was not this ointment ____?” (John 12:5)
24. Deli request
25. Church tower song
27. Tiny amounts
29. Martha’s hometown (John 11:1)
32. “The ____ of the house of David” (Isa. 22:22)
33. Easter mo., usually
34. Friends assumed Mary went to Lazarus’s ____ (John 11:31)
37. Judas made one with the Pharisees (Matt. 26:15)
41. “Fade as a ____” (Isa. 64:6)
42. Days Lazarus was dead before Jesus arrived (John 11:17)
46. “To comfort them concerning ____ brother” (John 11:19)
48. Flightless bird
49. Possible exclamation by crowd when Lazarus’ tomb was opened
51. Candidate
54. Female singer ____ Apple
55. Brown
56. What Paul was before he became shipwrecked (2 wds.)
57. Like a wing
58. Definition resource (abbr.)
60. Travel with
61. God’s heavenly creations are shaped like these
63. Tater ____
65. “One little ____ lamb” (2 Sam. 12:3)
66. Mary may have kept her ointment in this
68. Perculiarity
69. Jesus: be born ____ (John 3:3)
70. “Be ye therefore perfect, ____ as your Father” (Matt. 5:48)
71. Monastery superior
72. “It is a ____ thing that the king requireth” (Dan. 2:11)
73. When Jesus arrived, Mary’s brother was ____ (John 11:14)
74. Tilts to one side

DOWN
1. What Judas received for his betrayal of Jesus (Matt. 26:15)
2. “Faith, ____ charity, these three” (1 Cor. 13:13)
3. Samaria, e.g.
4. Gravy thickener
5. Mary’s sister
6. Sun in Barcelona
7. When Jesus called for Mary “she ____ quickly” (John 11:29)
8. Roman emperor
9. What Baal was not
10. What one did at a feast
11. Queen from this region visited Solomon (1 Kings 10:1-2)
12. In Gen. 37, Judah ____ his brother to traveling merchants
13. Without children, Mary’s home was an empty ____
23. Roe in KJV
26. Present at Jesus’ birth and burial
28. Typed error
29. Describes Elisha (2 Kings 2:23)
30. Fencing sword
31. Trolley car
35. Popeye’s yes
36. Surely there are these for silver and gold (Job. 28:1)
38. Room where Mary sat at Jesus’ feet, perhaps (2 wds.)
40. “I am the ____ vine” (John 15:1)
42. Boomed
44. “Faithful children not accused of ____ or unruly” (Titus 1:6)
45. Display
47. Perhaps used by Judas to end his life (Matt. 27:5)
50. “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see ____” (Matt. 5:8)
51. Type of Mexican liquor
52. Cast from Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9)
53. Female singer ____ Apple
54. Female singer ___ Apple
55. Brown
56. What Paul was before he became shipwrecked (2 wds.)
57. Like a wing
59. Where Mary’s brother was buried (John 11:38)
60. God’s heavenly creations are shaped like these
61. “Faithful children not accused of ____ or unruly” (Titus 1:6)
63. Tater ____
65. “One little ____ lamb” (2 Sam. 12:3)
67. “He loved them unto the ____” (John 13:1)