

## **The Pines – How did it all begin?**

*In 1989, shortly after The Pines opened, Betty Cumming, one of the people instrumental in founding The Pines, recounted how the retirement community came to be. Here are highlights from her account, first published in The Pinepost, the Residents' Association newsletter:*

The Pines began, I believe, in the fact that Davidson has always been a close-knit community of neighbors, conscious of each others' needs, and expecting to deal with them ourselves rather than to seek extraneous aid... Somewhere out of discussions (among local service organizations), about fifteen years ago, rose the persistent question, "Could we possibly have a pleasant life-care community for old people right here in Davidson?" Who asked it first will never be known.

I can, however, identify a few of the members who formed the first little group which dared to decide to start doing something about this seemingly impossible dream. There was "Pete" Barnes and her good husband, there were Bob and Pat Sailstad; there were the Cummings, stubbornly clinging to the hope of solving the impossibility of moving Bill away from his precious map collection, now willed to the Davidson College Library. We circulated a little questionnaire in the town.

(Former Davidson College) President Sam Spencer moved us in the first direction by suggesting that we go to Black Mountain to visit Highland Farms, run by Chester Prentice. We climbed the mountain in deep snow. Mr. Prentice galvanized us by saying that he would like to advise us in forming a branch of Highland Farms at Davidson. This was a for-profit community based on many small investments. We went a long way with Mr. Prentice: meeting in Charlotte and Davidson, and a growing mailing list which reached 300 names. Then came the first awful setback, the rise of interest rates in the mid-'70s, which made it impossible to borrow money for construction. What seemed doom was really blessing, however, for when our little group crawled into action again, we headed toward the non-profit, church-related community which we now have.

Nevertheless, it was a much-sobered few whom Reverend Charles Raynal found grimly meeting when he came to minister to the Davidson (College Presbyterian) Church. He was fresh from the South Carolina Presbyterian Community at Summerville, where his father was chaplain, and convinced that such places were a proper mission of the church. Our group widened. Another godsend was the return to Davidson of Giddy Erwin Dyer, boundless in energy, who got the director of all the South Carolina homes to talk to us. At the end, he said, "You're going to succeed, you know." "How do you know?" we gasped. "Because of the people I see in this room," he replied.

I have not space to record how our group developed into a competent volunteer board of directors....Nor can I tell how we decided that we could be only loosely related to the North Carolina Synod's Presbyterian Homes. Our momentum was up, and they were moving too slowly for us.

Let me close by telling with great pride in what way we are truly church-related. Came the time when we simply had to have some money to get started.... Charles Raynal preached a wonderful sermon on the privilege of assisting at the birth of a great Christian Institution; and the congregation of the Davidson College Presbyterian Church numbering about 550 people, in one month, with no assurance of our success, gave \$800,000 to set The Pines on its way! And so it all began.