



Remembering Dot: Pilot Club's Dorothy Bledsoe honored through memorial

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Author: autumn hughes

Citizen News Editor

Throughout her life, Dorothy R. \"Dot\" Bledsoe's face was a familiar one at Englewood First Baptist Church. She and her late husband, Carl, raised their daughter, Susie, in the church. It was there Dot taught Sunday school and led children and youth activities and Carl served as treasurer, among other duties.

After Dot passed away Jan. 3, 2011, at the age of 86, her friends in the Pilot Club of Athens wanted to offer a lasting memorial in her honor.

According to Ruth Atkins, chairman of the Pilot Club of Athens' Lasting Memorials Committee, in the event of the death of a member of the Pilot Club of Athens, the club honors the deceased with a lasting memorial to a worthy community project.

For many years, Atkins said, the club said goodbye to a deceased member by sending flowers for the funeral. "One day it occurred to me we are a service project club, why are we not doing something in their memory in benefit to the community," she said. From there, the Lasting Memorials initiative was developed. Since it was established, deceased Pilot Club members have been honored in a variety of ways - Lectern Bibles for members' churches, a seating bench for the elementary school where one Pilot taught for more than 25 years and picnic tables at McMinn Senior Activity Center, among others.

Susie said it took some time to decide on a recommendation to the Pilot Club for her mother's lasting memorial. However, she chose a gift for the church because of "Mother's love of the church," she said. The gift - a large silver vase and candlesticks - was presented to the church last month.

Dot Bledsoe was originally from Sweetwater, but lived in Englewood for many years. Susie said the family moved to Englewood in 1953 before her parents returned to Sweetwater in 1998. After the move, they began attending church services there, but the church in Englewood was still home. "Mother and Daddy were active over there all that time," Susie said of the church. "I remember walking to church every Sunday and Wednesday night." Russ Maples has been pastor of Englewood First Baptist Church for the past four years. Although he did not know Dot Bledsoe, he appreciates that the church meant so much to her and her family. Maples said the church occasionally receives memorial items, often monetary donations to the building fund. He said the vase and candlesticks would be used regularly, and that a gift to a church recognizes it was an important part of a person's life. "I think it's a wonderful tribute to the person," Maples said.

Atkins said Bledsoe joined the Pilot Club in 1972 and held several offices over the years; she served as president in 1982-83. "She was a special Pilot," Atkins said. "Pilot was a big part of her life."

Pilot Club of Athens President Kay Coker said Dot opened her home for several Pilot Club picnics and Christmas parties over the years. "It was always wonderful to go to her home for those occasions," Coker said.

Jo Long, who has been a member of the Pilot Club for 63 years, sat with Dot at club meetings, sharing dinner together twice a month for decades. She accompanied Susie in making the presentation to the church "There was not a more giving person than Dot Bledsoe," Long said. Susie said she plans to purchase an arrangement for the vase when special flowers are not in place. "An arrangement that can stay year-round," she said. When asked what Dot would think of the gift to the church, Susie said, "Mother would be pleased."*

Email: autumn.hughes@dailypostathenian.com