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DEAN OF GTCC'S GREENSBORO CAMPUS TO RETIRE AFTER 25 YEARS AT COLLEGE

GREENSBORO – Bill Geter, dean of Guilford Technical Community College's Greensboro campus on East Wendover Avenue, will retire Nov. 1 after 25 years with the college.

Geter said he isn't retiring from his involvement in the community. He said he will continue serving the community, and has an eye on political involvement. "I will eventually run for something but I don't know what it will be," he said.

Since settling in Greensboro, he has served on more than 15 community boards, including the Community Foundation, Communities in Schools, Impact Greensboro and Job Link.

GTCC wasn't in his career plans when he took a teaching job on the school's Jamestown campus. "I didn't plan on staying this long," he said. He thought teaching would be a temporary position until he found another job in sales. He said he left a sales position with Exxon because he didn't want to be transferred to corporate headquarters in Houston.

"I had been in sales with Exxon for 15 years, and I took a big pay cut when I left and took a job with the school. I kept staying on because I fell in love with things happening at the college and with the people," he said.

Geter had been with Exxon since graduating from Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte in 1968, and had become a sales manager stationed in Greensboro. He also earned a master's degree at NC A&T in 1971.

"I loved sales," he said. Those who have worked with Geter say he's still a salesman because he is always convincing doubting students that they can "make it" in education and earn a degree. "It's up to you," he says after an inspirational and challenging session with a student.

Geter has helped many students to stay in school, and move to a higher level in their lives, said Leroy Stokes, vice-president of corporate and continuing education at GTCC.

"He is passionate about helping the Basic Skills students be successful in their programs," Stokes said. "He will not hesitate to correct students if he sees them doing something wrong or using offensive language," Stokes said.

Geter also doesn't like students wearing droopy pants. "He is constantly asking young men to pull-up their pants," Stokes said. Geter said that he isn't picking on these students but wants them to dress more appropriately.

Janette McNeill, dean of GTCC's High Point campus, also sees Geter's concern for students' well-being. "I have found him to be a very giving, thoughtful and considerate person who cares very much for our students," she said.

Geter has been "very helpful" in teaching McNeill about the community college system, and about Basic Skills and Continuing Education programs since she took a job at the college in 2003, she said.

Pat Freeman, director of Basic Skills on the Greensboro campus, said, "He genuinely cares about people and is passionate about helping students achieve their goals. I've always valued his opinion because he values others and is passionate about helping students."

It was evident that "passion" was a word to help define Geter since he was a child growing up in Martinsville, VA, where he had a passion for making money since he was a boy hanging around his father's barber shop. "I'd shine shoes; work for a golf course where I would caddy; and

always hustled,” he said. “My father bought my last suit when I was in the ninth grade. I made my own money,” Geter said.

Stokes points out that Geter is still a “family man.” Geter said that his mother, Wilie Mae, 93, and daughters Cierra and Crystal are the three most important women in his life.

Morris Geter was his son’s example for a strong work ethic. “My father worked in Hooker Furniture for 44 years, and also ran a barber shop after he got off work at Hooker,” Geter said.

That barbershop was a big part of Bill Geter’s education, one that he loves to talk about as much as any subject in his past. “It was a gathering place where people came not just to get a haircut or a shoe shine but to *talk*. They would talk about everything – baseball, the Bible and politics.” There also was a television set in the barbershop that attracted people, especially on the nights that boxing matches were aired. “Sometimes the crowds would be so big that we would have to take the TV outside the shop so people could see,” he said.

Morris Geter was a man who loved the church, and his passion for the Bible still rings in his son’s heart. “He’s a Christian, no doubt, because of the way he was raised,” said Stokes. And Geter does mention that his minor in college was in religion, and that he sometimes is guest speaker at churches.

“My father went to church so much that his nickname was ‘Church,’ ” Geter said.

Bill Geter also had a passion for the civil rights movement, something that he first got involved in while still living under Morris Geter’s roof. “My father threatened to put me out of the house for being involved with picketing stores downtown (in Martinsville),” he said.

Geter, who played three sports at the segregated Albert Harris High School, was becoming his own man, but he never shed the teachings and the example of loving people he saw in his father.

While in college, Geter was involved in other civil rights demonstrations, and especially remembers being among the thousands of marchers who went to Selma, AL, in March 1965. He pulled a worn, American flag neatly framed wooden sign from beneath a table in his office, and said, “I brought this back from Selma.”

Selma was the scene for Black Sunday where 600 demonstrators were beaten with clubs by law enforcement officers. The combination of marches on Selma also resulted in President Lyndon Johnson signing the Voting Rights Act after the right to vote had been denied to many minorities.

Geter was still a student leader in peaceful demonstrations when Martin Luther King Jr. was killed.

Geter was among the first black sales managers hired by Exxon, and “I knew they were testing me – watching me,” he said. “I was successful because I treated everybody right,” he said.

His attitude has always been to take the high ground. “First, you’ve got to have faith in God, understand yourself and then understand people. Then you have to understand that everybody has value and worth,” Geter said. “I try to give everyone I meet respect and demand the same from them,” he said.

That’s his passion – helping people; and he does it in a variety of ways – just like Morris Geter would have wanted him to do.

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