

Passport

January 2008

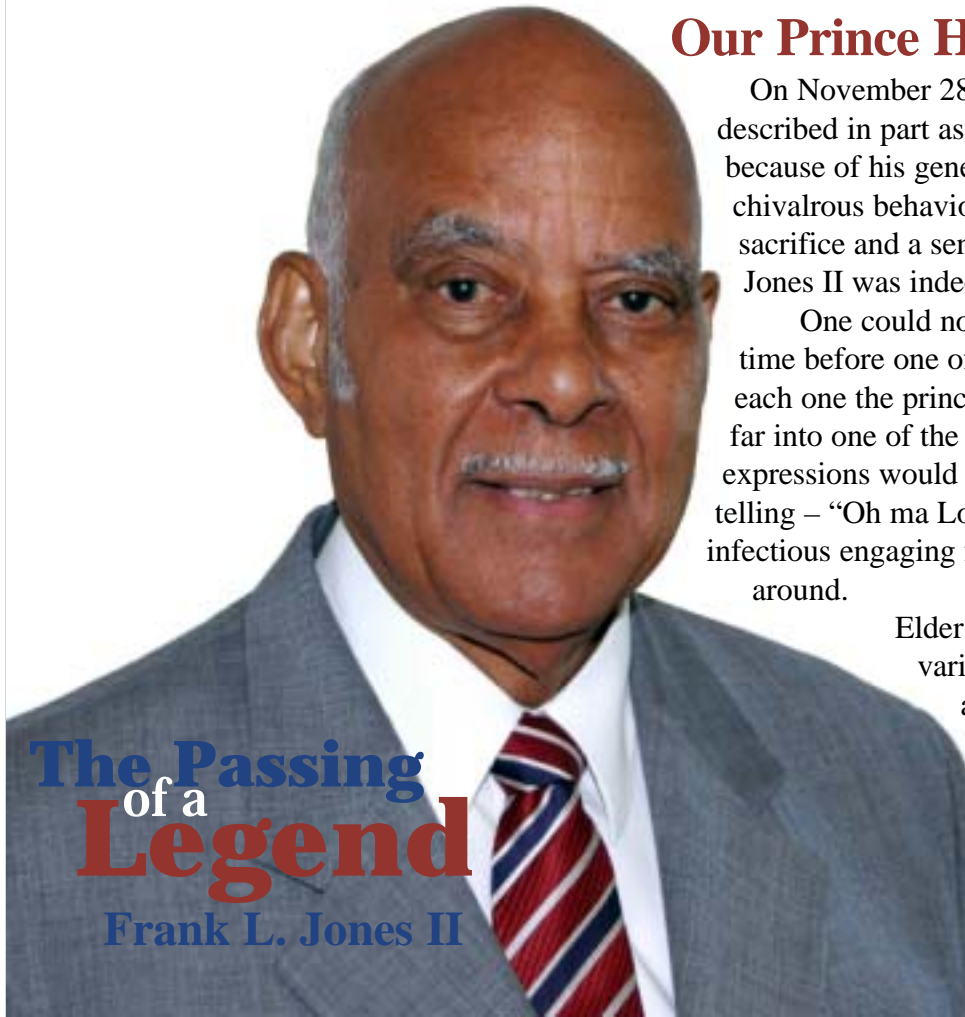
*A newsletter for the
Regional Conference Retirees
of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*

Our Prince Has Fallen

On November 28, 2007 our prince fell. A prince is described in part as a man who is outstanding, especially because of his generous or chivalrous nature. A chivalrous behavior is characterized by courtesy, self-sacrifice and a sense of fair play. In that sense Frank L. Jones II was indeed a prince.

One could not be in his presence but for a short time before one of his stories would begin to unfold. In each one the princely element would surface. Not very far into one of the stories one of his favorite expressions would elbow its way into the fabric of his telling – “Oh ma Lord.” Then there would be his familiar infectious engaging full-faced laugh. He was a joy to be around.

Elder Jones’ contributions are many and varied and since his passing the stellar accomplishments of his career have been celebrated in the publications and media of the GC and NAD. Even the Huntsville Times newspaper did a full story on the life and legacy of this special man. In this newsletter we pay a final tribute to his memory by highlighting one or two of the



**The Passing
of a
Legend**
Frank L. Jones II

things he did to support efforts to enrich the lives of our retiring employees.

For us in the Regional Conferences, especially those who are retired on our plan, one of his most valuable contributions was support for the formation of our Retirement Plan. When the NAD formed a special committee to determine the validity of complaints the Regional Conferences at that time were registering, by virtue of his long service as a denominational employee on multiple levels of the Church and as a retiree, he was invited to serve. They believed that in him they had an ally in their efforts to deny those claims and denounce the direction in which we were going. Were they ever in for a surprise.

Here is my favorite story. On his way to the first meeting of that distinguished group at GC headquarters, I saw him in the airport and asked for a brief audience with him before he boarded the plane. It was my intention to “school him” on the issues and ascertain where he stood on them. I was pushing the pro “Alternative Retirement Plan” agenda, as it was called initially, when he interrupted me with these words – “You don’t have to worry about me. It is those other “birds” you have to worry about, not me. I am in full agreement with what

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you young men are trying to do.” The record shows that he went straight to that meeting and in its opening moments he took the floor and made his support known publically and never deviated from it.

In the early days of the struggle when I was virtually alone in pushing the creation of a new retirement plan for Regional Conferences, to have



Frank and Dorothy Jones

a person from his generation of Workers to be so resolute in support for it was immeasurably encouraging. Of special note is the fact that his earlier retirement from the GC made him ineligible for any benefits from the new plan. However, that fact did

not blunt his enthusiasm or support for it.

The original design for the plan did not include a healthcare benefit. It quickly became evident that the costs would be prohibitive for each retiree to find affordable coverage apart from a group plan. Once the decision was made to pursue a healthcare benefit for our retirees, he single-handedly did all the research that led to our deciding that Adventist Risk Management was the best way to go.

One outstanding princely characteristic of his was a keen sense of fair play. A good portion of my downtime in the Retirement Office was spent listening to stories of how he got into trouble with others in administration because he told the workers of all the benefits that should be coming to them. In those early days of our regional conferences the brethren would tell you very little about benefits. What you did not know would hurt you because they would not tell you what you were entitled to. Well, Frank L. Jones II told it and enjoyed the telling thereof. “Oh ma Lord Joe”

they would be so mad with me . . . and then he would enjoy a good engaging, infectious, full-faced, face-turning-red laugh.

Thursday December 6, 2007, marked the day in Huntsville for the final celebration of his life. The tributes and the physical presence on that day from ministers, family and friends from all over this land, including representatives from every administrative level of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was a sight to behold.

During that service as a final tribute to his memory, Elder Charles Cheatham, Chairman of the Regional Conference Presidents Council announced the establishment of a special Legacy Scholarship in Elder Jones’ memory. This scholarship is to be given each year to a graduating senior who will pursue terminal degrees in Accounting and Business. Later through the office in Huntsville the Regional Conferences also announced a “Forever Guest” award to honor Mrs. Dorothy Jones, Elder Jones’ beloved wife of more than 57 years. This award affords her the privilege of attendance at all meetings of the Black Caucus at our expense for life. She was also awarded a cruise to the place of her choice to relax and regroup as she begins the journey ahead without him.

Character, enthusiasm, engaging, courteous, self-sacrificing, a sense of fair play, a dedicated husband, father, brother, friend and Christian gentleman - Truly our prince has fallen and we will sorely miss him.

Joseph W. McCoy
Executive Director

By the Numbers:

- 1,689**—Total number of current and former employees and current retirees and beneficiaries
- 209**—Number currently receiving benefits (Retirees and Beneficiaries)
- 6-4-2**—Percentage of cost-of-living raises by years from 2004 to present

Regional Conference Retirees

We are pleased to introduce the NEWEST retirees added in the 4th quarter of 2007:

1 - Gilbert Cooper - Education Superintendent	South Central	38.10 years
2 - Juanita Grier - Teacher	South Atlantic	6.5 years
3 - Irwin Dulan - Teacher	South Central	4 years
4 - John M. Brown - Pastor	South Central	23.2 years
5 - Ephriam Pembleton - Pastor	Central States	33 years
6 - Dante Tobias - Pastor	South Atlantic	31.11 years
7 - Thaddious Privette - Stewardship Director	Allegheny East	35 years
8 - Alfred Booker - Pastor	Allegheny West	34.7 years



The New Cost-of-Living Raises Are In Effect!



We are in the beginning days of 2008 and already the news is good. After years of making deliberate steps to ensure that the Retirement Fund is on solid ground, the Retirement Board voted to grant this great gift. In fact the news gets better. The entire \$22.00 per person rate increase for our Supplemental Healthcare Plan scheduled for January 1, 2008 is being carried by the Board. So in addition to the Cost-of-living raise, you are in effect getting an additional \$22.00 per month increase on the healthcare side.

The cost-of-living adjustments will be granted in the following manner:

6% - for those retirees receiving benefits in 2004 and earlier

4% - for those receiving benefits beginning in 2005

2% - for those receiving benefits beginning in 2006

The new amounts will not be reflected in your benefits until February 2008. At

that time your benefit will reflect a two-month cost-of-living adjustment amount because the new amount for January was not included in your January check. We had to play catch-up for January with the February amount. The regular amount will be reflected in your March 2008 check. So be aware that the total for your February check will be more than the total for your January check but less than your March check. If you are still confused call us and we will walk you through it.

Here is something you should know about the future that can be predicted. Healthcare costs will increase. You can expect a rate increase almost every year. That is the nature of the beast at this time. This year the Fund is covering the full cost increase for you. In the past we have divided the cost increases with the retiree. In the future you may have to carry all or a substantial part of the annual increases. So enjoy this wonderful news and do not spend this “windfall” all in one place.

Hard Questions That Demand an Answer

Back in the July issue I made a promise to have this section in every issue. I also promised to have at least seven questions that demanded an answer. Upon reflection that was a bit ambitious. Here is the new objective – at least one question per issue.



Question – Is it time to end programs that carry special financial advantages and considerations for Regional Conferences in the NAD?

In recent times, especially since the genesis of our Regional Conference Retirement Plan, some NAD leaders have suggested that it is time to review their position on concessions to our conferences. In fact in the early days of our efforts to initiate the plan, one leader told me that the “white conferences would retaliate” and that the target would be the Special Assistance Fund.

As I understand it several items went into making the NAD decision to reduce by 15% the amount coming from the conferences for this special fund. One reason given for that move was that too much of the money coming from all conferences was being retained by the Division and not enough was being distributed back to the local conferences and congregations where ministry is done.

The purpose for establishing this fund initially was to share the wealth of financially advantaged conferences with those whose per capita giving was less than desirable. Interestingly enough many white conferences were and are being helped by this initiative.

One troubling thought is that the thinking of our denominational leaders may be reflective of the thinking of the leadership of the current dominant political party in the United States. That party has targeted certain national programs that are identified as entitlements. They have suggested with increasing vigor that it is time to review those programs for their

relevance and effectiveness. It is only a few short steps from the agenda of that national political party to the agenda of too many of our denominational leaders who are just “across the aisle” from us.

What shall we say to these things? Can this be the first shot across the bow on the way to those funds that are specifically designed for Regional Conferences – Regional Capital Reversion, Regional Conference Scholarship Fund? Is it time to warn our Nehemiahs on the walls of “Zion” to be sober and vigilant?

Filling Big Shoes

The Retirement Office here in Huntsville is a City of Refuge for all retirees without regard to whether they are denominationally retired, Regional Conference retired, or just retired from the secular world. One valuable service rendered by Elder Frank Jones was given at tax time. He was the resident Guru for all things taxable. It was not an official part of his job description and I not aware of the fees for that service if any.

In order to fill the void left by his passing, I have ask Walter Parker, our accountant, attorney-in-residence and all around answer-man for many things business, to fill those enormous shoes. As with Elder Jones **it is not part of his job description.** However we want this to be the place to come for all things relative to retirement. If tax issues is one of those things; If you need this help from a familiar place, Walter Parker has agreed to make himself available to you. If you received this service from Elder Jones and have not found anyone to help you with this important matter, you may contact him through our office here in Huntsville. He has agreed to “walk around” in those enormous shoes.



Laugh Out Loud (LOL)

Little Boy: “Did you hear about the 88-year-old man and the 79-year-old lady that got married last week?”

Little Girl: “Did they throw rice at them?”

Little Boy: “No, they threw vitamins!”

For More Information Contact:

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