

An impactful life: Francis Wood remembered

BY BRIAN CARLTON
The Farmville Herald

There were two things we constantly heard when asking people about Francis Wood. He loved his community and he loved helping a good cause. And more often than not, the two went together. The longtime station manager for WFLO, known as “The Voice of Southside Virginia”, passed away Monday, Aug. 21, after a battle with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig’s Disease.

“Francis Wood was a true Southern gentleman,” said Sharon Harrup. She works as president of the nonprofit STEPS and served with Wood on the Centra Southside Community Hospital Board for 17 years. “He demonstrated compassion to those he met and that is reflected in the outpouring of support for Chris and his family. I find it interesting that Francis is known as “The Voice of Southside Virginia”, yet in board meetings or social gatherings, Francis spoke only when he had something meaningful to say. And when he spoke, all of us listened intently as we knew what he was going to contribute was important and impactful.”

Impact. That word kept coming up, regardless of who we talked to. During his life, Wood served on the Virginia Association of Broadcasters Board, Farmville Chamber



Francis Wood with some of the many books he published over the years.

of Commerce, the Heart of Virginia Festival Committee, the Moton Museum Board of Directors and the Centra Southside Community Hospital Board, along with the board for Centra Health itself. He also helped start Leadership Farmville.

“He was such a gentleman,” said former Farmville Mayor David Whitus. “My wife, Wanda, was president of the chamber and Francis was so willing to give of his time and talents when they started Leadership

Farmville two decades ago. He was also so gracious to welcome us, me as mayor, to the Call-FLO show to discuss events and issues. He possessed a genuine caring spirit. He had the ability to handle unique or controversial issues on his show with such grace. He has been a positive part of the fabric of life for the last five decades in the Heart of Virginia.”

That impact echoed beyond just Farmville and the surrounding area.

“He was a kind, passionate and caring individual,” wrote Michael Clark. He is the owner and station manager of Praise 99.1FM in Franklin. In a Facebook post, Clark wrote that Wood “took me under his wing when I first joined the Virginia Association of Broadcasters Board. I feel blessed to have



known Francis. I will cherish our many conversations about radio, community and life in general.”

HOW IT ALL GOT STARTED

A story about Wood and WFLO highlights his love for Farmville. In 2015, as his radio career had spanned more than 45 years at that point, the Virginia Association of Broadcasters gave Wood the C.T. Lucy Distinguished Service Award and he was inducted into the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame. Sitting down to talk with *Herald* reporter Marge Swayne, he shared about his time at the station, from the time he sent his reel-to-reel demo tape to WFLO’s manager at the time, John Wilson to the present.

“I just embraced it; I really

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Francis Wood in his beloved nature.



Francis Wood with some other staff members from WFLO.

Patterns in creation

DEVOTIONAL

As we go about our daily lives, we seldom take time to reflect on the patterns in The Almighty’s creation. Spring of each year comes alive with new growth. Trees sprout new buds that develop into leaves. Plants that were bare, spindly sticks grow green stems and new flowers, and the males of many species start to look favorably toward their females.

Toward the end of the year, the landscape shows patterns of dormancy. Trees and plants shed their annual growth, animals prepare for cooler days and cold nights, and our beautiful lawns turn brown.

Just as the Almighty has established patterns in His natural environment, He has also established patterns by which we are to govern our lives. In scripture, we find the following. “So set your face steadily and truly to the Faith: Establish The Almighty’s handiwork, according to the pattern on which He has made man-

kind.” (Qur’an 30:30).

This verse reminds us to direct our efforts and activities in a way that is pleasing to The Almighty. Remember Him much in our worship and devotion.

Also, we find, “In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity (seriousness), sincerity.” (Titus 2:7).

The central idea in this verse is the Divine displeasure with corruption. We are encouraged to be serious and sincere representatives of His pattern of human life.

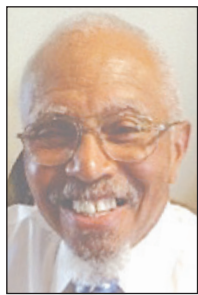
These two verses provide a plain, simple message for humanity. If we want to receive guidance and blessings from our Creator, we must follow His pattern for human excellence. We should establish our lives based on honesty, and just treatment towards others in our hearts and follow His Divine guidance.

Another important aspect of this Divine injunction is that we must be tolerant of individual differences. Historically this has been problematic in human society. All of God’s prophets and messengers possessed the characteristics mentioned and established for humanity an excellent pattern of conduct.

Our representative leadership should also be guided by these Divine dictates; if we truly are “One Nation Under God.” If on the other hand, governmental rule is established on racial, economic, political partitioning, greed, and self-interest competing for control, then the society suffers.

Let us remind one another that we “have indeed in the Messenger of God a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for anyone whose hope is in The Almighty and the Last Day.” (Qur’an 33:21).

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