

In retirement, Smith won't prop up feet

Longtime Maidens postmaster looking forward to free time

Brad Franklin
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George Smith at the Maidens Post Office his last week on the job.

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The view from the Maidens Post Office — of the railroad tracks nestled in the hillside near the intersection of Va. Route 6 and U.S. 522 — has been one George Smith has had for as long as he can remember.

Soon, he hopes his travels will make that just one on a long list of views he can say he's experienced first-hand.

Smith, 65, retired this week as the postmaster in Maidens. It's a position that runs in his family.

Smith's father, Adoniram G. Smith Jr., became postmaster in Maidens in February 1938. In the 10 years before Smith took over, his brother, Lilburne, served in that same capacity.

And in the 30 years between times of a Smith-led post office, Charles William Binford, a business partner of Smith's, was the postmaster.

"I guess you could say I was always meant to be here," the retiring Smith said with a smile.

"Born, raised, and reared in Maidens," Smith graduated from Goochland High School in 1959 and spent a year away at Virginia Military Institute.

"But I was a little better at the military part than I was at the academic part," he said. After leaving VMI, Smith volunteered for the Coast Guard as a boilerman.

Smith and his wife of 42 years, Jayne, have two children, Emily Carlton and Joel Smith. A third child, Dana, passed away when she was 12 years old.

"Family has always been a big deal to me," the grandfather of four said. "And I'm looking forward to the next chapter of my life and having them play a pretty big role."

Some people work all of their lives and retire, looking to enjoy doing nothing. Don't lump George Smith in with that group.

"I won't be one of those that retires, goes home, props their feet up, and just sits there," he said. "I plan on using every second of the next part of my life."

He and his wife are already planning trips, including one they hope to take to Alaska — by car — this year.

In addition, Smith will be taking a mission trip to Alabama this month with "Carpenters of Christ," which speaks to another purpose of his retirement.

"I've always had my faith and it's always been a very big deal for me," he said.

While being postmaster might not seem like a job where one counsels, Smith said he's always been there for people in need.

"I'm the kind of guy who will be here to listen," he said. "And over the years, I've done a lot of it."

There's something to be said for knowing just about everybody, including Alex Coles, a longtime friend who Smith says he has known for too many years.

"It's going to be hard to come in here and not see him," Coles admitted last week.

"But that's one of the reasons I think the postmaster should be someone local," Smith admitted. "The people around here like knowing me and it's good for the postmaster to know them."

Why, you ask? Because Smith can smell when someone's up to no good, for starters.

"If a stranger comes in here, and I don't know him, that's already a red flag," he said. "And if he's looking for a \$500 money order, well, that's another one."

While Smith will spend plenty of his time during retirement seeing the sights, growing his hot chili peppers and thornless blackberries, he'll also have his hands full with the pending Comprehensive Plan update.

A public servant at heart who's a life member of the Goochland County Fire-Rescue's Company 5 and a past member of the county's Electoral Board, Smith was chosen as a District 4 citizen representative for the update. He's also recently been tapped as a member of the Board of Zoning Appeals.

"Public service is just one way to give back," he noted. "There are so many other

ways, including giving blood."

There are many subjects Smith gets animated about, giving blood is certainly one. Having been a blood donor since he was 18 years old, Smith was instrumental in getting the Red Cross Bloodmobile in Goochland.

He's gone as far as donating platelets and getting on the bone marrow donor list. And when he's gone, he'll take his donating a step farther and have his body given to science.

"I've always looked at giving blood as being a way for people to help each other by giving something only they can make," he said. "And it's all replenished. Nothing's lost."

In his retirement, Smith says he'll miss seeing the people he's come to know over the years. But then again, even if he travels, he'll still see them around the community.

"This is my home and I love it," he said. "The people have made this job very enjoyable for me."

The Maidens Post Office, he said, offers the same services that all of the larger locations do but without all the hustle and bustle.

"I really believe that having it be more one-on-one, that's better for people," he said. "And you don't get that much anymore, except for in small places like this."

Having the opportunity to get to know the 15 people with general delivery or the three carriers that serve the roughly 1,000 people who make up the territory has been an honor.

"But pretty much my whole life, I've been here," alluding to the time he spent as postmaster at the now-closed State Farm Post Office and working in his father's general store, which was also in Maidens Loop.

"Maybe sometimes, I'd leave with half a tongue because I've bit it a few times, but I always knew we could offer people a lot of personal attention and I really liked it."

At the same time, he says, he'll enjoy not having the obligation to head to the office.

"There's more to life than having to come in and go to work every day," Smith said.