

Anthony Hartfield

Wendell Anthony Hartfield was born to Walter and Louise Hartfield on July 15, 1947, in Lumberton, Mississippi. Lumberton is a small town very near the Louisiana border, about fifty miles from New Orleans. His parents were long-time residents of South Mississippi. His family soon moved a few miles north to Purvis, Mississippi, where Anthony and his brother Floyd and sister Paula grew up. It is Purvis that is in Anthony's memory as a childhood home.

In Purvis, Mr. Hartfield was a farmer. A great memory Anthony has is of many trips to New Orleans to the famous French Market to sell their farm produce, mostly the huge, sweet Congo watermelons. Anthony remembers hoeing and picking cotton. The cotton was hauled to the cotton gin in an International half-ton pickup. They transported their produce to New Orleans in a neighbor's pulpwood truck with improvised sides and bed and, at one time, in an old school bus from which they had removed the seats to make room for the produce.

It was on this Purvis farm that Anthony began his attraction to Farmall tractors. His dad farmed with a Farmall Cub and a Farmall A tractor. As a toddler and young child, he spent many hours riding in a sweet potato crate attached to his dad's tractor. The story is told of Anthony's dad cutting a sapling for a fishing pole and putting a small perch for bait on it for Anthony to fish with in the farm pond. As his dad was plowing the field, Anthony came running across the field dragging a five pound bass and yelling "I got one.....I got one." When Anthony was about five years old, he was riding with his Dad on the tractor when it quit. As his dad was trying to get it started, Anthony stuck his hand in the fan belt and the tractor started up and cut the tip of Anthony's finger off. It was on this farm that Anthony learned the love of hunting and fishing.

At age thirteen, his parents sold the farm and moved closer to the town of Purvis where his Dad became the farm manager of Bass Memorial Academy, a nearby Seventh-Day Adventist affiliated boarding school. I. H. Bass, the owner and operator of the famous Bass & Sons Pecan Company, donated land and established the school in 1961. Anthony attended the school and worked there with his dad in the school dairy. At one time, they milked as many as seventy-five cows each day.

After Anthony graduated from Bass Academy, he attended Pearl River Junior College where he took a two-year course in auto mechanics. During that time he worked with a friend in a Volkswagen repair business. He also spent many hours with friends building a 57 Chevy with a 396 cubic inch, 400 HP engine with a one piece tilt-off front end. He also bought a 1966 Corvette convertible with a 427 – 425 HP engine with side pipes.

In 1969, shortly after graduating from Pearl River, he was drafted into the U. S. Army. He made \$67.00 per month with a car payment of \$60.00 per month. Anthony's basic training was at Fort Polk, Louisiana. From there he went to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and was trained as an equipment operator. After completing training there, he was transferred to Fort Eustis, Virginia, about 100 miles south of Washington DC. While there he instructed officers on how to operate a forklift. His company was sent for riot control during the riots in Washington DC protesting the Vietnam War.

With only six months left to serve, he received orders to ship out to Vietnam. No one could believe that he was sent with such a short time left to serve. Upon arrival, he was attached to the 20th Engineer Battalion. While in Vietnam, he served in the Motor Pool as a parts manager. His first job upon arrival was to pack up all of the parts into containers that were shipped by barge 200 miles down the Mekong River. After traveling three days by convoy they arrived at a new location in the middle of what had been a rice paddy. Everyone was standing around upon arrival when they noticed that their

trucks were sinking. Luckily they were able to move them before they totally disappeared into the ground. Anthony spent thirty-two hours straight helping unload the barges. Of the six months that he had left to serve when he went to Vietnam, he served five months and eleven days.

He was honorably discharged from the service in January of 1971 at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Upon his discharge he moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where his Corvette was stored at a friend's house. A few days after his arrival, his Corvette was stolen and found stripped on a mountain top in Soddy Daisy, Tennessee. Having just gotten out of the army, he could only afford liability on it; so he lost the car that he had been paying for the whole time he was in the Army. He was later able to replace that Corvette with a 67 Firebird and a 63 Corvette that his brother loaned him \$1000.00 to purchase. Months later his brother was getting married and Anthony figured he needed the money. Anthony sold his Corvette for \$1200.00 to repay the loan to his brother. He laments to this day selling it because today it would be worth over \$100,000.00. Big mistake!!!

Upon his discharge he began working in the shipping department of McKee Industries (Little Debbie), in Collegedale, Tennessee. His job was unloading railcars and trucks loaded with thousands of pounds of raw ingredients, mostly flour, sugar, oil and corn syrup.

His love of NASCAR racing began while he was in the army and stationed in Virginia. When a friend suggested they go to the race in Talladega, Alabama, he went AWOL to attend the Talladega 500. He was technically AWOL since he was not supposed to travel more than fifty miles from base, but the race was about 600 miles away. After becoming hooked on NASCAR, he attended dozens of races in the 60s and 70s at several race tracks, including at least five races at Talladega; the Firecracker 400 on the Fourth of July at Daytona, Florida; and races at Atlanta, Georgia, and at Bristol, Tennessee. On the Daytona weekend he attended the Paul Revere road course race. During those days, he saw many of the famous drivers, including Richard Petty, Cale Yarborough, the Allison brothers, David Pearson, and Dale Earnhardt and Darrell Waltrip in their early careers.

In 1972, Anthony was fortunate to have a date with a girl named Diana Adams from Gentry, Arkansas, who was attending Southern Adventist University in Collegedale. It says a lot about Anthony's distinctive South Mississippi drawl since, when Diana got off of the phone after agreeing to a date with him, she laughingly stated to her roommate, "Oh my, do I ever have a hick from the sticks." All of us who know Anthony agree that his pleasantly, rich sounding speech is refreshing. Many of us have a good Southern drawl but his is special. Diana had only agreed to one date as a favor to a mutual friend of theirs but after that first date, she went directly back to the dorm and called her parents and told them that she was going to marry this guy. Within three months they were engaged, and six months after that first date, on July 1, 1973, she married that "hick from the sticks." They recently celebrated thirty-seven years of marriage. Interestingly, due to meeting Diana, Anthony became friends with Chuck Ritchison who was dating his future wife, Jacque Adams (no relation to Diana). Jacque and Diana had been best friends since they were in grade school together and Jacque was then living in Nashville, Tennessee, where she met Chuck. They would spend their bi-yearly vacations in Arkansas with Anthony and Diana. After Chuck retired from working at DuPont for thirty-five years, the Ritchison's built a home and moved to Decatur, Arkansas, and also became Tired Iron members. Besides gaining spouses, a life-long friendship developed between these guys. They remain best friends today.

Four years after their marriage, Anthony and Dianna had sold their place in Tennessee, stored their belongings in Gentry, Arkansas, and traveled thousands of miles in a Volkswagen van. They visited places of interest throughout the Northwest, Canada and Alaska. They were offered a job in Dillingham, Alaska, working as dispatchers for a small bush pilot air service but decided that they did not want to be so confined to a job in such an isolated place. Anthony has wished many times over the

years that they had taken the job at least for a couple of years. Who knows, they could still be in Alaska today if they had.

After five months of traveling, Anthony and Diana settled in Gentry, Arkansas. Diana's father had died unexpectedly the year before, leaving the family's truss building business for Diana's brother and sister to run. Diana's father had started the business back in the early 50's as Adams and Son Radiator and Welding Shop but soon started manufacturing trusses for shops and chicken houses. Diana's siblings needed help so Anthony went to work in the family business as the shipping and receiving foreman. The business is now known as Adams Truss, Inc. Anthony and Diana are still part owners. Diana began teaching school and working as a counselor to many people in her private practice and later as the corporate chaplain for Kennametal Inc. in Rogers, Arkansas.

On October 12, 1980, they were blessed by the birth of Anna Faith, their only child. When Anna was two months old she had her first open heart surgery at Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock. Two months later, in February of 1981, Diana hit ice on Highway 59 just north of Gentry. Their Volkswagen van rolled several times, throwing Anna and Diana out onto the ground. Miraculously, Anna was not injured, other than a few scratches. Diana was injured with a concussion, crushed collar bone, five broken ribs and massive contusions and eventually had to have a complete hysterectomy due to the wreck. Nine months after the wreck, Anna received her second open heart surgery in Birmingham, Alabama. She was not expected to live through either surgery – but she did due to lots of prayers and attentive medical care. Her parents call her their “little miracle baby.” She went on to graduate from college with a degree in communications. Since her marriage on December 19, 2004, she has been the lovely wife of Timothy McMillen. They currently reside in Grass Valley, California, where she works as a representative for an energy company and helps her husband with his ministry as the youth pastor at the Grass Valley Seventh-Day Church.

Anthony has faced his own serious medical problems. While working at Little Debbie, one year after he was married in 1974, he was diagnosed as having a tumor on his spinal cord. Within twenty-four hours of the diagnosis, he was operated on at Vanderbilt University Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. They were not able to remove the entire tumor, and he was left with partial paralysis of his right arm. He then received daily radiation for three months to try to stop the growth of the tumor. By 1986, due to the continued growth of the tumor, he underwent a second surgery. Due to a mistake of the neurosurgeon, he was left paralyzed from the neck down. After months of agonizing rehabilitation, Anthony regained the use of his left side and right leg. His right arm was left permanently paralyzed. He was told at that time that he would eventually lose the use of his partially paralyzed limbs. Anthony had always been very physically active with activities including backpacking, spelunking, canoeing, water-skiing, hiking and playing baseball. Some people with such injury might be considered to be handicapped, but not Anthony. His indomitable will and faith in God sustain him. Anthony is an inspiration to anyone who knows him. He may have to improvise, but he can do almost anything. On one occasion, Anthony was asked why he didn't show anger or resentment about what happened to him. His reply in his wonderful Mississippi drawl was, “It wouldn't do anybody any good to be angry. An angry person makes himself and everyone around him miserable.”

In 1998 a friend asked Anthony to take some of their church boys to visit the Tired Iron of the Ozarks fall show. When he was observing a wobbling flywheel on a scale model engine the owner, club member Bob Engler, told him that he should have seen it before he had straightened it. Then Bob asked Anthony if he had ever been to the antique tractor and engine show in Republic, Missouri. Anthony had not; so he went the following week. As he so aptly puts it, he was hooked and joined Tired Iron at the very next meeting and became a very active member. He says that Bob Engler is to blame. At the time, the club was having its two shows a year at Rose of Sharon, which was Doyle and Virginia Hawkins' farm about a mile west of Gentry on Highway 12. A couple of big projects there

were the building of a shed for an early 1900s sawmill and later a pavilion structure. Anthony played a big role in getting materials and in helping in the construction of both sheds.

Anthony's collecting began, of course, with Farmall tractors. He has two Cubs and three As. He keeps and shows his brother's Gibson D. A jewel in his collection is his and Chuck's 1/3 scale International baler. It began when Chuck saw a scale model baler at the Tennessee State Fair in Nashville, Tennessee, and asked Anthony where he could get one. Anthony asked Stanley Arrowsmith if he had any information on scale model balers. He gave Anthony the information from the Baler Man in Enoch, Oklahoma. After receiving the information that the baler would cost \$2800.00, Chuck decided that was too much money. He bought the blueprints for \$150.00, and he and Anthony built their own baler. It is projects such as this that make Tired Iron special. Anthony gives lots of credit to others who helped. Don Etris (who passed away a few years ago) helped with the engine; Bob Engler did lots of machine work; Larry Morrison helped with assembly; and many others helped in one way or another. Anthony searched for parts from Louisiana to Kansas and Chuck did the wood fabrication while still in Tennessee. Anthony and Chuck enjoy showing and demonstrating the baler at the autumn show in Bella Vista. They sell between 600 and 800 bales each autumn. Anthony also has several old engines, including a few Maytags.

Anthony has been a faithful worker in building, maintaining, and operating the Tired Iron sawmill. Thanks Anthony for all you have done and continue to do to support Tired Iron. And Diana, thanks for letting him "come out and play" with us.

A point of great concern for all of us is that, on August the thirteenth, Anthony will be facing new surgery related to his spinal injury. He will have the work done in Little Rock at St. Vincent's Hospital. The prayer of all of us is that God will be with him and he will come out of this new challenge with flying colors, and he will be better than ever. Anthony has his family and friends, his own determination, and his faith in God through his devout worship through the Seventh-Day Adventist church to sustain him.



Anthony



(Left to Right) Chuck Ritchison, Mrs. Ritchison (Chuck's mom, Diana and Anthony Hartfield, and Jacque Ritchison



The IH baler on display in Mississippi