

# Stories of Northside

INTERVIEWEES: **DANNIE & TOBY PROPST**



**T**he second stanza of Thomas Chisholm's renowned hymn, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," reads, "Summer and winter and springtime and harvest, sun, moon, and stars in their courses above join with all nature in manifold witness to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love." Besides being their favorite hymn, Dannie and Toby Propst's own courses join with nature's witness and echo its refrain and testament to God's unwavering faithfulness:

*"Dannie and I have been blessed by the church. We have been blessed in our lives. We have been blessed with our children, in their lives. 'Great Is Thy Faithfulness' is my favorite hymn. 'All [we] have needed thy hands hath provided,'*

*and that's exactly how it has been with us."*

*This is the story of Dannie and Toby Propst. It is a story of faithfulness, commitment, love, blessing, and, best of all, laughter. It is also a story that is told best by them.*

**Dannie:** I grew up in Lawrenceville, GA. It was a tiny little town. My father had a grocery store right down the street from the high school. He was always around, and my mother was a homemaker, so I always had good supervision. I appreciated everybody being around, though, and it's nice to have your family there. Once I graduated high school, I came to Atlanta, went to Georgia State, and got a job. I married Toby a few years later.

**Toby:** We met at Grace Methodist in 1959. No way it was going to work. I mean, look. She was a model, a beautiful model. I was a short nobody. She had it all, and I didn't have anything but what I had on my back. The Lord was good to me. That's what it was. He blessed me. It took a lot of convincing, though. I remember the first time I asked her. She said, "I'll think about it." That's not a good answer.

**Dannie:** I never dated anybody short, and then I married him.

**Toby:** I dated anybody I could.

**Dannie:** He was funny and fun to be around. We did a lot of group things at our church when we were single. I lived with my sister at the time, and I remember her saying to me, "Why don't you just admit you're dating him?" I thought, *well I guess that's true*. Finally I just decided that it doesn't matter if you're short or tall, fat or skinny. He's a good person, and I love him. It's worked out for 58 years.

**Toby:** I was born in Washington, D.C. My mother and father got divorced when I was six months old, and shortly after, she moved to Atlanta and my grandmother came to live with us. We lived on Ponce de Leon Avenue. The first church we went to was Druid Hills Baptist. I had the greatest life anybody could have. I had two women who would do anything I needed.

**Dannie:** Do you think he was spoiled?

**Toby:** It was wonderful. I had a grandmother that was sneaky. If I was in school and she wanted to go to Florida, she took me out and told them I was sick. I wasn't sick, but we were going to Florida. We did everything together and had the greatest time. I can remember when I was about 10 or 11 years old, my uncle came by and said that we were going to a tent revival down at Ponce de Leon ballpark to see Billy Graham. I remember walking down the aisle after he talked. That changed me.

I went to Alabama Polytechnic Institute, now known as Auburn University. It was API until 1960, and I graduated in 1957. During football season, if they win all the games, I went to Auburn. If they lose, I went to API. I got it covered both ways. I graduated on a Friday and went to work at my Uncle's brickyard on Monday. I stayed there 39 years and retired in 1996.

**Dannie:** We joined Northside in 1994.

**Toby:** We've always been church people because that was the way it was. We were at Grace for 40 years. I was on every committee. I knew everything that was going on, the good and bad, and when we came here, I said, "I want to go there to worship."

**Dannie:** I think you have to get involved. There are great people here, and caring people, and that helps you when you're new. The more people I got to know, the more I found out and wanted to help.

**Toby:** Dannie has always been good at this. She volunteers for these things, but then, when something happens and she can't do it anymore, I'm stuck with it. I didn't volunteer to be in the Funeral Guild, but I'm in it.

**Dannie:** Betty Guffin did that. She was in our Sunday school class and in charge of the Funeral Guild. I started serving, and she asked me if Toby could come because it would be nice to have a man come help too.

**Toby:** I didn't volunteer for that.

**Dannie:** Nancy Wells asked Toby and I to start serving Wednesday Night dinners once a month, and we did that.

**Toby:** I didn't volunteer for that. Tell him why I greet one Sunday a month.

**Dannie:** Well, I was doing it, and then I had my knee operated on and couldn't do it anymore. I haven't started back.

**Toby:** I didn't volunteer for that either. It's a great church, though, and people look out for one another here. I do enjoy the ways in which I serve.

**Dannie:** He does lead the singing for Northside Bible.

**Toby:** I like to sing. I enjoy it.

**Dannie:** He has a nice voice.

**Toby:** It's fun; I enjoy it. You know, we're the only class that sings? To be honest, it took me a long time to call Northside my home. We've been members here for 20-something years now. I was at Grace for 40, and that was my church. I did a lot of stuff there. It took me a long time to really feel like this was my church because I guess I didn't want it to. Then, all of a sudden, I realized this is it. This is my church, and whatever I do and whatever I can do is going to mean something. I sign checks now. I didn't think I'd ever sign checks for anybody.

**Dannie:** There's just something about being in a church that helps you and feels like home. It's nice to be surrounded by your family. That's the way I feel.

*Dannie and Toby's story is a reflection of God's faithfulness. It tells of new mercies, a "peace that endureth," and "compassions [that] fail not." It can recount the pride they feel when talking about their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, as well as the cheeky humor Toby uses when describing himself as the worst soldier the National Guard ever had. We can all hope that our own courses and stories join with Dannie and Toby's in manifold witness, a chorus comprised of all of creation singing, "Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!"* ㊥