On Tuesday, May 15, the leader of the "world's most exciting university" died suddenly and unexpectedly. The man who cast the vision for everything we see on campus has attained at long last his blessed eternal reward. However, he has not passed from life to life without leaving a legacy for the students, faculty, staff and administration on Liberty Mountain to follow.

We the staff of the Liberty Champion are deeply grieved by the loss of Dr. Jerry Falwell, and our prayers are with both the Falwell family and the LU and TRBC community. It is certain that, as we look back on the life of a hero of the faith, we will also strive to look forward with a measure of the same devotion and vision that he had.

That's the way Jerry would have wanted it.

LU 01 — Students and staff fondly remember the dixie horn, the randomly created parking spots and sighting Dr. Falwell off-roading in his black SUV.
Recounting the final morning of Falwell's life

By Matthew Hegarty
STAFF REPORTER

A university community was shocked and a church devastated earlier this week after hearing the news - Dr. Jerry Falwell, chancellor of Liberty University, died in the late morning hours of Tuesday, May 15, after apparently experiencing a "heart rhythm abnormality," according to a statement from Falwell's personal physician, Dr. Carl Moore. Falwell was 73.

"I can tell you this - a giant has fallen," said Liberty's Executive Vice President Dr. Ron Godwin at an emergency meeting for the university family held in Thomas Road Baptist Church's sanctuary at 2 p.m. More than 6,000 people attended.

Overcome with emotion, Godwin struggled to begin his address to the crowd, saying that Falwell was a "man of vision" with "plans for the future."

He started by recounting the morning he had with Falwell. Godwin, who was a personal friend of Falwell for more than 28 years, said that about 6:50 a.m., he received a call from Falwell, who let him know where they were eating for breakfast.

The meal occurred from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. at the Bob Evans location on Wards Road near the university.

Falwell, ever his affable self, greeted the restaurant staff and patrons with an equal measure of friendliness.

Godwin later said that he and Falwell discussed "a number of projects" as a part of their customary morning repast.

He also said that, as at other times, the topic of conversation turned to the contingency plans for Liberty in the event of his death.

"It was a good time, and a time when he talked about when he wouldn't be here," Godwin said.

Godwin briefly mentioned another event that happened the day before, when Falwell drove up to the monogram on Candlers Mountain with his son, Jerry Falwell, Jr., and met with students who were there.

They discussed the university together, and Godwin said that Falwell was "full of appreciation" for the conversation he had with those students. Around 11:15 a.m. on Tuesday, Godwin briefly mentioned another conversation he had with those students.

Upon entering, they found Falwell unconscious, and Jonathan rushed in with Godwin immediately behind him.

Attempts were made to resuscitate him both in his office and at the hospital, but he never regained consciousness from the time they found him.

Falwell was pronounced dead at 12:40 p.m. in a room at Lynchburg General Hospital, surrounded by his immediate family.

"It's definitely going to make for a weird weekend."

Cooley, who is technically on university staff owing to his position at SGA, said he was immediately informed of Falwell's passing.

In his capacity as the equivalent of student body president, Cooley was going to be speaking briefly at graduation on Saturday regardless of any events that transpired. At the time of the TRBC service on Tuesday, however, he was uncertain of what he would now say.

"I had something written out, but I imagine it's going to change a little bit," he said. "I need to pray about it a lot."

Junior Charlotte Purdy said she was stunned when she heard the news after taking a final exam.

"I started bawling," she said. "I was crying, but then I stopped for a while because I couldn't believe it."

Purdy recalled her personal memory of Falwell, which took place as she was walking back to her dorm from the dining hall with some friends earlier in the semester. He was driving in his trademark black GMC Denali, and he rolled down the window so she could take a picture with him.

"He was very grandfatherly to everyone. You got the impression that he cared about each student," she said. "I'm going to miss him."

Dr. Ed Hindson, Dean of Liberty's Institute of Biblical Studies, also spoke at the TRBC service. He said in the course of his remarks that Falwell was "a man who loved God with all his heart and loved people with all his heart."

Please see MORNING, page 3
MORNING: ‘God is in control’

Continued from page 2

Hindson alluded to a tragic incident for the Liberty University family earlier in the year, when a drunk driver struck Hindson's son-in-law Andy Barrick and his wife and two children in October.

In ministering to the family's needs at the hospital, Falwell seemed to have an uncanny sense of God's sovereign hand.

"He said, 'This will be all right. God is in control. He knows what He's doing,'" Hindson recalled.

Hindson also provided a brief lighthearted moment when he spoke of Falwell's probable doings in heaven.

"I'm sure he's already trying to get it better organized," Hindson said, eliciting a moment of laughter from the audience.

Overall, though, Hindson called upon the audience to remember Falwell's desire to not be satisfied with the accomplishments of the past but to instead keep moving forward to greater and greater things.

"Jerry Falwell, in my opinion, was the true epitome of human greatness," Hindson said.

"He was a trophy of the grace of God."

The funeral for Falwell will be held in the TRBC sanctuary on Tuesday, May 22, at 1 p.m. Also on Tuesday will be a special service in Williams Stadium celebrating Falwell's life.

FINISH STRONG — In Falwell's last convocation message on May 9, 2007, he told students that it was their "time for battle." He recited 2 Timothy 1:7, which says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Falwellisms

What's your BHAG?

Don't quit.

Use every available means to reach every available person.

"When you can't trace His hand, trust His heart." — Charles Haddon Spurgeon

If it's Christian, it ought to be better.

A man or woman of God is indestructible until God has finished His plan for him or her.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." — Philippians 1:6
The man who had a vision for life

By Victoria Friedrich
STAFF REPORTER

Jerry Laymon Falwell was born on August 11, 1933, in Lynchburg, Va., to Helen and Carey Falwell. Falwell did not grow up in a religious atmosphere as many people might believe. His father was an entrepreneur of sorts who became a Christian on his deathbed, and his grandfather was an atheist. Falwell grew up with his twin brother, Gene, his brother Lewis and his sister Virginia He later attended Brookville High School where he was a star athlete, the editor in chief of "The Brookville Bee" and valedictorian of his senior class. He began attending Lynchburg College, originally pursuing a degree in pre-mechanical engineering.

In 1952 he attended a Sunday evening church service at Park Avenue Baptist Church. Falwell often said he was reborn on January 20, 1952 — the night he gave his life to the Lord. It was also here that he met 18-year-old Macel Pate, a church pianist who would later become his wife.

In March of 1952, while attending a Wednesday night Bible study and prayer service, Falwell committed his life to full-time ministry and decided to transfer to Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Mo.

After volunteering at High Street Baptist Church he was put in charge of teaching the Bible to one student — an 11-year-old boy, Daryl.

That small congregation grew quickly from one member to 56 regular members in just one year.

It was also here that Falwell began to develop a strong prayer life and daily devotional time that he carried with him throughout his life. Falwell said that he enjoyed reading the Bible from beginning to end.

"I like to read the Bible like I read a novel — from beginning to end. I don't like to skip around...almost every day there is a good reason not to do it. There is an assignment due, a crisis waiting, a family matter that needs attention, a breakfast meeting, or a conference call. The demands of each new day would destroy my time alone with God and His word if I would let them. I cannot."

He graduated from Baptist Bible College in May of 1956 with valedictorian honors. After graduation, he intended to start a church in Macon, Ga. However, those plans quickly changed. After praying for God's guidance, Falwell decided to stay in Central Virginia.

What is now known as Thomas Road Baptist Church held its first service on June 17, 1956 with 35 members. According to Falwell's biography on the Liberty University Web site, the first offering collected totaled $135.

The site said, "Falwell often (said) of that first collection, 'We thought we had conquered the world.'"

In the fall of 1956, Falwell began broadcasting a daily radio program from Madison Heights that reached homes throughout Lynchburg and Amherst and Campbell counties. "I reported the news of our church, the days and times of our services, and stories about people whose lives were being changed by God through our congregation's ministry," he said. After realizing the effectiveness of broadcasting a message to thousands of people at once, Falwell began thinking about starting a television ministry.

In December of 1956, he purchased a weekly half-hour time slot for $90. With no on-camera experience, Falwell began telling people about his new church. The church quickly began to grow as Falwell said his television appearances made him a sort of "instant celebrity." Over the years, the church continued to expand. TRBC just celebrated its 50th anniversary in July 2006 and has more than 22,000 members, according to the Thomas Road Baptist Church Web site.

In his biography on the Liberty University Web site he explains how his vision for education began. "He often states that his heartbeat is for training young people for every walk of life," the biography said.

In 1967, he began Lynchburg Christian Academy, which provided education for children from kindergarten through high school. The vision did not stop here, though. In 1971, Lynchburg Baptist College was founded and would later become Liberty University. According to the Web site, today the campus is growing rapidly and has over 21,500 students in both the resident and distance learning programs. Students come from all 50 states and 80 nations. Falwell's online biography said that his dream has become a reality.

Falwell's impact reached far beyond the church and the classroom. He founded the Moral Majority in 1979, which brought together thousands of pastors and religious conservatives from across the country for the purpose of political lobbying. The Moral Majority played a major role in the election of 1980 as "millions of people of faith helped to elect Ronald Reagan and many other conservative congressmen and senators," according to the Liberty Web site. Many people have also attributed George W. Bush's presidential victory in November 2004 to these same "faith and values" voters. More recently, in November of 2004, Falwell began the Moral Majority Coalition. According to their Web site, it is the "21st century resurrection of the Moral Majority."

Author's Note: Unless otherwise noted, this biography was adapted from Dr. Jerry Falwell's book, "Falwell: An Autobiography."
Portrait of a family: Husband, father and proud “Poppy” to eight children

By Amy Field
STAFF REPORTER

Dr. Falwell met his future wife, then Macel Pate, at Park Avenue Baptist Church when she was 18 years old and a senior at Lynchburg's E.C. Glass High School. His first glimpse of her was on the night he was saved, as she played piano for the service that evening. According to Falwell's autobiography, not long afterwards he fell in love with her.

However, it was too soon after Falwell's conversion to Christianity for Macel to be sure about the sincerity of his faith. In addition to that, because of his reputation as a Falwell, Macel initially shied away from his advances. Her childhood was quite the opposite of Falwell's, living with a tightly-knit family with parents who were lovingly overprotective of their daughter.

In the end, Falwell's persistence and the evidence that his life had truly been changed by God's work in his life eventually convinced Macel. Falwell and Macel tied the knot on April 12, 1958. In 2007, they celebrated 49 years of marriage.

"Macel likes order... her sense of timing and order has been her lifetime gift to me... In fact, it was Macel whose sense of order and timing helped me learn to preach... my best improvement came when Macel listened to me," Falwell wrote in his autobiography.

As a father, Falwell wanted to make sure that his children grew up in a Christian environment where biblical values were always observed. He was often heard talking about his and his wife's parenting styles, as he did in one of his sermons on May 11, 1997.

"At the very beginning of our marriage, Macel and I determined that our greatest achievement would be our children," he said. "Nearly 40 years later, that is still our commitment, except the grandchildren have now been added to the priority list.

"Macel and I have never had alcohol in our home. Our children and grandchildren have never seen a cigarette in our mouths. We don't use bad language. We don't dance. We have never taken them to a movie. That doesn't mean that it is wrong for parents to take their children to movies. But they should be very careful in selecting the movies they attend."

Falwell's commitment to his children and family was evident in the way that he paid attention to details in family matters.

All three of Falwell's children attended and graduated from Falwell's Liberty Christian Academy and Liberty University before going on to different schools and vocations.

Jerry Jr. earned his J.D. at the University of Virginia School of Law after graduating from Liberty with a B.A. in History and Religious Studies. He has served as general counsel to Liberty as well as the vice chancellor of the university until now, and he will assume his father's position as chancellor. In "An Incredible Journey," a commemorative book of the years Falwell spent building Thomas Road Baptist Church and Liberty University, Jerry Jr. expressed what he thought of his father's accomplishments.

"It is truly incredible what God has done through my father's ministry on Liberty Mountain in Lynchburg and across the nation, but as amazing as the impact for God has been, I really cannot say that surprises me," he wrote.

Jeannie graduated from Liberty as well. She then went to the Medical College of Virginia and is currently a surgeon in Richmond, Va.

Jeannie also used "An Incredible Journey" to record one of her favorite memories of her father, which happened to be a tradition he started when she was a child.

"As a pastor, Dad frequently officiates weddings. Whenever I come home, I'll still find a flower — Dad's lapel flower from the wedding — stowed in the refrigerator for me," she wrote.

Jonathan, the youngest of the three, will step up to the position of senior pastor at Thomas Road Baptist Church. After graduating from Liberty, Jonathan was ordained as a pastor. He also recorded the kind of impact his father had on his life when he was young.

"I was born in 1966, ten years after TRBC was founded, so I was not around in those early days. However, from as far back as I can remember, my memories of Dad are of a man who was fully committed to doing everything he possibly could to further the gospel of Jesus Christ," he wrote in "An Incredible Journey."

Whether in the pulpit or at home, Falwell's dedication to family has proven itself in his children and has continued down to their own children.

"I have an obligation to my children, and to their children, to see to it that when I am gone I have left behind a legacy called freedom, liberty, morality, and decency."

— Dr. Jerry Falwell

SURROUNDED BY LOVE — Falwell and Macel with their eight grandchildren, who affectionately call him "Poppy."
No stranger to the camera: Snapshot memories of Dr. Jerry Falwell

JERRY THE BUILDER — Falwell was never one to resist hands-on work in improving Liberty’s campus.

TWO DIFFERENT IDEOLOGIES, ONE UNIQUE FRIENDSHIP — Falwell sits aboard the plane of Hustler Magazine publisher Larry Flynt. Despite having faced off on opposite sides of a lawsuit, each man considered the other a friend.

ALWAYS READY FOR A JOKE — Falwell gets sprayed with Silly String during a commencement ceremony. He had an appreciation for a good prank.
MEDIA FRIENDLY — Whether behind the pulpit or while dealing with the media frenzy that followed him everywhere, Falwell was comfortable with microphones stuck in his face.

I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE — Falwell was as devoted an American as one could be, and he counted it a privilege to live in "one nation under God."

FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME — Falwell cuts down the net after the men's basketball team's victory during the 2004 Big South Championship in the Vines Center.
The real Jerry Falwell: The family man, the pastor, the leader of Champions for Christ

By Kevin Roose
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

WRITER’S NOTE — When I heard about Dr. Falwell’s passing, I kicked myself for writing such a jokey, frivolous profile of him only a week before. Who cares about his favorite ice cream flavor? How could I be so superficial? I should have asked him about his vision for Liberty, his thoughts on world issues, anything of substance.

I spent hours rereading the transcript of our interview, wishing I hadn’t edited out the more serious parts, like when I asked him the famous “Inside the Actors Studio” question — “What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?” He smiled and answered as if he had a thousand times, “That’s easy — ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’

Or when I asked him his biggest wish for Liberty’s graduating class of 2007. “These graduates are facing the biggest challenges of any graduating class in history,” he responded. “My prayer is that our graduates will be spiritually and emotionally prepared to go out and turn the country around.”

As I watched the coverage of Dr. Falwell’s death on Tuesday, however, I felt strangely calmed. The major television networks covered Dr. Falwell’s career as a pastor, his tenure with the Moral Majority, his vision for Liberty, his controversial public statements — but said little of his life beyond the pulpit. I couldn’t help thinking that Dr. Falwell would want us to get the entire picture.

Now, as we remember all Dr. Falwell has done for the Liberty community, and we pause to consider the overwhelming impact he made on America as a political and moral advocate, we cannot and should not forget his lasting impact as a friend.

EDITOR’S NOTE — The following article was previously published in its entirety in the May 8 issue of the Champion. We the staff believed it was appropriate to leave the article in present tense.

Liberty students are no strangers to Dr. Jerry Falwell. His fame is the predominant reason anyone in America has heard of Liberty University, and he has inspired thousands of news articles, dozens of Facebook groups and even a bobblehead doll.

Some Liberty students came here, at least in part, because they hoped (and expected) to watch Dr. Falwell in action.

On one level, Liberty students hear more from Dr. Falwell at convocations, special events and church services than most college students will hear from their presidents.

We know the legendary tales.

By the end of a freshman’s first semester, he or she can finish any story that starts with, “I walked every inch...” or contains the phrase, “Donald Duck Bottling Co.”

A Liberty sophomore knows the significance of the following figures — that the original attendance of Thomas Road Baptist Church was 35 people, that the first TRBC offering totaled $135, and that the projected number of students at the university for 2020 is 25,000.

Chances are, however, that the average Liberty student does not know much more about Jerry Falwell’s day-to-day life than a loyal viewer from Topeka, Kan., who tunes in to televised services at Thomas Road.

We set out to fix that, sitting down with Dr. Falwell in his office to ask him about his personal life. We looked for the small, humanizing details — the ones Time and Newsweek wouldn’t bother with — the ones only a small inner circle knows about.

Yes, Dr. Falwell’s e-mail newsletter goes out to half a million recipients — but what is his favorite restaurant? Yes, he is a friend of the Bush family — but who cuts his hair?

Big deal, some might respond. However, when you strip away the mammoth accomplishments, Dr. Falwell is just a regular guy who likes to watch “24” and walk around his yard with his wife.

The first thing to know about Dr. Falwell is that his office, located in a wing of the historic Carter Glass Mansion, is very, very nice. Rich, dark wood lines the walls. Dr. Falwell sits in a large, high-back leather chair between two desks.

Family pictures fill his bookshelves, including a portrait of his wife next to her computer monitor.

Personal artifacts — no doubt with stories attached to them — fill the room. There is a large wooden eagle in the corner, a framed Mickey Mantle photograph on the desk and a half-dozen globes scattered around the back half of the room. The office feels cozy despite its size.

Dr. Falwell greets all comers with a firm, practiced handshake. His forceful, booming bass voice is striking, perhaps even more so when you meet him in person and realize he doesn’t need a PA system to amplify it.

Dr. Falwell’s desk is clear except for two office phones, a few neat piles of books and papers and a glass bottle of Peach Snapple.

“It’s diet,” Dr. Falwell says, cutting the plastic seal off with a silver utility knife. “I have one every afternoon around three o’clock.”
PROFILE: Life beyond the pulpit

Continued from page 8

This is another thing you learn very quickly about Dr. Falwell in person — he is a creature of habit. When asked about his morning routine, he rolls it off briskly — "I rise every morning a little before six, I shower and dress and I go right to my devotional time, with Oswald Chambers' 'My Utmost for His Highest.' I read it every day and have for 50 years."

Dr. Falwell has a long list of "everydays." Every morning at 8, he meets with Liberty's senior management. Every night when he returns home, he walks around his seven-acre yard with Macel, his wife of 49 years.

The variety in his life, a thing of his youth, has been flattened over the years. Dr. Falwell used to wear both blue and black suits with all colors of ties. Just in the last few years, he says, he has started to wear a black suit and a red tie almost every day. "And none of the ties are alike," he says, smiling and leaning back in his chair. "I can go 40 or 50 days without repeating a red tie."

When asked who cuts his hair, he does not miss a beat. "Jimmie Martin. A-Plus Barbershop. Timberlake Road."

And while a younger Jerry Falwell might have argued with his barber about length, it is a cut-and-run operation these days.

"I don't even say anything anymore," he jokes. "It's always the same. I go in, sit down and take a nap while he cuts."

It may be the only midday rest he gets.

Dr. Falwell leads a horrifyingly busy life, even for a man half his age. While many grandparents are asleep before sunset, Dr. Falwell ends most nights after midnight. Combined with his early wake-up, he rarely gets a grandfather's share of sleep. Then again, Jerry Falwell is no typical grandpa.

Well, exactly how youthful is he? Does he have an iPod, for instance?

"No, I do not," he says decisively.

Does he have a Facebook profile?

"No, I just don't have time to do it myself," he says, gesturing at the piles of papers on his desk, which is a long slab of polished wood the size of a ping-pong table.

Well, what about the "Jerry Falwell with 461 friends at Liberty? Is he an impostor?"

"I don't have a profile," he restates.

Final technology question — does he text-message?

"I do use text-messaging. It's really where most communication is today," he says, pulling his slim Motorola RAZR phone from his shirt pocket.

"I have four grandchildren, and they like to pop me on here. They will say 'Poppy, Shaker's Restaurant' — one of Dr. Falwell's favorites — 'five minutes.' And I'm there."

Okay, just one more technology question — when he text-messages, does he use Internet shorthand? Does he abbreviate? Maybe "Trusteex, u need 2 c the monogram," or perhaps "lol at ur sermon dr. caner!"

"Well," he says. "I'm not as good at it as my grandchildren, but I've learned the code, yes."

As with text-messaging, Dr. Falwell is humble enough to admit his few shortcomings.

When asked if he has ever hunted big game, he says he has hunted before, but he admits that he doesn't know if he could kill anything as big as, say, a deer.

When asked about an archived photo that shows him playing the guitar at Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Mo., which is his alma mater, he says, "I used to play at the guitar. I'm not very good. A bunch of my friends and I thought we were musicians — made enough noise to get the police to come, but I don't play regularly."

After answering questions about some of his favorite places and things and clearing up some commonly-held myths about himself, Dr. Falwell gives an unplanned glimpse of what he is good at — making day-to-day decisions as Liberty's chancellor.

Mid-interview, Dr. Falwell receives a phone call from his son Jerry Jr., Liberty's vice-chancellor.

"Hello?"

As Dr. Falwell would explain later, Jerry Jr. is relaying to his dad the plans for a new bookstore at Liberty and getting his permission to proceed.

Jerry Jr. explains the options while Dr. Falwell rocks back and forth in his chair.

Only Dr. Falwell's side of the conversation can be heard — "Uh huh...I never heard about that...Well, I'm not sure if that's a good thing or not. What I want to know is..."

Jerry Jr. puts his father at ease as he lays out the case for the bookstore, including sales figures and other information related to the project.

"Oh, I see," Dr. Falwell says, sipping his Snapple. "I think that'd be a good thing, Jerry. That's pretty good, and I think it'd look great."

He puts his Snapple bottle on his desk with a thud.

"I'm for it."

It is one of thousands of decisions Dr. Falwell has made about Liberty's expansion in the 36 years since its founding, and it gives a close-up glimpse into his day-to-day work life. Dr. Falwell's job is making quick decisions on the make-or-break choices that affect the futures of Liberty and Thomas Road.

He goes about these decisions carefully and methodically, even when he only has a minute or so to give a thumbs-up or thumbs-down.

He gathers information, considers the interests of his organizations and takes into account the facts and figures before making a fast, gut-based decision. His decision-making capability has an absurdly impressive track record — one glance around Liberty's campus is enough to understand that — and the accuracy of his gut instinct may be what separates him most from other pastors or corporate leaders.

So, is Dr. Falwell just a regular guy? Well, yes and no.

The moment you hear one of his stories in person or hear him conduct official business, you realize that this man has been places. He cannot be reduced to just his personal details. Jerry Falwell is a son of Campbell County, Va., who watches ultimate fighting on TV and brags about his grandchildren.

But Dr. Falwell is also a decision-maker and a thinker, and his work ethic is what has made him famous.

Beyond the huge church, the Moral Majority, the founding of Liberty and the hundreds of other accomplishments that bear his name, Dr. Falwell seems at surface level like an average 73-year-old Lynchburg resident. He has favorites, foibles and more in-my-day stories than you can count.

Watching him conduct business and talk candidly about his personal life for an hour is only a glimpse of his two most prominent attributes — a large, charismatic personality and an uncanny ability to make a quick, decisive choice. That simple combination has made all the rest possible.
Sadness came over the Liberty campus on Tuesday as news of Chancellor Jerry Falwell's death rocked the university. Students prayed with each other, cried and offered stories passed by word-of-mouth, convocation services and brief glimpses of his famous black GMC Denali. For those who knew Falwell personally, he was a man of love, kindness, commanding presence and wisdom.

"I was born and raised in Lynchburg and have gone to (Thomas Road Baptist Church) my entire life," said 2005 Liberty graduate MarLisa Grama. Grama's mother was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2003. "Dr. Falwell insisted that the pastors get together in his office and pray for my mom," Grama said. "We went into his office one Sunday after church, and he prayed for her healing."

Grama's mother went into remission, and Grama said one day while she was working at an ice cream parlor, Falwell walked in with a large group of colleagues. She waited on their table.

"The first thing he said was, 'MarLisa, how is your mother?'" she said.

Glauco Lima, a student from Brazil and ad manager for the Liberty Champion, said he was in the newspaper office when he heard the news. "We knew he had died, but we had that really small hope at the bottom of our hearts that the official report would come saying that he was still alive," he said. "I believed I was going to walk across the stage next year, get my diploma and shake the hand of the man that changed my life."

Pamela Walek, who is currently a reporter with the Savannah Morning News in Savannah, Ga., graduated from Liberty in 1994. As the editor of the Liberty Champion, she met with Falwell before the publication of each paper to get approval.

"When I met with Falwell, he was very lenient (about what went in the paper). When he wasn't there, other people had to sign off on it in his place. They were not as lenient," she said.

"A lot of people don't know he wanted to be a journalist. He always had a soft spot in his heart for the campus paper."

Associate Dean of the Center for Multicultural Enrichment Daveta Saunders arrived at Liberty in 2000. She described Falwell as "someone with dynamic faith."

"People have visions and ideas, but don't work (to achieve them)," she said. She said Falwell was different, and she valued that he always stood "on foundations of the Bible."

My husband and I lost a friend today - one that changed our lives in more ways than we will ever know.

The friend, of course, was Dr. Jerry Falwell, whom we have never seen as a fanatic, strait-laced or bellicose preacher - the way the media often portrays him. To me he was simply Dr. Jerry, and we loved him.

Hubby and I both arrived on the campus of Liberty University back in the fledgling days of mud and ugly green buses. In 1977, I had only seen the college on television, yet I went there on a scholarship because I was to join the musical group that went around singing and raising money for the school. So we traveled - I think one semester I was in class exactly half the time - but I was able to observe Dr. Falwell behind the scenes.

I have never met a man more unafraid to speak up for what is right. I have never met a man who believed so confidently and completely in the Word of God. I have never met a man more willing to cut up...if the time was right. He was a devoted family man, a natural merry-maker, and willing to apologize when he'd made a mistake. He was committed to the Word of God, sold-out to the Lord, and willing to invest his life in the students who came to study at Liberty University.

I've seen him go down a waterslide in a suit and watched him smile as students of Liberty University let him body surf over the crowd. He went to every possible game (in which his children or LU students played). He was brilliant, a family man who loved his wife, children and grandchildren, and he was forgiving.

Back at the dorm (an old hotel), I learned that an elderly lady lived on the second floor named Mama Lind. And why did she live there rent-free? Because she was a "widow indeed, and according to the Scripture, the church should take care of widows who had no children to support them. And so Mama Lind lived with us, and "grandmothered" us, and we loved her. Jerry did that.

Perhaps it's because he was a rascal himself in his youth, but time after time, I saw Dr. Jerry forgive someone who had committed some sort of indiscretion - and soon they were back in the ministry. It wasn't until I left and began to observe other ministries that I realized how rare that kind of forgiveness really is. I've seen more people fall by me wayside, but Dr. Jerry knew we serve a God of second chances.

The last time I was in Lynchburg, Dr. Falwell came into the classroom where I was, gave me a bear hug, and told me he was proud of me...and it was all I could do not to burst into tears. Some part of me will always be that young college coed who was desperately seeking to train myself for whatever the Lord might ask me to do. To think that Jerry thought I'd achieved even a little something meant so much.

He wasn't perfect, but he was a good man, a brave man, a man who'd stake everything on being on the Lord's side. If Jerry Falwell hadn't stepped out in faith to build a college, I wouldn't have the education I do. I wouldn't have met my husband. I wouldn't have my children. I wouldn't have my job.

And mine is just one of thousands of lives Jerry Falwell touched through his lifetime. Please join me in praying for his family, who will miss him dreadfully. And for the students, who will doubtless begin to think about how he has changed the course of their lives, too.

Angela Hunt, the author of more than 100 different titles, including "The Three Trees" and "The Nativity Story," said her husband Gary attended Liberty in the 1970s.
Lighting Liberty's athletic Flame: Falwell's love of sports

By Jared Pierce and Adam Trent

Dr. Falwell was a man who could be described as devoted. He was devoted to God and God's calling for his life, his country, his family, his friends, Thomas Road Baptist Church, Liberty University, Liberty Christian Academy and his sports teams.

Multiple times he stood on the stage at convocation and proudly stated his love for the New York Yankees despite the booing that would inevitably follow. As for football, he was a fan of the Dallas Cowboys.

When it came to college sports, Falwell was undoubtedly devoted to Liberty athletics. In his vision, Falwell described the football team beating Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind., with him on the 50-yard line.

He could be seen at many Liberty sporting events, cheering on the Flames and Lady Flames. During the 2004 Big South Men's Basketball Championship, ESPN panned over and got a shot of Falwell pumping his fists as Liberty continued to rout High Point.

At that moment, the entire crowd of Liberty faithful erupted into chants of "Jerry, Jerry."

He was also an avid tennis fan and his favorite players were his grandchildren, Trey and Wesley Falwell.

No matter how busy he was, he was always at every home tennis match for the LCA Bulldogs to watch his grandsons play. He understood that sports were a great way to reach people, especially young people, for Christ, which was his number one priority.

At a volleyball match against Charleston Southern this season, he praised Liberty's players as "great athletes and, more importantly, great Christians."

Terry Falwell, who works in the Visitor's Center at Liberty, explained the true nature of the Chancellor's devotion to his Flames.

"When he couldn't be here and we had a game, he would always call maybe two, three, four times a night to see what the score was," said Falwell. "He wasn't happy just hearing we won, he wanted to know, 'What was the score?'"

"He pulled not only for Liberty but for Virginia and Virginia Tech and the (other)-state schools, but Liberty and Lynchburg Christian Academy were his two primary teams. He just called me Sunday afternoon on Mother's Day...three different times because he wanted to know how the baseball team did."

A few Liberty athletes have gone on to play and thrive as professional athletes.

Sid Bream, who attended Liberty until his junior year when the Los Angeles Dodgers signed him, remembered Dr. Falwell fondly.

"He was an icon, a pillar of faith," said Bream.

"It's a sad day for us, but a happy day for him because now he is in heaven with the Lord."

Bream went on to play for four major league baseball teams in his 12-year career and is most remembered for his game-winning slide into home plate during the 1992 National League Championship Series.

Bream humorously recalled an encounter with Dr. Falwell where Bream was watching a game as a freshman and sitting not far from Dr. Falwell.

"(Dr. Falwell) was chomping and talking as usual. I was minding my own business when all of a sudden he slugs me in the chest. I stood up and balled my fist at him. He looked at me and said, 'Boy, you better pack a lunch.' I lowered my fist and sat down."

Liberty basketball star Larry Blair, who is seeking to enter the NBA Draft on June 28, said he had a personal relationship with Falwell throughout his four years as a Flame.

"He always took the time to come speak to me and to my team," said Blair.

Falwell hardly ever missed a home game, and when he was there he always sat in the "same seat, same area."

"He would always call me and give me a thumbs up (before games)," Blair continued.

"His presence gave us a sense of confidence and added a bit a pressure to games, but it was a good pressure. It loosened us up."

Sports were a major part of Dr. Falwell's life. While he kept it in perspective, he was still devoted to his teams as he was to his causes. He will be missed greatly by all.
The indestructibility of God's servant

REMEMBER HIS PRESENCE.
The God of creation is the God of comfort. He is sovereign, yet He is sympathetic. He manifests His power, but He also ministers His pity. Our God of greatness is a God of grace.

Our Lord said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrews 13:5b
"Lo, I am with you even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:20b

REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE.
Remember, you are His possession. Acts 27:23 — "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am."

God's man/woman is indestructible until he has finished the work God has called him to do. Therefore, we have no reason to fear anyone or anything.

REMEMBER WHAT HE SAID.
Remember His promises. God is faithful. He is never surprised. He is never perplexed. He is never out of control. Remember what He said.

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God." Isaiah 43:2-3a.