

## South Apalachin Memories by Robin (Strope) Coules

How does one casually separate out memories that were specific to South Apalachin Baptist Church, when in fact, the church was your life? I could fill pages and pages with memories that remain sweet to me of my time at South Apalachin. My first memories of the church were not necessarily even pictures, but were instead smells — smells of the musty wooden pews at the old church on the corner of South Apalachin Road.



As I grew, I remember images of the old parsonage with its shingled siding; church family camping trips and singing around the bonfire; yearly Christmas caroling with popcorn balls served afterwards; and ringing the church bells with dad on America's Bi-Centennial. But as I reflect, the memories that come to the forefront for me are not really images of places or experiences in times past, but instead I see faces of people who made up the church and demonstrated to me at an early age what faithful living looked like. I see images of an organist and her husband, who served as janitor, at the church every Saturday preparing for the next day's worship service. I have memories of a faithful, humble pastor who served the church for decades and was willing to help his people no matter the task required. Over the years, there were countless workers at the Pioneer Girls Club, Boys Brigade and Youth Group helping us kids by spending time with us and teaching us truths from the Word of God. I remember the feeling of a woman's firm, guiding hand on my shoulder the time when my friend and I were laughing so uncontrollably at some missionary slides that we made the entire pew shake! Today, I warmly remember her guidance in gently instructing us girls through hardly a word. I have memories of a woman who loved the children of the church so much that for years she counted it her privilege to serve in the church nursery each Sunday morning without complaint. And finally, I have images of a man who lead Children's Church faithfully for years and taught us biblical children's songs that I am still teaching to my Sunday School kids in France 40 years later! I could go on and on with one example after another of memories of people from South Apalachin Baptist Church who influenced my life. For me, it was not necessarily the many events and fun programs that the church provided that stand out to me now years later, but instead my mind is filled with images of people who chose to faithfully live out God's Word in front of me and of whom I had the privilege of watching and learning from during my formative years. I will be forever thankful to the Lord for allowing me the privilege of walking behind so many faithful followers of Christ and having the opportunity of being instructed by their lives. Many

of these people in my memories are now in heaven, yet I can imagine them cheering on all of us who remain to stay faithful and stay focused on the goal — the advancement of God's Kingdom, all for His Glory.

[Robin and John are missionaries in France.]