



Woody Durham

“Go where you go and do what you do.” For forty years during critical junctures of Carolina sporting events, Tar Heel fans listened for these words from play-by-play radio announcer Woody Durham. When Durham uttered his famous phrase, fans knew that the game was on the line and everyone needed to summon up their best mojo to help the Heels over the hump.

Durham himself must have taken his own words to heart because in his lifetime he has ended up in the place he most wanted to be, Chapel Hill, and done what he most wanted to do, working as an essential part of the Tar Heel Sports Network.

Durham’s affection for Chapel Hill is understandable as both his parents had strong roots in the community. His maternal grandfather, Taylor Fowler, was a barber on Franklin Street alongside Mac Snipes. Born in Mebane and raised in Albemarle, Durham has fond memories of boyhood visits with his grandparents in Chapel Hill and trips to Kenan Stadium with his parents during the Justice/Weiner era of the 1940s.

A lifelong Carolina fan, Durham arrived at UNC in 1959 and before long began working with WUNC. His work in radio while in college was so time-consuming that he affectionately refers to Swain Hall, the home of WUNC, as his fraternity. When he wasn’t calling baseball games, going to class, or working at

Swain Hall, Durham was likely to be found standing in front of the Institute of Government with his thumb out, looking for a ride to Raleigh to visit his girlfriend, Jean, a student at Meredith.

Upon graduating from UNC in 1963, Durham and Jean were married. After a very brief stay in Florence, SC, the newlyweds arrived in Greensboro where Durham went to work for Channel 2. In 1971, at the young age of 30, Durham began his four decade tenure as the “voice of the Tar Heels.”

Durham and Jean raised two sons, Wes and Taylor, in Greensboro and later Cary before finally making it back to Chapel Hill in 1984. Since then, the Durhams have been an integral part of the Chapel Hill community, participating in and helping with numerous charitable events. Durham is most proud of his work with Ronald McDonald House, which offers a home away from home to families whose children are hospitalized. Durham served as the honorary chair of the campaign to build the house, which opened in 1988, and continued to play a primary role in fundraising efforts for more than twenty years, helping to double the size of the house in 2011.

Durham has seen many changes in the community over the years, most notably the high rise buildings going up all over town and Carrboro’s growth and merger into neighboring Chapel Hill. Like most people with long-standing ties to Chapel Hill, Durham and Jean enjoy reminiscing about past times and they also feel grateful that they live in a place so special that many of their friends are still trying to find their way back.