

## Joe Burnett Smith

By: Laurie Searle • November 2004  
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Joe Smith was born and raised in Rico, GA, in 1914 and attended Providence Baptist Church as a young boy and young adult before moving to Columbia, SC, to start his career. When he moved back to Rico a few years ago, he came back to his roots at Providence.

Back when Joe was a kid, Rico was in Campbell County, folks sometimes paid their grocery bill at his dad's store with poultry, and the church was the main center of activity in the community.

"We used to go to church parties all the time when I was a kid," Joe recalls. "It wasn't anything big, we'd just play some games, fellowship, and then go possum hunting afterwards."

Joe's fondest memory at Providence was when he was baptized with several of his friends when he was a young boy. "Folks would haul water from the creek to fill the cement pool across the street where the lodge is today," Joe said. "We all thought it was pretty special to be baptized together in that pool."

When Joe became older, he served as church treasurer for a while. "Folks were so poor back then," Joe recalled, "sometimes we'd only take up \$3 in the collection plate - just barely enough to cover the preacher's gas money."

Joe left Rico in 1942 when a friend told him about a job opening with the water department at Fort Jackson, S.C. Joe worked there for several years before entering the Navy to serve in WWII. After his tour of duty was over, Joe returned to his previous job where he worked until he retired.

When Joe moved back to Rico, he moved to the small house behind Smith's Store, where his parents lived after their original home place burned.

"I grew up in the big house on the hill," Joe said pointing to the two-story white clapboard house pictured on his mantel. Joe's parents raised seven children in that house: Joe, who is the oldest, John, Harold, Virginia, Estelle, Betty, and Lucy.

Joe has 15 nieces and nephews, 34 great-nieces and nephews, and 15 great-great nieces and nephews. His family has been at Providence for more than six generations.

Now and days Joe keeps busy and youthful tending his vegetable garden, sitting on his front porch with his dog Tippy, and going to music night at Cedar Grove where every now and then you might catch him dancing or picking his banjo.

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Joe Burnett Smith: Nov. 15, 1914 ~ July 17, 2007