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Southeastern News

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

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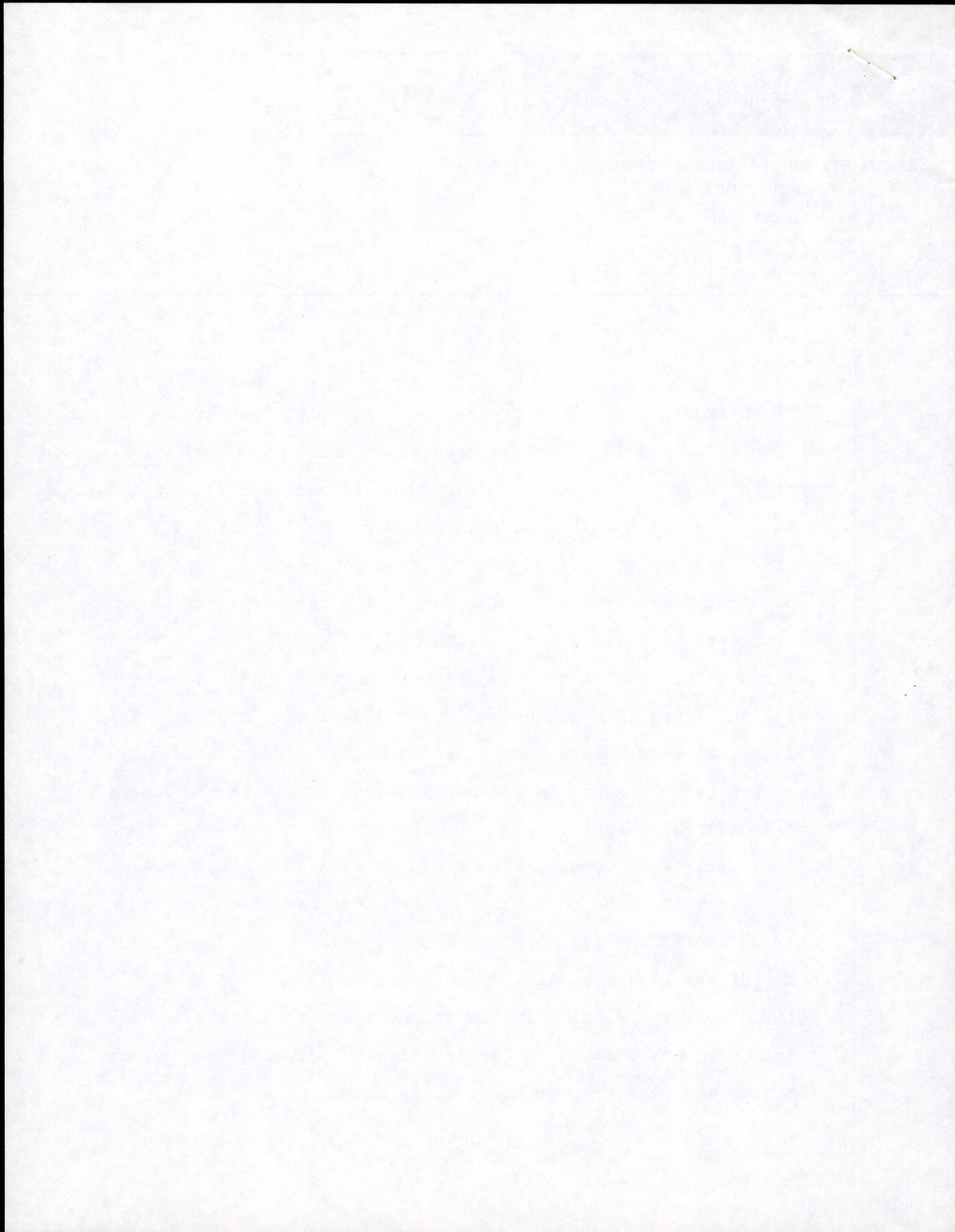
FATHER, SON TO GRADUATE TOGETHER

WAKE FOREST, NC - For Ernest L. Johnson, II, and Ernest L. Johnson, III, May 14 will be a very important day, a doubly important day. The father and son, whom friends and family call Ed and Eddie, will both graduate that day. Ed Johnson will receive a Master of Divinity Degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary here, while Eddie will graduate from Gardner-Webb College in Boiling Springs, N. C.

Since the time of the two graduations is only a half-hour apart, and since both father and son would like to see each other graduate, a special arrangement has been made. The president of Gardner-Webb will award Ed Johnson's degree to him at the same time Eddie receives his.

It will be a joyous end to a road that hasn't always been an easy one for the Johnson family. Sacrifices have been the rule for Mrs. Linda Johnson, wife and mother, and for the other children, John (16) and Patricia (11), as well as for Ed and Eddie. In addition to working full-time as an assistant comptroller at the Marine Corps Air Station in Jacksonville, N. C., and taking care of two growing children at home, Linda has typed all of her

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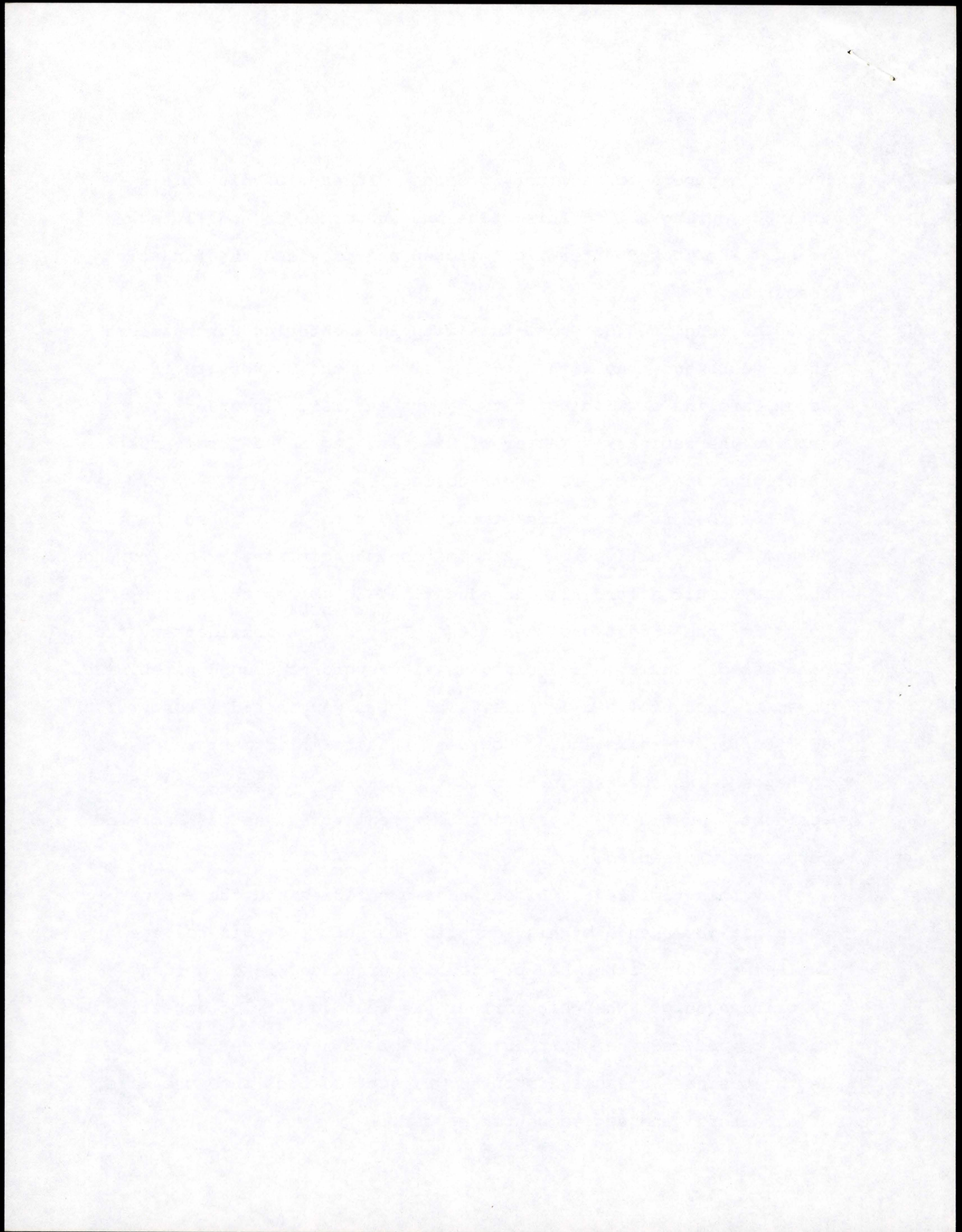


husband's papers for seminary courses. Ed says of his wife's attitude during all of this, "She has supported me and lifted me up. She looked after two children and provided the financial resources."

The long road did not start with Ed's entering Southeastern three years ago, but with his admission to the University of North Carolina at Wilmington two years earlier. In order to receive the Seminary's Master of Divinity Degree, a person must first graduate from a four-year college.

But the dream goes back twenty-one years ago to when the Durham, N. C., natives made a commitment to ministry. Not knowing how they could afford all the education, Ed joined the Marine Corps for the educational benefits. They had one child then, the one-year-old Eddie. Ed decided to sign-up for a second hitch. He says, "I thought I had it made. The job I was in had a bonus of \$10,000 for re-enlisting." However, that re-enlistment was never to happen. He suffered a blow to the head as the result of an accident. Just a few days prior to re-enlistment he was declared permanently disabled.

By this time Ed and Linda had two children and the Marines would not pay enough of his education for him to begin college full-time. His father had previously purchased 52% in a food distributorship. When his partner was found guilty of embezzlement, he offered the other 48% to Ed. So a new career began. As the business steadily improved, Ed settled back into the life of a faithful and active church member.



The food distributorship grew to be extremely successful until, as Ed says, "Almost as quickly as it had begun, the bottom fell out. At 38 years of age I found myself without a job. My wife and I kept talking about it." Haunted by their commitment to ministry of fifteen years earlier, they determined to pursue that objective, even if it meant giving up everything they had.

Ed already had approximately two years of college work behind him when he entered UNC-Wilmington in the fall of 1978. In 1980 he was awarded a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology.

Since coming to Southeastern Seminary in 1978, Ed has worked as much as possible during the week and on weekends. The last year has been particularly rugged, working during the week as the chaplain for a large shopping mall in nearby Raleigh and on Saturdays at the Marine Commissary in Jacksonville. He has also been available for supply sermons whenever possible on Sundays.

Now that he is almost at the end of these five hectic years, he says of the experience, "There have been a lot of rewards and some costs. My biggest concern was the separation from my family."

What comes next for the Johnsons? Ed would like to enter the pastoral ministry in a church as soon as the right place becomes evident. He also feels strongly drawn to hospital or industrial chaplaincy as a possible alternative. And son Eddie? There's one more similarity besides graduation day. He wants to attend seminary at either Southwestern Baptist in Fort Worth, Tex., or here at Southeastern.

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