

# Salem native invents pillow for post-surgical patients

By Meg Hibbert

Garnette Helvey Bane isn't a typical inventor. Statistics show the "typical" one is male and in his 30s, according to Bane, a Salem native who now lives in Greenville, S.C.

After having emergency open heart surgery in 2005, Bane invented Pillow RIGHT Now, that has a patent pending, to provide cushioning for post-surgical patients in the hospital as well as afterwards in the car. The pillow can attach to seat belt restraints, she noted, and is especially helpful for open-heart surgery patients who have to travel back and forth for weeks of rehabilitation therapy. The initials of the pillow - PRN - are a play on words because PRN in medical terms translates to "use as needed."

Bane's idea was selected by New Carolina South Carolina's Council on Competitiveness as one of the top 50 innovations to create jobs for residents of that state. More than 40 South Carolinians have been involved in the initial design, patent and production phase.

The pillow is manufactured by Clemson University's Apparel Research Center that designed the electronic pattern. It is prepared for distribution by employees in the training program at the S.C. Vocational Rehabilitation Center in Greenville.

Bane said she came up with the idea after realizing after her own surgery that the small or heart-shaped pillows hospitals often provide for patients to hold onto in order to cough to clear their lungs provided little support to the healing chest area.

The inventor is a retired award-winning medical reporter for "The Greenville News" and hospital marketing manager.

Bane, who is a member of the Class of '57 from Andrew Lewis High School, recalled writing for the "Salem Times-Register" while attending Roanoke College in 1960. She has written articles for magazines published by U.S. Airways, Piedmont Airlines and for "Better Homes and Gardens" and has recently been commissioned to write a coffee table book on the history of Greenville.

Bane pointed out she is still Virginian part time as she and her husband, Sanford "Sandy" Bane, own his family's 250-acre farm in Halifax County that was renovated seven years ago and was featured on "Before and After" on Home and Garden TV. They live with what she describes as "a spoiled miniature Schnauzer named Schatzi."

She has relatives still in Salem and Roanoke. Sister-in-law Joan Helvey lives on Academy Street in Salem, she said, and her Aunt Virginia lives in Roanoke as do her cousins Rhonda, Mike and Patrick Helvey and cousin Lynn Owens.

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