

## WHO'S NEW IN TOWN?

# Father Lee: The Search That Leads to Priesthood

By FRANCES ELLIS  
Morning News Women's Editor

To some people, priests are not quite human. They are on a level that is different from other mortals.

Father Walter Pringle Lee of St. Anthony's Catholic Church is very much of this earth: he's

an identical twin; he's a son of the Charlestonian Pringles and Buists; he's an ex-student of USC, Columbia, where he studied pre-med, where he was a member of the Sigma Chi social fraternity; where he had his own automobile, and was very much in demand at all social functions; he's an ex-traveling salesman for a drug company; he's a former Air Force sergeant, having spent three years in England with the 8th Air Force instructing in the use of flying equipment; he's an ex-Florentine, too.

He was born in Charleston, son of Agnes Buist Pringle and William States Lee, both of Charleston. His twin brother, William States Jr., now lives with his family in Columbia, as does his sister, Agnes, now Mrs. William J. Clawson.

His father was a wholesale drug company salesman for the Florence Drug Co., and for 14 months they lived on Cedar Street here when Father Lee was about three-years-old.

"The only thing I remember," he recalled, "are the trains, and somebody had some chickens next door."

They moved to Columbia where the young student graduated from the Columbia City Schools.

To go back to Charleston, though, and the Lees do that a great deal (one can detect with no trouble the Charlestonian accent in Father Lee's voice), the Lees all were members of St. Phillips Episcopal Church; his grandfather, the late Walter Pringle, began the Pringle Bros.

Dry Goods, was owner of the bank and of the only wholesale drug company in the port city.

"When cotton failed," Father Lee explained, "he lost everything he had. That's what brought us away from Charleston."

After high school graduation, Father Lee went to the USC, Columbia, to study pharmacy pre-med, but didn't get to med school because as, in his words, "the Army caught me." His total length of service with the Air Corps was 43 months.

"It was a blessing in disguise," he said, "for perhaps things would not have turned out as they have."

At any rate, after his discharge he worked for two wholesale drug companies; McKesson and Robbins, as a traveling salesman for South Georgia; the Sandoz Chemical Company as a detail man for three years, with headquarters in Columbia; then back to McKesson and Robbins in Columbia as city salesman until 1955.

Now, all this time, he was still an Episcopalian. "Oh, that's all right," he said, eyes sparkling and laughing, "I get teased all the time — and by some member of my family."

In 1952, Father Lee became a convert. "It was nothing startling that happened," he said. "This was a certain seeking for authority in my own life. I did a lot of read-

ing; and over a two-year period of investigation and instruction in the Catholic faith, I became a convert.

"I found in the Catholic church a way of life. I always was a worker in the church; had a great love for the church, but I didn't see, for me, any self motivation; I was looking for something to guide me. In the Catholic church I found direction; someone and something to guide me. The Ten Commandments became alive to me. The main thing was discipline and authority."

So after two years of study with Monsignor A. F. Kamler of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Columbia, Father Lee became a convert. He went to St. Mary's College, Ky., from 1955-58, where he received a B. A. degree in philosophy; he attended summer school at Notre Dame; then went for four years to St. Mary's Seminary, Roland Park, Baltimore, Md., and was ordained as a priest May 19, 1962 by Archbishop Paul J. Hallahan of Atlanta at St. Joseph's, Columbia.

Father Lee's first assignments were short: three months at St. Joseph's, Anderson; one month at St. Anne's, Sumter; then to St. Peter's, Columbia for one year. Then he was transferred to St. Anthony's here.

Father Lee thinks Florence is bigger than he expected it to be; the people are most hospitable, friendly. "And



NOW AT ST. ANTHONY'S...  
Father Walter Pringle Lee

Florence certainly is busy, busy — a growing city. But the friendliness of its people is the main thing."

Hobbies for Father Lee include reading, tennis and an interest in all sports. He played golf quite a bit while in Columbia, and hopes one day, perhaps, to take that up again. But in the meantime, he's more interested in the people of his parish than the golf course.

Because, in his words: "Man is a being composed of two primary elements: one is spiritual, the other material. Each component part must be fed in its wants and desires. To cater to the material, in the matter of the luxuries, never feeds the spiritual. That leaves man half fed. The spiritual needs are not satisfied — and this overflows into his life in the material. Both must be fed."