

Barber's experience mounts

By JAMES BARBERY
of the Daily Telegraph staff

In 1922 Doyle Lytton traveled to Cincinnati from Bluefield, Va., to attend Old Reliable Barber College. At 83 years of age, the Athens barber is still practicing the profession he chose when he was 18.

"After college I came to Athens and set up shop for a year. Then I went to Bluefield to work in a three-chair shop," Lytton said. "Five years later I came back to Athens to set up shop — where the beauty parlor is currently located. Twenty years ago, I moved into this building," which is located next door to the beauty parlor.

Lytton presents a simple, modest perspective of life — anchored by a practiced sense of humor.

"I've made a living. I don't think much of big city life," he said. "I take three squares (meals) a day but people are my real pleasure. I'd rather be a second class barber than the President of the United States.

"I tell people that I'm the best and the worst barber in town — since there aren't any others. There used to be as many as three barbers besides me in Athens, but the field has declined. Most people let their hair grow or go to stylists."

Lytton recalled a memorable time in his career in 1942 and 1943 when Aviation Cadets, taking flying lessons in Princeton, were housed at Concord College.

"I had the job of cutting their flat tops. They usually came in in groups of 40, but there were 200 cadets in all. Once I cut the hair of 100 cadets, five civilians, and three officers in 11 hours — and I left both ears.

"When I think how slow I've



Staff photo by James Barbery

Experienced barber

Doyle Lytton, an 83-year-old Athens barber, has cut hair since he was 18. Two-year-old Cody Arellano is one of the latest customers to enjoy Lytton's talents.

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gotten it amazes me," Lytton said.

"I like people. Anybody that serves the public needs to like people to be successful. When I find people coming in a little blue I know a joke will sometimes pick them up.

"Once I picked up some used razors that presented a problem. I asked one of my customers how I was doing. He said 'if you're skinning me you're doing a fine job but if you are shaving me'

Lytton has a way of making himself the object of his humor.

"People are fond of barbershop jokes. 'Just lay still — it's not costing you anything but the pain,'" he quipped.

Lytton said he hasn't thought about retiring. His shop is open two days a week — Thursday and Friday.

"There is something about the town of Athens. I wouldn't live anyplace else. Some people just take up in Athens," he said.

"I hesitate to suggest a change of hairstyle for my customers. I've had some 50 year customers. If you got somebody fooled that good you're doing pretty good.

The 83-year-old barber is the oldest living child out of 10 in his family. He had three older brothers and an older sister.