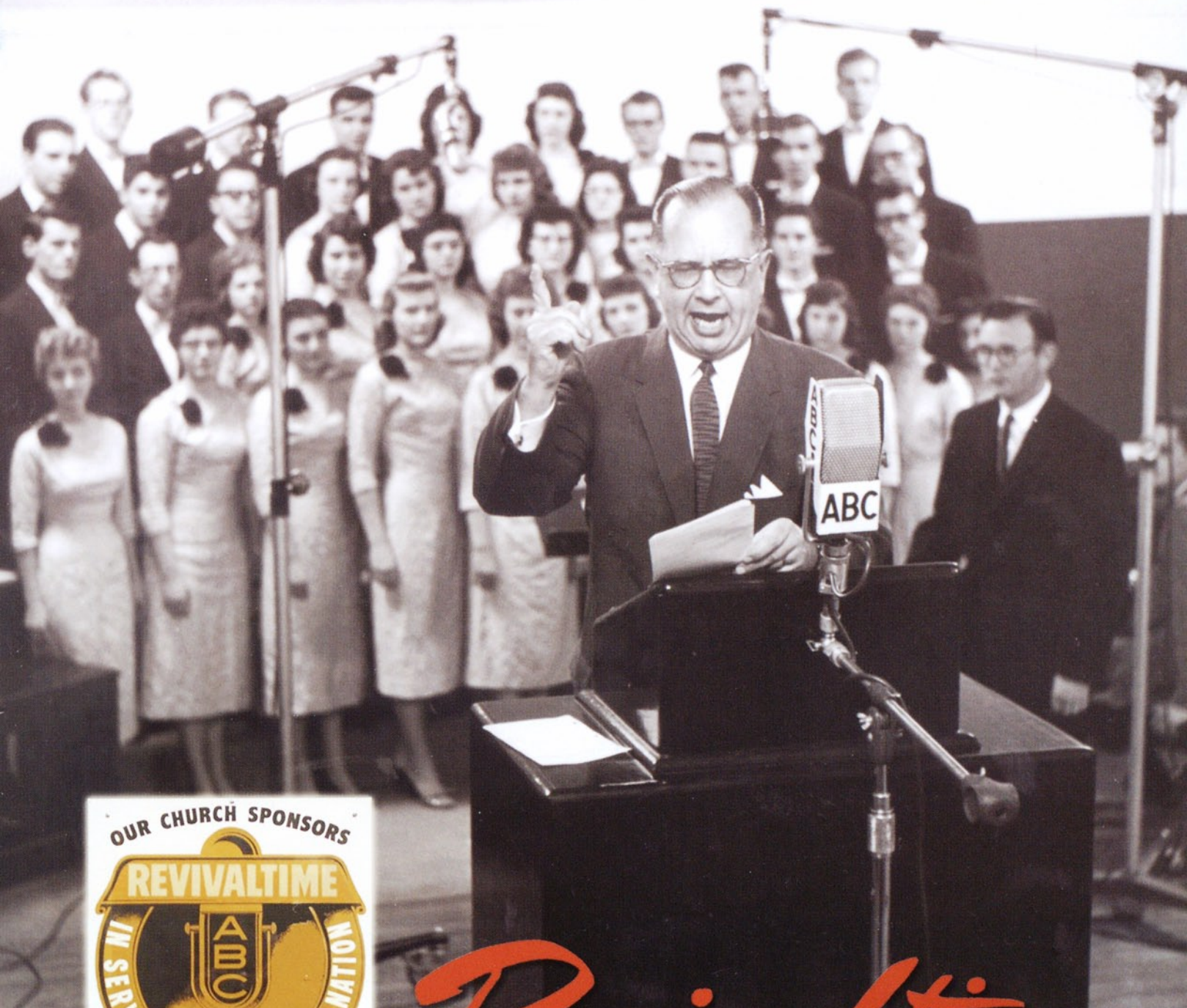


Vol. 23, No. 2, Summer 2003

Assemblies of God

# HERITAGE



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1959

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD  
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Wayne Warner  
EDITOR AND DIRECTOR

Joyce Lee  
ARCHIVIST

Glenn Gohr  
ASSISTANT ARCHIVIST AND COPY  
EDITOR

Brett Pavia  
COORDINATOR OF  
SPECIAL PROJECTS

Sharon Rasnake  
ADMINISTRATIVE  
COORDINATOR

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## THE BIG PICTURE FROM THE LONG, LONG ALTAR

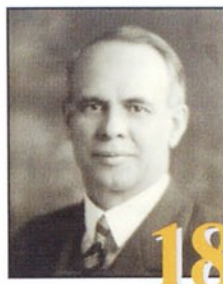
A behind-the-scenes view from a former *Revivaltime* choir member and staff member of this legendary radio ministry that was on the air from 1950-94.

By Barbara Cavaness



## MY SEVENTEEN YEARS AS REVIVALTIME SPEAKER

What was it like to follow C. M. Ward as *Revivaltime* speaker? Was he nervous? What was it like to be heard all over the world with a gospel message? Here is the story from the man who filled that role and developed his own dynamic ministry. By Dan Betzer



## ALVIN L. BRANCH: A BAPTIST TURNED PENTECOSTAL

Learn how this popular pastor, Bible teacher, and camp meeting speaker from the old Central District promoted church growth and Sunday school work and influenced many for the Kingdom of God. By Glenn Gohr



## A HISTORY OF ASSEMBLIES OF GOD NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

What school operates without vacations or snow days? Continues 24 hours a day, 7 days a week? Global University is one. Here is a history of non-traditional education in the Assemblies of God leading up to the recent forming of Global University. By James E. Book

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The *Assemblies of God Heritage* is a history magazine committed to telling the unique story of the Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal movement. Each issue aims to promote understanding and appreciation with a variety of topics and historic photos, most of which are archived in the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

Cover: C. M. Ward and the *Revivaltime* choir during a broadcast, about 1958. Choir director Cyril McLellan is standing at right.

# Heritage Letter

## The 1963 General Council Along the Mississippi River

By Wayne Warner

In this 50<sup>th</sup> General Council issue of *Heritage*, I'm going to flip back 480 calendar pages, back 40 years to 1963, and give you a peek at that year's council in Memphis, Tennessee.

Maybe you were there along the Mississippi River.<sup>1</sup> Maybe you can remember events of the 30<sup>th</sup> council. Maybe you can remember some of the world's events and tragedies. Let me refresh your memory:

-U.S. raises first-class letter postage to 5 cents;

-President Kennedy sends federal troops to Alabama because of battles over integration;

-U.S. military predicts South Vietnam will win the war by 1965;

-The atomic submarine *Thresher* with 129 men aboard sinks in the Atlantic;

-More than 200,000 hear Martin Luther King, Jr., give his speech, "I Have a Dream";

-President Kennedy assassinated in Dallas.

Now, you remember 1963! If you were not around yet in 1963, you've read of that very eventful year.

But let's focus on Ellis Auditorium in Memphis,<sup>2</sup> August 21-26, for the 30<sup>th</sup> General Council. Our column is excerpted from the "General Council Chronicle," published in two October 1963 issues of the *Pentecostal Evangel*. There is no byline on the articles, but I assume longtime editor Bob Cunningham is the reporter. (A quick survey of the present *Evangel* staff reveals only 6 of the 14 were born by 1963.)

The Corridors of Ellis Auditorium in Memphis, Tenn., were a-buz on



View of crowd at one of the services.

Wednesday afternoon, Aug. 21, as people poured in from all directions. While hundreds stood about in clusters greeting old friends and making new ones, other hundreds milled through the exhibit hall, stopping at one booth after another or shopping in the large book sales area.

Members of the roster committee (Arthur Berg, chairman) were kept very busy registering the ministers and delegates who were arriving. The Council program was not scheduled to begin until 7 p.m. but many had arrived the previous day. They had come early to attend such pre-Council functions as the WMC Workshops, Writers Conference, Sunday School Directors Seminar, or General Presbytery sessions.

At 7 p.m. the curtain went up bringing into view a platform filled with General Presbyters, Executive Presbyters, and guests. The congregation stood as the colors (Stars and Stripes and the Christian flag) were

marched in; then sang "America."

Emil Balliet, chairman of the program committee, called upon Ted Ness to direct the congregational singing. Paul Ferrin played the piano while his wife Marjorie played the organ. The great auditorium rang with the praises of the Lord as the audience sang and prayed. Our hearts were thrilled with a vocal duet by Virginia McDaniel and Paul Ferrin ("Be Glad, O Ye Righteous") and music by the Gabriels Trumpet Trio from North Central Bible College ("Wonderful, Marvelous, Yet True"). A vocal solo by Doyle Smith ("Until Then") was used of God to prepare the audience for a powerful keynote sermon by the general superintendent, T. F. Zimmerman.

The people were stirred so deeply by Brother Zimmerman's sermon that most of them remained in the auditorium for some time to pray and wait on the Lord. There were messages in tongues with interpretations as the Spirit of God swept over the audience

again and again. Many wept; some came forward to give their lives to Christ, or to request special prayer; a few danced for joy; and one man became so happy he sprinted the full width of the auditorium and back again in front of all the people. The power of the Lord was felt in a most unusual way. This glorious time of blessing was very refreshing to weary travelers who had come long distances that day.

The next morning following prayer and a devotional service, the general superintendent called the first business session to order. He expressed much joy over the presence of several ministers who formerly served as executive presbyters (J. R. Flower, Fred Vogler, J. O. Savell, David McDowell, Noel Perkin, and E. S. Williams). At the chairman's request, Brother Williams, a former general superintendent, made a few remarks which drew considerable applause. The chairman then read a telegram of greetings from R. M. Riggs, another former general superintendent, who was not present. The Council voted to wire its greetings to Brother Riggs in reply to his telegram.

James E. Hamill, pastor of First Assembly in Memphis, introduced Mayor Henry Loeb who extended a warm welcome to the convention. Earl Blythe, superintendent of the Assemblies of God in the Tennessee District, also welcomed the Council to his state. The remainder of the morning was devoted to the reading of biennial

reports by T. F. Zimmerman, general superintendent; Bartlett Peterson, general secretary; and M. B. Netzel, general treasurer.

On Thursday night, Mark K. Carter led in the song service. Denise Powers sang a solo ("Open Your Heart and let Him Come In"). Phil and Betty Wannemacher sang a duet ("I'm Not Alone"). The Girls Trio from Central Bible Institute sang, "What a Precious Friend Is He."

Thursday evening's speaker was Frederick H. Huber, New Jersey, whose sermon topic was "Upon All Flesh." He said that we as Pentecostal Christians are threatened by a three-pronged attack from materialism, intellectualism, and worldliness. "Emphasis on things, knowledge, and pleasure has always been the foe of God's spiritual people," he declared, "but there is an intensification of their attack today."

Friday morning a sacred atmosphere of worship pervaded the auditorium as the people assembled for another devotional service. Following the song service and prayer a solo was sung by Ira Stanhill ("The Choice Is Mine").

The morning speaker was Tom Johnstone, general superintendent of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. His subject was, "The Purpose of Pentecostal Revival." Brother Johnstone declared, "Let it be said that Martin Luther and his contemporaries started the Reformation, but let it never be forgotten that this great Pentecostal revival climaxed the Reformation by restoring to the mainstream of the life of the Church the Holy Spirit—recognized, appropriated, and obeyed to the glory of God." In the elections, all executive officers were reelected: General Superintendent Thomas F. Zimmerman; General Secretary Bartlett Peterson; General Treasurer; Martin B. Netzel; Assistant General Superintendents,

Gayle F. Lewis, Howard Bush, C. W. H. Scott, Bert Webb, and J. Philip Hogan (director of Foreign Missions).

A resolution was presented [and passed] which would dissolve the present Department of Evangelism and elevate this important responsibility to the office of the general superintendent.

The Council adopted a resolution to amend Article III, Section 1, of the Bylaws by adding a new paragraph under "Duties of the General Superintendent." It reads: "To emphasize, coordinate and promote evangelism in all of its phases throughout the fellowship. In consultation with the Executive Presbytery he shall appoint an Evangelism Committee to serve during the General Council biennium."

On Friday afternoon, Dr. George L. Ford, executive director of the National Association of Evangelicals, was introduced. Dr. Ford told the General Council the rapid rise of the ecumenical movement makes it imperative that all evangelicals stand together and resist the trend toward Rome. He said we need to be prepared to withstand an attack on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There were many home missionaries seated on the platform in the evening service. Some were dressed as American Indians. Others were wearing Jewish robes and one was carrying a flag bearing the Star of David.

G. F. Lewis, executive director of Home Missions, introduced these missionaries who minister to Indians, Jews, Alaskans, prisoners, deaf, blind, and foreign-language groups.

Evangelist John McPherson placed an Indian headdress on Robert Brandt, National Home Missions secretary. In honor of Brother Brandt's ministry to the American Indians he was given membership in the Cherokee Tribe.

Brother Brandt then presented "A Parade of Progress" depicting the accomplishments of Breakthrough—8000. With the lights turned low, pictures of newly organized churches were projected on a screen while the



Paul H. "Bud" Tumarc, Jr. (left) and Bob Watters, playing instruments at General Council.

spotlight fell upon the pastors of these pioneer works and representatives of the “mother churches” or the sections or districts which sponsored them.

On Saturday morning Chester Jenkins led the congregational singing during the morning devotional service. Danny Betzer sang a solo and later the Gatlin children (three boys and one girl) sang two quartet numbers. The morning speaker was Raymond Hudson, district superintendent of the Assemblies of God in New Mexico.

Brother Hudson referred to 2 Timothy 2:20-23 which mentions the various vessels in the master’s house. He said we are chosen vessels; the Lord puts each of us in the particular place where He wants us to function; and it is essential that we be purged from all uncleanness in order that we may be “a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use.”

Marie E. Brown, veteran pastor from New York City, was asked to lead the Council in prayer for God’s direction during the morning business session.

R. L. Rex, representing the Pentecostal Holiness Church, was introduced and brought greetings to the Council from Bishop [Joseph A.] Synan and other officials of his denomination.

Saturday night the focus was on youth. The meeting opened with a trumpet fanfare and congregational singing led by Steve Asmuth. Prayer was offered by James Montgomery, National C.A. Director of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Owen Carr, National C. A. Secretary of the Assemblies of God in the U.S.A., introduced members of the National C.A. Department staff from Springfield and other platform guests



Platform personnel bowing in prayer.

including regional winners in the quiz tournament, District C.A. Presidents, and numerous chaplains. Bob Abbott, Mr. C.A.-U.S.A. for 1963, played his saxophone for the offertory.

**Danny Betzer sang a solo and later the Gatlin children (three boys and one girl) sang two quartet numbers. The morning speaker was Raymond Hudson, district superintendent of the Assemblies of God in New Mexico.**

High point of the evening was the final competition in the National Quiz Tournament. The young people from First Assembly in Plainview, Tex., won 95 points for answering questions on the Gospel of Luke. The team from Bouldercrest Assembly in Atlanta, Ga., won 180 points to win the national championship for 1963.

Evangelist Calvin Melton of Mobile, Ala., delivered the sermon. His subject was, “The Province of Pentecostal Youth,” and his Scripture reading was 2 Timothy 4:1-8.

More than 200 youngsters constituted a youth choir for the evening. At the close of the service, hundreds

walked down the aisles to make public dedications of their lives to God.

Chas. W. H. Scott presided over the worship and communion service Sunday morning. Harry Myers led the singing. D. V. Hurst read the Scriptures (Hebrews 11). J. R. Flower offered prayer. Pastor and Mrs. Bennie C. Heinze sang, “When I Said Yes to Jesus.” General Superintendent T. F. Zimmerman dedicated his first grandchild to the Lord—a sweet little redhead named Catherine Elizabeth Tinlin whose father, Paul Tinlin, is pastor at Waterloo, Ia.

Bartlett Peterson read the names of 167 ordained ministers who had passed from the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant during the biennium (including 19 foreign missionaries). The congregation stood in honor of their memory.

Prior to the morning sermon, Truett Ford sang, “Day by Day.” Then G. Raymond Carlson, President of North Central Bible College, Minneapolis, preached on the subject, “The Song of Salvation.”

Communion was served by the Executive Presbyters to the General Presbyters, who in turn served the congregation.

Sunday afternoon saw the great Global Conquest Rally. Inspiring music was provided by the sanctuary choir of First Assembly in Memphis, following the colorful processional of missionaries in foreign costumes. Missionary-evangelist Morris Plotts delivered the sermon.

J. Philip Hogan, Executive Director of Foreign Missions, said this year’s Global Conquest offering was breaking all records. (The total in cash and pledges passed the \$70,000 mark.)

The music on Sunday night was a special blessing, including the singing of Pastor [Bobby] Bowen and his male chorus from the Whitehaven Assembly

which was outstanding. They sang, "Behold a Greater Than Man Is Here," "When the Lord Saved My Soul That Day," and "How Beautiful Heaven Must Be." Don Summerville sang, "The King and I." The Blackwood Brothers Quartet sang, "Lord, Teach Me How to Pray" and "The Stranger of Galilee." Lill Sundberg Anderson sang, "Spirit of God, Now Take Full Control." Bud Tutmarc played his steel guitar for the offertory.

A powerful gospel sermon was delivered by Paul E. Lowenberg, pastor of the First Assembly in Topeka and assistant superintendent of the Kansas District. His subject was, "The Midnight Hour." The congregation was mightily stirred as the power of God swept through the auditorium. Following a message in prophecy by the Spirit, many knelt to seek the Lord and continued praying for some time.

In Monday morning's devotional time, Don Summerville sang, "My Wonderful Father Is King of All Kings." The morning speaker was Pastor R. D. E. Smith of Binghamton, N.Y. John Polizzi played a trumpet solo entitled, "He Bought My Soul."

Mrs. J. R. Flower [Alice Reynolds Flower] was asked to pray for the Council as the business session opened. Balloting, for nonresident Executive Presbyters continued with the following results: G. Raymond Carlson, Kermit Reneau, Roy Wead, Richard Bergstrom, Edgar Bethany; G. W. Harcastle, Sr. (Arkansas District Superintendent) was elected to serve as Executive Presbyter succeeding A. A. Wilson who now resides in Springfield.<sup>3</sup>

A resolution passed that took notice of the current move of the Holy Spirit among denominational churches and expressed the desire of Assemblies



**Missionaries in native garb.**

of God ministers and officers to encourage this.

Two veteran ministers, J. O. Savell and V. G. Greisen, who have served the fellowship in important district and national positions, were des-

**Following the colorful  
processional of missionaries  
in foreign costumes,  
Missionary-evangelist  
Morris Plotts delivered the  
sermon.**

ignated by vote of the delegates to become Honorary General Presbyters. A vote of appreciation was given to A. A. Wilson for his many years of valuable service as an Executive Presbyter.

On Monday afternoon, a resolution on "Supreme Court Decisions" was passed. It stated that "recent decisions by the Supreme Court relative to Bible reading and prayers in the public schools have been most unacceptable by those who understand that the Constitution of the United States was created and established in accordance with Christian principles." It warned that further encroachments on religious practices in public life may be in the offing, and urged that ministers and laymen should contact their Congressmen deploring the present trend.<sup>4</sup>

In the closing service of the council Monday night, Bobby Jones, Mrs. T. F. Zimmerman III, and the Rangers Quartet ministered in music. The evening speaker was Lowell C. Ashbrook, Louisiana District Superintendent. He read from 2 Chronicles 5 concerning the dedication of Solomon's temple and compared this with our dedication today. "If we want the glory of God," he said, "we must have unity." The congregation was greatly inspired by the account of

Brother Ashbrook's own miraculous healing which he related in the course of the sermon.

The meeting ended with a season of fervent prayer.



**Notes**

1. One other council was held in Memphis, the 17<sup>th</sup> in 1937.
2. Ellis Auditorium was razed in 1999 to make room for a convention center.
3. Kermit Reneau is the only living member of the 1963 resident and non-resident executives.
4. It is not surprising to note that the 1963 General Council was disturbed over the Supreme Court's ruling on Bible reading and prayer in public schools. But it is sad that despite the racial firestorm just outside Ellis Auditorium and throughout the South that summer of 1963, the Council seems oblivious to the Civil Rights Movement. One of the many tragedies of the Civil Rights Movement happened when Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated 5 years later and 6 blocks away from the auditorium.



**Wayne Warner is director of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center and editor of Heritage magazine.**





# An Insider's View of the Worldwide *Revivaltime* Ministry

## The Big Picture From **The Long, Long Altar**

By Barbara Cavaness

Engineer Wally Fender stood ready in the control room. C. T. Beem, program director, adjusted his headphones and signaled choir director Cyril McLellan as the red "On the Air" light flashed on. Forty singing evangelists—students from Central Bible College—burst into the triumphant strains of "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" at the upbeat. As McLellan cued their voices to hum, narrator Lee Shultz announced, "It's *Revivaltime*—across the nation and around the world!" When I sing that song today, I can close my eyes and recall the thrill of the live broadcast and the anticipation that God was about to change literally hundreds of lives. The anointing was palpable.

The scene will be reenacted on July 30, 2003, nearly fifty years after the first *Revivaltime* broadcast on the ABC radio network. Although Wally, C. T., and C. M. Ward have gone on to their heavenly reward, former speaker Dan Betzer, narrator Shultz, choir director McLellan, and over a hundred former choir members have been preparing for this taped anniversary production.<sup>1</sup> Pastor Rich Neubauer and Arlington Assembly of God, Arlington, Virginia, will host the event in conjunction with the 50<sup>th</sup> General Council of the Assemblies of God.

### HISTORY

Before the 1953 night when C. M. Ward stepped to the live microphone, *Revivaltime* had been for three years a recorded broadcast. General Superintendent Wesley R. Steelberg served as the first speaker, with Wilfred A. Brown taking over after Steelberg's untimely death in 1952. General Council executives chose Ward, then pastor of Full Gospel Tabernacle, Bakersfield, California, as the first full-time broadcast speaker.

The story of *Revivaltime*, however, involves much more than the well-known speakers, even more than the broadcast itself. The half-hour per week formed just one piece of the mosaic. According to Lee Shultz, "The broadcast was only the door opener; the written page endures."<sup>2</sup> Hundreds of behind-the-scenes individuals—from the congregational singers to the tape duplicators to the mail openers and secretaries—contributed to the success of the radio ministry. One such person was Steelberg's son-in-law Lloyd Colbaugh, artist and designer, who suggested the dynamic name *Revivaltime*.

Only 41 stations carried the first release on Easter Sunday, 1950, but the number had increased to 75 by the time the broadcast began to air over the ABC



radio network on December 20, 1953. On that night the coverage expanded to 275 stations.<sup>3</sup> Emil A. Balliet served as the first narrator, followed by Bartlett Peterson, D. V. Hurst, and then Lee Shultz in 1964. Music directors included Marcus Gaston, Erika Munger, Bernice Kovacs, and Vernon McLellan before Cyril McLellan joined the team in 1952.

### PEAK YEARS

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a peak in the number of stations and listener responses to the service. One of the components of this success was the connecting of the broadcast ministry to the local churches. Jack and Jean (Cooke) Risner had sung in the radio choir for *Sermons in Song* (see sidebar) and for the first *Revivaltime* broadcast in 1950. In 1965 Jack again became a part of the team as field representative and stations director. Together with editors and public relations people like Ron Rowden and E. S. Caldwell, Risner brought the potential and impact of the *Revivaltime* outreach to the attention of the Assemblies of God constituency and station managers.<sup>4</sup>

Traveling some 30,000 miles a year, Risner told the stories of radio listeners at district councils, camp meetings, and local churches. Using slides and films he would explain how radio took the gospel message behind prison walls, through closed doors, and into hospital rooms. He urged pastors to sponsor a release on their local station and to put up an “Our Church Sponsors *Revivaltime*.” sign. In turn, Ward would always tell listeners to “look for the church displaying the *Revivaltime* sign.” The number of sta-

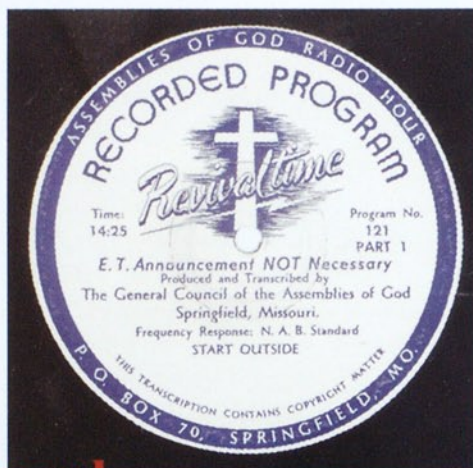
tions grew from around 300 to over 700 under Risner’s efforts.

One of Risner’s favorite testimonies had come from a Brooklyn woman who lived in a high-rise complex of 90,000 people in one city block. Depressed and distraught, she had been preparing to take her own life and turned up the sound on the radio to drown out the sound of the gunshot. At that moment, Ward’s voice penetrated her consciousness, saying in the middle of his message, “You don’t want to do that. Suicide’s not the answer.” Her hand was stayed, and she wrote to say she had given her heart and life over to God. Risner often said, “People are changed; the ministry touches them where they live.”

As he ministered to about twenty people in a home missions church near Portland, Oregon, Risner requested prayer for his brother who was a POW in Vietnam. He described how *Revivaltime* was reaching the men and women of our troops there. Afterwards the pastor took him to a couple sobbing on the back row. They told him that they had been asking God how to use the insurance money from their son, who

had just been killed in the war. They gave the \$10,000 for the radio ministry to help reach as many servicemen as possible with the gospel.<sup>5</sup>

Beginning in 1966, *Revivaltime* beamed its message and music over short-wave stations of the Far East Broadcasting Company into the Vietnam area. To reach even more servicemen, the Radio Department began sending reel-to-reel broadcast tapes to them in 1968. A letter from Assemblies



## Radio and the Gospel

Calvary Episcopal Church, Pittsburgh, is thought to have aired the first church service more than 80 years ago, January 2, 1921. Aimee Semple McPherson, an early member of the Assemblies of God and founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, is said to have been one of the first, if not the first, women to preach on radio. She also built one of the first commercial stations. Not too far behind in building a station in 1925 was Robert Craig, founder of Glad Tidings Temple (Assemblies of God) in San Francisco.

In 1946 when the Assemblies of God began to build a national radio program, *Sermons in Song*, they were able to get a jump start with a small network of west coast stations over which Leland Keys was broadcasting his gospel program. The 15-minute program was produced on 16” electrical transcriptions—that resemble giant long-playing records that were mailed to radio stations. Ernest S. Williams, the general superintendent at the time, was speaker for the program and was followed by Wesley R. Steelberg in 1949. During this same post-war period, the Radio Department produced a children’s program, *The Gospel Rocket*.

On Easter Sunday 1950, the Assemblies of God released the first *Revivaltime* broadcast. The new 30-minute ministry continued with the old electrical transcription technology until reel-to-reel tapes were developed. Steelberg remained as speaker until his death in 1952, and then general treasurer Wilfred Brown became the voice of *Revivaltime*.

The big day came on Sunday, December 20, 1953, when a new *Revivaltime* joined the ABC Radio Network with its first release and with C. M. Ward as speaker. Barbara Cavaness and Dan Betzer go into more detail with their stories in this issue.

—Wayne Warner



Workers in the mail room. Below are Connie Weddel and Joyce McHaffie.



of God chaplain, Commander Stanford Linzey described the revival brought to the aircraft carrier *USS Coral Sea* by the tapes: "Many have been saved, and a great number filled with the Holy Spirit. God is moving in a mighty way." Ward preached to a maximum audience of 4,200 every week over the ship's radio.<sup>6</sup> Wherever the U.S. sent soldiers—Germany, Korea, the Philippines, Okinawa, or Ethiopia—*Revivaltime* sermons and music tapes followed.

The cassette revolution of the early 1970s brought new potential and new ministries for churches and lay people. *Revivaltime* sent cassettes, each carrying two broadcasts, to

## C. T. Beem supervised a staff of 20-30 who handled as many as **11,000 letters** a month.

be taken into hospitals, rest homes, jails, and reservations. Within months of getting duplicating equipment, the department was sending cassettes to 228 churches and 139 individuals who were involved in tape ministry.<sup>7</sup> By August 1973, 700 cassettes were going out every two weeks to places as far away as Malaysia.<sup>8</sup>

**M**issions formed another component of the ministry's success. By 1973 the service was heard on 95 foreign releases, shortened and contextualized for the overseas audience. Missionaries could add a regional spot announcement, and offerings were not mentioned. Testimonies from Tonga, British Honduras, Iceland, and many other places confirmed that the broadcast opened doors. The Assemblies of God churches in the entire nation of Guyana were known as "*Revivaltime* churches." A radio station manager from Surinam heard Ward in Guyana and soon released the broadcast in his country. Within four years the first Assemblies of God church in Surinam was dedicated.<sup>9</sup>

### RESPONSE FROM LISTENERS

Handling mail from listeners—often 11,000 letters a month—definitely took a team effort. Program director C. T. Beem worked as *Revivaltime* office manager of 20-30 staff

members during the week. Under his watchful eye, the office moved like a well-oiled machine. Often letters arrived addressed simply, "C. M. Ward, Springfield, MO"—and sometimes in crayon or nearly illegible scrawl. Each letter was answered and prayed over.

The process started each morning with sacks of mail being opened, envelopes slit, offerings noted for typing of receipts, and letters read and sorted. Six or more workers wrote codes on the letters and divided them into boxes. Some letters requested prayer, others a sermon, a booklet, or the answer to a difficult question. The readers knew the ministry so well that they could read a letter and code it for a thank-you and receipt, a copy of a sermon addressing the person's need for healing or the baptism in the Holy Spirit, or a Ward booklet dealing with the writer's situation. At times they consulted an index by subject of topics covered in sermons or printed ministries over the years. Secretaries typed up testimonies received for sharing on the air by Ward, or in the *Pentecostal Evangel* or *Advance* by Caldwell, or on the road by Risner. The mail never stacked up. This counseling by mail always encouraged inquirers to find and attend the nearest Assemblies of God church and would give them the address and pastor's name. The local pastor had the "last word" in *Revivaltime's* counseling ministry.<sup>10</sup>

*Revivaltime*, the first department to acquire an IBM automatic typewriter, kept that machine clattering eight hours a day or longer. The basic response letters were rewritten every three to four weeks. Despite the volume of mail, many letters received personal answers from office personnel. The quick and personalized acknowledgement brought much positive feedback to the office.

Several people staffed the mailroom, where sermons and printed materials were kept on file and envelopes were stuffed to respond to listeners. *Life's Greatest Questions* might be sent to a person asking how to be saved. A listener inquiring about the doctrine of healing would receive *What Are They Saying About Divine Healing?* Thousands of copies of *The Holy Spirit Is For You* led people to their own personal Pentecost. Ward also produced several books of answers to questions that had been received repeatedly at his office.

**“Ward prayed for the elderly, taxi drivers, teenagers, airport and railroad porters, people in prison, telephone operators, and housewives.”**

Later on, sermon cassettes were also used to respond to those who wrote to the broadcast.

Every year *Revivaltime* also produced evangelism literature for use in summer soul-winning crusades. Most familiar were the hundreds of thousands of copies of full-color “miniatures”—pocket-sized testimonies of men such as J. C. Penney, Dr. Wernher von Braun (NASA scientist), Wallace E. Johnson (president of Holiday Inns), and Colonel Harland Sanders (founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken). Scores of churches utilized the materials door-to-door and in literature saturation campaigns.

The heaviest bags of mail poured in every October and November in time for the *Revivaltime* World Prayermeeting. About 5,400 requests arrived from listeners for the first one in 1955. By 1974, more than 42,000 requests flooded the office, were retyped and then distributed to 120,000 intercessors in over 1,600 registered prayer groups around the world. Marvelous testimonies resulted as prayer warriors laid hands on the requests and called the names before God’s throne.<sup>11</sup>

#### MINISTRY OF THE CHOIR

Next to C. M. Ward, perhaps the most influential *Revivaltime* team members were Cyril McLellan and the more than 1,300 people who ministered through the years as choir members and musicians. Ward always referred to the

choir as “these young evangelists.”<sup>12</sup> A variety of gospel songs and traditional hymns arranged for contemporary taste played an essential part in the success of the service. Whether on the broadcast, on one of their three annual tours, or via numerous long-play albums and cassettes, the choir focused on ministry and message, not performance. McLellan demanded and trained for musical excellence, but the emphasis of every practice seemed to be the prayer that each note would be anointed by the Holy Spirit.

Letters confirmed that listeners tuned in to hear the recognizable strains of McLellan’s arrangements.<sup>13</sup> He recalls the cooperation within the team: “We had a sense of unity and purpose that brought success. The personal strengths of each member, our mutual friendship, and good work ethic brought a continuity and a focus.” Shultz recently said of McLellan, “He gave his heart and soul to produce the kind of



music that reached people. The quality was uncontestable; so many tried to imitate it.”

The choir practiced during the week and on Sunday afternoon. A bus would take them from the Central Bible College campus to the headquarters auditorium. After rehearsing, the choir was joined by the rest of the team for prayer, and then the engineer recorded the service for the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada release. This served as a time check for the live broadcast. After a break, the choir would pray again. Ward would talk to them about the message, sports, something he had read in the newspaper, or sage advice to young ministers. These were rare intimate moments with a great evangelist. He had the ability to make each person feel he was deeply concerned about their future.

The congregation would assemble and McLellan rehearsed the congregational song, instructing the audience to “sing it out!” Many times as the service closed and the music of “There’s Room at the Cross” died out, Ward would turn to the choir, his face wet with tears. He was passionate about reaching people, especially lost people. The service ended with the final verse of “All Hail the Power” and the narrator’s words. The holy hush would then give way to



Ward's hearty laughter and warm welcome to those in the auditorium. He asked the first-timers to stand and give their names; then sent the choir members out to collect an offering of "first-fruits" saying, "It takes the grace of God and American greenbacks to keep us going." He often started the offering with money from his own billfold and then prayed that God would multiply what had been given to meet the needs of all the ministries of *Revivaltime*—to reach more souls. It was all about souls and what the Holy Spirit wanted to do as a result of the message and songs.

George and Cheryl (West) Cope sang in the choir. He recalls the power of the invitation song to effect a response from searching hearts: "Still today, 30 years later, tears come when I sing that song." Of Ward's talks, Cope remembers his emphasis on the altar call: "If you've got 30 minutes to speak, spend the majority of time on the altar call. That's where the results come from!" Cope echoes the feeling of other choir members, saying, "Of my four years at CBC, *Revivaltime* did more to mold and shape my personal life and ministry than anything else. I am what I am as a result of Brothers Ward and Mac investing themselves in me and allowing me to travel and be a team member. I am eternally indebted to *Revivaltime*."<sup>14</sup>

Dick and Cynthia (Holmberg) Nicholson were part of the choir in the sixties. Nicholson reports that Ward's sermons and passion are etched on his memory, both from the broadcast and from the class in evangelistic preaching Ward taught at the college: "He really zeroed in on the lost like no one else I've ever heard." The choir tours, however, form the most powerful memory Nicholson has of those years.

As an extension of the broadcast, the choir would present a sermon in song, and Risner or McLellan would give an invitation to those in need. The choir members dispersed into the congregation, following the leading of the Spirit, to "connect" with people. Nicholson still remembers the names and contexts of individuals he dealt with and prayed with after the choir had ministered. For many of the "young evangelists," these experiences were their first exposure to altar work and talking with people about their eternal destiny.<sup>15</sup>

The choir also had a succession of accompanists who practiced separately with McLellan each week. Mark Thallander, pianist for the choir from 1968-70, reports "My understanding, my philosophy, and my foundation for church music were established through conversations with McLellan and other professors. It was being a part of the *Revivaltime* team that showed me that my 'call' was music." The night before his graduation from high school, Thallander's parents took him to hear the choir on tour in Hayward, California. When a family friend introduced Thallander to McLellan and blurted out that he would be playing for the choir the following year, McLellan was startled but agreed to audition him after the service. Thallander got the job and felt that his life was blessed through it more than he could have ever dreamed or imagined. He had been listening to *Revivaltime* records and broadcasts since junior high days.<sup>16</sup>

#### UNIQUENESS OF C. M. WARD

From his first *Revivaltime* message in 1953, C. M. Ward created the impression that he was speaking directly to the



## “The Choir focused on **ministry and message,** not performance.”

listener. That person was his immediate concern. Ward effectively used the direct address of “Mister” and “Lady” to incorporate the person into the service and give a feeling of intimacy: “He’s talking to *me*.”

Ward took his task very seriously, saying, “I think one of the most unkempt words tossed around in my business is the word *program*. I am not interested in entertaining. The word needed is *service*. How can I *help* you? How can I *save* you? How can I *restore* you? That must be the motivation. ... [I]f you love people, it will come through as you broadcast. And your ministry will reach countless people who can be reached in no other way.”<sup>17</sup>

He often stopped in the middle of his message or altar call to direct a personal message to a listener. The Holy Spirit had impressed on his heart a “word of knowledge” while he had been preparing the script, and Ward believed in the supernatural “personal miracle” for individuals. Anointed words described healing, deliverance, the mending of a broken relationship, or provision of a job that would be imminent if the listener would only believe and receive. While working in the *Revivaltime* office, I read the letters of

testimony—often coming from opposite corners of the country—that said, “I was the one you were talking to!” And it wasn’t just one or two, but as many as ten persons who had received God’s touch. One night it was narrator Shultz who was healed the moment Ward addressed somebody listening: “You’re in such pain; you can hardly stand the pain. God is touching you.”<sup>18</sup>

An avid student of newspapers and current events, Ward had the ability to make Bible passages come alive in 20<sup>th</sup>-century language. In 25 years as speaker, 1300 broadcasts, he never repeated a message. In addition Ward estimated that he logged more than a million miles, flying to speak at churches that sponsored the service or special events. He carried a portable typewriter and often typed his sermons on motel stationery. Everywhere he went he believed in keeping the message simple—“plain vanilla.” People from every walk of life were touched as Ward prayed for the elderly, taxi drivers, teenagers, airport and railroad porters, people in prison, telephone operators, and housewives.

He “developed *Revivaltime*’s workable format, complete with his trademark cues to listeners to join him at ‘the long,

Lee Shultz became the announcer on *Revivaltime* in 1964. He also was secretary of the Radio Department (1964-74) and director of the Division of Communications (1975-92).



Left, *Revivaltime* choir, 1968.

long altar ... in these next 10 seconds...' as his call to salvation went out over the air."<sup>19</sup> On the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Revivaltime*, Ward thanked God that "he was leaving the audience larger than he'd found it, debt free, and without scandal. All who were tuned in remember his final words: 'Let people say about me that "he loved Jesus" ... I ask no greater tribute. And now for the last time, "It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," saith the Lord."<sup>20</sup>

Even as he ended one chapter he said he wanted to leave the listening audience "in the present and not the past. Always the important date is today. Yesterday is beyond my reach. It is gone forever. Tomorrow may never come.... Today is where God places the emphasis of life, and where we should put it."<sup>21</sup> He went on to introduce his successor, Dan Betzer, who would fill the *Revivaltime* pulpit for the next 15 years.

Betzer, who had been active in radio from his youth, left his pastorate in Ohio to become director of the radio department and then speaker. He used well-known gospel artists on the broadcast in an effort to create a new sound. His voice became the recognizable signature of the service, but he carried on Ward's legacy, saying, "I do not come to this radio microphone to preach anything other than Christ and Him crucified. Jesus can lift you from the pit; no one else can."<sup>22</sup>

The course of *Revivaltime* was set by its first speaker, Wesley Steelberg, when he expressed the intent that the service "would be brimful of the spirit and power of Pentecost ... a soul-saving agency potent with conviction, as well as a vehicle of Christian cheer and gladness."<sup>23</sup> The time of revival brought to many communities by the broadcast took the teamwork of many dedicated people with the enablement of the Spirit.

And that's the *big* picture from the long, long altar.



Barbara Liddle Cavaness sang in the *Revivaltime* choir from 1968-70 and worked as an assistant to Ed Caldwell in the public relations area of *Revivaltime* from 1972-74. She has been a missionary in the Asia Pacific region since 1975 and is currently a visiting professor at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Cassettes and CD copies are available from the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center General Council exhibit and web site.
- <sup>2</sup> Lee Shultz, interview, May 14, 2003. Shultz narrated *Revivaltime* for 25 years, while serving as secretary of the Radio Department (1964-74) and director of the Division of Communications (1975-92).
- <sup>3</sup> For more historical details see *Assemblies of God Heritage*, Fall 1983, 7-8 and Winter 1983-84, 6-8.
- <sup>4</sup> The author, Barbara Liddle Cavaness, served 1972-74 as assistant to Ed Caldwell, editor and director of public relations for *Revivaltime*. While a student she sang in the choir from 1968-70. She has been a missionary in the Asia Pacific region since 1975.
- <sup>5</sup> Jack Risner, interview, May 8, 2003. The Risners left Springfield to pastor First Assembly in Saginaw, Michigan, in 1973 and then in 1976 went to Sacramento, California, as pastors of Antelope Christian Center until 1990. They served the following ten years as missionaries in Africa. Colonel Robbie Risner was released and returned home in 1973 (now General Robinson Risner, Ret.).
- <sup>6</sup> "Revivaltime in the Gulf of Tonkin," *Pentecostal Evangel*, June 25, 1972, 10-11.
- <sup>7</sup> E. S. Caldwell, "Revivaltime Cassettes," *Pentecostal Evangel*, September 24, 1972, 22-23.
- <sup>8</sup> "The Good News in a Plastic Box," *Pentecostal Evangel*, August 5, 1973, 10-11.
- <sup>9</sup> See "Tailored for Export," *Advance*, April 1972, p. 7, for the story of how the Assemblies of God got started in the U.S. Virgin Islands through *Revivaltime*.
- <sup>10</sup> "The 'Last Word' in Counseling," *Advance*, March 1967, 16.
- <sup>11</sup> Barbara Liddle, "No More Machine," *Pentecostal Evangel*, October 7, 1973, 8-10.
- <sup>12</sup> "...These Young Evangelists," *Advance*, September 1969, 29.
- <sup>13</sup> Cyril McLellan's latest release is "Praise Him with Strings and Winds," on CD or cassette.
- <sup>14</sup> George Cope sang in the choir from 1970-74. He is currently president of Zion Bible Institute, Barrington, Rhode Island, one of 19 endorsed Assemblies of God educational institutions.
- <sup>15</sup> Dick and Cynthia Nicholson have been missionaries since 1978. He now serves as Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean with Assemblies of God World Missions.
- <sup>16</sup> Thallander worked for 18 years in the music department of the Crystal Cathedral. Part of his assignment was scripting the music for the *Hour of Power* telecast. His work with *Revivaltime* helped him secure that position. He has also taught at Vanguard University in Southern California.
- <sup>17</sup> C. M. Ward, "The Imaginative Dimension," *Advance*, December 1970, 26.
- <sup>18</sup> Lee Shultz, interview, May 14, 2003.
- <sup>19</sup> Steve Grant, "C. M. Ward: Voice of the Assemblies of God for 25 Years," *Assemblies of God Heritage*, Summer-Fall, 1996, 31-34.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.
- <sup>21</sup> "Ending 25 Years of Radio Ministry," *Pentecostal Evangel*, December 31, 1978, 20-21.
- <sup>22</sup> Dan Betzer, "Revivaltime: A 40-Year Legacy," *Pentecostal Evangel*, December 26, 1993, 22-23.
- <sup>23</sup> "History Highlights of the Assemblies of God Radio-TV Department," Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

# My Seventeen Years As *Revivaltime* Speaker



## Following in the Footsteps of C. M. Ward

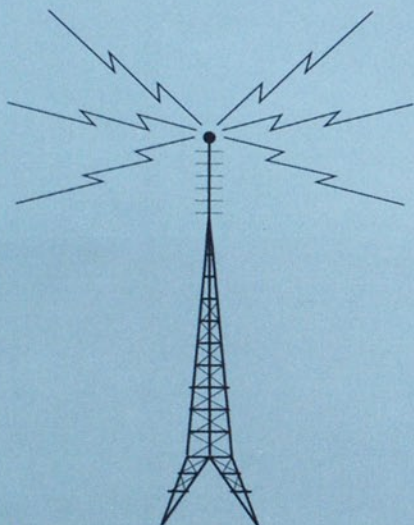
By Dan Betzer

My father and mother, brother, and I were on the front row of an historic occasion in 1953. The auditorium at Bowie Hall on the (then) CBI campus in Springfield, Missouri, was packed, and you could cut the excitement and tension with the proverbial knife. This was the ABC Radio Network premiere of *Revivaltime*—the new media venture of the Assemblies of God.

The choir was in place, the director gave the time cues, the theme “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” burst

forth, and it was “*Revivaltime*, across the nation and around the world.” But what everyone was waiting for was the message from the Word by the new Radio Evangelist C. M. Ward. Oh—it all just took your breath away. In my wildest imagination it never entered my thinking that one day I would have the privilege of following Brother Ward at the *Revivaltime* microphone. My goodness, I was still a high school kid!

In 1977 I was pastoring a home missions church in Sandusky, Ohio.





All was going very well. In fact, the greatest miracle of resource I have ever seen took place there. With absolutely no money—none—our church had purchased the gleaming downtown Western Security Bank Building for our church. The facility was on the tax duplicate for \$6.5 million and we bought it for \$80,000! How good God is! The church was averaging about 300 on Sunday mornings.

One afternoon, I received a phone call from Lee Shultz, director of communications for the Assemblies of God and narrator on *Revivaltime*. I was invited to meet with him and General Superintendent Thomas F. Zimmerman about coming to headquarters to serve as secretary of the Radio and Television Department. My family had always loved Brother Ward (my dad thought he could walk on water) and the great preacher had even come to dedicate one of our home missions projects. By that time, I had many years of commercial broadcasting background and was thrilled to be considered for the post. My wife and I prayed about it and felt it was God's direction, and we accepted the offer, even though it meant a huge decrease in pay—over 50%.

In November of 1977 we moved our family to Springfield. I was delighted about the move for a lot of reasons, one of them the fact that as a high school and college student I had lived with my family in the north end of Springfield, just three blocks south of Central Bible Institute (now College). It was like going home for both Darlene and me. In fact, her father, the late C. T. Beem, had been the business manager and director for the broadcast for 23 years.

In January, 1978, I went to Washington, D.C. for the National Religious Broadcasters convention. General Superintendent Zimmerman, who was so instrumental in the very formation of NRB, was there and called me to his room. "Dan," he said, "the Assemblies of God pastors and churches of Springfield are putting

together a city-wide campaign in March. They need help. You used to travel with Methodist Evangelist Ford Philpot, setting up his great crusades in stadiums and arenas. You are now in charge of this effort (which was called "Together-78"). Wow! Two months to oversee that fabulous evangelism endeavor (while trying to learn a new job yet!). God enabled us, and thousands of people attended every night with many saved.

Then came the bombshell! C. M. Ward announced his retirement at the end of 1978 after 25 years of ministry. In all my radio and TV background, I

**I told my wife I had no idea who would follow C. M. Ward, "But whoever he is, he's out of his mind!"**

always considered Brother Ward and Paul Harvey as the two greatest radio communicators of all time. The big question in the Assemblies (and in Christian media circles in general) was, "Who will follow C. M. Ward?"

The plan for succession was set by the Executive Presbytery of the Assemblies of God: Each district superintendent would submit one nominee. I would be given the names and contact each one, requesting an audition tape. The executives of the fellowship would be given the tapes, listen to them, pray about the need, and then name Brother Ward's successor.

I remember leaving for my office at headquarters on the day in which the decision was to be made on the "third floor." My wife Darlene asked me, just as I was leaving the house, "Dan, who do you think the executives will choose?" I answered her, "I have absolutely no idea; but whoever he is, he's out of his mind!"

At four o'clock that afternoon, Lee Shultz called me to his office. He said, "Dan, the executives have already made up their mind. You won't need to contact anyone or get any audition tapes from them." I was surprised. I asked, "So who's the new speaker?"

My heart almost stopped when Lee responded, "You are!" He told me to go home, write the broadcast from theme to theme, including a sermon, include music from the tape library, and be in the studio at sunup to record it and submit my audition tape to the General Superintendent by nine o'clock.

Well, after years of radio and TV newscasting, that wasn't really a huge assignment—except for the fact my heart was in my mouth. By nine the next morning, Brother Zimmerman had my tape, and I was told I would meet with the executives at the upcoming Church Growth Convention in Kansas City. There I was confirmed as the new speaker (and told I could not tell anyone but my wife for 30 days) and the Superintendent called for a news conference in the headquarters auditorium (August 1978) to make the announcement.

I still have the recording of his words. This is the way Brother Zimmerman informed the media of the transition:

"We are here to share with you an announcement regarding our new radio speaker. For the past 25 years, Dr. C. M. Ward has filled the position as evangelist on our broadcast *Revivaltime*. He has served this position with distinction and has become a legend in his lifetime. His last broadcast will be heard on the final Sunday of this year. Anyone called to fill his shoes will be at a distinct disadvantage. However, our Executive Board has prayerfully evaluated the future of our Assemblies of God radio ministry. Radio is enjoying a renaissance. With this in mind we have sought to find someone who could carry on a ministry in our movement who could relate to the opportunities of today and have an effective communicating ministry to people of all ages. In the providence of God we have made a decision. After months of consideration, we feel we have arrived at a decision that is pleasing to God. On August 14<sup>th</sup>, I am happy to tell you, we reached the unanimous

decision to invite Dan Betzer to be the *Revivaltime* speaker.....”

And so it was that on the first Sunday of 1979, flanked by the choir, Lee Shultz, and our director Don Upton, I stood before the microphone that connected me to millions of listeners around the world to preach a message called “Your Worth to God.”

Many have asked me how nervous I was for that broadcast. In actuality, I was not nervous at all. God had led me to that moment from my birth. By the time I was three years old, I was broadcasting on radio stations WNAX and KTRI in Sioux City, Iowa, my hometown. By the time I was in high school, I was host of a number of shows plus anchoring the news on television. In college I furthered my career with journalism, English and sociology courses—and a lot of history, which I love! As a teenager I had been given the thrill of a lifetime, that of interviewing President Harry S. Truman “one on one.” I had interviewed many dignitaries. I had appeared with Red Foley on ABC Television’s “Ozark Jubilee.” I had made records and sung all over the United States.

In school, I had been a member of the debating team, along with my partner Kent Valendra (Bob Barker’s brother—of *The Price Is Right*), taking on the best of ‘em. So, no, I didn’t feel a sense of nervousness that first night on *Revivaltime*. But let me tell you what I DID feel.

I felt a sense of responsibility and urgency which has never left me to this day. Today, nearly a quarter of a century later, I still have the burden and heart for *Revivaltime*. Imagine this: in the 17 years I ministered on the broadcast, I received 1.25 MILLION letters from around the world. God had given me an open door to preach His glorious gospel to millions of people. I remember so well one letter from a prisoner on death row: “Dan, I heard your message today on *Revivaltime*. You told me God loved me. I believed you and accepted Christ into my life. I am

scheduled to be executed Thursday night.....”

I wrote most of the *Revivaltime* messages in the wee hours of the mornings. So many times the Lord awakened me with a thought and I would rush to my typewriter (later, a computer) to get the message on paper. I felt such an anointing as I would write—picturing the person on the other side of the radio who would be hearing God’s Word through me. Oh, what exhilaration as I would pray and write! I only wrote for one person—and then spoke to one person over the mike. Radio is such an extremely “personal” medium. And yet millions heard the broadcast week after week.

Our son David is a missionary in Africa. During the last year I was on the broadcast, David ministered in Swaziland. While there, he went into a store to buy something for his children. He handed the clerk his credit card.

***Revivaltime* was one of the greatest treasures of my life—to have been entrusted with that blessed global ministry. I will ever be grateful.**

The clerk looked at it and asked, “Your name is Betzer? Do you know Dan Betzer?” David was stunned and stammered, “Uh, how do you know him? He’s my father!” The clerk responded, “I listen to him every day on *Revivaltime*! The broadcast was released every day on the government radio station.

That same year, I was preaching across Poland. One day I was talking with a friend in a hotel lobby. A gentleman walked over to me and said, “Excuse me...your voice is familiar. Are you Dan Betzer?” I told him I was and he grinned and said, “I hear you each week.”

During that last several years, we started a subsidiary broadcast called *Byline*. It was only a two-minute take

on the news of the day. Now we are heard on several hundred radio stations every day, Monday through Friday. Then a couple of years ago, we expanded *Byline* to television—a totally different program of just one minute. Now it’s released over 1900 times a day, Monday through Friday, literally around the world. Thousands of others subscribe to *Byline* free on the web.

Hundreds of people have e-mailed me, called or written to ask, “Dan, why did you leave *Revivaltime*?” I didn’t. The denomination decided to go another direction with media and made the change. The last *Revivaltime* broadcast was heard on August 27, 1995, 42 years after it began.

In all those 42 years, neither C. M. Ward nor I ever repeated a program. We produced a fresh broadcast every week. The late Grant Gustafson, head of NRB at the time, called me when we went off the air to say, “Dan, do you know that *Revivaltime* is still the fourth-rated Christian half-hour broadcast in the world?” Well, I didn’t know it. I only know it was one of the greatest treasures of my life to have been entrusted with that blessed global ministry. I will ever be grateful.

*Revivaltime* opened many doors of ministry to me around the world. Today I pastor First Assembly of God in gorgeous Ft. Myers, Florida. This precious congregation with its nearly 10,000 members and adherents is one of the strongest missions churches in our fellowship. We continue to spread the gospel everywhere. It’s a mandate from the Lord. And I will obey it as long as breath remains in my body. God is in the redemption business. So was *Revivaltime*.



**Dan Betzer is pastor of First Assembly of God in Ft. Myers, Florida. He hosts the *Byline* radio and TV programs.**

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# Alvin Branch

## A Baptist Turned Pentecostal

By Glenn Gohr

Alvin Lewis Branch was one of the better educated early leaders of the Assemblies of God, having 4 years of university training. He was originally ordained with the Baptist Church in April 1903. Later he received credentials with the Central District of the Assemblies of God on December 13, 1915.<sup>1</sup> At that time he was a pastor living in Three Rivers, Michigan.

He was born to Hilar K. and Josephine (Baragar) Branch in Oceana County, Michigan, on September 23, 1876. In an early newspaper account, Branch says he was born in the "wilds" of Michigan. His father bought a quarter section of land in the virgin forests of western Michigan, and after clearing the land to make room for a small house and garden, he married a young school teacher who was teaching in a nearby district. The house had no doors, but they hung blankets to serve the place of doors.<sup>2</sup>

The family's first means of transportation was a wagon and yoke of oxen. As a boy, he remembered riding on the wagon with a load of hay or other goods.



Alvin Branch

Alvin Branch graduated from the Medina high school in 1895 and for a year taught school. Then he went to Olivet College in Michigan for preparatory work before entering the master of arts course in McMaster University, Toronto.<sup>3</sup>

Branch wrote, "I was almost entirely dependent on my own earnings for the expense of my education and every summer I traveled and canvassed for books and other things that I could read."

While a student at McMaster University, he met his wife, Robena. After they were married, they returned to the old family farm in Michigan, and there he received a call to pastor a Baptist church. The salary was \$6 a week. The Baptist Church in Three Rivers, Michigan, became his third pastorate.

Alvin's younger sister, Lena, married Arthur Crane and moved to Tacoma, Washington. While his mother was visiting the Cranes in Tacoma, she received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Upon hearing her testimony, Alvin felt a witness in his spirit that he also needed this experience. "If it's good enough for Mother, it's good enough for me."<sup>4</sup>

A glowing testimony of his Pentecostal baptism appeared in the *Latter Rain Evangel* in 1910. Becoming convinced that God had not withdrawn any of the gifts offered in the New Testament, he believed that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was still a modern-day promise. He reported that "God opened up the way for me to go to Chicago, and while there the blessed Comforter came into this temple, which seemed to me more like a hut, unworthy of such a Heavenly Guest..." He received tongues as the evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and felt a sweet consciousness of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

It was clear to him that the Pentecostal experience was not "ecstatic" or "rhapsodical emotionalism." He said, "It deepens the passion to win men to Jesus Christ, and brightens the hope of His coming."

This was a new experience, and Robena, his Canadian wife, became indignant and wouldn't speak to him for a week. Finally the radiance in Alvin's face showed he had something she needed. Humbling herself, she yielded to the Lord totally and received a double portion, which made her a wonderful helpmeet for Alvin.<sup>6</sup>

While still pastoring a Baptist congregation in Colon, Michigan, he said, "Many of the dear brethren feared that I had gone into fanaticism, but when after a long time they did not discover irrational traits or outbursts, some are convinced that it is of God, and are hungering to know more of God in their lives."<sup>7</sup>

Branch testified, "The most blessed thing in this world is to live in the center of the will of God. It is the vestibule of heaven."<sup>8</sup>

With that thought in mind, he shared in his testimony the words of a hymn called "Looking Unto Jesus" which he said had come to him through tongues and interpretation. The chorus went like this:



**Board of directors, faculty and first class of Peniel Bible Institute, Dayton, Ohio, 1929. Front, l-r: O. E. McCleary (principal), Gayle F. Lewis (Ohio district superintendent), Harold McKinney, A. B. Cox, Flem Van Meter, Alvin Branch. 2nd row: Robert Miller, Roberta Miller, Dora L. Cox, next 5 unidentified, Ada Barr, Lillian Winder, Ella Van Skoyk. 3rd row: Unidentified, Alice Shallenbarger, next 3 unidentified, Wilimena Rizer, Mrs. Johnson, Pauline Kline, rest unidentified. 4th row: Alex Rudenko, Gordon Johnstone, John Horn, unidentified, Kermit Snyder, Mr. Johnson, Guy Hickock, and Glenn Horst.**

“Oh, I’m looking up to Jesus and would Jesus only see,  
And I’m trusting in His merit because He died for me.”

He worked with the Baptists for 12 years before deciding to start an independent work at Three Rivers, Michigan. It was not much of a start—his own family consisting of his wife, three children, and himself—meeting around the table to study the Sunday school lesson. For the next year and a half, he held meetings in his home, and others from the community began attending. He next rented a hall and then bought the old Opera House to hold meetings. By 1915 he joined the Assemblies of God and brought his church into affiliation. This became the first Pentecostal church in Three Rivers.

A few years later, in 1922, a group of believers in Battle Creek, about 50 miles away, asked Alvin Branch to tell them about the Pentecostal experience. For four years he and Robena, his wife, switched pulpits every Sunday—one in Three Rivers and the other in Battle Creek. The congregation in Battle Creek was meeting in a second-floor hall. This former store included a chapel in front and a small room in back furnished with a cot, commode, and hot plate. After spending all day Sunday and staying the night, on Monday morning whichever one had ministered there would return home to the family. Alvin’s stable Bible teaching and Robena’s fired-up evangelistic messages, plus her ability to pray people through to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, made them a fine team. Both congregations grew rapidly.

Under Branch’s leadership, the congregation at Battle Creek soon was able to make a down payment on a building on North Kendall Street which would seat 125. Within a couple years the church moved to larger facilities on Division Street and had use of the G.A.R. Hall. Then on Christmas Day 1927, the congregation moved into a large stately mansion they purchased at 303 Capital Ave., N.E., which became one of the most attractive church properties in the city.<sup>9</sup>

The building appraised at \$100,000 was made available for \$27,000. The auditorium seated several hundred, with many classrooms and a spacious upper room where many continued to receive the Pentecostal outpouring. The four white pillars in the front of the building suggested the four-fold gospel of salvation, healing, Holy Spirit baptism, and the Second Coming. The church at that time was known as the Church of the Four-fold Gospel. Since 1968, the church now located on 24<sup>th</sup> Street is known as First Assembly of God.

Donald Gee, the famed British evangelist, stayed in the Branch home when ministering in the church. Daughter Helen (Branch) Johnson claimed, “When [Donald Gee] laughed the whole room brightened.” His teaching ministries on the gifts of the Spirit and divine healing brought in

Alvin and Robena Branch



many new families to the congregation.

Another dynamic minister, P. C. Nelson, held meetings at the Masonic Temple Auditorium in 1925. He also held a tent meeting one summer near the church with some outstanding healings. Finis Dake, a great Bible teacher, accompanied him.<sup>10</sup>

June Knell, a member of Branch's congregation, said, "I was about nine years old when I came into the church in 1926. The man who later became my husband [James Knell] came into this church when he was seven years old. The days that he [Alvin Branch] ministered here were truly marked by the moving of the Holy Spirit and gave us a foundation for our faith in God and the Holy Spirit. Many have gone from this assembly into ministry all over the world."<sup>11</sup>

A revival report from January of 1926 reports, "God gave us a sprinkle of the 'latter rain' by baptizing one of our young men in the Holy Spirit. This intensified the hunger that had been in the hearts of many of our people, and for five weeks we continued the tarrying meetings just among ourselves and thirty-nine received the Baptism."<sup>12</sup>

In the same revival a woman received the baptism in the Spirit and a Bulgarian lady ran over by her and said, "Oh, she is speaking in my language!" A few nights later the Bulgarian sister was anointed by the elders for healing and also was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Missionary Virginia Hamlin reports that her brother Harry was born in 1928. Within a few weeks he took ill and began to lose weight. "One night he was turning blue and

dying. But people were praying earnestly for him. Pastor Branch rebuked death in the name of Jesus." She testifies that God healed Harry and he started gaining strength. A picture of him at one year old shows him fat and chubby.<sup>13</sup> Once it is reported that at a water baptismal service near the Verona Bridge in Battle Creek, tongues of fire appeared over the heads of Alvin Branch and a baptismal candidate.

In the fall of 1928, when Peniel Bible Institute opened for classes in Dayton, Ohio, Alvin Branch was on the board of directors and served as secretary while still pastoring in Battle Creek. When the Branches left their pastorate after 8 years at the Church of the Four-fold Gospel, one of the members, Alice Miller, wrote a loving tribute, which reads in part:

*You've been to us Father and Mother,  
Stood by us through thick and through thin,  
And when we have had trials and testings  
You've helped us find courage again.*

Next Branch felt called to become the superintendent of The Preston Home at Jamestown, New York. In December 1929, he wrote a letter to General Secretary J. R. Evans: "At the meeting of the Board of Managers of the Preston Home the brethren asked me to become the Superintendent and I felt the call of God to accept. In view of the fact that this is an institution that belongs to the General Council I feel that I should renew my fellowship



**Church of the Four-fold Gospel, Battle Creek Michigan.**



papers with the Council and shall appreciate if you will send me the same.”<sup>14</sup>

J. R. Evans responded: “I note what you say regarding your appointment as superintendent of the home in New York state, and while I have not had any official information regarding this, I take this opportunity of expressing to you my pleasure, and trust the Lord will make you a real blessing as you take up the duties there.”<sup>15</sup>

However, this position did not materialize as well as planned. General Superintendent Ernest Williams penned a letter to Alvin Branch regarding the home, which was an orphanage owned by a Mrs. Preston. She wanted to turn the work over to the Assemblies of God, but the State of New York had strict regulations. After assessing the situation Ernest Williams suggested that Mrs. Preston might figure out some other plan to continue using the property as an orphanage or else sell the property and turn the money over to the General Council with the idea of starting an orphanage somewhere else that did not have such rigid laws. He wrote, “I cannot see any possibility of our taking on a General Council orphanage in the state of New York with its binding restrictions. I trust God will lead you clearly in this matter, and bless all you brethren.”<sup>16</sup>

During the 1930s Branch pastored churches in Gary, Indiana; and Akron and Orwell, Ohio. In a newspaper article from the early '30s, he declared, “We have spent 17 happy months with Bethel Assembly of God in Akron. The Sunday school membership has more than trebled, and the

church membership more than doubled.”<sup>17</sup>

Branch was a strong supporter of Sunday schools. At the 1937 General Council held at Memphis, Tennessee, he served on the committee on Sunday schools and also gave a message on “The Sunday School as a Field for Evangelism.” His sermon appeared on the front page of the *Pentecostal Evangel* for January 22, 1938.<sup>18</sup> One of his nieces, Irene Crane of Gig Harbor, Washington, has fond memories of this event. “It was my first General Council. My uncle preached a message on evangelism in the Sunday school, and I actually heard him give it. It was very special for us because my sister Rachel Peterson, her husband Einar, and I all attended that Council. They came up from Texas, and I traveled from Battle Creek, Michigan with my pastor and wife.”<sup>19</sup>

Later Branch visited a number of churches in the South in the interest of Sunday school work. He gave a vibrant report from a Spanish-speaking church, El Templo Cristiano, in San Antonio, Texas. “Never have we seen people respond more heartily. They settled like trained horses into the harness and pulled the Sunday school attendance from 292 to 434 in one week. They then organized their workers for a continuous extension program.... We ministered the Word to them many times during our visit there, and they responded eagerly and began at once to put the truths into practice among themselves.”<sup>20</sup>

Alvin Branch extended his ministry to other areas and became a favorite camp meeting speaker in the Potomac



A group of leaders of the old Central District, about 1929. L-r: Gayle F. Lewis, O. E. McCleary, A. B. Cox, C. A. McKinney, Flem Van Meter, and Alvin Branch.

District, Northern and Southern California, and other summer camps. He is remembered for his Bible studies, especially hidden truths from the epistles and Hebrews. Some also noted the familiar quotations which he often repeated in his sermons. And he was a proficient writer, contributing articles to the *Latter Rain Evangel* and the *Pentecostal Evangel*. Topics included evangelism, Sunday school growth, holiness, heaven, Christian service, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The Branches encouraged young people to be sensitive to the calling of God on their lives and attend Bible school if at all possible. Their daughter Helen Johnson and husband Leland served many years as Assemblies of God missionaries in China and the Philippines. Niece Rachel Crane Peterson and husband Einar spent 42 years as missionaries in Cuba and the Dominican Republic. Rachel's sister, Irene Crane, was a longtime missionary to Nigeria. Another niece spent many years in India and Nepal under another mission.

By 1939 Branch accepted a position as dean of men at Southern California Bible College at Pasadena, California (now Vanguard University). After serving three years as dean, he filled the role of Bible teacher at the school from 1942-1946.

Alvin Branch was married twice and had three children with his first wife, Robena. They were married April 23, 1902.<sup>21</sup> Robena (Hill) Branch was born March 14, 1879 at Guelph, Ontario. She was ordained on May 16, 1930 with the Central District Council.<sup>22</sup> She assisted her husband in pastoring churches in Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio, as well as serving for a short time as matron of the Preston Home in Jamestown, New York. She also did evangelistic work, taught Sunday school, and coordinated Women's Missionary Council work in local congregations. She was a minister in California before she passed away suddenly in her sleep on September 4, 1940 at Pasadena, California.

That was a sad day for Alvin Branch. He wrote a note to General Secretary J. Roswell Flower: "She went to be with her Lord sometime during last night. She seemed as well as usual yesterday and did considerable work. I awakened early and as she seemed to be sleeping so quietly I slipped quietly out and after a precious prayer time went to breakfast. When I returned it was light and I could see that she had evidently not wakened until she awoke in glory."

Branch remarked that "She was always very active in the work of the Lord; too active for her own physical good, as it was the strain of church work that weakened her heart. She had occasional palpitations of the heart and often said she believed she would go that way and really desired to go that way as she was sweetly conscious of being not only ready but eager to meet her lover Lord."

In closing, he said, "Pray for our precious children to whom their mother was a strong factor in the development of their Christian characters, and for me as I push on alone till Jesus comes."<sup>23</sup>

The Branches had three children. Margaret married Gordon Ells and lived in Ohio. Robert Branch was an engineer and lived in Illinois. Daughter Helen married Leland Johnson and served as a missionary in China and the Philippines. The Johnsons and two of their children, Constance and Samuel, were held by the Japanese as prisoners during World War II.

Alvin L. Branch lived for another twelve years and married secondly to Alice (Brimley) Birchall, whose husband Peter lost his life when the ocean liner *Athenia* was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat in 1939 on their return from England. This boat was torpedoed on the same day that England declared war on Germany.<sup>24</sup>

Alice and her first husband had attended Bible school soon after their marriage and were engaged in Christian work together for many years. Peter Birchall was ordained with the Assemblies of God in September 1914 and was active as an evangelist and singer. He developed the Berean Book Rooms, a Christian outreach in Los Angeles.

Alvin and Alice Branch enjoyed more than a decade of happy years together. Suddenly one Sunday morning, while dressing for church, Alvin passed away at the age of 75 on February 8, 1952, at Los Angeles. Southern California District Superintendent Floyd C. Woodworth conducted the funeral service. He is buried at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, California—the same cemetery where a number of Hollywood stars are buried as well as two noted evangelists, Aimee Semple McPherson and Kathryn Kuhlman. His wife, Alice, passed away a little over a year later on November 3, 1953.<sup>25</sup>

Although it has now been more than 50 years since his passing, fragments of Alvin Branch's Bible teaching secrets remain in the hearts of those to whom he ministered. Paul's epistles and the book of Hebrews came alive as he taught their deeper and practical meanings for victorious Christian living. His life and testimony will live on in the lives he touched and in the children and grandchildren of his converts and parishioners.



**Glenn Gohr is assistant archivist and copy editor for the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.**

## Notes

1. Alvin L. Branch, application for ordination.
2. "Church Work at \$6 Per Week Calls Pastor of Bethel Assembly to Pulpit as Minister," [undated article Akron, Ohio, newspaper, ca. 1933].
3. Ibid.
4. Irene Crane, telephone interview, June 12, 2003.
5. Alvin L. Branch, "A Pentecostal Baptism: Testimony of a Baptist Minister," *Latter Rain Evangel*, August 1910, 22. It is possible that Alvin Branch went to William Durham's Holiness mission on North Avenue in Chicago, the same place where E. N. Bell, A. H. Argue, and others received the Pentecostal baptism.
6. Rachel Crane Peterson, "Alvin Lewis Branch," unpublished manuscript, 1993.
7. Alvin L. Branch, "A Pentecostal Baptism: Testimony of a Baptist Minister," *Latter Rain Evangel*, August 1910, 23.
8. Ibid.
9. See the *Pentecostal Evangel*, June 7, 1953, for a photo and history of the Church of the Four-fold Gospel, Battle Creek, Michigan, on its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
10. Rachel Crane Peterson, "Alvin Lewis Branch," unpublished manuscript, 1993.
11. June Knell, letter to Wayne Warner, May 20, 1993.
12. Alvin Branch, "A Holy Ghost Revival," *Latter Rain Evangel*, March 1926, 13.
13. First Assembly of God, Battle Creek, Michigan, 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet, 1998.
14. *Peniel Advocate*, August 1929, 5.
15. Alvin L. Branch, letter to J. R. Evans, December 14, 1929.
16. J. R. Evans, letter to Alvin L. Branch, December 23, 1929.
17. Ernest Williams, letter to Alvin L. Branch, January 17, 1930.
18. "Church Work at \$6 Per Week Calls Pastor of Bethel Assembly to Pulpit as Minister."
19. *General Council Minutes*, 1937, 56; Alvin L. Branch, "Evangelism in the Sunday School," *Pentecostal Evangel*, January 22, 1938, 1, 15-16.
20. Irene Crane, telephone interview, June 12, 2003.
21. Alvin L. Branch, "A Mexican Pentecostal Church," *Latter Rain Evangel*, April 1938, 22.
22. Alvin L. Branch, letter to J. Roswell Flower, September 5, 1940.
23. Robena Branch, application for ordination.
24. Alvin L. Branch, letter to J. Roswell Flower, September 5, 1940.
25. A testimony called "In Perils in the Sea" about Alice Birchall's survival of the sinking of the *Athenia* is reported in the *C.A. Herald*, January 1940. See also "On Torpedoed Ship," *Pentecostal Evangel*, October 7, 1939, 16.
26. California Death Index online.

# Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center Museum

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*Come Explore  
Assemblies of God  
History*



**In spite of the long-held tension in the Pentecostal movement between pro-education and anti-education constituents, non-traditional education actually existed in the Pentecostal movement prior to the forming of the Assemblies of God.**

# **A History of Assemblies of God Non-Traditional**

**By James E. Book**

Non-traditional education in the Assemblies of God reveals a long and varied history. Contrary to the impressions of some, the establishment of Berean Bible Institute and International Correspondence Institute (ICI) were not the first creative impulses in this area. Nevertheless, the contributions of Berean and ICI to this history and the recent merger of these two institutions into Global University build on some very early foundations in the movement's history. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that

1) these ministries were responding to an obvious need;

2) these ministries were concerned with sound doctrinal issues, the preservation of Pentecostal doctrine, but were not adverse to using non-Pentecostal scholars of the day in their courses; and

3) the development of various ministries contributed to apparent duplication, and various historical developments attempted to eliminate the perceived unnecessary overlap of programs.

For purposes of this article, I shall define non-traditional education broadly, encompassing all of the following: short-term Bible institutes or short-term courses, home study or "correspondence" courses, correspondence divisions of either residential Bible institutes or colleges, and stand-alone correspondence or "distance education" schools.

In spite of the long-held tension in the Pentecostal movement between pro-education and anti-education constituents, non-traditional education actually existed in the Pentecostal movement prior to the forming of the Assemblies of God.

## **Non-Traditional Education In The Early Years**

My focus will be on four specific educational ministries: the short-term Bible institutes of D. C. O. Opperman; the Gospel School of Findlay, Ohio, directed by T. K. Leonard; the home study courses of Eastern Bible Institute, developed by David M. Wellard; and the correspondence school division of Central Bible Institute. The first two ministries had their origins prior to the formation of the Assemblies. The last two ministries were essentially correspondence divisions of early residential Bible institutes.

D. C. O. Opperman's approach was to promote and conduct short-term Bible institutes, which were apparently quite common in the early years, as Glenn Gohr writes: "Before many of the permanent Bible training schools



Frank M. Boyd (left), founder of the Berean School of the Bible correspondence school, is working in his office in the 1950s. Virginia Stauffer, his secretary, is seated at right.

# Education

were established by the Assemblies of God and other Pentecostal groups, a *number of ministers* conducted *short-term Bible institutes* in various parts of the country.”<sup>1</sup>

Opperman had attended Moody Bible Institute, had a teaching background, and began conducting the short-term Bible schools in 1909. Since short-term Bible schools were common, and Opperman had met Charles Parham in 1906 when Parham was conducting a three-month short-term school, it is unlikely that the idea was original with Opperman. Parham had also directed a short-lived Bible school at Topeka, Kansas, during 1900-1901 which helped to usher in the Pentecostal movement. “Dozens of similar schools were conducted in the midwestern and southern states in the next two decades—including another that Parham opened in Houston, Texas,

in 1905.”<sup>2</sup>

Opperman’s schools ranged in length from one to three months. Subjects included New Testament truths and the Gospel of John.

These were conducted in a number of differing geographical locations, and several were conducted between 1909 and 1920. One of the students in the 1909 Hattiesburg, Mississippi, school was Ralph Riggs, a later general superintendent. Opperman was a key leader in the formation of the Assemblies of God, and he conducted a short-term three-month session in Hot Springs, Arkansas, immediately prior to the 1914 organizational meeting. He believed in balance between education and practical training.

At least two short-term Bible schools were conducted after the formation of the Assemblies and prior to Opperman’s conversion to Oneness

Pentecostalism. These would be the Ottumwa, Iowa, location from October 7 to December, 1914 and the Eureka Springs, Arkansas, location from April to May, 1915. A second school in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, began on September 7, and it was during this session that Opperman was “rebaptized in Jesus’ Name” on September 12, 1915.

He attempted to keep the matter from becoming an issue in the school and felt that he succeeded in this matter. However, he left the Assemblies of God denomination in 1916 when the theological issue came to a head in the General Council. Opperman helped organize a Oneness group of which he became chairman. He continued to conduct short-term Bible schools until 1920 when he turned his last school over to Persian evangelist Andrew Urshan, who had also been an



Students of D. C. O. Opperman's short-term Bible school which was held in Hot Springs, Arkansas, just prior to the organizational meeting of the Assemblies of God.



The Gospel School at Findlay, Ohio, directed by T. K. Leonard

Assemblies minister before withdrawing over the Oneness issue. It was not long until the Eureka Springs school closed due to financial and other difficulties.<sup>3</sup>

T. K. Leonard was associated with the Gospel School of Findlay, Ohio. The Gospel School of Findlay, Ohio had a course of "Home Bible Study" which offered students the possibility of finishing a study of the entire Bible in one year. It appeared to be a "correspondence division" of an early residential Bible institute. This particular school had been established in 1908.

"We would also call attention to the Gospel School at Findlay, Ohio, under the supervision of Brother T. K. Leonard, and advise that those in that section who are seeking Bible training to attend the same; and those who desire to take the *Home Bible Study*, through the Gospel School Review, by which they finish in one year a study of the entire Bible, should write T. K. Leonard, Findlay, Ohio."<sup>4</sup>

The above resolution was adopted at the first General Council at Hot Springs Arkansas, in April 1914.

The significance of this school is

that once again, the school had been established prior to the ecclesiastical organizational meeting. Also, the Assemblies of God national headquarters and the Gospel Publishing House were located in T. K. Leonard's Gospel School for about 6 months during the latter part of 1914.

The work of David Wellard and the correspondence school division of Eastern Bible Institute is a major contributor to the early history. The Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center recently acquired some of these courses as well as some other pertinent information. There were two levels of study in the "Full Gospel Home Study Courses," called the Beginners Bible Courses and Minister's Preparatory Courses. The Minister's Preparatory Courses were associated with both the Eastern Bible Institute and the Eastern District Council.<sup>5</sup>

The approach to both the beginner's courses and minister's preparatory study courses would in our era be considered very basic in both content and educational methodology. Both levels of courses employed simple outlines with a question and then several answers taken directly from the Scriptures. However, the content of the Minister's Preparatory Courses were more thorough and had several paragraphs of written material perhaps prepared by Wellard, Allan Swift, or others who may have assisted him. Wellard listed himself as "Author and Director" in an April 13, 1936 letter to J. Roswell Flower on Full Gospel Home Study Courses stationery.

In addition, the courses made use of theological resources available at the time, including the Westminster Confession, H. S. Miller, and R. A. Torrey. These three sources were quoted in the lesson on justification, and David Wellard copyrighted a comparative chart on Repentance, Justification, Regeneration, and Adoption.<sup>6</sup> Wellard copyrighted some of the courses during the 1920s.

David McIntosh Wellard, originally from Winnipeg, Canada, was

ordained with the Assemblies of God on March 13, 1919 and graduated from the Rochester Bible Training School in New York in April of that year. From 1925-1927 he was an evangelist and teacher at Elim Bible School at Endwell, New York. During the early 1930s he belonged to the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, but transferred his credentials back to the U.S. Assemblies of God on September 28, 1934.<sup>7</sup>

Two courses listing Wellard as author are copyrighted by him in 1926 and 1928 respectively, with both carrying the "Eastern Bible Institute" name on the title page. It appears that these were courses he developed while an instructor at Elim Bible School, and then he used them while he was a minister with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada before issuing them again through Eastern Bible Institute, using

this exclusively. The publishing house converted the correspondence course format to books. GPH felt it would be too expensive to reprint them as correspondence courses, but made a counter-suggestion to Wellard to send a more in-depth proposal concerning his offer.<sup>8</sup>

Central Bible Institute did indeed have a correspondence division in the beginning years, and the school prepared at least seven separate courses covering the subjects of New Testament, the Epistles, the Life of Christ, Fundamentals of the Faith "Plus," Old Testament, and Prophecy. Most of these courses were also copyrighted in 1926. These courses had extremely well-developed content with a few questions after the end of each lesson. For the early years, significant academic quality characterized these courses, mentioning such concepts as

when it comes to the "Life of Christ" course. It was republished in book form in 1939 as "The Life and Teachings of Christ." At the beginning of the book are instructions to students to request the exam for the revised book. If the General Council school had been discontinued as planned, who was handling these?

The significance of these particular developments, in my view, is multifaceted. First, it foreshadows the current practice of residential Bible colleges and seminaries developing correspondence school divisions. Second, it demonstrates a concern for adequate biblical and theological training for those seeking ministerial credentials who may not be able to take residential classes. Third, it evidences an openness to non-Pentecostal theological resources in the early days of the movement when the viewpoint did not

## The idea of a correspondence school for the Assemblies of God grew out of a conference between Ralph M. Riggs and Frank M. Boyd, shortly following World War II.

his original copyright date. In some of the later courses, the title page of the courses indicated a Th.D. degree behind Wellard's name. Although Wellard did attend two years of Bible school, undoubtedly this was an honorary degree.

An April 13, 1936 letter from Wellard to J. Roswell Flower makes reference to a General Council decision to discontinue the correspondence courses offered at that time through a department in Springfield. The purpose of Wellard's letter was to offer to take over these courses. Flower's response indicates that initially the courses handled through Springfield were graded by the faculty at Central Bible Institute, but that proved to be too much of a burden on these professors. The courses were then turned over to the Gospel Publishing House (GPH), but there was actually insufficient work to hire one individual to oversee

grammatical-historical interpretation, theophanies, and the nature and attributes of God, such as omniscience.<sup>9</sup>

Though no author is mentioned on the title pages of the courses, it is probable that Myer Pearlman authored these courses. A comparison of the material found in the archives with the later published book edition of at least the New Testament books of the "Through the Bible Book By Book" series by Myer Pearlman reveals that the content is indeed essentially identical. However, it should be noted that the book versions did undergo some revision. The book forms of this series, *The Gospels and Acts* and *The Epistles and Revelation* were copyright in 1935. This then harmonizes with Flower's letter to Wellard. In addition, these particular works later became part of the curriculum of Berean School of the Bible.<sup>10</sup>

However, a mystery remains

directly conflict with the Assemblies of God position. Fourth, it was created with the desire to train ministers in a Pentecostal theological position so that students would not have to attend non-Pentecostal institutions of higher learning. "There will always be a need for such work, as a Correspondence Course, and it be far better to have one that is true to our testimony than for our young people to go outside of our ranks for one."<sup>11</sup>

Fifth, it demonstrates that correspondence courses offered through both residential Bible institutes and the Gospel Publishing House were common in the formative years of the movement. "They probably represent some of the earliest efforts to provide correspondence courses offered through an Assemblies of God educational institution."<sup>12</sup>

The copyright dates of both the Eastern Bible Institute courses and

Central Bible Institute courses may or may not call into question the following assertion of Blumhofer, since it is possible that they were copyrighted in 1926, but it may have taken a few years to establish correspondence school divisions. "For those who either could not or would not attend Bible institutes, during the 1930's the schools *began* offering correspondence classes."<sup>13</sup>

Though Pentecostals sometimes eschewed anything having to do with the "world," their use of correspondence courses in the early years of the movement harmonizes with developments in non-traditional education in the secular arena. Some have noted that distance education began approximately 150 years ago as correspondence study.<sup>14</sup>

H. C. Ball and Alice Luce developed Spanish correspondence courses in the early years. "Ball and Alice Luce ... organized Bible institutes in

study resulted in the formation of "the General Council Correspondence School" in 1948 under the leadership of Frank M. Boyd, founder and president.

"The *idea* of a correspondence school for the Assemblies of God grew out of a conference between Ralph M. Riggs and Frank M. Boyd, shortly following World War II. Riggs at that time was secretary of education for the Assemblies of God; Boyd was dean of Glad Tidings Bible School in San Francisco.... Rev. Boyd founded the Correspondence School and worked closely with students *by himself* until 1950."<sup>16</sup>

This writer would suggest that though the above was a creative and crucial development in the history, the idea was most likely not original with these gentlemen, given their own histories. Ralph Riggs had a background in non-traditional education as a student in one of D. C. O. Opperman's short-

dean of extension education in the Assemblies of God Department of Education and worked closely with Berean from 1972 until 1977. Russell Wischart filled the role of dean of extension education from 1978-1985 and later served as dean of instruction for Berean. J. Robert Ashcroft served as president from 1985 through 1988 and president emeritus from 1989 to 1994. Zenas Bicket was president from 1989 until the merger between Berean and ICI occurred.

Eleven courses made up the school's curriculum by 1958. In June of the same year a research committee researched the matter regarding apparent duplication and recommended a coordinated program under the supervision of one department.<sup>18</sup>

A number of moves also characterized Berean, though all of the moves occurred within the city of Springfield. During the early 1950s Berean was located in the printing plant on

## **Berean has had a significant impact upon the training of individuals who could not attend residential Bible colleges for various reasons, but needed to train themselves for ministry while already involved in ministry.**

Texas and California; prepared Spanish correspondence courses, published a Spanish gospel hymnal; and provided the periodicals, tracts, and other literature that facilitated the communication of the message."<sup>15</sup>

### **Berean School of the Bible**

In 1948 the Berean School of the Bible (BSB) was established as "the General Council Correspondence School," though the Berean name was not adopted until 1958. The 1941 General Council appointed a committee to prepare a "Reading Course" for ministerial preparation. This committee was chaired by J. Narver Gortner. Those who could not attend Bible schools were encouraged to study at home. The result of this committee

term Bible schools. In addition, as noted earlier, there is historical evidence in the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center that correspondence courses were offered through both Assemblies of God headquarters and Central Bible Institute many years prior to the formation of Berean. Frank Boyd's academic background included the positions of dean at Nyack Training School and principal of Central Bible Institute for a brief period.

Charles W. H. Scott then conducted a lengthy survey of the Correspondence School program and as a result of this survey the name was changed to Berean School of the Bible in August 1958.<sup>17</sup> Frank Boyd retired in 1957, and C. C. Burnett became the director. Harris Jansen served as the

Boonville Avenue, and sometime in 1957 or 1958, it moved to the Assemblies of God administrative building, at that time located at 434 W. Pacific Street. In addition, Berean came under the direct supervision of the Department of Education and a full-time director or dean was appointed. At the same time, the national program was made available to districts, and many districts adopted the Berean program as their official course of study for potential ministerial candidates.<sup>19</sup> Berean was later located in the headquarters building at 1445 Boonville, and eventually secured its own facilities on Campbell Avenue in 1985.

By 1973, Berean had reached an annual course enrollment of 5,766, sig-



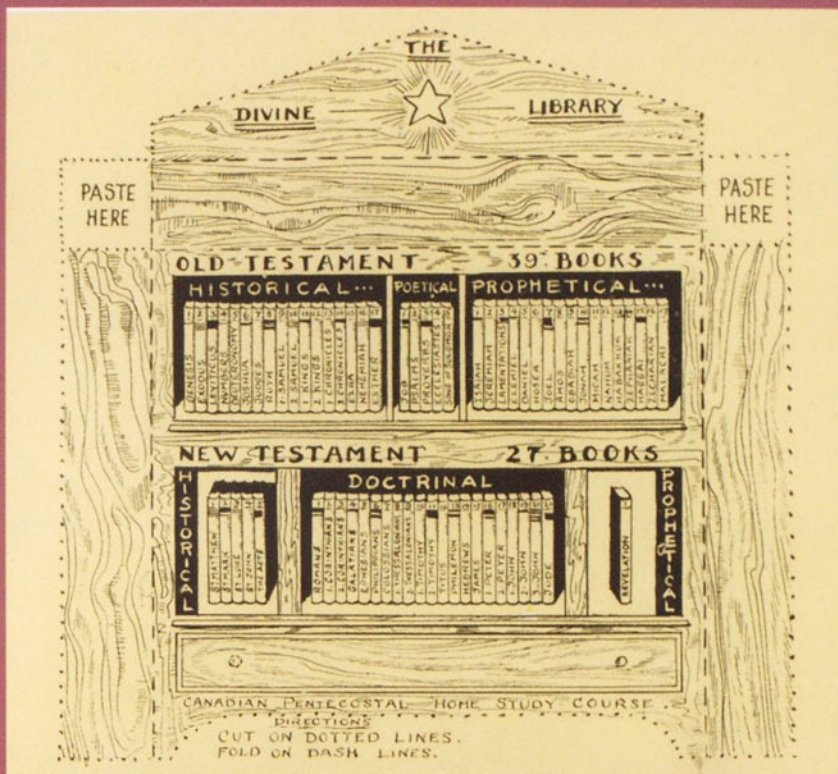
nificantly up from 1,781 in 1969.<sup>20</sup> Enrollments reached an incredible 37,000 in 1984.<sup>21</sup> Dr. Eliezer Oyola joined the Berean staff in 1986 to translate courses into Spanish.

In 1985, Berean began using a significant number of ICI courses, changed the name to Berean College, and restructured itself into three levels of study: certificate, diploma, and degree. The certificate level included the evangelism, Christian Life, and Christian Service courses of ICI. The diploma level utilized the BSB ministerial studies program for students wishing to study towards possible ministerial credentials but did not desire a college-level degree.

BSB remained a division of Berean College and continued the historical ministerial studies program, although clarity on this matter was deemed necessary for a special article in *The Berean* in the summer 1989 issue. The degree program incorporated a high number of ICI undergraduate degree level courses, though Berean also developed and offered several of its own courses at this level. In 1995, Berean added a Master of Arts program and was renamed Berean University.

The BSB program served and continues to serve a need for non-degree correspondence studies throughout the Assemblies of God fellowship. However, as BSB students began desiring further education, numerous inquiries poured into the BSB offices from students and residential institutions of higher learning concerning transfer of credit issues. Though many Assemblies of God schools would grant one college credit for “four units” of Berean study, the lack of accreditation at that time and the fact it was a non-degree correspondence study caused confusion for some of the institutions requesting information. A most interesting letter was received from the Michigan Technological University:

“This will confirm our phone conversation of July 9, 1979. Michigan



A chart on the books of the Bible which was included in one of David Wellard’s home study courses.



Onlookers at a booth for Berean School of the Bible in the 1970s.

Technological University has in the past accepted courses from the Berean School of Bible for transfer credit.... It would please us to be able to accept credits from Berean School of Bible as freely as is done from most other schools. However, this *cannot be done until the proper accreditation is received*. We urge your institution to seek such accreditation for the benefit of its students."<sup>22</sup>

Berean later received accreditation from the National Home Study Council, now the Distance Education Training Council in Washington, D.C., the same distance education accrediting agency that accredited ICI.

Berean has had a significant impact upon the training of individuals who could not attend residential Bible colleges for various reasons, but needed to train themselves for ministry while already involved in ministry. More important than the statistics are the stories behind the statistics. One such story is about an acquaintance of mine, Phil Chapin.

Phil was born to a 16-year old girl in a Los Angeles ghetto, where his mother was involved in drugs and prostitution. At age 9, he began living with his father who abused him regularly. He was thrown out on the streets at age 13. The California juvenile system sent Phil to live with his aunt in Oregon, where he developed a friendship with Lonnie Chapin, whose father, Ormel, served as the Assemblies of God district youth director at the time. Lonnie's parents reached out to Phil and brought him into their home, eventually adopting him at the age of 18.

Though Phil had dropped his drug and alcohol habits, the emotional pain from the years of abuse was difficult. At a youth convention where Phil met Evangelist Dave Roever, God prompted Roever to invite Phil to become an associate with his evangelistic association. After marrying Roever's daughter, Kim, and already involved in a heavy ministry schedule, Phil enrolled in Berean courses at his adopted father's urging in 1992. In 1994 he was

already studying the courses leading to ordination.<sup>23</sup>



**This study will conclude with the next issue and will cover the International Correspondence Institute (ICI) and a history of the merger of ICI and Berean to form Global University.**



**Jim Book is University Materials Development Editor and a faculty member at Global University.**

#### Notes

1. Glenn Gohr, "D. C. O. Opperman and Early Ministerial Training: Short-term Bible Schools," *Assemblies of God Heritage* (Winter 1990-1991): 8.

2. L. F. Wilson, "Bible Institutes, Colleges, Universities," *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 375. Parham's short-term Bible school at Houston lasted from December 1905 to March 1906. William Seymour attended this school and left for Los Angeles about the same time that Opperman arrived in Houston.

3. I am indebted to the following articles for the information on D. C. O. Opperman. Glenn Gohr, "D.C.O. Opperman and Early Ministerial Training: Short-term Bible Schools," *Assemblies of God Heritage* (Winter 1990-1991): 8-11; Glenn Gohr, "D.C.O. Opperman and Early Ministerial Training: Short-term Bible Schools: Final Part," *Assemblies of God Heritage* (Spring 1991): 5-7, 21.

4. "Religious Schools and Publications," *Christian Evangel*, November 14, 1914, 3 as quoted in Michael G. Owen, "Preparing Students for the First Harvest: Five Early Ohio Bible Schools—Forerunners of Today's Colleges," *Assemblies of God Heritage* (Winter 1989-1990): 5.

5. David M. Wellard, *Bible Doctrine Number One: Minister's Preparatory Course* (Green Lane, PA: Eastern Bible Institute, 1926), title page. Eastern Bible Institute is the fore-

runner of Valley Forge Christian College.

6. *Ibid.*, section 2, pp. 1, 9; section 3, p. 4; and Comparative Chart [no page number indicated].

7. David McIntosh Wellard, ministerial file.

8. J. Roswell Flower, letter to David M. Wellard, April 23, 1936. Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

9. CBI correspondence course files, 1926. Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

10. Dilla Dawson, personal interview, Global University, Springfield, Missouri, April 23, 2001.

11. David M. Wellard, letter to J. Roswell Flower, April 13, 1936. Full Gospel Home Study Courses Stationery. Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

12. David Drake, memo to Wayne Warner regarding Eastern Bible Institute Home Study Courses, October 27, 2000; emphasis added. Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

13. Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American*

*Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 151; emphasis added.

14. Borje Holmberg, *Growth and Structure of Distance Education* (London: Croom Helm, 1986) as cited in Kay Rockwell, Jack Furgason, and David B. Marx, "Research and Evaluation Needs for Distance Education: A Delphi Study," *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration* 3:3 (Fall 2000).

15. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, 245.

16. Berean University 50th anniversary commemorative brochure (Springfield, MO: Berean University, 1998); emphasis added.

17. Berean College catalog, Springfield, MO: n.d.

18. Frances E. Bell, "Berean College: The First Ten Years (1948-1958)," *The Berean* (Spring 1988): 1.

19. Frances E. Bell, "Berean College: The Second Decade (1958-1968)," *The Berean* (Summer 1988): 1, 3.

20. Berean School of the Bible, growth chart, March 25, 1974. Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

21. Frances Bell, "Berean College: A History of Growth," *The Berean* (March-April 1986): 1.

22. James H. Kerr, letter to Russell Lockhart (sic), Dean, Extension Education, Berean School of Bible, July 17, 1979; emphasis added.

23. "Phil Chapin: One of the Family," *The Berean* (Summer 1994): 1-4; and James E. Book, personal recollections.

# Photos From Our Past

## Luling, Texas, Reunion

If you attended the Assembly of God, Luling, Texas, during World War II, you might be in this 2002 reunion photo. Or if you were at Luling during the war and missed this reunion, you're probably disappointed. But take heart: the "Luling Church Kids" are meeting for their 6<sup>th</sup> reunion during the last weekend of September.

One of the Luling PKs between 1942-49, Mary Frances (Graham) Waltrip, provided this photo of the 99 in attendance—ranging in age from late 60s to 83. William Graham, her father, served as pastor during that period. He was later superintendent of the South Texas District.

Each Thursday lunch period during the war the Christ's Ambassadors who were not in the armed forces would gather at the Graham parsonage to fast and pray for the 20 friends who were away defending their country. All

20 of the young men returned.

"Twenty-one of the young men in the Luling church," Mrs. Waltrip wrote, "later became Assemblies of God ministers, and several women became minister's wives." Attending Southwestern Bible Institute (now Southwestern Assemblies of God University), Waxahachie, Texas, were 9 of the Luling C.A.'s from this group. Several of their children and grandchildren followed them to SAGU.

**For more information on the reunion and the group's newsletter, contact Maxine Lefevers Pawelek, 5575 Bronco Billy, San Antonio, TX 78222, phone (210) 648-0387, or Bill Graham, Jr., P.O. Box 356, Mineral Wells, TX 76068, phone (940) 325-2223.**



Charlene Pugh, 11-year-old child evangelist.

## Girl Evangelist, Charlene Pugh

My family lived in Greenwood, Arkansas, and my dad loved church and went to nearby towns to revivals of most denominations. Sometimes my sister and I would go along. On February 6, 1937, we heard that the girl evangelist, Charlene Pugh, was preaching in Hartford, a nearby town. My dad took us and two other teenagers to hear her.

I wish I could remember some of her sermon. She was 11 years old at the time. I remember that her words came easily, and she spoke under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. She told of her call into the ministry. When she was 4 years old, sitting in her yard making mud pies, she heard a voice and knew it was God speaking to her. "Will you preach my gospel?" He asked. She said she lifted her muddy hand and said, "Yes, Lord."

This photo is for your Archives.

Mrs. Howard (Irene) Dixon

Springview, Nebraska

**What happened to Charlene Pugh? According to another photo in the FPHC collection, she was living at 125 West Chevy Street, Wewoka, Oklahoma in the 1930s. Any of our readers having later information on this child evangelist are urged to write to the editor.**

## LIGHT FOR THE LOST 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention

When Sam Cochran organized a small group of men in Southern California with the idea of taking the Word to the world, he could not visualize that 50 years later they would meet to celebrate and make plans for the second 50 years. Neither could he visualize that the first-year offering of \$392 would grow to more than \$20 million annually. *Heritage* editor Wayne Warner attended the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary convention in Corpus Christi, Texas, in April and took the accompanying photos. See the Spring 2003 issue of *Heritage* for the story, "Light for the Lost: 50 Years of Vision," by Mel Surface.



Sam Cochran visiting with Paul and Eileen McGarvey, Kansas City.



Sam Cochran autographing *Give Me the Book, The Story of Sam Cochran and Light for the Lost*, by Chuck Freeman and Bob Burke. Seated with him is Arnold Newton. Standing on the right are Charles Sullivan of Las Cruces, New Mexico, and Tom Waldie of Marion, North Dakota.



Missionary Aaron Rothganger speaking about the Chinese Full Life Study Bible ("Fire Bible") at the awards banquet. A Chinese banner with a dragon can be seen in the background.



Seated, General Superintendent Thomas Trask and Sam Cochran; standing are Oklahoma LFTL Director Chuck Freeman (middle) flanked by Sam Cochran's two sons, Ron (left) and Jim (right).



General Superintendent Thomas Trask speaking at the awards banquet.



Duane and Lill Sundberg Anderson visiting with Sam Cochran.

## Time Frame

# A Truly World Pentecostal Conference

Seoul, Korea, Is Host in 1973

This report is taken from the *Pentecostal Evangel*, December 16, 1973.

Delegates from 47 countries participated in the 10th Pentecostal World Conference held in Seoul, Korea, September 18-23. With over 1,000 delegates, the U.S. led all other countries outside the Republic of Korea in attendance.

The day sessions drew capacity crowds to the Full Gospel Central Church, which seats approximately 10,000 persons; and over 3,000 made decisions for Christ in the night sessions at Hyochang Stadium.

The conference was sponsored by an advisory committee representing 16 countries. The committee chairman, T. F. Zimmerman, and its secretary, Percy S. Brewster, together with Robert W. Taitinger and Howard P. Courtney, constituted the presidium.

His Excellency Yang Taik-Shik, mayor of Seoul, gave a welcoming address at the opening rally. The main speaker of the evening was Brother Zimmerman, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God in the U.S.A.

Other night speakers during the conference were Paul Tehupuring of Indonesia, G. W. Lane of U.S.A., Samuel Odunaike of Nigeria, and Eliezar Javier of the Philippines.

Daytime speakers were G. W. Gilpin, Oliver A. Lyseight, and Percy S. Brewster of the United Kingdom, F. P. Moller of South Africa, Benjamin P. Shinde of India, Antonino Bonilla Jr. of Mexico, Elvio Canavesio of Argentina, Gerhard Wessler of Germany, and J. Floyd Williams of U.S.A.



In most cases they spoke on some aspect of the conference theme, "Anointed to Preach." All the sermons were given in English and Korean. Interpreters were present in the audience to serve other language groups.

Each evening, when the guest speaker had finished, the host pastor, Yonggi Cho, stepped to the pulpit and preached to the congregation in Korean without an interpreter. With great fervor and a heavy anointing of the Holy Spirit he exhorted the people to turn to the Lord, and they responded in large numbers. Hundreds stepped out each evening. Many wept. All joined in offering the sinner's prayer, after which the well-trained personal workers from Pastor Cho's congregation counseled with them individually.

An interesting feature at several sessions was "Windows, on the World" when delegates brought thrilling news of revivals on the various continents.

The congregational singing throughout the conference was most

inspiring. Much of it was in the Korean tongue, but the tunes were familiar to all, so each delegate joined in the songs using his native language.

At prayertime also there was a profusion (but no confusion) of tongues as all lifted up their voices in unison, praying or praising the Lord in the languages of their homelands or in other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance.


It was a truly Pentecostal conference—people of varied cultures all rejoicing in the same gospel of salvation, all trusting in the same Healer, all enjoying the power of the same Holy Spirit, and all looking for that same blessed Hope which is the Desire of all nations.

The theme for the closing rally, appropriately, was "Anointed to Proclaim the Second Coming of Jesus Christ." The speaker, J. Floyd



Full Gospel Central Church, Seoul, Korea (now called Yoido Full Gospel Church).

Williams, eloquently exhorted the delegates to be faithful in preaching the Second Coming until they would meet again, either in the air or at the next Pentecostal World Conference.

It was announced that London, England, will be the site of the 11<sup>th</sup> Pentecostal World Conference in September 1976 if Jesus tarries. 

## Your Historical Materials Are Valuable

The Assemblies of God has a dynamic and inspiring history—in the U. S. and around the world. This is why the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center is actively searching for historical materials before they are lost or destroyed.

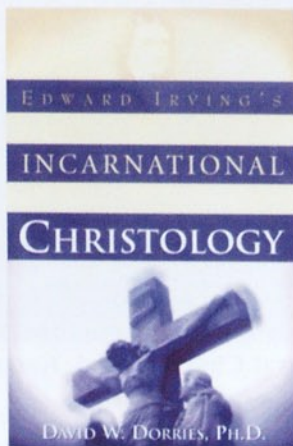
And you can have a vital part in this important ministry.

If you or a loved one were involved in the origin or development of any ministry relating to the Assemblies of God, please write or call today. Materials or information you can contribute might be just what we need to fill gaps in one of our many collections.

You are invited to stop by the new Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center whenever you are in Springfield so you can see firsthand how we are working together to preserve our Grand Heritage.



## Seen in Print



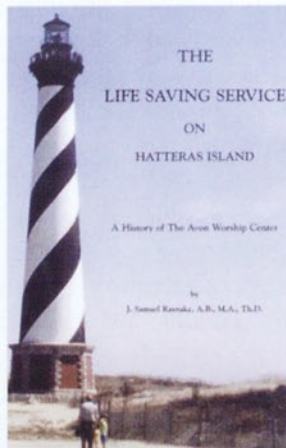
*Edward Irving's Incarnational Christology*, by David W. Dorries. Xulon Press. Available from Kairos Ministries, Int., P.O. Box 3456, Broken Arrow, OK 7403. Paperback, 492 pages, \$20, including shipping.

Students of Pentecostal history have always had an interest in Scottish minister Edward Irving (1792-1834) because of his claims that believers in his day could also experience the "charismata" as described in the New Testament. His group later became the Catholic Apostolic Church.

"Could Jesus Christ have taken human nature in its fallen state, like ours, yet lived His life in absolute sinlessness? Nineteenth century Scottish pastor Edward Irving lost his standing as an ordained Christian minister for communicating this truth. This precise Christological issue had never been debated officially in Christian history until Irving's time, yet he insisted that his teaching was not novel. He merely was restating the traditional doctrines of the ancient Church Fathers and Protestant Reformers. This volume brings to light the intriguing story of Irving's struggle to keep alive the true doctrine of Christ's fallen yet sinless humanity in an age of theological darkness."—*From the cover*

David Dorries is a teacher, author, and minister. For nearly 20 years he has served on the faculty of the School

of Theology and Missions at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He authored a 2-part article for *Heritage*, "The Making of Smith Wigglesworth" (Fall and Winter 1992).

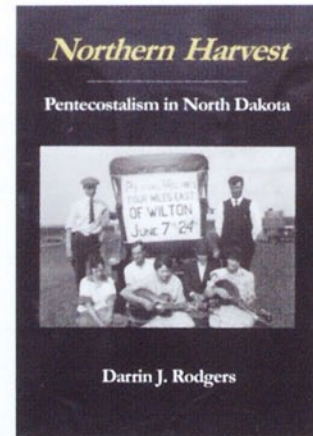


*The Life Saving Service on Hatteras Island: A History of the Avon Worship Center*, by J. Samuel Rasnake. Westhighlands Church, P. O. Box 3474, Bristol, TN 37625. \$10 postpaid.

Do you have a fascination with the mysteries of the oceans? What about the Outer Banks of North Carolina? Now you can read some history of this treacherous sea area—combined with history of the Avon Worship Center, an Assemblies of God congregation ministering in life-saving efforts for both soul and body following a revival Mrs. Charles (Myrtle) Chambers conducted in 1926. The church became the first of five Pentecostal churches established on Hatteras Island. The author served as pastor of the Avon church in the 1950s. He weaves his recollections with those of the congregation he served and with the research he has conducted on the island, shipwrecks, hurricanes, and life-saving efforts through the years.

J. Samuel Rasnake is an Assemblies of God pastor, having served Westhighlands Church since 1959. He is the author of two district books: *Pentecost Fully Come: A History of the Appalachian District of*

*the Assemblies of God* (1971) and *Stones by the River: A History of the Tennessee District of the Assemblies of God* (1975).



*Northern Harvest, Pentecostalism in North Dakota*, by Darrin J. Rodgers. North Dakota District Council of the Assemblies of God, P.O. Box 896, Bismarck, ND 58502. \$14 for first copy; \$12 for each additional copy shipped to same address. Postpaid in U.S. If shipped to foreign address, include additional \$5 for postage.

Northern Harvest documents the rise of Pentecostalism in North Dakota from a few scattered congregations at the turn of the twentieth-century to its present status as the state's fourth largest religious group. While revivals in Topeka, Kansas (1901) and Los Angeles, California (1906-09) became the focal point of the emerging worldwide Pentecostal movement, earlier revivals in Minnesota and the Dakotas provided it with precedents and leaders.

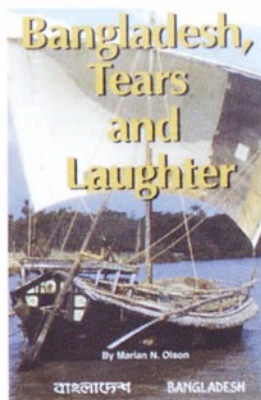
"In an impressively thorough study of North Dakota Pentecostalism, Rodgers maps the people, spiritual and cultural dynamics, churches, and denominations that made it happen. He also breaks new ground in showing the influence of Scandinavian pietism on the early believers, a reminder that the roots of the movement go deep into the heritage of evangelical revivalism."—Dr. Gary B. McGee, professor



of church history, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary.

Darrin J. Rodgers, a fourth-generation North Dakotan Pentecostal, earned his B.A. (Hillsdale College, M.A.T.S. (Assemblies of God Theological Seminary), and J.D. (University of North Dakota School of Law), and authored articles in *Assemblies of God Heritage* and the *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*—*From the Publisher*

You may wish to view the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary website: [www.agts.edu/news/news\\_archives/rodgers\\_darrin2003.html](http://www.agts.edu/news/news_archives/rodgers_darrin2003.html) for more information about the book.



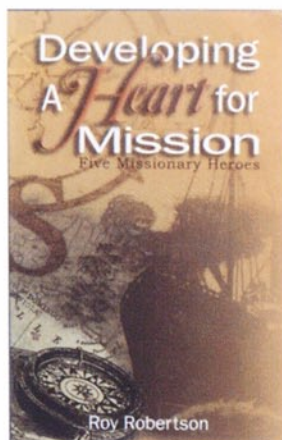
*Bangladesh, Tears and Laughter*, by Marian N. Olson. Willmar Assembly of God, 3821 Abbott Dr., Willmar, MN 56201. Hard cover, 344 pages, photographs. \$15.85 including postage.

This is the story of Calvin and Marian Olson during their 35 years of service as missionaries to Bangladesh. Each of them kept diaries during that time; in addition, there were 40 years of newsletter copies and 30 years of personal letters sent to Calvin's parents. Using these resources, this book tells the whole story. You will read of suffering, humor, adventure, regrets, and triumphs.

"Wherever I go in the world, people will often ask, 'Do you know the Olsons?'" The impact of their lives goes far beyond the borders of India and Bangladesh. I recommend this book to you."—Jerry L. Parsley,

Assemblies of God regional director for Eurasia.

"I speak on behalf of hundreds of missionary colleagues and national leaders who have been eternally blessed and encouraged by this couple. This book is Marian's gift, not only to Calvin, but to all of us who share their passion for missions."—David Grant, Southern Asia Area Director, Assemblies of God.—*From the cover*



*Developing a Heart for Mission: Five Missionary Heroes*, by Roy Robertson. NavMedia, Singapore. For inquiry, email: [sales@navmedia.com](mailto:sales@navmedia.com). In the U.S. contact: TEL, P.O. Drawer E, Denton, TX 76202. \$10 postpaid.

Here is a book that focuses on five men whose accomplishments, strategy, and commitment to reach the world will inspire a new generation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They reached multitudes through interdenominational ministries such as The Navigators, Youth for Christ, World Vision, Go-Ye Fellowship, Overseas Ministries, Inc., and others. The five modern missionaries in action, "The Powerhouse Five," the author calls them, are David Morken, Hubert Mitchell, Dick Hillis, Dawson Trotman, and Bob Pierce.

The author describes their ministry and influence as he closes section three: "[They] were knit together by a common vision and a heart burden to get the gospel out into the whole world in their generation. Most of them at one time or another met together in weekly sessions at five o'clock in the

morning for extended prayer, and honor one another.... They inspired many American servicemen who had come to the Lord in World War II and the Korean War to join in the effort. These men were the catalysts and those whom they trained have kept the mission going to the present day."

The 350-page book is divided into five parts: 1. The Powerhouse Five (1935-1946); 2. Three Great Missionary Advances: William Carey, Hudson Taylor, Veterans of World War II; 3. The Powerhouse Five Link with Youth for Christ (1946-60); 4. Building Upon the Foundation (1960-2002); 5. Challenge for the Future (2000-Rapture).

Roy Robertson, a World War II naval pilot, has been a missionary in Asia for The Navigators since 1949 and ministered along side of the five missionaries in this book.



*Heaven Below, Early Pentecostals and American Culture*, by Grant Wacker. Harvard University Press. Now in paperback, \$16.95.

See *Heritage*, Fall 2001 for more information and reviews on this book, which has garnered several honors, including the Society for Pentecostal Studies "Book of the Year" award; the American Academy of Religion's Excellence in the Study of Religion award; and the Outstanding Book Award from *Christianity Today*. Grant Wacker is professor of church history, Duke University, and grandson of former Assemblies of God General Superintendent Ralph M. Riggs.

# From Our Readers

## Appreciates Archival Help

Thank you [Joyce Lee and Heather Kellermeier] for your help. What fantastic customer service! If you want to see what I did with the material, you can peak at this web site: [ParbarWestward.org/RejectedBlessing.htm].

Jim Kerwin  
Regent University  
Virginia Beach, Virginia

## Roots of Southwestern

My Dear Wayne:

Your staff person, at your direction, sent me a complimentary copy of the spring, 2003 issue of *Heritage*. I thought the article dealing with the background of Southwestern A/G University was excellent [By Glenn Gohr]. Such history should continue to “live.” I began my professional work on the old Enid campus. I helped move the school to Ft. Worth and again to Waxahachie.

I treasure my subscription to the *Heritage*. I always find material in every issue with which I can relate. I guess I am getting aged!

Thanks again for your thoughtfulness!

Sincerely in HIM,

Klaude Kendrick  
Fayetteville, Arkansas

*Klaude Kendrick has been a friend of the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center since its origin in 1977. He is an honored educator, serving—among several positions—as first president of Evangel College (now University), 1955-60, and president of Southwestern A/G University, 1960-65. He is the author of the classic The Promise Fulfilled: A History of the Modern Pentecostal Movement, 1961.*

I certainly enjoyed reading the article of Southwestern Bible School [spring, by Glenn Gohr]. I was a freshman in 1937, away from home for the first time. So well I remember a pretty senior girl, Violet Bluhm, who befriended me and showed me around and helped me feel at home.

After we saw Violet’s name in *Heritage* [“Getting a Start in the Ministry,” Fall 2002], we looked her up in Boulder, Colorado and visited with her. Needless to say, we enjoyed our reunion.

That senior class was an unusual class. So many of them went on to become successful ministers and work-

ers. Of course, I thought all walked on water. Murray Brown [missionary to Africa] was one of the seniors.

My husband Howard and I graduated in 1941, and married in July. We were the last class to graduate from Enid. We were in the ministry many years before he retired. He is called on from time to time to preach.

Mrs. Howard (Irene) Dixon  
Springview, Nebraska

## CORRECTION

The Spring *Heritage* magazine just arrived at Southwestern. This is a wonderful story of Southwestern and we all appreciate it so much.

Just wanted to make one correction however. My grandfather is mentioned on page 15 and is also in the picture of Southern Bible College [“The Roots of Southwestern Assemblies of God University”]. His name is misspelled. C. P. Robinson is incorrect....should be C. P. Robison. He was also Secretary/Treasurer of the Texas District when they purchased this property and moved to Waxahachie in 1943. The Robison name is now in the 3rd generation of A/G ministers. B. V. Robison, C. P.’s oldest child and my father, just turned 95 years old in



Board of directors at Southwestern Bible Institute, taken in the library in 1950. Klaude Kendrick, business manager, is second from left. L-r: E. W. Moore, Kendrick, J. O. Savell, E. B. Crump, E. L. Newby, E. C. King, R. L. Bennett, F. A. Hunter, Kermit Reneau, Phinis A. Lewis, and Millard E. Collins.

A group of 27 workers from Christian Life A/G, Willimantic, Connecticut visited Headquarters on Feb. 15, 2003 on their way to Hot Springs to help at the Hillcrest Children's Home. Here they are greeted in the cafeteria by Robert J. Michels, director of Benevolences, and General Treasurer James K. Bridges (right).



February and built his last church when he was 80. Another son, Kenneth Robison, just retired from First A/G in Laredo, Texas, where he pastored for 30 years. Grandson, Brennon Robison, is pastor of First A/G in Leander, Texas.

Blessings on you for this wonderful magazine that we all enjoy so much.

Berna Robison Pruett

Alumni Services Coordinator

Southwestern Assemblies of God University

Waxahachie, Texas

*We apologize for misspelling C. P. Robison's name in the Southwestern story. We probably confused him with Charles C. Robinson, pastor of Oak Cliff A/G in Dallas during the 1940s or Charles Elmo Robinson with the Pentecostal Evangel for many years. All three of the men contributed to the Assemblies of God and the Kingdom.*

#### Visitors from Connecticut

Dwayne Harper, pastor of Christian Life Assembly, Willimantic, Connecticut, brought a group from his congregation through Springfield on the way to Hot Springs, Arkansas. The purpose of their trip was to remodel a building at the Children's Home, Hot Springs. General Treasurer James K. Bridges organized a tour of the Assemblies of God Headquarters, including the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center. Pastor Harper wrote this letter to Brother Bridges when he returned to Connecticut.

Greetings from Willimantic. I hope my letter finds you in good health and spirits. I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for the splendid hospitality you extended to our group of twenty-seven during our visit to the Assemblies of God headquarters.

Our tour was one of the most memorable highlights of our mission trip; we have you to thank for that! I am grateful to you for taking time out of your busy schedule to organize the tour and to be present when we arrived—you even held the door for us as we entered the building. We were very honored by your warm welcome, your kind words, the wonderful tour, and the refreshments you provided at the end. Please convey our gratitude to Brother Michels, Brother Warner, and your administrative assistant [Mary Stalnaker] and her husband [Jim Stalnaker, Human Resources director]. Their warmth and hospitality were outstanding.

We were very impressed by what we saw and heard. More importantly, we were inspired. It was very moving for us to get a glimpse of what God has done in and through our fellowship. Upon arrival, many from our group had absolutely no concept of the strength and worldwide influence of the Assemblies of God. They were amazed as they realized the Lord's hand has always guided and directed

our movement, as we have pursued souls for the kingdom.

Brother Bridges, thank you. I appreciate your kindness and your friendship. May the Lord richly bless you and your family. May He continue to keep and empower you as you serve Him.

Dwayne Harper, Pastor  
Christian Life Assembly,  
Willimantic, Conn.

#### Superintendents Quiz

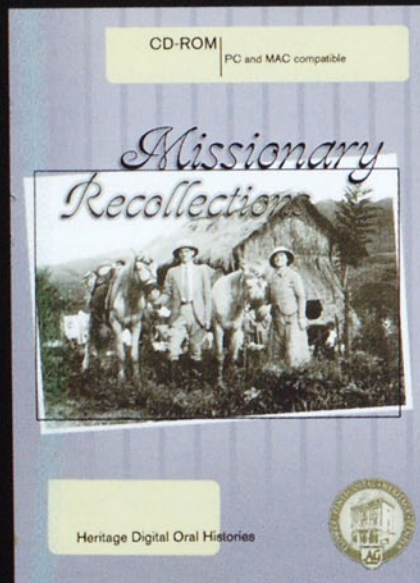
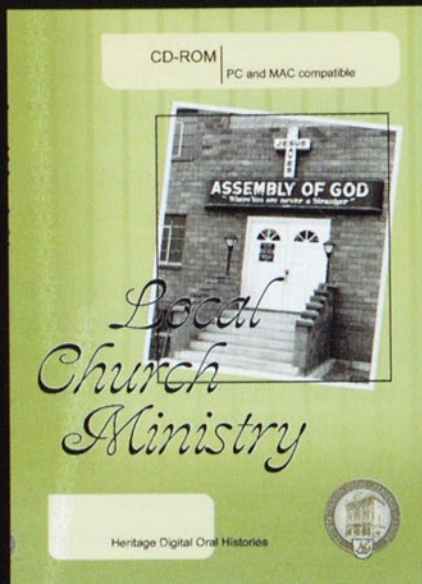
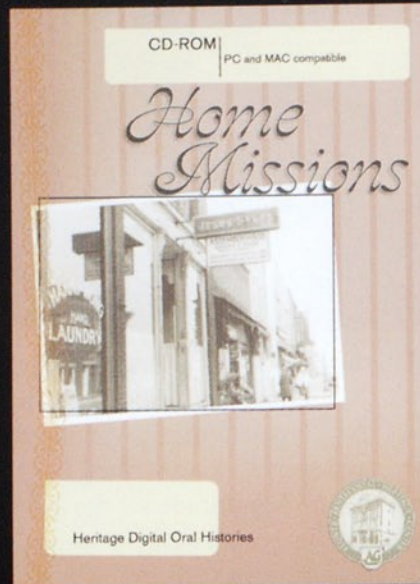
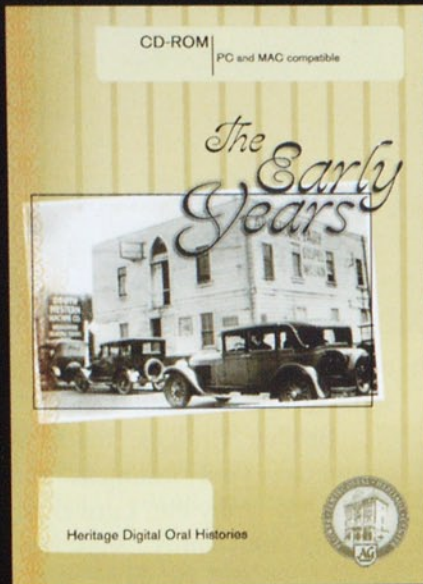
In the spring issue we asked readers to let us know if we overlooked anyone in our district superintendents quiz. Yes, we did. We heard from readers who told us of two omissions, men who held office in two separate districts (question 3). Robert L. Brandt, Billings, Montana, wrote that he served North Dakota and Montana Districts for a total of almost 20 years. Brandt also served as a general presbyter for 40 years and an executive presbyter from 1981-2001.

Wanda Shoff, Rialto, California, caught another omission. She wrote that Stanley Clarke served the old West Central District and the Minnesota District.

Another father and son who served as district superintendents are Earl W. Goodman and his son, Paul D. Goodman, who each became Montana District superintendent (question 1).

# Oral History

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## Testimony Time

# Healed of Polio

## In a Raymond T. Richey Meeting

By David Turley

My Dad, Charles C. Turley, who was an Assemblies of God preacher, made a vow that whenever he preached at a location for the first time, he would give the testimony of my healing. However, he said that when I became able to do it for myself, he was released from that vow. So, I have continued to do this, too.

When I was two years old, in 1936, I was stricken with “infantile paralysis” (now known as polio). I was totally crippled with both legs completely useless and my left arm drawn down and backwards. My parents were told that I most likely would not live, but if I did, I certainly would never walk. My parents were pioneer ministers and were heavily involved in establishing and pastoring a new Assembly of God in a small town north of Tulsa, Oklahoma, where we lived; a town that, coincidentally was named Turley, Oklahoma. (But, no connection to our family.)

As was the custom in those days, our home was quarantined, which meant no one could approach the house and no one could leave it. My dad was employed full-time as a book-keeper, as well as pastoring. So he was quarantined out and my mother was inside with me. (I think a family friend may have been inside with her.)

Large signs were posted outside the house and she talked later about how she felt when passersby would cross the street to the other side to avoid the house. For thirty days, my dad wasn't allowed in, and they communicated by phone. Both talked many

times of the darkness, despair, and discouragement they experienced. But, on two different occasions during the period, a message by tongues and interpretation came, stating emphatically that they would be delivered. After a time, the quarantine was lifted. I think maybe it was about six weeks after my affliction began that an evangelist named Raymond T. Richey came to Tulsa and held a campaign in Convention Hall, now Brady Theater. [See “Raymond T. Richey, A Man With a Burning Message,” by Glenn Gohr, Winter 2002-03.]

One night during that campaign, my parents took me to be prayed for. My mother described standing in the healing line and seeing one after another leave after prayer with no visible results, and how her faith began to sag. When it came our turn, Brother Richey took me in his arms, prayed a short prayer, and sat me down on the platform, a totally deformed crippled

child. There, in front of thousands of people, I stood, haltingly took a few steps, then like an infant learning to walk all over again, began to pick up speed, until I was running from end to end of that huge platform. My folks often said they couldn't understand why they went through that, or why the miracle was delayed so long, but numerous people were saved that night after witnessing the miracle. Even up into my later adult life, strangers have come to us and said, “I was there that night and got saved due to what I saw.” Then my parents understood that God waited for His time to perform a work in the presence of thousands of witnesses.

God has blessed me with a perfectly normal, healthy life ever since. When I was around 19, I became ill and the doctor diagnosed it as residual polio, but God kept the healing alive and I recovered then, too.

During my college years, I had a



The Turley, Oklahoma, congregation, in the late 1930s, which David Turley's parents pastored.

classmate whose name was also David. He was a victim of polio, completely paralyzed, and was confined to a wheelchair. He depended on students to push him from class to class. When it was time to go up or down the long stairs, whoever was available would carry him in his chair. Several times I

helped carry him up or down and realized my own blessings in that God chose to grant me mercy and deliver me from that condition. How blessed I really am! So, every time I walk into the church or walk to the organ, each person there is witnessing a miracle with his/her own eyes.



**David Turley** is a clinical social worker in Hohenwald, Tennessee. His healing happened in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1936 when he was 2 years old. His late father and mother, Charles C. and Noma Hamby Turley, were Assemblies of God ministers.

## Archives Activities

**Elizabeth Baker:** cassette interviews of various people involved in Alaska ministry: Jack and Betty Bransford; Ronald and Mavis Brown; Mildred James; Willard and Marian Leisy; E. Dwain McKenzie, Betty Glick Ohse; Donald J. and Austa Smith; Gladys Spencer Stonestreet; and Ben White. **Sandra Bradford:** photographs of Paul Lowenberg. **David Bryant:** cassette tape of Lyda and Lois Paino speaking at Lakeview Christian Center on Mother's Day (date unknown). **Warren D. Bullock:** revival announcement, no date, Highway Mission, H. H. Rohde pastor, Martin and Betty Baxter, evangelists; *Revivaltime* radio broadcast program, July 7, 1957.

**Tommy Carpenter (Arkansas District Council):** various "cuts" of photographs used in publications including J. W. Tucker and family, Billy Bray, Bath House Row, C.A. Department, Sunday School Department, South Central Bible Institute (Hot Springs, AR), etc. **George Carson:** dissertation: "Teen Challenge and the Development of Social Concern Ministries in the Assemblies of God" / George R. Carson, Ph.D., Saint Louis University, 2002. **Arnold Cirtin:** book: *Business Principles for Churches*, 1999. **Rev. and Mrs. Robert Cobb:** photographs of 13<sup>th</sup> Pentecostal World Conference, H. B. Garlock, John Juergensen, and a Speed the Light car in Tanzania. **Eric Forsgren (from estate of A. A. Anderson):** photographs of P. T. Emmett and Lorne Fox. **General**

**Council Credit Union:** coin purse and notepad commemorating 50 years of service.

**Glad Tidings Church (Rochester, NY) from family of Laura Thompson:** sheet music (Herbert Buffum): "And They Pave the Streets With Pure Gold"; "When We See His Face"; "The Lord Followed Me"; "Have I Not Chosen You?"; "In His Pavilion"; "When We're Traveling Thru the Air"; "A Million Miles of Peace"; "Keep On Keeping On"; sheet music (as sung by evangelists Guy Renfrow and Leonard Rogers): "Deeper"; "Longing to Go"; photograph: ladies Sunday school class at A/G church Alton, IL prior to 1937. **Kenneth L. Hardin:** book (autobiography): *The Fifty Year Trek* / Ken Hardin, c1990. **Marie Johnson:** book: *Memories of This and That* / Marie Johnson.

**Ruth E. Kent:** *The CBC Pulpit* (cassettes) with tapes of Loren Triplett, Glen Cole, Ernie Moen, Robert Schmidgall, Jeanne Mayo, and H. Maurice Lednicky. **Donald Ladd:** publication: *Highway Mission Tabernacle* (Philadelphia, PA), Mar. 1931 [duplicate item]. **Ron Maddux:** *China Reader: Extracted from the AG Heritage Archives*, 2003. **Woodvall Moore:** booklet: *The Country Boy That God Called to the Nations* / Bishop Bill Rogers (Church of God, Fulton, MO).

**Family of Calvin Olson:** funeral tape. **J. Samuel Rasnake:** manuscript: "Independent Holiness," by Julia Carter, 1939. **Darrin J.**

**Rodgers:** books: *Northern Harvest: Pentecostalism in North Dakota*, 2003; *The Japanese Disaster or the World's Greatest Earthquake: Together with Missionary Travels and Experiences by Evangelist B. S. Moore and Wife*, [1924?]. **Matthew Sutton:** article: "'Between the Refrigerator and the Wildfire': Aimee Semple McPherson, Pentecostalism, and the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy," *Church History* 72:1 (Mar. 2003):159-188. **Esther Hoover:** *Revivaltime* transcription recordings: program 77, part 1; program 78, part 1; program 79, part 2; program 80, part 2; program 83, part 2.

**B. A. and Mary Waltrip:** *Christ Reveals the Future* / Burroughs A. Waltrip, Sr.; 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet of Trinity Tabernacle Assembly of God at Baytown, Texas; biographical information on William S. and Catherine Graham; and miscellaneous items relating to Austin Gospel Tabernacle; Assembly of God at Luling, Texas; Raymond T. Richey and associates; and Southwestern Assemblies of God University. **Wayne Warner:** Light for the Lost 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary materials; 2002 annual report; South Texas District anniversary book: *South Texas District: 50 years, 1953-2003*. **David A. Willis:** reel-to-reel tapes of Thomas F. Zimmerman speaking at 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary service of the Full Gospel Tabernacle in Fresno, California. **Daniel Woods:** *An Infidel Answered* [tract]; two articles on Holiness Baptist Churches of Southwest Arkansas from *The Pentecostal Herald* (Louisville, KY), 1904-1906.

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