

**LIFE IS JUST A JOURNEY**

**My Journey through Life**

**William Kenneth Meadors**

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THE STORIES IN THIS BOOK ARE TRUE. FOR THOSE INDIVIDUALS TO WHOM I SOUGHT TO HONOR, THE NAMES ARE TRUE. IF FOR ANY REASON THERE WAS A NEGATIVE CONNOTATION, I EITHER CHANGED THE NAMES OR SIMPLY CHOSE TO USE INITIALS. I HAVE SOUGHT TO BE RESPECTFUL IN REFERENCE TO ANY INDIVIDUALS. THE NAMES OF MY RELATIVES HAVE BEEN USED.

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## Life Is Just a Journey

Life is just a journey traveling a winding road  
With its twists and turns, carrying life's heavy load.  
Our journey begins from the day of our birth.  
And it continues all our days here on earth.

Our journey is filled with all of life's demands.  
Over hills through valleys across hot desert sands.  
Life is not complete until we overcome  
All that stands before us until life's work is done.

Life may not be easy when things don't go our way.  
But blessings are provided for us every day.  
When our work is finished there is a great reward,  
At the end of the journey when we stand before the Lord.

Life is just a journey traveling on life's way.  
To bring us from where we are to a glorious day.  
All will be worth it when the Lord says well done  
Thou good and faithful servant a good race you have run.

For all that life has offered with all its ups and downs.  
With its ins and outs, difficulties all around.  
When all is said and done, we look back with reflection.  
Life will be worth it all when we've reached our destination.

William Kenneth Meadors

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**Dr. Kenneth and Nancy Meadors**

## INTRODUCTION

The goal of the writing of this book is to give a synopsis of my life in order that people who are interested will have a clearer picture of who I am. I have not obtained to the level of notoriety that would make a great number of people to be interested in my story, but perhaps there are those who are interested, including my descendants for generations to come.

I have had the privilege of living an extensive time on this earth, and I have seen a lot of places, met many people, and have done a lot of things, both of significance and perhaps some of insignificance. At any rate, this writing gives me an opportunity to help me see with a proper perspective to where I have been and what I am yet to do.

According to psychologist Erik Erickson\*, there are eight major stages of life with corresponding positives and negatives of each stage. A proper resolution of the challenges of each stage of development will lead to a fulfilling life. At this point in my life, Stage Eight of Development would be the most appropriate. Erikson's Eighth Stage consists of a dichotomy to provide a person with the proper view of their life as either being one of integrity (fulfillment) or one of despair. The obtainment of integrity means that a person can come to the end of life with a sense of satisfaction with no regrets, or one can have a sense of despair which is the belief that life has not been fulfilled. Despair means that you have the feeling of regrets and failure, not having fulfilled your God-given purpose.

We can all look back on our lives and desire to have done some things differently, but we cannot allow ourselves to be overcome by a sense of self-guilt, condemnation, or regret. I suppose that if I could do some things again, I probably would have made the same decision if I only had access to the same information as before. I think that most Christians have been conscientious enough to desire to do the right thing, and they did so often-times without sufficient information to make the proper decision.

\*Erik Erikson's Stage Eight

As we grow older (65+ yrs.) and become senior citizens, we tend to slow down our productivity and explore life as a retired person. It is during this time that we contemplate our accomplishments and can develop integrity if we see ourselves as leading a successful life.

Erik Erikson believed if we see our lives as unproductive, feel guilty about our past, or feel that we did not accomplish our life goals, we become dissatisfied with life and develop despair, often leading to depression and hopelessness.

Success in this stage will lead to the virtue of wisdom. Wisdom enables a person to look back on their life with a sense of closure and completeness, and also accept death without fear.

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/Erik-Erikson.html#ego>



Kenneth and Nancy 2017

## Chapter One

### A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF MY PARENTS

I will seek to give a very brief reference to my parents that will help to lay the foundation for a better understanding of where I came from. Of course, our upbringing is a very important factor in determining who we are. My parents may not have done everything right, but I have no doubt that they had the best intention in mind for the welfare of their offspring. I can truthfully say that I have had the blessing of a solid foundation, both in the natural and the spiritual. I learned the important lessons of integrity, hard work, and most importantly, a love and respect for others and our God. Each of my parents gave me a portion of themselves that developed me into who I am today.

#### William Henry Meadors, My Father

I will seek to give a brief summary of the most important facts that will reveal a little clearer picture of who my Dad was. He was born on September 1, 1909 in Luxora, Mississippi County, Arkansas. He died on June 9, 1979 near Poplar Bluff, Missouri, and he is buried in Ermen Cemetery in Osceola, Arkansas.

Dad grew up around the Mississippi River northeast of Luxora, Arkansas. This was in the area of Tomato, a community right on the river. Interestingly enough, where my Dad was born wasn't far from where Mama Walker's (Nancy's Mom, Frankie Gladys Copeland Walker) family was during the early 1900s. The Copelands lived near Huffman, Arkansas, which was near the Mississippi River a few miles north of the Meador family homeplace. (NOTE: Beginning with my Dad, the "s" was added to the family name Meador). Nancy's Grandfather John Copeland, along with her mother, are listed in the Mississippi County, Arkansas census of 1910. My Grandfather Jasper Meador, along with my Dad, are also listed in the same census.

Dad was a very hard working individual, who was strong in integrity. He worked for many years as a Mississippi

River towboat engineer. He began this career as a young single man of eighteen, sending money back to support his elderly father and single sister, Florence. He had a reputation of being very physically strong. His nickname was "Buffalo," as in "Buffalo Bill." However, according to some of his friends, he was given the name because "he was as strong as a buffalo." I found this out when I went back to Luxora to look up some of his old buddies after Dad died in 1979.

Dad worked on and off the river throughout his life, working at other jobs intermittently. He worked in electric power plants, a cotton seed oil mill, and other places where he worked with engines. In fact, we moved to Gideon, Missouri when he got a job working with the electric power plant there in 1953. Gideon is where my wife Nancy grew up and where I met her.

Dad had worked farm work early in life during the times he was not on the river, and he always had a desire to return to the farm. His dream was fulfilled when he rented a 97-acre farm during the years 1954-55 near Gideon. After two disastrous drought-stricken years, our family then moved to Memphis, where Dad continued to work for Patton Tully Transportation Co. as a towboat engineer. He ended his career as an employee for the City of Memphis and retired in 1971.



My Dad, Bill Meadors

Mother had always been the spiritual leader of our household, but Dad was always very supportive of us. He never hindered us in any way. Dad finally received the Lord as his personal savior and was filled with the Holy Spirit at Rugby Park Assembly of God Church in Memphis in 1958. At that time, he immediately gave up forty years of cigarette smoking. A quick arithmetic check says that he started smoking when he was about nine years old.

Dad had an unusual experience during the winter of 1957-58. The towboat company that he worked for was a smaller company and sometimes shut down for the winter because of the shortage of jobs. The company also owned timberland and transported the timber with some of their smaller boats. These smaller boats had a skeleton crew, so Dad had to double up as both engineer and sometimes deckhand. Dad was never without a job with the company because of his outstanding record with them.

A towboat Dad was working on that particular winter was pushing barges loaded with timber on the Arkansas River. He was asked to go out on the barge to check some problem while the boat was in tow, and Dad was knocked off the barge by a rebounding limb on one of the logs. He miraculously survived the propeller of the boat, the coldness of the river, and extended time in the river before he was rescued. The captain thought he was dead for sure. He had radioed back down the river for help, thinking that Dad was gone.

In the meantime, Dad had to survive the cold river as best he could. He swam, fully clothed, for over a mile downstream before he was rescued by a small fishing boat. When the accident happened, Dad had the sense to get away from the barge as fast as possible, knowing that he could have been pulled under it. That would have been disastrous, as he no doubt would have been destroyed by the propeller of the boat. He also had the presence of mind to remove his shoes. Later, he stated that his entire life passed before him during the first few moments of that ordeal.

There were times that Dad appeared to be a "hard-nosed" individual when I was growing up. He was a strict disciplinarian. However, he was a very loving father, especially in his latter days on this earth. He had a tender heart toward the Lord, often weeping softly in a spiritually-moving service.

Dad was a very talented individual. He could perform many tasks well, but he often seemed to have a lack of confidence in taking the next step. This lack of confidence is probably why he never sought to become a captain on the boats he worked on for so many years. He knew the river, and he could pilot the boat, but he was not willing to take the responsibility that would be required of a captain. Dad, also, had the philosophy that “one bird in hand is better than two in the bushes,” meaning that he often would take a job that was available instead of waiting on a more promising job. This gave him a sense of security, and he was very secure in his position as an engineer on the boat.

Dad was well accomplished in all manner of woodwork. He was a decent carpenter and a very good cabinet maker. Later in life, he worked in smaller more tedious works of wood. He worked many hours a week in his days of retirement, making Barbie doll furniture and other wood items that he sold at Arts and Craft shows and displays. Dad was a faithful tither, and God blessed him and Mom as a result. In fact, Dad double tithed on all his woodwork sales.

Around the people he knew and loved, Dad was a very personable individual. As a young boy, I remember going to Luxora on Saturday nights when we lived in Osceola so he could see his old buddies. He seemed to be well liked by them. At those times, there were several of these guys still living there who grew up with him.

Dad had a dislike for braggarts, boasters, windbags, and liars. He couldn't stand anyone who was a show-off. He disliked people who were lazy and were free-loaders. He expected people to be like him, a person whom you could trust and upon whom you could depend. He didn't want anyone to belittle him or to put him down. In fact, he wouldn't stay around someone who acted like they were better than he.

There were many things of value that Dad left us. He set a standard for hard work and honesty. He never cheated anyone out of anything that belonged to them. He died owing nothing except for about \$35.00 that my sister Dixie had on a credit charge account after visiting with our parents from her home in West Virginia. This purchase was just a few days old at the time of their deaths. Dad only owed one year on his house, but he had always paid every month exactly on time. His

two-year old Chevrolet Malibu was paid in full as well as his pickup truck. Other than that, there were never any unpaid bills.

I would describe our family as being lower middle class growing up. More accurately, we would be considered “working class.” We didn't have a lot of extras, but we did live in decent housing and wore decent clothes. We always had plenty of good food to eat. I don't ever recall lacking anything of necessities. Dad never was without a job, as he always brought home a paycheck.

Dad made decent average wages most of the time, but he made better than average wages on the river. The better pay on the river was the trade-off for him being away from home. He didn't like being away from his family. While on the river, he worked two weeks and came home for a week. That left a lot of responsibility on Mom, but it all worked out. During my growing up years, Dad would work on the river from time to time, in between other jobs. Again, I believe he always went out on the river to bring home a better paycheck.

### **Evie Lorene Thompson Meadors, My Mother**

Mom was born on April 19, 1917 in Detroit, Marion County, Alabama. She died on June 9, 1979 near Poplar Bluff, Missouri. She had barely turned sixty-two when she died and had drawn just a couple of her social security checks. She is buried in Ermen Cemetery in Osceola, Arkansas alongside Dad. My sister, Dixie, and her daughter Pamela are also buried along Mom and Dad.

Mom had a difficult life growing up. Apparently, her father was not a good provider, and the family was in great need most of her life. I just found out in recent years from Aunt Earlene, who is Mom's sister, that when their mother died, the kids were put in different relatives' homes for a period of time. Grandma Dora died when Mom was twelve years old. Then, Mom and Aunt Hildred were sent to live with Aunt Ambrillo in Mississippi for several months, or perhaps longer. Significantly, Aunt Ambrillo was a Pentecostal believer which no doubt had a tremendous impact on Mom's spiritual development. For the rest of her pre-adult life, she was here and there until she married my dad. The family apparently was disoriented after Grandma Dora died. My grandfather then had

the sole responsibility of six children, as the older son had already married and left home.



My Mom, Evie Meadors

Mom was a very family-oriented individual. She stayed in close contact with her extended family. This was the case when some of her other family members didn't necessarily seem to care. Mom had a tender disposition toward people, having a heart of compassion toward the underdog. She was saved in a Pentecostal Church near Osceola, Arkansas in the year 1943. She was a very dedicated Christian, being a faithful member of the Assembly of God Church from her conversion to her death.

#### **Mom's Special Spiritual Experience Right before She Died**

On the Sunday night before she died on the following Saturday, Mom had an extraordinary spiritual experience. She evidently had a visitation of the Lord that seemed to have prepared her for an imminent death. Mom was not an outspoken person in church services, even in testimony services. On this particular night, she arose to her feet and shared with the congregation a story of a missionary who returned home from the mission field. Upon his arrival at his destination, there was a celebrity who was being honored by an

adoring audience. The missionary stated, "Lord, there is no one here to welcome me home." The Lord stated, "But you're not home yet!"

Mom continued speaking by stating something along the lines that she wasn't home yet, but that it would be soon. With tears in her eyes, she asked everyone in the congregation to forgive her for anything she may have ever said or done to offend them. I don't ever recall anything that Mom would have said that would have been offensive, but apparently she wanted to be sure that everything was made right. This opened the door for general repentance throughout the whole congregation. With tears in their eyes, they went one by one through the congregation hugging and making things right with one another. According to witnesses, this was a very moving service. It no doubt turned out to be a premonition of her impending death less than a week later. My mother was a praying woman who loved her Lord very much, and there is no doubt where she is today.

Mom did not have a strong role model most of her life concerning things of the natural. I believe that Aunt Earlene had the greatest influence on her as far as striving for a better lifestyle. Aunt Earlene had left her poor upbringing in Arkansas, came to Memphis, and made something of herself. When we moved to Memphis, I believe that Mom then was inspired toward excellence in many aspects of her life. We bought a new house in Memphis in a new subdivision after we had left Gideon, Missouri. The house wasn't anything real fancy, but it did represent better than we ever had before. We had a three-bedroom frame house with hardwood floors.

To embrace her new concept of a better life, Mom bought new furniture. She protected what she had with great pride, realizing that she had never had much before. She became a spotless housekeeper, sometimes almost to the extreme of not being able to enjoy it. That is in contrast to me, because I believe houses are designed to live in! When Mom died, Raymond and I returned to find a spotlessly clean house with everything in perfect order.

Mom was a very good money manager, and that is the reason we had some things that we otherwise would not have had. Mom was also a fanatic about keeping the yard neat, clean, and trimmed. She would frustrate poor ole Dad, because he was

the one who had to do most of the work. Mom would supervise, pull weeds, work in the flowers, and keep Dad on his toes. I recall Mom coming to see us in Hayti one time. I had just recently built a nice five-bedroom brick house on an acre plot. She wasn't there two hours before she had all the kids rounded up working in our yard!

Mom loved her grandchildren and treated each of them equally. She was our babysitter when Nancy and I lived in Memphis in 1966-67 when I was working on my Master's degree. She would not let anyone take advantage of her. You would not demand anything of her, but she would go beyond her call of duty on her own. She was a very independent person, who instilled in me to never let anyone take advantage of me nor to run over me.

Mom definitely was the guiding influence in my life. It was she whom I went to when I needed to talk, even being very frank with me before I married Nancy. She supported me in my spiritual walk and was a strong supporter of me in the ministry, showing great respect for me. Even though I chose to leave our denomination, she was still supportive of me, believing that I was following the will of God for my life.

Mom and Dad have finally found peace and rest. I have no doubt concerning their relationship with the Lord. They both provided all of us with so many wonderful attributes. We did learn the value of truth, honesty, and hard work. I believe we were exposed to all the values that are considered traditional, good, and wholesome. To Mom, especially, goes the tribute for teaching us faithfulness to God. She led the way, not only for our family, but for her entire extended family. She definitely was the first Pentecostal believer in her family. It was she who brought Dad from a Baptist background into Pentecost (however meager that might have been).

It was Mom who brought her Dad from a Hardshell Baptist background to the Pentecostal experience. She had a positive influence on Uncle Elton being saved and filled with the Holy Spirit, as well as his wife and family. Uncle Elton's family, other than his oldest daughter Eileen, were oneness Pentecost. Eileen, as was our family, had always been Assembly of God. Both of Eileen's children are Assembly of God pastors.

Mother was one of the most faithful persons to her church and Lord that I have ever known. I don't ever remember missing a single church service, whether it was Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday evening as well as revival services. She taught us faithfulness. Mom was also an avid tither, and she taught my Dad the value of tithing even before Dad was saved. The value of tithing has been instilled in their children and grandchildren. I see my mother as having been responsible for Raymond and me both being Spirit-filled ministers of the gospel. She was ordained of God to turn things around for her entire family.



Kenneth, Nancy, and Donia 2017



Kenneth and Nancy Meadors circa 1980



Donia and Kandi at Lyle's Wedding Reception 1998

## Chapter Two

### MY EARLY CHILDHOOD DAYS

#### Unto Them a Son Was Given

I was born September 15, 1939 near Osceola, Arkansas on Old Highway 61 that runs alongside the Mississippi River levee just north of Osceola. I was born in the first house from Osceola in a row of houses in a community called Jacksonville. The house I was born in was no more than fifty feet from the base of the levee. Mom was in labor with me for over twenty hours. I was born breech (butt) first. It must have been an anguishing time for Mom, and my understanding from my Aunt Florence as well as my Aunt Earlene, I was a miracle to have survived. I was born black and blue all over. Dr. Hudson from Luxora was the doctor who delivered me. Dr. Hudson was killed a few years later, when late at night he was called out for an emergency. He was hit by a train at the crossing coming into Luxora.



Mom and I

### **Very Early Recollections**

I do have some very early recollections of my childhood. Sometimes it's difficult to know if you really remember something or you have heard some of the stories from your parents. However, I do remember some places we lived in the country west of Osceola when I could not have been over three or four years old. I have vague memories of some places, one of which was where we lived some few miles from my Grandfather Thompson. I recall a flood, and my mother could not get home from her father's house. I also recall another place, which later I heard from my parents was on Carl Cannon's farm. This was a relatively new house built of rough, unpainted lumber. Very likely it was cypress, as many farmhouses in those days were built of cypress wood. Today, this would be very expensive wood.

When I was no more than four years old, I remember very well going to Memphis with Dad to my Aunt Corrine's house near Memphis to buy a cow. Uncle Ed and Aunt Florence had taken us in their car, pulling a trailer to transport the cow back home. It stormed all the way home with severe lightning and thunder. In fact, one of our neighbors had lightning hit his barn, and it burned to the ground. When we got back to the farm in Arkansas, it was so stormy, and it had rained so hard that it was impossible for Uncle Ed to get to our house. We lived on a dirt road, and it was mud and water. I remember walking from the main road down this dirt road for what could have been a mile on a stormy and rainy night, with Dad leading that cow behind him. It is amazing the things that we remember. Aren't they always something out of the ordinary? We usually only remember the things that are very pleasant or very unpleasant. We remember few if any mundane, ordinary events of life.

I also seem to vaguely remember staying at the end of a cotton row with my younger sister Dixie, and I couldn't have been more than three years old because I believe she couldn't have been much over one year of age. However, I remember more vividly living in a pecan grove, which was located on Highway 40 west of Osceola (now state highway 140). It was just past Dead Man's Corner, a sharp curve in the road that had evidently claimed the lives of a few folk who were driving a

little too fast. This farm belonged to Acie Morris. I could have been no more than 3 or 4 years old there. What is noteworthy, is that this place of residence was only a couple of miles from the location where my brother Raymond and I held a tent revival in 1971.

It was while living in the pecan grove that I specifically remember helping to engage in a little vandalism with my cousin Lloyd, who was six months older than I. My Dad had an old Ford. We would play in that car, pretending that we were driving. My cousin had a little mean streak in him, and I evidently was a pretty good follower. For some strange reason, he broke the headlights out of the car with a hammer. Man, was my Dad angry! My grandfather Thompson thought it was funny. To Dad, it was no laughing matter. It was only a short few days later that Lloyd and I busted up some of Papa's fruit jars (I don't recall the fruit jars as it was told to me later). The tide was turned; the shoe was on the other foot. This time it was Dad's turn to laugh and Papa's turn to be angry.

### **Spiritual Heritage**

It was during our time of living in the house in the pecan grove that I specifically remember the night my mother got saved. Nobody had to relate this story to me. I remember vividly the hot summer night. I remember a relatively small church, and the church was packed with people. I also recall riding to that church in a car with a little electric fan on the side of the steering column. Mother gave her heart to Jesus that night, and this was the beginning of her walk with the Lord that continued until her death. Actually, she is still walking with the Lord. It was from that point on that a significant change took place in the Meadors household. We would become very faithful worshippers in the house of the Lord. The little church where Mom was saved was a Pentecostal Church west of Osceola.

I definitely give my mother credit for our spirit-filled walk with the Lord. As I have already stated, because of my grandmother's death, my Mom's Dad was so devastated that he was left with six children to care for by himself. Therefore, the children were basically sent to other relatives' homes. My mother moved in with my grandmother's sister, Aunt Ambrillo,

who was living in Mississippi at the time. This was for several months. I do specifically remember Aunt Ambrillo as being a dear saint of the Lord who was one of the early members of the Assembly of God church. Was it a coincidence that my mother spend a significant period of time in her home? I believe not. No doubt Aunt Ambrillo had a great influence on mother's direction in life as far as her relationship with the Lord was concerned.

Isn't it interesting to see how certain turn of events in our lives can have a great impact for generations to come? Perhaps as the result of this limited time with her aunt, my mother was exposed to a woman who had a Pentecostal experience with the Lord. This had a direct effect on every member of her family, the greatest being with her own children. Aunt Ambrillo's influence on mother very well could have determined the spiritual destiny of my brother and me. Both of us are spirit-filled ministers of the gospel. It goes without saying, that our children have been impacted. They in turn will impact hundreds, maybe thousands of people, including their own offspring. We serve an awesome God!

I do recall Mom talking about persecution in the early days of Pentecost. She told about a man who killed another man who had thrown rotten eggs and rotten tomatoes on his wife along with other worshippers as they were riding home from church in a wagon. What a price many who have preceded us have paid. We stand on their shoulders today because of their commitment to the work of God.

### **Move to Old Town**

The next move I recall was to Old Town in Osceola. This was the old, original town of Osceola, which was right next to the river levee. The levee ran parallel to the Mississippi River, maybe 1/2 mile from the river. The land between the levee and the river served as an overflow for the flooded river, usually each spring. This land between the river and levee was completely dry in the summer, and that would be times I would spend a lot of time behind the levee.

The river would swell from the spring rains as well as the melting snow from up north. I have seen times when the river would be all the way up against the levee. In fact, Dad

said that the water was lapping over the top of the levee in the floods of 1927 and 1938. People were evacuated to the higher ground near Memphis, which was on a bluff. In 1973, the swollen river was threatening the safety of the levee in Southeast Missouri. The levee had to be reinforced with sandbags. In the levees, we are talking about a monumental mound of dirt. The levee was probably twenty to twenty-five feet high, twenty feet across the top (usually a road on top), and maybe sixty to eighty feet across the base.

Old Town was the dwelling places of most of the lower income families in Osceola. There were always lots of kids, noise, and excitement in this part of town. I don't recall any bad people—just poor, ordinary people who formed a relatively close-knit community. In fact, I remember one of my aunts living in a cabin that had canvas for walls, but it had a wooden floor. I guess you would call it a sophisticated tent! Days with this aunt were the days of bologna, liver cheese, Pepsi colas, and cookies. That's what I will always remember about going to Aunt Hildred's house. I always enjoyed going to her house and eating, because she had all of these delicacies! All we had at home was just plain, good, wholesome food, but sometimes a kid got tired of that and had to have a fix on junk food!

Our stay in Old Town wasn't for very long, perhaps a few months. I do remember one significant event while living there. It was when I was about four or five years old, and it was on a Sunday. My cousin Lloyd and I decided that we would wander behind the levee. Lloyd was an adventurous type. He had no restraints from his mother. His Dad had died in a car accident when he was only less than two years old. He seemed to have liberty to go when he pleased, wherever he pleased. But not so with me. My Mom and Dad kept a strict rein on my sister, Dixie, and me. However, I was "led astray a time or two," and I paid the price.

On this particular occasion, the river was up against the levee. The water was at least six or eight feet deep. Lloyd and I found an old rowboat tied up to the bank. We decided to take it out. When Dad finally found us, we were in the boat, and the boat was leaking. We did not know the danger, but Dad must have about panicked. I probably got one of the worst beatings of my whole life. Needless to say, I do not recall ever going

close to the river again until many years later when I was much older.

### **Move to New House on North Pearle Street**

I recall living on St. John Street for another short period of time. In the meantime, Dad had bought two lots across from the Osceola Oil Mill on North Pearle Street (the old U. S. 61 highway coming into Osceola). Dad was working at the Osceola Municipal Electric Power Plant at the time. In Dad's spare time, he was building us a new house. The house had three rooms with brick-siding felt on the side. We had an outdoor toilet; however, we did have a kitchen sink and running water in the house. Later, after Raymond was born, Dad added an extra bedroom and indoor bathroom facilities.

There was a black neighborhood behind our house. Several families would come to our house and draw water from an outside faucet on the edge of our property to carry to their houses, as they did not have running water. Dad charged each family \$.50 per month to help cover the extra cost of the water. I remember having some pretty good acquaintances with some of these black folks. There were some dear, precious, older black people who were very humble and poor. I always recall Osceola being a very neat and clean city with all streets paved except those in the black neighborhood.

The second lot that we had was a vegetable garden. I vividly recall working hours pulling nutgrass in the spring, planting the seed, hoeing the garden, and bringing in the vegetables when ripened. It also was my responsibility to keep the yard cut. We only had a manual rotary blade lawn mower, and if the grass got too big, it was a difficult job to cut the grass. If it got too big, I had to use a sling blade before using the lawnmower. Thank God now for riding lawnmowers!

Dad always had a batch of baby chickens that he raised. He had a little chicken house on stilts, which was about six by eight feet. This later became Dixie and my playhouse, and it was the place I preached my first sermon when I was probably about nine years old. I will never forget what I preached. It was, "And the Winds Blew Contrarily." No doubt this was a sermon a pastor had preached. Our congregation included two of our neighbor children, Bubba and Patsy Stokes.



Dixie and I in front of house on North Pearl Street in Osceola

Little chickens grow into big chickens, and big chickens need continued care, such as feeding and watering, and that was my responsibility. These chickens were prime candidates for Sunday dinner. Many times Dad would wring the chicken's neck. I never cared about eating chicken in those days, and the reason is because I could still see this dreadful scene of a flopping chicken giving his life for us. To this day, the memory of the smell of chicken feathers in hot scolding water still haunts me. However, I have eventually developed a taste for the white meat of a chicken. I still to this day cannot stand to gnaw on a chicken leg.

One of the hardest whippings I ever got (besides the time I was found behind the levee) was when I was about ten or eleven years old. It was in the hottest part of the summer, and I had failed to water the poor chickens. They had about died of thirst, and I deserved the whipping.

### **Starting to School**

We were living in this house on North Pearle Street when I started to school at Osceola Elementary School. I had to walk to school because there was no bus service for anyone who lived inside the city limits. It was about one mile to the school. Later, I rode my bicycle to school. I don't have the

customary sad stories of walking miles in the rain, sleet, and snow just to get to school, and I don't remember it being such a bad walk or ride. I recall Mom crying the first day that I left for school.

School was a new and exciting experience for me. Mrs. Foster was my first grade teacher. I remember being very fond of her, and reportedly she was a good teacher. I still remember the Dick, Jane, Spot, and Tag stories. I also remember the fairy tales, colorings, and songs such as Ole McDonald and Jack and Jill. I think probably kindergarten now is more advanced than first grade was then. Unfortunately (or fortunately), we didn't have kindergarten.



My first grade picture, 1945-46

My second grade teacher was Mrs. Miller. This same Mrs. Miller was my mother's second grade teacher some twenty-two years previously! Dr. Eldon Fairley, who was a noted citizen in Osceola before his death, was a classmate with Mom in the second grade. Mrs. Miller got sick in the middle of the year, and she retired. I don't recall who the teacher was who finished the year. My third grade teacher was Ms. Martin, whom I recall was a niece of the long-time senator from Arkansas, Senator McClellan. My fourth grade teacher was Ms. Pemberton. It was in the fourth grade that I realized that I had

special talents in mathematics. I recall making a 100 on a test when no one else did nearly as well.

### **A Baby Brother Is Born!**

It was in the fourth grade that a special thing happened. Dixie and I were each in our grade's school play. Dixie was a brownie, and I was an elf. We wore our costumes that Mom had sewn for us. The play was on a Friday night. Mom and Dad didn't go with us to the play, so Uncle Elton and Aunt Elizabeth came with us and took us home with them afterwards to spend the night. The next morning when we arrived back home, we understood a little better the events of the previous evening. There in bed with Mom was a new baby brother! Raymond had been born at home in the early morning of May 7, 1949, which was on a Saturday.

Dixie and I quickly took to this little guy. We adored him. Dixie was a good babysitter until the dirty diaper had to be changed. Raymond then became my responsibility. When Raymond was still a toddler, mother began working at a K-ration plant, a plant that prepared packages of food rations to be sent to our troops in Korea. Dixie and I together got \$.50 per day to babysit during the summer (must have been the summer of 1950). There was a time Mom took us to Steed's Ice Cream for a treat one evening. We were excited! We ordered a \$.25 banana split. That represented a whole day's pay! The split was good—in fact, too good, or at least too rich. Dixie and I both got sick.

Dixie and I were very close to each other growing up. She loved me, and I loved her. As small children, we often walked to the grocery store, about one half mile away, holding hands. I remember this being in the latter days of World War II, because there was a rationing of bubble gum. I guess the ingredient that went into bubble gum was crucial to the war. Maybe it was rubber! Well, actually I think it was sugar that was scarce. I remember kids had to preorder the bubble gum, and when it came in, the store owner would sell it to them. I recall an older girl who gave Dixie and me a piece of bubble gum. Boy, were we excited!

### **A Sad Day at the Zoo**

Probably one of the saddest stories (now it seems more so) of my life was the day the first graders were going to an end-of-the-year outing to the Memphis Zoo. Actually, Nancy gets upside anytime I make reference to this incident. Osceola was forty-five miles from Memphis, and this represented a major trip. Every kid was to bring something for a picnic lunch, and my responsibility was to bring a pack of cookies. Mom had given me \$.25 to spend at the zoo. She had intended for me to charge the bag of cookies at the neighborhood grocery store. I did not understand this, so I paid my \$.25 for the bag of cookies (little round fluffy marshmallow tops on a cookie). I had not one penny to spend at the zoo. I had no money for a coke or ice cream. Finally, a parent noticed that I didn't have anything all day (except the picnic lunch without anything to drink). When all the other kids were taking an afternoon break with cokes and ice cream, a parent must have felt sorry for this poor, red-headed freckled-face kid. She bought me an ice cream and a coke. When Mom found out what had happened, she was broken-hearted. I guess something like that would bring a tear to any loving parent. Twenty-five cents doesn't sound like a lot, but in those days it would have bought a coke, a couple of bars of candy, a pack of gum, and an ice cream cone.

### **A Very Ordinary Life**

I know that we did not have a lot of extras when I was young, but I don't ever remember going without the necessities of life. We always had a good warm house in the winter, but we had to suffer the heat of summer as we only had a window fan to stir the air. We had plenty of good food, and Mom was a good mother, housewife, and cook. We didn't have fancy clothes, but they were nice and presentable. Clothes usually consisted of blue jeans. I always had to wear the same clothes two days before laundering. This was to save laundering, as well as the wear and tear associated with continual laundering. I probably only had about two and certainly no more than three changes of clothes. However, I don't recall being out of the ordinary, but compared to the rich kids (and there were some),

I came up short. Compared to ordinary, average kids, I was the norm.

I don't recall us having a car until I was about seven or eight years old (other than the old Ford in the pecan grove). The first car I remember was a 1934 Ford that Dad bought for \$200.00 from one of the black men in the neighborhood behind us. Next, I recall a 1946 tan Studebaker. This was a normal looking coupe, not one of those airplane-looking Studebakers. It was a pretty nice car. Next, we bought a 1950 dark green Dodge (this was in 1951). Finally, we had a brand new car! A brand new 1953 Dodge bought in the fall of 1952!

When I was about nine years old, Dad began to work as an independent freight carrier from the railroad station to the businesses in Osceola. He had to buy his own truck, which was a relatively new 2-ton GMC with a canvas-covered bed. It was in this truck that I was trying to maneuver the emergency brake in the floor on the passenger side of the truck. The emergency brake was hard to move, but suddenly it freed itself. I went crashing into the dash, and that is where I got the chip in my top front tooth! I believe this was the night that Dad took Dixie and me to a circus in Osceola. It was a fun time, even though I got a chipped tooth that remains with me even until this day.

Dad was a relatively good father. I know that he didn't spend a lot of time with us growing up, especially when he was gone away from home working on the river. When he went out on the boat, he would be gone usually two to four weeks at a time. He would have half as many days off before he went back on the river. I do recall the days that Dad worked at the Osceola Electric Power Plant. He had some spare time when he would fix up my old bicycles. Every so often, he would completely redo them. He would then paint the bike and put new tires on it.

### **The Day That I Learned to Ride a Bicycle**

I shall never forget my experience of first learning to ride a bicycle. I was no more than six years old, and I learned to ride a huge, 27-inch boy's bicycle (most larger bikes were 26-inch models)! I could barely touch the pedals. Dad held the bicycle up until I got started. I remember one time that I took off and was headed for a railroad train track that led to the oil

mill. Unfortunately, a train was coming. Dad was running and screaming for me to stop. I could not stop. I kept going faster and faster. Dad ran faster and faster. He screamed louder and louder. He never could catch me, but finally I did what only I could do. I laid the bicycle over on its side in a small ditch beside the road. I did not know how to apply the brakes, but I knew that something would give if I hit that train, and it wouldn't have been the train! This was one of those early, exciting experience that you always remember.

I was about seven or eight years old when Mom and Dad bought me a brand new, maroon red, 24-inch bicycle from J. C. Penney. It was the prettiest bicycle I had ever seen. This was in the fall of the year, and I only had the bicycle for about six weeks before it came up missing. I was heart-broken. There were a lot of Mexican immigrant laborers for the cotton fields who were brought in by truck just for the harvest season. I was always told that it likely was a Mexican, because I was told that they had the reputation of being thieves (which might have been true, or it could have been the racism of that time). Even though this might have been a stereotype, it did make sense that if one did not have any particular strong code of morals, it would be easy to steal something since they would only be in the country for a short few weeks or months before going back home.



The bicycle I learned to ride on when I was about 6 years old.

One must be reminded, that in the 1940s, there was a lot of prejudice toward Blacks and Mexicans in Northeast Arkansas. I'm sure there were thieves who very conveniently blamed a lot on the poor Mexicans. At any rate, the bicycle never showed back up. I never got another new bicycle until I bought one myself when I was twelve years old. I bought this bicycle with my paper route money.

### **Worried About Fractions**

Mom was always very proud of me and my schoolwork. Even though I was an excellent student in everything, and in particular mathematics, Mom was still worried sick about me entering the fifth grade. She had remembered from her own experience that fifth grade was the year for students to be introduced to fractions. What a horrible thought! You would have thought I was about to enter a nuclear physics or calculus class! She had me scared. Needless to say, I never missed a beat. Fractions were just a piece of cake, as mathematics was my subject. As was proven in the next year, nobody else in my grade was my peer.

In fact, it was in the sixth grade that I had reached a certain level of notoriety in mathematics. One of my claims to fame was the fact that Billy Beall was my sixth grade math teacher. Billy Beall was an assistant football coach at the high school. He later became the head coach at Osceola High School, which usually represented a football power in Arkansas high schools. Billy Beall later became the backfield coach of Rice University, and eventually became the head football coach at Baylor University—and he was my 6th grade math teacher! I don't recall learning much of anything from him. Fortunately for me, I could read and learn on my own. I learned sixth grade math very well on my own. In fact, before the year was over, I was working from an eighth grade math book, as I had finished the sixth grade book, and Coach thought I could do eight grade work.

The reason I know that I did not learn much from Billy Beall is because his method of teaching was to turn students lose working on their own. He did grade the work and posted the correct number of solved problems on a chart on the bulletin board. I had almost twice as many as the next highest student

in the class! After graduating from high school, I received my Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in mathematics and taught several years of high school advanced math classes.

### **Some Early Extracurricular Activities**

Mom and Dad did allow me to join the Boy Scouts while still in Osceola. The main reason I joined the scouts was because one day a year, the Boy Scouts took over the city. They became the mayor, judge, policeman, jailer, etc. I'm sure that the officials did not completely relinquish their official duties, but this was a big day in the life of every young boy. I did go to scout meetings and had a full uniform including Buster Brown shoes, and I did actually get promoted to Tenderfoot!

I had the privilege of being a safety patrolman for several years in elementary school. This was an honor, as only certain select students were allowed to be patrolmen. We had our belt with a stripe across our chest with a badge on it. It felt mighty powerful to step into the street, and with an uplifted arm and whistle, hold back a whole line of traffic! To add to the honor, we got our picture in the Osceola Times at the beginning of the year. What a treat it was to see my picture in the paper!

### **The Day I Got Revenge**

My first cousin, Lloyd Moore, was a big, strong, and fast-footed kid who could have possibly been a star in the NFL. Lloyd won the junior high district 100-yard dash, and was the champion discus thrower. He was a natural athlete. He probably was almost 6 feet tall and weighed 180-185 pounds when he was a freshman in high school, and he could run like a deer! He was the starting halfback for the high school team when he was a freshman, and we are talking about a big-time high school program in the State of Arkansas. In fact, later in life, I met a guy who was an athlete in those days, and he said Lloyd Moore had the greatest potential of any football player he had ever seen. All this went down the drain, as Lloyd quit school in the eleventh grade to join the Marines. He was seventeen years old at the time, and he had to have his mother sign for him. Even though he was this tough guy, during boot

camp training, he begged his mother to get him out! Of course she didn't or couldn't, and Lloyd served his term honorably.

I would also like to convey an interesting story about my cousin Lloyd. It was when I preached the tent revival in Osceola in 1971. The subject was brought up, and Lloyd said, "Give me a bottle of Old Crow, and I can preach!" I remember him saying this, but a few years back when I mentioned this to him, he didn't remember it. I had the opinion that Lloyd was probably a drinker, but he told me that he never drank. To me, that was quite a testimony. Lloyd gave his heart to the Lord about ten to fifteen years before he passed a couple of years ago. Lloyd, may you rest in peace in the presence of our Heavenly Father.

Lloyd's sister, Bonnie Moore Younger moved to Memphis and became an outstanding golfer. She won the Memphis-Shelby County Women's championship several years in a row, in which outstanding younger college women golfers were in the tournament. Later, she became the Tennessee Seniors champion for several years in the 1990s. One year, she played as an amateur in the Sara Lee Tournament, which was a sanctioned tournament for the WPGA, the national professional league for women.

### **Protected from Worldly Influence**

My parents, in particular my mother, were strict holiness people. My mother did not believe in partaking of the world in any shape, form, or fashion. I recall the many years that she did not cut her hair nor use any make-up. In fact, I remember her being very critical of those "modernist" Assembly of God churches in Memphis where the women bobbed their hair and put on lipstick! They even wore short dresses that had no sleeves, or the neckline was low.

By no means were we ever allowed to go to a movie. Hollywood was corrupt, which no doubt was and certainly is today, but movies in those days would be G-rated now! But, for some reason, I went with our class to the local theatre while in elementary school to see a Walt Disney movie. I guess Mom must have given her approval, or else I wouldn't have gone. Boy, was this a treat! A real, live, Technicolor movie (though it was cartoon). However, there was an added feature (not in

color). The feature was a selection of some O'Henry short stories that I can still remember today. In fact, just yesterday, I went to YouTube, and some of these movies were available for viewing. Included in the movie I went to see were the Ransom of Red Feather, The Gift of the Magi, and The Last Leaf.

I recall only one other movie that I went to during all my years at home. That was when I was in the twelfth grade. I went with three or four other guys to take a two-day physical exam for Naval ROTC, and they convinced me one day to go see a movie. I was under conviction the whole time, but I did enjoy it. It was a movie featuring Fats Domino.

We never had a television set in our home all the time I was at home. I remember in 1952-53 going to Aunt Hildred's house to watch Roy Rogers, Dragnet, Red Skelton, Mr. Peepers, and I Love Lucy. Then, when we moved to Memphis, we went to another aunt's house every Saturday night to watch Lawrence Welk and Ozark Jubilee. I remember the twelve-year old Brenda Lee singing one of Hank Williams' songs. From there, she became a Hall of Fame singer. The first TV set my parents had was after I left home. Dad never wanted a color TV set, because to him, it wasn't realistic. The first TV set I owned was when Nancy, Donia, and I lived in Essex, Missouri in 1962.

### **Recollections of the Korean War**

I have some recollections of the Korean War. It started when I was about eleven years old. I remember hearing some guys sitting around and talking at the Osceola Cotton Oil Mill about the war. I never will forget them relating the story of a brave American soldier who killed something like twenty Koreans before he himself was finally killed. I also remember the end of the war. General Eisenhower was running as a Republican nominee for president. The thing I remember most was his promise to end the war. I could not understand as a young boy how someone could just end the war. If he could do it, why didn't Truman do it? However, he did end it. There probably were a lot of concessions, but it seems the Korean War was an unwinnable war.

I also remember how many people almost idolized General Douglas McArthur, who was the hero of World War II. In fact, he was one of only about three or four 5-star generals in

the history of the U.S. You recall that he wanted to cross the Yalu River into China to stop the war. President Truman did not agree, and General McArthur was dismissed from his post of duty. As of this writing, we as a nation are faced with a potential crisis with North Korea once again; North Korea is threatening to send a nuclear warhead to the west coast of the U. S. when they develop a missile to transport it.

### **He Liked Ike**

My grandfather Thompson was an Ike man. He definitely was one of those who adhered to "I Like Ike," which was a campaign slogan. This was significant, because my grandfather had never voted Republican in his whole life. He was a yellow-dog Democrat, which meant that he would vote for a yellow dog if he ran on the Democratic ticket! In those days, I didn't know any difference. I was disappointed that a Republican won. Why not? I had always heard that Democrats were for the poor people. I grew up on the merits of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was a savior of sorts to a lot of folks who came through the Great Depression. Now I understand how FDR could have been responsible for sending us down the road to government becoming the big daddy who handed out goodies to its citizens. He was one of the early proponents of what is now referred to as progressivism and liberalism. He was the originator of the "Great Society" later embraced by Lyndon Johnson. It was in college history that I discovered that FDR also sold us down the river to the communists at Yalta by allowing Russia to have a big slice of the conquered territory after they had entered the Pacific War just days before the end of the war.



My Maternal Grandfather, Sylvester Thompson

The Korean War was the only significant war fought during my early lifetime (except for World War II). I was older during the Korean conflict; therefore, I remember more about it. In fact, when I started to college in 1957, I was a member of the Air Force ROTC. It was a standing joke among the guys that if we messed up, we'd be sent to Korea. Fortunately, I was born at an advantageous time (that is if you don't relish the thought of going to war). I was too young for World War II and the Korean Conflict. I was too old (over twenty-six) for the Vietnamese War. Consequently, I was never drafted into the military. Two years of Air Force ROTC in college was the extent of my military training.



ROTC at Memphis State University



Mom, Dixie, and Me

## Chapter Three

### EARLY CHURCH EXPERIENCES

#### The Luxora Church

My earliest recollection of going to church on a regular basis was at the Assembly of God Church in Luxora. We were living in Osceola, which was five miles south of Luxora, as there was no Assembly of God Church in Osceola at the time. The only pastor I knew at Luxora was Rev. Everett Jones. I remember Bro. Jones always owned and drove a brand new Pontiac automobile. His son, Donnie, was probably about fourteen or fifteen years old then (he told me this just a few years ago when I met him at a conference), but he was the one who always drove to Osceola to pick our family up for church. I have some group pictures that include Dixie and me when we were just youngsters in this church. I want to express my appreciation to all the people who ever had any input into my life as far as church was concerned.

The Luxora Church was an exciting church. It was a very lively and vocal Pentecostal church. There seemed to have been a lot of Pentecostal power manifested. I remember the shouting and singing. I specifically remember Bro. Tubbs whom I recall was an illiterate man, but he had a tremendous experience with God. He reportedly prayed three hours each day. I didn't realize it then, but apparently he could not read or write, and he always had someone read the scripture for him. In later years, after I began pastoring in Hayti, Missouri, Bro. Tubbs pastored a church in Caruthersville and Marston. He has always been an inspiration to me as a praying man.

According to Donnie Jones, there were sixteen preachers that came out of the Luxora church during that time period. Some of the preachers that I knew were the aforementioned Bro. Tubbs, Donnie Jones, Donnie Williams, and Clay Brooks. Clay Brooks was the pastor of Crossroads Assembly of God in Gideon, which was a split from the Assembly of God Church in the town that I knew as a teenager.



My Sunday school Class at Luxora Assembly of God Church.  
That is I with The circle around my head.



Mom and my sister, Dixie. Looks like Mom is picking feathers off of chicken. Also, looks like cotton sack on right.

I know of a preacher later to come out of the Luxora church—Bishop Gary Clowers.

The Luxora church had pretty elaborate Christmas celebrations. I remember Christmas trees and Christmas Pageants. I also remember one of my Sunday school classes drawing names for Christmas gifts that were to be placed under the church Christmas tree and passed out on the Sunday night before Christmas. I drew my own name. I refused to let anyone know, because I knew what I was going to get. Guess what I bought myself? I bought a can of paste shoe polish and a yo-yo! That was what I wanted. I don't know if anyone ever knew about this or not, but I was not disappointed with my gift that Christmas.

### **Pioneering a New Church in Osceola**

The time had come for the Assemblies of God to plant a new church in Osceola. Our family was one of the founding families. The organization purchased a house on Broadway, which was just one block west of Old Town. It was a very nice, large house that could well have belonged to a person of distinction in earlier years. The house had a large screened-in porch on the front. The porch was closed in and became a part of the sanctuary. There were Sunday school classes in the back of the house as well as a parsonage for the pastor.

The first pastor, as I recall, was a Bro. Smith, who was from DeQueen, Arkansas. He was an older man. I still remember how he looked, but I don't remember much about him. I do recall that Bro. J.C. Dickinson was a pastor there. Bro. Dickinson had been a pastor of the Assembly of God Church in Blytheville, as well as Luxora.

The pastor I remember the most was Bro. E. Joe Wilmoth. Bro. Wilmoth later became the District Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in the state of Arkansas for many years (this was in the early 1980s). The church then moved to Highway 61 South in Osceola but is presently on Highway 140 just a couple of miles from I-75.

The highlight of my memories of the Osceola church was a revival sometime around 1950 or 1951 with Billy, Jack, Kathryn, and Vivian Campbell from Gideon, Missouri. Their revival was the one that made the greatest impression on me,

especially in my early formative years. The Campbell Trio consisted of Billy, Jack, and Kathryn, while Vivian was very quiet and stayed in the background.

Jack was the best guitar player I had ever heard up until that time. I immediately wanted to emulate him. In fact, I proceeded to build me a homemade guitar (just a toy) out of rubber bands. Boy, did I sing all the popular Campbell songs! It was during the Campbell revival that I heard for the first time "Oh What a Happy Day" which was recorded by the Rambos in the 1970s and became a number one gospel song in the nation. Another song I remember was "Jesus Use Me" that has become a standard in the gospel music world. Jack related that he wrote this song when he was separated from Billy and felt useless in the ministry without him. His prayer was that Jesus would use him. Jack wrote two other well-known songs—"I Know a Man Who Can" and "I've Got More to Go to Heaven for than I Had Yesterday."

### **I Thought the World Was Coming to an End!**

I was in church on a regular basis from the time that I was four years old. I had been exposed to every type of spiritual experience, and I never doubted the reality of any of them. I knew God was real, and I guess in my way, I loved the Lord. Yet, it was not until I was fourteen years old that I finally confessed publicly the Lord Jesus as my Savior. However, I did have an unusual experience when I was twelve years old. In those days, any child under twelve years of age was innocent and would have gone to heaven had they died. But, here I was twelve and had passed the threshold of "automatically" being saved. There had been numerous predictions in the newspapers concerning the world coming to an end on a certain day. I didn't think too much of it at first, but the closer the date approached, the more serious I became. Finally, on the eve of the supposed end of the world, I turned to my mother and told her that I wanted to get saved. She prayed with me in our living room.

This was on a Monday night. The world was supposed to come to an end on Tuesday. Our church service was on Thursday. I wasn't sure that I was going to be in the world come Thursday, but if I were, I was going to testify of the Lord's saving grace. I was a bashful kid and wasn't given to public

demonstrations. The world did not come to an end, and I wrestled with the dilemma of having to testify in church in just two days. I guess I was under a spirit of conviction. I had to testify. Thursday came. I fought the urge to testify. I never did testify until I genuinely gave my heart to Lord two years later.

As far as anyone other than my mother was concerned, I had never made a confession of faith. Actually, after this incident as a twelve-year old, I grew very cold in my experience. I suppose I never really considered being saved, believing that according to scripture, I had to believe in my heart and confess with my mouth. Of course, looking back now, I had confessed with my mouth with my mother. However, I was convinced I had to confess before the congregation. And again, remember, people felt that if they didn't testify in church, they certainly couldn't be an "on-fire Christian." At any rate, it was about two more years before I genuinely gave my heart to Jesus for real.

#### **Bro. Wilmoth's Interest**

I remember Bro. Joe Wilmoth giving special attention to my cousin Lloyd and me. He took us to play tennis one day; I'm sure that I didn't do too well. I didn't play again for many years, but at least here was a preacher who took some interest in a couple of young kids. Just recently, I was told by Jerry Spencer, a young Baptist boy, that Bro. Wilmoth had a great influence on him as a youngster when he lived down the street from the church.

The church had a cake and pie sale every Friday to help raise money to keep the church going. I guess that was okay, but I never felt this was God's way of financing his program. Usually, a church that has to depend on these types of financing don't usually prosper too much. In all fairness, I'm sure that those early pastors had a pretty tough time of it, and they have to be honored for making it any way they could. I know my mother was one of the faithful women who devoted her time and effort into these weekly acts of love.

#### **Sister "Whitehorse"**

There are usually a few humorous things that happen in church that you always remember. I recall that very seldom did we not have a testimony service at the church. I also don't remember too many times that my Uncle Judge (Raymond Alton Thompson) came to church with us. You see, Uncle Judge ran the local whiskey store, and he had the reputation of being one of the best domino players in the state of Arkansas, as he had a near-genius mathematical and logical mind. He evidently made a lot of money gambling on domino games.

On this particular night, Sis. Whitehead was leading the testimony service. When a brother in the church got up to testify, he addressed her as Sis. Whitehorse. My uncle got a big kick out of this. Maybe he thought this was a Freudian slip, because he stated that this brother was thinking about the brand of whiskey he used to drink!

The man whom I referred to as addressing Sis. Whitehead as Sis. Whitehorse was Melvin Curtright who later became the stepfather of my sister-in-law (my brother Ray's wife), Carol Farrington Meadors. Carol, her sister Georgia, and her Mom (Mary Espinosa Farrington Curtright) were living in New Mexico where Melvin worked for a railroad company. One cold wintry day, Melvin was working on the tracks on a handcar with his head wrapped to protect him from the cold. He was working upwind from an approaching train. He did not hear the horn, and subsequently, he met a tragic death. Since I had remembered Melvin from the Osceola Assembly of God Church, I was doubly saddened to hear the news.

There were many fond memories in Osceola. In fact, now from time to time, I still dream about it. It was here where I grew up. I recall the river, riding my bicycle all over town, playing little league baseball, going to Boy Scouts, being a School Safety Patrolman, having a paper route, and drinking cherry cokes at the drugstore where I went to pick up my Memphis Press Scimitar newspapers. Those were the days that I only made \$5.00 per week, but that went a long way toward buying 5-cent cokes, 5-cent candy bars, 5-cent ice cream cones, and 1-cent bubble gum.



The age when I had the paper route in Osceola.



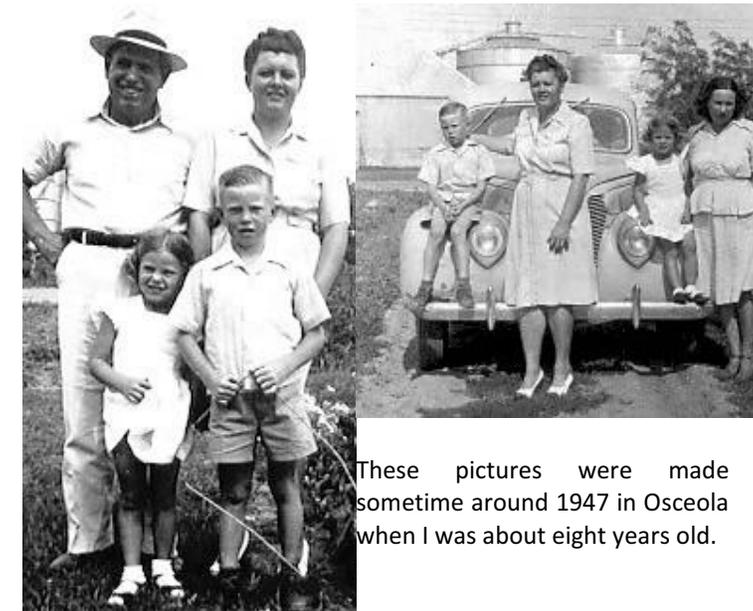
Larry, Bill, and I with my new Gibson guitar (notice date on right.).

## Chapter Four

### CLOSING YEARS OF THE OSCEOLA EXPERIENCE

#### Getting My First Job

I had picked some cotton on Saturdays and sometimes after school while living in Osceola. I do remember picking cotton using a "toe" sack (about a four-foot potato sack converted into a cotton-picking sack for kids). I would make a little spending money this way. I remember picking cotton for Mr. Simpson behind the levee. After the spring flood waters receded, the land behind the levee represented very fertile soil. Also, we picked cotton for Mr. Bledsoe, who farmed odd parcels of land between Highway 61 and a railroad track with a mule, and he put cotton in an ole mule wagon to haul to the gin. My family knew Mr. Bledsoe from the Luxora Church. In fact, his daughter Velda married my sister-in-law Carol's uncle, Joe Espinosa.



These pictures were made sometime around 1947 in Osceola when I was about eight years old.

My first real job was a paper route. I was about twelve years old at the time. Mr. Gibbs was the district manager for the Memphis Press Scimitar, an evening newspaper. The paper has since been discontinued. Papers were delivered to Siler Drug Store, and the paper boys had a table in the back where we folded our papers. I had a route of about ninety customers, and I made about \$5.00 a week. I think I would have made more, but I had the lower-income community, and a lot of folks still owe me money! I would have a big heart and continued to deliver papers even though the customer was behind on their bill. I thought they would eventually pay, and I couldn't stand to think about losing a customer. Eventually, I had to stop delivering papers to those who fell behind in their payments.

With the paper route, I did have some spending money, and I bought a new bicycle. I had money to buy cherry cokes every day at the drugstore. In fact, I sometimes had money to buy clothes, especially the extra things that Mom and Dad couldn't or wouldn't buy me. One such item was a hat and a brightly colored shirt of which I was very proud (I think this was the shirt I bought in my eighth grade picture in 1952-53).

A memorable occasion took place one Halloween. It was a cold and rainy evening. Dark had come early, and I had not finished my paper route. I was cold and wet, and I remember just crying from the agonizing discomfort and pressure of finishing my route. I was in a hurry to get home so I could go to the Halloween Carnival at the high school, which was a big event in those days in Osceola. Only rowdy boys went trick-or-treating, and I don't ever remember going trick-or-treating when I was growing up. I don't recall how it happened, but my mother showed up on the scene and helped me finish delivering my papers in the car. I guess Mom was concerned that I was not home, and perhaps she went looking for me. I will never forget this act of love. I got home in time to go to the Halloween Carnival.

### **The Summer of 1952**

The summer of 1952 proved to be a very significant one. Aunt Florence and Uncle Ed always went to Michigan to pick cherries after they laid their crops by (plowing them for the last time and awaiting the harvest) in Missouri. For some

reason, Dad decided that he and the family were going to Michigan to pick cherries! Only God knows what he would do after the cherry picking season was over. Perhaps he was planning to go back to the river, because he did end up there with a different position. We loaded up a two-wheel trailer that Dad had built and headed for Michigan. We got to Michigan only to find that we were two weeks too early. The cherries were not ready to pick, so Dad turned around and headed for Columbia, Missouri.



My sister Dixie and I when she was about ten and I was twelve years old. This was about the time we were in Columbia, Missouri in the summer of 1952

Dad had worked for Patton Tully Transportation Co., which had headquarters in Memphis. Patton Tully owned a towboat barge line, but their main work was doing government contract jobs working on the river channels as the Anderson Tully Company. This was done through pile driving and dredging the channels. Anderson Tully had a work project on the Missouri River near Jefferson City, Missouri. We moved

into an apartment in Columbia, and Dad began working river construction about twenty miles away.

This was a very memorable summer. I remember having some pretty good times. I met a young fellow named John Wolf, whose father was temporarily in Columbia working with the Missouri-Kansas-Texas ("Katy") railroad company. We moved into a furnished apartment on Range Line Street. It was at the apartment manager's residence, where a bunch of us guys were playing Rook with the lady manager. My mother was very upset. She really let that lady have it because she was polluting these young kids. It should be noted that mother became a Rook fan before she died. I remember many Christmases in the 1970s that Rook was the family game.

Dad worked long hours and made very good money. He brought home some pretty healthy paychecks, and we ate "high on the hog" (a pretty good upgrade in lifestyle). I remember Mom taking us kids to the Root Beer Shack and getting a root beer float almost every day. These floats only cost 25 cents each. I think we got hooked on them that summer, and then we had to return back to reality when we moved back to Osceola.



This is I, my sister Dixie, and brother Raymond. Raymond was about two years old at the time (1951). I was twelve and Dixie was ten years old.

Dad was still working on this job when school started. This was the beginning of the eighth grade for me. I immediately made an impression on some very impressionable students in the school, though I only went there for three weeks before moving back to Osceola.

We went to the Assembly of God Church while in Columbia. The pastor's name was Bro. Parker. His daughter, Donna, was in my class at school. She went home one day and told her parents about me making a humorous statement that the moon was made out of cheese! Of course, I knew better. I just had to make a remark that gave me a little attention!

### **Back to Familiar Surroundings**

After the summer of 1952, we returned back to familiar territory. We moved back to Osceola to the same house that we were living in. In fact, we never moved the furniture from it. We had rented a furnished apartment in Columbia. I was glad to be back home with familiar friends, but I was to be there only until the spring. It was then that we were to forever leave Osceola, the place where I had been born, and the place where I had spent my entire school life.

One of the highlights in my eighth grade year at Osceola was when Ben Taliaferro and I won the eighth grade doubles championship in ping pong! I had become a pretty good player by then. In fact, I had been a pretty good player through the rest of my life, probably reaching my zenith at Humes High School, where I taught in 1966-67. Sadly, Ben died in battle during the Vietnam War.



My grandfather, Sylvester Thompson, Grandmother Mariah Meldora Anthony Thompson, my uncle Elton, and Aunt Corrine. Uncle Elton was probably about six years old, so this must have been when Papa was about twenty-six, and Grandma was about twenty-five. Unfortunately, I never knew my grandmother Dora. She died when she gave birth to twins, Willie Mae and Mary Faye. Willie Mae died at sixteen months.

## Chapter Five

### GIDEON—THE PARENTHETICAL YEARS

#### Move to Gideon

Dad was working back at the Cotton Oil Mill across the street from our house in 1953 when he heard about a pretty good job at the Gideon Anderson Electric Power Plant in Gideon, Missouri. This proved to be the most significant move of my life. It was in Gideon that I found the Lord and spiritual direction for my life. Also, significantly, it was here that I met my wife, Nancy. As I have reflected, years from now when my descendants are looking through the census reports searching out their family history, they will find the William Henry Meadors family, with son William Kenneth Meadors, listed in the 1950 Arkansas Census. Then, they may discover in the 1960 Census that the family must have migrated to Tennessee from Arkansas.

If the census was the only basis for any future family searches, then they would have no inkling that nearly three very significant years were spent living in Gideon, Missouri. That is the reason I refer to Gideon as the “parenthetical years.” However, the fact that I am writing this account will give my family far more information than I ever had while doing family research to discover my family roots. Hopefully, there is enough information to give a pretty good picture to future generations of the life and times of William Kenneth Meadors. Perhaps I can record not only facts, but some feelings and emotions; some likes and dislikes; some important decisions and events in my life that may likely have an impact on generations to come.

#### First Day of School at Gideon

I arrived on the Gideon High School campus sometime around the first of March, 1953. It was on a Monday. Standing on the campus was a sea of young people, enjoying the warm March morning. Gideon Schools enrolled about eighteen hundred students in those days, as it was a relatively large

school district. In fact, at that time, area-wise, Gideon had the largest school district in the country. Out of all the people on the campus that day, my attention was immediately drawn to one girl. I don't remember being that girl-conscious at that time, but I could have begun getting interested in the opposite sex. There was one girl who stood above all else. I have attributed this attention to her beautiful, long, naturally curly hair that was attention-getting. She was a cute girl. But more than that, perhaps the Lord was bringing my attention to this young lady, because you see, it was she to whom I would make a lifelong commitment some seven years later.

Nancy was in the seventh grade, and I was in the eighth grade when we met. Nothing was said to her that day; it was just that my attention was directed toward her. It would be the following Sunday that I learned who this young lady was. Nancy's mother, Mama Walker, was a very friendly, outgoing lady who made herself available to new people in the church. She had noticed this new family in church, and she came over to introduce herself to us. She immediately gathered her three children, Nancy, Larry, and Billy to come meet the Meadors kids—Kenneth, Dixie, and little "Rudy" (Raymond). Just a few years ago, I wrote a song in honor of my meeting with Nancy:

#### **“The Girl with the Long Dark Curly Hair.”**

She was a beautiful girl; we were just thirteen.  
I was a plain guy; she was a teenage queen.  
I looked across the yard; she was standing there.  
She was the lovely girl with the long dark curly hair.

She had a pretty smile; her lovely eyes were green.  
She was someone special, to me she was my dream.  
Her green eyes just twinkled; her smooth skin was so fair.  
She was the pretty girl with the long dark curly hair.

Soon we got together; down the lane we walked.  
Then for many hours, we just sat and talked.  
We talked about what could be; our dreams we did share.  
Just me and my little girl with the long dark curly hair.

One day I asked her if she'd be my wife.  
I wanted to be with her for the rest of my life.  
Together we walked the aisle, and while she were standing there;  
She was a beautiful bride with her long dark curly hair.  
We started our life together; we raised a family.  
To each other we showed our loyalty.  
Together we walked life's walk; ev'rything we did share.  
She was my friend and lover with her long dark curly hair.

Many years have passed and gone, and now we're growing old.  
Our hair is turning white; our steps are a little slow.  
Together on the porch, we sit in our rocking chair.  
I still see her as the girl with the long dark curly hair.



Gideon High School. To the left of the front door is where I spotted Nancy, the girl with the long dark curly hair.

#### **Special Friends**

There was an almost immediate fit in my new Gideon experience. Larry, Billy, Nancy, along with Dixie and me, seemed to have so much in common. We all were very sincere,

God-fearing kids who didn't seem to fit in with the rest of the young people in the church. I say this because we always sat close to our parents in the annex of the church, while the majority of the other kids were sitting in the back of the church visiting, talking, writing notes, and running in and out of the church. The reason we were the type of kids we were was because of our parents. They would not allow us to be with the others in church. We had to be respectful and attentive in the house of the Lord, but that's not to say that we didn't have our kid times. I remember one time when Larry had fallen asleep in church with his mouth wide open, and Billy proceeded to put a big bug in his mouth.

After service on Sunday morning, Nancy and Larry associated with several of the kids who did sit in the back of the church. These kids always went home with the Walkers on Sunday after church. Dixie and I had our times when the Walker kids came to our house. Mama Walker could fix a feast on Sunday. It usually was the same menu, but it was extremely good. It usually consisted of roast beef, white beans, sweet potatoes, and when in season, strawberries and fresh tomatoes.

I especially remember the days on Number 2 Ditch. This was a flood ditch that drained the excess water off the land. Southeast Missouri was swamp land before these ditches were dug. Number 2 Ditch was a favorite water hole for swimming for neighboring kids. It was here when we jumped off a railroad trestle that crossed the ditch. We had some great times together there when we went to visit the Walkers.

All this time, Nancy and I paid little attention to each other. At some point in time, I believe it may have been during the ninth grade, that I had some interest in Nancy. In my very immature way, I guess I was making a play for her. This interest was more kidding and teasing than anything else while we picked cotton together in the Walker cotton fields. I think Billy and Larry poured a little fuel on the fire. I finally got the nerve to ask Nancy for one of her school pictures. She said that she didn't have one, but I'm not sure that I totally believed her then. I thought it was a brush-off, and I took it as a rejection. I guess that pretty well cooled our "romance," a romance that really never started.



Nancy's Seventh Grade Picture When I First Met Her

The Walkers and the Meadors were close in other endeavors. We went to the Jack Coe revival in Blytheville together. I recall our family going to Poplar Bluff to Faith Tabernacle, where Nancy's Aunt Louise Copeland was the pastor. This was a convention, and I believe that O. L. Jaggars was one of the main speakers. We also went together to many of the Holcomb Revival Center services.

### **Days of Revival**

It was in the year 1953 that the most important event in my life took place. It was during a revival in August of that year that things began to change for me. On Friday night, August 14, 1953, I had left the church during the altar service. I guess I must have gone outside, but I couldn't stay. Holy Ghost conviction brought me back inside where there was something powerful taking place in the altar. I decided that I wouldn't fight it any longer, so I went down to the altar and completely turned my life over to Jesus. I was gloriously saved that night, and I have not turned back since. That has been over sixty-three years ago now!

On Monday night, August 17, 1953, I was gloriously filled with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. It was not a worked up thing. It was not my mind or imagination. It was not through the power of suggestion. The Holy Spirit came to take His abode within me, and as I recall, it was as if I were blanking out. Everything around me became oblivious. My tongue became thick. Out of my mouth flowed the divine utterance of the Holy Spirit!



My Gideon Pastor, Rev. J. L. Whitaker

It was sometime around 1954 or 1955 that Bro. J. L. Whitaker, our pastor, came up to me and asked me when I was going to preach. Yes, it had crossed my mind, but no way had I ever given consent to it. It seemed that every time I got close to the Lord, this would be prevalent on my heart and mind. When I drifted a little, the call of God was of less significance.

From the time that I was in the ninth grade, I decided that I was going to take advantage of my mathematical and scientific ability. I knew that I wanted to be an engineer. That was my goal all the way through my freshman year in college. The direction of my life changed in 1958, when I finally said yes to the call of God for my life. I will elaborate on this a little later.

As I look back on church history now, I realize that those days in Gideon were the days of a very important revival in the Church, what later has been referred to as the latter rain outpouring. It was during those days when many of the healing evangelists were experiencing peak popularity. It was also in the days of very lengthy revivals. There was a six-week revival at one time in the Gideon Assembly of God Church with Fred Brand, a friend of our pastor, Rev. J. L. Whitaker.

Bro. Whitaker was a man who had pastored some rather significant Assembly of God churches in Florida. Why did he come to a small town in Missouri? Maybe it was because the church in Gideon wasn't small! The church averaged over four hundred people a Sunday for a long period of time under Bro. Whitaker. My understanding is that the church probably prospered more under a former pastor, Rev. W. P. Campbell. This was a very significant church in those days, especially in the Gideon community. It was the biggest church in town. Bro. Whitaker was a man who seemed to be open to the moving of the Spirit of God. I am sure that he was open to many aspects of the latter rain revival that did not set too well with the Assemblies of God District. In fact, I recall the district superintendent coming to mediate some problems that arose in the church over some of the spiritual things that were happening.

It was in Holcomb, Missouri where things were really happening. The Holcomb Revival Center was meeting in an old honky-tonk on Highway 25. It was founded and pastored by Johnny Little, who was previously from the church in Gideon. Johnny and his family were great singers and musicians. Not only that, Johnny was a pretty good preacher. He had a special gift of motivating people, and he usually built up a congregation wherever he went. More than that, he was subject to what God was doing in those days. As a consequence, the Holcomb Revival Center had a continuous three-year revival, seven days a week! These were not just meetings; these were revival services where the anointing of God was powerful.

I recall our family and the Walkers going to the Holcomb Revival Center several weeks in a row. This experience had a great impact upon my spiritual life. There were people coming from far and near. Assembly of God

pastors were coming, and they left with a renewed vision. This led to an increased pressure from the Assemblies for these pastors to stay away from this independent church revival. Many of these pastors turned their credentials in and followed on with this move of God. It was during this time that Bro. Whitaker led the church in Gideon into an independent Assembly of God church. The church then was called Bethel Assembly, which is the name this same church goes by today. However, in the intervening years, the church had returned to full fellowship with the Assemblies of God organization. Today, the Gideon church is just a shell of what it was in the 1950s, perhaps with no more than 50-75 people attending on Sunday mornings.

### **Guitar Playing Days**

This was the church you may recall where that terrific guitar picker Jack Campbell was going. Jack was my inspiration. My parents bought me a Harmon guitar for \$25.00. I learned all I could from Jack in order to begin practicing and playing. A bit later, Mom and Dad bought me a DeArmond electrical pick-up for my guitar. It wasn't long until there were some of us younger guys on the platform with Jack Campbell! James Payne was getting pretty good on the guitar. James would later go on to Nashville fame in country music, writing a song that became an all-time standard, selling 14,000,000 records and was recorded by eighty different artists in seven languages. That song, "Woman, Woman" was recorded by Gary Puckett and the Union Gap, and was still being played on Oldie Radio Stations over twenty-five years after it was written. James, who was known in Nashville as Jimmy Payne and the Payne Gang, wrote other songs that became No. 1 hits in country music. In the early 1990s, Jimmy was working for a music company in Nashville and was a deacon in an Assembly of God church. So, it was with Jimmy Payne and Jack Campbell that I was learning my licks on the guitar. Billy Walker, who later became my brother-in-law, was playing the mandolin. We had some great times together.

Before I moved to Memphis in 1955, I had started playing lead guitar with the All Star Gospel Singers on a radio program every Saturday over KTCB in Malden, Missouri. The

All Star Gospel Singers actually was a duet made up of a young man and young woman. This young man was Jimmy Payne, and the young lady was his niece Betty Beck. It was here at the Malden radio station that Betty met a disc jockey who would later become her husband. This jockey was none other than John Hartford, who became the lap-slapping, banjo picking, clogging, and riverboat singer of Nashville fame. John was a regular entertainer on the Smothers Brother's television show.



My Gibson ES-225T that I bought while in high school in 1956.

John's main claim to fame was a hit song that he wrote and Glenn Campbell recorded, "Gentle on My Mind." John appeared numerous times on the Glen Campbell Hour. Betty would become the mother of two of John's children, but they eventually divorced. John Hartford played all of the fiddle music for the very popular movie, "O Brother Where Art Thou." Sadly, John died of cancer less than a year after the movie came out. He was only sixty-two years old.

Betty was one of Nancy's best friends. She was the same age and grade as I in school. We all grew up together in the Gideon Assembly of God Church. Nancy and I saw Betty in Nashville about twenty-five years ago, and that was the first time I had seen her since leaving Gideon in December, 1955. I had seen Jimmy at a few homecomings at Gideon, Missouri, and I saw him in Nashville somewhere around 1990. A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since those days in the 50s back in Gideon. We have had many contacts with Betty over the last several years. In fact, Betty and I were a part of our

fiftieth anniversary of graduating from high school in 1957. Even though I did not graduate from Gideon, I was still considered an integral part of the Class of 57.

The first weekend before Labor Day, Gideon has a school reunion of all classes, and the fiftieth-anniversary class provides the entertainment at the Saturday night banquet. Our Class of 1957 celebrated our 50-year anniversary in 2007. We presented a music program of fifties music. I was honored in singing "A White Sport Coat," which by the way, can be seen on YouTube (another modern-day social media phenomenon). What made the program so special was the fact that Betty's son, Jamie Hartford, was the lead musician providing the background music for all of the songs. Jamie is a very accomplished guitarist, having traveled with the Everly Brothers as well as playing guitar on many of the songs in the Johnny Cash biographical movie, "I Walk the Line."

I was really just a beginning guitar picker in those early Gideon days. I did fairly well, but I wasn't polished by any stretch of the imagination. I remember I felt that I had really messed up trying to get some guitar licks in a song during the radio broadcast of the All Star Gospel Singers. I was so discouraged that I didn't even bother to show up for the radio program the next week. I didn't think it made Jimmy any difference. I got the feeling that I was not meeting his expectations. It really made me feel great when he bothered to call the high school and had me paged. He stated that he wanted me to continue to play for him, and this I did until we moved away. Jimmy, Nancy, Betty, Larry, and Billy blessed Dixie and me when they all came to Memphis to visit with us shortly after we had moved from Gideon.

It was the Walkers, Betty, Jimmy, Dixie, and I who went to Marston, Missouri while we were still living in Gideon to hear the great Louvin Brothers who were to be in concert at the community building. To our disappointment, we got there only to discover that they had cancelled the show. We were all Louvin Brothers fans. In fact, Billy and I have a photo where we are in cowboy hats, playing our mandolin and guitar, with a sign in front of us, saying "The Louvin Brothers." What a fantasy! Some of us younger guys were so much into music that it sometimes overshadowed our prayer lives. In fact, I recall that in one New Year's Watch Night Service, when everyone

else was in the sanctuary praying, Jimmy and I were in the fellowship hall playing the old year out and the New Year in!

### **Cott'n Pickin' Friends**

Jimmy was a hard working person. In fact, he was a tremendous cotton picker. I would have to say that some of us other kids were no slouches, either. My last year on the farm, I picked three hundred pounds of cotton one day. That remains my record, but I did get where I was averaging two hundred-fifty pounds a day, which is a lot of cotton. Cotton doesn't weigh very much! You don't slow down too much all day long. I believe that Nancy was a pretty good picker, also. She didn't pick many days, but I recall hearing that she picked over two hundred pounds one day. By the way, my sister, Dixie, only picked about one hundred pounds or less a day! My brother Ray may have picked fifteen or twenty pounds, but of course he was only five years old!

### **Highlight of the Eighth Grade in Gideon**

The last three months of the eighth grade that I spent in Gideon were somewhat eventful ones. For one, I succeeded in math in my third school of the year (Columbia, Osceola, and Gideon). A gold medal was awarded the outstanding student in each subject at an Awards Assembly at the end of the year at Gideon. Fortunately for me, the math award was based on a comprehensive exam given at the end of the year. I made the highest score on the exam for the gold medal much to the chagrin of the students who had been there all year. This gave me instant notoriety in Gideon. In fact, it was in Gideon where I began to be more sociable and gained more self-confidence. I guess I had felt somewhat inferior to many of the kids my age in Osceola. I lived in the less affluent areas of the city in Osceola, near the Mississippi River Levee on the east side of town. In Gideon, everyone was pretty much on the same level, as most of us were cotton-picking farmers! At any rate, I felt more accepted in Gideon.

## Joining the Debate Team

The next year was also an eventful one. I joined the debate team. Since I was only in the ninth grade, I was on the "B" team. My partner was Doris Hill. Doris was a very intelligent girl who came from a very common background as I did. In fact, she ended up being a co-valedictorian of the graduating class of 1957 at Gideon High School. Doris and I debated the negative of the question, "The President of the United States should be elected by the direct vote of the people." Both Doris and I were very ordinary but intelligent kids, but we both were from humble backgrounds. We didn't dress as well as the rest of the kids. Also, we both were very inexperienced in this debate arena.

Doris' and my first debate tournament was at Sikeston High School. The first debaters that we came up against were very intimidating. They were two guys who were dressed like Philadelphia lawyers, and they sounded like them, too. Boy, were they impressive to us. However, we gave it our best shot. We went on to two other debates that day. To everyone's surprise, even ours, at the end of the tournament when all the results were in, we had done better than any other debate team from Gideon that day. We had won all three debates!

By the way, I am now writing in the year 2017, and this same debate question was an important one in the 2016 presidential election as Hillary Clinton won the popular vote, but Donald Trump became president because he beat Hillary significantly in the electoral vote. Many considered this unfair, but the Electoral College was established in order that the smaller states could be more influential in the election. The candidate who got the most votes in each state got all of the electoral votes. The electoral votes equal the total of the Senators and Congress Members from each state. If a president were elected by the direct vote of the people, a candidate would only have to campaign in the larger states. For example, Clinton got three million more votes than Trump in the state of California. She got the same number of electoral votes as she would have if she had won by only one vote. This is one example to explain why Mr. Trump won the election. Of course, the same thing has happened in the past, including the presidential election of 2000, when President George W. Bush

got fifty thousand less popular votes than Al Gore. By the way, I might add, the constitution allows only two senators for each state regardless of the population, which gives each state equal footing. This is the American way.

## Castrating Pigs

It was during my freshman year that I had been convinced that agriculture was the way to go. After all, this was an agricultural community and perhaps I would be a farmer one day. I forwent the required subject of General Science so I could take a class in agriculture that required two periods a day. This was a good class, because it was taught by an outstanding Agricultural teacher, Arnold Matson. Mr. Matson eventually went to work for the State of Missouri in the Department of Agriculture. He was well organized in his class, and he required us to be, also. We learned about fertilizers, feed, seed, woodworking, and blacksmithing. We had one hour of lecture and one hour of shop each day.

The most memorable thing I remember about agriculture was going on a field trip to a farm and proceeding to castrate some little pigs. This was the procedure for raising pigs for market, because this helped to ensure that the meat was not tough as it would have been in an uncastrated pig. I was one of the students who had to castrate a pig after receiving a demonstration from the instructor. This was done with a single-edge razor blade without any anesthesia!

The next year, I had to take the required general science course. I never had science in school in my life. When I went to the science class the first week of the tenth grade, I was absolutely bored stiff. I went to the principal to see if I could get permission to fulfill my science requirement by taking chemistry. At a small high school such as Gideon, advanced classes of science and math were taught every other year. These advanced classes were offered only to juniors and seniors. My appeal was granted. I was the only sophomore in the chemistry class along with some very bright students, two of whom were valedictorians of their respective classes of 1955 and 1956. At the end of the year at the Awards Assembly, to everyone's surprise, including mine, I was awarded the gold medal for being the most outstanding chemistry student that year!

### Coming Out of a Shell

During my sophomore year, I was beginning to come out of my shell. I was more confident of myself, and I was able to interact and converse with the other students much better. In fact, I had a lead part as Commander Stone in the Sophomore Play, "Act Your Age." My junior year started out to be a good one at Gideon High School, as I was settling into things quite comfortably. I was making good grades with minimal effort. But there was another major move in the making for my family and me. It was in December of 1955, even before the end of the semester, when our family moved to Memphis. Before I elaborate on that move, let me share a bit more interesting information



I am on the far left. I was Commander Stone in the Sophomore Play, Act Your Age

### Cotton Picking Vacation

Gideon was a farming community, and everything revolved around the harvest of crops. There was a six-week "vacation" in the fall when school was dismissed for cotton picking. In order to allow for this six-week period, the new school year started in July. July and August were the hottest times of the year, and there was no air conditioning! In fact, I don't remember any ventilation fans. It was sweltering, and it is a wonder that anyone learned anything in those hot summer days.

Fall vacation was an exciting time. Most kids looked forward to it, because this was the only time they worked and got paid for it. Most families didn't pay their kids to chop cotton in the summer, but they paid them at cotton picking time for two basic reasons: (1) there was money coming in to pay them, and (2) this was the family's way to provide incentives to their children to work hard and earn money for school clothes. Fortunately, Dad paid Dixie and me half wages for cotton chopping and full wages for cotton picking. We did put our money to good use, as we bought all our clothes for the upcoming school year. In addition, we had to pay certain school fees, including a book fee, but I guess we must have had some spending money for our own use. I do recall that I bought a \$20.00 Schaffer snorkel ink pin. Just think that was more than three days' pay on the farm. I also bought a Bulova wrist watch for \$40.00, which was more than a week's pay!



I as a 16- Year Old Cotton Picker on the Farm

Our first fall in Gideon, we were living in town. That fall we picked cotton for George Lott and Nancy's Dad. The next two years, we were living on our own farm. How I hated those cold mornings when the dew was still on the cotton, and

our hands were raw from being pricked by the sharp points of the dried cotton bolls. There were many mornings I just about cried, because it was so miserable. The beginning of the cotton picking season was usually in September when it was still hot. Before the season was over, it was pretty cold, especially right after sun-up.

It was always good to get back to school to show off our new threads for the coming year. It was a time of exhibition. The craze in those days was see-through nylon shirts for the guys. Pink was also a popular color, as this was the beginning of the Elvis years. The normal wear for most guys was jeans and nylon shirts. For the better dressed, it was khaki's and nylon shirts.

### **The Jack Coe Revival**

A very memorable occasion while living in Gideon was going to hear the great Jack Coe in a crusade at the Armory in Blytheville, Arkansas, which was about fifty miles away. Jack Coe was one of the most noted healing evangelists of that day. He purportedly had the world's largest tent, even bigger than Ringling Brothers Circus. He was a bold and brash man who had reckless faith. I had heard him many times previously on radio, but now I had the privilege of seeing him in person. It was in December, 1954, when our family, along with Nancy and her family, took the drive several nights to Blytheville. I can still remember some of the scenes. Jack Coe would have two different services to accommodate the crowds. He would dismiss one crowd and let another one in.

I remember in those days that there was a running battle between Jack Coe and the Church of Christ. The Church of Christ was notorious for fighting against ministries that claimed to perform miracles. Jack Coe evidently loved a good fight, and he fought back. I remember seeing Church of Christ members picketing the meeting, carrying signs blasting the sensationalism of the Coe meetings. I heard reports that many of these picketers came inside to see what was going on and left as believers!

Jack Coe was a man who was very forward. He would do things that would make most people cringe. For example, he would hit people in the stomach who had a tumor, and the

tumor would disappear. He would take folks who came on the platform on crutches and put his knee in their back and bend them over. Sometimes, when people came for prayer on crutches, he would break the crutches across his knees before he prayed. Sometimes, he talked brashly to the people. There are those who say Smith Wigglesworth, a great healing evangelist in the early twentieth century, operated in the same manner.

I never will forget when my old Hardshell Baptist Grandfather Thompson came through the prayer line to be prayed for. He evidently was having some throbbing sensation in his neck. When asked how he felt after prayer, my grandfather replied, "It's still beating," to which Jack Coe retorted, "Well, I sure hope so!" My grandfather was referring to the beating of the blood pressure in his neck, and Jack Coe was responding to the hope that his heart was still beating! Everyone got a big laugh. I must confess that this was an experience that has remained indelibly imprinted on my mind. Raymond was about five years old at that time, and he was a mischievous little kid. He reminded me just recently that he sat in the balcony and spit on people below! He got several people quite upset at him. The little rascal!

### **A Mischievous Little Brother**

As I said, Raymond was a mischievous kid. He would run from Mom when she sought to discipline him. Mom became so frustrated. She would chase him, but to no avail. Finally, one day she got in her car and chased him down. Desperately, she sought the advice of an older person as to how she should handle this. This was our next door neighbor, Mrs. Hudson in Gideon. Mrs. Hudson indicated that she had always found it to be successful to put her kids to bed. Mom replied that would not even faze Raymond. However, Mom did find a cure. She locked him up in a bathroom. This may have had a traumatic psychological imprint on Raymond, but evidently it did work. There was no more running from her. By the way, I don't think I see any particular psychological distress in Raymond.

Nancy's family has told the story for years that they remembered the first time our family had visited them.

Raymond found some activities to occupy himself. He went into the hen house to bust up some hen eggs. That wasn't enough. He then proceeded to paint Daddy Bill's tractor tires with some red paint that he found nearby.



Raymond at Walker's Farm

A time that I'm sure Raymond will never forget was the time that he hid Mr. Britton's car keys. The Brittons had come to chop cotton for Dad. Cotton chopping was a 10-hour day work, and it wasn't easy. At the end of the day, one had more than earned their \$6.00. When it came quitting time, Mr. Britton could not find his car keys. I don't know how long they searched. Raymond was questioned, and he said he knew nothing about them. The search had to go for nearly half an hour. Probably suspecting that Raymond knew something, Mr. Britton said to Raymond, "I'll give you \$.50 if you can find the keys." Raymond replied, "I'll give you a dollar if you can find them!" Immediately, Dad picked up on this and proceeded to tear Raymond's bottom up. Raymond then went to retrieve the keys.

I had a special relationship with Raymond in his younger years. I was ten years older than he, and I really loved my little brother. He and I shared the same bedroom from the time he was about three or four years old until I left home at twenty. I took care of him in church. In fact, when I went home with my friends after service on Sunday, he cried to go with me. Sometimes I couldn't stand to see him cry, so I just took him with me.

When we moved to Memphis, I took Raymond to see the Memphis Chicks play minor league baseball. I also took him to several Memphis State football and basketball games. I was the one who was there to teach him how to throw and catch a baseball and football. In many respects, I guess you could say that I was a Daddy to him. When Raymond and I grew up and married, we both assumed our own individual responsibilities. These responsibilities would carry us in different directions. There were times when we went through a period of time that we did not have the regular contact with each other that we once experienced. However, today, we have as good a relationship as any two brothers can have.

Raymond and I have had many quality times together. In fact, we have enjoyed viewing March Madness (college basketball post-season national tournament) together over the last twenty-years or so, including places such as Las Vegas; Denver and Sterling in Colorado; Owensboro, Kentucky; Hayti, Missouri; and Cedartown and Cartersville in Georgia. Quite a feat, huh?

### **Driving the "Super H"**

I never did mind working on the farm. I enjoyed cotton picking because it was a challenge that was rewarded according to what you picked. I hated cotton chopping. Whether it was psychological or not, I would invariably get sick at my stomach in the hot sunshine. This was probably complicated by drinking the excruciatingly cold water that was always available. There is nothing any worse than being sick at your stomach with the sun bearing down on you and hitting one of those hard, dried clods with your chopping hoe. In the beginning, Dad had little mercy on me, but finally, he must have been convinced that maybe there was some legitimacy to my complaints.

Dad's back bothered him driving the tractor all day long. He would rather chop cotton. When he approached me about us switching roles, I was overjoyed. I took to tractor driving like a duck to water. I had driven the tractor in getting the ground ready for planting, but for the last year of our farming career, I did most of the cultivating in the summer. Dad chopped cotton in my stead. I got pretty good at driving that Super H Farmall tractor. Dad had bought this tractor brand new

with a four-row cultivator at the beginning of the second year of farming. This Super H was a big upgrade from the old worn out H that Dad bought from the previous tenant.

I was only about fifteen years old when we were living on the farm the first year. I had the responsibility of taking the cotton to the gin. Sometimes it was with the tractor pulling the trailer; and, at other times, it was our 1953 Dodge car. This was a highlight for me. One time when I drove the car to the gin, our insurance agent approached me. After that, Dad had to sign a statement relieving the insurance company of any liability should I have an accident, since I did not have a driver's license. I don't recall stop driving the car. I'm sure it is much different today.

### **Two Long Hot Summers**

I remember those farms years as being very lean. The summers of 1954 and 1955 were hot and dry. In fact, I still see record highs on weather reports today that show those years as still being records. There was little to no rain. The hot and dry weather did not seem to affect the cotton crops, because we did very well. In fact, we had about ten acres of "new ground" that had just been recently cleared of timber. One year we produced nearly twenty bales of cotton from those ten acres! For the remaining cotton ground, we got about a bale to the acre. Then, a bale to the acre was very good cotton, but I understand that today, because of scientific advancements, the yield is much better.

The good cotton crop was the only thing that kept us from being totally devastated. We had a government-enforced cotton allotment of about thirty acres. The rest was planted in soybeans, except for a few acres of corn that was grown to feed our cows and hogs. The soybeans barely made the seed back, as the best soil was reserved for cotton. Cotton was the staple crop that brought in most of the cash. Our soybean soil was very poor and sandy, which was devastating for growing soybeans in an extreme drought. Dad always said hot summer nights were best for growing cotton.

It is amazing how conscious of the weather you become when you are so dependent upon it. I remember as a young boy how excited I got when there would be thundering. Most of the

time during those summers, it would be a false alarm. However, there was one time that the rains came. It must have rained a couple of inches. Boy, was it refreshing. There was an exhilarating feeling around the Meadors household, and we celebrated by going swimming in an old water hole! But, there wasn't any more rain for the remainder of the summer.

### **Cows, Pigs, and Chickens**

Dad always had a milk cow and usually a calf and a few hogs. Dad really relished the idea of being totally self-sufficient, which I don't think we ever obtained. However, we did have fresh milk and eggs every day. We butchered a calf and a hog every year. I remember us having a calf that we called Jerry (a Jersey calf), and we became very attached to him. Dixie and I cried when he was taken to the slaughter house. I don't think we kids were able to eat any of this beef, at least for a long time. I also remember the horror of those squealing hogs when we tried to load them on the trailer to take to the slaughter house. And, then, there was always a large vegetable garden that provided fresh food in the summer, and canned food in the winter.

Hog-killing time was after the weather got cold. There would be fresh meat for a while, and then the other was taken to a freezer in town where we paid to have it stored at Elam's Store. We went there to get our meat whenever we got ready to eat it. Finally, Dad bought his own 20-foot chest freezer, which we had for many years, even after we moved to Memphis.

### **Introduced to the Life of Dating**

I went back to Osceola to spend some time with Aunt Hildred and my cousins, Lloyd and Bonnie, the first summer after we moved to Gideon. I was almost fourteen at the time, and it was while I was there that I was introduced to some facts of dating. I remember Lloyd and his friend Robert Porter had an old car that barely would run. You have to keep in mind that none of us were over fourteen or fifteen years old. Robert had a girlfriend, and they took Lloyd and me to pick up two sisters, and we were supposed to be three couples. I was the designated driver. Lloyd and Robert were making out pretty good with

their girlfriends, but I was so backward that I don't even remember talking to the girl I was with. If my memory serves me correctly, she was a very cute little girl. In fact, she and her sister both were dolls.

Here's the crux of the story. For some reason, I lost control of the car, and we ended up in a ditch on a country road. We couldn't get the car out. In fact, I don't believe we were even able to start it. I don't remember the details, but evidently we had to walk for a distance to obtain help. I never lived this incident down. Being the carnally-minded person that Curtis was (Lloyd's stepfather), he told people that I had my hand up this girl's dress, and I got so excited that I ran off into a ditch! That hurt me deeply, because I had never done anything out of the way, and I just knew that everybody was going to believe him. Fortunately for me, not many people ever believed Curtis in anything that he ever told, because he had a reputation of not always telling the truth.

### **One Time Curtis Told the Truth**

There was one time that Curtis told the truth. It was at the funeral home in Osceola after Mom and Dad were killed. Curtis told Raymond and me that he had gone by Mom and Dad's house, and he saw the car keys locked inside the car (my parent's accident was in my Dad's pickup truck with a camper shell on the bed). We had wondered what we would do, because we were sure that the keys were destroyed in the fire of the fatal crash. My Aunt Hildred said to Curtis, "Curtis, you will lie about anything. You ought to be ashamed of yourself." To our surprise, the keys were in the switch with the door locked just as Curtis had said. This was a total shock because we had never known our mother to be that careless. Was this the providence of God that allowed us to retrieve those keys and have access to this automobile? That was one time that Curtis really did tell the truth.



Ken and I right after Brandon's funeral in 2012



Donia, Ken, and Lyle circa 2014



Donia and Lyle at Lyle's Wedding in 1998



Donia and Lyle in Jasper circa 1996

## Chapter Six

### THE FAMILY MOVES TO MEMPHIS

#### A Review of the Farm Days

As I have stated, the two years on the farm in 1954 and 1955 served to bring about some major changes in the Meadors household. My Dad felt very badly that he had failed in his lifelong dream of being a farmer on his own. In his younger days, he was just a farm laborer. Farmers were either sharecroppers or tenant farmers (unless you owned your own land). A sharecropper did not have to have his own farming equipment. Neither did he have to pay for seed, fertilizer, nor gasoline for the tractor. He did all of the work, such as breaking up the ground for planting, planting, cultivating, and then harvesting the crops. For his share, he received one-half of the money produced from the sale of the commodities. On the other hand, a tenant farmer was his own businessman. He rented the land and was responsible for everything to make the crop. The land owner just collected his share, which was one-fourth of the cotton and one-third of corn and soybeans. Dad was a tenant farmer.

Farming was very hard, but my Dad thrived on it. He enjoyed getting up at daybreak and working until dark. He was his own boss and was not answerable to anyone. He did not have to punch a time clock. His freedom gave him a great sense of satisfaction. And here he was, at the end of a second disastrous harvest, a broke and broken man. Dad felt badly for Mom and the kids for the hardship they had gone through. Dad had sold our home in Osceola to invest in the farming venture. He had little to show for it after two disastrous years of drought.

You must understand that prior to these farm years, our family had lived in relatively modern homes. This was the case in Osceola, as well as our first year in Gideon. We lived in a very nice modern house in a good neighbor in Gideon. In fact, Nancy has often reflected that she always thought we lived in the neatest house. Compared to the country house she had lived in most of her life, this was probable the case.

After having enjoyed the modern facilities of a good house that was warmed by a fuel oil stove, and one that had modern facilities of indoor plumbing—including bathroom and hot running water—a move to a more primitive setting was quite a cultural shock. I can recall how Dad drove across the countryside on Sunday afternoons just looking for a potential farm. He looked at farm after farm. Invariably, the utmost question on my and Dixie's minds was, "Does it have an indoor toilet?" I shall never forget the time that Dad lost his cool after having heard this repeated question. He replied, "No, it doesn't have a d--- bathroom, nor does it have an electric tail-wiper!"

Finally, a farm was located. It was a 97-acre farm owned by Mr. Roy Elam on number six ditch about six miles north of Gideon. Mr. Elam was a gentleman, but he did not have a decent house on this farm. It was an old, run-down house that was very open and airy. The walls had layers and layers of old wallpaper. The floors were rough. The outside was rough and unpainted. There was no grass in the yard. It was not a real desirable house even by the standards of those days. It had no indoor plumbing of any sort. There was an outhouse and an old hand pump for terrible tasting water about twenty-five feet from the house. Mom had her washing machine next to the pump where she did her washing every Monday. Tuesday was devoted to ironing the clothes.

I shall never forget the cold, cold days when I had to go and expose my underside to the elements in order to use the toilet. I never sat on the hole. I was always afraid that a spider or a snake would come from the regions below and bite my rear end! I always stood in a stooped position over the hole! In the winter, this was only in the daytime, because no one in his right mind would venture out into the cold, dark night for an outdoor toilet experience. Therefore, we had what was called a slop-jar. This was a container (with a lid) that filled up during the night with five people in the household. Actually, I believe Dad always went outside. Yet, to say the least, this was a very smelly pot the next morning. I don't remember whose responsibility it was to empty it. It was probably mine.

My main chore in the winter was to bring in buckets of coal at night and then to get up every morning before daylight to get the fire going again. You have to keep in mind that in the wintertime, the inside temperature hovered somewhere around

the freezing mark (inside the house). In the mornings, the old coal stove had hot coals simmering in the ashes. I had to open the ventilation door, shake the grates to remove the ashes, and then fill the stove up with fresh coal. I then went back to bed. When the family finally got up, the house was warm.

I have painted this picture so you could get an idea how excited and blessed we were when we were finally delivered from this torturous (to me) environment. To seek to make amends, Dad had agreed that he would return back to the river so that the family could be taken care of financially. Dad looked for a house in Portageville because there was a Greyhound Bus Station there where he could come to when he had days off from the river. However, this plan never materialized. Finally, it was decided that since the riverboat headquarters were in Memphis, we would just move there.

### **A New Start in Memphis**

Dad had gotten enough equity out of the farm equipment to buy Mom some new furniture. Mom purchased a new living room and bedroom suite in Malden and moved them with the other furniture to Memphis. Dad also had about \$500.00 which he used as a down payment on a brand new 3-bedroom modern house in a new subdivision in Frayser, which at that time was a suburb outside the city limits of Memphis. This in our opinion was a mansion compared to the house we left behind in Gideon! It had hardwood floors, a gas floor furnace, a bathroom, hot water, and a modern kitchen. This was the house that Mom and Dad lived in for the rest of their lives that ended in 1979. The move from Gideon to Memphis had been in December of 1955.

There were times years later that Dad was tempted to try and move away from Memphis and return back to a simpler life in the country, but Mom was very adamant and stood her ground. She refused to budge. She had finally found a place to settle, and she wasn't going through anymore experiences that subjected her to the lacks of the past.



This is the house that Mom and Dad bought in 1955 when we moved to Memphis. This picture is of my brother Raymond and me when we went back to visit the house sometime around 2009.

Because of Dad's humbled spirit from his failed financial dealings, he very faithfully worked on the river, sent the paychecks back home to Mom, and depended on Mom to take care of all the business. Mom was a very excellent manager. She did very well in taking care of the finances of the household. In fact, I give her credit for the accumulations that she and Dad had upon their death. They had a nice house, which was enlarged and improved. Mom had the best furniture of her life, and she took good care of it. She had great pride in her house, and she became a very good housekeeper. She had equal pride in the appearance of the outside. Mom and Dad's house became one of the more attractive homes in their neighborhood with a well-manicured lawn.

### **Our First Sunday in Memphis**

Mom was a very faithful Christian who was loyal to the house of God. We had not missed a single service in our transition from Arkansas to Missouri in 1953. This was also the case in our move from Missouri to Memphis in 1955. We did not miss a single service in either transition.

The very first Sunday we were in Memphis, we visited Bethel Assembly on Chelsea Avenue, pastored by Frank Masserano. I believe the reason we visited this church was because it had the same name as the church we had just left in Gideon. However, this was to have been the one and only time that we went to this church (actually, we may have visited there for a special revival service or two later). The pastor of Bethel Assembly is now Frank Masserano, Jr., a young man who worked with me in my later Food Center days while attending college.

On the first Sunday night we lived in Memphis, we visited a church closer to where we lived. This was Rugby Park Assembly of God in Frayser where Bro. E. L. Adcock was the pastor, and we immediately felt at home there. Perhaps it was because of Bro. Adcock's down-home personality. He was a fiery, Pentecostal, walk-the-straight-and-narrow preacher. We settled in here and became members. This was the only church that Mom and Dad belonged to in all their nearly twenty-four years in Memphis. I had left the church sometime around 1959, when Bro. Adcock started a new Assembly of God Church in Raleigh, Tennessee, a suburb of Memphis just east of Frayser.

### **Rugby Park Assembly of God Church**

It was at Rugby Park Assembly of God that I grew in the Lord during my teenage years. We had a strong youth group that loved the Lord and was growing spiritually. In fact, I became the young people's leader within a couple of years (the C. A. group). Under my leadership, we gathered a pretty significant representation to attend Sectional C.A. Rallies. We brought the banner home every month, and that included all of the Assembly churches in Memphis and Shelby County.

Immediately at Rugby, I found my place in the music department. From the very beginning, I played my guitar in every service. Sis. Adcock was also a guitar player, and she had an old Martin guitar. Billie Sue Crawford was a year older than I, and she was the church pianist. Rusty Rutledge later became one of my guitar-playing buddies. We had some great times musically at Rugby. Later, I found a young man at Frayser High School, Bill Cameron, who was a member of the

United Pentecostal Church, and he and I played guitars together on many occasions.

### **Beginning at Frayser High School**

I now was attending a relatively large (compared to Gideon) high school. Frayser High School was then a part of the Shelby County School System. Frayser would not be annexed into the city of Memphis until the fall of 1957. My first impression of my new school was that of city kids, which in my opinion were very different from the country kids in Missouri. There were some decent kids from some well-respected homes. There were also some kids from rather ordinary neighborhoods. Then, there were some who were considered "greasers." These were the ones who had long, greasy hair, had ducktails, and wore leather jackets. Some were motorcycle types, even though I don't remember seeing any motorcycles! There was one young man who was called Bardahl (the name of a popular motor oil additive) because of his greased head. There were others, that I learned later would fit the description of a true "redneck."



Frayser High School in Memphis

I did not fit in with most of these groups. I felt much more comfortable with the good, sincere, studious kids who weren't afraid to take flack for wanting to make good grades. I, along with them, became targets of some of these off-beaters who referred to us as "brown-nosers." I will not seek to describe

where this term originated; I will simply let you fill in the blank spaces. We did seek to do what was right. We wanted to be obedient and responsible to our teachers. We did do well in school, so why should not the teachers appreciate these kids? As a teacher myself later, I certainly did appreciate kids who tried to make something out of themselves and have the proper respect for those who were in authority.

There were some adjustments to be made in my transition from a small rural high school to a more urban one. In many regards, Gideon High School had higher standards. In fact, I believe that I could accurately say, that overall, good grades were more difficult to make in Gideon than at Frayser. I only had difficulty in one area that first year at Frayser. That was in Mechanical Drawing (engineer drawing). The class at Frayser was much more advanced. I arrived at the school about three weeks before the end of the first semester of my junior year. My semester grade was not too good in Mechanical Drawing, although my grades were excellent in all other subjects. I was taking geometry, physics, American history, English III, Mechanical Drawing, typing, and Physical Education. During the second semester, I got the hang of things and began making good grades in Mechanical Drawing.

My physics teacher was very interesting. He was Mr. Dunlap, and he was also the track coach. Mr. Dunlap was a super guy who related very well with his students, but you didn't learn very much physics. It was very easy to get him off the subject onto something more interesting than physics. Consequently, most of our time, which should have been devoted to physics, was spent in talking about everyday things, mostly sports.

### **My First Memphis Job**

I had an interest in going out for the football team in the fall of 1956, which was my senior year. However, finding a job (which I did) became my major priority. I had a friend in my class, Billy Brown, who was working as a meat-cutting apprentice at Holmes Easy Way grocery store in Frayser. He got me a job working as a stocker, bag-boy, and grocery deliverer at the store. If a customer did not have a way home, I drove them and their groceries in the owner's brand new 1956

Oldsmobile 88. It was a dream car. I enjoyed getting away from the store and taking this smooth running Olds around Frayser.

I worked thirty-three hours per week, and my gross pay was \$16.00. My take-home pay was \$12.88. This didn't sound like much (and it wasn't, even by the standards of those days—larger supermarkets paid \$.75 per hour), but it was very helpful. It gave me necessary spending and expense money, as well as enabling me to purchase my very first Gibson guitar. It was an electric, thin hollow bodied model (ES225) guitar, which I still have and play today. To me, this was one of the prettiest guitars I had seen at that time. I also bought me a double speaker Silvertone amplifier from Sears that was traded in for the Fender Tremolux amp that I still own today.

There were several noteworthy events of my senior year. My senior year was the academically best of my high school career, even though I worked thirty-three hours per week. I carried a pretty demanding schedule and still managed to have a 98.5 average in all classes for the entire year. My subjects that year included English IV, Advanced Algebra, Trigonometry/Solid Geometry, Bookkeeping, American Government, and P. E. Senior English required twenty book reports as well as a Research Paper. I don't remember reading many books at all, but I satisfied the requirements in the English class by giving reports from classic comic books based on the actual book. I rarely ever had to study at night, and never stayed up late to study. In fact, I burned the "midnight oil" only about two times in my entire college career. If I didn't get my high school work in study hall, I just didn't get it. However, I fortunately did not require very much extra studying in high school.

### **Naval ROTC**

It was during my senior year that every senior boy took an examination that could lead to a fully paid four-year scholarship. The scholarship was for any of several colleges that had Naval ROTC programs, including some of the top engineering schools in the country. I believe this test was about the same as a "Stanine Test" that I took at M. S. U. in Air Force ROTC. I along with only two other senior boys passed this

examination. According to the principal, there had only been two others in the past several years who had passed the exam.

The next phase of the ROTC procedure was to go to Nashville, Tennessee for a two-day physical examination. We were told then that one had to be almost a perfect specimen to pass. Perfect vision was a must. That never even crossed my mind as being a problem. My major concern was that of fallen arches (flat-footedness). I always thought I had flat feet. However, to my surprise I passed everything, including the "flat-foot test," except for one—the vision test. I never before even suspected that I had a vision problem. Upon my return to Memphis, I went to an ophthalmologist to find that this deficiency was verified. It was then, that I began wearing glasses. This eye deficiency eliminated me from further consideration for the ROTC program, but isn't God marvelous? Had I passed that exam, my life no doubt would have taken a totally different turn. I would have been obligated to serve four years as an officer in the Navy. That could have led to a military career. How could we ever question the divine sovereignty of God who leads us in His paths?

It was during our two-day stay in Nashville that brought some memorable times. There were four of us guys who made the trip together. These guys were Eddie Claunch, Vernon Brown, and a third guy, Ronnie DeLancy, who just went along for the trip. These were all good, clean-cut guys with whom no parent would have any problems. None of us went further in the Navy program, but all three of us did enroll at Memphis State University, and all three of us were automatically enrolled in the mandatory two-year Air Force ROTC program. The other two guys were eventually commissioned into the Air Force as second lieutenants after having gone through the four-year Air Force ROTC program. Also, I recall that the Army had approached me at the end of my senior year of high school, trying to enlist me for special services, offering me the opportunity to go into intelligence. This I refused, which again seemed to have been in the plan and purpose of God for my life.

### **A Cheap, Sleazy Hotel**

Let me tell you about some of our experiences while in Nashville. None of us came from affluent families. We all were

of very meager means; therefore, we sought the cheapest hotel we could find in Nashville. It was a sleazy hotel that had activity going on all night long. We got very little sleep, and we sought for other accommodations the next night. This was at the local Y. M. C. A.! Here, we all slept in one big open space! There is no telling what kind of characters were there lurking in the night, but it was far better than the night before.

### **Exposed to the Evils of Nashville**

It was while in Nashville that I was exposed to the pressures of the evil world. As I said, all of these guys were very decent guys who never did anything out of the way while in Nashville except to go to a movie! They kept insisting on me to go with them, but I resisted. I never said that it was against my conviction. I don't believe I ever stated that my parents disapproved. I did state something to the effect that "my church didn't believe in it." By the way, this was the evil I was referring to!

To tell the truth, my parents would not and did not approve of movie theaters. They would not allow us to go. However, I did give in to the pressure. I went with these guys to see a movie, starring Fats Domino. This was a movie that depicted some of the more popular rock-n-rollers of the day. It was a decent movie, but I couldn't really enjoy it fearing that the wrath of God was going to strike me. I was convinced Jesus would never have been caught in such a place, and if He came back to rapture the church, perhaps I would have been left behind. That was heavy, but it was the worst thing I did in those two days away from home in the far-away "sinful" city of Nashville, Tennessee.

Another notable event in my senior year was the Senior Skip Day. This was the day that everyone in our senior class was to stay away from school. Even the good guys went along with it, including myself. There must have been at least 75-80% of the senior class that did not show up for school. Most of the kids went off having a great fun day. I chose to skip, but I called my boss at work to see if I could work some extra hours that day. He agreed. However, it was just a short time after I went to work that I got a call from a friend of mine. He had not skipped school. My math teacher, Miss Bridger, was my

favorite teacher. She told Allen that if there was any way possible for him to contact me that he should do so. She was concerned for me, as she related that there would be severe punishments for those who did not return to school immediately. There was the threat of kicking all offenders out of every club, banning them from the honor roll, and stripping them of all awards and class offices. That was pretty severe, and unfortunately for many, it was enforced.

Our class graduated without a president. Many deserving kids were banned from the honor roll and the Beta Club, which was a national honor society. They were kicked out of all clubs. That sounded harsh, but if the same type of restraints were enforced today, there possibly would be less violence, less disturbances, and more respect for those in authority. Fortunately for me, I was spared because I immediately returned to school.



Rugby Park Teens, Dixie, Laura, Chester, Mae, and I

### **A "Wild" Bunch of Kids**

My true friends were those with whom I associated at church. We young people did have some great times. We had a close knit group that always enjoyed going out together after

church on Sunday nights. This included going to the local root beer shack. On some of our wilder nights, we would drive into Memphis to drag Main Street and Beale Street. We really did some crazy things that probably would have gotten us shot today. They usually were initiated by a couple of rowdy guys who did call themselves Christians, but needless to say, these were not the type activities of which the Lord would have been pleased—such as throwing out racial epithets.

Some of our more honorable activities included a summer picnic day at Shelby Forest National Park, which was about fifteen miles north of Frayser, near Millington, Tennessee. Other outings included a day at the zoo or at the fairgrounds. Miniature golfing was a pretty popular and harmless activity in which we engaged. In fact, most of the real dates I ever had were either parking at the Root Beer Shack, driving around town, or playing miniature golf. There never were any movies, bowling alleys, or swimming pools for us kids.

### **A Trip to the Grand Ole Opry**

Another memorable occasion was when about three couples of young people went to Nashville to see the Grand Ole Opry. It was about a four-hour drive across a two-lane highway, U. S. 70. We left early on Saturday and returned after the Opry that night (Saturday night). I recall that everyone had to have a date before we could go. It fell my lot to take along as my escort, a young, feisty little gal from the church, who never would have been my choice.

We did have a fun time at the Opry. I remember Don Gibson, who had one of the biggest hits of those days (outside rock-n-roll), "I Can't Stop Loving You." Of course, there were Roy Acuff and Minnie Pearl. This was at the old Opry house, the Ryman Auditorium, which at one time was the Gospel Union Tabernacle.

### **A Brief History of Ryman Auditorium and Evangelist Sam Jones**

Just recently, I learned more about the original purpose of Ryman Auditorium. I am now a resident of Cartersville,

Georgia, which was the home of famed evangelist Sam Jones. Sam Jones was a Methodist preacher who preached to crowds of thousands at the end of the nineteenth century as well as the early part of the twentieth century. Sam Jones was a strong revivalist who preached heavily against alcoholism. Interestingly enough, Sam was a recovering alcoholic himself. His father and grandfather were Methodist preachers, and on his father's death bed, he promised to quit drinking.

In 1885, the ministerial association of Nashville invited Sam Jones to come hold a crusade in Nashville. He agreed to come on certain conditions, and one condition was that they would provide a large tent that would accommodate five thousand people. As usual, Sam came down hard on alcoholism. As a result, so many people were saved, that the local bars and taverns suffered for a lack of business. The largest tavern owner in Nashville was Captain Tom Ryman, who also owned a fleet of riverboats. Captain Ryman sent out the message that he was going to visit this little preacher and do physical harm to him. That news reached Sam Jones, and Sam Jones stated publicly, "I am afraid of no man. I'm a hundred thirty-five pounds, and a hundred thirty-three of those pounds is backbone!" It was shortly afterwards that night, that Captain Ryman and his entourage entered the tent and headed down the aisle toward the evangelist. The crowd hushed, anticipating some tragic event. When Captain Ryman reached the pulpit, he fell on his knees, and asked for forgiveness. He was saved that night and pledged to Sam Jones that he would be his best supporter. This he was, as he built the Gospel Tabernacle, which was later renamed Ryman Auditorium, the home of the famed Grand Ole Opry.

Sam Jones was an extraordinary man who has been called the greatest evangelist that no one seems to know. One reason might have been that he left no memorial such as a college or seminary in his honor. However, when he died of a heart attack while preaching in Oklahoma, a special train escorted his body back to Georgia. People lined the tracks all along the way to pay homage to a great man of God. Upon his arrival in Georgia, his body lay in state at the Georgia State Capitol for two days. Thousands gave honor to this fallen soldier of the Cross. He is now buried on the grounds of his homeplace, now known as Roselawn in Cartersville, Georgia.



Ryman Auditorium was originally the Gospel Union Church that Sam Jones pastored. It later became the home of the Grand Ole Opry.

Another interesting bit of information is that Lottie Moon, a famous Baptist missionary, has her Cartersville home just across the street from Roselawn. Even though she was not born in Georgia, she came to Cartersville as a teacher and later became a noted missionary. The Southern Baptist Convention has an organization named in her honor, which is a missionary outreach.

### **Elvis!**

Of course, how could you ever deal with these times in the mid-1950s without mentioning the craze of the day—Elvis! Yes, I was an Elvis fan. I was just like all other teens of that day. I enjoyed seeing his songs hit the charts and rising all the way to the top. Some of his hits that went to the top that year were "Heartbreak Hotel," "Hound Dog," and "Don't Be Cruel." I was flattered that one day I would teach at the high school from which Elvis graduated, and I worked side by side with some of his old teachers. This was the year that I spent at Humes High School in 1966, where Elvis graduated in 1953.

### **An Unforgettable Halloween Night**

I shall never forget the Halloween of 1956, when I took Raymond out trick-r-treating with me. We both were dressed in costumes (face masks, anyway) walking down Overton Crossing Road in Frayser when we were confronted by a gang of young hoods. They were going to be real thugs, I guess. One of the guys, emboldened by the others standing behind him, stepped out and demanded that I take off my mask. I refused to do so, at which time he proceeded to slug me in the mouth. I was not really a fighter, but I had enough in me to fight back. In fact, I was so angry, that he and I locked up together. The only way I knew to fight was to lose my temper and tear into the guy, usually ending up in a bear hug, wrestling around on the ground. I guess I was pretty strong and thought this was to my advantage.

To this day I still bear the marks of that encounter. That is the reason that the eye tooth on the left side of my mouth is discolored today. My tooth was severely loosened, and the dentist told me that I likely could lose the tooth. I still have the tooth, which is sixty years later. During all this fracas, I'm sure that Raymond was petrified, as he was only about seven years old at the time.

### **Graduation Day!**

Finally, graduation day arrived! I was about to reach the first of my educational goals. There had been many adjustments for me moving from one high school to another in the middle of my high school career. In reality, it was in the middle of a year, which was three weeks before the end of a semester. The hardest pill of all that I had to swallow was the fact that I was not eligible for valedictorian or salutatorian awards at my graduation ceremony. The rule was a fair one in a sense, as I needed to have two complete years at Frayser High School in order to be eligible. Even though this was fair to the kids who were already there, unfortunately for me, I felt that I had paid a great price in our move from Missouri. Perhaps this was a price that was forced upon me by my parents, but I have never held this nor anything else against them because I have always felt that they did what they did in all of our best interests.

Perhaps to them, there were no other alternatives. Again, as I look back, my steps have been ordered of the Lord.

I had very loving, caring, and supportive parents who wanted the best for me. Unfortunately, they were not always attuned to certain situations or things, perhaps because of their lack of cultural and educational background. Since my parents were deprived of so many of the finer things of life, including a good education, I wanted them to be proud of me for my accomplishments. I felt like that anything that I accomplished, they shared with me. In essence, they were living their lives through me, seeing some things they themselves never obtained.



Graduated Frayser High School in Memphis, 1957

### **Falling a Little Short**

The thing that was very hurtful to me was the fact that my grade point average was higher than that of the valedictorian. This no one can ever take away from me, even though I will never get the credit for it. After all, where are all the valedictorians of this country? Where are they today? What have they accomplished? How many of them have doctoral degrees today? Yes, many of them have accomplished

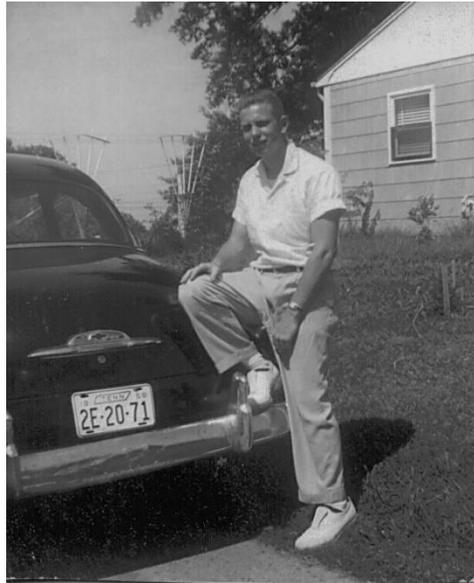
significant things, but how many of them ended up being losers? I am a winner. I am a winner because of what I am in God's eyes.

It could have been because of my not being adequately recognized academically that I was awarded a prestigious honor during the graduation ceremony. I was the recipient of the Junior Lion Award, which was a citizenship award bestowed upon a deserving senior boy by the Frayser Lions Club. I, along with several other seniors, had visited the local Lion's Club during the year as an honored guest. All of these guys were candidates for this award. I am sure that the input of the faculty was the deciding factor as to who would receive the award. That usually is how they are determined. Perhaps the teachers saw this as a consolation prize to me since I had been ineligible for the other awards. Maybe not. Who knows?

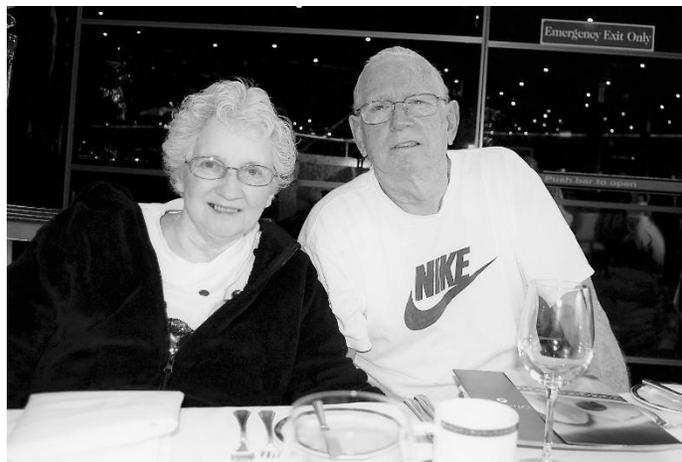
What's wrong with receiving a citizenship award on your own merits? Not coincidentally, Nancy and I both were awarded the corresponding citizenship awards for our respective graduating classes in different schools. Nancy was the recipient of the Daughters of the American Revolution Award (D.A.R.), the citizenship award given to the most deserving girl in her graduating class. I count it an honor that both of us received such a highly esteemed award.



On the front of Mom and Dad's 56 Chevrolet



On the bumper of my 52 Chevy



Nancy and I in 2012

## Chapter Seven

### SHORTLY AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

#### Riverboat Days

Shortly after graduation, I went to work for the summer as a deckhand on the barge line on which my Dad worked. In fact, I worked on the exact same boat as Dad. This was good, because I had never been away from home before. It was especially good because I guess Dad was a buffer between me and some of the tough realities of river life. As a result, I believe that I was treated with more respect by the rest of the crew.

I had just quit my job in the grocery store that paid me less than \$.50 per hour. The river job paid me about \$200.00 per month. For each two days I was out on the river, I accumulated one day of free vacation with pay at home. I was on the river for thirty-eight consecutive days before getting a leave! That was a long time. I would never have made it if Dad wasn't working with me.



This is the Boat I Worked on, but This Was Afterwards

I recall that we pushed a line of barges from Memphis to New Orleans. We brought a load back up river all the way

to Charleston, West Virginia. This route took us up the Mississippi River to Cairo, Illinois, where we took the Ohio River the rest of the way. The Ohio River had locks that we had to pass through. This was about the only time on the trip that deckhands had to really work, because we usually had to break tow to get the barges through the locks. I recall that we had a few short hours leave at Cincinnati, Ohio, at which time we went ashore. This was the only time I touched ground for the entire thirty-eight days!

I remember those long, lonely, summer nights from midnight until daybreak. I worked a split shift. I worked six hours and then had a six-hour break. My shifts were from midnight to 6:00 A.M., and then from noon until 6:00 P.M. This was the worst of the two alternatives, because there was no sleeping in the hot evening hours. There was no air conditioning in the boat, and my bedroom was right next to the engine room, which created additional heat. By the time I finally got to sleep, it was time to get up for the midnight shift. My responsibility during this shift was to sit in the pilot house and keep the pilot company. I was there to retrieve him coffee or anything else he wanted from the gallery. I was usually able to lie down on a wooden bench in the rear of the pilot house, but this was "cheap" sleep, if any. It was a miserable time. Then, of course it was also difficult to sleep in the mornings. The other shift was able to sleep from midnight until 6 A.M., which was the best shift to sleep. No doubt I was the "low man on the totem pole." Those were interesting days. The food was terrific; we had absolutely the best of everything. There was an older woman who traveled on the boat and did all the cooking. I think the captain was seen slipping into her room a few times during the evening hours!

### **Go to Work with Construction**

When I got a leave after thirty-eight days on the river, I felt like a bird out of a cage. I had nearly three weeks of free time accumulated. When it neared the time to return back to the river, I decided that I was not going back. I was going to Memphis State that fall anyway, so I decided to get a different job.

I had a friend, Rusty Rutledge, who was a crane operator working on the new Allen Electric Power Plant south of Memphis. These guys made terrific wages. Even the oilers on the cranes made about \$2.00-\$2.50 per hour. This was four times what I had made in the grocery store! Rusty finally pulled some political strings to get me on this job. He wanted me to be his oiler, but I had to work with another operator. This was okay with me, as it was the same shift as Rusty, and he and I commuted together from Frayser.

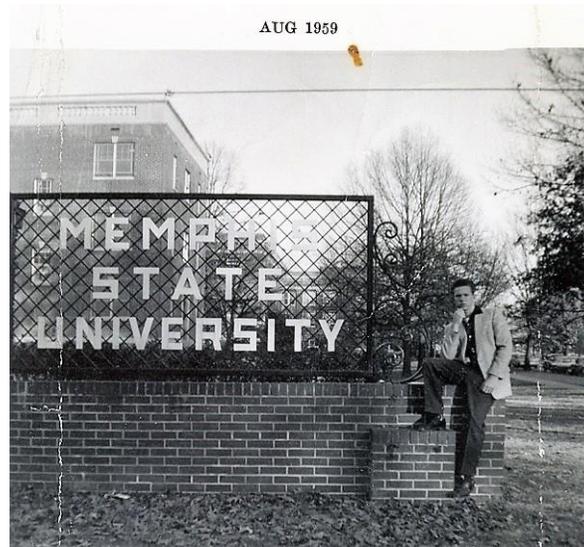
The job was about as nothing a job that I have ever had. I had to do absolutely nothing—well, nearly nothing. The oiler's job was at one time a very important job, but for some reason this importance diminished significantly. However, we belonged to a union, and the union had fought to preserve these jobs. My primary job was to keep the deck of the crane mopped and clean. I had the cleanest and most spotless crane on the job! I was bored stiff, but the pay was good. In fact, I was able to save money for my first semester at M. S. U.

### **Enrolling as a Freshman at Memphis State**

I started my freshman year at Memphis State University in the fall of 1957. This was a significant year, because this was the first semester that Memphis State College became Memphis State University. I had the privilege of being in a group of students who were whooping it up under a banner with Memphis State University's name on it. An enlarged full color picture of this scene appeared on the front page of one of the Sunday morning sections of the Commercial Appeal newspaper. The significance of me stating this is that I was the only student in the history of Memphis State whose educational career spanned exactly the entire existence of Memphis State University. As of July 1994, Memphis State University became the University of Memphis. The last graduating class of Memphis State University was May 13, 1994. I received my Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree during that commencement, which of course is a terminal degree. I was the only student to hold this distinction. My head professor thought this was significant enough to become a story in a summary of the history of Memphis State University. Apparently, the "powers that be" didn't necessarily agree.

## Seeking a Career in Engineering

I began my college education program in pre-engineering. At the time, there was no engineering program at M. S. U. My plans were to finish the two-year pre-engineering course of study and then transfer to an engineering school. This two-year program consisted of most required courses and was heavy into mathematics, science, and engineer drawing. I earned thirty-five semester hours of credit in my freshman year, with three math courses, two courses in Chemistry, and two courses in engineer drawing.



August, 1957

My freshman year at Memphis State was an eventful one. The tuition that year was a mere \$60.00 for a whole semester. The last credits that I enrolled for at Memphis State were dissertation credits over twenty years ago, and the tuition cost was \$865 for one 3-hour credit course! Now, in 2017, it is much higher. A full semester load during my freshman year was sixteen hours. You can see the tremendous cost differential through the years, which initially made each credit hour cost less than four dollars!

## The Beginning of Four Years at Food Center

I only worked about twenty hours during my freshman year. I got a job working at Food Center, a relatively large grocery chain in Memphis at that time, and I kept this job until I graduated from M. S. U. in 1961. I started working for \$.75 per hour bagging groceries. I made about \$.25-.30 cents per hour in tips, which, by the way, I divided between my sister Dixie and brother Raymond. When I was promoted to check-out after a few months, my pay went to \$1.05 per hour. I believe my final wages were about \$1.50 per hour when I quit in June, 1961.

Those days at Food Center were hardworking days. There was no slacking it under the management of Warren Knight. He was a slave driver. I gained his good graces, because in his words, I had become one of his two top employees. As a consequence, I was pretty well able to name my own hours. The last year or so there, I came in to stock shelves at 6:00 A.M. and worked until my first class at M. S. U. I came in at 5:00 A. M. on Saturday and worked until noon. I had all my evenings free, which was good for my school work as well as my social life.

In the first couple of years, I had to work mostly evenings. Therefore, my social life suffered. My motivational level was very low during my sophomore and junior years. I did little to no studying. I was basically satisfied with an average grade, and every now and then I would get a B. As a result, my GPA took a beating. One of the reasons for the lack of interest in school was because of my budding romantic involvement with a certain girl. I had no interest in school, but I did realize that I could not just quit. I hung in there and persevered. This perseverance paid off as I graduated on schedule four years after first enrolling.

## My Spiritually Developing Years at Rugby

At Rugby Park Assembly of God Church, we had an exciting group of youth. It was a group that was very sensitive to the Lord. We had a spiritual bunch of kids who prayed. In fact, many times the C. A. meetings before the main Sunday evening church service continued on into the next service

because of some of our spiritual encounters. We had kids saved and filled with the Holy Spirit on a regular basis. In my opinion, the young people became the spiritual life of the entire church.

This group of kids was a closely knit bunch. We had great times together socially. As I stated earlier, some of these after church activities did disintegrate to a certain degree, yet no one was a bad kid. We sometimes were perhaps a little more carnal than at other times. I think this must have been a sore point for my mother. She could not understand how we could be so "frivolous" after having been in the presence of the Lord. I don't have the total explanation except to say that we were kids. Besides, God is not against anyone having some fun times. In fact, He doesn't even mind you smiling at times!

It was in the beginning of my freshman year that I purchased my first automobile. It was an old 1947 four-door black Studebaker. It was an oil guzzling piece of machinery. Yet, it was mine, and I was proud of it. I shall never forget the time that I had discovered that someone had backed into my Studebaker and had damaged the door. It was a clear case of hit-and-run. To my disappointment, the culprit was one of the church deacons. When he was confronted, he simply stated that he didn't think it was such a big deal since it was just an old beat-up car. Was I crushed! An old beat-up car? What a nerve! This was my car. How insensitive! I never did regain the proper respect for this man after that. He never made an effort for apology nor compensation.

It was just within a few months that Dad helped me obtain a more reliable automobile that would transport me back and forth to M. S. U., which was about a thirty-minute drive. I purchased a neat, 1952 two-door coupe Chevrolet. I believe I paid \$500 for it (compared to \$100 for the Studebaker). This car was to be old reliable, as it carried me through all my college years and through all my dating. In fact, this was the car that I owned when Nancy and I married in 1960. I kept this car until a year after I graduated from college in 1961.

### **The Barron Brothers, My Special Friends**

During my college years, beginning the very first year, I developed a very close relationship with Bill Barron. Bill and I were the best of friends. Bill and his older brother Don had

pioneered the Frayser Assembly of God church. This was done when Don was nineteen years old and Bill was seventeen. Both Don and Bill were students at M. S. U., and the three of us all graduated together in June, 1961.

One day Bill was making a little bit of fun of my old 52 Chevy, because it had developed a roaring in the rear end. It did sound pretty bad, but it never failed me. One day, Bill challenged me to a race down Central Avenue. We were on our way to M. S. U. My car could never outrun his new one, but for some strange reason, I was able to beat him to college. I think it had something to do with maneuvering in traffic and hitting the traffic lights just right. At the last moment, I cut in front of him in the right hand lane before we made a right turn onto Highland Avenue which went beside M. S. U. I laughed, and I laughed, and I laughed. Bill was humbled, but he took it all in good fun! Many times after that we would refer to this time and get a good laugh from it. Bill and I had lunch together in the school cafeteria about every day during our freshman year.

### **Helping to Organize the M. S. U. Chi Alpha Chapter**

Bill, Don, and I were the ones to organize the Chi Alpha chapter at Memphis State. This was the religious organization on campus for the Assemblies of God. The early members of this group included the three of us in addition to Charles Coscia, Ken Carter, Ken Talbot, and Beverly Scott. Our pictures appeared in every school annual after Chi Alpha's inception.

There was another time that Don, Bill, and I had a great time together. The three of us, along with the Memphis sectional presbyter of the Assemblies, Bro. Scruggs, took a trip over to Hot Springs, Arkansas to take in the District Council meeting. Don and Bill were very musically talented, playing the trumpet and trombone. In fact, Bill played fantastic trumpet, and majored in music at M. S. U. The Barrons were special musical guests at the meeting that night. On the way home from the conference, we were returning to Memphis on I-40 with Don asleep in the back seat. Bill was driving, and he just thought it would be so funny for him to blow his horn, throw on his brakes, and all of us to scream at the same time. This served the purpose of almost giving Don a heart attack.

We thought this was so funny, but perhaps it could have been disastrous. Who knows? Don later in his life did have an angioplasty procedure, but of course that had nothing to do with this incident.

Don and Bill both followed their father's footsteps in becoming airline pilots. To my sad dismay, Bill Barron died at the early age of about thirty-three, when he was jogging and fell over dead with a heart attack. This was when I was living in Abilene, Texas. I was saddened when I heard the news. It was in later years, after we had moved to Cartersville, Georgia, that I discovered that Don was still an airline pilot with TWA and was living in Peachtree City, Georgia. He had started the Assembly of God church there, but at the time I spoke with him, he was just attending the church. The young man in the middle of the picture below is Charles Coscia, who was the chairman of the board of First Assembly of God Christian School in Memphis for forty years. He passed away a few years ago.



Officers of Chi Alpha are left to right: Ken Meadors, vice-president; Charles Coscia, president; Billy Barron, secretary.

### My "Military" Days

I had some fun times during my ROTC years at Memphis State. Air Force ROTC was mandatory for two years.

Every male student had to enroll. This consisted of two hours of lecture each week in addition to marching drills. There was a drill formation every Friday when we had roll call. There was a lot of pranking going on in those days. I will never forget some of the strangest names being called out week after week after week before our drills with no response. I later found out that someone had registered a fictitious person. The standing joke among these ROTC draftees was that if we messed up, we would be sent to Korea. Of course, the Korean War was basically over, but we did still have troops in that country. We had to wear our full uniforms every Friday, and everything had to be perfect.

Before my first inspection, I had spent much time shining my black shoes. I wanted to make a proper impression during this first inspection. To my dismay, I was issued a demerit for my shoes! I felt a bit desperate. What more could I do? I just knew that my shoes would never meet the proper standard, and the accumulation of demerits would put me in a jeopardous situation. However, I proceeded to learn how to put a spit shine on my shoes, and I never got another demerit for any cause. At the end of the two years, we were allowed to take a Stanine Test which determined if we could qualify for the Advanced ROTC program that would lead to a commission in the Air Force. I passed the test, but I decided that two years was enough for me.

### And I Worked As a Babysitter, Too

During those days, my Aunt Earlene had two small sons, Ray and Cary. Their Dad was an alcoholic, and he would not show up at home on many nights to keep the boys for Aunt Earlene to go to work at 11 o'clock at Kimberly Clark. Many times she would call me to come spend the night with the boys. This was no problem, because I had already gotten off work, and I could do my school work there as easily as I could at home. However, it didn't work out quite that way. You see, Aunt Earlene had a TV, and we never had one all the time I was still in my parents' house. In fact, my parents got their first TV after I married and moved out. So I enjoyed going to Aunt Earlene's home to watch TV. I watched the late movie every time I baby-sat, and for a stretch of time, this was about every

night. This gives one explanation why my grades took a nose dive that year. Also, Aunt Earlene always had a lot of treats, including cokes and orange juice. She allowed me free access to the fridge. On top of this, she paid me! So, you see, I did enjoy babysitting for her.



A Memphis State University yearbook picture of me.

I recall one time that shortly after I went to babysit my little cousins that their dad showed up. He was embarrassed that I was there, and he told me, “Now, Kenneth you just go on and take care of your own business.” My reply was, “This is my business.” Actually the dad was a quiet and usually polite man, but this night he had a little too much drink.

### **Finally a Yield to the Call of Ministry**

It was during my sophomore year that the course of my life took a dramatic turn. I had been feeling the call into the ministry from the time I was sixteen years old, but I never acknowledged it. My whole desire was to become an electrical engineer. My educational goal pointed toward this end. However, it was during the school year of 1958 that I finally decided that my life's occupation was going to be in the work

of the Lord. I justified continuing in a secular university, believing that it would be important to be able to support myself while beginning in the ministry. I had already accumulated many hours of mathematics, and I decided that it would be reasonable for me to work toward a major in mathematics. After all, I could become a math teacher! This became my goal, which was fulfilled.



Nancy and I with Bro. and Sis. Adcock, our pastors at Scenic Assembly of God Church near Raleigh, Tennessee.

### **I Became an Assistant Pastor**

It was sometime during my junior year that I joined together with Bro. Adcock, who was my pastor at Rugby Park Assembly of God Church. He was starting a new church near Raleigh. The church was Scenic Assembly of God. Bro. Adcock was a great encouragement to me, and he helped me to come into the ministry. In fact, he completely turned the midweek service over to me. It was during those days that my time was occupied with going to school, working at Food Center, dating, and spending the necessary time in preparing my sermon for Wednesday night. Bro. Adcock certainly had a great influence on my life.

## **Nancy Comes to Memphis**

Nancy had graduated from high school in Gideon in 1958. She spent the first summer in Dayton, Ohio working with her Aunt Louise Copeland in pioneering the United Christian Center. Nancy went from there to obtain employment in St. Louis. Her sister Olive Belle lived in Memphis, and she came to visit on Thanksgiving, 1958. It was during this time that she came to visit our family and discovered that I had grown up and had become a little bit more appealing than she had remembered me in our Gideon days. I was heavily involved with another girl, and according to Nancy later, she had determined at that time that she was going to get me.

It was in the spring of 1959 when Nancy decided to move to Memphis. I guess she already had her battle plan. She stayed in our home for about three weeks while she was looking for employment and a permanent place to live. In the meantime, as timing would have it, I wasn't getting along with my girlfriend too well. In fact, we were in the process of breaking up permanently. Yet, I wasn't interested in anyone else in particular at that time. Nancy's hopes were high. She would dress up every night hoping that by chance I would ask her to go with me somewhere. I never noticed. Finally, I guess I must have asked her to go somewhere with me. She immediately responded in a stronger manner than I was prepared for. You see, she had a battle plan, and I wasn't ready.

Nancy went to work at Welcome Wagon, and there were a few times that I along with some other kids from the church would pick her up from work. Nancy naturally assumed that she belonged beside me, and I wasn't ready for such a commitment. I did a very ugly, ugly thing that I have always regretted. I wish it had never happened. I did not have the nerve to tell Nancy that she was taking too much for granted, and I wish that she would back off. So the next time that I picked her up, I had another girl sitting beside me. Nancy was crushed. She did not deserve this kind of treatment. To her, it was very humiliating, and it no doubt was.

Nancy never made another move toward me. She evidently was hurt and rejected. I felt bad. Yet, I felt that the pressure was off, at least for the time. It was a tough summer for me. I knew that Nancy was more important to me than I had

realized. It hurt me to see her going with another guy, especially when I knew she deserved better. It was not until September that I finally contacted Nancy again. I was at work at Food Center, putting up stock when I did some serious thinking. I realized that there was a girl who thought a lot of me. She was attractive. She came from a good family and was a good girl. Most of all, she loved the Lord, and I loved the Lord. I had a call of God on my life, and I knew that it was crucial for me to have the right woman in my life. I was about to turn twenty, and I was ready to settle down. What was I waiting for? I called Nancy at the boarding house where she lived and asked her if she would be interested in going out with me the following Saturday to celebrate my birthday. She quickly replied in the affirmative. Until this time, we had no contact for months.

## **I Propose to Nancy**

I don't recall what we did that night prior to going to Gray's Drive-In Restaurant on Lamar Avenue in Memphis. It was while we were sitting there and talking that I casually asked the question, "What would you say if I asked you to marry me?" Her immediate reply was, "I'd say yes!" This was on the first date we had since having the departure several months before! Actually, it was the first official date ever, and she said yes! Later, I got cold feet. What had I done? Was I out of my mind? Getting married? I was only twenty, and she was just nineteen, although we both were very settled for our age. No doubt we knew what we wanted, yet it was several weeks before I even mentioned the word marriage again. Nancy must have had a lot of questions and apprehensions about what was going on in my mind. It was distressing. I didn't think I was ready to get married!

Finally, it must have been sometime around Christmas that I brought up the subject again. It was after the first of the year that we finally got serious about this marriage thing. We went shopping for a ring. I found a set for \$125, and then we announced our engagement to the world. I think it must have taken a lot of folks by surprise, even my parents. My parents both thought highly of Nancy. In fact, my Dad dearly loved her. Our families had gone back a few years together in the

Assembly of God church in Gideon. It was a match made in heaven.



Nancy about the Time I Proposed to Her

Nancy and I settled into a normal courting routine. I enjoyed her company, and we had some good times together. There were times that I could hardly wait to get to her boarding house to pick her up. One such time was while driving from Memphis State across Central Avenue on my way to pick Nancy up. I was caught by radar and given the very first ticket of my life. I was going forty-two miles per hour in a thirty-five zone. This was to be the first of only two tickets I ever received. The other was coming home to Hayti from Doniphan, Missouri in 1980. That has been the last. In fact, I have never been arrested nor have spent a single minute in jail for any reason.

Nancy and I have a memory to which we still refer. It was the evening that we were parking on President's Island next to the Mississippi River. It was a romantic moment, and I guess Nancy and I were doing a little necking. Suddenly out of nowhere, a bright flashlight shined right in my eyes. There

stood a policeman questioning me what I was doing there. I didn't want to get smart with him, but I felt like asking him what did it look like we were doing? Evidently, we were illegally parked there, and we were told simply to move on. Boy, that's real wild and exciting, isn't it? Isn't it amazing that such an innocent thing becomes a highlight of our life? We found our excitement otherwise.

### **The Date Is Set**

The date was set for April 16, 1960. Even though I was working with Bro. Adcock at Scenic Assembly of God church, we decided to be married at our old church and my parents' church, Rugby Park Assembly of God. Bro. Adcock was to officiate. The day of the wedding was quickly approaching. Nancy and I found a little two-room apartment on Parkway Place, which was near Overton Park Zoo. It was a little upstairs apartment which was totally furnished, and we only had to pay \$50 per month, and that included all utilities!

We were working on our apartment the week before the wedding, and we stayed out a little later than usual. It was all proper, because you see, Nancy and I were both virgins when we married. Even though I had gone with the same girl seriously for over two years, and there were some passionate moments, I had managed to keep myself pure before the Lord. Nancy had done the same. I guess others knew that something was going on that wasn't right when we were working on our apartment. Those were still in the days when there was not near the freedom that people experience today. Nancy was reprimanded severely by her landlady at the boarding house where she stayed. Mrs. Easley was a godly woman, and she ran a pretty tight ship. She had about ten Assembly of God girls who lived with her. All of them except for Nancy belonged to First Assembly. Nancy, of course, went with me at Rugby and Scenic Assembly.

Mrs. Easley was very gracious by providing the whole wedding reception for Nancy and me in the boarding house. It was a memorable occasion. The wedding was very inexpensive, yet beautiful. The only flaw in the whole evening was when Bro. Adcock forgot Nancy's name. When exchanging the vows, he said, "Will you, er, Walker, take this man to be

your wedded husband?" But guess what? We were married anyway, and it has stuck! In fact, we just celebrated our 57<sup>th</sup> anniversary just a few days ago.

After the wedding reception, all of my friends were going to play a dirty trick on us. We got word that our car was being jacked up on blocks so we couldn't get away from the reception. The girls at the boarding house had sewn Nancy's gown up at the bottom. I borrowed Dad's car, and we slipped away into the night undetected. Dad was left with the dilemma of getting my car off the blocks. I guess the guys probably helped him.

### **The Honeymoon**

Our honeymoon consisted of one night in our little apartment on Parkway Place. The wedding was on a Saturday night. I had worked at the store until noon of my wedding day. We didn't bother about going to church the next morning, but we showed up for the Sunday night service!

It was on our first night together, and I was anxiously awaiting the entrance of my new bride in her night attire. I was in bed waiting. Why not? I had kept myself pure all these twenty years, and this was our night! I kept waiting and waiting. Nancy had not come out of the bathroom. She must have been in there for what seemed like thirty minutes or longer! I finally went to the door to ask her if she was coming out. She replied that she was. I found out later that besides being nervous, she was trying to get the bottom of her gown unsewn! Our wedding dinner the next day consisted of eating a spam sandwich together in Overton Park. We both liked Spam sandwiches, but for some reason, we both got sick from eating the Spam that day. It would be several years before either of us ever ate another Spam sandwich.

Nancy and I quickly reverted into our normal routine of working and going to school on the following Monday. Nancy was still working at Welcome Wagon, and I was still at Food Center. I went to work early in the mornings before going to Memphis State. As I remember, we had most of our evenings at home together.



Wedding Reception at Nancy's Boarding House



Dad, Mom, Me, Nancy, Mama Walker



Wedding Family and Friends



Cousin Cary Spain looking on.



Pastor Adcock Praying Blessing.



She was a beautiful bride! Lasted 57 years so far!



Our first apartment (rear upstairs on Parkway Place in Memphis)

### **A Dirty Trick, But Funny**

One evening I played a trick on Nancy that neither of us has ever forgotten. Nancy, as has always been her custom, went to bed far earlier than I. I guess she must have been in bed no later than 10 o'clock. On this particular night/ about midnight, I set the alarm on the clock for about 12:15 A. M. I then went to bed where Nancy was sound asleep. In just a short few minutes, the alarm went off. I nudged Nancy and told her it was time to get up. She reluctantly made her way out of bed. She was very sleepy, of course, but she must not have thought anything about it. She proceeded to go to the bathroom to put on her robe and went into the kitchen to cook breakfast. I allowed her to get the pots and pans out before I notified her that it was only about 12:30! Boy, was she aggravated but relieved. She happily went back to bed and slept several more hours before getting up for real. We both have gotten a lot of mileage out of this incident, recalling it on numerous occasions to amused audiences.

Our Saturdays were all very eventful. We both got up at 4:00 A.M. for me to go to work at five o'clock. Nancy took me to work so she could have the car to do whatever she wished

to do. Part of her activities was to go to the local Laundromat to do our weekly laundry. Then she picked me up at noon, and we had the rest of the afternoon together. This was an exciting year for us—our first year of marriage.



First Portrait of Nancy and Me Shortly after Marriage

For some reason, we were beginning to feel some financial pressures toward the end of the summer. It was about time for me to enroll in my senior year at Memphis State. I felt the pressure to drop out for a year so that I could work more hours. Besides, I was tired of school. Nancy insisted that there was no way that she was going to allow me to drop out. I was yet to do my student teaching, and it would only be a short nine months before I would graduate. I got a second wind, and somehow we made it financially. I concentrated on my senior year studies and returned back to the honor roll.

### **The Day Long Awaited--Graduation!**

June 3, 1961 was a memorable day. Besides being Mom and Dad's twenty-third wedding anniversary, this was the

day that I had been looking forward to for a long time. This was graduation day! The ceremony was in the Old Fieldhouse on the Memphis State campus. All of my and Nancy's family were there. It was a joyful day. I have a picture of my family, some of the church family, along with my old buddy Bill Barron to celebrate that eventful day.



Graduation from Memphis State University, 1961

### **Out to Save the World**

I had already made up my mind. I was going to go into fulltime evangelistic ministry. My mind was set. Nancy's twin brother, Larry, and I were going to hit the evangelistic trail together. Our first meeting was in Houston, Texas. Actually, it was in Channelview, a suburb of Houston. I took Nancy to Gideon to stay with her mother, and Larry and I left my bride of one year behind for regions unknown. Larry and I were both very sincere. We preached in Channelview for a week or so, then we went into the inner city of Houston to preach at a mission. We were gone about three weeks before we returned to Gideon.

From Gideon, we all went to the Youth Camp that Sis. Copeland sponsored every year. It was near Naylor, Missouri, and that year was one of those wild times. For some strange reason, someone threw someone else in the lake. It became a chain reaction. Even one of the sponsoring pastors was thrown into the lake. No one was exempt. I and Nancy's younger brother Bill joined in the follies, and our target was Nancy! Nancy was horrified at the thought. I was having no mercy. Nancy locked herself in the toilet for a long time. Finally, we were insistent on retrieving Nancy to throw her in the lake. I guess this was the only time that I ever recall having any words with any of Nancy's brothers. Larry came to Nancy's rescue. I informed him that she was my wife, and he needed to back off. Larry, being the gentleman he was, didn't say anything else. I do recall that Bill and I did not follow through with our plot. We finally called a truce, and all was well again.

From Youth Camp, Bill, Larry, Nancy, and I held a week revival in Sis. Copeland's church, Faith Tabernacle in Poplar Bluff. I don't necessarily remember any earthshaking happenings during this revival, but I do recall that we went all over Poplar Bluff blasting out on a speaker atop our car for the people to repent or else! Their only hope was to come to the revival! From Poplar Bluff, we returned to the Walkers' residence in Gideon. We had a three-night meeting scheduled with Pastor Johnny Little in Marston, Missouri. This was the same Johnny Little who had pastored the Holcomb Revival Center during the 1950s where a revival went continuously for three years. That revival was while we were still teenagers in the Gideon Assembly of God Church. Now, I was ministering exclusively in independent churches. Later, this was not to go over too big with the Assemblies, as I was a licensed minister with them. It was in Marston, that I was a part of maybe the best revival that I ever participated in. The three nights soon moved into a full week. A week stretched into two and then finally into three weeks. We had an impact on the little town of Marston. Scores of people were saved, healed, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Bill, Larry, and I alternated preaching, with each preaching every third night.



Preaching a Revival at Sis. Copeland's Church in Poplar Bluff

### Going National

It was the impetus of the Marston revival that propelled Larry, Nancy, and me into further fields of labor. We were going to Sandusky, Ohio! We were about to become big-time! We felt that our fame had preceded us, and now we were becoming national evangelists! Sandusky was to become a pivotal point for every one of us. It was in the Sandusky area where we were exposed to some realities of the ministry. We arrived in this northern city to find that the pastor was near starvation, almost literally. In fact, all of us were forced into a fast that was of none of our choosing. There was no food, and no money for food. Finally, after a day or so of fasting, the pastor announced that the fast was over. Some money had arrived, and we were on our way to the store. My, how delicious were those little miniature white, sugar-coated doughnuts. We about ate ourselves sick.

I don't recall the services being anything out of the ordinary. In fact, I don't recall seeing more than a dozen people there on any given night. At the end of the week, Larry and I divided the spoils. There was about \$32.00 for each of us! We didn't even come out enough to pay our expenses up there and back. What a disappointment.



Evangelists Kenneth and Nancy Meadors, 1961

### A Turn in Destiny

It was at that juncture, that Larry decided that he was going to return to college. He had already had about one year under his belt. He would continue on through his Master's degree in psychology before he went to work as a school psychologist in Memphis for the city school system. After a year, he went on to Mississippi State University to receive his Ph.D. in psychology. Upon graduation, he went on staff at Oral Roberts University sometime around 1969. He remained there until 1994, when he took a leave of absence. After about one semester, he returned to his position where he was until his retirement just a couple of years ago.

Larry had been the chairman of the Behavioral Sciences Department for many years at ORU. Upon his retirement, he experienced great satisfaction when his daughter, Dr. Andrea Walker, took the vacancy left by her dad. After

working a few years in the department, she then went on the staff of the ORU School of Theology.

After Sandusky, Nancy and I went back to my parents' home in Memphis. It was a dejected time, and our spirits were low. There was nothing for me to do but to go to work. I went to work helping to build the new sanctuary at Rugby Park Assembly of God church under the leadership of Bro. Cecil Wiggins. I worked hard for \$1.00 per hour, but we had virtually no expenses. We were living with Mom and Dad. After a hard day's work, I remember that I came home in the afternoon, took a nice shower, and relaxed to watching Huckleberry Hound and Quick Draw McGraw every afternoon on TV. This was really the first time we had a TV in the house where I was living, and I was enjoying it very much.

The next step for me was to obtain a Christmas season job in the mail order department at Sears. This was a humbling experience for a guy who had a college degree in mathematics, but it kept us going. Nancy and I had found us a darling little house off Jackson Avenue in Memphis, where we lived for only a short few months. After Christmas, I got a job with Baker Brothers Big Star in Frayser. I remember how humiliated I felt when I took the groceries to the car of a lady who had graduated alongside me from high school. I thought, she no doubt thinks the only accomplishment I had in life was just working at a grocery store not knowing that I had a bachelor's degree. After working a short period of time in the grocery store, Nancy and I then moved into a duplex in Frayser. It was during the next few months, that we were finally getting a bearing on the direction our lives were to take.

Oh, yes, an exciting thing had already transpired. This was probably a motivation for me humping it anyway that I could to make a living. Nancy was pregnant! She evidently had conceived while we were staying with her parents in Gideon sometime in August of 1961. This was before our trek into Ohio, and which probably explains my urgency to get a job when we returned to Memphis.

### **The Best Blessing of All—Donia**

God blessed us during the early months of 1962. I bought a brand new, 1962, candy apple red, black interior, four

in the floor, bucket seats Monza Spider. It was a cute little car. This is the car that I rushed Nancy to the hospital in, and on May 27, 1962, a beautiful little baby girl was born into the world—Donia Renee Meadors. I was a little “disappointed” when I first heard that it was a girl, because the doctor had insisted all along that we were going to have a boy, and my mind was set on a son. I have had to apologize to Donia for making her feel insecure when reading that in her baby book. I believe that she knows, beyond a shadow of doubt, that she is the apple of my eye and has been all her life. She was and is still a very special person. She was our first born, and a lot was expected of her, but she has never disappointed neither Nancy nor me.



Donia about Six Months Old

### **A New Teaching Job**

It was now the time to put applications in for teaching positions for the next year. I had decided that Missouri was the place to go. The pay was better there, and I heard that there was an opening in Van Buren, Missouri for a history teacher. That

was not my major, but I did have a minor in history. We went to Van Buren, and I was presented with a contract. I took it home with me giving the school the assurance that I would send it back after a day or two of thought. In the meantime, I heard about a math job opening in Essex, Missouri. This is where we ended up going in the fall of 1962. I will elaborate on this tenure more in the next chapter as I begin to talk about those early years of our marriage as new parents.

So, now the frustrations of the past year were being turned into excitement. We were now launching into a career that I was trained for. It enabled me to make a decent living for my little family, even though my first year's salary was a meager \$4000. There was still a lot of family history to unfold.



Nancy's family at her sister Olive Belle's house.

Left to right: Kenneth Meadors, Dr. Don Meier, Wayne Walker, Ann Walker, Ed Meier, Olive Belle Meier, Nancy (with baby Donia), Mama Walker, Dr. Larry Walker, Rev. Louise Copeland. The two young girls in the front are Wayne and Ann's daughters, Shawn and Angel.



Dad, Mom, Mama Walker, Olive Belle Meier, me, Amy Meier, Bill Walker, Dixie Meadors, and a preacher whose name I don't remember.



Family at my college graduation from Memphis State University.

From left to right: Bill Walker, Olive Belle Meier, Mama Walker, Larry Walker, Amy Meier, Me, Nancy, and Mom.



Easter 1961



Aunt Louise Copeland at New Covenant Church

## Chapter Eight

### BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE TOGETHER

#### We Leave Memphis for Essex, Missouri

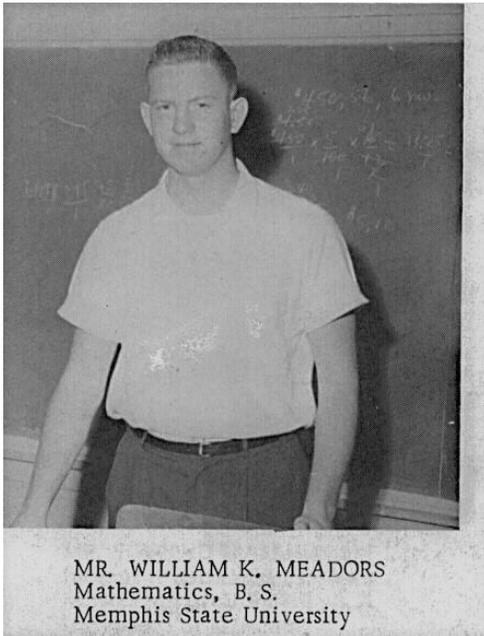
It was in July, 1962 that I, along with Nancy and Donia, moved into our new residence in Essex, Missouri. It was pretty tough on Mom and Dad for us to move away only two months after their only grandchild was born. To tell the truth, I guess it was a little tough on me, too. I had never been away from my family before for any extended period of time. However, for Nancy, it was a homecoming of sorts. We would be at least living in the same state as her parents. They lived only thirty-five miles south of us.

Our first house wasn't anything to write home about, but it was the only thing available in the small town of Essex. Essex was about five miles east of Dexter and twenty miles west of Sikeston. It was a small community of only five hundred people. We moved next door to the junior high school basketball coach and his wife, Gilliam and Betty Guthrie.

My first job was teaching seventh and eighth grade mathematics in Richland Junior High School in Essex. Richland High School was in Gray Ridge, just a few miles east of Essex. My two years in Essex were very pleasant ones. First, I was working in the field that I had been trained for, and I thought I was pretty good. Secondly, this was the first time that I had ever really been totally on my own away from both families. Thirdly, it was a very sweet time for Nancy and me to begin life with our family of one child, Donia. She was a little doll with dark eyes and naturally curly hair. Nancy sewed her some of the cutest clothes. She was, and always has been, as cute as a bug-in-a-rug. Today, she is an attractive and successful businesswoman, of whom I am very proud.

The second year I was promoted to teaching 8th and 9th grade math, including algebra. I had the privilege of working with some of the sweetest and greatest kids ever. Some of these kids were amazing scholars. In fact, there was a county-wide competition in each subject at the end of the year. I groomed a

7th grader who won first place in mathematics my first year. The next year, the contestant in math was my third choice because the first two were representing other subjects. My third choice won first place in the county!



### **My Spiritual Eyes Were Being Opened**

Before going any further, I need to bring everyone up to date on what had transpired in the last year or so of our time in Memphis concerning my association with the Assemblies of God. As I have already stated, my first full-time excursion into the ministry was evangelizing in independent churches. I was still a licensed minister with the Assemblies of God. I was not ordained because I had not reached my 23rd birthday. I began to realize that there were exciting things happening among non-denominational churches that I never saw in the Assemblies. I saw the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit—not just speaking in tongues, but the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom, discerning of spirits, and most of all, prophecy. The Assemblies in those days did not smile upon prophecy,

especially personal prophecies. I also witnessed exciting praise and worship that I had not experienced before.

My first exposure to liberty in worship was in an A. A. Allen revival in 1960 in Memphis. Nancy and I had just married. A. A. Allen was not held in high esteem by the Assemblies. In fact, we were told by our pastor that we should stay away from his meetings. Well, Nancy had been exposed to much more spiritual activity than I, primarily because of her Aunt Louise Copeland. Sis. Copeland had been an early pioneer in the Voice of Healing fellowship of ministers, and she was a renowned minister herself. She had been personal friends with Jack Coe, Oral Roberts, W. V. Grant, Gordon Lindsay, O. L. Jaggars, T. L. Osborn, John Douglas, Sr., Gayle Jackson, and Kenneth Hagin. I shall never forget the time in 1982 when Kenneth Hagin ministered at Faith Assembly in Atlanta. That day he was rehearsing many of the ministries he had been associated with, including the Voice of Healing. After the service, I approached Bro. Hagin and asked him if he ever knew Louise Copeland, and without hesitation, he replied that indeed he did.

Nancy wasn't completely satisfied with where we were spiritually in Memphis. She had been very coy during our courtship. It was not long after we married, that she began to resist being so tied up with a denomination. You must understand that Nancy and I both grew up in the Assemblies. She and I met in the Gideon Assembly of God church, but she evidently had grown past where I was spiritually at this time. I remember becoming upset at her and stating, "I can't believe I married you! I would have been better off marrying a person of a totally different faith! At least, it probably wouldn't have been any worse!" From then on, Nancy never resisted nor impeded me in any way. I continued to minister in the Scenic Assembly of God church. Nancy must have trusted that the Lord could do more than she, so she submissively went along with me. It wasn't long until I saw where she was coming from.

### **"Be Attached to No Man!"**

Probably the clincher for me was the influence of Allie Taylor. Sis. Taylor pastored about two hundred people in Detroit, Michigan, when A. A. Allen came to town. Sis Taylor

supported his meeting, and shortly thereafter, her church skyrocketed to over one thousand! She became a national leader of the revival movement of that day. In fact, there was a saying among many revivalist preachers, "You're really not anybody until you preach in Allie Taylor's church!"

Sis. Taylor had a tremendous prophetic anointing upon her life. I have never met anyone, even to this day, that had quite the impact that she had on me. She was truly a woman of God. She was preaching in Sis. Copeland's church in 1961 when she impacted my life forever. She had a heavy anointing upon her, and she basically prophesied to me to be attached to no man; I was to follow the Holy Ghost. She even said under the anointing of the Holy Spirit that if I had to preach on a tree stump, the anointing would be powerful upon me. I took this to heart, because shortly thereafter, I detached myself from denominationalism and followed the leading of the Holy Spirit as best as I could. In the following fifty-six years to date, I have never attached myself to any manmade denomination.

#### **Days in Essex Assembly of God**

The first year we were in Essex, I guess that we probably went back home to Memphis about once every three weeks. In between weekends, we went to the Assembly of God church in Essex, where the pastor was Rev. George Hill. He was a good man, and we enjoyed going to this little church. Bro. Hill was very supportive of me, and he understood where I stood. One day he asked me if I would consider reapplying to the Assemblies for ordination. I never considered it. I was too embedded in what I believed to be the move of God for that day, and I did not see this move being associated with any denomination.

It was while sitting in the Essex Assembly of God church that I experienced my first earthquake. The windows rattled, the floor quivered, and the people were "scared half to death." This was to be the first of many such shakings, because Southeast Missouri is sitting atop one of the most crucial and potentially deadliest earthquake faults in America. This is the New Madrid Fault, which runs somewhere around Cairo, Illinois to Northeast Arkansas. The New Madrid Earthquake of 1812 was estimated to have been equivalent to about 8.5 on the

Richter scale! This was before earthquakes were registered. This earthquake was so severe, that the land sank in West Tennessee to form Reelfoot Lake. The Mississippi River ran upstream for several hours filling in this sunken lake.

Earthquake specialists are predicting that the earthquake of all earthquakes can happen anytime. In fact, a person who predicted the San Francisco earthquake in 1989 predicted that an earthquake was going to hit Southeast Missouri sometime around December of that same year. About everyone took him seriously, as stores sold completely out of emergency supplies. Most schools were closed on those particular dates.

The earthquake of 1812 rang church bells in Boston. The effects of the earthquake were felt across the entire eastern portion of the United States. It behooves each of us to be ready for anything to happen. I never believed that you could run. You could run from the bear or the lion in the street, enter into what you believe to be the safe haven of your home, lean against a wall, and be bitten by a spider or snake. This is the Word of God!

Following is an excerpt from Wikipedia:

The New Madrid earthquakes were the biggest earthquakes in American history. They occurred in the central Mississippi Valley, but were felt as far away as New York City, Boston, Montreal, and Washington D.C. President James Madison and his wife Dolly felt them in the White House. Church bells rang in Boston. From December 16, 1811 through March of 1812 there were over 2,000 earthquakes in the central Midwest, and between 6,000-10,000 earthquakes in the Bootheel of Missouri where New Madrid is located near the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

In the known history of the world, no other earthquakes have lasted so long or produced so much evidence of damage as the New Madrid earthquakes. Three of the earthquakes are on the list of America's top earthquakes: the first one on December 16, 1811, a magnitude of 8.1 on the Richter scale; the second on

January 23, 1812, at 7.8; and the third on February 7, 1812, at as much as 8.8 magnitude.

It was in Essex where Nancy and I owned our very first television set, and it was a curse! I spent hours and hours each day watching that stupid television! I basically had time for nothing else. I was literally hooked. I had never lived in a house before where there was a television set (except for a few months back in 1961 when Nancy and I lived with my parents after coming off the evangelistic field). I had watched every episode of the most popular programs in those days, and I must admit that Red Skelton was my favorite. It was not until several years later that I was delivered from television. There are only a handful of TV shows over the past fifty years that I can tell you what they were about.

### **A Campmeeting in Panama City**

We had moved to Essex in 1962, and we had our little 1962 candy apple red Monza. It was one of those air-cooled, rear-engine jobs. I got wind that there were some problem with those little engines, and I thought that I would be ahead of the game by getting rid of it while the value was still high. I paid \$2200 for my Monza. I had driven it about 12,000 miles when I went back to Memphis to trade it in on a brand new 1963 off-white, 2-door hardtop Impala Chevrolet. To show you how the value was still up on the Monza, I paid only \$500 difference between the two cars. I got a car that sold for \$300-400 more than the same model Monza, and I got an Impala one year newer, and no miles compared to 12,000 miles! I felt very blessed. Besides that, I now had a 283 V-8 engine as compared to a little 4-cylinder job. It wasn't long after we had gotten this new Impala that Sis. Copeland, Doris Swartz, Bro. Cody, Nancy, and I loaded that 2-door automobile down, and I mean down, heading for a campmeeting at J. W. Hunt's Church in Panama City, Florida. There were some heavy folks in that little car. We had a great time, though.

On the way back home, we came back around New Orleans and took a riverboat ride. Nancy and I were in a foul mood with each other that day for some now unknown reason. We were not speaking with each other. Kenny and Sadie Sadler

had gone to the convention and came by New Orleans with us. I guess he wanted to be a peacemaker, so he went to the captain of the ship to announce over the P. A. system, "We want to welcome aboard today on the boat some special guests—Kenny and his little Nanny!" This loosened us up a bit, and I think we soon started talking again. I suppose the trip home was a little more pleasant after that.

### **The First Cotton Picking Vacation**

During the first cotton picking vacation in 1962, I went back to Memphis to work for the six weeks at my old store, Baker's Big Star. They sent me to one of their other stores in south Memphis, and I worked in the produce department. We had a big apple promotion, and I came up with the slogan: "Eve'n Adam Ate'm." Again, we stayed with Mom and Dad during this time. It was better than picking cotton! I had made the statement when I left the farm that with God's help, I would never pick cotton again. God has been good to me, because I have yet to pick cotton again.

### **Our First Church—People's Tabernacle**

It was sometime at the end of our first year in Essex that Nancy and I began pastoring our very first church—People's Tabernacle in Clarkton, Missouri. This was about one mile from Nancy's folks, and her brother Wayne and one other brother had started this little full gospel, independent church. We were driving down every weekend to minister to maybe ten to twenty people. This was quite a contrast to the Gideon Assembly of God church, which was three miles away and that had averaged over four hundred people every Sunday in its heyday! By this time, the Gideon church was about spiritually dead, and the little group in Clarkton was interested in spiritual things. I guess we called ourselves Deeper Life. It's interesting how along the way, we always identified ourselves with some move of God including Deliverance, Revival, Sonship, Charismatic, Kingdom, and Grace. The bottom line, it should all be about Jesus and His Kingdom.

Nancy and I finally decided that we would do better for the church if we lived in the community, so we moved. There

was no decent housing in Clarkton, but that made little difference to us. We moved back into the primitive! It was more primitive than the house we had in Essex. We moved into a house that had running water. It even had a commode inside, but there was no bathtub or hot water. The floors were rough and bare. We gladly sacrificed for what we believed to be a worthy cause—preaching the gospel of Jesus in our own little church! I continued to teach in Essex and drove a roundtrip of seventy miles a day.



This is the picture of People's Tabernacle, our first church in Clarkton, Missouri. This picture was taken many years after we were there when the building was in decay. It was eventually converted into a residence.

It was while in Clarkton, that we were contacted by Bro. J. W. Hunt, who was a very successful pastor in Panama City, Florida. He wanted to come to Clarkton for a tent revival. I have no idea why it was Clarkton, except for the fact that his pianist was Ruthie Whitaker Todd, who was the daughter of my pastor in Gideon, Bro. J. L. Whitaker. I think that Ruthie wanted to come back to Missouri to minister to her friends. She accompanied Bro. Hunt and provided the music. She stayed with us in our little humble abode, and Bro. Hunt slept in a small camper that he had brought for the revival. I remember Bro. Hunt preaching a message, "There's Corn in Egypt," a reference of course to Joseph's family being sustained during a severe drought in Israel.

I continued to teach in Essex a second year, commuting the thirty-five miles one way each day from Clarkton. The school year began in July in order for us to get out for the six-week cotton picking vacation in the fall. During this fall break, I worked at a cotton gin in Gideon. This was the cotton gin that I had hauled cotton to as a young teenager while living on the farm. I was the cotton baler at the gin. It was my responsibility to estimate the load of cotton on the truck or trailer and determine how many bales of ginned cotton there would be. I had to estimate when to cut the ginned cotton off from coming into the baler so as to have a full bale and yet not to have a bale too large to retrieve from the baler. This job did take some good judgment and skills, but I was paid very unskilled wages!

### **We Almost Went to International Bible College**

I had met Bro. David Coote, the president of International Bible College in San Antonio, Texas, at one of the youth camps that Sis. Copeland sponsored. Bro. Coote was a dynamic preacher—a real orator. He impressed me tremendously. I thought that I would very much like to work with him. I talked with him, and he offered me a job teaching mathematics in the high school that was a boarding school associated with the Bible School. I was to teach math, and Nancy and I were to be dorm counselors, or house Mom and Dad. I was to turn in my resignation at Essex before fulfilling my contract in order to take the job.

It was about this time that Nancy discovered that she was pregnant with our second child, who was Ken. I had related this possibility to Bro. Coote. On Sunday night before the Monday that I was to resign, I received a telephone call from Bro. Coote informing me that since Nancy was pregnant, he didn't think things would work out. It may have been because the wages he was offering us would not be sufficient to cover the added expenses of having another child. But as I recall, it seems that he addressed the fact that Nancy's pregnancy could cause some distraction in our role as house parents. I don't understand this. Of course, those were really still in the days where anything that had to do with sex was hush-hush—even a woman's pregnancy. I even remember my mother denying to me that she was pregnant with Raymond after she had come

from her own baby shower. I asked her who was going to have a baby. She never told us of her pregnancy. What a surprise my sister and I had when we returned on a Saturday morning after having spent the night with one of our uncles. We had a little baby brother!

Well, again, here was another instance where no doubt the hand of God intervened in our lives. What course would our lives have taken if we had gone to International Bible College? No one will ever know. We just have to rest in the fact that our steps are ordered of the Lord.

### **Our Second Church—a Promotion of Sorts**

It was during the second year that I was teaching at Essex that Nancy and I got the call to our second church. Jimmy and Manie Lee, older folks who were stirred by the present-day move of God in Sis. Copeland's Church, invited us to join them. The Lees lived in Sikeston and had started a little store-front church on Malone Street. This was the building where they had a very successful dry goods business in past years.

The Lees were definitely interested in deeper spiritual things, and evidently they thought Nancy and I could be a help. The Lees were good supporters of the church, but they didn't have too much of a ministry themselves. We accepted the offer to come and pastor the church. I guess you could say that we were the preaching counterpart of a pastoral team, because I think that Sis. Lee considered herself a co-pastor. At any rate, we did make the move. The Lees helped us to be owners of our very first home. We purchased a cute little two-bedroom, white framed house in a nice neighborhood of Sikeston. It was the nicest house that Nancy and I had lived in together up until that time.

### **Kenny Is Born**

It was while here in Sikeston that Kenny was born on April 3, 1964. Nancy had given birth to Donia in Memphis two years before by being put to sleep, thus feeling no pain. She was promised by her doctor in Sikeston that he would do the same. He lied. Nancy went through a torturous, mind-rendering, eighteen hours of labor pains. I felt so sorry for her.

She was screaming and crying. The nurses purportedly gave her some tranquilizers that had no effect at all. Nancy no doubt was scared, betrayed, and angry. It was a very traumatic experience for her, and I am convinced that this prolonged labor period was the beginning of some of Nancy's back pain.



Ken as an Infant

It was because of this experience that Nancy almost panicked when she found that she was pregnant the third and fourth times, six and eight years later. I had to assure her that I would allow her to go back to Memphis for her prenatal care and the birth of the babies. Memphis was about one hundred miles south of Hayti where we lived at that time. This I did, and this I followed up.

### **Turned Back by an Appendectomy**

It seems as I look back today, I probably made some foolish mistakes in the name of serving God. No one could question my intentions and motives. I wanted to do God's will and to serve Him to the best of my ability. One such time was in the summer of 1964. Kenny was only two months old, and I was going to leave Nancy and my two beautiful, darling children to go out once again to evangelize. My thought was

that I would be doing God's work and hopefully, it would provide some additional income over the summer months. I was still teaching school. I had a new contract to teach high school mathematics in Hayti, starting out at \$4400 per year, which at that time was pretty good.

I was on my way to Florida, where I was going to hook up with Bro. J. W. Hunt and spend the summer evangelizing. Brother Hunt was the head of a fellowship of about sixty independent churches in north Florida and south Alabama. I left Sikeston on a Friday, not feeling real well. Yet, I continued on believing that I would begin to feel better. The further I drove, the sicker I got. I was deathly sick in my stomach. Pain began in the pit of my stomach and moved to the right side. The pain got excruciating.

Somewhere around Tupelo, Mississippi I decided that I could not continue on. I turned my car around, hoping that I could make it back to Memphis. I barely did, as I discovered that my appendix was near rupturing. Mom and Dad took me to St. Joseph's Hospital for an emergency appendectomy. This again drastically changed my direction in life. What if I had gone on to Florida? Would my association of friends have been different? Would I now be moving in a different circle of churches? Who knows? Only God knows. Our steps were being ordered of the Lord.

### **A Summer at Camp Llewellyn**

After spending a couple of days in the hospital and recuperating for a few more days at my parents' house, I returned back to Sikeston pondering my next move. When I got back, I contacted a Boy Scout Camp where Coach Guthrie was working for the summer. I was offered a job as a conservation guide. I would have to be responsible for handling non-poisonous snakes in teaching the scouts about wildlife conservation. No way! I would accept this job under no circumstances.

Mr. Roger Carbaugh was the District Scout Leader, who was in charge of the camp. He was a real nice guy. I sensed then that he was a special person, and later I discovered that he had been filled with the Holy Spirit and had become a full gospel pastor in Scott City, Missouri. In fact, Nancy and I

preached for him one weekend while we were pastoring in Cartersville, Georgia. He had a good charismatic church there in Scott City.

Mr. Carbaugh then offered me a job as the commissary director. I would be responsible for all the kitchen help. My responsibilities were running the place, including ordering all the food. This I accepted, and Nancy, Donia, Ken, and I made the move into a one-room cabin on the grounds of Camp Llewellyn, north of Poplar Bluff, Missouri. Keep in mind, Donia was barely two years old, and Ken was only two months old. This was an interesting summer. We had no facilities in the cabin—no running water, no bathroom. We ate in the dining room. Nancy got milk from the kitchen to take back to the cabin for Kenny in between meals.

It was a neat summer. I'm sure that Donia enjoyed it. I'm not so sure about Kenny and Nanny. I enjoyed it, because I had a lot of free time from my job. I took advantage of the facilities by engaging in all the activities I could, including archery, canoeing, and swimming. I earned several awards while there, including the mile swim badge and the Senior Lifesaving Badge. After returning back to Sikeston at the end of the summer, I took a two-week training course from the Red Cross in Lifesaving. I became a certified Life Guard, which I never took advantage of. It was a grueling two weeks of training in order to become certified.



Kenny in Abilene 8 years old.



Ken about time of Summer Camp in 1964



"Baby Ken," the name Aunt Florence used in referring to Ken even into his adulthood years.

## Chapter Nine

### THE BEGINNING OF OUR MINISTRY IN HAYTI

#### We Move to Hayti the First Time

At the end of the summer of 1964, we made the move to Hayti from Sikeston. This our first move to Hayti. We would eventually move back to Hayti two more times, once from Memphis and another time from Abilene, Texas. The school superintendent was very kind to us. He sent a school truck with two guys to move us. It cost us nothing. We moved into a nice little two-bedroom house on the west side of town. It was behind Circle Inn, which had the best hamburgers in town, and they only cost \$.25! Nancy went to work in a coat factory across the street from where we lived. We had the privilege of getting a very caring woman, Mrs. McCoy, who came to our house to babysit with Donia and Kenny. Kenny later went to school with Mrs. McCoy's grandson, Kevin.



Ken and Donia about 1969

## **My Coaching Career**

The first year at Hayti High School was an exciting one. I was into working out, and I was interested in sports. I played basketball with the high school guys after school. In fact, I did this often in Essex, and I had gotten pretty good. It was while we were still in Essex that the faculty played a few games, most of the time against the Junior High team, and of course we could handle them. But, my most memorable game playing basketball was an exhibition game between the faculty and the Professional Redheads, which was a professional traveling women's basketball team. They wanted us to slack off and let them look good. They really got mad at me because I have always been very competitive and didn't want to lose anything to anybody. I was pretty quick, and I played my hardest. I played point guard and scored eleven points! I remember one of those gals cursing me while she was bringing the ball down the court! She told me to back off. I guess you could understand why she was upset because they weren't looking for some hotshot trying to make them look bad. They were trying to impress people that they were unbeatable; but, I, and some of the other guys had other ideas.

At Hayti High School, the main sport was football. Hayti definitely was a football town, and basketball was a side sport. The head basketball coach was the assistant football coach. The head football coach was the freshman basketball coach, G. W. Dean. Coach Dean was a cool dude. He was the biggest football star to ever come out of Hayti up until that time. He was a running back, and he got a scholarship to Ole Miss. He later transferred to Southeast Missouri and made Little All-America. Coach Dean wasn't interested in freshman basketball. In fact, he asked me if I would like to coach the team. He got permission from the administration to get out of the job and turn it over to me! I earned an extra \$200 for it. We had something like a 3-10 record, but one of those victories was in the county tournament. That was the extent of my coaching profession. It was fun, but it was not my cup of tea.

One of the highlights of the first tenure in Hayti was the year I played Santa Claus for the Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees). I was paid \$50 to dress up as a Santa Claus for two weeks during the Christmas vacation. I would go and sit in my

little North Pole on the town square and listen to those little kids telling me what they wanted for Christmas. Then, I took my bag of candy and walke around town spreading my cheer and joy. One day I was stepping up on one of the high curbs (about two feet high), and I stumbled. There was a town drunk who saw me. He laughed, and said, "Hey Sandy, how about giving me a little nip from your bottle." I smiled and basically ignored him, but I had to chuckle to myself.

## **The Beginning of Our Ministry in Hayti**

During our first year in Hayti, we began attending an independent full gospel church, the Full Gospel Evangelistic Center. The pastor was renting the Rotary-Lion Building on Wednesday night, Sunday morning, and Sunday night for ten dollars per service. This included all utilities. There must have been seventy-five people who had left the Pentecostal Holiness Church to start this church.

In order to protect the identities of the persons involved, in the following paragraphs, I will simply refer to Pastor and Pastor's Wife instead of naming names. Of course, anyone who is familiar with the happenings of this period of time will know to whom I am referring.

Pastor and his family were very popular in the Pentecostal Holiness Church, as they were all a very musical family. The PH church had grown to about two hundred people when something strange happened. The pastor had apparently committed suicide! His car was found by the Mississippi River, and he had disappeared. There was tremendous grief. It was left to be believed that he had taken his own life. Apparently, he had some mental disturbances at the time. Pastor's Wife was a minister herself, so she continued on as the pastor in the absence of her husband. Several months later, Pastor suddenly showed up with no explanation as to where he had been. There were rumors that he had been in Mississippi with a woman.

Well, the Pentecostal Holiness Church didn't take too well to this episode. Pastor was asked to resign the church, which he refused to do, so he was fired. That was the reason for the formation of the Full Gospel Evangelistic Center. Nancy, and I found our place of ministry there. I had become respected by Pastor, and the people of the church were very receptive of

us. I ministered on several occasions and recall that I had done a series of teachings on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

### **A Startling Prophecy**

Pastor's Wife was quite a unique person. I believe she was probably a pretty good woman and definitely was sincere. She evidently loved the Lord, but I know in many regards, she no doubt made life miserable for Pastor—at least as was told me by Pastor himself. Pastor's Wife had some spiritual insight, probably much more so than her husband, and this was one source of the problem.

Pastor's Wife was given to some far-fetched visions, and she declared herself as a prophetess. Of course, the mark of a prophet or prophetess is fulfilled prophecies. On many occasions, Pastor's Wife would speak out in tongues, getting certain syllables out a little bit at a time. Soon it became clearer. Finally the word Nisan came out. The 8th, the 8th, the 9th, the 9th. The 8th the 9<sup>th</sup>—Nisan; the 8th, the 9th Nisan. This was repeated several times over the next several weeks. The Lord supposedly was telling her, which she revealed later, that on the 8th and 9th day of March in 1965, a flood was coming, and it was going to wash Hayti off the map. She was trying to convince people of this. She particularly was working on one certain woman that made this woman was very confused. This woman didn't want to miss God, yet she couldn't get a witness in her spirit. We did everything we could to calm her spirit, and I believe that we did. This woman would become an integral part of our new-founded church a couple of years down the road.

The 8th of March came, and, shockingly, it began to thunder and storm. I believe that it actually turned into a bit of an ice storm. This was amazing that even this happened. It worked on Nancy. She was fearful, but I soon calmed her down. Pastor's Wife must have believed her own prophecy, because she was on her way out of town to higher ground. In fact, as she was leaving town, she telephoned the lady that she had been working on. She told her that she needed to get out of town quickly, because the water was starting to come upon the road.

I believe that Pastor's Wife was sincere, but it appeared that she was experiencing some mental and/or emotional issues. This was, in my mind, verified in other situations. I found out later that she probably was justified in some of her defense mechanisms, because she no doubt was trying to cover up for her husband, who turned out to be a more questionable character than anyone had thought. He really deceived a lot of people, because he had a way of getting people's sympathy, even mine. Many times he came to our home and cried on my shoulder, and I bought into it. I want to emphasize that this man had an engaging personality, and I liked him. As a result of listening to Pastor, I was convinced that his wife was the source of their problems. Of course, there are always two sides to every story. Who's to say that Pastor's Wife did drive him to some actions? On the other hand, I'm sure that Pastor was responsible for many of her actions.

### **Something Not Right Was Going On**

In the meantime, there were rumors that Pastor was interested in a woman in the church because of his frequent appearing at her home. She had a couple of teenaged daughters, one of which was a senior in high school. This senior was Pastor's older daughter's best friend. The Lord showed Nancy through revelation that something was going on between this woman's teenager and Pastor. She approached the girl, not giving her any specifics, but telling her that the Lord had told her about some things going on that weren't right involving her. We invited her to go to Youth Camp with us in the summer of 1965, and she agreed to go. The Lord really ministered to her, and when she returned home, she called Nancy and told her that she had made a telephone call to break off an illicit relationship with the person we later discovered was Pastor.

We did not know who the individual was that the young lady was referring to until later, but when the young lady called Nancy, she was really excited. She told Nancy that she had saved her life. By the strength and grace of God, she that day made a decision that averted what could have been a disaster. However, just a few short days later, everything was out in the open. The young lady apparently had weakened under the persuasion of her "lover." It was the next week that she left

town with the 38-year old pastor, who was the father of her best friend.

This incident represented no little crisis. The church was in a turmoil. The town was in a state of shock. I was immediately approached by the main leader of the church to take the pastorate. I preached for a few weeks and did not realize until later that Pastor's Wife was not happy with me being in that position, because she was rallying her forces to take the leadership of the church. It came down to a vote of the people, and Nancy and I were overwhelmingly chosen as the pastor. I don't recall exactly where Pastor's family went immediately after all of these incidents transpired.

### **Some Changes in the Air**

We pastored the Evangelistic Center for about a year. It was approaching the end of our second year in Hayti when I won a scholarship from the National Science Foundation to return to school on Saturday to take some graduate courses in mathematics at Memphis State University. There were some other teachers in the area who were working on their Master's degree on Saturdays, and I commuted with them to begin my studies to further my education in mathematics. This inspired me to want to continue to work toward a Master's degree in mathematics. I decided to seek employment in the City of Memphis School System where I could pursue an M.S. in mathematics at Memphis State.

### **Nancy and the Kids Move to Memphis**

I was offered employment in the Memphis School System, and I went ahead and moved Nancy and the kids on to Memphis in the spring of 1966. I resigned the church, and the church immediately disbanded. I stayed with Aunt Florence out in the country during the week. I went to Memphis on Friday evenings after school was out, attended classes at Memphis State on Saturday, and was with the family for the weekend. I then returned back to Hayti on the following Monday morning, which was a two-hour drive.

After school was out for the year, I headed for Memphis to enroll in summer school. I took twelve semester hours during

the regular summer session, three hours in the pre-summer term, and three hours in the post-summer term. That was a total of eighteen semester hours during the summer in mathematics! This kept me bumping and jumping! I went to Memphis State part-time during the following fall, spring, and summer. I graduated with a Master of Science (M.S.) degree in mathematics in August of 1967.

It was this same year that Aunt Florence must have had at least twenty-five dogs around her house. She had female dogs that kept having puppies. She always did love dogs and must have spent a lot of money just feeding them. I know that she had a vicious dog, half Chow and half Boxer named Candy that she dearly loved. She fed that dog better than most folks ate.

One day I asked Aunt Florence if she would like for me to load up some of those dogs and take them to the humane shelter on one of my trips to Memphis. I loaded up fifteen puppies in the trunk of my car and took them to Memphis. Dad didn't like dogs at all, even though in his later years, he fell in love with a little stray dog. Dad always was very critical of Aunt Florence having so many dogs.

I thought I would play a trick on Dad. Nancy's brother, Bill Walker, was in town visiting their sister, Olive Belle. I called Bill and asked him if he would go along with a gag. He was to call Dad and present himself as being from the humane shelter. He was to tell Dad that he had taken in fifteen dogs from Florence Frazier, and the agreement was that if they could not find them proper homes, he was to call Bill Meadors and have him pick them up. Bill Walker followed through with this gag. Dad got so frustrated and angry, that he cursed and told me to get on the phone. He said, "Come here, it's something about some d--- dogs!" It was good for a great laugh, but Dad didn't find it funny at all. It was a dirty trick, I suppose.

There is always a situation that you never forget. One night, probably two or three o'clock in the morning, I heard the telephone ring. We only had one telephone set in the whole house, and it was down the hall on the wall near the kitchen. I was half asleep, blundering my way around the room. I was disoriented, and it took me some time to realize where I was. I was completely turned around. The phone kept ringing. After banging into a couple of walls, I finally reached the phone and

answered it. The message on the other end of the line was short and sweet, and then the caller hung up. I returned back to the bedroom, and I said to Nancy, "You won't believe what that guy on the phone just said! He said, "I know who you are; I know what you did; I saw you when you did it!" Nancy was startled for a moment, because she couldn't figure for the life of her what this was all about. When it dawned on her that it was a prank, she had a good belly laugh. We have laughed about it many times for the past fifty years or so.

### **Assigned to Humes High School, Where Elvis Graduated**

As I stated earlier in this book, I was flattered that one day I would teach at the high school from which Elvis graduated; and, I worked side by side with some of his old teachers. This was the year that I spent at Humes High School in 1966, where Elvis graduated just thirteen years prior to my being there. Humes served students from the most poverty-stricken area of Memphis, which was near downtown. The school district included three of the most noted housing projects in Memphis history, Hurt Village, Lauderdale Courts, and Dixie Homes. Elvis and his family lived in Lauderdale Courts, which at that time was a predominantly white community. Hurt Village was predominantly white until right after the assassination of Martin Luther King. At the time of my tenure, Dixie Homes housed predominantly black residents.

I recall the times in the teacher's lounge, as well as in teachers' meetings, Elvis' teachers related to me that he was a very introverted young man. He wore strange and bright colored clothes and kept to himself. He had long hair for that period of time. He evidently never bothered anyone, nor did he get into any kind of trouble. However, the teachers were apprehensive of him because of his appearance. They thought perhaps that he was a potential "bad influence" on the other kids. Maybe they were afraid that he was going to lead a cultural revolution, which he actually did just a few short years later! As a consequence of some of the faculty's concerns, Elvis was originally banned from participating in a talent show sponsored by the school. However, after a review of the situation, they consented to let him participate. Of course, Elvis won the talent show! The rest of the Elvis story is history.

As a special note, recently, I read from the Wikipedia website that in 2004, Humes High School was listed on The National Register of Historic Places due to its connection to Elvis Presley, who graduated from the school in 1953.

My year teaching at Humes High School was one of the most frustrating of my entire teaching career for several reasons. Nineteen sixty-six was the first year of integration in Memphis schools. Humes had previously been an all-white school, but after integration, the school population was predominantly black. That within itself was a cultural shock. I previously mentioned that students from three major housing projects attended the school. Being the first year of integration presented a challenge within itself.



Humes High School in Memphis

The addition of black students was not the concern to me, as I had already taught integrated classes the previous year at Hayti High School. The main concern was how blacks and whites would relate to each other in a potential volatile situation. Also, as I will address in just a moment, there were challenges in terms of how you disciplined black students, especially when it came to corporal punishment, which was commonly administered in those days. Another reason this year was frustrating was because I felt that the City of Memphis School Board had humiliated me by assigning me to teach ninth grade general mathematics, at all place, Humes High School. I

considered myself to be a good, well-respected high school math teacher in advanced mathematics. I was working on my Master's degree in mathematics. And to make matters worse for me, I was teaching six of the lower general math classes. I couldn't handle it, so I complained to the Board of Education. They called me to come and appear before the board. I expressed my displeasure to no avail, to which I replied, "Well, I'm not sure that I will honor my contract." That still didn't faze them; it probably infuriated them. I thought, maybe they didn't need good math teachers as badly as I thought. I knew that I was one of the best, but apparently they didn't know that. I finally decided that I would make the best of a perceived bad situation. I decided that I would just put my time in for the year and continue my studies at Memphis State. In just a year, I would be able to move on to somewhere else when I got my Master's degree. By the way, my classes did better on end-of-the-year standardized tests than the higher group of general math students.

I had pretty good rapport with most of the kids. They learned to respect me, and I had some very good times with them. I had already been resolved to the fact that this was my lot in life for that year, and I made the best of it. I recall that at Christmas time, each class was collecting money for the underprivileged kids. Even though many of these kids in my class were underprivileged themselves, I helped to motivate them into raising the most money of any class. To me, this was rewarding, so perhaps in light of some perceived negative moments, there were some good ones.

One of the things that helped me through the year at Humes High School was the fifth period planning hour for several teachers. This was of course in the afternoon, and there were six male teachers who had preparation time during the same hour. None of us used this time preparing for anything except maybe a ping-pong tournament. All of us, including Coach Tommy Spiers, met in the boiler room to play ping-pong every single day during the year. We had some good players who were very competitive. I was always pretty good, and I held my own here. I could beat many of the guys on a pretty consistent basis, but there was one guy, an English teacher, who was almost unbeatable. However, we played doubles most of the time so that more players could be engaged. The team that

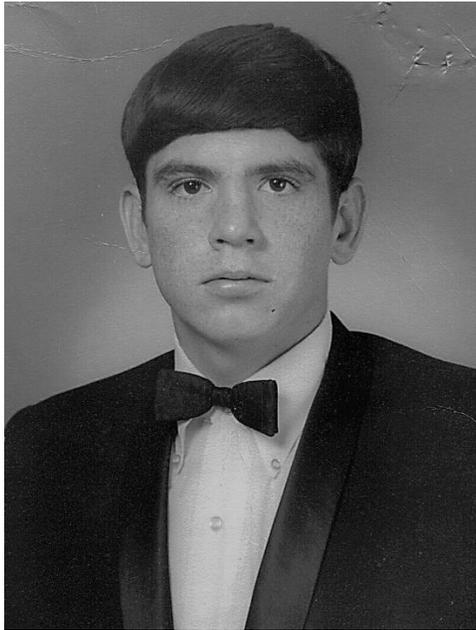
won stayed up to play the next team until they lost or came to the end of the period.

This English teacher and one other teacher had heard about a tournament at Memphis State that was open only to its registered students. These guys decided they would enter the tournament. No harm done, they thought. Maybe they would win a game or two for the fun of it. No doubt they would bow out early, and no one would ever know the difference. But there was a problem. They kept winning. The English teacher kept winning in singles, and the two of them kept winning in doubles. They won both the singles and the doubles championship at Memphis State! The time of reckoning had come. They had to come forward with the truth. Of course, they had to forfeit the championships. I never did find out what the consequences were. I think the sponsors of the tournament were upset, but apparently, nothing more came of it. They might have found it amusing in the same way that I did.

### **Time with Raymond in His Senior Year**

My year in Memphis allowed me to spend some time with Raymond, who was in his senior year at Trezevant High School. I had the opportunity to go and watch Raymond practice football, and I went to many of his games. Raymond was a good athlete in high school, and he played split end. He also had been a pretty good basketball player. In fact, he was junior high school first team all-district in his freshman year at Georgian Hills Junior High School. He played on the high school team his junior year. He missed his sophomore year, because during the last week of football practice, he broke his leg. Raymond decided that he had enough of high school sports when basketball season came around his senior year, mainly because he wanted to get a part-time job.

Raymond started working at Baker's Big Star, where I previously worked. He still loved basketball, and he joined the recreational league in Memphis. His team was to play for the city championship against a team from the area where a lot of kids at Humes knew. I remember talking to some of the guys about my brother. They had heard about him, because Raymond had become a league star.



Raymond's Senior Year Picture, 1967

Raymond wasn't planning on playing the night of the championship game because he had to work, and he evidently could not get out of it. I told my class at Humes about this, and they rejoiced because they believed that their team would win. The more I thought about the situation, the more I felt for Raymond. I approached his boss, who was also my previous boss, and asked him if I could substitute for him. The boss agreed, and Raymond was thrilled. He got off work and arrived at the gym just about game time. He dressed out, played in the game, scored thirty-five points, and his team won the championship! The guys the next day thought I had lied about Raymond not playing, but I explained to them what had happened.

It was also a special year for Mom. She babysat the kids while Nancy worked at Welcome Wagon. This was the same job Nancy had when we married, and I guess they were glad to get her back. Mom would come to the house every day. Even though we only paid her to babysit, she usually cleaned the house and would have supper ready every night for us. It

was a time when Mom could enjoy her two grandchildren at least for a year.



Mom When She Was about Fifty

I remember Mom turning fifty during our year in Memphis. I think it must have bothered her, because she kept talking about it. She repeated, "Fifty years old! Just think, I'm fifty years old. Why that's half a hundred!" How profound. She was convinced that she was getting old, because that same day, she slammed the car door on her foot! She no doubt was serious about being fifty and was anxious. How I long to be just fifty again. It would only be twelve years later that she passed on into the eternal presence of God.

While in Memphis, Nancy and I attended Revival Temple in West Memphis, where a friend of ours, Bro. Vernon Barnes, was pastoring. We knew Bro. Barnes from Sis. Copeland's Youth Camps. We didn't get too involved in the church because of our heavy schedule, but we did go every Sunday morning.

## Job Offer at Memphis State

It was now August, 1967, and I was preparing for my comprehensive examinations. The exams were oral. I had to meet with a committee in the math department, including the head of the department, Dr. H. S. Kaltenborn. Dr. Kaltenborn's wife, Dr. Helen Kaltenborn, was one of my professors in my freshman year of college. Additionally, Dr. H. S. Kaltenborn was my calculus teacher. He also had taught me a graduate math class. It was during my oral comps that evidently I further impressed him. The following day after the comps, he called me and offered me a full-time teaching job on the staff in the math department. He offered me \$7200.00, which was 33% more than I had made at Humes High School that year. I had already accepted a job to return to Hayti with a contract for \$6000.

When Dr. Kaltenborn called, I did not hesitate to tell him that I was not able to accept his offer, as I was to load up my furniture the next day to move back to Hayti. You see, the Lord had already instructed Nancy and me to return to Hayti to raise up a church. We had been there with a group of people meeting in a rented building before moving to Memphis, but I was to return to build a permanent church. I felt great satisfaction that I had made this choice, when I was being tempted to go another direction.

One day I spoke to Nancy what the Lord had said to me. She said that God had been dealing with her about the very same thing, but she was afraid to say anything to me. This was confirmation. I never felt such peace in my life. In my heart, I knew that I had made a bold decision to say yes to God, and I felt good about it.

Again, what if I had accepted the math job at Memphis State? Sure, I still could have eventually turned to full-time ministry, but I also could have been a full-time college professor. If there is one job outside the ministry that I wish that I had, it would have been a college teaching job. That is one position that I would have highly desired. But I knew that God had other plans for my life. Many people don't understand such things, especially those who know anything about Hayti!



Memphis State University (now University of Memphis)  
Administrative Building when I did graduate work in mathematics in  
1966-67.

When I called Mr. Sam Wallace, who was the Hayti School Superintendent, I asked him if he would like to have a good math teacher. He replied without hesitation, "Yes!" I said that I could return, but I would need \$6000. He didn't even think about it twice. He said, "No problem." I then proceeded to tell him what my main motivation was in returning to Hayti, and he had no problem with that, either. So, the die had been cast. God was opening the doors, and it was left up to us to enter those open doors.

## Nancy Healed of Asthma

One of our concerns about returning to Hayti were the problems that Nancy had all her life with asthma. Hayti was notorious for ragweed and other allergies, including dust and cotton lint. Nancy never suffered one time from an asthma attack all the time we were in Memphis. She and I discussed this, and we came to the conclusion that if God had called us to return to Hayti to do a work for Him, He could take care of this problem. This He did, and Nancy was healed completely of asthma! So, off to Hayti it was to begin another important phase of our lives.

It is also noteworthy that I was in the local barbershop one day that was run by a Church of Christ man. He was engaged in a conversation with other men in the shop about miracles. They expressed that they didn't believe miracles still

happened. I patiently listened without any response. Finally, I responded by telling them about Nancy's healing. They had no response. How could they argue with someone who personally knew that his wife had been miraculously healed? It has been said that the person who only had knowledge of something was at the mercy of the person who had experienced it.



My first cousin Lloyd Moore and I at Aunt Earlene's funeral in 2009.



First cousins Ray Spain, Cary Spain, Lloyd Moore, Kenneth Meadors, Nona Ruth Thompson, Jenny Ruth Fitzsimmons, and Glynda Thompson.

## Chapter Ten

### THE DECADE OF THE 60s in HAYTI

#### A Special Visitation

Immediately after we had moved back to Hayti, Sis. Louise Copeland asked us to come to her church and minister for a week. She was out of town, and the whole responsibility of the church was upon us. We had revival services during the week. The crowds were quite small, but there was a precious spirit. The first couple of nights were quite uneventful. But the third night was a night to be remembered.

It was rainy and gloomy on this particular night. The crowd was exceptionally small, but perhaps this was the way it was to be because of the unusual experience that took place that night. I had preached and had called everyone to the altar. We were praying, and the Lord came on the scene in a very special way. Nancy went into a trance. This has happened to her twice; the other time was in Hayti where she had a special visitation recorded in the book, *I Was Caught Up to the Third Heaven*.

On this Wednesday night, it was similar to her later experience inasmuch as she was totally oblivious to everything going on around her. She was completely caught up in the spirit. I recall on this occasion that she would speak in tongues, and evidently this was God talking to her. She understood every word that was being spoken, but to those who were witnessing the experience, all we heard was speaking in tongues. Then she would speak in English like she was responding to what God was saying. This went back and forth for well over an hour. Nancy was in deep conversation with God. We would hear her say things like, "But, God I don't understand." "Yes, God I'll do it." "No, God I won't tell anyone, not even Kenneth." This puzzled me, but I would not question it. I knew beyond a shadow of doubt that this was God. Some of the things God had spoken to her, she related to me years later after she felt that God had given her the clearance to do so. Much of what was revealed to her concerned our future ministry that eventually came to pass.

### **Beginning Our Special Mission in Hayti**

We left Poplar Bluff to return back to Hayti. We had moved into a house on Peach Street that was next door to the house we lived in before we moved away from Hayti for good in 1982. We only lived there for a few months. We were in the process of determining how we were to begin fulfilling the purpose of God in our being back in Hayti. We found a big house on Lincoln Street, which would be the ideal place to start a church.

Our first building was at 410 East Lincoln Street. This was just east of the town square across the street from McAdam's Store. The house belonged to Dr. Shirey. It was an older white frame house with a large living room and sitting room across the front. There was a large ten to twelve-foot opening between these two rooms, and they would make an ideal sanctuary for our new church. I guess we must have had forty to fifty folding chairs set up. The rest of the house, which consisted of three more rooms and a kitchen, served as the parsonage. We started the church sometime around November of 1967. Some of the ministers that initially visited and preached in this church setting were Jerry Dortch, Tony Abram, and Terry Finn. We had a very humble beginning, but it wasn't long before God was preparing the way for us to enlarge the ministry.

It was only a short few months before the Lord led me to a choice piece of property one block south of the town square on Third Street. There were two lots that belonged to Mr. R. N. Brasher. He had been approached by the Post Office to purchase the property to build a new post office building. He refused to sell them. Even his own church, Calvary Baptist Church, had thought about building there, but they decided on an existing building behind the elementary school. Mr. Brasher stated, "I don't know why I'm doing this, but I'm going to sell you this property." He was willing to finance it himself, and he gave us a clear deed before the property was paid off so that we could proceed to borrow money to start building. We paid \$3500 for the two lots, which wasn't a bad deal even then. A couple of years later, we paid \$3000 for just one lot across the street. God blessed us in our little church on Lincoln Street. We started out with just my family, Corrine Dowdy and her

daughter Donna, as well as Effie Stockton and three of her children. That was it. But God soon began to add to our little group.

### **The Bergamo Conference in Dayton**

One of the most exciting things in my life happened in the summer of 1968 right before we started construction on our new building. We had friends in Dayton, Ohio, Rev. Doris Swartz and her family, the Todds. Bro. Todd was the president of the Dayton chapter of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship. There was a move of God among the Catholics in Dayton at that time. The charismatic movement in the Catholic Church was creating much interest even in the Vatican. It was decided that a conference would be held at the Bergamo Center on the campus of the University of Dayton to discuss this phenomenon.

The Bergamo conference was a closed meeting to all outsiders. There were representatives, both pro and con to the charismatic question, from all over the United States. There was also a representative there from the Vatican. There were a select number of Protestants who were invited. Two spirit-filled ministers who were invited to speak were Tommy Tyson, an Oral Roberts associate, and Leroy Jenkins, a healing evangelist. Bro. Todd, because of his influence among the local Catholics, was invited, and he was able to bring some guests. The conference was for about three days. Nancy and I were privileged to be guests of Doris and Bro. Todd. It was a most memorable occasion.

For three days at Bergamo, we listened to discussions of the Pentecostal experience in the Catholic Church. Tommy Tyson was persuasive. Leroy Jenkins evidently had been responsible for several Catholic nuns receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He had a gifted ministry, operating in the gifts of faith, healing, miracles, and the word of knowledge and wisdom. The Lord used him in some of the gifts during the conference, and most of the Catholics were convinced it was God. Of course, there were the skeptics and the critics. The outcome of the conference was more or less the recognition that the charismatic movement was no doubt a legitimate move of

God, and the official stand was to "just wait and see what happens."

The Catholic Church was quite open for a period of time, with the embracing of Protestant brethren. This was soon to change. David Wilkerson had prophesied that he saw the Catholic Church shutting the door against this openness toward the Protestant Church, and unfortunately, this soon came to pass. It was a short year or so later that the Catholic Church decided that the charismatic experience was okay, but it should be practiced among their own people. To my understanding, this is where the Catholic Church stands today. There is a goodly number of charismatics marked among the ranks of the Catholic Church, but they have little or nothing to do with any fellowship outside their own church. In fact, most of the Catholic charismatics meet in an obscure location of the church such as the basement or an auxiliary room.

Nancy and I returned back to our field of labor in Hayti with a new sense of vision and direction. We were convinced that the move we had made a few years before to seek to be identified with the broad field of the Spirit-filled community was confirmed. We certainly had deep roots in our Pentecostal past, but we did have an open mind and heart to not limit God to a certain small segment of people. I thank God that He has always allowed me to be flexible to embrace whatever He did wherever He did it. Our spiritual lives are ever evolving, and we never stop learning or growing.

### **Our New Building Is Begun**

It was during the month of July in 1968 that I single-handedly dug the footing for our new thirty by sixty-foot building with a shovel, which was on the corner of Third and Monroe in Hayti. I poured the footing myself. I hired a block layer, Charlie Coleman, to lay the blocks for the foundation, then I did all the fill-in with dirt and gravel. I hired a man to help me pour the floor. The day that we poured the concrete, it was 100 degrees in the middle of July, and it was very humid. This was a day that the whole church was fasting. What a day to fast! It was a very difficult day physically, but I felt great. My energy level was high, and my experience that day was most fulfilling.



Mom and Aunt Hildred



One of my favorite pictures of Dad



Ground Breaking for Evangelistic Temple Sanctuary

However, it must be said that the day of pouring the concrete was a very frustrating one. The concrete man had put some red dye in the concrete so that we would have a red floor without having to paint it. The sun was shining very brightly, and it was very hot. Before the concrete could set, there came a deluge of rain. It just about ruined our floor. To make matters worse, the concrete was set up hard, but not hard enough to withstand the rain. There were peck holes all in the concrete. The man who was helping me sought to remedy the situation by going back over and patching up the floor with some type of sprackling compound. This never worked. The top layer began to peel after we had completed the church. The red dye in the concrete loosened and became powdery. It was more than a mess. This situation was never completely remedied until we finally decided to cover the floor with carpet to cover up the red powder.

I hired the same block layer to come and build the walls out of cinder blocks. I did the rest of the work—all the carpentry work. I hired a plumber to put in the bathrooms. Larry Pilkington, who was to move from Memphis to join with

us, did the electrical wiring. I put in the central heating system. Just think, instead of all this hard work, I could have been teaching at Memphis State University, but this experience was most satisfying. We were fulfilling the call of God on our lives.

### Those Who Joined Us

Larry and Billie Sue Pilkington had felt that the Lord was calling them to move from Memphis to Hayti and help us in our church. This decision was made shortly after Nancy had told Billie Sue when we were in Memphis what God was doing. Billie Sue became excited. Larry was a licensed electrician in Memphis. He left a very good job to move to Hayti. While in Hayti, Larry did some electrical work, but he also drove a Coca Cola truck and later a milk truck. In addition, he wired both buildings that we built in Hayti as well as the new house that we built. Billie Sue was a great blessing, as she was a pianist and vibraharpist. In fact, this is the Billie Sue Crawford who was the pianist at Rugby Park Assembly of God Church in Memphis when we were both teenagers.

God sent Jerry and Rebecca Dortch to work with us somewhere around 1968. Jerry had just been saved a short time, and he was a lineman for the local electric company. Jerry was very excited about the Lord in those days (and forty-nine years later, he is still excited). In some people's minds, he was fanatical in some respects. Compared to him today, he was legalistic. Today, he believes in the grace of God in a special way and is open to present-day truths of the Kingdom of God.

One thing Jerry did for me while at Evangelistic Temple in Hayti was to inspire me to get into the Word of God more. I was into a lot of inspirational preaching with little organization and study behind it. I also was heavy into the moving of the Spirit through the gifts. All of this was important, but there needed to be a balance with the systematic teaching and preaching of the Word of God.

Jerry and Rebecca were called to the mission field in Mexico from our church, where they spent about four and a half years of their life. In fact, their youngest child, Chaltel, was born in Mexico. Jerry and Rebecca joined us in Cartersville in 1985 to help us launch our Christian School. Today, Jerry is

pastoring the Gathering Place in Cartersville, and that is where we are at this time of our lives.

The Lord blessed our little church, and I was continuing to teach high school mathematics in Hayti High School. I shall not elaborate much on the teaching aspect of my life in Hayti, as I feel that the ministry took first priority. However, I will say that I had the privilege of teaching some of the most outstanding kids with whom I had ever been associated. Hayti had a very good school system in those days, but unfortunately, it soon deteriorated.

I had many wonderful memories from my days of teaching at Hayti. School teaching was one of the major callings in my life, but teaching the Word of God took precedence. I might add, that at least three of my students from the Class of 1966 became lawyers. One of these lawyers is now a law professor at Florida State University. Some other of my students became a medical doctor, a couple of engineers, and a nuclear physicist. In fact, one student became an assistant district attorney in Los Angeles. However, when he inherited his grandfather's fortune, he moved to Switzerland where he resides today. Another student of note became the high school math teacher until his retirement after thirty years of teaching. The greatest reward for me are two ministers who recently have credited me for influencing them, not only academically, but also spiritually. Because of Face Book, I now have contact with nearly fifty of my former students.

### **Our Mexico Expedition**

In the fall of 1968, Nancy and I bought a brand new 1969 two-door hardtop Galaxie 500. It was the nicest car that we had owned up until that time. It had a 428 V-8 engine, with air conditioning, power windows, and power steering! The first long trip we made in our new Ford was to Mexico. Eddie and Geraldine Griffith were missionaries to Matehuala, Mexico. They were out of Sis. Copeland's Church in Poplar Bluff, and they invited us to come visit them. We left Donia and Kenny with my parents in Memphis for two weeks.

We set out for our missionary trip, and the experience at the border was just what we heard it could be—somewhat intimidating. The border guards were always looking for

payola. They can make life hard for you if they choose to do so. I remember being told that a few dollars would pacify the guards and help facilitate our passing through the borders. This I did, but pretty soon there was another guard running up with his hand out. I couldn't understand a word he was saying, but I chose to ignore him. This was evidently no problem, because we were allowed to continue across the border to our destination.

We spent the first couple of days in Mexico with Sis. Quida Baker. She pastored a significant church in Monterey. She also had several churches under her leadership in and around Monterey. We had the opportunity of being taken on a tour of the city, which was an experience within itself. For the first time, we saw first-hand some of the real poverty. We saw people sleeping on the streets. We saw little kids begging. The most memorable thing I remember about Monterey was the crazy, wild drivers. It was the most bizarre thing I have ever witnessed. I don't think they knew what traffic lanes were. They drove wherever they chose. I don't understand why there were no more accidents.

The trip continued on down to Matehuala, which was about two hundred miles south of Monterey. This was a medium-sized city, with perhaps fifteen to twenty thousand people at that time. This was where Eddie and Geraldine lived, and where Jerry and Rebecca would eventually live. Eddie worked in the villages all around Matehuala. He was a hardworking person. Besides being involved in much physical labor in building new churches, he also gave himself to the teaching and preaching of the Word of God. Later, in 2008, I returned to Mexico with Jerry Dortch along with four other ministers. By then, the population of Matehuala was over one hundred twenty thousand people. I will elaborate on this trip a little later in the book.

On the 1969 trip, we were going to one of the mountain villages one evening when Eddie informed us that we were obligated to eat with the natives. They had already described the surroundings, which included filth and thousands of flies. Our stomachs were already turned, but Eddie informed us that we would insult them if we didn't eat with them. This was when Nancy began to pray. When Nancy really prays, she usually gets results. This time was no exception. A miracle of miracles

happened. For the first time ever that Eddie could recall, there was not a prepared meal at the village that night! They served us fresh, saltine crackers and a bottled coke. This was a definite answer to prayer! Eddie called it a miracle.

We went to one of the more established churches on Sunday morning in one of the villages. I preached there that morning with Geraldine interpreting for me. It was here at this church that a most unusual event took place. After church, there was an older Mexican woman who came up to Nancy jabbering something in her native tongue. We had no idea what she was saying. When we asked Geraldine what she was saying, she brushed it off as being nothing. She stated that this woman called herself the village witch, and she just wanted to tighten Nancy's head. Geraldine told her that it was okay, and about that time this woman placed her hands on Nancy's head and began to squeeze. Nancy later had some of the most horrendous headaches that she had ever experienced in her life. We finally realized why. The amazing thing is that at the time, we did not take this seriously, either. Witchcraft is a very serious thing, and it is not a game to be taken lightly. When we realized what had happened, we bound this spirit in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the curse was broken.

### **Tony and Marge Abram**

We had some very notable meetings during the early days of Evangelistic Temple in Hayti. Nancy and I had met Tony and Marge Abram in 1965 at one of our Youth Camps. Tony, Marge, Nancy, and I were all just a few months apart in our ages, and we found many other things in common. We have had a real bond of friendship through the years with the Abrams. They saw all four of our children grow up, and they are all very fond of Tony and Marge. I will elaborate more later, but today in 2017, we still have a very close relationship with Tony and Marge.

Tony started out in the early sixties with T. L. Osborn, serving as one of his overseas crusade coordinators. Tony received valuable training under T. L. Osborn, but he had a great calling and anointing on his own life. When he and Marge married, they both began to travel overseas in mass evangelistic crusades, much on the same order as T. L. Osborn. They have

been consistent in ministry through all the years, and today in 2017, they are still going strong, even though they are both seventy-seven years old and are a bit slowed by some age-related ailments! Most people who do this type of ministry work a few years and then retire. Tony and Marge have been the most consistent and faithful servants of the Lord that I have ever known, especially in this particular type of ministry. I wouldn't be surprised if they haven't touched more lives in crusade work than anyone alive. T. L. Osborn probably reached more people in a shorter period of time, but Tony and Marge have been going strong for all the fifty-five years of their marriage and ministry. I had the privilege of ministering with Tony and Marge in South America for about six weeks in 1975. Again, I will elaborate on this a bit later.



Tony and Marge along with Nancy and me at Lake Louise in Canada

In 1968, Tony and Marge came to Hayti to hold a two-week tent revival. It was here that we met Tony's mother, Mom Abram, a faithful servant of the Lord. Mom Abram passed away about two years ago just short of her one hundredth birthday. She was very active in her son and daughter-in-law's ministry in Phenix City, Alabama, taking care of the business end of the ministry. Mom Abram's brother, Uncle Joe, accompanied them. Uncle Joe was a very timid man who had never married. He helped with the manual part of the tent setup. Uncle Joe stayed

in the back of the truck, and we took food to him. Tony, Marge, and Mom Abram stayed with us in our house on Lincoln Street. We offered Uncle Joe accommodations, but he was more comfortable in his own habitat. We had a good revival with the Abrams.

### **An Unusual Deliverance Service**

There was another evangelist who came for a one-week revival but stayed for two weeks. That was Dan Carroll. Dan was a very enthusiastic, evangelistic preacher who preached deliverance. It was during his meeting that a most unusual thing happened. There was a young lady in our church, Dianne, who was a quiet and unassuming young woman. She was basically a pretty good kid, but she evidently had been mixed up with a questionable crowd. She became involved with Ouija boards, séances, and other demonic activities. There was a young woman in town who had been hospitalized for an attempted suicide after being involved in a Ouija board experience.

One night, demon spirits began to act up in Dianne. It was a most unusual demonstration. All the classic characteristics such as growling, snarling, and foaming at the mouth were manifested. The most unusual thing that happened was when these spirits began to talk in a very gruff tone of voice. We were feeling our spiritual oats that night. We authoritatively commanded these spirits to come out in the name of Jesus! They wouldn't budge. We did not give up. We persisted for over two hours. By this time, of course, the service had basically disintegrated, and many people had left. Many probably left out of fear. There were some sincere people who remained, and there were perhaps a few on-lookers—curiosity seekers.

Conversation was engaged with these spirits. We thought this was really something conversing with the devil! We thought we had tricked them into giving us some valuable insight and information. One of the significant things that did come out were the circumstances that preceded the attempted suicide of the other young lady in town. It was during a séance that it was planted in her mind to take her own life, but fortunately, she did not succeed.

A lot was learned that eventful evening. Number one, don't spend time arguing with the devil. Don't give him such glory and attention. Jesus spoke, and the demons had to respond immediately. Don't even engage in conversation with the devil. It has no value. You can't trust anything that he says, either. So much attention can be given to demon spirits, and the real purpose of God can be defeated in people coming together to worship the Lord and to exalt the King of kings. I believe major warfare is taking place, though with principalities and powers as well as spiritual wickedness in high places. This is among the higher ranked order of the kingdom of darkness. Satan would like nothing better than for the Army of God to be sidetracked and distracted by a few loose buck private demons.

The service that night wasn't over until perhaps around midnight. Everyone, including Nancy and the kids, had already gone home. Dan and I were still in the church rehearsing many of the events of the evening. It soon became apparent to me that Dan was stalling me from leaving him alone at the church. He was sleeping in one of the Sunday school class rooms at the church. Finally, I addressed the issue, and he admitted that he felt a little uneasy. After talking awhile longer, he finally felt peace, and we each went our way for the rest of the night. We have reconnected with Dan just in the last few years here in Georgia when he attended one of our conferences in Cedartown. He is presently pastoring a church in Indianapolis, Indiana.

### **Significant Ministers Who Came to Evangelistic Temple**

Charles Cox was a very popular preacher among the revival-oriented people in Southeast Missouri. Charles was a very exciting and excitable preacher who sounded very Pentecostal, but he had a lot more to say than most. He had a rather deep word, preaching under a heavy anointing through the spirit of revelation. He was a very good organist, and he had a very raspy singing voice that was very effective.

Charles' theme song was "There Is a River," a song that the Lord had given him several years before. I heard him sing this song long before it became popular. Someone else had taken the song and copyrighted it, and the song became a standard. Charles never received credit for it. He stated that he

had over 200 preachers who were ready to document the fact that they knew him to be the author of the song long before it was copyrighted. He stated that when the Lord gave him the song, he prayed that it would be a great blessing to thousands of people. This it was, and in this, Charles was content and did nothing else toward receiving credit for the song.



Charles Cox and Nancy circa 1971

It was when I was in Abilene in 1972 that I met the Assembly of God preacher who was a personal friend of David Sapp, who copyrighted this song. I told him about Charles, and the pastor stated that he always had some doubts about the authorship of that song. In fact, he had confronted his friend David about it, but he was evasive. The pastor said that he thought it was strange that he never knew David to have been a songwriter, and furthermore, to his knowledge he never wrote any other songs.

Charles was one of the very first effective kingdom preachers to come into Southeast Missouri. I give him credit for my evolving spiritual life. Charles had a very likable personality, and he wove his charm into the hearts of everyone. As a result, Charles did very well financially. But, what was unusual about Charles, materialism didn't mean much to him. As successful as he was, he chose to drive a Ford and stay in

pastors' homes. Since the church received half of the offerings, we were always very happy for Charles to come.

W. V. Grant, Sr., was one of the early pioneers in the healing revivals of the 1950s, being a part of the Voice of Healing. Bro. Grant was a very prolific writer, having written perhaps two hundred or more booklets. He had a national ministry, and he sent out hundreds of thousands of magazines a month. He was on radio nation-wide.

I met Bro. Grant in Poplar Bluff at Sis. Copeland's church. We went out to eat after service one night, and he was a very interesting little guy who had a very dry sense of humor. It was during this time, that Bro. Grant expressed that he'd like to come to Hayti, of all places. I was very intimidated by this offer, but I was willing to give it a try. He was going to send in his front man, who was Boyd McClarren. As he had done in other ministry engagements, Bro. Grant would send Bro. McClarren in for several days, doing all the groundwork, including preaching the first several nights of the revival. Bro. Grant then would come in for the last few nights. Bro. Grant had a very successful revival early in his ministry in Blytheville, Arkansas, at the Assembly of God church. He wanted to come back into the general vicinity, hoping that he could contact some of his old friends. Blytheville was only twenty-five miles south of Hayti.

Well, something happened that Bro. Grant did not come, but he did send his associate evangelist, Bro. Boyd McClarren. Everything was done very professionally. Bro. McClarren sent me a few hundred dollars up front to do some radio advertisements. This I did, and when the time of the revival came, the church was packed. This was while we were still in the original building, and the seating capacity was one hundred and forty at most.

Bro. McClarren brought his son, Darrell, who was one of the best organists in the business. He was very accomplished. Bro. McClarren played the electric guitar along with Darrell playing the Hammond organ. They made a very effective team. Bro. McClarren was a professional evangelist. He knew all the clichés and buzzwords that moved the congregation. His favorite theme was chasing the devil out of the house. He often would say, "There he goes out the door, and all you can see are his tail lights!"

It was the last night of the revival that the McClarrens had one of the most unusual and effective services that I have ever witnessed. It apparently was effective everywhere they went. Bro. McClarren put on a black cape, had a casket in front of the pulpit, dimmed the lights, and in the words of one pastor, "scared the hell out of everybody!" I guess, that was his goal—to get the devil and hell out of everybody he could, including scaring it out of them!

It was a very emotional service. Darrell played some spooky organ music in the background. He had a technique of switching the sound of the organ from one speaker on one side of the building to the other side. This he would do at precisely the right moment for effect. At the climax of the service, the swell of the organ arose to a crescendo. It appeared that many of the people there had eyes as big as saucers. They would jerk their head from one speaker to the other as the sound reverberated between them. At the close of the service, there was by actual count, thirty-eight people who came forward to be saved. The amazing thing was that many of them were seen shouting in the earlier part of the service. What an evening! I have recently connected with Darrell on Face Book, and he is a pastor in North Carolina.



Jay Swallow and I circa 1971

Brother McClarren brought a man with him who preached deeper life in the day services during this crusade. He was Jay Swallow, who was a very sincere, spiritually-attuned, and anointed man of God. He was a full-blood Cheyenne Indian. We would later have many very successful meetings with Jay Swallow in Hayti, including his being the main speaker for two different conventions that we had every Labor Day weekend. Sadly, Bro. Jay went home to be with the Lord in the year 2016. He was a spokesperson for many Native American tribes, and resided in Oklahoma.

### **Raymond Stands Afar Off**

In was in the summer of 1969 that I had the inspiration to rent a tent and set it up in front of the church, precisely on the spot where we would later build a new sanctuary. It drew a lot of attention, but some folks could not understand why we were sitting in the hot summertime under a tent when no more than fifty feet away sat an air-conditioned church. Well, I guess that was something to think about. But I believe that the tent did have a desirable effect.

Standing outside his automobile, parked across the street from the tent, was a bloated young man weighing nearly two hundred pounds who was in a backslidden condition with a hit-me-with-your-best-shot attitude. This young man ordinarily never weighed anymore that a hundred and seventy pounds, which is about what he weighs today at sixty-eight years of age. This was none other than my brother, Raymond, who had been on fire for God the previous couple of years.

Raymond enrolled in Central Bible College in Springfield, Missouri in the spring of 1968. It was during this time that he came in contact with Teen Challenge. He was intrigued by this ministry, and soon he joined the staff of Teen Challenge Detroit. He worked with this ministry for nearly a year. He had some wonderful experiences in this ministry, but apparently, he became disillusioned for some reason. Maybe some of the pressures of this kind of ministry got to him. He came back home to Memphis and grew cold in his experience with the Lord. It was while in this condition he was standing outside the tent in Hayti. But, it would be only a short time that he was restored in his relationship with the Lord and hasn't

looked back since. It would be later that fall that Raymond cried out to Nancy and me for help. He was desperate. His life was in shambles, and he wanted to turn it around

Raymond came to Hayti to live with us and got a job at the Caruthersville Shipyard. It was on a cold and rainy day that he was working outside helping to build barges. It was there in that condition that he finally realized that he was in the pigpen of life. He had sold his substance on riotous living. His Father had better, and he would return to His Father's household. It was then, that Raymond finally made the turn-around.

It was during a planned prolong fast, that God spoke to Raymond's heart. He had received his notice that he was to report to the draft board. By now, he had made peace with God. He proceeded to "volunteer" for the draft, which enabled him to go ahead and get his obligation over with. Ordinarily, when you volunteer for the army, it is for a minimum of three years, but if you volunteered for the draft, it was for two years.

### **Raymond's Vietnam Days**

This would be the beginning of a journey for Raymond that would finally establish him in the faith. He went into the military on a spiritual high, and he came out nineteen months later still high spiritually. During this tenure, he spent fourteen months on the battlefields of Vietnam. It was during these Vietnam years that Raymond grew in the Lord. Mom was very disturbed when she first heard the news that her baby son was going to Vietnam. Mother was a woman of faith and prayer. She made a commitment to the Lord to fast one meal every day while Raymond was away. She also wrote him a letter every day, and Raymond answered about every one of her letters.

Raymond wrote mother only uplifting and encouraging letters. Most of the time, he wrote the same to me, but there were a few times that he expressed his true feelings and shared the anxieties of being in Vietnam. Raymond was a battlefield medic, and he had experienced many dangerous situations with many of his friends falling all around him. In his position, he had to deal with much tragedy. One time he told me that they were deep in the jungles and had no food for three days. They had to cross a rushing stream, and one of the guys was swept downstream because he was too weak to fight the current. He

did not survive. Through all of this, Raymond came home without even a scratch. The hand of God had been upon him during those fourteen months on the battlefield of Vietnam.

It was during his last months of Vietnam that Raymond wrote me and told me that he felt that the Lord was going to allow him to work with me if I thought that would be a possibility. This was a huge step for Raymond, because he had always been completely committed to the Assembly of God organization. I was now an independent preacher. As will be described later, Raymond was very instrumental in some very significant things that he and I were involved in spiritually.

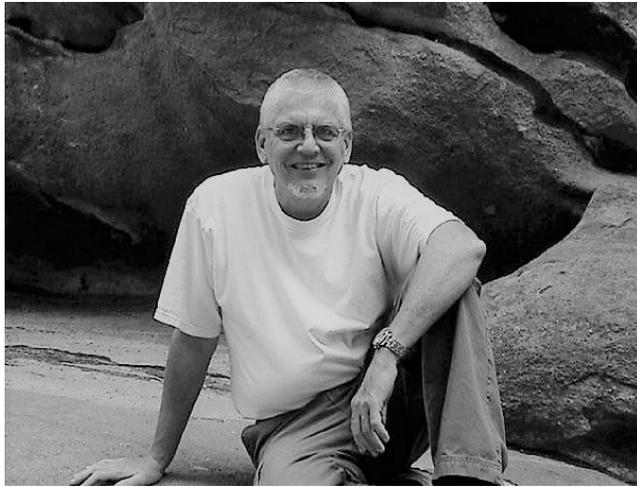
Just a few days before Raymond went to Vietnam, after he had completed all his training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and Fort Polk, Louisiana, Dad and I planned to spend some very quality time with Raymond. All three of us guys decided that we were going to camp out together in Big Springs National Park, near Van Buren, Missouri. I shall never forget the night. As has been the case in most instances when I have decided to camp out, it rained heavily. In fact, it was thundering, lightning, and raining very hard for most of the evening.



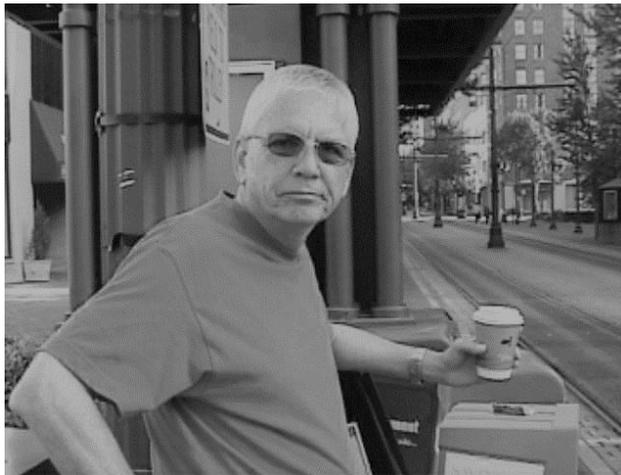
Raymond in Vietnam in 1970

We were camping in the camper shell of Dad's old pickup truck. We stayed up late talking, laughing, telling jokes, and playing Rook cards. Some of the most haunting songs I have ever heard still ring in my ears. Raymond was singing

songs about the bloodshed of Vietnam that he had learned at Boot Camp. This might have been a part of his training designed to help desensitize him to tragedies that he could be faced with. I remember in particular about his singing about the mountain streams flowing with blood, and that was very haunting to me.



Raymond at Red Rock in Colorado



Raymond in Memphis when we stayed at the Peabody Hotel.

## Chapter Eleven

### HAYTI—the Years 1970-72

#### "This Is No Joke"

The night before the Dortchs left for Mexico represented one of the most bizarre experiences that we ever had in Hayti. Tony and Marge were visiting with us at that time. They had a travel trailer parked at the church. We were still living in the house on Lincoln Street. The Abrams, along with the Dortchs and Grissoms had spent an evening together in our home. It was a nice, warm summer night, and the Abrams had walked to our house. After they left us for the evening, Jerry, Larry Wayne Grissom, and I decided we were going to have some fun with the Abrams. We were going to slip around the trailer and "spook" them.

We parked Larry's truck in front of the cleaner business, which was around the corner from the church. We walked around in the dark shadows to play a trick on the Abrams. About the time we got near the trailer, a light came on, and Tony came outside. We immediately ran to try and keep him from seeing us. We turned the corner on Third Street, and low and behold the chief of police stopped us. He recognized me and asked me what we were up to. I explained to him what we had done. He asked us if the pickup truck with Louisiana tags parked in front of the cleaners was ours. We told him it was. He told us to jump in and he would drive us back around to it. When we turned the corner coming back to the cleaners, to our surprise there was a party waiting. There was a group of people gathered around including a State Trooper.

The trooper was searching the truck. We questioned what was going on. Apparently, one of the neighbors saw us park there and no doubt saw us acting a little suspicious. They called the police. When I questioned what was going on, I got no response. I walked back to the chief and told him to tell the trooper that this was all a big joke. The trooper overheard me and presented a gun that was retrieved from the truck, and he said, "This is no joke." I thought, Uh oh. Oh, no! Jerry was standing on the sidelines nearly petrified. He stated later that

all he could think about was ending up in jail when he was supposed to be in Mexico doing the Lord's work.

Chief McKay knew me very well, and he told the trooper that with his permission, he would take care of everything. The trooper said okay, but the responsibility rested on Chief McKay. The chief gave us a little lecture and let us go. He told Larry that he could come by the police station the next day to pick up his gun. That was an evening to behold.

When we told Tony about this the next day, he really assumed the upper hand. He said, "Boy, it's a good thing you guys didn't come around." He said he was about to waylay somebody. He probably could, because Tony was 6'3" tall and weighed about two hundred and sixty pounds. He had been an ex-teen gang leader in Pittsburgh. We had some great times rehearsing this incident on many future occasions. Jerry can laugh about it all now.

### **A Mission Trip to British Honduras**

Another highlight in this particular phase of our lives in Hayti was the time that I accompanied some ministers on a mission trip to British Honduras. I had renewed my fellowship with Bro. Whitaker, who was my boyhood pastor in Gideon, Missouri. In fact, this was the first time that I had seen him since our family moved from Missouri in 1955. This was now in the year 1970. Bro. Whitaker was ministering at Bro. Nochta's church in Corning, Arkansas when I went to hear him.

Bro. Whitaker was now heavily involved in missions, particularly in British Honduras. He invited me to join him and several other ministers who were going to make a trip to British Honduras during December of 1970. We arrived in Belize, which was the capital city of the nation. Actually, the whole country is now known as Belize. The first night in Belize, we stayed at a Mennonite boarding house. They had nice, clean facilities and great food. The Mennonites are very well known for their hospitality.

While in the city of Belize, one of the pastors who was from Alabama related a story concerning one of his previous trips to Belize. He had driven his pick-up truck through Mexico and into British Honduras. He had parked his truck on the street in Belize, when a young, large, and strong-looking black man

noticed his Alabama tags. He approached this minister in a very surly manner, and said to him, "White man, you need to go back to Alabama where you belong, because down here, WE are in charge!" Wow, that was heavy! I might have been tempted to turn around and gone back home. Well, not really. I probably would have done precisely what this brother did—just stay there!

The next day, Bro. Leo Travis was there bright and early to take us to his home base in southern British Honduras. He was living around the Punta Gorda area. There was only one highway running north and south across the country, and it was far from being a superhighway. In fact, it shouldn't have even qualified for a highway! It was about two hundred miles of dirt road. There had been some recent rainfall. In fact, it rained every afternoon in this tropical land. The road was muddy and almost impassable in places. We got stuck no less than a half dozen times. The ruts in the road sometimes dragged the bottom of the truck. The trip to Punta Gorda was an experience within itself, taking all day to make the trip.

When we arrived in Punta Gorda, we found a very primitive culture. The Travises, who were wonderful and godly people, had given their lives for the mission work in this area. Their ministry was primarily to the Indians. The Travises had no modern facilities. They had a shower that was fed from water in an overhead tank, which was filled by the rainfall. The water was very cold, and I can tell you that you didn't take long showers! I helped Bro. Travis plant a vegetable garden in December. What a different turn. This was absolutely gorgeous weather for a winter month. We then went and ministered in some of the local congregations at night.

About the third or fourth night in Belize, I found out the primary reason that these ministers had come. Sis. Travis was having some problems with her heart, and they believed it was connected to demonic activity. They had been exposed to some strong evil presence in that land, and they needed reinforcements. As we were sitting and talking together one night, it was the feeling among the brethren that this was the night to confront spiritual darkness in the form of deliverance. It was quite an experience, but we felt that the victory had been won. Sis. Travis was delivered by the mighty power of God!

However, it was early in the morning, perhaps three o'clock, when something very strange happened. Suddenly, in the quiet of the night, there was a thunderous noise that almost sounded like an explosion. It was startling, to say the least. There was a gruesome feeling of the presence of darkness all around me. For some strange reason, the platform that held the five hundred gallon sheet metal water tank outside my window had collapsed. The tank was ripped apart, and water ran everywhere. This was the strangest and most eerie feeling imaginable.

A spirit of fear gripped me. I found myself almost in a battle for my spiritual life. I felt the powers of darkness like I had never experienced before. For what seemed like a very long period of time, I was in intense spiritual warfare. I felt the power of darkness almost overwhelmingly. There was a period of time afterwards that I almost felt like the darkness was overwhelming the light! I seized everything spiritually within me to overcome these forces. Finally, after much warfare, I felt the peace of God. The victory had been won. When I related this experience to the other brethren the next morning, a similar experience was verified as having taken place in some of the others. It was definitely one last effort on the part of the enemy to hold on to any vestige of power he had on those premises. It is only today that I am able to once again relate this experience without feeling a renewal of some of those same feelings of evil. I believe that I have finally won the total victory over this very awesome display of spiritual darkness.

### **A Drawing to Guatemala**

After spending perhaps a week in Punta Gorda, I felt a strong urge to follow up on a contact in Guatemala that I had received from Tony Abram. There was a Church of God overseer in Guatemala City that I so much wanted to contact. I left the other group of ministers, and alone, I caught a small plane back into Belize City. It was there at the airport that I sought to make the necessary arrangements to fly into Guatemala City. To my disappointment, the flight had been cancelled. While I was standing there pondering my next move, there was a handsome young businessman who approached me. He stated that his home was in Guatemala City, and he saw that

I was having the same difficulty as he. He told me that if I chose to stick with him that he would see to it that there would be arrangements made to get to Guatemala City that evening. We arranged for a flight into Spanish Honduras, and from there, we took a flight on into Guatemala.

The flight into Honduras was one I shall never forget. The plane was an old DC-3 two-propeller dinosaur from World War II. This plane was about to fall apart. It had no radar, so the pilot could only fly by sight. To my dismay, we hit a storm right as we were to land in Honduras. It was very frightening. The plane shook and shimmied. It rattled, and I wasn't sure that we were going to make it. The storm subsided, and we landed safely. We immediately boarded a plane bound for Guatemala.

### **I Met and Stayed with A Very Influential Family**

The young man was Mario Yllescas. He was a traveling salesman in Central America for the American company, Johnson and Johnson. He told me that his wife was going to meet him at the airport, and they would be glad to take me to my destination. Upon arrival in Guatemala City, Mario's wife was waiting for us at the airport. They invited me to come home with them, and they would later take me to my contact person. This I agreed to do. We drove up to a very nice, large house in an exclusive area of Guatemala City.

I discovered that the extended family of three generations was living in this home. Mario's wife, her mother and father, and the mother's mother and father were all living here together. They all were people of great esteem and influence. The grandfather was a noted chiropractor. In fact, he was the chiropractor for the Olympic bicycling team. The mother was a former Olympian in gymnastics. She was a beautiful blond of Belgian ancestry. The grandfather and grandmother were also both born in Belgium. The mother was married to a native Guatemalan, who was at that time a banana exporter. He had previously been a foreign ambassador representing the nation of Guatemala.

After some refreshments, Mario and his wife then drove me to make contact with my ministerial associate. We found the address, but the man I was looking for was now out of the country. The brother who took his place invited me to

minister a couple of nights in their churches. I was not offered any accommodations, so Mario then invited me to stay with their families. I agreed to do so. That night, Mario and his wife, who were both staunch Catholics, drove me to my meeting. They stayed for the service while I preached. This was perhaps the first time they had been in a Pentecostal church service. After we returned back to their house after the service, they were full of questions. I stayed up late that night explaining to them what they desired to know and to answer their questions. This could have been my main purpose of being there. I don't know. Only eternity will tell. I have had no more contact with them after I left the country, but for those few days, the time was very special to me.

After I preached a couple of nights, by Mario's invitation, I remained for a couple more days. One day, Mario's wife took me on an extended tour of much of Guatemala. It was a beautiful country, with some of the mountainous areas reminding me what I pictured Switzerland to be. I recall a lake with twelve small villages around the lake that represented the twelve apostles. Then, one evening, Mario and his wife took me to a nice restaurant near the Pacific Ocean. This was, as I found out later, in the vicinity where the Rodolfo Rivera's ranch was located. The Riveras entered our lives a few years later when we kept their son Milton in our home in Hayti for over a year.

The army had seized control of the government, and soldiers were patrolling the streets in jeeps armed with machine guns. It could have been very scary if I had not received some assurances from these native Guatemalans that there was nothing to fear. On the way back home that night, we were stopped by the military before we reentered the city. I found that this was routine, as no doubt they were checking for guerrillas. I might add, years later after I got acquainted with the Riveras, Bernarda Rivera's father and brother were murdered by guerrillas.

In relating my Guatemalan experiences later to Rodolfo, he was utterly amazed. This was a family that he knew very well. Rodolfo was a very successful businessman in Guatemala City, and it was mind-boggling to him that I had known these friends of his. It was more mind-boggling to me to realize that out of a city of more than a million people that I would have contact with two different families, in two different

time spans, in two different parts of the world, and for these two families to know one another. What a small world! For what purpose did we come in contact with these two families? We may never know.

The last time we saw the Riveras until recently was sometime in 1978 or 1979. By the sovereignty of God, we reconnected with them a few years ago through another social media, Linked-in. We began communicating, and when Nancy and I went on an extended cruise from San Diego down the coastline of Central America, one of our stops was a Guatemalan port about one hour from the Riveras, who lived in Guatemala City. So, Nancy and I reconnected with this beautiful family after over thirty years. We were able to see Rodolfo, Bernarda, Milton, and Sylvia Rivera. We saw all of the older Riveras except for Ilyana, who was living in Norway. Rodolfo took us to lunch, and we had a fabulous time together for a few hours. What is amazing is how God has reconnected us with many significant people of our distant pasts. These are the connections that I believe God intends to be forever. My prayer is that we can see them one more time on this side of the veil.

I had been teaching at Hayti High School about two years after we had moved back from Memphis that I began feeling the urgency to devote more time to the ministry. I was feeling that God was leading me into full-time ministry, but I guess that was a huge step that could only be taken in small increments. I decided to approach the school superintendent, Mr. Sam Wallace, with whom I had an outstanding relationship. I asked him about the possibility of teaching only a half day. His response was that if he couldn't have me for a full day, he would settle for half a day. This was a big step for me. However, it was sometime during the second semester that the school system lost its freshman science teacher to medical school. I was asked if I would be interested in teaching the remainder of the day in his vacated classes. I agreed to do so. The end result was that I only taught half a day for half a year!

### **We Were Going to Be Parents, Again!**

I guess this extra work was helpful, because Nancy and I then realized that we were going to be parents for a third time.

At the end of May, I was no longer covered by the school hospitalization plan. We were now really living by faith. To Sis. Eunice Norman's credit, she felt the burden of our family and single-handedly arranged for a selling project to help us with the expenses of the birth of a new child. She and others in the church sold little hammers with screwdrivers in the end. Sis. Norman was a very sensitive and giving person. Even though we were to go our separate ways later, she was a great blessing to us at a very important time of our lives.

As I had promised Nancy, when she became pregnant, I agreed with her to return to Memphis for her prenatal and delivery care. She was admitted into the hospital a few days before the baby was to be born, and labor was induced. On August 1, 1970, a beautiful baby boy was born—Brandon Raymond Meadors! He was a special child who was a very quiet and gentle individual all of his life. I believe that the Lord was honoring Nancy for the turmoil she had been through in her previous pregnancy.



When Brandon was born, it was a time in our lives that we were at peace with God and the world. We were older and wiser, and perhaps were better parents. We could now love and appreciate our children like we should have earlier. In earlier

life, there were so many pressures involved, and most of them led to anxiety. Because of this reason, Brandon and Lyle both were real pleasures and joys to have. Not that Kenny and Donia weren't pleasures, but this was a new phase of our lives. In fact, Donia in particular was a "little mother" to the younger boys herself. She was a great help to Nancy in the rearing of our two smaller sons.

### **A Visit with Daddy Bill**

It was sometime during 1970 that Nancy and I felt a strong urge to go and talk to Nancy's father, Daddy Bill, about his soul. We did not know how he stood with the Lord. To our knowledge, we had never known him to have gone to church. It was Nancy's understanding that in his earlier life he was involved in church. Evidently, something must have happened that soured him on the church and religion. When we approached Daddy Bill, we were not sure how we would be accepted, but he was very open and congenial. He stated to us that he had made things right with his maker, and if he died, he knew that everything would be alright. This was all we could do. We could only present someone with the opportunity to respond, and if that person says they are okay, we have to accept that.

It was early before dawn in the first week of January of 1971 that I received the call from Ann Walker, who was Nancy's brother Wayne's wife. She told me that Daddy Bill had shot himself. I asked her if he was okay, and she stated that he was dead. I hesitated to tell Nancy because I didn't know how she was going to respond. I finally told her the news. She was shocked, and she cried. We felt that it would be best to wait until later that morning before we would be going to Gideon, because Brandon was only about five months old, and we did not want to disturb him any more than possible.

Momma Walker had heard the shot, and immediately she knew what had happened. She did not attempt to go into the other room, not knowing what she would find. She called Wayne, and he came to find his dad lying on the floor of the bathroom with a .22 bullet wound to his head. It was a horrible experience that lingered for many years in Wayne's memory as it had a very adverse effect on him. Momma Walker soon

moved to Poplar Bluff, Missouri where she lived a block from her sister, Louise Copeland. She lived in the same rented apartment for the next twenty-two years before she went to be with her Lord on Mother's Day of 1993.



Daddy Bill

### **The George Wright Revival**

In 1971, I moved our family from Lincoln Street, where we had started our church, to a little two-bedroom yellow brick house on Old Braggadocio Road. This was on a little farm that was being cultivated by Jerry Davis' dad. It was right next to a black neighborhood, just west of Hayti Heights, which was a predominantly black incorporated city. I say this to add effect to the next story that I will share.

It was in 1971 that we had scheduled the first black preacher to hold a revival in a white church in Hayti. Bro. George Wright was the right man. He was a very talented singer and preacher who had a positive and uplifting ministry to the Body of Christ. Bro. Wright was the exemplification of love and joy and was often referred to as the Apostle of Love.

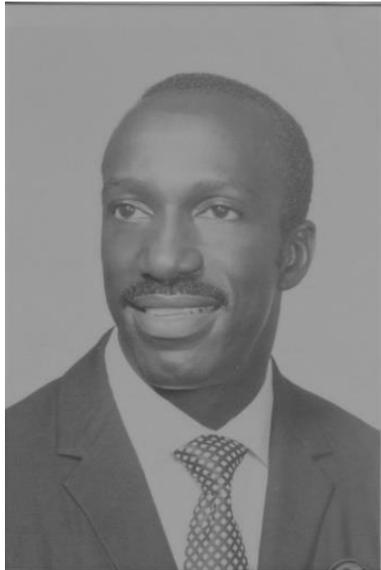
He had a way of ministering healing to people who had been hurt, and he was the ideal person to bridge the racial gap.

As timing would have it, there was a racial outbreak in the high school just one week before Bro. Wright was to arrive. The schools had been integrated for a few years now, and with integration, the population of the school was two to one in favor of the blacks. This proved to be a source of agitation in the white community. The racial tension was so strong that the police called for a 7:00 P.M. curfew in the city the week of our proposed revival. However, I ignored the curfew and continued with our plans for the revival. People, both blacks and whites, responded. It was a week of true revival. There were healed relationships and a new-found appreciation of people of different races. Yet, this week was not to be without price.

It was the following week, when Nancy and I were sitting up after having put the kids to bed. It was about nine o'clock on Monday evening after the revival had closed the night before. Just a few short moments after Nancy had gotten up from her seat on the couch that was directly in front of a large picture window in the living room, suddenly, there came crashing through the window a chunk of concrete about the size of someone's head. It shattered glass all over the living room. It was a very frightening experience, not knowing what might happen next.

Yes, there was instant anxiety and concern about what had happened and what could still happen. I did not know if a fire bomb might be right behind the concrete. I had no idea what was happening, nor why it was happening. I didn't know if the next sound we would hear would be the sound of an angry mob outside. After all, the previous week had been history-making, and in our minds, anything could have happened.

The first thing I did was to turn out all the lights in the house. We called the police and remained as calm as we possibly could. I then ventured to look through the kitchen window to see if I could see any activity outside. There was none. There was no indication as to who might have done this dastardly deed. It could have been someone from the black community, or it could have been someone from the white community. It could have related to the Wright revival, or it could have been totally incidental. We never knew.



Evangelist George Wright

Nancy was near panic. She was adamant about not staying in the house that night. Again, I don't know if I made the right decision or not, but nobody was going to force me from my house. I procured a sheet of plywood from a black family across the street and nailed it across the broken picture window. We then made our minds up that we were staying put through the night. We had some friends come to take our children home with them. I don't think Nancy or I slept a bit that night. I was definitely listening for any further activity. It was a very disturbing night, but we survived with the help and grace of the Lord, and we never knew who was involved in this terrifying incident.

### **The Osceola Revival**

Raymond and I had been born in Osceola, Arkansas, which was about forty-five miles south of Hayti. It was my desire to return to my hometown for a revival. This became a burning and driving force. I went on a fact-finding tour of Osceola seeking a place for us to conduct a revival. The first thing that came to mind was a civic organization building.

There were none available. The next move was to find a vacant building. There were plenty, but none were available. I then went to the mayor of the city, hoping that I would find some encouragement and possible help. To my surprise and dismay, I was abruptly unwelcomed!

I stated my mission to the mayor, explaining to him that I was a native Osceolan who had a strong desire to come to Osceola for a revival. In fact, it was the urging of the Lord. The mayor stated in no uncertain terms, "There are so many good churches in Osceola, and they needed no outside help. Who are you to think these ministers were not doing a good enough job?" The city that I loved and grew up in through the eighth grade was now rejecting me for no other reason than I being a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. This didn't discourage me. I then proceeded to look for a vacant lot to have a tent revival. I was going to rent a tent if necessary. This I had done back in 1968 in Hayti, so why not in Osceola? My search for a vacant lot was almost fruitless, when finally I located a willing party, an older woman who had a nice vacant lot on the north side of Osceola. The lot was near the Hays Store right on highway 61, the main highway through Osceola. The elderly lady agreed to rent me the property for two weeks. I agreed to pay her a certain amount of money, and I was now very excited.

It appeared that things were beginning to work out, after all. I proceeded to buy time on the local radio station. I had a daily 15-minute broadcast for about two weeks prior to the beginning of the revival. I had posters printed advertising the revival. These posters were plastered on store windows in Osceola and Luxora.

The time was now approaching for the beginning of the revival. I had made contact with Tony Abram's friend in north Mississippi about an old tent that he owned. He graciously allowed me to use this tent. It wasn't anything to brag about, but it was sufficient enough. I was planning to set the tent up on Saturday and to begin the revival on Sunday night. Everything was on go. I was ready to settle in on the Friday evening before I was to set the tent up in Osceola the next day. I received a telephone call from the elderly woman stating that she had backed out of her agreement. I pleaded with her, but to no avail. It didn't mean anything to her that I had gone to the trouble and expense that I had, and at such a late hour, she was now

cancelling out her agreement. I found out later that she was the mother of the city attorney, who was no doubt in contact with the city mayor. Can you believe that these city officials were fighting me this hard? It was disappointing and discouraging. I didn't know what to do. I was never a person to give up too easily, especially if it involved what I knew was right and good. If God spoke it, I persevered. Raymond made the statement to my mother that he didn't know who had the hardest head—me or the devil.

I went to bed that night resting in the Lord, believing that something would still work out. In the night, I had a dream or a night vision. I saw myself walking across the lawn of the Osceola Oil Mill which was across the street from where I grew up as a young boy. In this dream, I saw the biggest and most intimidating giant I had ever seen in my life. It was reminiscent of Goliath, and I suppose I must have been David. I did precisely what David did. I took a stone out of my bag and slew the giant. This realistic dream still stays with me today, even though that was over forty-five years ago. This was a significant victory even if it was a dream, but that dream would soon be fulfilled.

I awakened the next morning with new inspiration. I still had no idea what I was going to do. I finally decided that I was going to take the step of faith. I loaded up the tent just as I had always planned to do. I went to the lot where I was supposed to have set the tent up. I parked my vehicle on the street, sitting and waiting for further instructions. Along came the disc jockey of the local radio station, where I had been preaching for the past two weeks. He asked me what was going on. I told him, and he was infuriated. This DJ was a Baptist preacher and probably could care less about my revival. In fact, he never showed up at it at all, but the Lord sure used him that day.

The radio DJ preacher gave me the name of a man in Luxora who owned the property at the intersection of I-55 and state highway 140. This was the same highway 140 just a couple of miles east of where this story began as a 4-year old. It was near the pecan grove where we lived when my mother got saved! Here I was later in life having been influenced by my mother, where Raymond and I are about ready to have one of the greatest revivals that Osceola had seen in recent years! I

contacted the man, whom I recall was a tavern or saloon owner. He was so gracious, as he offered to let me use the land as long as I desired and with no cost! I was elated! This was a very visible place only a couple of miles west of Osceola on the interstate! I don't recall how we got the word out, unless it was through the local radio station, but we started the revival as scheduled!

The first week was a little slow starting, but I preached like the tent was full. True to Raymond's request from Vietnam, he was now working with me as he had been home from Vietnam just a short period of time. We had posters with our pictures on them. Raymond's hair was a little longer than liked by many traditional religionists. I remember my cousin, Glynda Thompson, relating what her boss said to her when he saw the posters. Referring to me, he said, "I probably wouldn't mind hearing this one preach, but I wouldn't go across the street to hear that long-haired one." Well, guess what? He never came to hear either of us preach, but a lot of other folks did, and Raymond's hair didn't bother them! In reality, Raymond's hair was not that long, and it was neatly trimmed. A move of God's Spirit minimizes the things that aren't important and maximize the things that are important. O, how we need more of these revivals!

Raymond was a great blessing and inspiration. He led the first part of the service, including the singing. I played my electric guitar, and later on, there were some other musicians who joined us. I recall that we went about three weeks, and the tent ended up being full! The Lord moved mightily in that tent revival. According to many who came, they said that they never recalled anything that had ever had the same impact. I especially was pleased to minister to some of our own family, including Uncle Elton and his family. Aunt Mary Faye and her family also came on several occasions. It was a very special and satisfying experience. I found out just this last year from one of my cousins that my Aunt Mary Faye had come to this revival only to return home to the ridicule of her husband.

There were many wonderful lessons learned in the Osceola revival. The greatest lesson was that of faith and perseverance. When you hear the voice of God, act on it regardless of the circumstances. Don't allow circumstances to discourage you from the purposes of God. Don't take no for an

answer. Don't give in to the devil. Stand your ground, trust God, and see the results.

Meanwhile, there were many, many wonderful happenings taking place back home. In a short few months, the most significant event was the birth of our fourth and final child, Lyle Copeland Meadors. I will fit Lyle's birth into the framework of our transition to Abilene in the next chapter.



Kenny about six years old.



Nancy had a puppet show for kids every Monday night in Hayti.

**The following special people had a great impact on my life**



Nancy's Aunt Louise Copeland who pastored 48 years at Faith Tabernacle in Poplar Bluff, Missouri.



Mama Walker (Frankie Copeland Walker)



Mama Walker and Daddy Bill (Willie Dee Walker)

## Chapter Twelve

### THE CALL TO ABILENE

#### A Move of the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room

Jerry and Joy Davis had been a big part of our ministry in Hayti during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Jerry was a first lieutenant in the Air Force before he had resigned and returned to Hayti. Later, he had the opportunity to go back in as a Captain and was assigned to Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, Texas. There were some exciting things happening spiritually in Abilene, and Jerry felt that I had something to offer them. There was a move of the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room, which was a coffee house ministry designed to reach the younger generation. There was also in attendance a goodly number of older adults who were beginning to move in the experience of the Holy Spirit, and they were not being fed spiritually in their churches.

It was in January of 1972 when Jerry called to invite me to come and minister in the Upper Room for a week. Raymond and I made the drive to Abilene and stopped in Dallas for a Sunday morning service with Rev. Woody Gibbs. We then went to hear Fred O'Dell at W. V. Grant's church on Sunday night. Bro. O'Dell was to preach for me the following week in our church in Hayti. We drove on into Abilene the next day and began ministering in the Upper Room each evening.

This was a risky trip because Nancy was seven months pregnant with Lyle, and she had a difficult pregnancy. Again, it was one of those times that I felt that I had to take care of the Lord's business even at the risk of not being there for my own family. That feeling of putting God first was prevalent in that period of time. One minister said, "You take care of God's business, and God will take care of yours." This I certainly believe, but how far do you take this when it comes to being responsible to your family? We can seek to win the world and lose our own families. I trust that I did not make a mistake in this decision. If I did make a mistake, it is a thing of the past, and I have moved on.

I must say that the Lord moved in a powerful way during this week in Abilene. In fact, I was faced with another important decision. Things were going so well in the meeting that I was asked to stay a second week. Yet, I felt a responsibility back home in Hayti. Fred O'Dell was scheduled for a revival in our church, and Nancy was carrying our soon to be born son. I finally decided to send Raymond back to help take care of things at home. He drove my car back to Hayti, and I was basically stranded in Abilene. Well, not really, because Marion Smoak (Smokie) had agreed to drive me home after the second week of meetings ended.

We had a very good week in Abilene in the second week. In fact, it seemed that this week was ministry especially to new spirit-filled adult believers who did not feel they had a home church to look to for spiritual guidance. I was approached by several of these people about the possibility of moving to Abilene to start a new interdenominational, spirit-filled church. I agreed to make this a very serious matter of prayer.

I returned home to Hayti after the service on Friday night. This was a very miserable drive home. Smokie and I both had to fight sleep throughout the night. Finally, we alternated driving about one hour at a time. It was a 740-mile drive from Abilene to Hayti, which took a minimum of twelve hours of constant driving. By the grace of God, we made it back to Hayti without any incident.

### **Joy Is Brought into Our Household—Lyle**

It was less than one month before Lyle would be born a month prematurely. As I stated, Nancy had a very difficult time carrying Lyle. Nancy had to fight a great deal of depression, and it was a real battle. There was a little black woman who lived down the street named Sis. Lewis. She was a real sweetheart, and she had a close walk with the Lord. Many times, she had been a great source of encouragement and inspiration to Nancy and me. Although she was a member of the Church of God in Christ, she came to many of the special services at Evangelistic Temple. Sis. Lewis spoke a prophetic word that certainly came to pass. She said that even though Nancy would go through a great struggle in bringing this child to birth, he would be a very cheerful and happy child who would

bring us great joy. This proved to be very accurate, as Lyle was a pleasant, smiling, and loving child. I will address a bit more a little later concerning Lyle's later life.

Lyle was born on February 13, 1972 at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis. It was back in the days when fathers were treated like aliens in the hospitals. There was no such thing as fathers being able to be with the mother during her labor and delivery. In fact, the fathers were not allowed to be in the presence of the baby until it was released from the hospital. I remember being in the room with Nancy when a nurse brought one of our babies in to be with its mother. The nurse saw me and turned her back to me with our baby as if I had the plague. I had to leave the room lest I contaminate my own child! I was only allowed to view my own baby during special viewing hours, and that was through the glass window in the nursery. I have had very bitter feelings concerning this bit of insensitivity on the part of the medical profession of that day. This was the situation with all three of our children who were born in Memphis. Hopefully, I have recovered and am no longer bitter; yet, it was disappointing.



Lyle Copeland Meadors, born February 13, 1972.

After Lyle was born, I returned to Hayti to preach in our church on Sunday morning and then returned to Memphis to be with Nancy and Lyle that afternoon. Raymond was with me, and after spending the afternoon at the hospital, we went back by Revival Temple in West Memphis to be in service with our friend, Rev. Pat Heald. It was this night that Raymond met Carolyn Farrington, who would become his wife a very short time later. This was the first time that Raymond had ever met her. Actually, that particular night I was the one conversing with Carol as she had relatives in Osceola who lived next door to us when Raymond and I were still kids at home. Raymond was standing off as if he was not paying attention to this attractive young girl, but I think he was just being coy. I don't remember how they finally got together, but it was just a couple of months later that they married! Sometimes good things happen fast, especially if it is in the plan of God.

In the meantime, I had prayed and felt that I should return to Abilene for another meeting to get a feel as to what further ministry we might be involved concerning the starting of a new church. The men, with whom I had contact, made arrangements for us to meet in the mezzanine area of the old Mims building downtown. This was the same building where the Upper Room Coffee House met on the top floor.

The meeting wasn't particularly eventful. There was not the same response and excitement that was present in the Upper Room. In the Upper Room, I had not represented a threat to some who may have had their own aspirations of starting a church. In fact, it was during this week that it became apparent that there were those with opposing agendas. It was a true test as to which of the original ones were serious about us becoming involved in a church in Abilene. It was during this week that I really wrestled with a lot of issues, and then I finally indicated that I felt the Lord was leading me to move to Abilene.

### **Our Family Moves to Abilene**

I do not recall the exact date, but it was in March of 1972 that my family and I made the difficult break from Hayti to leave for Abilene to pioneer a new church. We still felt an obligation to see that there was continuing ministry in Hayti. We asked Eddie and Geraldine Griffith, who had been

missionaries to Mexico, to come and minister at the church. This they did with the blessings of the congregation. They drove sixty-five miles from Poplar Bluff to minister every Sunday morning in Hayti.

Soon, we loaded up all our belongings and headed to Abilene. It seemed Abilene was in the middle of nowhere, but I was anxious to get there. As we were approaching Abilene in the middle of the night, I could see the lights of the city from a crest about ten miles away. What an exciting sight that was! We were now a complete family. All four of our children were now born, and the move to Abilene represented a major move. The church had helped us purchase a relatively small three-bedroom brick house (probably about a thousand square feet). Several of the people had worked very hard before we arrived, painting and redecorating the house. They were very excited to finally see my family for the very first time.

### **The Beginning of Abilene Charismatic Center**

We immediately began having a Sunday morning service in Bill and Joann Crawford's den. We met there for a few months before a church building was located and bought. We bought the old church building of the Christian Church at 2073 Graham Street, which was on the north side of Abilene. In fact, it was around the corner from Hardin Simmons University. The church was located in a low-income area. There was a large eight-foot high chain-link fence surrounding the property. That was the first thing that had to go. We took down the chain-link fence to announce to the community that we were open to all. The building probably had the facilities to accommodate one hundred and fifty people in the sanctuary, and there were some classrooms in addition to a kitchen and fellowship hall. It was a pretty nifty little church that was not in the most desirable location, but we were able to purchase it at a very reasonable price. Even in that location, people still found us.



Our First House in Abilene

### **Preaching Allie Taylor's Campmeeting**

I had an obligation to fulfill in the early part of the summer that I had scheduled before we moved to Abilene. I was honored to be the day speaker for Allie Taylor's Campmeeting on her campground west of Detroit, Michigan. This was a two-week affair, and Allie Taylor's Church was the Mecca for the independent evangelists of that day. Anybody who was somebody had been to Allie Taylor's. If you had not been there, you had not arrived. I was about to arrive. Allie Taylor had a tremendous influence in my life sometime in 1961-62, but I'm sure she had no recollections of this association. Actually, the reason I was invited to be the day speaker was because Charles Cox was the night speaker, and Charles and I had developed a good relationship. It was through his recommendation and special effort that landed me this opportunity. I felt that I needed to and wanted to go to Detroit, yet it was crucial for me to be in Abilene. I called Pat Heald to ask him if he could come to Abilene to stay in our home and to fill the pulpit for the two weeks. I had great confidence in Bro. Heald, and I felt that he could be a great blessing to the church. In fact, I gave him the liberty to preach a revival in my absence. In those two weeks, Bro. Heald had done a fantastic job of preaching, teaching, and establishing the people on a solid foundation of the faith. It was during those two weeks that a spirit of revival had taken root, and our church grew

consistently through the summer and fall months. In fact, during the fall we were averaging about a hundred people on Sunday mornings. We also had Sunday night, Wednesday night, and Friday night services. The church had become a spiritual oasis as there was a refreshing move of the Holy Spirit.

### **A Television Ministry**

I had begun a television ministry through the local cable television system. I was having two 30-minute programs each week on Tuesday and Thursday. The program was called "The River of Life" telecast. The format of the program was informal, as I would have guests with whom I would chat, and I would also bring messages from the Word of God. The cable system was going into about fifteen thousand homes. My time slot was immediately before the 700 Club, which was a very exciting spirit-filled ministry with Jim Bakker and Pat Robertson. For the first time, I had seen speaking in tongues and the operation of the gifts of the Spirit on television. In fact, Jerry Davis called me one night real excited and told me to turn on my TV to Channel 4. He said there were some people speaking in tongues on television! That was a real rarity in those days.

As I said, we had some real excitement in Abilene Charismatic Center (ACC). The children were excited. In fact, someone came to church with a tambourine, and this developed into a craze. Someone then got the bright idea for all the kids to get tambourines. We had twenty-two tambourines beating at one time, and I don't think any two of them were in the same rhythmic beat. It was disastrous. It might have been a joyful noise to the Lord, but it seemed like a chaotic bit of confusion to me and to most others. I didn't know how to handle this situation, because I did not want to discourage the young people, but things did work out okay. I can certainly say that there is a lot to learn when being a pastor. It's a shame that we couldn't start out with twenty-five years of experience when we were twenty!

The church was blessing us financially. Arrangements were made for us to buy a larger and nicer home on North Willis Street in Abilene. It was a sixteen hundred square-foot brick home with a double-car garage. It had central heating and

cooling system. It was a lovely home in a good neighborhood that we enjoyed very much.

### **"You Sho Gonna Die!"**

There was another very humorous occasion while we were in Abilene. My dad grew up in the era of time where there was much prejudice against the black race. He and Mom came to Abilene precisely the same week as Bro. Wright, who came to hold us a revival. You recall that Bro. Wright was the black evangelist who had come to preach us a tremendous revival in the midst of racial turmoil in the city of Hayti. Mom made it appear that she did not tell Dad about Bro. Wright being there. Mom was always a jokester, anyway. She carried me high about Dad not knowing that Bro. Wright was there. She expressed to me that Dad was going to be terribly upset when he found out that a black preacher was going to be there. He did know it, and he had no problem with it. To my delight, Dad met Bro. Wright, and he loved him.

I shall never forget that Raymond and I had been leaning toward some of the "never-die teachings." My Mom couldn't accept this. She approached Bro. Wright and asked him if he thought that we were never going to die. My mother was thrilled with his response, "What you talking about? You sho gonna die!" That was a battle cry for my mother. She reminded me of this response at least four dozen times during the next few years!

### **A Time of Refreshing**

I saw our year in Abilene as being one of the most refreshing times of my life. It represented a new beginning for me. It was like a fresh breath of air, as I felt that my ministry was being expanded and accepted. We were seeing great responses, and the Lord was blessing us in every way, both spiritually and financially. In fact, I even enjoyed the hot, dry weather. It was very hot in Abilene in the summer, but since the humidity was so low, you didn't feel it as much, because you didn't sweat very much. Well, actually you do sweat, but with low humidity, the sweat evaporates, which leaves you feeling dry. To me, it was very pleasant. I also enjoyed the city. It was

large enough to do things that we were never able to do in smaller places. There were more restaurants and more things to do. We had a daily newspaper, which we used to our advantage in advertising. There was a K-Mart. The streets were wide, and the city was very clean. Abilene had a population of about one hundred thousand people. I felt like a country boy come to the city, and yet we could get around easily without any major traffic jams.

I also had developed a very good relationship with the pastor of the Assembly of God church in Abilene. I do not recall his name, but he and I had some great times together at the local YMCA. It was here with him that I first learned to play racquetball. He was pretty good, and it wasn't long before I was competing with him. We played a couple of times a week. I can't believe that we played with wooden racquets! This was a great contrast to the large, lightweight graphite racquets of today. It is a wonder that we could get around on a swing with those heavy racquets. This preacher was killed after we left Abilene in a motorcycle accident, and that was very sad news to hear.

Nancy could not stand Abilene. She couldn't stand the heat. She couldn't stand what they called trees. Mesquite trees were about all you ever saw. These were really just "bushes" compared to the trees back in Missouri and Memphis. It was a common sight to see dust storms and tumbling tumbleweeds. Abilene was in a desert-like surrounding that was one hundred fifty miles from almost anywhere (west of Fort Worth on I-20). There is a sign outside Abilene that reads, "El Paso, 444 miles." It should also be noted that Nancy had a difficult time of making any kind of change, and she was no doubt homesick for Missouri.

### **Ray and Carol Come to Abilene**

Raymond had been a big part of our Abilene experience from the very beginning. He had come with me to preach for the very first time, and he had developed some very good friends there. The Crawfords had become very close friends to him and his family, and they remained close until the Crawfords' deaths in the last few years.

Raymond had returned to Memphis and had begun working again with Baker's Big Star. I remember that he left after work one night and drove all night to visit us in Abilene. When he arrived very early the next morning, he was wide awake and energetic. He stated that he believed he could have driven on to California. I found out later that he had taken a diet pill, which was a form of speed.



Ray and Carol in 1972 in their first year of marriage.

During Raymond's time of working back in Memphis, he and Carol had developed a serious relationship. Nancy and I returned to Memphis to perform their wedding ceremony, which was held in the West Memphis Assembly of God church in the month of May. Remember, it was just in February when Raymond stood off in the distance while Carol and I talked. Raymond and Carol then came to Abilene, where they spent what seemed like several months with us.

Our family made the trip back home during the Christmas holiday in 1972. We went to Tulsa to visit with Nancy's brothers, Larry and Bill. We had a Christmas get-together at Larry and Becky's house. Nancy's nephew, Dr. Don Meier and his family were there. We then proceeded on to

Poplar Bluff to visit Momma Walker, and from there, we went on to Memphis. It was on this trip that Lyle had become quite sick with some bronchial infection. He had gotten much better by the time that we got to Memphis, and it was there in Memphis when Lyle walked for the first time at ten months of age. We have this memorable occasion on home movies. This is the time that Richie, who was quite a bruiser, knocked him over after he took several steps. We then returned back home to Abilene where some very significant things would begin to happen over the next couple of months. Our time in Abilene would soon come to a close.

### **I Met Jim Croft at the Upper Room**

There was a traveling shoe salesman who came by to visit with us while we were in the Upper Room. Jim Croft would have many more contacts with me over the next several months. When Jim came through Abilene, he came by my house, and we talked for lengthy periods of time concerning the things of God. Jim was a recently spirit-baptized Baptist who was very hungry for spiritual things.

Jim Croft and his wife, along with Nancy and me, went to Fort Worth together one Saturday afternoon to a Kathryn Kuhlman meeting. This was an opportunity for Nancy and me to take in another of several of the most noted healing evangelists of the twentieth century. Kathryn Kuhlman was a very unusual woman. She was a woman of great sophistication, and she had a flair for the dramatic. She spoke in very soft and drawn out tones. She waved her arms very dramatically over the audience, and the audience would swoon under the power of God. It was Kathryn Kuhlman's ministry that heavily influenced Benny Hinn, as well as our dear friend Tony Abram.

### **The Night a Preacher Threw Water on Us**

Kathryn Kuhlman's ministry wasn't too hard for a spirit-filled Baptist such as Jim Croft to palate, but we went to a ministry that evening that was very difficult for him to accept. We all went to W. V. Grant's church in Dallas. There was an evangelist, Rev. Cecil Upthegrove, who was in his sixteenth week of revival at Grant's. Upthegrove had preached a two-

year revival in the early 1960s at Ralph Hart's church in Detroit, Michigan. On this night, Bro. Upthegrove was preaching his heart out. He was going through some very dramatic, Pentecostal shenanigans which basically were turn-offs to many people who did not understand them. I had seen much of this before, but for some reason, I was not the least bit excited this night. People were shouting all around us, but here the four of us were sitting there very stoic.

As we sat in the audience, I picked up on some cues as I would see Bro. Upthegrove looking specifically at us out of the corner of his eyes. He was not too happy that we weren't responding. He made reference to some dead-heads who were as dry as corn shucks. He picked up a glass of water, and I immediately knew what he was going to do! In fact, I warned the others. I said, "Watch it, he's going to throw that water on us." Jim said, "You've got to be kidding." He no more than got these words out of his mouth when Bro. Upthegrove threw that whole glass of water on all four of us. We were sitting just a few rows back from the front. Jim was so infuriated that he threatened to get up and walk out. I convinced him that we should stay, so we did until the end of the service.

It would be a few years later that Jim Croft made quite a mark in charismatic circles. He became a protégé of Derek Prince in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and became the pastor of the church when Bro. Prince passed. Derek Prince was one of the outstanding charismatic ministers on the 1970s. It would be interesting to know what Jim is doing today. Meanwhile, back in Abilene, there were some exciting things that were beginning to take place. The church was growing, and people were filled with enthusiasm. There was a revival center atmosphere among us.

### **Our Experiences with a “Spiritual Hippie”**

There was an interesting young woman who was brought into our lives in Abilene, and she was a stereotypical product of the hippie movement. She was a true flower child. She wore long dresses, and had a spooky spiritual air about her (she did have a pleasant demeanor). She had a self-proclaimed ministry to bars. She played the piano and sang some, but I don't recall that she was real outstanding at either. I will not

refer to her with her actual name, so I will simply choose to call her Becky (no particular reference to anyone named Becky!)

We took Becky into our home, thinking that she would be a help to Nancy, especially in helping with our two younger sons. That didn't work out too well, but we still allowed her to live with us. It was during Charles Cox's revival that Becky gave all of us some laugh-fodder. Charles was a big cut-up, and Becky was very serious-minded. I don't think she took to Charles too kindly (actually, I think this was a front, because I'm convinced she liked the attention).

Becky stayed home one night from the revival. All of us, including Charles, came home after having gone out to eat after church. Becky was coming out of her bedroom and headed to the refrigerator. She informed us that she had just had a marvelous spiritual experience. She had been talking to angels, and as soon as she got something to eat, she was returning to her room to talk to these angels some more. Well, that was all Charles Cox had to hear. He really took issue with her in his usual humorous way. He said, “Becky, if I had been in the presence of angels, I don't think eating would have been on my mind!” I think Charles was right about that. Charles had a great personality, and he had humor that he effectively interwove with a powerful message.

Of course, there were a lot of negatives associated with the quick growth in our church. The church represented life to people who were starving spiritually. People were coming from different walks of life, and there were potential situations for divisiveness. There was a great need for stabilization. Many of the people who were coming to the church were primarily spirit-filled Baptists and Church of Christ. This was a city that was strong in these denominations. It was particularly strong for the Church of Christ. It was in Abilene where Abilene Christian College was located, which is one of the major colleges for the denomination. It was also in Abilene where the Herald of Truth originated, which was the national radio voice of the Churches of Christ.

These spirit-filled Baptist and Church of Christ believers were asking when we were going to have a communion service. I must interject here that in that particular period of time, I had understood communion as being a spiritual matter. I knew that we couldn't eat from the table of devils

except spiritually, and true communion had to be spiritually. God desires that we have sweet communion with Him. When he said, “I stand at the door and knock; if any man will open the door, I will come in and sup (have communion) with him.” So, I was faced with a dilemma. I felt very strongly about what I believed, that of not being caught up in symbolism rather than true communion or fellowship with the Lord. All of the types of the Old Testament had spiritual fulfillment in the New Testament. I’m not saying that a communion service is an Old Testament type, but the point is there is always a reality that types represent. I always believed that the things that were seen were temporal (temporary; subject to time), but the things that were not seen were eternal and represents the only reality.

I agreed that we would have a communion service on New Year’s Eve night. The Bible does say that as often...that didn’t necessarily mean every Sunday or any specific time. As often as we engaged in a communion ceremony, we were doing so to recognize the significance of Jesus’ death. As the time was approaching New Year’s Eve, I declared my true feelings and explained it to the congregation. I stated that I could not in good conscience go through with the ritual. That was a bombshell that exploded that I was not expecting. I should have expected it, but I felt that I had presented my case effectively. It was very shortly that our congregation was cut in half. From that point, there had begun to be restlessness. People were then beginning to find that this anointed prophet of God was suddenly vulnerable in their minds. There would begin to be things said that were very hurtful to me and my family. The sad thing is that some of it was coming from some of my most ardent supporters.

I might add that I still believe in the reality rather than the symbolic, but I have no problem taking the cracker and wine (grape juice) alongside my brothers and sisters. I do believe that the faith one has in partaking of the table of the Lord can be very powerful. By the way, my daughter’s church has two lines when they have communion service—one for grape juice and the other for the real stuff!

It had been difficult keeping Nancy happy, because she never felt at home in Abilene. She felt like a fish out of water. She was too far from her roots. As I stated earlier, Nancy does not adjust easily to new situations. She was homesick and

depressed. These problems just added to the severity of these other existing conditions. I had lost most of my enthusiasm and drive. I was at a low place because of the strains in my relationship with some very significant people in the church. I felt that the whole world had turned its back on me. We did not feel that we had any true friends. To us, no one seemed to really care about what we were experiencing. So, we were contemplating some changes. I do want to state that these special friends whom I thought had been against me would become some of my strongest friends through restoration a few years down the road. I even had several people who came to visit with us 740 miles when we returned to Hayti. A few families even moved to Hayti to be a part of our ministry there. We feel now that our mission was fulfilled in Abilene, as there was a strong, charismatic, spirit-filled church remaining many years after our departure. And, again there had been much restoration that we treasure.

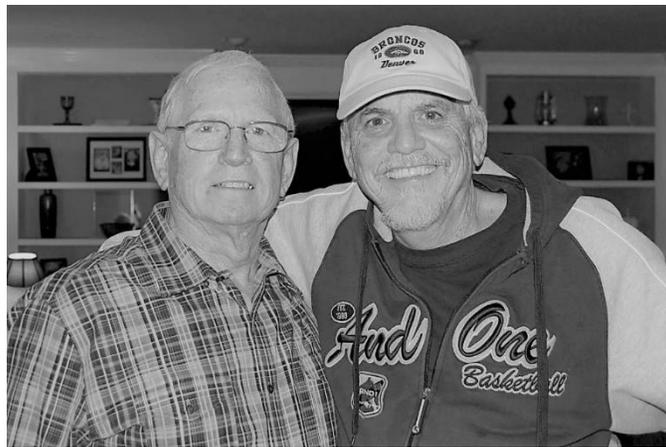
### **The Decision to Move Back to Hayti**

After much discussion and persuasion from Nancy, we made the decision to move back to Hayti. I wasn't thrilled about this at all. In fact, I resented it. Nancy insisted that we go back. She was even willing to pastor the church in Hayti if I wasn't. She gave me the liberty to evangelize if that was my choice. That precisely was what I was going to do. She sure must have been anxious to return to Southeast Missouri, or I don't think she would have made that much concession!

As I recall, we had made a trip to Hayti to preach for a few nights. The church did not have a pastor, and they were glad that there was a possibility that we were coming back. In fact, they provided the finances for us to move back. We began making preparations to make the move from Abilene back to Missouri. This was the third time we had moved to Hayti! The first time was when we came for my teaching job and work with the Full Gospel Evangelistic Center. The second time was when we returned after one year in Memphis to start Evangelistic Temple. Now, we were moving the third time to eventually take the church to a new and higher dimension.

The church in Abilene continued in operation for several years after we left. I believe that we had laid a solid

foundation. Bill and JoAnn Crawford were products of our year of ministry in Abilene. Bill all of his life had been a good support person with a real ministry of helps. There were one or two pastors who followed us in Abilene, but none of them did well. Finally, Bill said that the Lord was calling him to pastor the church. The church was renamed The Lord's House, and the Crawfords pastored the church for several years, and had good success. Since the Crawfords passed on to be with the Lord, I am not sure what happened to the church as I had lost contact with it. I might add that the Crawfords visited us in Hayti as well as twice in Georgia years after we left Abilene; I could summarize our stay in Abilene in my own words. This is not speaking for anyone else, not even Nancy. Abilene was good for me, and it will always carry a special place in my heart.



Lil' Bro and I circa 2010.

## Chapter Thirteen

### FROM TEXAS BACK TO MISSOURI

#### I Don't Wanna Go Back

Although Nancy and I had made the decision to move back to Hayti, this was not a move in victory for me. I was very disappointed in the way things had gone in Abilene, but I also know that we could have ridden out the storm. At the time of our decision to leave, it had been just about a year when we had a new start in Abilene. I agreed to move Nancy and the children back to Hayti and settle them in. I would then seek to go into some evangelistic work. Charles Cox helped me to make the necessary arrangements to go to Maryville, Tennessee for a revival. The pastor of the church was Bobby Bryant, whom I had met in Detroit while helping Charles preach Allie Taylor's Campmeeting. I reconnected with Bobby sometime around 2015 through the social media of Face Book. Brother Bobby is a very successful traveling evangelist doing a great work for the Lord Jesus and His Church. Again, it is amazing how modern technology has allowed me to reconnect with so many friends of the past.

When we arrived in Hayti in March of 1973, everything was flooded. There had been heavy rainfall all spring. In fact, it was the highest flood level of the Mississippi River in years. My dad had told me about the flood of 1938, when the river was lapping over the top of the levee in places. It was almost to this stage again. The river was being reinforced further up north by sandbags. There was a real possibility that the levee could break, and if that happened, Hayti, which was only three or four miles from the levee, could be wiped out. It was a frightening thought, as we knew that this definitely was a possibility.

The land in the extreme southeast Bootheel area of Missouri is very low and flat. In fact, it had been swampland before the floodway canals were dug back in the 1930s. The seep water saturated the land. That meant that the water table level was almost to the surface of the land. In ordinary seasons, one would not have to dig very deep to get to the table of water—perhaps no more than eight feet. During the flood of

1973, the water level was very, very high, all the way to the top of the ground.

According to some sources, the Mississippi River runs under a large portion of Caruthersville, Missouri, which is located right on the river. Supposedly, a diver had gone into this underground cavern. In 1973 there were large sink holes that appeared in some of the major streets. Was Caruthersville going to cave into the river? As you might imagine, if there were any doomsday prophets who became disillusioned with southeast Missouri, it would be easy to prophesy its destruction. That is what Mrs. Pastor had done nearly eight years before in 1965. That also is what another doomsday prophet, C. R. J., had done in more recent years. It was shortly after this flood, and after I had decided to settle back down in Hayti, that C. R. came to Hayti and set up a little tent on Highway 84, right at the exit off of I-55.

C. R. had been a part of our church for a brief time before we went to Abilene. He was a good man, but a little "far-out." There were many nights that no one showed up for his meeting. He had posters warning the people to repent, for if they didn't, Hayti was going to be destroyed by the floods of the Mississippi River. He warned the people to flee to the mountains. By this time, I was not running anywhere.

One day, when I stopped to talk to C. R. on the site of his tent, I further questioned him concerning this word from the Lord. He stood by his message. To this I replied, "C. R., I don't understand this. Why would God tell you that Hayti was going to be wiped off the map, and He told me to come back and build a new church building?" He had no explanation for this, nor did I. Please note that I was now saying that God sent me back to Hayti. It was just a few days before that I rebelled about coming back. God had moved very quickly in my spirit concerning His plans for me. Thank God, He knew my heart. Down deep inside I wanted nothing but the will of God. Didn't Jesus ask Paul why he kicked against the pricks? In a way, that was precisely what I had done in my resistance to coming back to Hayti.

So, when we moved back to Hayti from Abilene, it was raining profusely. Reports came out of East Prairie, which was just about thirty miles north of Hayti, that caskets were seen floating out of the ground from the tremendous seep water

pressure. This was the scene to which we were returning. Yet, our hearts were set, and God was yet to do a greater work in Hayti than ever before.

There were no houses for us to obtain when we moved back to Hayti. I had gone to a friend of mine who was now selling mobile homes. We purchased a nice 14x70 mobile home. It was a very beautiful and somewhat luxurious mobile home, so we had it moved onto the property at the church.

The first day we arrived in Hayti, we didn't even unload the truck. We spent the night and got up early the next morning heading for Tulsa. Nancy's brother Bill Walker was getting married in the prayer tower garden at Oral Roberts University. So, we loaded the old station wagon with our family along with Raymond and Carol and left for Tulsa. When we returned, we rolled up our sleeves and began to work.

### **The First Sunday Back at Evangelistic Temple**

We returned to Hayti after the wedding to unload our truck and to begin what would prove to be the most significant period of time that we ever had living in Hayti. But, remember, I didn't want to come back. Would you believe that the first Sunday we were back in the church, everything changed? It only took that one service for the course of my life to be turned around. The Lord spoke in terms that I readily accepted, that His will was for us to be back in Hayti. Further, the Lord gave instructions through prophecy that we were going to expand our facilities! That word was not for a long time off in the future. We began to make immediate plans. This was spoken to probably no more than fifteen or twenty of us who were there that Sunday morning, and this was on the first Sunday! I still had an obligation to fulfill in Maryville, so the next week, I left for this revival. It would be the only revival that I would preach for the next few years! I had moderate success in Maryville, but now my heart was back in Hayti. I could hardly wait to get back and get things rolling.

It must have been no more than a month until we had begun to dig the foundation for a new 40x80 addition to our church. This was going to be our new sanctuary. The Lord began to bless us mightily, and the money began to come in to get started. So, we started building. We would get materials on

a thirty-day agreement, which meant it had to be paid by the tenth of every month. When the bills came in, we paid them. We never stopped building. Of course, you must realize that many days it was only I who was working, but eventually I had help about every night.

The building was going up, and the money kept coming in. We had the building completed in about a year, and our testimony was that when the last nail was driven, the building was completely paid for! We had a lovely building that was fully carpeted, with central heating and cooling, and we also had a fully-furnished prophet's chamber for visiting ministers that included about four hundred square feet of space above the foyer. This chamber was in addition to the thirty-two hundred square feet for the sanctuary. All of this was accomplished in an area that many has called the most poverty-stricken area in the central United States. In fact, Pemiscot County's Department of Family and Children Services was the second largest in the state of Missouri. Many people were on welfare, but God blessed our congregation in spite of the circumstances.



The first building of Evangelistic Temple 1968

The church continued to grow, even though its greatest influence was to the surrounding areas and towns around Hayti. For some reason, we had a difficult time breaking the barrier in Hayti. The church became a lighthouse and spiritual oasis to the whole Bootheel of Missouri. We were beginning to have some of the greatest spirit-filled evangelists in the nation to

come for revivals. I guess you could say that we were going through the "revival center" phase of our ministry.

### **Conventions Were a Highlight**

Our annual convention was held the last weekend before Labor Day. This was a very important aspect of the ministry of Evangelistic Temple. Some of our headline speakers included Jay Swallow, Jether Vinson, and Kelley Varner. Other speakers included Frank Lopez, Jerry Dortch, Richard Booher, Terry Finn, Wayne "Doc" Agan, Ray and Rick Bazzell, Danny Busey, Allen Arrowood, Paul Tofoya, Bob Miller, Lynn Hiles, and Dr. and Mrs. Paul Grubb. Most of these persons were preaching the present-day truths of the Kingdom of God. These conventions represented a spirit of excitement, but most of all these were times that we came together to hear from God. At that time, hungry people from all over the nation heard about the Labor Day Conventions and came.

Besides outstanding ministries, we had our share of kooks. One year a woman came from Georgia who called herself a prophetess. She tried to persuade the congregation that when the anointing came on her, gold and silver specks would appear. She wiped them off to show us. Terry Finn publicly told her she was operating under the spirit of witchcraft. Needless to say, she stomped out of the convention and took her little contingency with her, which included a couple who had been a part of our churches in both Abilene and Hayti. This couple had moved to Georgia, but they agreed to come to the Convention to take care of all of the cooking. Well! We just lost our chefs! But, God always has something or someone in reserve, and He raised up two who were no doubt the best cooks in my life—my mother and my wife! By the way, the woman tried to leave a bed sheet behind for Nancy which she had slept on, seeking to pass it on as being anointed. Nancy destroyed the sheet.

Even though it was just a weekly radio broadcast, I faithfully ministered every Saturday for all the years we were back in Hayti over KMIS radio in Portageville. This was the most listened-to radio station in the area. It was a country-western radio station that had some gospel music thrown in periodically. This broadcast became our voice to the outside

world in southeast Missouri. Interestingly enough, the DJ on the day of the broadcast was a young man who apparently had nothing to do with anything spiritual or religious. A few years later, Danny Ramsey gave his heart to the Lord and became a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hopefully, the New Day Broadcast had a little something to do with it. He no doubt had to hear some of the things I was saying. In fact, later he did verify that the broadcast had ministered to him.

Concerning the radio station, there was another interesting story that related to me personally. There was a Pentecostal preacher who had preached on this radio station for many years. He was known as a fighter, as he was very bold in his public criticism of other ministries. In fact, when I was a teenager back in Gideon, Missouri, he had some choice things to say about ministries whom he determined were preaching “false doctrine.” On one of this Pentecostal pastor’s broadcast, he took a shot at me without naming me. However, there was no doubt of whom he was speaking. At that time, we had started a very successful outreach for youth in a coffee house ministry that we called The Lamp. Bro. H.G. blasted me about being a “long-haired” preacher who was running a coffee shop and preaching false doctrine. Amazingly, there was also criticism for the name of our broadcast, the New Day Broadcast. In my opinion, it was a new day of God’s visitation, which I believed to be refreshing. Perhaps some thought we were “New Age,” a Far East religion. Then, there are those who are so steeped in their tradition that it is difficult for them to embrace anything new or different.

The years of 1973 and 1974 represented times of frustration, yet they were probably some of the most rewarding years of our lives. The rewards came in having a specific vision that we were working toward. We were experiencing a tremendous move of God. Most of my narration will chronicle these rewarding times, but I shall briefly address a few of the negatives.

First of all, it was very frustrating for us to be living in the door of the church, especially during a time when there were things happening every night. Multiple activities infringed tremendously on our family's privacy. It definitely affected Nancy and the kids. When I had men coming to work on the church at night, they would bring their wives and kids, who

would invariably end up in our cramped living quarters of the mobile home next to the church. This became frustrating, but we did not want to offend anyone. Finally, it had to be addressed. Our children needed time to study, to rest, and to enjoy their family time. Thankfully, everything worked out. So, that frustration was only short-lived. One must be reminded that there will always be challenges that have to be dealt with throughout life.



### **The Lord Moves People In**

There were some significant people who helped to make those days possible. The core of the church who supported us and were interested in the vision of God was a little group of ladies from Kennett, including Eunice Norman, Mytie Burk, and Pearl Horner. Each of these ladies had their own quirks, but by and large, they were women of God. A lot of people did not understand them, but they were faithful to us and the church. They probably represented the spiritual backbone of the church at one time, because they did have a vision for the kingdom of God. They were interested in more than tradition even though they had been brought up in heaps of it.

What is interesting is that we can be delivered from tradition only to create our own traditions. People can fight denominationalism only to enter into another form of denominationalism. A study of history shows that a generation that is persecuted then becomes the persecutor of the next generation. In simpler terms, the persecuted become the persecutors. It becomes a constant effort to stay open to the

move of God and to have spiritual ears to hear what the Spirit is saying.



Evangelistic Temple, Hayti, Missouri

By now, Jerry and Joy Davis had moved back from Abilene to Hayti. As you recall, these two were responsible for bringing us to Abilene. They wanted to be a part of what God was doing in Hayti. Joy was a tremendous pianist, organist, and a good singer. She and Jerry had a way of drawing people to them. It was during this period of time that very exciting things began to happen in Hayti. Again, after many years since that time, we had no contact with most of the people who were with us in those days in Hayti. But, Face Book enters the picture one more time (maybe a few more times). Today, we have renewed friendship with Jerry, Joy, and Sherry, whom we will speak of next.

Dean and Sherry Price, who were excellent singers, joined us. Dean's mother was a successful Church of God pastor in Kennett, Missouri. Others began to come together to form a team that would be effective for the work of the Lord. The Lord even began to move families in from out of state just to be a part of our church. There was absolutely nothing in the natural to draw them. Anyone who came had a difficult time finding employment. Some of the people who moved in were Billie Joe and Eunice Head from Savannah, Georgia. They were a part of our church in Abilene when Billie Joe was in the Air Force.

Connie Davis and her two small children, Ricky and Debbie moved to Hayti from Kennett, Missouri. Billie Sue and Larry Pilkington had moved specifically to Hayti from Memphis. Larry and Betty Hurt moved from Poplar Bluff.

David and Sondra Tharp moved from Poplar Bluff, also (David became the pastor of Sis. Copeland's church in Poplar Bluff in 1988 and is still there). Doug and Sherry Wallace moved to Hayti from Fort Wayne, Indiana. Terry and Dru Godfrey, who were relatives to Ray Bazzell, moved from Arkansas to Hayti to be a part of the church. There was another couple and their son, Vern and Delores Keeberly, who moved in from West Memphis, Arkansas. Judy Higgins (she now is Judy Raines) and her daughter Stephanie also came from West Memphis. Every single one of these people moved specifically for the church, and they trusted God for meaningful employment. Everyone did find employment, even though it might not have been what they desired or had been accustomed to. I am humbled to think of all of these dedicated servants of the Lord who worked with us in the Lord's business.

There were others whom I cannot specifically recall their names. Most of these were a blessing, and they became consistent participants of the church. A few did not. The bottom line was that there was a spirit of excitement that people wanted to be a part of, and they were hungry for the things of God. They were willing to make the necessary sacrifices and adjustments to make themselves available for the kingdom of God sake.

Raymond and Carol Meadors moved to Hayti to be a part of the happening. Following them were Carol's mother and stepfather. Soon to join them were Larry and Georgia (Carol's sister) Hoover, along with their children Donna, Deana, and Pete. As I look back now, it is awe-inspiring and humbling to even think about what God had done. I want to personally give tribute to all of these soldiers of the Cross who remain a big part of who we are today. Many have gone on to be with the Lord. Of course, all of us who remain are getting older!

Two very significant people who joined forces with us in Hayti were Jimmy and Manie Lee from Sikeston. This was the retired couple with whom we had worked in Sikeston back in 1964. Brother and Sister Lee were now well into their late 70s, but I have never met anyone who had the energy and enthusiasm that they displayed even at this age. They were excited about what God was doing in Hayti. They drove fifty miles each way for every service we had, including Wednesday, for at least three or four years. They would bring many of their

friends to the church from Sikeston, including Alice Figley, Helen Stacy, and Patty Chisolm and son Robbie. Another visitor the Lees brought from Sikeston was the ex-wife of the great healing evangelist, Gale Jackson. Eventually, the Lees moved their Airstream camper on the grounds of the church to have a place to rest between Sunday morning and Sunday evening services. They also spent the night there when we had revival services.

Bro. and Sis. Lee acted young, no doubt, because they identified with the young. They were strong believers in life. They were strong proponents of kingdom teaching. We had many wonderful times together, including some trips to various conventions. Bro. Lee was a man of means, and God raised him up in this crucial time to help bless the work of God in Hayti, not only spiritually, but also financially. He was the driving force behind our being able to build the new sanctuary without debt.

### **They Had a Ringside Seat**

Nancy will never forget the night that she and Bro. Lee had a ringside seat to an unusual scene. We had an evangelist who conducted a "Pool of Bethesda" service one night. This was the night that the preacher ministered on stepping into the waters after the waters were troubled. He had a small tub of water in front of the church, and he had people lined up to pass by it, putting their foot into the water. Many exciting things happened from this, because this was where the people's faith rested. One very heavy-set, older woman came and stepped into the water. As soon as she did, she began to shout, jump, and holler. She fell on the floor flopping like a fish. To Nancy and Bro. Lee's amazement, this woman's dress came up, and she did not have a stitch of underclothes on! Neither one of them said a word to the other. They were dumbfounded. Finally, their eyes met, and they could not contain their laughter. You must keep in mind that at this time Bro. Lee was nearly eighty years old. After the service, he said that he and Nancy had a ringside seat!

William Shoemate was another very significant individual whom God brought into our lives. William was a man of a humble upbringing. He was a very quiet and

unassuming person who was saved under our ministry, and he grew by leaps and bounds. He was genuinely a man who was willing to do anything for the Lord. He had a definite gift of helps. He was my right hand man, as he was always there when anything needed to be done. He worked long and tireless hours in the mundane aspects of the ministry. When he cleaned the church, he would do so cheerfully while singing and praising God. William always had an uplifting attitude. May God raise up the same quality of helpers for him as he is now a pastor of his own church. It should also be noted that William worked every night on the construction of our new sanctuary, including doing all of the plumbing, as he was a plumber by trade.

I shall never forget the first time that William Shoemate preached for me. He, Lanny Ledbetter, and Gene Thompson were working with me one evening on the new building. The three guys were fired up for the Lord, but none of them had ever preached. I didn't know whether any one of them could preach a whole message or not, but I knew there was a call of God on each of their lives. So I asked them to all three get together and take a service with each of them sharing. This was all that William Shoemate needed. He hit the ground running and hasn't stopped since. He has been faithful to the Lord all these years and is now pastoring a church in Hannibal, Missouri.

Sadly, Lanny died in a car accident several years ago coming home from his job in Caruthersville. He was a young man of high integrity, who loved the Lord. I know he is rejoicing in the presence of the Lord. He left behind a wife, and a couple of children, and was beloved by everyone who knew him. Lanny will always live in our hearts.

David and Sondra Tharp were two young people that God sent to us. David is one of the most intelligent and talented individuals that I have ever met. There is little that he cannot do. He is an accomplished musician, a computer genius, and an airplane pilot. For several years, David was one of only two aviation examiners in all of southeast Missouri. Anyone who needed aviation licensure had to go through one of these two guys. David resigned this position to have more time with the church he is pastoring. Presently, he is a corporate pilot for a company in Poplar Bluff, making weekly trips to Dallas, Texas. David also is a flight instructor.

When David and Sondra came to Hayti, they were hungry for God. He was interested in what was happening in our church, so he moved Sondra and his then one daughter, Daphne, to Hayti. David initially provided a living for his family by driving a delivery truck for a local furniture company. He then became a local law enforcement officer, and finally went to work in Kennett as an aviation instructor after having gone to flight school. David and Sondra are now the pastors of Sis. Copeland's old church in Poplar Bluff, Faith Tabernacle. They have been in that position for twenty-nine years now.

David and I have regular contact with each other, and he and Sondra have visited us in Georgia at least twice in the last five or six years. He has been very helpful in my developing some songs that I have composed. In addition to his skills and talents, David has a unique sense of humor. David and Sondra are one example of a family who put God first. They did not move to a community because their job sent them there and then incidentally sought for a church. They moved for the church and incidentally sought a job instead! I could go on and on pointing out significant turn of events and individuals who made this a very significant period of time in our lives as well as in theirs.

### **Revival among the Youth**

Besides the outstanding revivals we were having, an average of one per month, the most memorable move of God was among the youth. It all began when we had a vision of a coffee house that was no doubt inspired by our experience in Abilene. The first meeting place was an old house across from Hayti High School. It had a very large living room that went across the front of the house. A local building supply business donated a beautiful red shag carpet to cover this area. There was also a long screened porch across the front.

It was to be the opening night for the coffee house on a Saturday night. I stayed home with the kids to give Nancy some freedom, and did she take it! I was expecting her home about eleven o'clock that night, but I didn't think too much when she didn't show up. At midnight, I got a bit concerned. Finally, at one o'clock, I called the local police, where Jerry Davis was working. I told Jerry that Nancy had not come home, and I was

worried about her. He promised to drive by the coffee house and see what was going on. He called me back and said that the coffee house was closed, and he had driven over town and had not seen Nancy.

Where could Nancy be? What was going on? I was worried sick, but I waited somewhat patiently. Finally, about two o'clock in the morning, she came home. "Where have you been?" I screamed. Oh, I've been over talking to Corrine Dowdy, and I lost count of the time. Nancy was higher than a kite. She was wide awake. In fact, when she came home, she didn't go to bed, but started working around the house. I thought she was crazy. Nancy admitted that Carolyn Motes had given her a diet pill, and she was bursting with energy! Sure, no doubt, because the pill was speed—an upper. Nancy wasn't worth much the next morning in church, and by the afternoon, she crashed. That was some experience. I told her that this was ironic. We were opening a coffee house to try and get kids off drugs, and my wife goes off and gets on them! In all fairness, Nancy did so innocently as she had no clue what the diet pill did. All she was thinking about was perhaps this would be the means to lose some weight! I can testify that Nancy has been as innocent and pure as anybody I've ever known. She is truly a gift from God.

### **Ken Dowdy's Conversion**

The coffee house ministry proved to be a huge success. One of the leaders was Kenneth Dowdy. Ken's mom, Corrine, was one of the founding members of our original church on Lincoln Street. So many times Corrine had requested prayer for her son to come to Jesus. Ken had been to Vietnam, and while there, he became hooked on drugs. Ken never talked much about this as he was a very quiet and unassuming young man, anyhow. He drove a Volkswagen van that was typical of that period of time among young people.

Ken was converted after he knocked on our mobile home door late one night. He related to us a most unusual story. He had taken a van load of guys to a rock concert in Memphis. The band was a hard rock group. No doubt, all of the band members were about half stoned. Ken stated that it was while in this concert that God spoke to him in such a clear voice that

he had no doubt that if he did not get out of that place and give his heart to Him that he was going to die and go to hell. Ken believed it so strongly that he left all those guys stranded in Memphis to get home the best they could. After making the two-hour drive, Ken came straight to us. He gave his heart to Jesus that night and became a staunch believer. He has not wavered to this day. After we left Hayti, Ken became a Sunday school teacher at the Pentecostal Holiness Church.

Through the coffee house ministry, Ken met a beautiful and sweet young girl. They made an instant contact and later were married. Today Ken and Roxanne have three children, two of whom are in full time ministry with their husbands. We spent the night with Ken and Roxanne a couple of years back, and they have visited us here in Cartersville.

### **We Baptized Forty Kids in the Mississippi River**

Ken's conversion had a tremendous impact on other young people in Hayti. We had a revival in those days with Sam Wood. Sam came with a young, hot guitarist named Johnny Murrell. They both were musically talented, and this inspired the kids. We had the greatest move of God among the youth that I have ever experienced.

It was on a chilly October night after the Sunday night service that we led about forty young people into the cold waters of the Mississippi River to baptize them. It was an unforgettable experience. I will always remember Ken, Roxanne, Phil, Sunshine, Allen, Doug, Sally, Benny, and many, many more who were a part of that group.

The Mississippi River? That treacherous river of undertows and currents which had claimed the lives of countless people? At night? In October? You've got to be kidding! It was a bit crazy, but it was exciting. I know many of you reading this account will no doubt think it was crazy, but it did represent a memorable occasion. The kids who came out of the revival became a part of the coffee house outreach. Johnny Murrell and his wife remained for several weeks after the revival to continue working with this group of young people. Today, Johnny is a successful pastor in Oklahoma. Even though such a youth revival will produce fruit that is everlasting, there are those who had a temporary experience and soon faded back

into their regular lifestyle. However, we don't know the full impact of that move of God. Only eternity will tell.

I remember one evening after the first showing of the movie, "The Exorcist," a bunch of these coffee house kids were passing out tracts to those leaving the theater. I was there with them. It was a sight to behold when these teenagers came out after having seen the movie. Some were as white as a sheet. Many appeared to be scared half to death. Some of them said, "Where is this coffee house?" There were some who came directly to the coffee house that night and had an encounter with the Lord.

It was during the height of this youth movement that they decided one day to form a march around the city square. They were marching, singing, and praising God. Some of the "religious" folks were seen just shaking their heads, not believing that anyone could be so stupid. Yet, these were exciting days that represented a great highlight of my life. It might be noted that one man who walked away shaking his head was a pastor of a local church. Thank God for the enthusiasm and boldness of young people who are willing to risk their reputations to glorify Him. We need such a move of God today, as drugs and the attractions of the world are drawing youth down a dead-end road.

As the ministry of the coffee house was expanding, we purchased the old Kelly Hotel, which was a three-story house that had served as an old railroad hotel. We went in to clean it up and to fix it up. A portion of the hotel was rented to a family that had eleven kids, and the main floor was for the meetings. Recently, I have had meaningful interaction with most of the eleven kids who lived in the hotel. They are now married, have children, and grandchildren. Many of them are living in Georgia, and most of them are serving God. Guess how I reconnected. Yep, through Face Book!

### **We Build a New House**

In 1974, I felt the Lord had given me the liberty to build a house for our growing family. I purchased a one and a third acre plot just outside the city limits past the city park (the home of Butch the Lion and Susie the Bear—with more details later). When I started thinking about building our own home, I wasn't

sure what I was going to end up with. We built a two thousand square-foot brick house with a double garage attached to it. We arranged the floor plan to have five bedrooms, a large living-family room, and three bathrooms. This was a very lovely place that I built myself. After a few years in the house, we traded the equity in this house for a sixteen hundred square-foot house on Peach Street that was debt-free in 1980. When we moved to Georgia, I eventually gave this house to the preacher who now has the church.



The House that I Built 1974

### **Vernon**

There are always special, unique persons that you never forget. How could I close out this chapter without mentioning one such person? Vernon was a simple-minded person who had come into our lives when we were at the Full Gospel Evangelistic Center in 1965. At that time, Vernon was still living with his wife, and they had several children. Vernon had a drinking problem. He could have been a very handsome man, but now he was dirty and unkempt. Through it all, Vernon loved the Lord. He loved me and the church, and he would do absolutely anything that I wanted him to do.

Vernon worked alongside me when I built our new house. He couldn't do much, except perhaps carry some things and do the dirty work, but he was willing. I paid him a few dollars, and then we fed him lunch. He was living alone and was a very lonely man. His whole family had turned against him. He was a lovable and harmless individual.

Vernon had a hard time staying in victory, but when he was in victory, everyone knew it. He would praise the Lord out loud in church, repeating over and over, "Glory, glory, glory, glory!" He would often come up to me for prayer, stating that he was so pressed, meaning that he was depressed. Vernon, we miss you, but we will see you again among the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us.

The Bible states that we are to minister to the feeble-minded, and I guess God gave us our share. There was a young man named Larry. He was seriously mentally challenged, but he also loved our church. He was hilarious at times. Larry enjoyed attention, and he would often get up in church and tell some of the tallest tales. I would usually ignore it, but one time I didn't. Larry came to the front for prayer, and I told him, "Larry, if you don't quit lying in church, God is going to strike you dead!" To this Larry replied, "I know it, because I've seen him do it lots of times!"

There was another amusing incident with Larry. We had a couple who had just moved to Hayti, and they were living in the back of the church. In fact, we had several people through the years who lived in the back of our church until they got settled into their own abode. On this particular occasion, Larry knocked on the backdoor of the church where this couple was staying. When they came to the door, they found Larry lying prostrate on the ground. This alarmed them, and they called me. I knew that Larry had done this before, so I told the couple to call his dad. Larry had a very fine dad who made a good living for him and the rest of the family, and he was a very sensible man. He came immediately to where Larry was still lying on the ground, and he said in a very agitated voice, "Larry, get up from there, and I mean now!" Larry immediately came to his senses, got to his feet, and went on his way! We definitely had some down-and-outers who came to our church, and we ministered to every one of them.



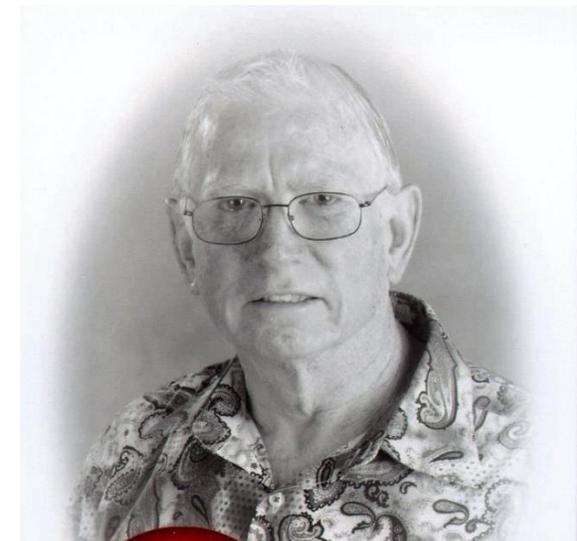
Nancy, Brandon, Ken, and I about 1971



Nancy, Donia, Ken, Brandon, and Lyle when we first moved to Abilene.



Meadors Family at Wesley's Wedding



An academy picture of me in the early part of the twenty-first century.



A Classic Picture circa 1957

Kenneth Meadors, Ed.D. (Pastor, Teacher, Chancellor of Vineyard Harvester Bible School and Seminary)

Ray Meadors, Ph.D. (licensed psychologist, working many years at Kid's Ark near Denver, Colorado)

Don Meier, M.D. (pediatric surgeon who served as a medical missionary to Nigeria; the chief of staff of pediatric surgery at Children's Hospital of Dallas, Texas; pediatric surgery as well as Professor of Pediatric Surgery at the University of Texas El Paso Medical School);

Bill Walker (taught humanities and languages for thirty-six years at Oral Roberts University).

Larry Walker (taught and was chairman of the Behavioral Sciences Department at Oral Roberts University for forty-years);

## Chapter Fourteen

### MY TRIP TO SOUTH AMERICA

#### A Trip of a Lifetime

In 1975, I was able to go on a missionary tour of a lifetime. I had been invited to accompany Tony and Marge Abram for five weeks of ministry in Brazil, South America. It was in March, and this was Brazil's fall season. This missionary trip was definitely a highlight of my ministry. Tony, Marge, Don Honeycutt, and I left Miami on Varig Airline, destination Rio de Janeiro. We arrived in Rio about twelve hours later. There was a short delay there before we caught another flight that took us to Curitiba and then on to Florianopolis.

Walter Zygarewicz was Tony's crusade coordinator and interpreter, and he was there at the Florianopolis airport to meet us in a cab, which then took us on into Criciuma. Walter was of Ukrainian descent, but he was born in Paraguay, South America. His parents moved to California when he was about ten years old. Walter was a very bright young man, as he could speak fluently five languages, including English, Spanish, Portuguese, Ukrainian, and Russian. He had been in Brazil about a month making preparations for the two major crusades that we would be holding. He had visited many of the major churches in these areas to gain support for the crusades.

#### The Crusade in Criciuma

The two major crusades we had were primarily supported by the Assemblies of God in Criciuma and Itajai. Interestingly, the Brazilian Assemblies of God organization was formed in 1910, while the U. S. version did not begin until 1914. It is my understanding that both of these body of believers are one together today.

We had our first service in the country at an Assembly of God rally in Porto Allegro, which is at the southern-most tip of Brazil. Then we returned for our first ten-day crusade in Criciuma. This was an experience of a lifetime. The church

had been fasting and praying for weeks for a mighty move of God's Spirit. When we arrived, there was already a spirit of revival in the church. The church had regular attendance of about one thousand to fifteen hundred people. The crusade began with a Saturday night rally in the church, and I was privileged to preach that night. The next day, there were about two hundred preachers from outlying areas who came in for special seminars for pastors. These seminars were held at the same time as the regular morning church service, but they were held in the basement. Tony started the day by ministering to the pastors downstairs while I ministered to the general congregation upstairs. After about an hour, we switched. I ministered to the pastors, and Tony came upstairs to the general congregation. The outdoors crusade started that night. Don Honeycutt played his guitar and harmonica along with singing that added to the crusades.

Walter did most of the interpreting for us in the church services, but a native Brazilian, John Sousa interpreted for the outdoor crusades. He had been the interpreter for David Wilkerson in an earlier crusade in Brazil. Interestingly enough, John Souza came by to visit me in Hayti, Missouri about a year after the crusades were over. He invited me to come back to Brazil in the near future to minister. I was excited by the prospect of doing so, but there were some things that hindered me, and I never went back to Brazil.

In addition to the crusade services each night, I taught a new converts' class in the mornings and a deeper life class for established believers in the afternoon. Tony did all the major ministering at night. However, I briefly addressed the crusade crowds each evening. The first night of the crusade began with a couple of thousand people who had gathered in the open air at an old abandoned railroad station. We were using the platform of the station for our stage. There were several acres that had been cleaned off for the crowds. The crowds grew to about ten thousand before the crusade was over. In fact, there was a carnival going on next to the crusade site at the same time, and eventually, there were more people at the crusade than there were at the carnival.

One night in the crusade, a deaf girl was healed who had never heard anything all of the twenty years of her life. We went on the local radio to minister and to tell about the crusade.

The next day the pastor went with us and announced the young woman's miracle over the radio waves. This brought people out to the crusade, but it also brought some opposition. The state church in Brazil is the Catholic Church. Pentecostalism was beginning to sweep this part of Brazil, and the priest went on the radio to try and counteract what we were doing, but to no avail.

### **A Trip into Paraguay**

There were countless thousands of people who were saved and healed by the power of God. At the end of the crusade, I, along with Don Honeycutt, left for a sight-seeing tour of Paraguay. While we were gone, Tony, Marge, and Walter, along with the pastor of the church, were invited dinner guests of the mayor of Criciuma. The mayor expressed his appreciation for the crusade, and told them that he was going to decree that the vacated train depot be turned into a plaza and be called the Plaza of the Bible. This was quite a tribute and honor to what God had done in that city. In the meantime, Don and I boarded a bus headed for Iguazu Falls. We arrived there to see one of the great wonders of the world. This was at the place where Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina converged.



Iguazu Falls Where Brazil, Argentine, and Paraguay Converge

Meanwhile back in Brazil, we knew none of the language, but we were able to get simple messages across at the bus station by looking up words in a Portuguese dictionary. Many times we would find someone who knew English who would interpret for us. But, one time, we couldn't find someone who could interpret directly from Portuguese to English and vice versa. However, there was a tourist who spoke English and German. He then conversed with a person who knew German and Portuguese. The second interpreter then translated our message to the intended party. We boarded the bus to go on over the border into Asuncion, Paraguay. This was an interesting city, and I think we were there for a couple of nights.

### **The Crusade in Itajai**

We then proceeded to return back to Itajai, which was the site for the next crusade. This was a small city north of Florianopolis and was right on the Atlantic seaboard. We started the crusade in the Assembly of God church there, also. It too, was a large church that was pastored by a presbyter of the Assemblies. He was a precious brother who was very open to the Word of God. I assumed the same role as I had in Criciuma, primarily teaching in the day services and on Sunday morning.

In Itajai, we had a little different situation. Whereas the spirit was flowing freely in Criciuma, it was a bit more difficult in Itajai. There was a more difficult spiritual battle. Tony, Marge, Walter, Don, and I were staying in a furnished house here. Marge did a great deal of the cooking, whereas we ate at the pastor's home at the previous location. I recall that Tony was very concerned about the spiritual hardness in this area, and he called all of us to fasting and praying. It was just a couple of days before the spiritual breakthrough came. After the breakthrough, there were mighty signs, wonders, and miracles performed, as God honored His Word through His anointed servants. I remember in particular a girl who was in the audience, and while Tony was preaching, she began to throw and flip people around. This created quite a scene. She was demon-possessed, but when Tony began to minister deliverance to her, she was completely set free.

Tony conducted these outdoor crusades along the same order as T. L. Osborn, who had been his mentor. He would preach the word, pray a mass prayer for the crowd, and then invite those who had given their heart to Jesus or were healed to come forward on the platform to give testimony. Sometimes, as the result of these testimonies, there would be those who then gave their hearts to the Lord. There were many, many reported miracles of healing.

Recalling back to the Criciuma crusade, one night it was raining, but the crowds remained. Many of them had brought their umbrellas, but many had not. I don't think it affected the enthusiasm one bit. This was a very humbling experience to see thousands of people standing on their feet for two to three hours at a time. This was one of the most amazing scenes that I ever witnessed. These people were hungry for God, and they didn't let anything hinder them from receiving something from God. Fortunately, we had the roof over the platform of the old railroad depot to protect us from the rain.

### **Ministry in Other Brazilian Cities**

After the Itajai crusade, once again, Don and I left before the rest of the party. I was seeking out a couple of contacts that I had received from Bill Britton. One was in Sao Paulo. Don and I took a bus, and I preached a couple of services there. From Sao Paulo, we went by bus to Riberao Preto, where Adiel de Olivera was the pastor. Adiel was a very educated and articulate Brazilian. He had translated *The Cross and the Switchblade* by David Wilkerson into Portuguese. He also had translated much of Bill Britton's materials. Don and I ministered in Riberao Preto for two nights, and Tony and Marge joined us there for the third night, at which time Tony preached. We had smaller crowds here, but the people were being taught and further grounded in a deeper word concerning the Kingdom of God.

Before he came to Riberao Preto, Tony's "fame" had preceded him. The second day Don and I were there, the local newspaper had a front page picture of Don and me in the service, and they repeated what we had stated that happened at Itajai concerning the woman who was delivered of demon

possession. I still have a copy of the picture and newspaper article after forty-two years.



Pastor Adiel de Olivera and Kenneth Meadors, 1975

From Riberao Preto, Don and I preceded the Abrams to our next stop. When we had left Miami, we had gotten airline tickets roundtrip from Miami to Florianopolis and back to Miami. Supposedly, these tickets could not be altered. For some reason, we were able to have our tickets rewritten which allowed us to fly into Manaus from Brasilia, and from Manaus back to Miami.

Don and I rode a bus from Riberao Preto to Brasilia, which was the capital of Brazil. Brasilia was a relatively new city that was designed to be the most modern city in the world. By the time the first phase of the city was completed, there were almost twice as many people living there than had been anticipated. Therefore, there were a lot of makeshift houses and buildings constructed. Brasilia was only about fifteen or twenty years old, but it literally looked like a city of slums. Of course, there were some very modern parts of the city. It was unbelievable.

We had an interesting experience at the Brasilia bus station. Don and I were standing out on the platform late at

night by ourselves. We were waiting on the Abrams and Walter to arrive. There weren't many people out, and where we were standing was on the fringes of a frightening looking place. I recall that it was very dark. There were some unsavory looking characters who passed by and were eyeing our luggage. We felt very uneasy. In fact, it was a little bit scary. Don, being an old street fighter and drunk himself, knew precisely what to do. He took his front bridge out of his mouth, ruffled his hair, turned his coat collar up and looked as tough as any of them! Don was about 6'3" and weighed probably two hundred and thirty pounds. We then noticed that when anyone passed by, they gave him a glance and slid right on by!

### **On Into the Amazon**

The Abrams and Walter had decided to stay an extra day in Brasilia, but again, Don and I felt a bit adventuresome. He and I had a great time on the evening flight to Manaus by way of Belem. Belem is the city at the mouth of the Amazon River on the Atlantic Ocean. There probably were only a dozen or so passengers on the airline which ordinarily seated about one hundred and fifty people. We basically had the plane to ourselves. Don kept the hostesses entertained by playing his harmonica, which he did quite well. I think he had convinced them that he was a country music celebrity, and the hostesses mentioned that he was like Johnny Cash.

When we landed in Belem, we thought they were going to let us deplane, spend the night, and then catch the next plane on into Manaus. At the last minute, they informed us that we could not do that, so on to Manaus we went that night. We arrived in Manaus and checked into a hotel within sight of the Negro River. Manaus is a very unique city. It is a city of several hundred thousand people and is isolated right in the middle of the Brazilian Amazon Jungle. This was a city that was built by the rubber industry in the early part of the twentieth century, but the rubber industry had been long gone by then. Manaus was also considered to have been a city of great culture. There was only one highway into the city, with the major routes being by river or through the air.

Manaus is located right near the junction of the two major rivers of Brazil—the Amazon River and the Negro River.

The Negro River is black as ink. It is black from all the dye from vegetation from further upstream. It looked horrible and filthy, but supposedly, it was cleaner than it looked. The Amazon River was muddy brown. The junction of the two rivers was several miles from Manaus. It was an awesome sight to see these two major rivers emerging, where you could distinguish between the black and the brown waters.

The Amazon rain forest is awesome. All of the growth provides twenty-five percent of the world's supply of oxygen. The ecology is changing now since much of the forest is being cleared. The Amazon River is many miles wide at Belem, where it flows into the Atlantic Ocean. I have been told that the volume of the river is so tremendous that fresh water can be found hundreds of miles from the coastline. The Amazon River and jungle are amazing sights.

One day after the Abrams and Walter had joined us, we hired a small boat and its captain to take us into the flooded jungles. This was quite an experience within itself. The waters were full of piranhas, which were small, flesh-eating fish. Stories are that a school of piranhas can clean the flesh off a dead cow, leaving only clean bones, in a matter of just minutes. To say the least, one should stay on board! In addition, in the jungles, there is all manner of unique South American wildlife, including monkeys and colorful birds. From the bigger boat, we took a small motor boat into the flooded jungle. In fact, we boarded near a native's house where we bought some trinkets from him. This was an experience that I shall remember forever. In order for these trinkets to be made available must have meant that there had been other people who had visited this area. However, on this day, we were the only boat in sight.

We had two nights of services in a large Assembly of God church in Manaus. The building seated about three thousand people, and it was full each night. These meetings would mark the end of our Brazilian experience. I would soon be returning home, and even though I enjoyed the experience of a lifetime, I was ready to get back home to see my family! I brought back several souvenirs, including a stuffed monkey, which was alive at one time (ha!), and I had to smuggle it into the country in my luggage! I don't know if I was supposed to have taken anything like that into the U. S. or not.

## Glad to Be Back Home

From Manaus, I flew alone back to Miami. It had been a great five weeks, but I had missed Nancy and the kids tremendously. I had written them several times and had called them once. It was not easy to get a telephone call in and out of Brazil in 1975. There were few telephones. Those who were fortunate to have one paid something like \$3000 for it. If you made a long distance call to the United States, you had to do it by appointment. You made the call, and the operator would get around to it a few hours later. When she had made the connection, she would then call you back. That is the reason I only called once. Besides that, it was very expensive. Writing home was much cheaper.

I flew back to Miami, and from Miami, I flew into Memphis. Nancy and the kids were there waiting on me when I arrived (this was when visitors could go all the way to the gate where the plane would land). Were they all a beautiful sight! I was never so glad to see anyone in my life. The experience was great, but I was back home again, and home was where I would remain for the next many, many years!



At Boulder, Colorado



Brandon can read in any position!



Nancy and I in Jasper

## Chapter Fifteen

### FINAL CLOSING YEARS IN HAYTI

I returned home from South America where things continued to go very well for the remainder of 1975. But, evidently, things must have slowed in 1976, because there began to be a financial crunch in the church. I don't recall what may have precipitated it, but it was probably one of those cycles. I was not necessarily looking for outside employment, but the superintendent of schools at North Pemiscot School District in Wardell, Missouri had been carpooling with me when we both were working on our Master's Degree at Memphis State in 1966. He knew that I had a Master's degree in math, but school had already started, and he needed a high school counselor. There were provisions in the state law that allowed him to hire a temporary person with a Master's degree for two years. That individual would have two years to make up the deficiencies for certification to continue in the position of a school counselor.

When Mr. Brogdon called me and offered me the position, I accepted it and went to night school four nights a week at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, Missouri to begin the process of fulfilling requirements for a permanent certification in counseling. The round-trip to Cape was one hundred and sixty miles, and that was for four nights! My brother, Raymond, along with two other individuals carpoled together. Raymond was working on his Master's degree in counseling, also. The next two years represented a heavy load, as I was working at the high school during the day, was taking four graduate courses in counseling at night, while still pastoring the church. Besides this, I was trying to be a good husband and father. Those were a lot of responsibilities, and by the grace of God, I was able to handle it.

At the end of the school year in 1978, I had accumulated forty-one semester hours of counseling, which were more than needed for my counseling certification. I then transferred these hours into the doctoral program at Memphis State during the summer of 1978. I spent that summer term on campus at Memphis State in 1978. I lived in a dormitory room

and came home on the weekend. Then in the following fall, I returned to campus and worked as a graduate assistant while continuing my studies toward the Doctor of Education degree (Ed.D.) in counseling. Again, I lived in a dormitory room during the fall and came home on the weekend. Then, I lived with Mom and Dad the second semester. This time with Mom and Dad was so special, as they would die in an automobile accident less than a month after I left them at the end of the semester.

When I went back to Memphis State full-time, Nancy got a job working for the Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS) in Caruthersville. She had previously been working part-time with Universal Bible Institute, which was a correspondence Bible school offering degrees in Biblical Studies. She worked under Dr. Clyde Patrick. Later, this school was sold to a man in Florida, and Bro. Patrick started another school which he called World Wide Bible Institute. When Bro. Patrick died, Nancy assumed the full operation of the school, where she continued to work part-time while working at DFACS. The school is still functioning today in Texarkana, Arkansas as Anchor Bible School and Seminary, led by Dr. Leon McDowell, who was president of the school while it was still in Missouri.

The first year I worked at North Pemiscot High School in Wardell, I enrolled Donia there in the ninth grade and Brandon in the first grade. Kenny chose to stay at Hayti where he could play football. The next year, Lyle joined the kindergarten class at Wardell. When I left Wardell to return to Memphis State, after two years at North Pemiscot, Donia remained enrolled there, but Brandon and Lyle returned to school in Hayti. Ordinarily, students who went to school out of district had to pay a tuition. While I was a counselor at Wardell, my children did not have to pay tuition. After, I left, they exempted Donia from having to pay out-of-district tuition. She was heavily involved there as a cheerleader and president of the Student Council, and she graduated as the valedictorian of her class.

## Our Year with Milton

Raymond and Carol had ministered in Guatemala in the 1970s and met the Rivera family in their travels. They developed a friendship with them, and it was through their friendship that we were willing to provide a home for their son Milton so he could go to school in the states. Milton lived with us for a little over a year. I enrolled him in the Wardell School, and again, because he was living with us out of the district, he was liable for tuition. Because he was considered an exchange student, he did not have to pay tuition. Milton was an interesting kid, and we loved him.

Milton had several adjustments to make, both in school and in our home. He spoke English, but didn't have a full grasp of the language. After attending school for the one year, his English improved dramatically. In Guatemala, he evidently did not have to do any household chores. Why should he since they had three hired full-time maids? In our home, it was different. If Milton was going to be a part of our family, then he would have to share responsibilities with the rest of the kids, including cutting the grass, carrying out garbage, working in the garden, and keeping his room straight. So, that year in the U.S. was a real learning experience that I know served Milton well for the remainder of his life. Milton also made a mark as being the best arm wrestler around!



The Kenneth Meadors Family with Milton Rivera in 1978

During my stay in Memphis in the fall of 1978, there was an ice storm that hit southeast Missouri that essentially paralyzed the whole area. There had been a lot of rain, and when the ice came, it put so much pressure on the power lines that they either broke, or the poles were pushed over on the ground because of the soft ground. There was no electricity in the city for five days. I was not able to get home and had to stay in Memphis. Since there was no electricity, there was no water because there was no power to pump the water. Additionally, there was no heat in our home, since we had an all-electric heating system.

Nancy moved herself and all the kids over to the prophet's chamber at church. This was a small upstairs apartment that had a gas wall furnace. They had no lights, but there surprisingly was water. For some strange reason, she was able to drain water from the pipes that was enough for them to survive. The amazing thing is that the flow of water did not stop! God was either providing water supernaturally, or the water was being drained from pipes in the whole area. Either way, there was water!

When this storm hit, we were supposed to be having a weekend revival with Richard Booher, Richard had already arrived in Hayti, but he found himself stranded there. So, Richard was with Nancy and the kids in that little upstairs apartment. As a result of the five days without electricity, we lost everything in our freezer. There was no electricity anywhere in town. Some of the patients at the hospital had to be transferred to another hospital out of town.

### **Accidents in the Family**

It was during the times that I was out of town, either at school or in South America that our kids seemed to get hurt. Kenny was riding his bicycle when he was thrown over the handlebars and broke his arm. Donia fractured her pelvic bone while skating. When I was at home, there was another occasion when Lyle was playing in a walnut tree in the back of the church one Sunday morning after church. He fell out of the tree, and we had to take him to the emergency room with a broken arm. Our family doctor, Dr. Bryant, asked Lyle what happened. Lyle was five years old at the time, and he told Dr. Bryant that he

was climbing that coconut tree to try and get some coconuts. We told Dr. Bryant that it was really a walnut tree, and he said that he wasn't going to dispute Lyle's word. For all he knew, there might have been a coconut tree in Hayti. He said that after all, a few years before, a man came to him because of some injuries. When Dr. Bryant asked this man what had happened, he said that he had been attacked by a lion. This was really the truth, because the city park had just gotten what would eventually be the world's largest lion in captivity, and the man was attacked while trying to work with him (the lion was just small then). So, Dr. Bryant probably thought that anything could happen in Hayti!

The city of Hayti had some interesting animals in the park. They had Butch the lion, who was over twenty years old when he died. They also had Susie the bear and a few other small animals, including some monkeys, peacocks, and deer. This was a real treat for kids to observe in Hayti, and still to this day, the memories of those days are indelibly printed on now-grown kids. In the past few years, I wrote a song entitled, "Butch the Lion and Susie the Bear," which is on You Tube.

I was not free from injury, either. When I was working in Wardell, I went skating one night with Nancy and the kids. I could barely stand up on skates, but I was doing pretty well when this kid came whirling around a curve, hit me, and I went sprawling. I landed on my right wrist, and was it painful! I had broken my writing wrist, and this was during the time that I was going to class at Southeast Missouri State University. I learned how to write with my left hand. Mom and Dad thought that was "thin," (the terminology they used to mean ridiculous) that an old man (I was only about thirty-seven years old) was out trying to act like a young person. I wonder what they would have thought if they knew (they might have known) that I showed up at their funeral on crutches? I had torn the Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) in my left knee when I came down from a rebound playing basketball with some teenagers on the basketball court at our house.

Another time while I was gone, Nancy heard that there were conditions for a possible tornado in the area. I guess it must have been storming, and at about the time that she thought a tornado was surely on the way, she had all the kids, including Milton, in the hall under a mattress. They have never let their

mother forget this. Donia has recently said that when Mom expressed fear of a tornado, she basically took it with a grain of salt. But, if Dad showed any concern, she took notice!

Another funny time was when the Riveras were visiting us from Guatemala. We had sat up quite late that night, and when everyone had settled in for the evening, there was a sound of something running down the keyboard of the piano. The younger Riveras sat straight up in their beds. They thought the place must have been haunted. It was only Donia's black cat walking across the keyboard.

The year I was in school at Memphis State was a good year. I had concentrated on my studies while attending full-time at the university and living on campus. The second semester, I had spent some quality time with Mom and Dad. I stayed at the university until late into the evening, but every morning, Dad woke me up, and I would have some quality time with him before I went to school. I usually had some time with Mom in the evening before we both retired for the night. Dad had already gone to bed by the time I got back home from school.

I believe that God must have arranged for my parents and me to have this special time together, as it would be the last time I saw them before their death in June. I shall never forget hearing my mother praying out loud every night when I went to bed. She would be praying and praising the Lord. My mother was a praying woman, and she loved the Lord with all of her heart. In May of 1978, I had completed all my coursework for the Doctor of Education degree at Memphis State University. I also had completed all my comprehensive exams. Also, I had completed my prospectus for my dissertation, and then it would be time to work on the actual dissertation. I went back to Hayti feeling very good about the past year. But something would happen within a few weeks that would change the course of my life and put my educational goals on hold for another eleven years. I let the ten-year limitation on my coursework expire. I then had to renew my complete doctoral program before receiving my degree in 1994.

### **The Accident That Changed Our Lives**

My sister Dixie had moved from Memphis to West Virginia with her husband and two children in 1978. Dick was from West Virginia, and now he was going back home. They had been there about a year, and Dixie, along with Richie and Pam, came home to spend some time with our family. She had been at Mom and Dad's for a few days when they decided to come to Missouri to visit Raymond and me. Raymond was living at Doniphan at that time, which was about ninety five miles west of Hayti. Mom and Dad had been with Raymond all week, and they were supposed to come to Hayti to visit us on Saturday. Nancy and I went to Poplar Bluff on Friday night, June 8, 1979. Raymond was having a special rally at his church in Grandin, and Sis. Copeland's young people went in their church bus to attend this rally. Kenny asked us if he could ride over to Grandin with the church bus and come back home with Maw-Maw and Paw-Paw the next day. We agreed to let him go.



The accident that changed our lives.



It was on Saturday morning about 10:00 A. M. that I received a call from the Doctor's Hospital in Poplar Bluff, Missouri. They informed me that our son Kenny had been in an automobile accident, but that he was okay. They told me that it had happened in front of a grocery store. I pictured in my mind that they had stopped at a store and had a minor accident. The hospital told me that Kenny had a broken leg. I thought everything was okay, but in my mind, I was trying to decide what had actually happened. I asked if everybody else was okay. They said that the truck driver was there at the hospital, but he was okay. I thought they were talking about Dad, because he was driving his pickup truck, but they were referring to the driver of the 18-wheeler that had hit them. I then asked them about the others. They didn't know what I was talking about, or else they did not want to tell me. They said that I should call the Highway Patrol to get any additional information. I knew then that something was probably terribly wrong.

When I called the Highway Patrol, I identified myself. When they asked me if I was there alone, I knew for sure that something drastic had happened. I told them that I was alone, but they could go ahead and tell me what I needed to know. Nancy had gone to the grocery store to prepare food for my family's arrival. The Patrolman said that there had been a serious accident. It still wasn't clear to me that four members of my family were dead. When I asked them about the driver,

they said he was dead. I could hardly believe what I was hearing. I was totally shocked when they revealed to me that all the occupants of the vehicle were dead. Of course, I knew that Kenny and Richie had survived because I had talked with the hospital. Mom, Dad, Dixie, and Pam were pronounced dead on the scene and taken immediately to the mortuary.

I called Raymond and told him the news. He thought I was kidding. They immediately came to the hospital at Poplar Bluff, which was about twenty-five miles from where they were living. The accident had happened after my family had left Raymond's house, which was about fifteen miles from the scene of the accident. In fact, it had happened at the intersection of U. S. 60 and U. S. 160 just south of the Call of the Wild Museum, which was about ten miles south of Poplar Bluff.

It was when I got to the hospital and saw Raymond and Carol that I then found out more of the details surrounding the accident. They had gone by the scene of the accident on the way to the hospital. Dad evidently had pulled off U. S. 160 to make a left-hand turn onto U. S. 60. They were hit by a Wilson Freight semi which was loaded with liquid rubber. The trucks collided pushing Dad's little Chevrolet pick-up truck into some gasoline pumps in front of a grocery store. The pumps exploded, and both trucks immediately shot up in deadly flames. As a result both vehicles were totally destroyed as well as the entire store.



The scene of the accident at the intersection of U. S. 67 and U. S.



Dad was thrown clear of the wreckage and was not burned. Kenny and Richie were riding in the back of the truck under a camper shell. They both were thrown clear of the fire. Kenny had a one hundred-pound gas bottle to land on his left leg, and he received a compound fracture. He was in a cast for six to eight months. He also had been close enough to the fire to get third-degree burns on his right arm biceps and triceps, but a brave young man pulled him away from further danger. Richie was admitted to the hospital but was released the next day. Mom, Dixie, and Pamela were evidently burned beyond recognition. Mom's body was found lying on top of one of the crumpled gas pumps. There were flames seen from over twenty miles away from the burning of the two trucks, the grocery store, all the fuel, and liquid rubber. It was one of the most disastrous accidents in the history of that area of the state.

The account of this accident that well changed our lives would not be complete without me sharing something that had bothered me for a long time, but I soon got peace about it. I could not understand how Dad could have been making a left-hand turn and the other truck hitting him without pushing him further up the highway. Instead, they were pushed into the gas pumps that were on the right side of the highway. I had a dream one night when I was asking Dad what really happened. He said that he was having some problems with the carburetor, and when he pulled onto U. S. 60, he saw the big truck coming. He knew that if he continued his left-hand turn, there would certainly be no hope for them. Instead, he sought to accelerate the truck to get on through the intersection. When he did, the truck sputtered and stalled. The big truck hit them broad-sided on the passenger side of the pickup. Raymond had told us that the morning when Mom and Dad left his place, he was aggravated with the truck because he was having problems with the carburetor. I did not interpret this dream as communicating with the dead. Rather, it was God's way of settling in my mind what very likely took place. At least, it was reasonable, and I have not wondered about it since.



Nancy nursing Kenny's third degree burns from fatal accident of June 9, 1979 that took the lives of four of my family members.

The news of this tragedy was on all the national evening news broadcasts, including ABC, CBS, and NBC. We had

people who knew us to call from all over the United States. There were those who heard it in Texas, Washington State, Florida, Ohio, and West Virginia. Nancy's sister and her husband heard about it on the evening news while in their summer home on Sanibel Island, Florida. We had friends to come from everywhere to help us mourn the loss of our family. Swift Funeral Home in Osceola said it was the largest funeral they had in over twenty-five years, when an entire family of five died in a house fire.

Mom and Dad were living in Memphis at the time, but both of them grew up in and around Osceola, Arkansas. There were friends from many years prior who came to the funeral. Many of my parents' church people came from Memphis. There were twenty-six ministers of the gospel, most of them Raymond and my friends, who were at the funeral. Mom, Dad, Dixie, and Pamela are buried side-by-side in Ermen Cemetery in Osceola, Arkansas. They are now in heaven awaiting all the rest of their family to join them.

### **Why Did It Happen?**

I would also like to address another issue. Why did God allow this accident to happen? Weren't these all Christians who loved the Lord? Where were their guardian angels? These are all legitimate questions, and I don't purport to know all the answers. God allows many things to happen without Him being personally responsible. First of all, there was human error involved. Yes, we make mistakes all the time, and God covers them and protects us from them. However, I believe that when you constantly violate certain laws and principles, you will pay the price. Dad had become careless, and he probably was not always in the right frame of mind. For one, he was very frustrated before he left Raymond's house. This could have impaired his good judgment.

Another thing that likely happened was that Mom and Dad could have been very aggravated with each other. I could probably envision there being a lot of tension in the truck that day. Mom and Dad were pretty nervous people and were easily frustrated. I think that perhaps one of the most logical explanations was that some way this accident was spoken into existence. I believe very strongly in the power of the spoken

word. What we continuously speak can very well come to pass. I know that there were times that Dad's driving made Mom nervous, especially when he got impatient in traffic. He would sometimes take unnecessary risks. I know for a fact, that by the confession of Mom's mouth that she said on prior occasions, "Bill is going to kill every one of us." Did it not come to pass?

I do not believe that God said that He was ready for Bill, Evie, Dixie, and Pam to come on home. He did not have immediate plans for them in heaven. First of all, I don't believe that God would be the author of such a devastating way of going home. He did not have to mangle them and burn them to a crisp. Dixie was a young woman thirty-seven years old. She had not fulfilled her days. Pamela certainly did not fulfill her days; she was only three years old. I can't believe that Mom and Dad had fulfilled their days, either. Dad was sixty-nine, and Mom had just turned sixty-two. There are too many promises in the Word of God concerning longevity of life, and these promises are provisional. Long life and length of days are contingent upon our meeting certain requirements, the main one being of faith and obedience. However, when this tragedy struck, I believe the angels of the Lord were there to accompany them into the eternal portals of glory.

What are the limitations placed on our guardian angels? Are they there under all circumstances? Do they automatically protect us from everything? Evidently not. Otherwise, nothing would ever happen to a believer. I believe that angels basically function on our behalf upon command. They work for us based upon our active faith in their ability to take care of us. It is important for us to pray for God to dispatch angels on our behalf. Now, Nancy and I pray that our angels will protect us when we leave in our automobile.

I must confess that large trucks on the highways both intimidated me as well as angered me. It seemed that I would begin to notice that many of them were "bullies" on the highways. They would run up behind you and try to force you off the road. This became very frustrating. Also, I must admit that there began to be a fear in my heart that perhaps the same thing would happen to us or our children. I had to finally come to the conclusion that we were under the protective wings of the Lord. Furthermore, I felt in my spirit that never again would Satan be able to remove any other member of my family in like

fashion again. We must be on guard against every potential opening that we allow him to operate in. Unfortunately, for an unexplained reason, our middle son and his wife were killed in separate automobile accidents separated by eleven years. I suppose one consolation is that neither of them were involved in such a devastating manner of being caught in a blazing fire. I don't have the explanation. At this point in time, all I can conclude is that God is God, and He sees the complete picture when we can only see in part. When I don't have proactive faith, I have learned to simply "trust"—trust that God is ultimately in charge of our lives and for us to never doubt that He is God.

### **The Aftermath of the Accident**

Raymond and I had the task of going to Memphis to see about our parents' property. We found the house to be in perfect order. Everything was clean and in place. The following several months were going to be hectic in taking care of all the affairs of the estate. It is something that I would not want to go through again. Everything was divided three ways between Raymond, Richie (Dixie's part), and me. When everything was settled, we all had about \$13,000 dollars apiece. This may not have been a great amount, but it was very significant for our family. Raymond and I invested most of our share in the retreat that we built in Doniphan right next to the property that Mom and Dad had purchased. When the retreat burned about three or four years later, I took my share and paid it on the house we purchased in Cartersville. Richie's share was put into a trust, but unfortunately, nothing was there for him when he turned eighteen.

The remainder of the year was pretty difficult. So was the following year for me. I was going through some shakings. Most of it was because of this tragedy. We were nursing Kenny back to health. He had gone through a very traumatic experience himself. I was going through a period of adjusting to some midlife situations, as I would turn forty that fall. I had just finished my coursework for my doctorate. I made an effort during the next year to work on my dissertation, but I did not have the heart to put into it as I needed. The church was beginning to go through another low place. Financial pressure was building. I was looking for outside employment, but it was

not until January that I found employment. This was a time of emotional upheaval, and it was a time of mourning.

I had not allowed myself to mourn properly in the very beginning. I did not shed a tear at the funeral. I helped to officiate the funeral service along with Mom and Dad's pastor, Rev. Gaylon Echols. I thought I had to be strong, and I suppose that I came across as such. But on the inside, I was hurting, and I was grieving. I would wake myself up at night feeling that my heart would burst. In my dreams, I would think that I was crying my eyes out. I was sure that everyone in the house was hearing me, but it was all inward and silent. This continued on a consistent basis for a couple of years. In fact, it would continue on less frequently for several years. Even after fifteen to twenty years, it happened every now and then. This was all a part of my grieving for my family that we had lost. I might add that I still have dreams of my parents, but they are all very positive and uplifting now.

One of the most difficult things I had to do was a few months after the accident to go to Memphis and to work on the house so we could put it on the market to sell. I painted the house, and I stayed in the house at night. We had left one bed, and the rest of the house was empty. Raymond, Dick, and I were fearful that Dad would be sued by the grocery store, and they would put a hold on all of my parent's belongings. Therefore, we had moved all of the furniture from the house within days of the accident. We never heard anything from the store, and I now believe they were fearful that they could have been sued for having their gas pumps so close to the highway.

The first night I spent in Mom and Dad's house, I wasn't sure that I could. I was there all by myself. After the initial evening, everything was okay. I stayed there for several days doing the necessary work, having a sense of peace. The house was painted outside, and it was ready to be put on the market.

### **I Began Work as a Psychological Examiner**

I went to work at Pemiscot County Special School District (PCSSD) the following January after the accident. PCSSD was a coalition of all the school systems of Pemiscot County that provided services for school children of all

handicaps. I worked as a psychological examiner for the Diagnostic Center, which was located in the old school facilities in Pascola, Missouri. This was one of only two special school districts in the state of Missouri, the other being in St. Louis County. I thoroughly enjoyed my job for the two and one-half years that I did this. It was one of the least pressured jobs that I ever had. We basically tested two to three students a day. I was hired by an old Gideon High School buddy that I had chemistry with back in 1955. Bob Herring was a prince of a guy to work for. I would work here and continue to pastor Evangelistic Temple (except for a few months in 1981) until we moved to Georgia in 1982.

### **Donia Graduates from High School**

Donia graduated from high school in May of 1980, and she was the class valedictorian. My parents' accident was very hard for her to deal with. She loved her grandparents very much, and it was important to her for them to see their first grandchild graduate from high school. Donia was preparing her valedictorian speech when she informed me that she didn't think she could go through with it. How could she even go through the ceremony knowing that Maw-Maw and Paw-Paw were not going to be there? I encouraged her to allow the Lord to minister to her and that He would give her the strength to do so. Donia made her speech that night, and I know that I am not very objective when it comes to my children, but I thought she did one super job. Immediately after the graduation ceremony was over, she came running up to me excited. She said, "They were here! They were here! Maw-Maw and Paw-Paw were here! I know they were here! I could feel it!" How could I deny that? It gives me cold chills and goose bumps just repeating this now!



Donia was valedictorian of her senior class at North Pemiscot High School in 1980

Donia went on to enroll at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, Missouri after graduation. She was a hard worker, having worked at Drury Inn and the Daisy Queen in Hayti while going to high school. Now she was going off to school to live on campus. I feel so bad now because she was no more than gone than we gave her bedroom to one of the boys. I guess I thought they needed it, and I suppose they did. Now, I must apologize to Donia for what she could have interpreted as us pushing her out of the house. That certainly was not intended. We were just trying to think about the three boys who were left at home. Fortunately, Donia has indicated that she had no negative feelings, that she never gave any thought to it.

After enrolling in college, Donia became very involved on campus. She was dating a guy in high school of whom we weren't particularly excited. We felt she deserved better. Kelley Varner prophesied to her a word of the Lord that I know

had a profound effect on her life. He told her that she would become very popular on campus, and there would be many young men who would seek her hand. She was not to compromise, but to wait on the Lord. He was going to give her a prince. Well, every one of those prophecies came true. Donia was elected to the Student Government as a representative her sophomore year, and in her junior year, she became the first elected female president of the SGA in over twenty-five years! Additionally, she was the first female or male elected from the deep Bootheel of Missouri in over twenty-five years! For what it is worth, Donia was the President of the SGA at the same school where Rush Limbaugh graduated. To add frosting to the cake, God gave her a prince in Chris Culberson.

The latter part of 1980 and the early part of 1981 were perhaps the worst of my life. Not only was I dealing with the tragic events in our family, but I was dealing with my own issues. It all began when we were having some problems with Kenny. Kenny was probably questioning why he was still on this earth. He revealed later that he felt guilty that he survived and the others didn't. I think there were times that Kenny had a secret death wish. He became very rebellious. He was fifteen when the accident happened, and this was a very crucial age for him at a very difficult time.

Kenny was beginning to resent my authority. He was not willing to live by the rules. One night in the fall of 1981, I had gone to Osceola where my Aunt Elizabeth had died. When I came home, I found that Kenny had moved out. He decided that he was old enough to be on his own. He moved in with some other guys. Kenny was a senior in high school. I told him that if he left, he had to stay gone, because he would not be coming back and forth. Furthermore, he would be completely on his own. He could not come home and have his mother wash his clothes. Kenny honored these demands, and to his everlasting credit, he stayed in school and graduated on time in the spring of 1982.



Brandon was working as a security guard while going to college when he died.



. This was a difficult time for all of us. We had moved Aunt Florence into a mobile home that Raymond owned and was parked behind the church. This gave us an opportunity to be close to her and to look after her. She invited Kenny to come live with her the second half of the year, which he did. We had little contact with Kenny for this whole year. He was on his own. We did go to his graduation, and we were all very proud of him.

### **The ORU Interview**

In the summer of 1981, I knew for sure that we were on our way to Oral Roberts University. I had been asked to come for an all-expenses paid interview for a vacancy in the counseling center of the university. Larry, Nancy's twin brother, was the chairperson of the Department of Behavioral Science at ORU. He had been at the university since 1968, and he had pulled all the strings for us to come aboard. Larry is normally a very conservative person, but he made a statement that he was 99% sure that I would be offered the job. He said only a miracle would bar it. Guess what? The miracle happened. The 1% chance that we would not go was exercised. Again, we have to believe that this was by the sovereignty of God. How else could we look at it? If we had gone that route, where would we be today? Again, our steps were being ordered of the Lord.

After interviewing for two days, the director of the counseling center told me that in his heart he did not believe that it was God's will for us to come. I had all the qualifications. I had the necessary education, and all my references were top notch. He said that he believed that the Lord had other things for us. Of course, his conclusion no doubt was based on the things I had shared with him concerning our work in the ministry. He was a very sincere man, whom I believe was hearing from God (I may not have thought he was hearing from God at the time!). As I would discover later, he was right. But for that time, I had never been so disappointed. I felt that we could have had a brand new lease on life by entering the university scene. But God did have other plans, and we would get a new lease on life in our continuing role of pastoring.

The year became a nightmare for me. I was emotionally drained. I had begun to lose some of the vision and enthusiasm to really get involved in the church. It was a very critical time. I was very quiet for a long time. There was turmoil within. What was everything about? How would everything turn out? I felt that I was losing everything. I felt that I was a total failure in everything that I had ever attempted. Here I was, forty-two years old, and where was I? The church wasn't doing all that great. I guess this had to be part of my mid-life crisis (no, not the mid-life crisis that many envision).

I had come to the place that I had to make a decision. I could not continue in the way I was. We took a week off to visit the Retreat Center with Raymond. I came back to the elders of the church and told them that I had to have two weeks to get away and find what and where I was supposed to be. The eldership of the church was pretty strong, and they ministered in my absence. In two weeks, I gave them my decision. I was leaving. I shall never forget the feeling of emptiness that night as I walked around the church all by myself. I was thinking and reflecting. I was remembering all the hard work—every nail that was driven. All the sweat, and yes, even some blood. It was painful, but still I could not continue on. I did not have the inner strength. I needed rest. I needed new direction, but I had to get away from everything and sort it all out. William Shoemate did most of the ministering during the next few months that I was away.

### **Helping Raymond Build Retreat Center**

Beginning in the spring of 1981, I spent the summer helping Raymond build the retreat center near Doniphan, Missouri. I stayed with him during the week and worked on the building. This was good therapy for me. I was away from all the pressures of Hayti. I was occupying myself, and I was doing it for the Lord. Through everything that I had gone through, I never for one moment turned my back on God. I still loved Him with all my heart. In fact, on the weekends, all of our family would go to church at the retreat when it was far enough along to have services in it. I would preach, sing, play the piano, and play my guitar. Raymond's family and our family would take float trips down Current River on inner tubes. It was refreshing.

How could I talk about float trips without relating another one of those amusing episodes? All of us were floating down Current River. Current River was a cold, cold river that was fed by Big Springs, perhaps the largest volume of spring water flow in the world. The river wasn't that deep, but it did have a fast moving current and frequent small rapids.

Shannon, Raymond's daughter, and Nancy were floating on their tubes next to each other when all of us spotted a snake that was lying on a rock in the shade right next to the river. The next thing we knew, the snake had slipped into the water. Of course, this was a good fifty feet away. I decided to play a mean trick. I slipped out of my tube under water and came up under Nancy and pinched her on the bottom. She about had a heart attack. She screamed, and it about scared Shannon half to death. Yes, I probably shouldn't have done it, but I could not resist!

### **Back to Ministering in Hayti Church**

The time came in the fall that I had to go back to the church. There was no other choice. The Lord had already dealt with me. By now, there were a couple of guys in the church who weren't ready to give up their newfound power. I returned to Hayti, preached with the elders' permission, and told the people what the Lord was saying to me. I asked everyone who was with us to come to the front and stand. About 90% of the people came forward. Some sat back defiantly. A few of these eventually came on back in; a few didn't. From that point until the time that we left Hayti for good in 1982 for Georgia, the church began to grow again. We were blessed. I was restored.

Much of this restoration was because a man of God and his wife came by our house and ministered the love of Jesus to us. They gave us a sure word of the Lord. More importantly, they ministered to us through the delivering power of the Holy Spirit that liberated me completely and totally from a spirit of hopelessness and depression. I was free! There was a renewed hope and vision in my heart. The anointing of God came back in a stronger manner than I had remembered in years. The rest of 1981 and the first of 1982 were very good months for me. It would be in the early part of the summer of 1982 that the wheels

began to turn that was preparing the way for us to move to a new field of labor in Cartersville, Georgia.

The Lord has been good to all of us. In fact, as we look back over our lives, we may not have had as much as a lot of other people, but we had more than most. We have always had good housing, and God has blessed us with good cars, if not new ones. We have been able to go out to eat, even though it may have been associated with the church crowd. We have had wonderful vacations and family times together. As you can see, we have a lot to be thankful for through the goodness of God.

We lived in one of the nicer homes in Hayti—the house that I had built. Kenny had a basketball goal with a concrete slab. We had a riding lawnmower to cut the large yard and a Cub Farmall tractor for the garden. Kenny's best friends in Hayti were some black kids who didn't have a lot. Granted, Kenny did not always have the best of clothes, but they were sufficient. I think one reason he didn't was because he was very hard on clothes. He played hard, and he did not always respect his clothes. Therefore, he would come up with holes in the knees, which at that time wasn't the "in thing."

One day Kenny was in the restroom at school, when some of his black friends came in. They were not aware that Kenny was in one of the stalls. Kenny overheard them say, "That Kenneth Meadors is a real cool dude. He's the only rich white boy in Hayti that dresses like us!" Of course, we weren't rich, but our God did more than supply all of our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. It was a faith walk, but God honored His Word in our lives. We were blessed with a beautiful family. We provided our children a home that taught the ways of the Lord. So, in every true sense of the word, we were rich.



Six of our eight great-grandchildren Christmas 2016



Kenneth, Nancy, Donia, Ken, Autumn, Bug, MacKynna, Maddy, Ashley, Sam, Kandis, Anna at Autumn and Bug's Wedding.

## Chapter Sixteen

### THE DECADE OF THE 80S IN GEORGIA

#### We Discuss Cartersville

The year 1982 had been a relatively good year for us in Hayti. There were no serious upheavals, and we were rather at peace. The most significant event for the first part of the year was Kenny's graduation from high school. Kenny was living with Aunt Florence behind the church, and we all were there for his graduation, which was held outside on the football field. Kenny had overcome a lot of obstacles during the past year, and graduation represented a high mark for him. What is amazing, Kenny took upon himself to enroll in a correspondence course in order to graduate.

Raymond had left the retreat center in Doniphan to go to work with Ed and Glenda Corley in Lincolnton, Georgia. However, whatever the reason, this did not work out for them. We were sitting around talking one evening, and I made the comment that I knew there was a congregation of people somewhere that would make a good fit for us. I believed there was one that would appreciate us, and we would appreciate them. At that point, Raymond mentioned a church in Cartersville, Georgia that was looking for a pastor. He then told me that if I were interested, Bro. Corley could give me more information because some of the men of the church had been in contact with him.

I called Bro. Corley, and he told me that this was a confirmation to him, as he was thinking of calling me. He said that some of the leadership of the church in Cartersville had looked to him for guidance in finding a new pastor. He gave me Lee Goodwin's telephone number. I called Lee, and he was excited. He said that the church had been gathering every night at the church for two weeks praying for a pastor. He went to the prayer meeting the next night and told them that they had found a pastor. This was before anyone met me and before I had made a commitment to them. This must have been prophetic.

I made arrangements for us to come to Cartersville to minister one weekend. We were going on to Lincolnton the following week to be in a convention with Bro. Corley. When we stopped by Cartersville to minister, we were invited to come back the second weekend on the way back home. We ministered in Cartersville those two weekends, and the people seemed to readily accept us. I had met with the leaders of the church on the Saturday before the first weekend. The men in the meeting at Shoney's were Lee Goodwin, Tommy Dial, Larry Wilson, Ernie Reese, Larry Hobgood, Jerry Chitwood, and Lynn Chance. These men were elders and served as the pulpit committee.

I must share this story. In the meeting with the elders at Shoney's, I went around the room asking each man what employment they were involved in. Anyone who ever knew Lynn Chance, knew that he always had a sense of humor and enjoyed being different. When I asked Lynn what he did, he very seriously said, "I deal in drugs." All the other guys laughed. Of course, I didn't take Lynn seriously. It turned out that he worked for Southern Bell Telephone Company. As a side note, Lynn's dad was a replica of Colonel Sanders, including the hair, beard, white suit, dark-rimmed glasses, and western bowtie. "Colonel Sanders" was a member of our church.

We were introduced to Victory Temple, which became New Covenant Church after we arrived as pastors. After the second weekend of ministering at the church, I met with the elders concerning our coming to the church. They invited us to come to be their pastor, and I accepted. This was one of the major decisions of my life.

### **We Move to Georgia**

The church paid our moving expenses. Tommy Dial and Parnick Jennings came to Hayti to help us move. We had lived in Hayti for a number of years and had accumulated a lot of "junk." It took two twenty-four-foot Ryder Trucks to move all that we possessed! This included all our furniture, tools (including all of Dad's woodwork equipment), garden tiller, riding lawnmower, and Raymond's old antique barber chair. That barber chair was a nightmare. I hauled that chair

everywhere we lived and had to move it every time. In fact, I almost broke my foot trying to move it. Raymond finally took it to Denver fourteen years after I brought it from Missouri.

When we arrived in Cartersville in July of 1982, there were probably fifteen to twenty guys waiting at our home to welcome us and to help us unload. This was a very moving experience (no pun intended). Our first house was at 1111 N. Tennessee Street. The house was a very nice house, but we would only live there for a couple of months before we bought our own home at 44 Wayside Drive. On the night that we unloaded, one of the men was disturbed that our telephone number had three sixes in it—386-0626! Fortunately, the sixes weren't consecutive!

Raymond had moved to Cartersville a couple of weeks before we did. He loved the city. He indicated that he was going to move there even if we did not. Raymond moved into a small house on Lee Street, and his backyard joined the backyard of Joe Frank Harris. Mr. Harris would be elected as the governor of Georgia that fall and serve two terms. The Harris family, including two brothers and one sister, belonged to Faith Methodist Church in Cartersville, but many of them were spirit-filled. In particular, his brother, Fred Harris, and his wife Pat came to many of our revival services. At one point, Pat was diagnosed with cancer, and she and Fred came and sat on the front pew of the church. Darrell Gooden, who was a country boy with a personality and a good ministry was preaching under a heavy anointing when he reached out and took Pat's shawl. He proceeded to wipe sweat off of his brow with the shawl and handed it back to her. Although the Harrises were dignified people, they accepted it as an anointed cloth of the Lord.

As has been the case in every one of our moves, this move represented an opportunity for us to get a new lease on life. We felt that we were coming to a place that had great potential. The church had been the most significant full gospel church in Bartow County during the previous five or six years. At the time that we came, the church was really down. Unfortunately, some things happened in the church that led most of the people to go elsewhere or to drop out of church completely. This was not an easy situation to come into. The first Sunday that we were in Cartersville, we may have had thirty to forty people. The last pastor had left a bad situation.

Many obstacles had to be overcome before the church would grow. There was a great need for the church to regain credibility in the community. The first year was spent in settling and restoring the people. It was a time of stabilization and confirmation. There was some growth, but a foundation was being laid.

Connie Davis and her two children, Ricky and Debbie, had come to our church in Hayti from Kennett, Missouri. Connie was divorced from the children's father, and she and the kids eventually moved to Hayti. While in Hayti, Connie met Betty Hurt who had come to our church from Poplar Bluff, Missouri. Betty was divorced from her husband, and Connie and Betty eventually began living together. From Hayti, Connie, her children, along with Betty, moved to Abilene. They attended the church that we had started there in 1972, and they were there for a few years. We had been in Cartersville only a couple of weeks when Betty, Connie, and the kids came to visit us. They felt that it was time to leave Texas, and they were not sure where they wanted to go. They spend several days with us, and it was while they were there that they decided to move to Cartersville. That was thirty-five years ago, and Connie was still living here until her death in 2016. Betty had passed away over twenty years ago.

Betty and Connie became some of our dearest friends. All of our family, including all the kids, loved and respected them. Betty had always had spiritual maturity even when we met her in Hayti, but Connie was a new Christian in Missouri. After Connie came to Cartersville, she began to grow by leaps and bounds. She became the leader of our prayer ministry at New Covenant. She and Betty became some of our staunchest supporters. After we left New Covenant in 1991, Betty and Connie started working with a ministry that had just begun in Adairsville, as they were living in Adairsville at that time. The church was founded by Gary and Anita Spellman who were attending New Covenant before I left. Jon and Tina Spellman are now the pastors and are doing a great work. Tina had been a young girl who was a very special person while growing up in our church.

We had been in Cartersville only a short time before I invited Tim Woodson to come for a revival. I had met Tim in Hayti, where both of us were pastoring. Tim was the pastor of

the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Hayti for about a year during my last years there. Tim was an unusual individual. He had a great anointing upon his life and was a very talented musician. In addition, he was an exciting preacher. His ministry was one of love, as he ministered under the power of the Holy Spirit, moving prophetically in both music and preaching. He was a worshipper who could lead people into the presence of God.

I had sold Tim to the elders. The first night of the revival, Tim did not show up for the beginning of the service. We went ahead and started the service on time. I was nervous that he had not arrived. The elders were probably wondering about this preacher that I had promoted. We had gone for almost an hour in the service, and there still was no Tim. This did not set well with the leadership of the church, and you could probably understand why. I was getting ready to preach myself, when Tim walked into the back door of the church. You should have heard the welcome. The people did not know him, but they gave him a very warm standing ovation. That night, Tim ministered in a way that I had never heard him. He was a great blessing and inspiration to our people. Tim returned to minister two or three more times during our tenure in Cartersville, and he had a positive impact every time.

### **Kenny and Donia Join Us in Cartersville**

It was in the fall of 1982 that Kenny and Donia joined us in Cartersville. Donia was in the first semester of her junior year at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. As I have stated previously, she was then serving the student body as the president of the Student Government Association (S.G.A.). Donia called us, and she was very depressed. She could not continue on. She asked me to come and pick her up, and this I readily did. I left Cartersville in the morning to drive the four hundred and twenty-five mile trip to Cape. I picked her up, and we immediately drove back to Cartersville that night. The next few months were to be a time of restoration and recuperation for her. She went to work at Quality Inn as a front desk clerk, and she enrolled at Kennesaw College the following semester. It was at Quality Inn that Donia

met Chris Culberson, whom she married in December of the following year.

It was also in the fall that Kenny called us from Hayti and asked us if he could move to Georgia to be with us. This represented a very joyous time, as Kenny had left home over a year previously, and this was his first time to reach out to us. Kenny, too, was at the end of his way, and he was also discouraged and depressed. I think Donia and Kenny both were homesick for their family who was over four hundred miles away in the far-away state of Georgia.

Nancy and I gladly came to Hayti to pick Kenny up. I shall never forget the scene. We arrived at the house where Kenny had been staying. He was sitting on the front steps with all his belongings in a single bag. Beside him was a sad-eyed coon hound. I don't know how long he had been sitting there because we had no cell phones then and had no way of letting him know when we would be there. When we saw him and his coon dog, it about tore our hearts out to see this pitiful sight. I wasn't happy about having to transport a coon dog to Georgia, but I agreed to do so. We found a cage to put him in and then put him in the trunk of the car. The lid of the trunk was left open and secured so the dog could get sufficient air. Kenny returned to Hayti to marry his sweetheart in a month or so. He and Lisa Riley then came back to Cartersville together, and they lived in our basement for an extended period of time, which I believe must have been a couple of years.

### **Our First Year at Victory Temple**

The first year at Victory Temple was definitely a honeymoon. There were no high expectations for us. Anything that was accomplished seemed to be icing on the cake. It was during this first year that we were exposed to the satellite ministry that came from Word of Faith Church in Dallas, Texas. This was an innovative ministry, featuring seminars with some of the outstanding faith teachers and preachers in the nation. Bob Tilton was the founder of this operation. At that time, Bob had a legitimate ministry until money seemed to have become a driving force for him.

The Word of Faith satellite programs proved to be a great blessing to our church for the first two or three years. We

received live telecasts from Dallas which were projected onto an 8 x 10 foot screen in front of the church. We received outstanding seminars by Charles Capps, Kenneth Copeland, Jerry Savelle, T. L. Osborn, Marilyn Hickey, Norvell Hayes, Fred Price, John Osteen, and many others. Eventually, the satellite was bringing special seminars just for men and women. It also provided children's ministry with Willie George. Concerts were telecast for the youth. There was even a full-time Bible School presented on a daily basis, which we carried for two years. Nancy received a one-year diploma. There were some young men who received two-year diplomas. These included Ricky Thomas and Buddy Corbin. Bishop David Huskins was a teenager at that time, and he attended classes for about a year. Bishop Huskins would play a major role in our lives later, which I will elaborate on further in the book.

I do not recall the year, but it must have been about the second year we were in Cartersville that I felt that it would be in our best interest to change the name of our church to New Covenant Church. This would give us an opportunity to distance ourselves from the past with the stigmas attached to it. We felt this would give us a new identity. We now were a totally different church. We had new leadership and a new vision, and it was now time for these changes to be reflected in this name change.

It was the second or third year we were there when we had perhaps the most significant revival ever. It was an innovative revival. It was a revival that originated in Dallas and was beamed via satellite into our church in Cartersville. It may seem incredible, but it was very effective. There were many exciting things that happened. The evangelist was Norvel Hayes of Cleveland, Tennessee. Bro. Norvel had an exciting and unique ministry. He was very effective, as he interwove sincere preaching and teaching with an unusual sense of humor. He emphasized the supernatural with signs, wonders, and miracles following. The revival went on for nine weeks! After six weeks of being hooked up with the satellite revival, I felt that the Lord instructed me to have Owen Johnson from Loris, South Carolina to come in person to continue the revival. Bro. Owen had a miracle ministry, and the revival went three more weeks under his direction. This was a total of nine weeks of revival!

### The Boys Go to a Christian School

We enrolled Brandon and Lyle in the public school system, but they were there only a couple of days. Raymond had enrolled Shannon and Valerie in Manna Christian Academy, and I did the same for Brandon and Lyle. They all four attended Manna for two years, after which the school ceased to exist.

When Manna Christian Academy closed in 1984, we were faced with a decision. We would either have to enroll the boys in public school, or we would have to do something ourselves. By that time, the state had made allowances for parents to home school their children. This was one option, but it meant that a parent would be tied up on a full-time basis providing their children with educational training. It was too late in the year for us to try to sell the church on the idea of Christian education. I approached the governing body of the church for them to allow us to use the facilities for us to teach our own children. The church agreed to this arrangement. Nancy and Carol alternated teaching every other day, thereby freeing each of them on alternating days. In essence, this became the first year of New Covenant Christian Academy. There were six students that year: Shannon, Valerie, Brandon, and Lyle Meadors, in addition to Tina Hendrix and Tim Miller.

This was a very eventful year. I think it represented a very difficult year for Nancy. It was one of which she would not desire to repeat, as it represented an awesome responsibility. All of the kids were really good kids. They were all very good students, and they accomplished a great deal that year with all the personal attention they were getting. One day, Nancy about panicked when Valerie and Tim played a trick on her. Valerie came running to Nancy and told her to come quick that Tim had hurt himself. Nancy went out on the parking lot to see Tim off in the distance lying on the ground. As she got closer to him, she saw what she thought was blood pouring from his face. About that time, Raymond came up, and Nancy gladly deferred to him. Upon approaching Tim lying there on the ground, they discovered that he was covered with catsup, not blood!



Brandon was the first graduate of New Covenant Christian Academy in 1988.



Lyle graduated from New Covenant Christian Academy in 1990.



Our largest graduation class in 1990.

### **The Dortchs Are Reunited with Us**

We came back to Georgia, and I contacted Rebecca and Jerry Dortch to see if they were interested in coming to teach and be administrators of our new Christian School. The Dortches had run a school in Florida, and they were now back in Arkansas. They readily agreed to come, and the foundation was laid for a very successful school.

The first year, we had about twenty-eight students. The second year we enrolled fifty-five. At the beginning of the second year, Jerry's father became sick, and Jerry stayed with him for an extended period of time. Mr. Dortch eventually died during the early part of the second year. This sent Jerry into a tailspin, and as a result, he resigned his position at the school. Rebecca continued on in her role. The responsibility of being principal fell on me, and this limited my time that I could devote to being the full-time pastor. However, I did this for a goodly part of the year, until the Lord sent Michael Bailey along who helped me on a part-time basis at the end of the year. Mike became the associate pastor of the church and the principal of the school the following year. He served in this capacity for a year, and then Steve Miller became the principal. I believe that Steve served as principle for two years. The school was disbanded in 1990 due to a lack of sufficient backing. We could

not charge enough tuition to support the school. At that time, our school was the only Christian school in all of Bartow County. There is now one sponsored by the Church of God, and is one of the most successful Christian schools in the state.



Brandon and New Covenant Academy Friends

Brandon was the first graduate of our school in 1988, and he had a hard time handling all the attention. He was the center of attention, as he was the only graduate of the school that year. He was introduced as the valedictorian, most popular, and most likely to succeed! However, this was followed by the statement of the principal that Brandon was the quality student who would likely win these awards even with a hundred students.

The focal point of the whole year was our end-of-the-year Awards Banquet and Ceremony. We rented the Civic Center and had a steak dinner catered. This ceremony became a dress-up occasion for the kids, as the girls wore their formals, and the guys rented tuxedos. They all looked so pretty and handsome. We gave out all the awards for the year, and this ceremony also represented our graduation exercise. We usually had at least two hundred in attendance at each of these banquets, and we invited a dignitary to speak each year.

## Raymond's Involvement in Cartersville

The first year that Raymond lived in Cartersville, he was going out in ministry from time to time. He made about one trip a month back to Dyersburg, Tennessee where he had a regular ongoing ministry for several years. In between times, he did whatever his hands found to do. He cut grass, worked at the local bowling center, and did some painting for a contractor in our church.

Raymond and Carol had started a new praise and worship ministry at the church. This was in contrast to the traditional congregational singing from hymn books. Raymond and Carol were more into the contemporary singing of scriptures and choruses. They formed a group to back them up. This represented a drastic change for the church, but it proved to be a very positive experience. It launched the church into a higher dimension of worship.

It was about a year later that Raymond was hired by the church board to be an assistant pastor and music director. He served in these capacities until he made the move to Heritage Village, U. S. A., which was an international ministry near Charlotte, North Carolina. This ministry sponsored the PTL Club, which was aired over their television network all over the world.

Raymond served on the pastoral staff of PTL for a couple of years, appearing on an early morning daily telecast. From PTL, Raymond went back to school to finish his Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in counseling psychology. He received his degree in 1989 from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. It was during his time in Carbondale, when Jim Bakker had fallen from favor. Raymond then returned to PTL shortly after the ouster of Jim Bakker. At this juncture, Raymond became the director of marriage workshops and seminars. He also was the director of counseling. He would remain there for about two years. From PTL, Raymond and Carol moved on to Cincinnati, Ohio. For the next few years, they made several moves, including Phoenix, Arizona; Orlando, Florida; and Louisville, Kentucky.

## Growing Pains with Adolescents

The first few years in Cartersville were years of growing up for Brandon and Lyle. We experienced normal adolescent difficulties with our boys, including accidents. All told, between Bran and Lyle, there were four automobile accidents. There was one in particular that stands out in my memory. It was one Saturday night when I was preparing for my Sunday sermon. All at once, I felt a strong urge to pray for Brandon and Lyle, who were out together. When they came home that night, they informed me of an accident that could have been far more devastating and potentially fatal. They were rounding a curve just south of Cartersville when an approaching driver was on their side of the road. Brandon swerved into the left lane and lost control of the car. The car made a 360 degree turn around, went down an embankment toward the Etowah River, and hit an electric pole guide wire. They could have landed in the river, or they could have hit a tree. Thank God they came home safely without any harm. I believe God allowed me to pray that night that they might be spared from a disaster.

The first three years at New Covenant Church were years of stabilization and growth. It seemed to be a difficult task in getting a significant spiritual breakthrough. It was pretty difficult ministering, as I seemed to experience some spiritual pressures. I could not put my finger on it. In fact, after the founding pastor had left, there had not been a pastor to stay more than one year. I had now been at the church over three years. Eventually, I served a total of nine years as the pastor. Even until today, that has been the longest tenure of any pastor of the church, which was founded forty-two years ago.

It was probably in January 1985 that I began to experience some serious stress that manifested itself in my physical body. I began to have chest pains, which I thought could possibly have been my heart. I called our family doctor, who often attended our church, on a Sunday afternoon. He told me to meet him at the emergency room of the hospital. Upon arrival, he immediately admitted me into the hospital for about three or four days of intensive examinations. This was during a revival that we were having with Joby Brady. This would prove to be a very crucial period of time for me and the church.

The outcome of all the tests was that I was suffering from stress and high blood pressure. The pressures of the church had evidently gotten to me. I look back now and realize that most of the pressures I felt were self-imposed. I expected more of myself than others. However, I did discover that I did not meet the expectations of some.

One of the first things that I did upon my dismissal from the hospital was to become involved in a regular exercise program. I joined a local fitness center, and I began to lift weights and exercise. It would be a year or so later that I joined the Sport Court which had racquetball courts. I began to play racquetball again after a fifteen or sixteen-year absence, as I had begun playing while we were living in Abilene. I continued exercising and playing racquetball on a regular basis for several years. I completed my racquetball career in my mid-60s, but I now continue to exercise on a regular basis.

I don't recall the precipitating events, but it was in the spring of 1986 that I began to feel pressures which I thought were near unbearable. I did not feel the support of the church that I believed that I needed. After conversing with a couple of key people in the church, I was convinced that the best thing for me to do was to resign. This I did suddenly on the first Sunday morning of April of 1986. I gave the church a thirty-day notice. I told the people that I would be at the back door greeting them as they left, as was my custom. I said that I didn't want anyone to make any comment about what I had done. One particular person leaving that morning walked by me and said, "I think you're making a mistake."

I was praying in our living room late one night the following week. Everyone else had gone to bed. God began to speak very clearly to me. He expressed to me through the spirit of prophecy that I was not to make a decision that would affect so many people without seeking His face. As the Lord was speaking to me, I began to write the prophecy down. I returned to the church to relate this message to the church. I then called the church on a corporate 21-day fast. This was to be a chain fast, whereby different individuals would be fasting a day at a time. At the end of the twenty-one-day period, I believed that God would give us more specific directions and guidance.

It was at the end of the fast that the Lord made clear to me that I was not to leave. Because of the fasting and praying,

the church was on a spiritual level that we had not experienced for some time. When I announced to the church that I was staying, I got negative reaction from a few of the families in the church. There were about three or four key families who chose to leave the church. Most of them came to me in a very good spirit. They expressed their sentiment that I was a man of God, but they did not feel that my vision corresponded with theirs. They each went in peace. What else could I ask for?

I was hurt that some of the very families who brought us to Cartersville were now leaving. It always hurts when people leave your fellowship, but these were special people. Most of them had been with the church from its inception. They represented people of influence and good reputation. They also represented strong financial support of the church. I was concerned that there would be a tremendous fall-out from their leaving. I had no idea how many would follow them. To my surprise, they had little to no influence on the rest of the congregation. There were only a very few families that were affected.

The next couple of months would be ones of holding everything together. It would be sometime during the summer that we got the spiritual breakthrough that we were believing for all the time we had been in Cartersville. The year 1986 became the best year to date that we had, including attendance, finances, and spiritual awareness. God had proven Himself faithful to us. The next few years would prove to be very rewarding.

### **A Fresh New Breath of Air**

One significant thing that happened in August of 1986 was the introduction of some very key people in our congregation. Michael Bailey had been pastoring the Manna Christian Fellowship. They decided to disband, and Bro. Mike told the congregation that they were free to go wherever they pleased, but he and his family were going to New Covenant. We got an excellent boost from some very significant people who would become a very integral part of our ministry, even today. With the Baileys came the McAbees—Max, Judy, Shane, and Josh. They would become a very strong part of our ministry. In fact, the McAbees were with us in Jasper as our

Praise and Worship leaders until my resignation there in 1997. Josh was our drummer. There were some other individuals and families who came to New Covenant from Manna, including Prophet Eddie Russell. Bro. Eddie was always a strong supporter of our ministry, and still is today. This new infusion of life was a great thing from the standpoint that this merger was the opposite of most situations involving two churches—ordinarily, that of a split. Instead of a church splitting into two or more segments, we now were experiencing two becoming one!

Mike worked as an independent paint contractor. He relieved me during the latter part of the 1986-87 school year as the principal of the academy. He and Jane became full-time staff members for the next couple of years. Mike became the assistant pastor as well as the principal of the school. Jane became one of the supervisors in the school. Jane was also a great blessing in the music department, as she was one of our top soloists as well as a member of the Praise Team.



On the site of new building project New Covenant Church.

Mike and I became good friends. He had a good personality and related well with the congregation. As far as I know, he was always faithful and loyal to me as pastor. I never sensed any competition from him since he himself had been a

pastor in the same city. He seemed to be very happy in the role he had assumed at New Covenant. I believe it represented a time of healing and restoration for him and his family. Mike's faithfulness paid off, as he returned back to his home in Pennsylvania to start a new church. Our church sponsored him for a year with \$500.00 per month.

About the same time as the Baileys, the Rothschild family came on board. Chic was a very likable and personable guy. He was a super salesman, working in the carpet business, and he loved the Lord and His church. Chic and his family had come to visit our church upon the invitation of Phillip Suits. Phillip was the son of Kay Sissom, who was a member of the praise team in our church. The Rothschilds had invited Phillip to go to church with them at Tabernacle Baptist. Phillip then invited them to come to his church. The Rothschilds immediately fell in love with our congregation and became a strong supporter of the church. In fact, Chic later became one of our deacons and one of my best friends. We still meet with him and his wife Kay monthly to eat-out and fellowship. Chic was always a very good friend to me. He supported me when it seemed that others didn't. It was he who went to bat for us when we were in need, and the church gave us a raise in salary.



A service at New Covenant Church

One of the kindest deeds bestowed upon us was one evening that Chic and Kay invited us to their beautiful home for dinner. We had a great time fellowshiping. At the end of dinner, Chic handed me the keys to a beautiful two-tone blue 1984 Chevrolet Blazer. He had paid \$5500 for this vehicle just the previous week, and now he was giving it to us! What an act of love and kindness!

Chic continued to stand with us through even some crucial times in the church. One of these times was in the summer of 1990. God sent a young prophet, David Huskins, to our church. The essence of the message he brought was that "our house would be left unto us desolate until we say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." In essence, this was our opportunity as a church to push forward to the next level. In fact, the message indicated that we were to be a special church in our community. We were to be an open door to the prophets. If we failed to assume our calling, we would be just another church that would probably still have its doors open, but we would not be the special people that God desired. Chic was serving at that time in the capacity of church administrator. This had taken a large load off of me. He took to heart what the man of God said. He followed up this message with a message from the Lord to the congregation concerning lifting up the hands of the man of God.

Another family that came in to give us a big boost at a very crucial time was the Holden family. Charles and Betty Holden, along with Gloria, Debbie, Renee, Susan and Ken, came and were a great blessing. The Holdens were very musically talented, as they had traveled as a family in ministry and music for many years. Gloria became our church pianist. She would leave our church to become the pianist of the largest charismatic church in Marietta, the New Life Family Worship Center, pastored by Jim Munsey. Gloria then went to work with Clint Brown in starting a new church in Orlando, Florida. Clint Brown was the praise and worship leader for World Harvest Church with Rod Parsley in Columbus, Ohio. She then became Clint Brown's church administrator.



Eddie Russell, Mike Bailey, Jerry Chitwood, Max McAbee and I looking at plans for new addition to New Covenant Church.

The Holdens came to us at a crucial time in their lives. We were able to minister life to them, and they accepted me as their pastor. They were with us for about a year and a half before starting their own church near Woodstock. Charles was a building contractor, and in just a short few years, he built a beautiful edifice to the glory of God.

It would be near impossible to mention everyone who came to be a part of the church in Cartersville, but I think it would only be fair that I mention another special lady—Grace Boston. Grace had been a part of the church in the early days of its beginning, but she had not been there for several years. Grace was a great blessing to the church, as she was the church organist and became the church treasurer. She was a very special person, and she many times came to our rescue personally. She was very sensitive to our needs, and she was not afraid to get involved.

It was Grace who almost single-handedly spearheaded the pastor appreciation when the church bought us new furniture. Another kind gesture on her part was when she, Nancy, and I went to a cookware party. We agreed to go in together to buy a \$1000 set. She was going to let us have the

majority of the pots and pans, but she ended up giving us all of them! She and another couple in the church paid the entire amount. This was just another one of those special blessings from a special person.



The light color is the new addition that doubled the size of the church.

### **Plans for a New Building**

In the meantime, when we had received new life and vision in 1986, the church pushed forward in implementing the plans that the church had for many years. That was the construction which would double the facilities of the church. Our original church was a two-level building, which had a basement with about three-fourths of it out of the ground. Only the front part was underground. It basically was a two-story building that was forty feet wide and one hundred feet long. We extended the back of the building twenty-four feet, which gave us the main building of 40x124 feet. We then came out with a 40x76 feet extension to the side. This gave us an additional 8,000 square feet, for a total of 16,000 square feet. This enabled us to more than double the size of our fellowship hall. Additionally, we were able to gain the necessary space for our school to grow significantly. We also gained needed office space. The building project represented an exciting period of time for New Covenant Church. Eddie Russell, an anointed minister of the gospel, came from Manna Christian Fellowship,

and he was a block layer. He was a great blessing both spiritually and manually.

Mike and I ended up doing the majority of the carpentry. Mike was doing this in addition to running the school. Of course, I was doing this in addition to pastoring the church. Joining us was a young man who had been working with Mike when he was doing private contracting. We had some great times working side by side. It represented a very rewarding time in seeing something accomplished for the glory of God as well as some great times of fellowship with all the men who helped to make the building possible. We started out by paying for the new building as we went. We immediately raised somewhere around \$50,000 up front. The building ended up costing about \$150,000 even with all of our free labor (that was very good considering the square footage of the project). We borrowed the final \$80,000 from a local bank to complete the project. Today, the property is invaluable, as it is located on a major highway across from the hospital and just a block from a shopping center that includes a Super Walmart. Surrounding the church are various medical buildings. This past year, the church sold an acre of land to the adjoining Cartersville fire station for \$600,000!

### **Special Appreciations**

There were many times that the church had expressed its love and appreciation to Nancy and me. They had a special twenty-fifth wedding anniversary celebration for us. It was a well-kept secret. We came to the fellowship hall of the church after a Sunday morning service to the cheers of our friends and family. Nancy's mother, Mom Walker was there as well as my Aunt Florence. The church presented us with the gift of getting away for a few days of celebration.

There would be other times that the church honored us and showed their appreciation. One of the times that meant so much was when we were remodeling our house. Grace Boston was a real trooper. She loved us, and was one of our strongest supporters. She had come to the house to help me do some wallpapering. It had not been long since we re-carpeted our house throughout (on the first level). Finally, Grace told me

what the church was going to do, but I was to keep it a secret from Nancy. We wanted her to be surprised.



Grace Boston and Nancy

Finally, the special day came. I was to take Nancy away for several hours while the church was putting the finishing touches on this surprise. When we returned, even to my great delight, we walked into the house full of supportive people. In our living room was totally new furniture. We had a new couch, two loveseats, a new arm chair, new tables, and new lamps. It was a wonderful act of kindness shown to us. We were so blessed. Then, on my fiftieth birthday, the church provided a special time of appreciation. So as one can see, there was a lot of love shown to us as pastors. For this, we will always be grateful.

### **Prophecy of Political Involvement**

I have always had some interest in politics. In fact, Tim Woodson had prophesied to me as early as 1983 that I would become involved politically and would one day hold a political office. I thought this would possibly be true. Perhaps it would be as a city councilman, the local school board, or possibly as a state or U. S. representative. However, none of those offices ever opened up, but I was elected by the Republican Party to be a member of the Seventh Congressional District Board, after I

was selected to be an alternate delegate to the 1988 National Republican Convention in New Orleans.

Sometime in the latter part of 1987, Nancy and I along with a few folks from our church went to Ball Ground, Georgia to hear Pat Robertson address a small group of Republicans. I went away from that meeting that day determined that I was going to get involved. I called the state office of Georgians for Robertson, and that was the beginning of my involvement with the Pat Robertson for President Campaign. I will continue my political story in Appendix A in the back of this book.

### **Pastor Darrell Gooden**

It was while we were still in Hayti that we met Darrell Gooden. Darrell had come to one of our conventions with Sis. Copeland, and we began a friendship that has continued until this day. It would only be when we moved to Georgia that I realized that Darrell lived only fifty miles from Cartersville in Tallapoosa, Georgia. Darrell and I renewed our friendship, and today we are probably as close to each other as I have ever been to any minister. Nancy and I love him and his wife Kathy very much. They have always been there for us, as we have been there for them.



Pastors Darrell and Kathy Gooden

Darrell had always been a student who wanted to learn more. He has an open heart, and he wants to improve himself. He gives me credit today for helping him to become a better preacher. Actually he was and is a great preacher, but I suppose that I helped him to get a different perspective on spiritual matters and especially understanding more clearly the purposes of God in the earth. Darrell tells about the times he would get audio tapes of all of my sermons I was preaching in Cartersville, and he would go home to his church and preach them. That was a very high compliment. As one preacher said, when he hears something new from someone else, he will repeat it and give the person proper credit. The second time, he will say that he heard this from somewhere. Then the third time, he will say God told me! A lot of truth there.

Over the years, I have seen Darrell blossom in the ministry. He has always been a great preacher, and he is a good communicator. People relate to him very well. He has a wonderful personality, and he demonstrates his love for people. When we first went to his church, they were meeting in a little cracker box of a church, but it was full. There was a lot of noise and a lot of excitement. In those days, I did not see the excellence of ministry that I do today. Darrell now has a beautiful church that is first-class in every regard. He has a highly regarded annual conference that draws some of the great ministries in America today. About three years ago, Darrell assumed the leadership of the International Minister's Forum that was founded by Sister Louise Copeland. Today, the Forum counts over fifteen hundred ministers. He now travels to Africa and India several times a year to teach and preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Darrell is a very special person, and I count it a privilege to be his friend.

### **Bishop David Huskins**

There is another minister who has figured prominently in our lives. When I became David Huskins' pastor, he was about fifteen years old. He was an extraordinary young man and grew up to be an extraordinary man of God. Nancy first met David when she was invited to speak to a ladies' group at White Baptist Church. This was a spirit-filled Baptist Church, where David was then a part. He operated the sound system when

Nancy came to speak. She must have made an impact on him, because from that day forward, David has identified with us.

A short time after Nancy met David, he came to our church for one of the satellite services. One of the elders came to tell me that a young man had fallen out on the porch. When I got there, David was prostrate on the floor of the front porch, slain in the spirit. He stated that the closer he got to the church, the more he felt the power of God.

Nancy and I would have a great deal of input into David's life as his pastor for several years. David was an outstanding pastor at Cedar Lake Christian Center for over twenty-eight years, serving as a bishop over twenty-five to thirty churches in the Fellowship of Vineyard Harvester Churches. He then became the Bishop of the International Communion of Charismatic Churches (ICCC), which is a worldwide fellowship with oversight of nearly five million people.



Bishop Huskins at Barnsley Gardens

David met an unfortunate death about three years ago, and is now a part of the great cloud of witnesses that surround us. I will deal with this in more detail when I begin rehearsing the last several years of our life, after now having served alongside Bishop Huskins for nearly fifteen years in Cedartown

as a member of the pastoral staff as well as the Dean of Vineyard Harvester Bible School and Seminary.

It was during our early years at New Covenant Church that I was privileged to go to the Bahamas to minister in a convention with Bro. Bernard McPhee. It was an interesting week of ministry. We had known Bro. McPhee for many years, dating back to our conventions in Hayti. In fact, one of Bro. McPhee's daughters, Dilene, lived in Cartersville for about a year and attended our church. A group of young people from Bro. McPhee's church came to the states and ministered in our church as well as several others in the area. Bishop David Huskins was the leader of the youth group that hosted the Bahamian Singers.

### **Ministry at Pinecrest Retreat on Long Island**

For over five years, I had the privilege of being the featured speaker at various meetings at Pinecrest Retreat Center in Setauket, Long Island, New York. I had made contact with Charlie and Polly Sarvis, who were the retreat directors on Long Island, through Polly's mother in Pensacola, Florida. I had ministered in Sis. Hendrix's church, which was pastored by Bro. Lloyd Handrop. She enjoyed my ministry and had recommended me to her son-in-law and daughter. Charlie called and invited us to come to minister. At that time, I had returned back to school work as a high school counselor, and I was not free until the Christmas holiday. So we went there during the Christmas break.

The first trip that we made to New York was one of those unforgettable events. We arrived in New York City about four o'clock one afternoon, which was the wrong time to try and drive through New York City. We were awed by the sights, but the traffic was horrendous. It was bumper to bumper traffic for the total of sixty miles from New York City to Setauket. At Pinecrest, we ministered there on the weekend, from Friday through Sunday. On Monday night, we went to Hicksville to preach in a church, and on Tuesday night, we preached in a hotel in Manhattan. One year it was the Diplomat Hotel and another year it was the Ambassador Hotel.



Pinecrest Retreat Center in Setauket, Long Island, New York

On this first trip to Manhattan, I and the family spent the entire day on Tuesday sightseeing. It was cold and snowy. We walked miles that day and also rode the subway. I shall never forget Nancy clutching to our young boys, fearful that someone was going to snatch them away. All of this was a new experience to all of us, but I told Nancy that if she didn't loosen up, the thugs would know for sure that we were sightseers, and we would certainly be prime candidates for their attacks.

Another year when we went to Pinecrest, I was to minister on Tuesday night at a Ukrainian Church in Lower Manhattan. This church was located in the area of Washington Square, Greenwich Village and the Bowery. We rode the subway to Washington Square, and from there we walked to the church. About that time a young man caught up with us and walked alongside us. He was going to the same church. We had Brandon, Lyle, and Richie with us, when they were nine or ten years old. This man told us what good looking boys we had. Then, he boldly announced that he was gay! We continued on to the church, and we had a good service that evening. This was a church where our friends Tony and Marge Abram had ministered on many previous occasions.

The year after Mom and Dad died, we returned to Nancy's sister's Florida home on Sanibel Island and were getting ready to go on one of our annual trips to Long Island.

This was the year that Nancy and I loaded up our little Datsun 210 with Brandon, Lyle, and all of our clothes for two weeks. On top of this, I had my acoustical Gibson guitar! To further top this off, we stopped in West Virginia to pick up my nephew Richie! This must have been in the summer of 1980, when Bran was ten, Richie was nine, and Lyle was eight.

I think we must have decided to take the Datsun for the heck of it, as part of the excitement, because sitting in our driveway back home was a 1979 LTD Ford. More realistically, we had only had the Datsun a short period of time. It was a 1979 model, and we were excited about the gas mileage. I do recall that even with the car loaded down and going through mountains, the total trip was four thousand miles, and we burned exactly one hundred gallons of gas. That was forty m.p.g. Not bad. But we paid for it in other ways, namely in comfort. All in all, it was a fun time.



Washington Monument in Background

Our first stop was in Washington, D. C. where we saw all the sites, including the monuments, the Smithsonian Institute, the Capitol, and the White House. Many of our trips are now blurring together, because I know that we went to Washington sometime around 1984 after we had moved to Georgia. It was in 1984 that the boys had their picture made with then Congressman Buddy Darden. I confronted Congressman Darden about his support of abortion. To the

credit of the Republicans, Buddy Darden was defeated in the next election year!

We then continued on to our real destination, and that was to Pinecrest Retreat on Long Island. We made five trips to Long Island over a period of five years. From Long Island, we went to minister at Pinecrest Bible College, the sponsor of Pinecrest Retreat on Long Island. We then went to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. From there, we went on over to Niagara Falls, and from there we continued on into Ohio, where we were in service one Sunday morning with Allen Arrowood. We then met Richie's dad, Dick, somewhere close to Pittsburgh, and from there we returned home, and the Horsts went back to West Virginia. It had been a very full, but fun-filled summer.

### Special Trips with Donia and Ken

When Donia and Kenny were growing up, I made an effort to spend some quality time with each of them alone. There were times when I went to New York to minister, and I took Donia and Ken separately. Each time we flew by commercial airline, and this represented the first time that Donia and Kenny had ever flown. The first one who flew with me was Kenny. I believe that this was when I ministered at a summer youth retreat at Pinecrest. I recall that all of us were playing touch football behind the retreat. Also, it was on this trip that we went out into the bay in a small boat. Later, the youth went on an outing to the south side of Long Island to swim in the Atlantic Ocean. We had swum in the Gulf of Mexico at Sanibel, but the waves of the Atlantic on this particular day were awesome. The most memorable thing that I remember about this outing was when an alarm sounded, indicating that someone was in distress out in the ocean. All the lifeguards went into operation. My heart about sunk when I heard that it was two girls from our group. The next several minutes were very anxious ones. The girls were rescued. They were exhausted and were spitting water, but they were okay.

The time I took Donia with me to New York was when she was in high school. It may have been the summer of her senior year, because it was the year that I worked with Charles Williams in the Special School District. Charles' wife was

Donia's high school art teacher. Charles and I had shared notes that we were both going to New York, but I don't remember us thinking that we would be there at the same time. Besides, we were going to Long Island, but we usually ministered one night a week in Manhattan.

Donia and I were spending the day together in Manhattan. We were in Central Park sitting on a bench, when to our amazement and delight, we saw the Williams family walk by. What a coincidence. What were the chances of us meeting in New York City at precisely the same time in Central Park? I hollered out Charlie's name. He kept walking. I finally got his attention. He turned around, and to his surprise, it was some folks from back home in Missouri. He told me that he had heard his name the first time, but there was no way that anyone was calling him—not in New York City. That goes to show you that you'd better keep your act clean wherever you are in the world. Not only is God looking, but someone you know may be looking, also!

I know that Nancy sometimes expresses frustrations of having four kids at the same time, but I believe that she may have forgotten that we had received a great deal of help from Donia and Kenny with Brandon and Lyle. There was enough age difference between the two sets of kids that it wasn't like having four small children at the same time. Donia readily became a little mother to the boys. Kenny loved the new guys in our home, but since he had been the baby, I think there was some resentment at first when Bran was born. This of course was quite normal. All at once he was having to share his mother's attention with a new baby. However, I think it would be safe to say that Kenny has always loved his younger brothers. I'm sure he was proud of them and their accomplishments. It gave him a great deal of pleasure to bring his teenaged buddies home with him and have his two little brothers beat their socks off in pool.

I know there were times that the kids were somewhat resentful of so many of our activities being associated with church. They have felt many times that we didn't have too many vacations unless they were connected to preaching. I tried to point out to them that it was because of the preaching that we were able to do so much. How many other kids have been to Washington, D. C. two or three times? How many other kids

have been to New York City three or four times? It was because of our preaching trip that we were able to go to Cooperstown and Niagara Falls.



Bran, Shannon, Richie, Lyle, and Valerie meeting Richie at Airport for summer in Cartersville. Richie spent several summers with us. In fact, he was visiting us in Hayti and accompanied us when we moved to Georgia.



Nancy, Donia, Ken, Bran, and Lyle waiting for NYC Subway.



Donia, Ken, and Lyle. Donia was a little mother to Lyle.



Meadors Reunion Thanksgiving 2016 at Washington, North Carolina

## Chapter Seventeen

### THE END OF OUR NEW COVENANT ERA

The year nineteenth-ninety was another very critical time for us. One reason was because we had taken the responsibility of my Dad's sister, Aunt Florence Frazier. She was living in Missouri and had come to the time in her life that she needed someone to help take care of her. She was a widow of over thirty years, and she never had any children of her own. She was now in her eighties and had experienced some major physical problems, including diabetes, cancer, and congestive heart failure. We moved her to Cartersville to live with us.

After suffering a major stroke, it became nearly impossible for me, and especially Nancy, to care for Aunt Florence. After a period of time when she was so helpless and needed special help, we admitted her into a nursing home facility in Cartersville. Because of this, we felt badly, but she was a person of extraordinary understanding. Nancy and I visited her every day while she was in the Cartersville facility.

Eventually, when I resigned the church and moved to Memphis to complete my educational goals, we offered to take her with us and to admit her into a facility in Memphis. She did not want to do this, and she asked us to take her back to Hayti where she resided in a facility there. Memphis was about one hundred miles from Hayti, so that year we were able to visit her several times. Aunt Florence went home to be with the Lord in 1993 at the age of eighty-six years. She was one of the sweetest, most kind, and loving persons I have ever known. I had the privilege of conducting her memorial service, and she was put to rest beside her husband near Portageville, Missouri. The scripture makes it clear that it is the son's or a nephew's responsibility to take care of elderly family members. This we did gladly, but circumstances demanded that we make the decisions that we did. This ordeal, along with some other issues, contributed to a difficult time for us.

Throughout this book, it may seem that we dealt with so many difficult problems and situations. That represents life. Hopefully, the emphasis has not been on the negative, but on the positive outcome of the faithfulness of God to bring us

through. I have sought to be as transparent as possible, hoping that somehow this may minister to other people who are dealing with the difficulties of life on this earth. Most people never thought we had any problems, because we never really placed a public emphasis on our personal lives. I can assure you that if you live long enough, you will have dealt with many crises. Especially, in the ministry, there are not only personal problems you have to deal with, but you have to deal with other people's problems. These problems involving other people can weigh heavily upon you.

The end result through all of this is that we should be overcomers in every circumstance of life and stand on the promises of God. God has always been faithful to us, and I trust that we have been faithful to Him. Nancy and I have been in active ministry all of the fifty-seven years of our marriage. She has been a faithful wife who has had the same calling of ministry as I. I felt to state all of this at this point in time, as I felt in my spirit that it was needed before anyone read any further in the history of our lives. Through it all, to God be the glory.

So, all of this represented a very important time in my life for reevaluation and to determine where to go from that point forward. I had come to the conclusion that if I were to do anything of any significance, now was the time to do it. At that time I was about fifty years old, and no other landmark in my life affected me like my fiftieth birthday. Not my thirtieth nor my fortieth, but for some reason, I realized that I was getting old when I hit fifty. It might have been because subconsciously I remembered Mom's reaction to her fiftieth birthday. I recall that mother kept repeating over and over that she couldn't believe that she was fifty. "Why," she declared, "That's half a hundred!"

### **Renewal of an Old Goal**

In a sense, I went through another "midlife crisis." I was fifty years old, and we were at a plateau in the church. Things weren't going too badly, but there seemed to be a leveling off period of time. Nothing significant appeared to be happening that led me to a sense of not feeling fulfilled. I felt there was something more. One of the things that I felt that I

had to do was to complete some unfinished business of some eleven or twelve years before—the completion of my doctoral degree. As stated earlier, I was sidetracked in obtaining this goal in 1979 when the tragedy hit our family. It again was a time of reevaluation of our lives and the direction we were to take in going forward.

Up until that time, I never thought I would ever complete my degree. What purpose would it serve? I had no particular goal that would require this degree. I was now too old to start a new career even if I wanted to. If I completed my degree, I would be at least fifty-four or fifty-five years old, and for most practical purposes, that would not leave me too many productive years to use my degree. I finally came to the conclusion that for no other reason, I needed to finish it for my own personal satisfaction. I needed to complete unfinished business. By this time, all the coursework for my doctorate that I had completed in 1979 had expired. None of it was valid toward fulfilling my degree requirements. No coursework could be over ten years old before the degree is conferred.

Fortunately, Memphis State had a plan that would allow me to test out of one-third of my previous coursework. This I did after refreshing myself in these courses. I was also able to complete some courses off campus that could be transferred into my program at Memphis State. Thus, I enrolled in classes at Georgia State University during the fall of 1990. I took classes that totaled twenty-eight quarter hours which represented about nineteen semester hours. I had tested out of eighteen hours. The program was a total of sixty-six hours above my Master's. This included twelve hours of dissertation, and that left about eighteen hours for me to take on campus. So, I made the decision to move forward toward my doctoral degree.

### **Resignation from New Covenant**

Sometime around the first of July, 1991, I announced our intentions to the church. I was resigning the church effective around August 15. We were ready to move on to the next phase of our life. Nancy and I had reached the time in life that we felt that we had some freedom. Brandon was twenty-one, and Lyle was almost twenty. Perhaps they were ready to

be pushed out of the nest. However, Nancy and I were to have many days agonizing over whether we had forced them out too soon. It would be one thing for them to move out on their own, and another thing for them to be forced out. In a way, we were forcing them out. It was a difficult time for us, and I am sure it was for them, also. But, as they say, "You can't cry over spilt milk."

After our resignation, there was a display of support for us in our plans. The church in our opinion was doing very well at the time. We weren't aware of any serious problems. Oh, there are always a few rumblings, and there apparently was more underneath than we were aware of, because some began to surface. It would only be less than a week that a situation came up that I had to deal with. It was concerning those who began to undo what it had taken us many years to accomplish. Less than a week after I resigned, there was a secret effort to illegally change the constitution and by-laws. This was troubling because there had been a lot of prayer and effort that had gone into the organization of the church, and the constitution was rewritten to reflect a biblical form of government. The effort now was to revert back to an old mindset of church organization.

Otherwise, the last few weeks we had at the church were good ones. The church was very kind to us. There was an appreciation night one Sunday before we left. There was a singing, and many who had been a part of our ministry, including the Holden family, had returned to express their love, support, and appreciation for the nine plus years we had served the church. The church continued to pay our salary for one month after we left, which was a great blessing. This allowed us a proper time of transition in our move.

We were coming to the close of one of the most important and fruitful periods of time of our lives, but it was time to do something else. We were ready to move on. Our nine plus years at New Covenant Church had been fulfilled ones. I can look back now with a sense of satisfaction that this was so. We had left behind many friends, but our heart is now elsewhere. Our continued prayer is that God will continue to bless the field of labor at New Covenant Church.

## **To Memphis to Finish Doctoral Degree**

When we left Shoney's Restaurant the night before we moved to Memphis was one of the most emotional of our lives. We had just eaten our last meal with our sons Brandon, Lyle, Kenny, our daughter-in-law Angie, and granddaughters Ashley and Autumn before we left the next morning. I shall never forget seeing Lyle and Bran driving away in Lyle's little blue pickup. It was a sad scene for me, because I knew that in the morning we would be leaving them to fend for themselves. We had helped them move into their own apartment the week before, and they were now on their own for the first time in their lives.

Our nine months in Memphis represented a very special time. For the very first time in our lives, other than before our children were born, Nancy and I had only each other. This was a very important time in our lives for us to renew our love and friendship with each other. During this year, Nancy and I drew closer, as we would have more quality time together.

The year was rather difficult on Nancy for maybe three reasons. First, she had a hard time living without her identity as a pastor's wife. Second, she was away from her children for the first time. Third, she had to go back into the work force. Going back to work proved to be very difficult for Nancy. She was a little older, and she did not have the energy level she once had. Also, she found it to be much more difficult to obtain employment than either of us had anticipated. It was a time that Nancy was probably feeling a bit useless and worthless. This was a time that I needed to encourage her and to reassure her.

Nancy went to work at Walmart, a job she said that she probably enjoyed as much or more than anything she had ever done. She loved to work with people, and she especially enjoyed meeting different people. She worked there just a few weeks, as it was just part-time. Then Nancy went to work for Kroger. This didn't last long at all, as it was very difficult work, and they weren't too cooperative in giving her decent hours. It was while Nancy was in a training session upstairs at Kroger that a storm came up. It was a tornado that took a part of the roof off the building. The lights went out, and "be prepared at all times" Nancy had her trusted flashlight in her purse. She

valiantly led the poor stranded souls from the darkness of the upstairs to the safety and light of the outside.

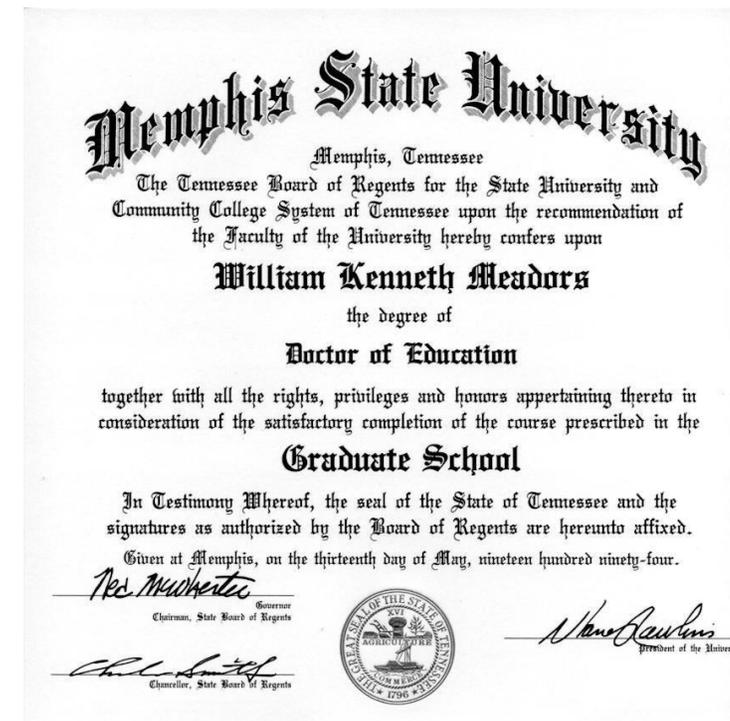
The tornado scare was an occasion to remember. Nancy called Sanky and Olive, and they drove over to pick her up. She was too nervous to drive herself. Finally, Nancy probably had her secret wish fulfilled (just kidding). All those years she was expecting a tornado, but none ever came. She now could tell her children and grandchildren of the time she survived the tornado. However, we later were in a tornado in Jasper that killed eight people.

Thinking back now, Nancy worked for a few weeks with a psychologist when we first moved to Memphis. This was a woman with whom I had carpooled back in Missouri in 1976 when we were taking graduate courses at Southeast Missouri State University. She now had her doctorate in counseling psychology and was a licensed psychologist. She had married a clinical psychologist, and they were in practice together on Colonial Avenue in East Memphis. Nancy's association with this psychologist proved to be a very traumatic experience for her. It was here that she had her first exposure to "political correctness." Her psychologist boss was a relatively quiet and laidback person in Missouri, but she now had become very assertive (perhaps aggressive). Nancy was angrily reprimanded for referring to a woman as a lady. She was told by her boss in no uncertain terms that she was never to use that terminology in her presence again.

You must keep in mind that "liberated" women do not wish to be referred to as ladies. The reason for their disdain is because "lady" brings back traditional memories and identification of women being submissive to the male gender, and this they resent very highly. By the same token, they resent men being referred to as gentlemen, for this conjures up visions of male chauvinism. Also, some "liberated" women resent a man who opens a door for them. However, I find that most women still appreciate the respect given them by the opposite sex.

Nancy could not take the pressure under the circumstances of the psychology clinic. She begged me to not allow her to go back to work there. She didn't bother about giving any notice. She simply called and said she was not coming back. Nancy then went to work for McDuff

Electronics, where she worked as a customer support representative. She worked there for the remainder of our stay in Memphis, which at that time was about five more months. This job was much more in alignment with her previous experience. She also had better hours and better pay. Both of us having evenings free allowed us to have a fun time of going out to eat and to go to movies. We probably had more "dating" than we did before we married!



Doctor of Education in Counseling and Psychology, 1994

### I Again Was Working as a Graduate Assistant

I had been a graduate assistant when I initially enrolled in the doctoral program in 1978. I was fortunate to obtain another assistantship when I reenrolled in 1991. This time, I worked as a graduate assistant to Dr. Burl Gilliland and Dr. Bob Crawford in the department of counseling at Memphis State. Dr. Crawford was the chairman of my dissertation committee,

and Dr. Gilliland was one of the members of my committee. I took nine credit hours each semester, which was not too difficult to do at all. I had time during the year to complete my doctoral dissertation prospectus and to have it approved before I left campus. And, again, I had free time to enjoy life with Nancy.

I also enjoyed the time that I did library research for Dr. Crawford. Dr. Crawford was my major advisor, and in addition to his doctorate in counseling, he also held a Doctor of Jurisprudence degree. He was interested in legal issues that pertained to the field of counseling. My responsibility as his graduate assistant was to do much of his legal research in the Law Library that dealt with abuse. My job as a graduate assistant gave me free tuition, which was very expensive for out-of-state students. In fact, the regular tuition for in-state students was expensive, but, out-of-state students had to pay two to three times more. In addition to free tuition, I was paid a stipend of about \$6000 for the year.

Nancy and I lived on campus in the family housing complex. We had a neat little one-bedroom apartment. It was a cozy little place. Nancy and I had some great times together that year. Often, when she came home from work, she and I would just take off for the evening. We went to different restaurants and then went to the dollar theater. We saw a lot of movies that year, and we ate out a lot. Fortunately, we found coupons where we could get a free meal with the purchase of a meal. It was a special time together.

Again, Nancy and I were enjoying our liberty. We were alone with just each other. For the first time in many years, we had the freedom to go to church where we pleased. I didn't have church problems to contend with, and that was really refreshing. Most of the time, we attended Christ the Rock Fellowship in Collierville. This was probably one of the most exciting churches in all of Memphis. It was a vibrant, charismatic church that had probably seven to eight hundred people on Sunday mornings. After one service, to our surprise, we ran into Tim Woodson, a long-time friend in the ministry. We became rather faithful to the church and were tithing to the church. Yet, not one time were we sent a welcome letter as a visitor. We received not one contact from anyone in the church all the months that we attended! Ordinarily, a church will seek to

follow up on visitors who had expressed an interest in the church. However, it was the best church to which we had attended. Other churches we visited were First Assembly of God, Central Church, and Highland Heights Baptist Church (where we went with Olive and Sanky).

I was about to complete my doctoral coursework for the second time. The first time was back in 1979. I also passed my comprehensive examinations for the second time. And, before I left campus, I had my dissertation prospectus approved. The prospectus was essentially the first three chapters of the five chapters of the finished dissertation. In essence, the prospectus was a contract between me and the university. It said that if I did what I proposed to do, I would receive my degree. The only thing left to do was to fulfill that contract by finishing my dissertation, and that took me about two years to complete.

Our plans now were to move to Hamilton, Ohio where I felt we would be there for at least a year. It would give me an opportunity to do some things with Raymond in the field of marriage enrichment, and this would provide me with the data for my dissertation. After classes were over at Memphis State in May, we went back to Georgia to visit with our kids for a week or so before we returned to Memphis to prepare for our move to Ohio.

### **Our Move to Hamilton, Ohio**

We moved to Ohio in June of 1992. There, we had a one-bedroom apartment just a few blocks from Hamilton Christian Center, pastored by Johnny Wade Sloan. This was the church where Raymond was on staff as a counselor and coordinator of special marital workshops and seminars. Nancy began working as Pastor Sloan's secretary. I was seeking a job with one of the Christian counselors in town. I went to interview with one, and about the time that I was offered a job, I had already made my mind up to move back to Georgia. I don't know exactly how you would describe our Hamilton experience. We enjoyed time with Raymond and Carol. We enjoyed the church, but it was a rather frustrating few months (seems we have had a lot of frustrations in life, but, that is life). I could not seem to get a handle on anything. I was a fish out of water. I did not fit in. I don't think Nancy did, either.

One day I came to my senses. What on earth were we doing up north? This wasn't our habitat. We belonged in the South! Our children were there. Our grandchildren were there. All our friends were there. We weren't accomplishing anything in Hamilton of any significance. Whatever we could accomplish in Hamilton, we could accomplish in Georgia. Our minds were made up. Efforts were begun in making preparations to return back home.



Our apartment in Hamilton, Ohio, 1992.



Richie's Family in 2012

### Great Grandchildren



Sammy



Sa'Rion



Sabriel



Decembre'



Maddie



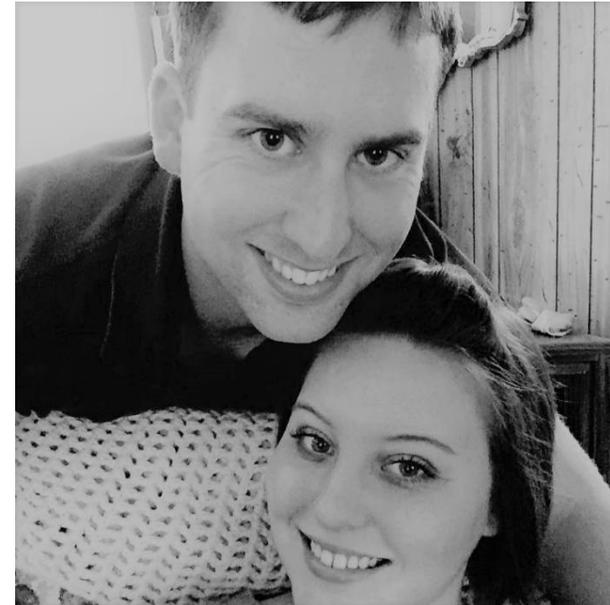
MacKynna



Lily Rae



Kennedy



Kandis and Vince



Ashley, Anna, Angie (the Mom), and Autumn



Laura, Kandi's Mom



Kenneth and Nancy Meadors, 2016

## Chapter Eighteen

### BACK TO GEORGIA AND THEN TO JASPER

I returned to Georgia to minister in several of my friend's churches to help me make the necessary arrangements to move back home. I remember the day that Pastor Darrell, Pastor Henry Jones, Bishop Michael Spiers, and I were spending a day golfing together in Atlanta. As we were visiting, while waiting on each other to putt, I was looking and observing and thinking that these were my friends; and, Georgia was the place I wanted to be. I returned to Hamilton, and Nancy gave the necessary notice for her resignation at the church. Two weeks later, we loaded up the U-Haul truck and headed back to Cartersville. We had given our renters a thirty-day notice to vacate our house in Cartersville. We moved back into our house about one year after we had left, somewhere around the middle of August in 1992.

Nancy got a job working at Community Home Health Services. The Lord had given her this nice job. Her boss was a good Christian woman who was attending the same church as Donia at Chapel Hill Harvester Church in Atlanta. In the meantime, I was seeking a position with a Christian Counseling organization. It was a few months before I began an association with Alpha Care Christian Therapy Services in Atlanta, where Dr. Ron Braun was the president.

After going onboard with Alpha Care, I was given the responsibility of opening a new office for them in Cartersville. Tabernacle Baptist Church was the sponsoring church, where I had begun to do some counseling with clients in their facilities. In the meantime, I obtained a lease from Bartow County to open an office in the Bartow County Professional Building directly behind Cartersville High School. I did the renovation of the office suite myself, and Alpha Care paid me for the labor. This helped to keep us going until we could establish a counseling practice.

Prior to Alpha Care, when we first came back to Cartersville, Chic Rothschild gave me a job helping to renovate

some of his rental property. I worked with him for several weeks, and that went a long way toward helping us financially. I basically enjoyed getting sweaty and dirty and then going home to clean up, eat, and relax for the evening. Yet, in many regards, crawling under houses was a bit humiliating. God was definitely working something out of me. It sure made me appreciate better days.

### **We Hear About Jasper**

It was in October of 1992 that I was contacting many of my minister friends telling them that I was back in the area, and I wanted them to be aware of what I was doing. I called a particular friend of mine, Rev. Joe Dover in Canton. He asked me if I missed pastoring. I said, yes, I missed some things, and some things I didn't miss. He then asked me if I had any intentions of ever pastoring again. My reply was that I had nearly thirty years of pastoring, and that was a lot from which to walk away. Yes, perhaps one day I would return to pastoring, but now I had plans to go into Christian counseling. After all, I had spent a lot of time, energy, and money to get my degree, and it was logical that I should pursue a career in counseling. Besides, I was somewhat burned out from pastoring, and I thought this would be a good alternative ministry.

Bro. Dover then told me about a little church in Jasper that had some good people, and they were without a pastor. He said, "Perhaps you would be interested in contacting them about at least ministering on the weekends." He gave me Bob Cagle's telephone number. I called the number, and Bob's wife Helen answered the phone. I told her who I was, and immediately she sounded excited. She and Bob, along with another couple, had visited our church in Cartersville a few years previously in one of our satellite services. Her response was, "Praise the Lord! Maybe we have found a pastor!" I had not mentioned wanting to be a pastor! Isn't it interesting that this statement was made twice in contacting a church in Georgia. Again, the Lord was ordering our steps.

Bob was not in, but he called me back a couple of days later. He didn't seem particularly interested, but he was polite. I indicated that perhaps it would be good that we could meet each other and sit down and talk to get acquainted. In the

telephone conversation, Bob had indicated that there wasn't an opening to preach for several weeks, as they had someone to fill the pulpit. Of course, I perceived this as being a put-off, but that was no problem. However, Bob then proceeded to ask me what I and my wife were doing that Friday night. I told him that we had no particular plans. He invited us to drive up to Jasper, and we would go somewhere to eat and visit.

Bob owned the Cagle Funeral Home, and I met him at the funeral home that Friday night. He then took us to the Woodbridge Inn, which was a nice, exclusive German restaurant in which to dine. John and Betty Faix were with them. Betty looked like a million dollars dressed up and with her diamonds. This was very intimidating to Nancy. She didn't think she would fit in with such classy people, as she saw herself as a very plain and ordinary person (by the way, as we would later discover, Bob and Helen were very down-to-earth people). We went to Bob and Helen's home afterwards, and we shared a great deal of ourselves. There seemed to be an instant rapport. It was like we had known each other all our lives. Bob asked me what we were doing Sunday. I said that we had no particular plans. He invited us to come preach.

### **Our First Sunday at Living Word Church**

Nancy and I came to Living Word Church the very first time. I think there were about seventeen people there. We had a good time, and the people seemed to be very receptive of us. They invited us to come back the next week. Shortly, thereafter, we were asked if we would be interested in preaching on a regular basis. I told them that I wouldn't mind that arrangement, but when we were asked if we were interested in pastoring the church, I told them that I had an obligation to fulfill at Alpha Care. I felt that I at least should give the counseling experiment a year.

We agreed to come as pastors of the church on the contingency that we would remain in Cartersville for at least a year. They agreed, and we would come up and make ourselves available for personal ministry on Saturday, preach on Sunday morning, and then come back for Wednesday evening. We had the availability of the nice apartment that Bob had above the funeral home. We drove up to Jasper after Nancy got off work

on Friday, and we stayed until after church on Sunday. This represented a nice arrangement. It gave us a break from the routines of Cartersville, and we saw the weekends as being sort of a retreat. It was very relaxing. We enjoyed the Saturdays, and we were there to minister to the people.



Living Word Church in Jasper, Georgia, where we pastored from 1992-97

The Lord began to really bless the church, and it began to grow. It soon became very evident that the Lord was leading us to move to Jasper. Bob had told us about the house next to him that was available. We had fallen in love with the Cagles' place that had the most gorgeous view of anywhere around. However, I wasn't necessarily crazy about the house. Nancy loved it from the beginning. I soon fell in love with it, and we purchased the house. We moved to Jasper in May of 1993. The Lord blessed our tenure in Jasper. We had a very lovely group of people that was a good mixture of those who represented substance and those who were of meager means. The people accepted us and freely expressed their love and appreciation to us.

Bob and Helen Cagle were particularly very special. They were our next door neighbors, our friends, and our brother and sister in the Lord. Bob, especially, was very kind and

generous to both Nancy and me. The Cagles shared their love and their substance with us in a very generous fashion. Words cannot express the blessing they have been to us, and we trust that we shall be the same to them. It would be years later that Bob would be instrumental in the burial of two members of our family.

### **Those Who Soon Joined Us**

Judy and Max McAbee joined us just a short few months after we arrived. They were a tremendous blessing to the church. Judy had been our praise and worship leader at New Covenant for the last three or four years we were there. Judy and Max had also proven to be very good friends to us, especially during our move to Memphis. In fact, they accompanied us on our move, and they helped us in setting up our new home. Then, they returned to Memphis on another occasion to spend some valuable time with us when we didn't have any friends around.

After coming to Jasper, Max and Judy revolutionized our praise and worship. We had an exciting band that included Judy on the rhythm guitar, Max on the electric bass, Josh on the drums, Tommy Olsen on piano, Gary Cochran on electric guitar, Jim Stowe on electric guitar, Nancy on the accordion, and I on my Martin guitar. Our music represented a very exciting part of the ministry, and I believe it helped our church to grow.

Randy and Donna Smart also joined us at the church. They were with us in Cartersville. They resided in Fairmount that was equidistant from Cartersville and Jasper, about twenty miles either way. Randy and Donna took the responsibility of coordinating all our children's ministries.

Gary and Maxine Cochran was another couple who joined us, after having been with us in Cartersville. They lived near Rome, but they came to our church in Cartersville on a regular basis. Both Gary and Maxine had grown up in the Jasper area, and Maxine's parents still lived there. God had joined them to this ministry.

Within the first year, the congregation grew to between seventy-five and ninety people. The sanctuary could only hold about a hundred and fifteen people, so essentially the church

was full every Sunday. We probably had the fourth or fifth largest congregation in the whole county. Of course, most of the churches that had more people were Baptist Churches. We definitely had the largest Pentecostal church in the county. The increased interest and growth led us to seek out property to build a new facility. I had always heard that when a congregation grew to at least seventy-five percent of its building capacity, it was time to think in terms of expanding the facility.

The church building of Living Word Church had formerly been a Jehovah Witness facility. As I stated, the sanctuary was rather small, and there was no space for children's church, no fellowship hall, and no pastor's study! In a very short time, I found myself back into a construction project. I had built two buildings in Hayti, an extension to New Covenant Church, and I was about to do the same in Jasper.

John Faix, one of the elders of the church was a retired builder, and he and I built a wing onto the church that became a fellowship hall that also housed the children's church. Nancy also used this facility for her women's Bible study group. We also bought a used mobile home to put on the backside of the property that was utilized by the youth. Even with all of the additions, I still did not have a pastor's study! Therefore, I had a portion of our home that was dedicated to a pastor's study as well as a place for counseling.

I have already mentioned the beautiful setting of our home that had an unobstructed view of Mt. Oglethorpe and Sharptop Mountain. Mt. Oglethorpe was the second highest mountain peak in Georgia, and on a clear day one could see the Atlanta skyline, which was sixty miles away. The skyline was very faint, but Stone Mountain, just east of Atlanta could be seen more clearly.

Our home was located on a ridge that overlooked a valley, but it was not viewable from the Old Tate Highway, the main highway coming into Jasper from the south. We were renting out our home in Cartersville, but it became such a hassle that we finally sold it. I took part of the proceeds to build an addition on the back of our home in Jasper. The addition gave us a great view of the beautiful mountains.

Before building the addition to the house and a wrap-around deck, I had already built a smaller deck on one side of

our house. As I was working under the deck, I used a small children's chair to stand on. The ground surface was a little rocky, and the chair apparently was not on solid footing. The chair overturned, and I was thrown to the ground. As a result, I had broken my left wrist after it hit a rock. I mention this, because I have already told the story of breaking my right wrist in a skating rink in Missouri. One of the young men of our church was a builder, and he volunteered to come and finish building the deck for me.



East view of our house in Jasper, Georgia. The addition on the right has windows all around it for a beautiful view of the North Georgia Mountains.



Ray Meadors' Family 2012

Left to right back row: Ray, Valerie, Wesley, Shannon, Carol, Mike

Left to right front row: Lillie, Sam, Kate, Liam, and Abbie



Nancy and I circa 1988

## Chapter Nineteen

### SPECIAL TIMES IN JASPER

Some of our experiences in Jasper represented highlights of my and Nancy's life together. We had good fellowship with many of the older couples in the church, including Bob and Helen Cage, Max and Judy McAbee, Jim and Pat Stowe, Jerry and Joyce Wilson, Gerald and Cheryl Faulkner, in addition to others whose names escape me at the moment. Actually, we had a good rapport with the entire church, as we had many wonderful times of fellowship together. There's nothing like good fellowship. I believe it is a biblical concept that brings people together as nothing else can.

One of the most exciting evenings was when several of the older couples went to Roswell to eat at Red Lobster in two limousines! Bob had leased these limousines for his grandchildren to go to the high school prom on Saturday night. The limousines were not to be returned to Marietta until Monday, so we decided to take advantage of them on Sunday night. When we returned to Jasper from Red Lobster, we drove through the drive-through of McDonald's. We were laughing and cutting up like a bunch of teenagers. The young people at the window were shocked to see limousines at their place of business. One of our friends reminded us of Hillary Clinton, and we reminded the kids at McDonald's that Hillary Clinton was in the second limousine. They were blown away! Of course, we had to retract our statement.

From McDonalds, we went up to the top of Mt. Oglethorpe, where there was a monument of James Oglethorpe. The road was a narrow dirt road which was isolated and desolate. Looking up ahead, we saw this bright red dot shining that we thought was the eye of a wild animal. When we got to it, we discovered that it was just the red dot on the side of a 7-up can! The road was not necessarily open to the public, and now there is a barrier that keeps one from ascending the mountain. Sounds like we were a bunch of teenagers!

### **Wesley Spends Some Time in Jasper**

Some of our biggest laughs at a Meadors family reunion is in recalling some humorous experiences with my nephew Wesley while he was spending a summer with us in Jasper. Wesley was just a young teenager, and a few incidents spooked him out. First, the summer was a very hot and dry one. As a result, black bears were coming out of the mountains to find water. Two black bears showed up in the small apple orchard in our yard. Wesley's bedroom was facing the orchard, and he saw the bears. I think he might have had a few nightmares over it! Lyle stated later that he didn't think Wes slept at night all the time he was there, as he thought the house was haunted. In all fairness, we did find out later that someone had committed suicide in this house many years before.

Wesley sought to spook Nancy one night after she had gone to bed. He meticulously set up a sound system outside her window with the recorded sound of a growling bear. Well, when I saw what he was doing, I decided that I was going to spook him. So, while he was setting the sound up, I came around the back of the house, jumped out suddenly, and growled as loud as I could! Wes just about jumped out of his skin, and he started running. Wes' experiment backfired on him. We still laugh about this to this day.

Another exciting time was when I borrowed Bob Cagle's four-wheel drive SUV to take Wesley to a wilderness area up in the mountains outside of Amicalola Falls, which was about twenty-five miles northeast of Jasper going toward Dahlonega. The road up in the mountains was a dirt road that was barely wide enough for one vehicle to travel. If two vehicles were meeting each other, one would have to back up to a wider opening in order for the other one to pass. I parked the SUV and told Wes that we were going to take a little walk on the road. All at once, I screamed, "Oh, my God!" Then I started running as fast as I could with Wesley right behind me. He had no idea what was happening, but he later stated that he thought I had seen a bear! Of course, running from a bear isn't such a great idea, because they could outrun you! My daughter said that when she and Chris vacationed at Yellowstone National Park, they were told that when they went on a hike to occasionally make a loud noise that would alert the bears.

Generally, you don't want to surprise them by coming up to them.

After we got back in the SUV, we continued our drive on up the mountain. There were tree limbs hanging out over the road. I mentioned to Wes that sometimes snakes would be in trees. He couldn't believe it, but about that time, a limb hit him on the arm when he had his arm extended through the open window. Again, Wes freaked out! We have had a lot of fun through the years at Wes' expense recalling these special times together.

### **Copperhead Snakes**

I've been told that for every one poisonous snake you see, there is probably a hundred around somewhere. Well, we had an experience with copperhead snakes in Jasper at least once a year. Jasper is called the "First Mountain City" of Georgia, and there are a lot of trees and growth. Our yard was about 3 acres on a ridge looking toward the mountain range. Kudzu covers about an acre behind our house. I was mowing a strip around our house, when I saw a copperhead snake in front of me. First, I tried to run over it, but it slipped away. I stopped the riding lawn mower and went over to Bob Cagle's house next door to have him come over with a shotgun. I should have known that the snake would not be there when Bob and I returned. His son David came along with us. We never saw the snake again, but David was determined that he was going to fire a shot. Unbeknownst to me, he fired a shot into the air. I jumped, and a kudzu vine wrapped around my leg. I thought that snake had found me. The table had been turned on me, as I was repaid for trying to spook Wesley!

Another time, when friends of ours were leaving the house after dark, a copperhead snake was stretched out across the sidewalk. Then there was another time when Bob's Chinese Shar-pei dog was seen shaking a copperhead to death. All of that goes with the territory, I suppose, when you choose to live in the mountains. By the way, I just heard the news here in May of 2017, that this is worst year for poisonous snake bites in Georgia. Most of the snake bites are from copperheads, as they outnumber all other poisonous snakes. One reason for this

increase is possibly because of the short and mild winter, and the first snake bite was in early January.

### **1996 Atlanta Centennial Olympics**

I never thought I'd have the opportunity to attend an Olympic event, but that opportunity presented itself when Atlanta hosted the 1996 Centennial Olympics. Gerald Faulkner and I went and spent the day at Centennial Olympic Park, taking in the atmosphere, including seeing the Budweiser Clydesdale horses in their stables. It was here in the Centennial Park just a few days later that Eric Rudolph set off a bomb that killed one person and injured a hundred and eleven others. Eric Rudolph was a fugitive from the law for about two years before he was discovered in the mountains near Murphy, North Carolina, which was just a few miles from where our daughter's cabin is near Blairsville, Georgia. When he was captured, he was sentenced to death, and the penalty was carried out in a short period of time. There are rumors that some of the mountain people in North Carolina were helping him hide because they were sympathetic toward him.

Gerald, his wife Sheryl, and I went to Athens to see the semi-finals of soccer at Sanford Stadium, home of the University of Georgia football Bulldogs. I had never seen a soccer game in person. In fact, I had really never paid attention to soccer on television. However, I was intrigued by the energy expended, as there was endless activity on the part of the players running up and down the field. They had to be in great shape. Nigeria won the gold medal.

Nancy and I spent five very fulfilling and successful years as pastors of Living Word Church in Jasper. We saw the church grow almost exponentially in just months after we arrived. The church took care of us royally, perhaps more so than any place we've ever pastored. As the church prospered, the people allowed us to prosper. There was always a substantial monetary bonus on my birthday and at Christmas. Bob Cagle was a great blessing personally as there were times he would call me and say, "Pastor meet me in the apple orchard." We would meet, and he would give me a very generous gift. Bob and Helen were two of our greatest supporters.

I probably had more free time and had less pressure in Jasper than any other place we had ever pastored. In fact, there was a big adjustment for us to adapt to a smaller, more remote town in the mountains, as there were limited things to do. As a result, Nancy and I probably went to Town Center Mall in Kennesaw, about thirty-eight miles away, at least twice a week. There we would eat-out, shop, or go to a movie. I look back now and think how we foolishly spent money we should not have. We should have saved more money; but, I suppose it is tempting when you have a little more free money than you've been accustomed to. It was about this time that I surprised Nancy by presenting her with a brand new, red Dodge Neon car. She always wanted a small red car. In my free time, I planted and cared for many flowers in the yard. Our yard looked like a botanical garden. It was hard work but very rewarding. I also played racquetball two or three times a week, both for recreation as well as for fitness. I often played against the mayor of Jasper, John Weaver, who owned the fitness center. I also played against two lawyers in Jasper.

We sold our house in Cartersville, and received a significant amount of equity. I paid off credit cards and invested money in publishing a book I had written, *What on Earth Are You Doing Here?* I then proceeded to expand on our house by building a two-level addition. On the bottom level, was a larger bathroom adjacent to our bedroom. Also, there was a small exercise room with lots of equipment. The upstairs was a large, sitting room with glass all around, giving us a beautiful view of the mountains. Then, I built a deck (probably about one thousand square feet) extending around three sides of this room. This was on the side of the ridge, with a scary drop-off. I now think how easy it would have been for me to have slipped off the roof of the addition. The drop would have been thirty to thirty-five feet. In the meantime, we purchased a five-acre plot of ground to build a new church building. The property was on a major highway right on the edge of Jasper going toward Talking Rock. We paid for the property, which was \$130,000, but I did not stay long enough to build the building.

I had bought a Ford Ranger pickup from Chris while we were in Jasper. Lyle asked me to loan it to him to go to Marietta. I don't remember how he got back home, but he came back with the announcement that my truck had been stolen. This

was an almost unbelievable tale, but I simply had to accept it at face value. I called the Marietta police department to report my stolen vehicle. To my surprise, one month later, the Marietta police called me to inform me that my truck had been found. I don't remember the details, but the truck was being driven by a man who was living in a motel near Marietta. The truck actually had been stolen; or, at least it was gone, and then it reappeared.

### **Special Times with Ray and Carol**

In the story of my life, my brother Ray and his wife Carol, have had a vital part in my journey of life. They had moved to Abilene for a period of time right after they married in 1972. Then, they moved to Hayti to be a part of the ministry there. When we moved to Cartersville, Ray and Carol worked with us at New Covenant Church before they moved on to Heritage Village near Charlotte, North Carolina. Just a few months after they moved to Cartersville, Carol gave birth to a special little guy—Wesley Raymond Meadors. I don't think I have mentioned this earlier, and Valerie doesn't necessarily like it, but she was the only Meadors to be born in Hayti, Missouri! Her sister Shannon was born in Memphis where three of our children were born (Donia, Brandon, and Lyle). Ken was a Missourian as well as Val, but he was born in Sikeston. Ray and Carol have lived in many parts of the country, and that allowed us to visit them to see the U.S.A. We brothers and both families have always been very close, and we have had some good times with together.

Earlier in their lives, Ray and Carol had lived in Memphis, Tennessee; Abilene, Texas; Hayti, Missouri; Scott City, Missouri; Doniphan, Missouri; and, Dyersburg, Tennessee. This was during the period of time that they were essentially getting their education that would lead them to some major cities of the United States. The most significant time of their ministry began with Heritage, U.S.A. (PTL with Jim and Tammy Bakker) in Charlotte, North Carolina. From there, they worked with some large churches in Cincinnati, Ohio; Hamilton, Ohio; and Louisville, Kentucky. Continuing to search for their ideal place to live, Ray and Carol found themselves in a transitional period around 1995. They came to Jasper and stayed with us a couple of months.



Raymond and Carol Meadors

One day, Ray and Carol thought Colorado might be the place to go. So, they left Jasper to drive to Colorado to see how they felt about it. They returned to Jasper and made the decision to move to Colorado Springs, Colorado, which was the home of over one hundred major ministries, including Focus on the Family (Dr. James Dobson). It was when they were in Colorado Springs, that they made contact with Children's Ark, a residential treatment center for troubled young girls, in Sterling, Colorado. So, they moved to Sterling, and then to Denver. They continued living in Colorado for over twenty years, and most of that time, they provided counseling and psychological help at Children's Ark.

About a year ago, Ray and Carol thought they wanted to get closer to their family. If they didn't live in the mountains, they wanted to live by the ocean. When their youngest daughter Valerie and her husband Jay became pastors of the First Christian Church in Washington, North Carolina, then Ray and Carol thought that the east coast was the place to be. Their other daughter, Shannon and her husband Mike lived in Philadelphia, and there was an Amtrak train that would take them to Philadelphia. Also, they would be closer for Nancy and me to drive to visit with them. Driving was important, as Nancy was

fearful of flying. Fourteen hundred miles to Denver would have been prohibitive.

Ray sold their house in Denver and got enough equity to buy a nice house in a gated community near New Bern, which was about thirty-five miles from their daughter Valerie. They chose this location over Washington because it was a larger city that had more to offer. To make a long story short, they were totally unhappy with that part of the country. The humidity was unbearable, and the mosquitoes were plenteous. Because of circumstances related to their son Wesley, Ray and Carol decided that this was the determining factor of moving back to Colorado. So, they sold their house in New Bern and moved back to Colorado. They stayed there a short period of time until they decided that they wanted to live by the beach, but this time it would be the Gulf of Mexico. They moved to Gulf Shores, Alabama and contacted the bishop of the Fellowship of Liberty Churches in Florida and Southern Alabama, whom they had known from Cartersville, and it looks like Ray and Carol are going to continue their ministry in that fellowship, offering ministry through workshops and seminars.

I mention all of these locations, because in order to visit with Ray and Carol, we were able to see much of the U.S.A.! One of the first interesting places we visited was Heritage Village in Charlotte. I don't know the exact sequence of their locations, but another time was in Louisville, Kentucky, where Ray and Carol worked with Bob Rogers, who was the pastor of the large and influential Evangel World Prayer Center. This is the church where Colonel Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame was saved and baptized late in his life.

I have to relate a very interesting and satisfying event related to Bob Rogers. Bob was an outstanding athlete at Oral Roberts University and was a pretty good racquetball player. Ray mentioned to him that I was a racquetball enthusiast, and he suggested that Bob and I get together when I came to Louisville. Bob Rogers asked how old I was, and when Ray told him, Bob's response was, "I'll kill that old man! There's no way he can stay up with me!" I was in my fifties at the time, and Bob Rogers was in his thirties. Well, the time for the showdown came. We went to a local racquetball court, and sure enough Bob Rogers beat me the first three games. But instead of wearing out the "old man," I must have worn him out. I was

now getting my focus and second wind, and I won the last two games, winning the last game 15-0! That must have been embarrassing to him, as Nancy and Carol were there as spectators. I wanted to continue playing so that I could at least even up the match, but he didn't want to. Apparently, I had worn him out!

Another significant place where we visited Ray and Carol was in Phoenix, Arizona sometime in January. It was from there, that we visited the Grand Canyon on our way to Las Vegas. We went through Sedonia where there was still a Christmas scene with a different version of "Away in a Manager" playing. That tune stayed in our heads for the remainder of the trip, and from time to time, Ray and I would break out singing that song in harmonious style. In Vegas, Nancy and I got our first glimpse of "Sin City." We stayed at the Excalibur Hotel for a couple of nights, and then returned to Phoenix down the western Arizona border. We went to Lake Havasu, where the famous London Bridge was relocated. I have been told that sometimes the summer temperature at Lake Havasu would reach into the one hundred and twenty degree range!

Another memorable event on our return trip back to Phoenix was when we stopped at an A & W root beer establishment. This was in a remote desert area where many Native Americans lived. We went into the restaurant and ordered a root beer. Before resuming our trip, we inquired about where a restroom was located. We were pointed to a door that had a sign above it, "Restroom." We opened the door, and to our utter surprise, it was the outdoors! The restroom was an old-fashioned outdoor toilet house about thirty feet from the restaurant!

There were numerous trips to Colorado over the next eighteen years, where Ray and Carol resided. When we visited Colorado Springs, we saw many sites, including the Garden of the gods and Pike's Peak. Most people think that the fame of Pike's Peak was due to the fact that it was the highest peak in the Rockies, but there are over thirty other mountains higher than Pike's Peak. Pike's Peak is the highest mountaintop in the United States that can be reached by automobile. The first time we traversed Pike's Peak, we were not able to go any further than halfway up due to snowy conditions. Since then, I had the

opportunity to go to the top of the peak on two other occasions. It is an awesome drive with plenty of scenic views. It was from the top of Pike's Peak that the song (originally a poem) "America the Beautiful" was inspired and penned by Katharine Lee Bates in 1893.

## Las Vegas

I have been to Vegas numerous times since that first visit. On one trip, Carol asked me if I had a quarter to put in a slot machine. I said, "Yes, but you have to split your winnings with me!" To both of our surprise, after depositing one quarter, quarters started pouring out, \$40.00 in all. "OK, you owe me \$20.00," I exclaimed. Reluctantly, Carol handed over the \$20.00. I really have felt bad about taking that for the last several years, but I must not have felt too bad, because I haven't given it back to her. Perhaps I might compensate her at some point in time!



Dragging the Vegas Strip in 72 Ford Convertible

One of the most fun times in Vegas was in March 2005 when I, along with Ray and his entire family, went and stayed in two houses owned by Ray's boss at the Children's Ark. At one of the houses on a golf course, the owner left a 1972 Ford

convertible. It was a humongous machine, and Ray, Mike, Wesley, and I enjoyed it immensely. We decided to drag the Vegas strip by holding up a large American flag above our heads, with the convertible top down, and singing to the top of our lungs, "I'm Proud to Be an American!" Needless to say, we got a lot of attention. It was while in Vegas on this trip that my alma mater's basketball team (University of Memphis) was in the Elite Eight, playing UCLA and played the worst game ever. The final score was something like 48-43, UCLA. That was the beginning of an amazing four-year run, ending in the national championship game in 2008.

It was while on the Vegas trip in 2005, that the whole gang went in a van to visit the West Rim of the Grand Canyon. We stopped at Hoover Dam on the way. The West Rim is under the authority of a Native American reservation. At the beginning of the reservation, about twenty miles from the Rim, was one of the worst roads I have ever seen in the U.S., perhaps rivaling some of the roads in Old Mexico. We were bounced around for about thirty to forty minutes, when we finally approached the Rim. It was there that we discovered that the last two miles were not open for visitors to drive their cars. We were required to ride one of their old buses, which cost \$30.00 per person, including the young kids! I stuck my feet in the mud (figuratively speaking, because there was no mud!) and stated that I would never pay such an exorbitant price for a two-mile ride. Of course, I relented when everyone stated that since we had come that far, we might as well complete the trip.

We greeted at the Rim with some Native American dances. Then, without our request, a guide proceeded to take us on a tour of some Native American huts. This guide was carrying a bucket with money sticking up for us to see, including a twenty-dollar bill. We were not interested in this tour; we came to see the canyon. Mike finally told the guide that we had come to see the canyon. The views of the canyon were awesome sights.

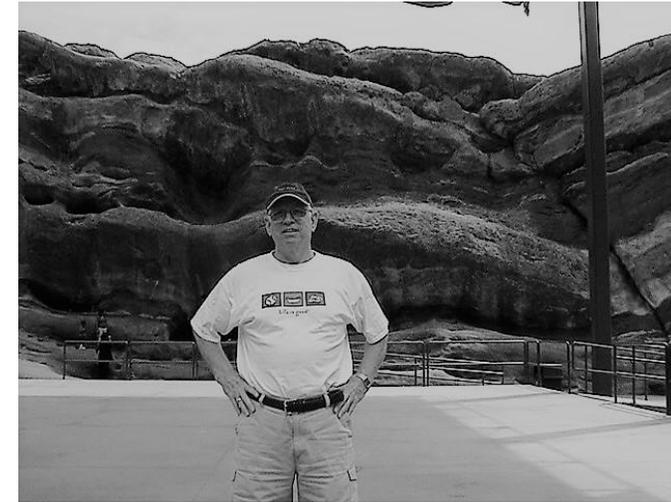
On one of our trips to Colorado, Ray and Carol took Nancy and me to Cripple Creek, an old mining town that was turned into a city of casinos. Not that I wouldn't, I just didn't have any real desire to play the slot machines, but Nancy loved it. I told her that I was only going to give her \$10.00, and when that was gone, that was it. I figured that \$10.00 wouldn't

be a very expensive form of entertainment. As I found out later, videoing was prohibited, but at the time, I videoed Nancy at a machine. On the way back to Denver, I showed Nancy the video on my camera screen. She about panicked! “Oh, don’t show that to my kids! Please don’t show that to my kids! They’ll never have confidence in me again!” Of course, we all had a good laugh at Nancy’s expense.

### Other Interesting Trips to Colorado

Several times I had gone to Denver by myself, and one day Ray was going to show me some of the sights around Denver. One was to a small casino village, Black Hawk. One of the big treats in casino areas is the fabulous food at a fairly reasonable price. After we had eaten at a buffet, we went into a western-style casino. I had my video camera in hand, and I was informed by a security guard at the door that I could not bring it in. Both of us protested, telling him that we would take no pictures, but our appeal was to no avail. Ray then made a statement, which is out of character for him, and it could have probably caused us some problems if the security guard wanted to amplify it. Ray stated, “How does it feel to be a Barney Fife? It must make you feel mighty important.” That would not necessarily cause us a problem unless the security guard decided that we were disturbing the peace or some other accusation. We left, and then went to a very famous music venue.

Red Rock is a world famous outdoor music amphitheater carved out in the side of a mountain. About every famous musician or music group who ever lived has probably done a concert at Red Rock. With no one there but Ray and myself, I proceeded to move on the stage and sang a song that I had written about Nancy, “She Was a Beautiful Girl.” Then, I could say that I have played Red Rock, and there is video to prove it! We then proceeded to the Red Rock museum that chronicled all of the famous people who had been there.



I at Red Rock Colorado

Another time while Ray and Carol were in Sterling, Ray decided to take me on a very noted tour. We left Sterling, which is in the extreme northeast corner of Colorado, and visited Cabellas. Cabellas is a large and famous outdoor sporting goods store in western Nebraska with a fabulous museum of stuffed wild animals. From Cabellas, we went to Mt. Rushmore in South Dakota. There engraved in the side of a stone mountain are the head images of presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Teddy Roosevelt. Why were these four particular presidents chosen? Of course, George Washington was our first president and was a national hero in the founding of our nation. Thomas Jefferson was the major author of the *Declaration of Independence* as well as the president who almost doubled the land area of the U. S. with the Louisiana Purchase. Abraham Lincoln led the nation in its greatest crisis, the War Between the States, which ended with the emancipation of slaves in this country. Finally, Teddy Roosevelt famous for his foreign policy, corporate reforms, and ecological preservation. Teddy Roosevelt was also instrumental in the construction of the Panama Canal.

Perhaps an unknown fact, less than twenty-five miles away from Mt. Rushmore, is a carving of Crazy Horse (of the Little Big Horn and General Custer fame) in the side of a

mountain. Crazy Horse is on his horse with an extended spear in his hand. All of Mt. Rushmore could be placed just on the spear! The project has not been completely finished, but has been in construction for over sixty years.

The story of Crazy Horse has portrayed him as a vicious, blood-letting Indian who massacred the entire army of General Custer. If we check history, we will find that Crazy Horse was a relatively peaceful man, but was forced into a corner when the United States failed to honor a treaty giving them the rights to certain lands. Four months later, Crazy Horse was captured and was fatally wounded by a military guard, while allegedly resisting imprisonment. Crazy Horse was honored by the U. S. Postal Service in 1982 with a thirteen-cent Great Americans series postage stamp.

From the Crazy Horse monument, we spent the night in Rapid City, in the middle of the black hills of South Dakota, which is famous for its black hills gold. On another occasion, Ray and I took a day's tour of northern Colorado and southern Wyoming, visiting the city of Cheyenne. Then a few years later, Ray, Mike, and I went to Cheyenne once again when visiting in Denver.

### **A Christmas Nightmare in Denver**

In 2008, Nancy and I went to Denver to spend a few days before Christmas with Ray and Carol, along with Wesley, Shannon, Mike, and their children. We were due to fly back home on Friday, December 22 in time to be there for our family's Christmas Eve get-together. On Wednesday or Thursday, a blizzard hit Denver, dumping thirty inches of snow on the city. Everything was paralyzed, including the airport, which was shut down for a whole day on the day we were supposed to return home. The streets were clear enough on Christmas Day for us to go out and celebrate with the family at a local restaurant. We finally were able to get a flight out a day AFTER Christmas. It was truly a Christmas to remember (or forget)!



Lyle and I in 2014



Nancy, Autumn, MacKynna, Ashley Sammy, Anna, and I in 2013.



Ken, Kimberly, Brandon, Nancy, Donia, Chris and I in Memphis circa 2010.



Nancy and I in Abilene 1972

## Chapter Twenty

### TRANSITION BETWEEN JASPER AND CEDARTOWN

#### Plans for the Next Phase of Our Ministry

In 1997, there again was a restlessness that settled in on me, and I felt that I was not being as productive as I thought I could be. This seems to have happened on several occasions in the past. Sometimes restlessness can be the motivation to move on to another phase of your life. I called Bob Cagle, who was my head elder and friend, to meet me in the apple orchard (this apple orchard seemed to have been a popular place). I announced to him that I was considering leaving the church. I said, “Bob, I feel like there is more that I’m supposed to do. If I were ready to retire, there was no place in the world that I would rather be than looking out over the valley toward Mt. Oglethorpe and Sharptop Mountain. But, I wasn’t ready to retire.” So, on my birthday, September 15, 1979, I preached my last sermon at Living Word Church. I felt that the Lord was leading us back to Cartersville to do a work.

Since I had earned my doctorate in counseling from the University of Memphis in 1994, I decided that I would again be involved in some type of counseling ministry. I leased a building in the old Belk shopping center right behind Cartersville High School (not far from the original counseling office I had before going to Jasper). The building was renovated to accommodate my needs. I began a counseling ministry, and we were having church services there on Sunday mornings. The ministry was called Marpe Family Center. *Marpe* is a Hebrew word meaning “healing” or “wholeness.” We called the church Grace Fellowship. Bill and Deana Watson, who had been a very active couple at New Covenant Church when we pastored there, joined us from the beginning. Deana was very helpful in the ministry of praise and worship. I was making a feeble effort to play a keyboard.

In the meantime, Nancy and I were commuting back and forth to and from Jasper, as we continued to live in our

home there. After a few months, we decided that we would move into a two-bedroom duplex in Cartersville. The house in Jasper was put on the market for sale. Several months passed, and there was no activity on the house. We were becoming financially strapped, so Bob Cagle assumed the loan and took ownership of the property. That has been twenty years now, and Bob still owns the house. It is not occupied, but it is being used to house their antiques.

The next two to three years became the most trying of our entire lives. (Seems like every test we faced was the most trying—but, hopefully, you understand what I'm trying to communicate). Things were not developing as we had hoped. We were running up credit cards to support the ministry and to survive. I felt I had crashed from the highest pinnacle to the lowest nadir of our lives. I had swallowed my pride and started bringing in a little income by painting houses. Later, I worked with our friend Chic Rothschild, in helping to maintain his rental property. I found myself having to crawl under dirty floors, not knowing if there were spiders, snakes, or any other creature. This was hard work, but I continued to do it as much as possible, working thirty to forty hours a week. This was in addition to trying to make the counseling ministry and church successful. Nancy had reentered the work force by working for a book distribution company in Cartersville. We continued this pattern until the summer of 1998.

It was during this period of time that Nancy and I faced personal crises that we had not ever faced in our lives. Our oldest son, Kenny, had been battling drug and alcohol addictions that had wrecked two previous marriages, including the marriage to three of his daughters' mother. Kenny had another daughter from another relationship, our beautiful and wonderful Kandi. While we were in Jasper, we would have Ashley, Autumn, and Anna to visit us without the knowledge that they had another sister. We would have Kandi at different times. This was an extremely awkward and difficult situation. When the three girls saw a picture of Kandi in our home one time, they asked who she was. All we could state was that she was a special little girl.

While we were living in the duplex in Cartersville, Kenny dropped the bombshell. He revealed to the girls that they were all sisters, which came as a shock to them. Of course, this

was against the will of the mothers, but it proved to be a wonderful turn of events. We could now have all four granddaughters together at the same time! The first time together, we took all of them to McDonald's and to a movie at Town Center. Since that time, the girls have become good friends. What was amazing was that all four of them were attending Excel Christian Academy at the same time without even knowing one another.

Kandi and Autumn became good friends when both of them started attending Cass High School. They would tell other students that they were sisters, but they didn't believe them. Kandi had blonde hair and blue eyes; Autumn had dark hair and dark eyes. All four of these girls are now grown, and all of them are beautiful and have beautiful children. In fact, we now have eight great grandchildren—three boys and five girls.

Now, back to the crises. I was so distraught over Kenny's situation that I had a breakdown. I began to cry and scream uncontrollably, and I went to stretch out on the bed crying to the top of my lungs. This moved Kenny to make a move toward doing something about his situation. Arrangements were made through my brother Raymond for Kenny to enter the Teen Challenge program in Cincinnati, where he remained for six months. This was a successful time, but Kenny reverted back to his old lifestyle and experienced many traumatic times until this past August, when he checked himself into a recovery and discipleship program at Center of Hope in Anniston, Alabama.

I can testify that Kenny has now gotten it. A series of circumstances brought him to realize that he had to change his life. He is still there after eight months and has plans after graduation in August of remaining on as a staff member. He already is helping so many young guys who are in the program. While in the program, Kenny has written a book, *Decisions to Change: the Choice Is Yours*, subtitled *My Journey Back to Father's House*. I proofread Kenny's book, made some grammatical changes, and put the material into a book form. Without Kenny realizing it, I had the book printed, and only today, April 30, 2017, has Kenny seen the book. It is a tremendous book chronically his life story that I know will be a great inspiration and source of ministry to others who are experiencing what Kenny had experienced. The book is

available through Amazon, and it is already having a tremendous impact.



The first time we had the four granddaughters together.

Another wonderful thing that has happened this past weekend is that Kenny saw his wife for the first time in eight months. Circumstances had led to an alienation between Kenny and his wife, Kimberley. Kimberley was the best thing that ever happened to Kenny, but she had endured all she could. Kimberley had helped him reach his absolute bottom. I thought he had hit bottom in the past, but now I believe he has. He was determined that he was going to fulfill the purposes of God in his life at any cost, including the possible dissolution of his marriage. The amazing thing is that he is just as focused, or more so today, than he was eight months ago.

In the last few months, Kenny and Kimberley have been communicating by telephone several times a week. My daughter, Donia, told Kimberley that when she felt the time was right, she would fly her to Atlanta, pick her up at the airport, and take her to visit Kenny. Kenny had no clue that she was coming. She and Donia went to be in church service at the Center of Hope, and when Kenny saw Kimberley, he fell to his knees crying. It was the most moving sight ever. Donia sent us pictures via texting. Kenny had told Kimberley about two weeks ago that he would give his left arm just to hold her with

his right arm. Kimberley told Donia that when she saw Kenny, she was going to say, "I'm here for your left arm!" So, that day has been an exceptional day for the entire Meadors family.



Autumn, Kenneth, Nancy, and Ashley



Kenny and Kimberly reunited at Center of Hope Spring of 2017

I took the time at this particular juncture to interject the situation that Kenny has faced since the fatal accident that he survived as a fifteen-year old youngster when the lives of my father, mother, sister, and niece were taken. Kenny found himself going down a dead-end road in dealing, not only with this crisis, but many others yet to come. One involved a fatal accident he was involved in that took the life of an eighty-two year old woman. She was in the passenger seat in an automobile that pulled out in front of Kenny's truck. Kenny had an alcohol level of only about .02, which is far below the level of intoxication. However, when there is a fatality, a person can be charged with vehicular homicide with any level of alcohol. The supposed reasoning is that any amount of alcohol can impede one's judgment in acting responsibly in a tragedy. Even though Kenny was injured himself, he went to the woman's rescue, and the woman died in his arms begging him to not let her die. This brings tears to my eyes as I write this.

This elderly woman was leaving the driveway of her son, who was a very powerful political figure in Bartow County. The son witnessed how Kenny acted responsibly. This man promised Kenny that he would be an advocate for him, and would inform the courts that in his opinion, Kenny should not be charged. However, the case was sent to the Grand Jury, and Kenny was indicted for vehicular homicide. He appeared in court three or four times, and the court would dismiss for the month before it got to Kenny's case.

On about his fourth appearance in court, the elderly woman's son met Kenny and me in the hallway. He asked Kenny what he was doing there. Kenny said he was there for the trial that took his mother's life. The man stated that it should have already been settled. Then, something happened. I heard the responses of numerous people, including some policemen, who said that they had never heard of before—Kenny's case was returned to the Grand Jury, and Kenny was cleared of all charges! Praise God from whom all blessings flow! There are many, many other crises that Kenny had faced that placed a tremendous burden on Nancy and me. But, I can say that he made an effort to stay away from us, or otherwise it would have been more traumatic for us.

But, today, we are rejoicing, and we know God has great things in store for Kenny and the entire Meadors

household. Many who have read portions of the transcript of Kenny's book have stated that this book should be in every recovery center in America. Our prayer is that it will fulfill its purpose, for we are facing today an epidemic of drug and alcohol addiction problems. Many people have already ordered multiple copies of the book to distribute to people whom they believe really need it.

At another phase of this my book, I will share other tragedies that Nancy and I have experienced in the past sixteen years, including the death of our daughter-in-law, Hope, who was our son Brandon's wife. Eleven years later, we lost our precious son Brandon to an automobile accident. Just two years ago, we lost our youngest son Lyle, who took his life by hanging in a prison cell of the most notorious prison in the state of Georgia. This occurred in the first two months of his being there. I will go into more detail later concerning the circumstances that led to his incarceration. Much of it related to serious addictions in conjunction with some mental issues. The sad thing is that my daughter and I had made constant appeals all the time he was in prison for him to get mental help.

I am not relating all of this to conjure up some sympathetic feeling toward us. It has been very painful, but our sufficiency has been in the Lord. I will share some things that I thought were the promises of God that were not fulfilled. I don't know the answers, but I have learned that when you don't have active faith, you have to simply trust God. That we have done, but the pain is still there inwardly. Hopefully, the way we have dealt with so much tragedy will minister to others who may be faced with the same situations.

### **A Near Miss**

One incident that involved our son Lyle before we moved to Cedartown was a near tragic accident. One day, a call came for me to go immediately to Lyle's apartment where this incident occurred. When I arrived, a county sheriff was there, as his apartment was not within the city limits. The sheriff had asked a city policeman, who had befriended Lyle while Lyle was working in a local fitness center, to accompany him.

While Lyle was lying nearly unconscious on his bed, next to the wall to another apartment, he had accidentally fired

a handgun with the bullet barely passing his head and lodged into the wall. The policeman knew me as a pastor and counselor, and he handed me the bullet and said that he was depending on me to get Lyle some help. I made arrangements for Lyle to enter a program in Louisville, Kentucky. He was supposed to have been there for a year, but he left after thirty days to return home to marry his girlfriend. From that time until his death, Lyle had entered numerous recovery programs including some of the most renowned ones in Atlanta.

### **Move to Poplar Bluff**

It was during this period of time that a pastor friend of mine in Poplar Bluff, Missouri contacted me and convinced me to move there to help him open a Christian counseling center. Nancy and I prayed about it and felt that perhaps this was what we were supposed to do. Coincidentally, this pastor had called me before I resigned Living Word Church and asked me to come. At that time, I had no thoughts of leaving Jasper. But, within a period of only a few months, he called again.

I approached Bill Watson about taking over Grace Fellowship. Bill came from a pastor's home, but to my knowledge, I had never known Bill to have ever prayed publicly, much less to speak. Bill's response was "No way!" But, the next day, he approached me and said that he believed God wanted him to take the church. He agreed to assume the lease on the building and stayed there until the lease expired. Then, Bill moved to a larger facility to continue the ministry. He was successful there for a couple of years, and then the big invitation came for him to merge with New Covenant Church, the church that I had pastored for over nine years. Bill agreed to do so, and assumed the pastorate of New Covenant Church, where he remained for over eight years. My tenure at New Covenant was the longest of any pastor there. Bill announced one day that I still had the record, because he was resigning!

As a note of interest, Bill's dad, Billy Watson, had pastored New Covenant Church for a couple of years before I came to be the pastor. Billy also preceded me at Living Word Church in Jasper. He and his family had been missionaries to Israel for many years. Billy has since gone on to be with the Lord, and his son Bill has now pursued other interests.

So, preparations were being made for Nancy and me to make the move back to Missouri. In my heart, I didn't feel that we would have been there over a couple of years until the counseling ministry was established. We left Cartersville in July, 1998, I driving a U-Haul truck with my Ford Ranger pickup truck in tow and Nancy driving our old 1993 Cadillac. The temperature was near 100 degrees, and the air conditioner went out on the Cadillac! Nancy poured water over her head to stay cool.

We arrived in Poplar Bluff and were able to rent a very nice house in a good neighborhood. I started working with a brother in the church, who had a counseling business, contracting with Sears Center, a residential treatment center for delinquent teenage boys. In order to do this, I had to go through a very complicated process to become a licensed professional counselor in the state of Missouri. Through several significant contacts, this was accomplished, and I had a very rewarding experience of counseling some very interesting young men who had been involved in various crimes, some petty, others more serious.

Things were not working as they had been presented to me. First of all, I was asked to come to open a Christian counseling center, which was already in operation under the leadership of the man I was working for at Sears Center. One of the agreements for me coming was for Nancy to be hired in the office of the counseling center. When someone else was hired, I was informed that husbands and wives could not work there together. This was a great disappointment.

I continued to work four days a week at Sears Center and one day a week at the counseling center in a facility of the church. I felt like we had been betrayed. It was from this point forward that it seemed that we weren't really a part of the ministry of the church that had been promised. I felt we were being completely ignored. If they were honest, then they should know they had been a bit deceptive. As has happened so many times in the past, strained relationships eventually heal. I had no contact with this pastor for many years, but finally we reconnected at a camp meeting in Tallapoosa, Georgia. Pastor Darrell Gooden was a mutual friend to both of us.

## Meadors Joins Staff Of Counseling House, Serving Southeast Missouri

By RON SMITH  
DAR Business Editor

Poplar Bluff's role as a regional health care leader includes the ever-growing demands for professional counseling services. The Counseling House, part of Social Servants Inc., is a local firm expanding to serve Southeast Missouri.

Dr. Kenneth Meadors is the most recent addition to a collection of certified counselors offering professional help for individuals and groups — working in such areas as drug & alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, marriage & family and trauma.

Meadors holds a doctoral degree in education from the University of Memphis and a doctor of divinity degree from Grace Theological Seminary in Loris, S.C. A teacher and counselor in the Pemiscot County schools for several years, he recently returned to Southeast Missouri after 16 years in Georgia. His wife, Nancy, is the niece of the late Louise Copeland, a well-known Poplar Bluff evangelist for nearly 50 years.

The Counseling House offers two distinct types of service. Adolescent Cognitive Therapies are clinically based serving a variety of referral sources including the juvenile courts in four circuits, the Division of Family Services, schools and the Division of Youth Services. While that work is completely secular, Meadors said, the other part of The Counseling House's services are Christian-based.



**Helping Others** — Dr. Kenneth Meadors is newest addition to the staff at The Counseling House, located off U.S. Highway 67 North behind Larry Hillis Christian Plymouth. (Staff photo by Ron Smith)

The Counseling House began in 1996 as a joint effort of Westerman Adolescent Services and New Covenant Fellowship Community Ministries. Their mission was to provide clinically sound therapeutic and counseling services as well as pastoral/family counseling. A

Christian ethic of serving any need of services, regardless of ability to pay, was implemented.

In January 1997, the newly incorporated Social Servants Inc.

See COUNSELOR  
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### Return Back to Georgia

We were in Poplar Bluff only a couple of months before we came back to Cartersville for Lyle's wedding to Farrah McFadden. Nancy came to stay, and she moved in with Brandon in his two bedroom apartment. I returned to Poplar Bluff by myself to work out a thirty-day notice, which I felt was the honorable thing to do. After the thirty days, I loaded a U-Haul truck and made my way back to Georgia. We put our furniture in storage and lived with Brandon until he got married to Hope Tinsley in April of 1999. At that time, Nancy and I

moved into our own two-bedroom apartment and got our furniture out of storage.

We had started going to Cedar Lake Christian Center (CLCC) immediately after we moved back to Georgia in November of 1998. Bishop David Huskins, who had been a teenager in New Covenant under our pastorate, extended his open arms to embrace us and to make us a vital part of the ministry of the church. Bishop Huskins had started a Bible College, and he wanted me to assume the responsibility of the college. In fact, the Bible College was totally revamped under my leadership.

I began my duties at CLCC in January, 1999. I shall forever be indebted to Bishop David Huskins for his continued love and support of Nancy and me through the next fifteen years. I am still partially involved in the Bible College, having relinquished a large part of my responsibilities to Dr. Roger Hutchins. My plans were to completely retire in the next few months to give myself to other ministry endeavors, but, as I will elaborate later, those plans did not exactly come to pass, as I am still an integral part of Vineyard Harvester Bible School and Seminary.

Shortly after I came on the staff of Cedar Lake Christian Center, Bishop Huskins invited me to accompany him on a ministry trip to Philadelphia to minister at Bishop Coleman's church. In a short period of time, we went to Norfolk, Virginia for a conference. There, I met a life-long friend, Clayton Cline, a pastor and coal mine owner from Gilbert, West Virginia. After meeting Clayton, he stated, "We're covenant brothers for life, right?" I agreed with him, and we still are to this day and will continue on for the rest of our lives. Sadly, just about two years ago, Clayton's love of his life passed on into the eternal realm of glory. Eleanor was a very special person who had a strong ministry as a prayer warrior.

Perhaps the most interesting trip was to Washington, D.C. with Bishop, his wife Michelle, Nancy, and I. Nancy and I were to speak at a Valentine Banquet in West Virginia. The banquet was on Saturday night, and Bishop was to be the speaker on Sunday morning. Nancy and I have always had a free, fun-time with Bishop and Michelle, as we all had a hilarious time as delegates to the Republican National Convention in New Orleans in 1988. Bishop always enjoyed

interacting with Nancy, who is always good for a barrel of laughs. But, on this trip, there was an incident that wasn't so humorous.

As we were approaching Dulles Airport outside of Washington, the pilot came on the public address system to announce that instruments were showing that the landing gear was not working. In order to determine whether the landing gear was down, he announced that we would fly low enough so the tower could visibly observe it. Well, we flew by the tower, ascended back into the sky, and circled around. No reassurance was communicated that all was alright. The pilot said nothing else. We were then thinking that the landing gear was not working, and we would have to make a belly-first landing that could have been very dangerous. There would have to be foam spread out with fire equipment available, and the plane would have to land. Without any further announcement, the plane began its descent and made a perfect landing. Nancy has always been fearful of flying, and this incident did not help matters any. We continued on to our destination and had a great weekend.



Bishop David Huskins with Dr. Roger Hutchins and I

Another trip I made with Bishop was to Titusville and Daytona Beach, Florida. The pastor in Titusville, Bro. Wayne Gray, also worked at Kennedy Space Center, and he took us on a very interesting tour of the center. We then went to Rock

Church in Daytona, where Fred Gorini was the pastor. There, Bishop taught a weekend seminar on the Kingdom of God.

We had met Pastor Vince and Phyllis Cuda when they made a trip to Cedartown to meet Bishop Huskins. Vince had been a part of the Rock Church Fellowship of Virginia Beach, Virginia. Vince was looking at the possibility of joining the Fellowship of Vineyard Harvester Churches, over which Bishop Huskins resided. After this contact, Bishop was invited to come preach at his new church in Deland, Florida. The Cudas had just purchased a piece of property with some housing accommodations but no church. The meeting was to be in a tent erected on the grounds. Bishop could not be in the Sunday services, so Roger Hutchins and I went down, and I preached the Sunday services.

It was in Deland where we had another very eventful experience. After the Sunday morning service, the people excitingly witnessed a frightening sight. Climbing up a guide wire on a telephone pole was a large snake making its way up to a bird nest to devour the occupants. He reached the nest, and at that time, someone shook the guide wire, and the snake came tumbling down. I'm usually not easily frightened or spooked, but when it looked like the snake was headed right down toward me, I took a sudden jump and kicked an eighty-year old woman in the shin. I couldn't apologize enough. A year later, she came to Cedartown to our conference, and I apologized again. This story brings us to a couple of other very interesting encounters with snakes.

### **Snakes!**

Donia and I were hiking on the Rocky Mountain trail between Blairsville and Helen in north Georgia. Her husband, Chris, had gone with us, but he went ahead of us with their two dogs. As Donia and I were approaching the end of the trail, I happened to look up to see a huge timber rattlesnake stretched out ready to cross the path. Normally, I'm looking down at the trail to keep from stepping on a snake, but at this particular time, I looked up to spot what was ahead. Donia and I suddenly stopped in our tracks, pondering our next move. We were probably thirty to thirty-five feet from the snake, and we were

not about to continue on our trek without taking some serious plan of action.

My first response was to throw a rock at the snake, thinking it would scare him away from the path. All it did was to cause the rattlesnake to lift up his tail and sound a slight rattle. Fortunately, he had not coiled up but was still stretched out. Throwing the rock about freaked Donia out, and she screamed, "You're going to anger that snake, and he'll come after us!" I stated that first, I doubt he would be that aggressive, and especially wouldn't be coming uphill. I found out later that the timber rattler was the least aggressive rattlesnake and was rarely seen. But, that was hard to believe that a five-foot long rattlesnake would not be aggressive. Size is not always the deciding factor for defense, as evidenced by the deadliness of a much smaller copperhead.

The next action was for Donia to start talking to the snake! She said, "Now snake, we don't want to bother you, and we don't want you to bother us; so, simply go away!" The next thing we did was to holler for Chris hoping that he would hear us. Upon our desperate call for help, Chris returned back to keep his eye on the snake while Donia and I made a new path just above the trail. We safely passed beyond him and went merrily on our way. In all my years (twenty years or so) of hiking in the mountains, this was the only snake I've ever seen.

The next exciting episode was one summer when I was returning back to the gymnasium at the church from the sanctuary. As I opened the door, stretched out across the doorway was this huge black snake. I knew that it was not poisonous, but I don't like snakes, period. One of the maintenance workers at the church came and killed the snake. The very next day, I went back into the gym and saw another black snake over next to a wall. The maintenance man killed this one. The following day, I came in the gym, and in a small hallway off from the gym was a third black snake that had been trapped by one of those glue patches that captures rodents. The snake was desperately trying to shake loose from it, but the maintenance man killed it.

Some may say that you should not kill any snake, much less a non-poisonous one. I do understand the logic, but it was not my decision to kill the snakes. However, it was I who notified the maintenance man. Now, that was enough! I went to

Bishop Huskins, stating that something had to be done. I declared that I had been hiking in the mountains for years seeing only one snake, and here in the civilized part of the world were *three* snakes in a matter of a few days. It was determined that there was an opening in the wall where there was an exhaust fan, and the snakes were coming in that way.

Oh, by the way, I also recall that when I was at New Covenant Church, there was a snake in one of the classrooms in the basement. I don't have the fear of snakes that I once had, but I have a healthy respect for them, and I will keep my distance!



Four granddaughters together. Ashley, Kandi, Anna, and Autumn



Ray and Carol, Kenneth and Nancy Meadors, Rebecca and Jerry Dortch, Darrell Gooden and his friend, and Connie Davis.



Nancy, Kenneth, Donia, and Ken in 2017



Nancy and I with baby Donia in Essex in 1962

## Chapter Twenty-one

### MINISTRY AND TIME IN CEDARTOWN

#### A Great Spiritual Renewal

We continued to live in Cartersville and commuted to Cedartown for classes two nights a week in addition to services on Wednesday night and Sundays. A most unusual event took place shortly after we had begun our association with the church. Sovereignly, there was a prayer and worship experience that broke out that I've never seen or experienced before or since. There were no planned activities, either song or speaking. We simply waited in the presence of God, and supernatural things began to happen. There was inspirational worship music by Amy Reid Synch playing in the background. Outside of praying and praising, there was no speaking. It was a time of the supernatural manifestation of God's holy presence. Unusual things began to take place, including miracles of healing, both physically and emotionally. Strong sweet aromas were smelled that permeated the sanctuary and lasted for two or three days. It was unexplainable. There were reports of the scent being in people's automobiles on the way home. The scent saturated clothing. It was a smell that was totally unidentifiable.

This supernatural outpouring of God's Spirit continued for sixteen consecutive nights and could have gone on longer if Bishop Huskins had sought to make a spectacle of it. He chose to continue to honor the presence of God and to continue to minister in a "normal" manner. For these sixteen nights, Nancy and I were driving back and forth from Cartersville to Cedartown, which was about thirty-seven miles one-way.

It was in the spring of 1999 that Nancy and I decided to move to Cedartown to be more of a part of the ministry. We found a two-bedroom apartment, which was not a great experience. We were kept awake all through the night with loud, blasting music in the next apartment where young people were coming in and out all hours of the night. We banged on the walls; we paid a visit to request consideration for two older people. The young man, whose parents are now a very vital part

of the church, was very polite, but the music didn't stop. So, we decided to make other arrangements.

We found a nice, three-bedroom brick home that rented for just a few dollars more than we were paying for the apartment. We got permission to get out of our lease, and we moved in without having to make a deposit. We remained there for five years until a much nicer home opened up for just a little more rent than we were paying at the house we were living in.

We had just moved to our house from the apartment, when a remarkable family came into our lives. While boxes were still unpacked, we opened our home to Kevin Lamp, a pastor of a denominational church in Cumberland, Maryland, who came to Cedartown to sit under the ministry and to be further trained in the teaching of the Kingdom of God and of grace. He became a part of our Christian Academy and lived with us for two weeks before he could move his family to Cedartown. He and his family were there for five years before they returned to Cumberland to start a new church.



The Lamp Family 18 Years after First Meeting Them

Nancy and I fell in love with Kevin and Stacy Lamp along with their three children, Jared, Kaitlin, and Nathan. They accepted us into their lives, as we were a part of their family night every Friday night. We also ate with them at the Mexican restaurant every Wednesday night before church. They became like children and grandchildren to us, and the kids called us their Georgia grandparents. They have been returned to Cumberland thirteen years now and have a very successful church. For several years, we saw them once or twice a year, as they returned for special meetings and an annual conference. We came to know their parents, and we love them all very much.

### **We Hit Rock Bottom**

As I have stated, from the time we had left Jasper, we had been through more trials than ever before in our lives. All of my life from the eleventh grade on, I always had a job. I had worked in grocery stores my senior year in high school and all the way through college. I had the dignity of being a highly respected high school teacher in a small town, which helped to give me great self-confidence. God had blessed us in the ministry, never missing a beat from one church to another, including our tenure in Hayti, Missouri; Abilene, Texas; Cartersville, Georgia; and Jasper, Georgia.

We left a very comfortable situation in Jasper to pursue what I thought would be a big step forward only to be hit with reality. We had gone through the trying times in Cartersville, both before and after Poplar Bluff. While we were in Poplar Bluff, we were doing very well. What seemed to be a downward slide continued in the first few years in Cedartown, even though we were being compensated for our ministerial role in the church and the school. But, the burden of having to depend on credit cards to finance the ministry in Cartersville and just to survive took its toll.

I came to the place I never thought I would come to, and that was the loss of everything we ever had. We had owned our own home for the previous twenty-five years or so. God had always provided us wonderful accommodations, including owning a five-bedroom home with three baths in Hayti, Cartersville, and Jasper. Now, we were living in rented facilities, and apartments at that. There were times we longed to have enough money to go to the Pizza Hut on Friday night.

We had no money in checking, savings, or retirement—nothing. We were barely making it from paycheck to paycheck.

I had always been critical of Christians who took bankruptcy, but now I was faced with that possibility. I felt that I had been a complete failure, and that I had lost all sense of integrity. The day of decision came—I went to file for bankruptcy. Credit card balances were insurmountable. I owed the Federal government over \$3000.00 for previous self-employment taxes from Jasper. A school loan debt of \$5000.00 was so delinquent that with penalties and interest had swelled to over \$10,000. The government put a lien on my paycheck, planning to take so much money we would not have had enough to live on. I called and told them that they were making me homeless and putting me out on the street. A repayment agreement was reached.

When I went to bankruptcy court, I was not exempt from anything owed to the government, including school loans and taxes. I suppose I partially rationalized that my debts were all unsecured debts by “loan sharks,” with interest of 25% or more. I was strapped for ten years, but by the grace of God, my credit rating is restored and is at the highest level ever. I have had credit cards now for the past eight or nine years, and I have yet to have a balance to go past thirty days. In other words, I have paid no interest for the past seventeen or eighteen years! God taught me a very valuable lesson. Number one, learn how to be completely disciplined in your spending. Number two, don’t ever criticize someone who is going through hard times. Today, by the grace of God, I am totally debt free and have been for several years!

Through those trying years, I began to feel sorry for myself. When I was about sixty-one or sixty-two years old, I realized that I had NOTHING—no retirement; no investments; no money. At that time, the future looked pretty dismal. When my daughter Donia was visiting us in Cedartown, I had an emotional breakdown and could not control myself. Donia looked at me and said, “You’ve been faithful to God all these years, and you will be taken care of. In fact, look at me as your retirement. You have invested in me, and now it is time for you to draw on that investment.” I had never felt that I could or would ever depend on my children for anything. First, I had pride. Second, even though I knew my daughter was

prosperous, I never felt it was her duty to have to help support me. She and her husband had worked hard, and they deserved to fully enjoy what they had harvested. As I will state later, my daughter has been more than faithful, and God has blessed her and her husband abundantly.

The first blessing was one day in about 1999, when my daughter and son-in-law handed me the keys and clear title to a 1997 Mercury Marquis. I was overwhelmed. Our old Cadillac was about on its last leg. I told her I could sell the Cadillac and give her the money. She refused. In 2007, she approached me and said that she and Chris decided it was time to get us another car. They presented me the keys to a 2005 Toyota Camry, which I am still driving with over 200,000 miles on it. I have never done anything to it, and it is still running almost perfectly!

#### **Mercury Stolen at Airport Parking Lot**

I kept my Mercury in addition to the Toyota. It was still a very serviceable car with 175,000 miles on it. I really enjoyed the bigger car, and I took it as I my personal car while Nancy had the Toyota. I drove the Mercury to the Atlanta airport to fly to Denver to see my brother Raymond. Upon my return to Atlanta, I was the last one on the shuttle bus that took us from the airport back to an off-site parking facility. When we pulled up to where I had left my car, there was a vacant spot. The driver asked me if my car was a white Mercury. I replied, “Yes.” “That car was stolen last Friday.” I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. Yes, the car was important to me, but why would someone steal it when other more luxurious cars were parked there? I asked this question to the police when they arrived. Their reply was that this older car was easier to get into. Also, that model car was very popular with teenage guys because it looked like a police car. I was then told that the car had been found and was in the possession of the Atlanta Police Department.

I had a combination to unlock the driver’s side door of the car, so I left all my keys in the pocket on the inside of the door. I was told that I probably should have all my home door locks changed, as oftentimes a thief would find keys, locate the residence, and then burglarize it. Wow! How scary! And on top

of that, what a colossal task of changing all those locks! So, I rented a car and returned to Cedartown.

The next day, I called the Atlanta police and found out that the car was being held in a tow parking lot. I had to take proof of ownership to the police station before I could even go to the parking lot to see the car. This I did, and when I went to see the car, I found minimal damage had been done. There was some minor damage in going through the edge of the window to open the door. There was also some minor damage to the passenger side door. The only other visible thing was the ignition switch on the steering column had been ripped out. AND...to my surprise, there were my keys, still intact where I had left them in the side pocket! What a sight to behold! To me, that was a miracle.

The next week, I received a letter from an assistant district attorney telling me that the thief had been caught, and I was asked to contact their office. When I called, I was told that the thief was driving down a street in southwest Atlanta when incidentally there was a roadblock, not to stop him, but I think it was for a license and insurance check. The driver ran through the roadblock, raced to the end of a dead-end street, got out of the car, and ran away! The police apprehended him and arrested him. But, here was the real kicker—the judge let the thief go because the thief said he didn't know the car was stolen, and he had no prior criminal record. Duh! Didn't know the car was stolen? Where did he get it? With a ripped out ignition switch? Running through a roadblock? Getting out and running from the police? My response was, "If he didn't have a record, he should have one now!" The district attorney was distraught and reported that many cases of auto theft in Atlanta turned out the same way. And, we wonder why there is so much crime.

Ironically, I had been informed that there might be compensation from the one who stole the car. Well, a few months later, I received a check from the court in the amount of \$4.00 which was my compensation! I still have the uncashed check as the proof of stupidity. My daughter was irate. She stated that it cost the government more than that to process it! The unresolved question is, "If the thief was freed, why the compensation?" It makes little sense.

## Y2K

The turn of the century was a time of great anxiety. Prophets were declaring that the end of the world would come at the stroke of midnight. From a practical secular standpoint, there was concern that computers would go berserk because they were programmed by the last two digits of the year, and with the beginning of the twenty-first century, the computer wouldn't know whether it was 1900 or 2000. The whole world was anxiously awaiting the impending fate. As January 1, 2000 came in each time zone, it was announced that all was well. We were celebrating New Year's Eve at Cedar Lake Christian Center when our computer man was announcing that the end had not come at the turn of the century. He was following the coming of midnight in each time zone. By the way, the beginning of the twenty-first century didn't begin until January 1, 2001. The beginning of the first century was not "0" but "1." Guess what? Nothing significant even happened on January 1, 2001.

Predictions of the end were not new, as we were told by a "noted" prophet in 1970 that the end would come in 1977. The end came for him before then, but everything continued on. The next notable date was 1988. This was based on the fact that Jesus said in Matthew 24 that "this generation shall not pass until all these things be fulfilled." The reasoning was that this generation did not begin until 1948 when Israel once again became a nation. A generation supposedly was forty years, so the end of the generation would be 1988. A book was written, *Eighty-eight Reasons the Lord Will return in 1988*. When nothing happened, the book had to be revised to *Eighty-nine Reasons the Lord Will return in 1989*. When nothing happened then, the next magical date was 2018, because perhaps a generation was seventy years instead of forty years.

I have now come to the conclusion that even we who have not necessarily adhered to the traditional teaching of the rapture, the coming of Jesus, and the end of the world, our so-called enlightenment needs some more enlightenment. I am understanding more all the time the significance of the Cross. Jesus' death was the link between two dispensational covenants, the Old and the New. I am now realizing that many scriptures that refer to the end was the end of the Old Covenant

age that was finally consummated in 70 A.D. when the Jewish Temple was destroyed.

The significance of the destruction of the Temple is that, although Jesus ended the Mosaic sacrificial system at the Cross, it was not until 70 A.D. that it was finalized as far as the natural was concerned. There have been no animal sacrifices since. And if you truly believe that God will sanction the rebuilding of an earthly temple and reinstitute animal sacrifices, then God must be schizophrenic. We must go back and consider that Jesus brought an end to the sacrifice of bulls and goats, and God will never again return back to these sacrifices. That would be like crucifying Jesus anew.

The Jews may very well rebuild a temple and once again offer animal sacrifices, but I can assure you that it will not be God. Jesus was offered as the eternal sacrifice, once and for all, and for all peoples and nations of the earth. There is neither Jew nor Greek in God's eternal purposes, and God will deal with everyone alike, including the Jews. All must come through the same channel, the cross and the blood of Jesus. If the Jews are to be grafted back into the vine, they will do so through the Lord Jesus Christ, the same way we were grafted in. The presence of God was represented in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, then was transported into Solomon's Temple, manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ, and is finally residing in you and me. We now are the temple of God.

### **The Beginning of Miracles in Action**

Our oldest son Kenny had been in many alcohol rehabilitation centers, so when he finally turned his life around, he began talking about starting a program at Cedar Lake Christian Center. So sometime around 2000 or 2001, Kenny and I went to Bishop Huskins to present to him the idea of a program. Kenny said that he knew the ideal person to be in charge, Ahue Sims. Sims, as he was called, was a recovering alcoholic, and at that time had been "clean" for over twenty years. He had lived on the streets of Atlanta, so he knew firsthand what it was like to be an addict, and especially what it was like to be a recovering addict.

Ken had met Sims at Three Rivers Rehab Center in Cedartown, where Sims had been conducting Alcoholic

Anonymous meetings for over eight years. The A.A. program requires that a person introduce himself by stating, "Hello, my name is -----, and I'm an alcoholic." Sims was beginning to get "too spiritual" for the hierarchy of the center, because he believed that when you are a new creation in Christ Jesus, you no longer identify yourself as something you were before, but who you are now. Sims was forced to stop using the name Jesus as his higher power, and to continue identifying with the old nature. Sims decided that he could never follow these rules, although A.A. has the right to set their own rules. If you don't follow the rules, then you don't need to be a part of the program. I must say that in all honesty, A.A. has served many recovering alcoholics well.



Pastor Ahue Sims, director of Miracles in Action

Bishop Huskins was in agreement with our proposal to start the program, and Sims was contacted. The new ministry was to be called "Miracles in Action," which meets every Saturday night. To my knowledge, Sims had never been to Cedar Lake Christian Center before his introduction to Bishop Huskins, but he has been perhaps the most effective minister for the past twelve or so years. He is now Pastor Ahue Sims, who was recently recognized by the church as the "Father of the

Year” because of his role, not only as a natural father, but as a spiritual one, also.

In my opinion, Ahue Sims is one of the most extraordinary individuals I have ever known. He has been totally faithful to his calling, making himself available to anyone at any time, day or night. He had gained a special place in the hearts of our whole family because of the extended hand of love that has reached out to us with sons experiencing addictions.

Sims and Ken became especially good friends, and Sims was Ken’s best man at his wedding in Poplar Bluff, Missouri. Sims has always had a great sense of humor, and he makes it very clear in no uncertain terms, that there are some things of which he is frightened. One is his fear of crossing bridges. In order to get to Poplar Bluff, Missouri from Georgia, you have to cross the mighty Mississippi River, which we did at Dyersburg, Tennessee. As I was pointing out a towboat to him and telling him about some of my experiences with the river including water baptisms, he made it clear to me that I needed to keep my eyes on the road! Perhaps to reinforce his fears of bridges, a few years later, a bridge across the Mississippi River collapsed near St. Louis, Missouri. I don’t think I’ll ever get him to cross another bridge with me!

### **Development and Promotion of the Bible College**

Vineyard Harvester Bible College started out as an affiliate of Florida Theological Seminary, but when I came on board, it was my responsibility to develop the program and curriculum for the new college. The past eighteen years have represented a challenge, and I feel like we are at a place where we can turn responsibilities over to another person to carry it on to the next level. We have developed a full curriculum for associate, masters, and doctoral degrees in theology. All of our classes have been filmed since the inception of the school, and we now have the full video curriculum online to be made available to students worldwide. We recently renamed the college as Vineyard Harvester Bible School and Seminary.

We are now fully accredited with Transworld Accrediting Commission, International (TAC). I am presently a board member of the accrediting commission. I also am a

board member of Apostolic School of Ministry, with headquarters in Huntsville, Alabama under the leadership of Apostle Edmond James. There is an affiliated branch of the school here in Cartersville under the leadership of Apostle Jerry Dortch, where Nancy and I have done some teaching.

A few years after we arrived at CLCC, I felt forsaken because of loss of identity as a pastor. I approached Bishop Huskins about Nancy and me becoming pastors to the Seniors (those over 55 years of age). The primary purpose was to have a monthly fellowship where we could all come to together and eat. We would take the church van and go to various places, including Anniston and Lake Weiss in Alabama.

Perhaps the most memorable trip was in the fall of 2007 when about ten or twelve Seniors were on our way to eat fish at a restaurant near Lake Weiss, Alabama. This was about an hour’s drive from Cedartown. As we were traveling north on State Highway 100, which was a rather remote highway, we had the most interesting encounter with a large deer. There was a slight slope to the right of the highway, and all at once, a large buck came running and jumped off the ridge right into our pathway. I held the steering wheel very steady, not trying to miss the deer. Otherwise, we could have flipped the church van and could have had a very serious accident. By the grace of God, no one was hurt, but the deer got the blunt end of the deal. We thought he was dead, but amazingly, he got up and ran off into the woods. I can’t believe that he got very far, because it was a solid hit that destroyed the whole front end of the van. We sat on the side of the highway waiting over two hours for Triple A to send someone out to tow the van. In the meantime, we had telephoned back to the church for someone to transport us back to Cedartown. We were not going to give up. Even though we didn’t make it to the fish house, we did have a great time of fellowship at Zorba’s Restaurant in Cedartown. By the way, we had really a great time of fellowship waiting on the side of Highway 100. The weather was very pleasant, and it was still daylight at the time, but it was dark by the time help arrived.

### **The Dreaded News of Hope**

When Nancy, Donia, Brandon and I were visiting with Lyle in a rehab program in southern Georgia, we returned to the

saddest of news. Brandon went to his and his wife Hope's home in Cartersville with a message on his telephone to call the local hospital. He learned that Hope had been involved in a head-on collision on a road leading into Cartersville. She had been air lifted to Grady Hospital, a trauma center in Atlanta. While Nancy and I were in route to Atlanta from Cedartown, I had the ominous feeling that Hope was gone. We arrived at the hospital to have our dreaded fears verified. Hope had graduated to heaven on the last day of the church conference, July 15, 2001. We were all in shock. Brandon and Hope had only been married for two years after having dated for over five years.



Brandon and Hope in 1999, two years before her death

When we heard of Hope's death, we called to give the news to Lyle at the rehab center only to discover that he had left shortly after we were there. No one knew where he was, and we had no way of communicating with him concerning Hope's death. He was gone two days before we finally thought of calling one of his friends, and that was where he was. Hope's memorial service was a memorable one as hundreds of family and friends came to pay their last respects to her.

As the result of Hope's passing, her parents, Matt and Von Tinsley, have become very close friends to Nancy and me. We go out to eat together on various occasions and have gone to Donia's cabin in the North Georgia Mountains together. Von was one of the teachers at the academy while I was the principal.

The next seven or eight years saw Brandon almost losing hope of anything, going through serious periods of depression. He seemed to have had no real direction or focus. He was employed by the United States Postal Service, and he missed weeks of work the first year. In fact, he eventually lost his job because of depression and so much absenteeism. As far as we know, Brandon never dated anyone before or after Hope. He took one girl to our academy awards ceremony when he was in high school, but that was only one occasion. Brandon had always been a very serious-minded individual. After Hope's death, we knew no one that he's even considered dating. He met Hope at Cedar Lake where she was the head of the dance ministry as a teenager. She was still in high school, six years younger than Brandon when they began dating.

After living in his and Hope's house for about a year, Brandon moved in with us in Cedartown, where he worked for many years with Murphy Harpst Children's Home where disturbed and abused children lived and went to school. Brandon loved his work there and said that would be his lifelong job if he could make a decent living at it.

### **The Twin Towers Go Down**

While I was the principal of the Christian Academy, Angela Green was one of our teachers. Her husband, Fred, was the interim chairperson of the Psychology Department at Floyd College (now Georgia Highland College). It was about time for the new academic year to start in the year of 2000. Mr. Green knew that I had a doctorate in counseling and psychology, and he asked me if I would be interested in teaching a couple of Introduction to Psychology classes. I agreed to do so, and taught several semesters. It was September 11, 2001 when I had just completed teaching a class when a student announced that the Twin Towers in New York City had been hit. He was on the internet with his laptop computer. That was the day that shocked the nation as over three thousand people lost their lives when terrorists crashed a commercial airliner into each of the towers. Unbelievably, the tallest buildings in the world went crumbling to the ground.

America and the world changed as of that day. All airplanes were ordered out of the sky for several days. The only

plane in the sky was Air Force One, bringing President George W. Bush back to Washington from a trip to a Florida school. No one knew what was happening, as another high-jacked airplane crashed into the Pentagon. Then, another high-jacked plane, believed to be headed toward the White House, crashed in Pennsylvania when passengers overcame the terrorists, but all died in the crash. Believing that Iraq had something to do with the terroristic acts, Iraq was attacked, and American soldiers were there for over twelve years.

My niece, Shannon Meadors, was working at the Pentagon when the plane crashed into the building. My son, Brandon, tried desperately to reach Shannon by telephone. He finally was able to talk to her, and he insisted on coming to D.C. to bring her back home! Well, Shannon told him that all was well, and she needed to stay. Shannon had been an assistant to Sen. Fred Thompson, and her future husband was an assistant to Sen. Arlen Specter as the director of his Philadelphia office. Today, they have their own lobbying firm in Philadelphia, representing dairy farmers and transportation systems in Pennsylvania.

#### **Another Near-Death Crisis with Lyle**

On Labor Day, 2003, Nancy and I were attending a school and church reunion in Gideon, Missouri when we retrieved a telephone message that Lyle had been shot. We knew no details other than he was in intensive care at Floyd Medical Center in Rome, Georgia. We immediately headed for home, driving into the early morning hours of a Sunday morning to find that Lyle had gone through surgery for internal injuries caused by the firing of a .22 caliber bullet at close range that barely missed his heart. He was opened in his chest from right to left as well as down the middle of his stomach from his chest to the bottom of his stomach. The repairs were made to keep him from bleeding to death, but the bullet remained lodged in his liver. The doctors said it would be more harmful to try and remove it than it was to remain in the liver. God miraculously brought Lyle through. Lyle was in the hospital at the same time as Valerie, my niece, when she gave birth to her firstborn, Kate.

We found out later that Lyle had gone to an older man's house whom he had met in a rehab center. He apparently had been to this house several times. At this particular time, he went to the refrigerator to get a bottle of beer. The man told him to leave a dollar. Lyle thought he was just kidding. The man then proceeded to fire the pistol, and Lyle cried, "You shot me! You shot me!" There were two other witnesses there who called the police. When the police arrived the perpetrator was still on the couch with the pistol beside him drinking beer, while Lyle was lying on the floor. The man went to jail where he died within six months before even going to trial. He was only fifty-four years old at the time.

About a year after I started working with the Bible College, it fell my lot to assume the additional responsibility as principal of Vineyard Harvester Christian Academy. As a general rule, I enjoyed at least the first year. I had a great staff to work with. I was teaching some educational courses in the Bible College, and I made a couple of courses mandatory for the teachers, including classroom discipline. Other educational courses were the Psychology of Education, Introduction to Christian Teaching, Curriculum, Psychology of Exceptional Children, and Black History. I could not have been able to handle the responsibility of the Bible College and the Academy if I did not have the complete support of the faculty.

#### **Health Scare Changes Course of Direction of My Life**

I have always been in relatively good health, but in 2006, there were a couple of incidents where I had concern about my heart. All tests showed that there were no problems, but there was an incident that literally changed the direction of my life. In the middle of the night, I suddenly awakened with the feeling that the room was full of electricity, and I thought that was the end of my life. After arising, I was still feeling like life was slipping out of my body. Nancy immediately called 911 for an ambulance to come and take me to Redmond Hospital emergency room in Rome. In the meantime, Nancy had alerted Brandon, who was living with us at the time. Brandon was showing great concern, and he expressed it when he didn't think EMS workers were moving as quickly as he thought they should. I was taken to the hospital, and there were no evidences

of any problem. The doctor concluded that I had an anxiety attack. I was asked if I was experiencing any particular anxiety, and I expressed to him my concern for Lyle.

I think the pressures of life situations were beginning to take a real toll on me. Along with the heavy responsibilities of the Bible College, I was dealing with Lyle's addictions. It was at this time that I concluded that I could not continue at the pace I was on. I was almost overwhelmed with the responsibilities of creating curriculum, preparing for course teaching, teaching, filming the classes, editing the videos, producing the DVDs for correspondence students in addition to the administrative duties of the school.

Donia had already made a commitment to me to make it possible for me to retire, but I wasn't ready for retirement. It was then that I requested that she make it possible for Brandon to come onboard to help me with the technical aspects of the college. Brandon was still working for Murphy Harpst, but he agreed to relieve me of the technical duties by working twenty hours a week. Donia's donation to the church made this possible. As a result, I was able to cut back to a four-day work week. This arrangement continued for a couple of years until I requested that the school make another adjustment. I felt that the school was under financial pressure, and I was willing to assume Brandon's responsibilities with a reduction of my pay which was supplemented by the amount that Brandon had been receiving.

As a result of a reduction of my pay, I was allowed to relinquish some of my responsibilities and to work a three-day work week. This gave me more freedom to do work at home instead of coming to the school every day. Instead of teaching four classes, I taught two classes, all on Tuesday evenings.

### **Nancy and I Celebrate Our Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary**

On April 16, 1960, God brought a most amazing young woman into my life who has been my constant companion in life and ministry. On April 16, 2010, our children planned a big celebration for us at the church fellowship hall. What was exciting, all four of our children were doing their part in the preparation for this special event. There were many friends and family members there to celebrate this special time together.

We were honored to have some of past elders and deacons from New Covenant and Living Word Churches, including Bob and Helen Cagle, Chic and Kay Rothschild, and Jerry and Judy Chitwood. To really make the occasion special, all four of our children were involved in the preparation for the celebration. Food was catered, and it truly was a time of celebration.



Cutting the Cake



Kenneth and Nancy Meadors' Four Children and Three Granddaughters



Brandon, Donia, Ken, and Lyle at our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration.



"You may now kiss the bride!"



"I'll Give You All of Me"



Nancy and my second Easter together

Since Brandon died, we found the following post on his Facebook page on April 13, 2010:

Last night I was thinking about the one thing I can never say I wasn't blessed with....Parents who have been faithful to each other for FIFTY YEARS! And they have been faithful servants of God for even longer. I've never known them to even think of being unfaithful to God or each other. Now THAT's how you show the world what covenant relationship is...

Brandon was always such a laid-back person whom you never knew where he was coming from. So, this was a great tribute from him.

### **Plans to Move Back to Cartersville**

After having lived in Cedartown for about eight years, Nancy was anxious to move back to Cartersville where she could be closer to our grandchildren. Cartersville was really the place where we always wanted to live, but I didn't see any way that we could make the move. For one thing, rental property in Cartersville was much more expensive than in Cedartown. The second thing, even though I planned to continue my duties in Cedartown, I felt that it would be perceived that I was disengaging from the ministry there. Then, there was the matter of commuting seventy miles roundtrip for each time we went to Cedartown, and that would have been three days of the week, including Sunday and Wednesday night services in addition to the Bible College teaching on Tuesday night.

In early 2010, I began to give consideration to moving back to Cartersville. I approached Bishop Huskins to see how he felt about it, and he gave us his total support. Then, Nancy and I began looking for rental property in Cartersville thinking that we would have to live in an undesirable house or apartment because of finances. We almost made a commitment to rent a house, but I requested that I be given a couple of days to make a final determination that we were making the right decision. I called the landlord the next day to inform him that we were not interested. A few weeks later, Nancy, Donia, and I met my

nephew Richie for dinner in Atlanta while he was there for some military training.

After dinner, I casually mentioned to Donia that Mom and I were considering moving back to Cartersville. She knew that her mother's desire was to move back to Cartersville one day. When I brought up the possibility, Donia lit up with excitement and stated, "Chris and I have already been thinking about that. In fact, we have already been considering buying a place for you and Mom." Wow! It could not have been any more perfect timing. At the time I was beginning to receive a release to make a move, Donia and Chris had already been thinking of a way to make it possible. For the next couple of months, we started looking for property.

Finally, in May, the ideal house was found. It was a nice, three bedroom brick ranch-style house in a very nice neighborhood in the middle of Cartersville. There was nearly an acre of yard, and there was an unfinished basement. Donia and Chris bought the house and immediately hired a contractor to come and convert the basement into an apartment for Lyle to live in and an office for me to do my work for the Bible College. On June 1, 2010, we moved into our new house. It has been most enjoyable to be in the great city of Cartersville, which was close to our grandchildren, thirty-eight miles closer to Donia's house in Decatur, and thirty-eight miles closer to Donia and Chris' cabin in the north Georgia mountains. In addition, we were reunited with many friends of the past when we pastored there. It has been an ideal setup, and we praise God for it.

### **Another Crisis with Lyle**

Donia and Chris had made it possible for Lyle to have a nice apartment to start his life anew. He continued to have problems that led to a major turning point in his life as well as ours. Exasperated with having to deal with so many crises, I called Donia to come help when Lyle was totally incapacitated. She came and had Lyle taken to the local emergency room. His alcohol level was .56, seven times the legal limit. They were going to release him from the hospital after several hours when his level lowered to .30. Every other time Lyle was treated in the hospital; they always admitted him for three or four days to

prevent Delirium Tremens (DTs). Then, they would offer to find him a place for rehabilitation.

My daughter was adamant that he not be released. She then revealed that Lyle had a gun in his possession at home. When questioned, he indicated that he had a purpose for it, and he was charged with terroristic threat. Donia, Brandon, Ken, Nancy, and I made an appeal to the district attorney to mandate Lyle to a year of rehabilitation. The district attorney, with an agreement with the judge, granted the request. Lyle was admitted into a program at Providence Ministries in Dalton, Georgia. There, he found purpose that he had not had in years. He became involved with a ministry that gave him great satisfaction. He had found his destiny that was far beyond himself. Instead of focusing on his needs, he was now involved in helping others who had needs. He did this successfully for six months before the next turn of events.

In the meantime, Brandon had moved to Decatur to live with Donia and Chris and found employment there. This was in 2009, and he remained there until December 2010. He then moved into our basement apartment that Lyle had vacated. This proved to be a very important step forward for Bran. He had been coming out of his depression for the previous couple of years, and he was beginning to gain new hope for his future. He determined that he was going to return to college, which he did in the spring of 2012. We had not seen him so focused and interested in life in years. He was definitely headed toward fulfilling some lifelong dreams.

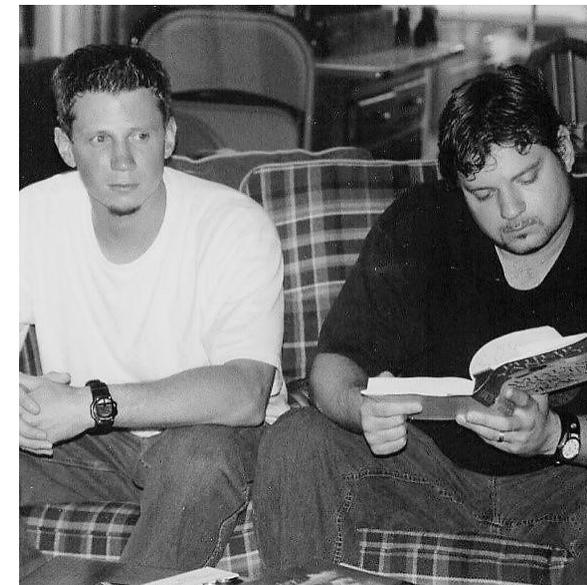


Donia and Lyle after he graduated from 6-month program at Providence Ministries in Dalton, Georgia.

This was the spring of 2012 just a few weeks before Brandon's death. This was the best we had seen Lyle in years.



Brandon, Anna, and Ken



Brandon and Lyle at Donia's Cabin



Brandon and Lyle sometime around 2010.



Circa 1973

## Chapter Twenty-two

### THE HORRENDOUS CALL—BRANDON'S ACCIDENT

In the early morning hours of April 25, 2012, we were awakened by a knock on our door. Nancy went to the door to find a police officer there who informed her that Brandon had been in an accident, and we were to call Kennestone Hospital in Marietta. Nancy returned to the bedroom and cried, "Get up! Get up! Brandon has been in an accident, and we need to get to the hospital!" I knew immediately that this was a serious matter because the policeman came in person instead of telephoning us. We were told to call the hospital, and that was not a good sign.

When I called the hospital, they asked me if there was someone to bring us to the hospital. Without telling me what had happened, I knew that the worst had happened. I stated that I could drive. This was reminiscent of the call I received concerning my parents. Nancy and I arrived at the hospital at about 2:30 A.M. only to have our worst fears affirmed. Brandon was dead! He had been involved in a head-on collision on his way from work to visit a friend in Kennesaw. Our hearts were broken. We then returned home, and shortly, Bishop Huskins and Donia were there to stand by us for the days to come. Bishop Huskins never left us from early morning until bedtime. He and Brandon had always been close throughout the years since New Covenant Church.

At the time, Brandon was working the second shift as a security guard of Allied Barton in Rome, Georgia. This was a place of employment right next to Georgia Highlands College, where he was enrolled for classes. He had decided that after he got off work at 11:00 P.M. he would go to Kennesaw. He had just talked with Bishop Huskins right before he left work, and everything seemed to be fine. We do not understand how the accident happened, as apparently Brandon was going south in the northbound lane of Highway 41 when the collision took place. There were no drugs or alcohol involved, as was stated

in the police report. The only conclusion we have come to is that he was not completely alert, having worked all day. Brandon had a tendency sometimes for his focus to be lessened by distractions, sometimes getting caught up in listening to music. We do not know what happened, nor do we understand.

The greatest mystery to us is why or how this happened at a time when Brandon was becoming so upbeat and focused on his future. He was thoroughly enjoying his school classes. He was more involved in our church than I had ever seen him, working with projectors in the sound room along with his father-in-law, Matt Tinsley. He had renewed a strong friendship with Bishop Huskins, and the future was looking bright. Then the dreadful tragedy happened. Brandon's journey in this realm of life had ended, but it had just begun in a higher dimension.

Brandon has always been a very talented young man, being artistic as well as musically inclined. But, we were not aware of perhaps his greatest talent—that of writing. We would never have known this had he not been enrolled in a writing class in college, where he wrote some of the most interesting essays. He had the talent to become a very successful writer. This was verified by two professors of English in addition to his professor in his composition class. His professor was enthralled by an essay Brandon wrote, entitled “I Was from the Land of Misery (Missouri),” This was a brief story of his upbringing in Hayti, Missouri. His professor wrote on his paper, “This is the first chapter of your first novel.” We treasure all of his writings, which gave us greater insight into his most inner being. We would never have known about this talent had he not been enrolled in college.

In the fall of 2012, the Dean of Student Affairs of Georgia Highland College called me asking permission for one of Brandon's writings to be considered for publication in the annual magazine that recognized artistic and literary talent. In the following spring, I received another call announcing that Brandon's essay, *A Little about Myself* was accepted and published. Nancy and I, along with Bishop Huskins and Brandon's mother-in-law, Von Tinsley, went to the ceremony at the college for the dedication of the magazine. Brandon's writing was recognized and recited by his professor. This was a special honor to us, and we were so proud of Brandon.

Incidentally, this was on April 17, which was Brandon and Hope's wedding anniversary. Following is the writing:

“A Little about Myself”

I speak very little, but not because I have a shortage of words.  
I talk out loud to myself and yes, I answer myself.  
I love people (especially kids and the elderly).  
I laugh at myself way more than you ever will.  
I sometimes think evil thoughts, but I don't take ownership.  
I love thrift stores, coffee shops, and live music.  
I value my heritage.  
I dream big. I daydream bigger.  
I believe in second chances—and third, fourth, and fifth chances.  
I love free stuff.  
I love science.  
I love chaos.  
I love chimichangas.  
I fly by the seat of my pants.  
I am horrible at returning phone calls.  
I hate stepping on cracks.  
I love figuring things out for myself.  
I love to explore.  
My favorite Disney movie is the Lion King.  
I'm a Leo. I love attention but hate being the center of it.  
I love surprise endings.  
I love good news.  
I hate drama.  
I hate shopping at Walmart.  
I love people-watching at Walmart.  
I love to read cereal boxes.  
I like to pee outside.  
I like peppers that are so hot it makes me drool.  
I love to sneeze.  
I love girls who wear flip-flops.  
I think flip-flops should be worn only by girls.  
I love talking to complete strangers.  
I think I have insomnia.  
I believe in grace. Lots and lots of grace.  
I'm thinking of not voting in the next presidential election.

I don't mind criticism.  
I think it's midnight, and I must submit this post immediately.  
I think hope is what drives me more than anything.  
I hope I get credit for this blog.

Oh, did I mention that I am the world's best procrastinator?

Two of the most profound writings of Brandon's were "Then She Laughed" and "The Kennesaw Old-Timers Club." The first was a tribute to Hope, and the second one was a tribute to an extraordinary elderly man whom Brandon had met a few years back. According to Bishop Huskins, Brandon was on his way to see if the old man was still living when the accident took place. I will put some more of Brandon's writings at the end of the book, including "The Land of Misery," in addition to the two aforementioned ones.

In honor of Brandon, Donia, Shannon, Valerie, Kimberley, and Kate wore flip flops to the funeral because in his "A Little about Me," he stated that he thought only girls should wear flip flops! Many friends showed their love and respect, not only at his viewing and funeral, but in comments left on his Facebook page. I will insert a few of the condolences left by his friends in APPENDIX C of this book. To me, this tells who Brandon was in the eyes of others.

Probably the most moving tribute was by Bishop David Huskins who wrote the following and read it at Brandon's Home Going:



Bran Da Man (one of my favorite pictures of Brandon)

## **Bran DA MAN!**

Forever in my heart. April 27, 2012 (Two days after Brandon had died).

It was almost thirty years ago when we met at New Covenant Church. I was barely a teen and you were soon to be a teen. I was loud and you were quiet, yet we bonded and formed a friendship that has lasted all this time. You volunteered to help me in Children's Church (so long as it was a role that did not require you to say anything) even though you were still a member of children's church yourself. You helped me build the first puppet stand...what a stand it was. LOL. AND remember when we tried to make a cape for FAITH MAN that didn't turn out so good. :)

Then when I first took the teen group you were one of the first teens to take the "dream team course" and who could forget you as a student when I monitored for the Academy in between breaks at the Bible School and yes I did let you get by with too much a few times. :) Then there was the Friday night board games and the basketball matches beside the church at the lower deck parking lot. What about the Sunday evening of going to ice cream and pushing my "great" car forever because it wouldn't start? I remember beaming with pride at your graduation even though you were not sure you wanted any part of all that spot light. You deserved it all then and you deserve it all now. You would have been the top of the class if there had been hundreds in that class and you remain TOP OF THE CLASS today. Your always willingness to stand up for the underdog came shining through in every situation. Your words were often few but your heart was always talking. You were a person of loyalty and covenant long before most even knew it existed. I remember the talks at Dellinger Park about the future, the "crazy girls," and the people watching. Moments that seem like yesterday now even though they were so long ago.

As I went off to adulthood and starting my family and pastoring I remember the first day you walked into CLCC and the day you said "I'll do anything you need me to do if it don't require me to say anything" it was full circle. However, you did almost everything even if and when it required you to say something. The thing you did clearest, loudest, and consistently was serve faithfully. You took a stint at the drums, sound, helps, youth, security, and then your "big break" as a roman soldier in the passion performance. That is when you caught the eye of the one who had caught your eye...HOPE. The hours we talked on the front porch of the old sanctuary about the two of you seem like only yesterday. There was no question you were smitten. Then it was to be! Then it seemed to be gone. Your resolve never wavered I will always remember the day you said, "If I have to wait a hundred years I will. I know what I know." It didn't take a hundred years but you did wait and you were right. There were those six weeks of pre-marital counseling when you quizzed me like you didn't know a thing and Hope's only question the whole six weeks was about making sure I was going to wear "purple" for the wedding. Even though we were friends and close in age it was at the wedding that I felt I was 'marrying off' my two 'babies' to each other. As you got ready to leave for your honeymoon and the three of us stood in the hall and cried and marveled together at how God had done what you asked Him to do, I had never seen two happier people in my life. We weathered a few storms after that and sat in my office a few times and navigated some storms but your resolve was unwavering always. The concerts we all shared, the visits to Revolution and the homeless shelter may have formed the ministry CLCC is today. You saw and lived GRACE with me before it was our emphasis. Then that horrid July 15th when your world was rocked and all of ours as well, and it was you, Matt, and I that had to walk into that room and identify your queen. You were a rock but a rock who had a piece missing. I promised to carry you and you agreed to let me.

However, I think we mostly carried each other. Two years later when you found that "perfect grave marker" and had your name put on it with hers, I quizzed you about the what ifs' and your resolve was the same "nothing will change, I married her for life." You knew.

The season you came on staff to assist your Dad at the church were some of the greatest days ever because not only were you in your purpose but that is when our weekly lunch times started. I treasure them now more than ever. Even the "big lunches" of Krystal out of the bag at Peeks Park were gourmet meals. Then when my world seem to unravel, you were on the phone saying even though I been away a bit for work I am coming home "to walk this out with you." AND YOU DID. It was these last three years that I realized you were no longer just a son, you were a peer. You carried me as much as I carried you. Our Monday meetings have meant the world to us both I think but I know to me. Even when it was as simple as sitting in the parking lot of Home Depot and people watching. Your laughter was contagious.

Your photography of documenting conferences, the outpouring, and yes when Hollywood came to Cedartown will give hours of reflection long into the future. You let us see it all through your lens. Just like your pictures you were the gift that keeps on giving. It has been my joy to watch and assist you in the plans that got you back in college and our time of working on the budget for the future but movie time is still the fondest memory and I will catch "THE HOPKINS" as Hitchcock on night one and YOU WILL BE THERE WITH ME.

Your post on my Facebook wall both Monday and Tuesday I have re-read over and over to pretend it was brand new for Wednesday through today. When you said "I look forward to being a part of this," YOU WILL. 10 26pm Tuesday night is forever engraved in my mind and I wish I had it back. You said, "I'll talk to you tomorrow bishop, I love you and if you need me let me know." HEY BRAN, I will always need you and

I love you too. I would like to go back to 10 26pm Tuesday night just before we hung up to say, "hey bud just go straight home after work tonight and I'll go with you Thursday night, or let's meet at Waffle House as soon as you get off instead of you going to Kennesaw tonight." I never dreamed when the next call came after midnight it could possibly have been what it was. I thought the officer was confused, I said I just talked to him. When my head cleared I gave them Doc and Nanny's numbers still never dreaming it could mean what it meant, so I dressed to come meet them and 'pick you up at the hospital'. Then Jan Collier called and said they need to reach Doc and Nanny now...my heart sank. IT COULD NOT BE. You could not be gone...YOU ARE NOT GONE, you are just out of sight. Now I know why you were taking dance again and why you were getting back into dance. You were going to be dancing before the week was over WITH HOPE. I hurt like crazy for me because these last three weeks you have been closer than ever and talked more than ever but as much as I hurt for me, I rejoice for the two of you. You are dancing. You will never be dead. You are more alive than ever. I will make sure the writings are discovered, the blog is celebrated, and your story of life and love is heard forever. NO ONE has ever been more faithful, loyal, and covenantal than you. You have always told me the truth...ALWAYS. You never hid a single thing from me, even stuff I wish you would have. :) You went from being a kid I loved, to a servant in the house, to a son in the faith, to a man I respected, to a best friend, and to now my hero. You were content to never shine and to always stay out of the bright lights but BRAN you always shined even when you tried to hide. You will always be in my heart forever. I love you Bran, enjoy the dance, and yes tell Hope I will wear purple tomorrow. :) BRAN YOU ARE DA MAN!

### **An Outpouring of Love**

There were perhaps five hundred people to show up for Brandon's viewing on a Friday night. Numerous family

members and friends showed their respect by being there for the celebration of his home going the next day. Brandon's Homegoing Ceremony was streamed live via the internet. Our good friend Bob Cagle, who was my next door neighbor and head elder in Jasper, provided funeral services for Brandon. We paid for the casket, vault, and opening and closing of the grave. Bob charged us nothing for his services. We are appreciative to Bob as he went to Kennesaw to get his body, and made a roundtrip of about one hundred fifty miles for Brandon's viewing on Friday night and for his funeral on Saturday.

Brandon's body could not be left in the church unless a staff member of Cagle Funeral Home was present with it at all times. Bishop Huskins was sanctioned as a staff member of the funeral home for one day, and he stayed in the church all night with Brandon's body. There was a special bond between Brandon and Bishop Huskins.

Ordinarily, a police escort leads the procession to the gravesite. But, since Bob was from out of town, apparently the call to the police was not made. When this was discovered right after the funeral, Bishop Huskins called for the police escort to come. They delayed their coming so long that it was agreed that Bishop would go ahead in his car to direct traffic near the cemetery. There must have been a misunderstanding with the hearse driver, because he was trying to catch up with Bishop and was going over 65 miles per hour. There the whole procession was trying to keep up, and we all were going 65 miles an hour in a 55 mile per hour speed zone. That was very frustrating, and I slowed down to what I thought was at least a reasonable pace, and those following just had to follow behind me. In the meantime, Bishop and the hearse were way ahead of all the rest of us. Our son Kenny finally was signaling for traffic going in the other direction to slow down in respect of the procession.

The family members were handling everything pretty well until the casket was closed for the last time. At that time, Donia almost had a panic attack, crying, "I won't see him anymore!" She became hysterical. Oftentimes, the family members who are the loudest at a funeral are those who feel guilty for not doing more for the deceased one. This certainly was not the case for Donia, as she had been a surrogate mother to both of her younger brothers, Brandon and Lyle. She was

eight years older than Brandon, and ten years older than Lyle. Donia still loved her brothers as much as she ever did and continued to do whatever she could to help them, including allowing both of them to live in her home. In fact, Brandon had lived with Donia over a year before he moved back to Cartersville less than a year before he died.

At the end of the gravesite ceremony, most of the family members had already left, but Donia and Ken along with a few others, remained back to shovel dirt over the casket. Donia aggressively took the shovel and began shoveling dirt with all that was in her. She was letting out her frustrations, and she reported later that that was the best thing she did to deal with her emotions. She said that it helped to bring closure to her.

Brandon's final resting place is in Rome Memorial Gardens side by side with the love of his life, Hope. He is now reunited with her after having been separated for eleven years by her death. Brandon had stated that he desired to be an organ donor on his driver's license. Perhaps his greatest contribution to humanity on this earth was the donation of his heart, eyes, tissue, and valves for the sake of someone to live a more enjoyable and fulfilling life.

After one year elapsed, I went to the bank to redraw a few hundred dollars that went to reimburse some expenses I had incurred personally on his behalf. I cannot describe the feeling that struck me as I realized that this was perhaps the last action to close out Brandon's dealings. That is when I wrote the following song:

### **The Book Has Not Been Closed**

Written by Kenneth Meadors  
May 2, 2013

#### **Verse 1**

I went to the bank today to close out your account.  
My emotions overflowed thinking this had closed the book.  
While my tears were flowing, hope in my heart arose.

It was closing one chapter, but the book has not been closed

#### **Verse 2**

It was one year ago when the sad news came  
You were taken from us, and we felt the piercing pain.  
One chapter may have ended, but there's more to be read.  
Your book is not finished; there's more to be said.

#### **Chorus**

There's more to be written; more chapters to be read.  
Your life is still speaking, for there's more to be said.  
Your voice is still heard in our hearts so loud and clear.  
Every time we read your book, you're not gone you're still here.

#### **Verse 3**

So many lives you have touched; a legacy you left behind  
By words you have spoken, so gentle, so kind.  
You are still writing through lives you have changed.  
All your acts of love and deeds, in your book will remain.

#### **(Repeat Chorus)**

Your life will live on beyond your days on earth.  
Everyone that you met, in them you saw a worth.  
You were always there to lend a helping hand  
For now and forever, you are still Bran the Man.



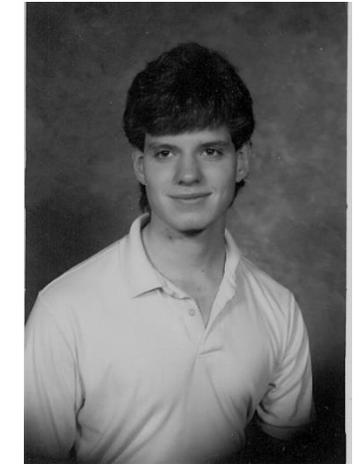
Baby Bran



Brandon about 18 months



Brandon about 2 years

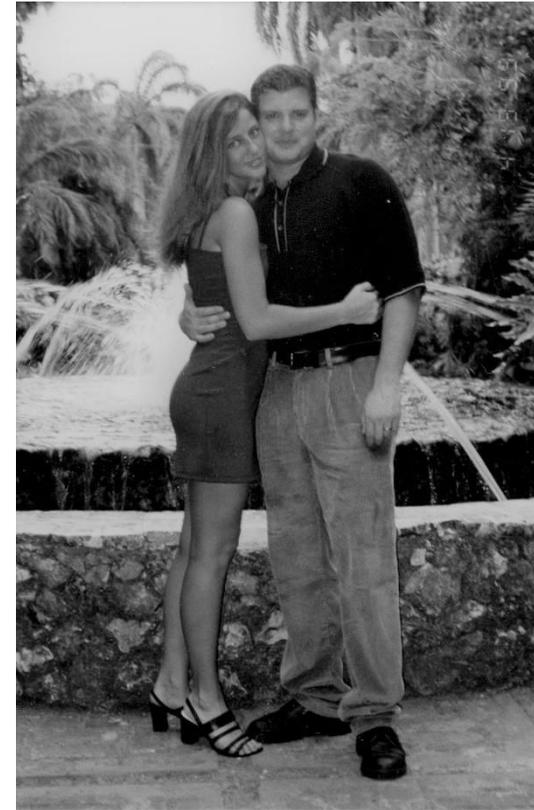




Brandon and Lyle



Brandon with Hope's Parents, Matt and Von Tinsley



Bran and Hope on their honeymoon.



Brandon was an organ donor.



Brandon circa 2010



Brandon with Mom, Dad, and Donia Bishop's 25<sup>th</sup> Church Anniversary.

## Chapter Twenty-three

### OTHER FAMILY CONNECTION

#### Nannyisms

How could I write a story of my life without mentioning a few nannyisms? Some have heard of yogisms, famous short humorous one-liners of Yogi Berra, a baseball hall of fame player for the New York Yankees. An example of a yogism: "If you come to a fork in the road, take it." "Baseball is 90% mental; the other half is physical." A nannyism is a humorous, somewhat naïve response by Nancy (Nanny).

A few Nannyisms:

When I asked my brother Raymond if he thought there were elephants on the ark, since there are no elephants in Turkey, Nancy replied, "Sure there were." "How do you know?" "Well, they're in all the pictures!"

When we had a ventriloquist at New Covenant Church, Nancy asked, "Why does the man have a microphone and the dummy doesn't?"

She told Brandon, "Vinegar is good for a lot of things—arthritis, memory, digestion, upset stomach, and did I mention memory?"

A hilarious story that we still get the most mileage out of was when Nancy was hiding some food for me, as I was late coming home for dinner. Lyle was notorious for being a big eater; he could eat a full meal every few hours. So, in order to hide the food on a high shelf, she had Lyle to help her. Our son Kenny was there, and he asked, "Who are you hiding the food from?" Of course, Lyle was being very coy and helped his mother hide the food. In all fairness, if Lyle had been told that the food was reserved for his father, he would not have eaten it. (I don't think!)

### Special Times with Tony and Marge Abram

Tony and Marge have been our friends for fifty-two years, having met for the first time at Aunt Louise Copeland's church in Poplar Bluff, Missouri. We then saw them again at a Youth Camp, and they came to visit our church in Hayti. Tony and Marge have dedicated their lives to the work of the ministry all over the world, conducting mass crusades, schools of ministry, and seminars. They have ministered in over one hundred twenty-five nations, and I had the privilege of ministering with them for over five weeks in Brazil in 1975. Even though there was a span of time where we had little contact, we have had many good times of fellowship with them over the past ten or twelve years. We have spent time with them many times in the North Georgia Mountains. Then, we followed up with a dream trip that we never thought we'd take, going to Alberta, Canada to meet and visit with Marge's family. They took us on a tour of some of the most beautiful places in the world, including the picturesque Lake Louise.



Tony and Marge Abram with Nancy and me 2016.

In December, 2012, Nancy and I had a time of refreshing with the Abrams that I certainly never thought we'd have. We went on a 17-day cruise with them celebrating their

fiftieth wedding anniversary. This was a gift to them from family and close friends. Since Nancy and I never had a real honeymoon, I suppose that one coming after fifty-two years of marriage was fitting! We left San Diego, California, went down the west coast of Central America, through the Panama Canal, and back up through the Caribbean Sea to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. We stopped in eight different ports including Puerto Vallarta, Mexico; Hualtulco, Mexico; Puerto Quetzal, Guatemala; Corinta, Nicaragua; Puerto Caldera, Costa Rica; Oranjestad, Aruba; Willemstad, (Curacao) Dutch Antilles; and Half Moon Cay, Bahamas.

Nancy overcame many fears on the cruise that she never thought she would. First, she is fearful of flying, but we flew to San Diego. She was always fearful of boats and water, but she was a real champion on this whole trip. Before embarking on the ship in San Diego, we spent two nights with my nephew Richie and his family. This was the first time that we had seen them in a few years.

The cruise was very calm in the Pacific Ocean, and a little rougher in the Caribbean. However, overall, the cruise was a very pleasant one with plenty of good food, entertainment, and fellowship with Tony and Marge. When we got to Fort Lauderdale, we rented a van to return home. We got home only three days before Christmas, but Donia had taken care of all the details for our regular family get-together on Christmas Eve.

### Reunion with the Riveras

Milton Rivera came from Guatemala to live with us and go to school for over a year. That was in 1978-79. We had made initial contact with the Rivera family through Ray and Carol when they were doing missionary work in Central America. For some strange reason, we had lost contact with the Riveras over the past thirty years. I didn't have an address or telephone number. I had tried to google them on the internet, but to no avail. In 2011, Rodolfo Rivera, the father, made contact with Ray through LinkedIn. From there, we had restored communication with the family.



Reunion with Rivera family after 35 years. Milton on far right.

When we discovered that we would be making a stop in a Guatemalan port on our cruise, we contacted the Riveras asking if it were possible for them to meet us at the port. They were excited about that, and Rodolfo, Bernarda (the mother), Milton, and Silvia (sister) met us at the port and took us to lunch. It was a most pleasant experience, as this was the first time we had seen them in over thirty years. Of course, we were all much older looking, but Rodolfo and Bernarda looked very good for their age (eighty-six and eighty-four years young at the time. Now, five years later, they are still living). Milton looked very good (now fifty-three years old), and he was his old self, except that he had matured. He has two daughters, one who graduated from a Chinese university and fluently speaks three languages: Spanish, English, and Chinese. Silvia speaks fluently three languages: Spanish, English, and German. She works as a translator for a German company.

The Riveras live in Guatemala City, but they have a ranch about an hour from the city. They have over two thousand acres, thirteen hundred head of beef cattle, thirty-five horses, and a multiple number of tropical fruit trees. In fact, they said that they had over twelve different varieties of bananas. When I asked him what he did with all of that fruit, he said that they basically gave it away. Rodolfo and Milton go to the ranch from

Tuesday through Friday. Our meeting with them was the highlight of our cruise.

### **Richie Horst**

Richie is a very important member of our immediate family. Not only is he my nephew, but I suppose you could say I was his surrogate father, at least in the summers when he was growing up. Richie is, and always has been, a most unusual individual. Despite the many obstacles he has faced in life, including the death of his mother when he was eight years old, Richie has been upbeat and optimistic. He has proven to be an outstanding husband and father.

After Richie graduated from high school, he discovered that there was no money in the trust fund that was left him from his mother's share of my mom and dad's estate. He then decided to join the Navy, and it was there that he met his future wife, Amanda. We did not meet Richie's wife and first two children until we met them at my brother Raymond's house in Hamilton, Ohio. This was about 1995, and Lyle, Brandon, and Hope made the trip to Ohio to spend the night and meet Rich's new family. Matthew was perhaps three years old, and Meghann was about one year old. We drove back to Georgia at night, and I allowed Lyle to drive. I found out later that he had been driving over 90 miles an hour in our Accura Legend while I was asleep.

A little later, Richie and his family moved to Atlanta and stayed with Donia and Chris for a season. It was from there that they moved to Ohio, which was Amanda's home. Richie later joined the army reserve to help supplement his salary. Within a month, he was on active duty in Iraq! As I stated earlier, Nancy and I visited with Rich and his family in December before disembarking on a cruise through the Panama Canal. Rich and Amanda have done a wonderful job in rearing three wonderful children: Matt, Meghann, and Hannah. It was while we were visiting Rich in Hamilton, when we found out that Shannon and Valerie were planning to join Master's Commission, a youth discipleship program in Phoenix, Arizona.



Richie Horst and his family when we visited them in San Diego in 2012

### **Walker Family Reunions**

After Mama Walker died, her children determined to keep in contact with each other through an annual family reunion that alternated among the siblings. We hosted a family reunion in Jasper, and Chris and Donia were hosts twice in their cabin between Helen and Blairsville, Georgia. We have been to Tulsa a few times; Angel and Jake's home in Salem, Missouri; Don and Patsy's lake home in Jacksonville, Texas; and several times in Memphis. In fact, because of Olive and Sanky's increased years, the reunion was held in Memphis about every time. In the beginning, we met once a year. Now, we meet once every two years, and this year is the year for another reunion.

In one sense of the word, perhaps the most memorable reunion was in 2003 when we went to Jacksonville, Texas. That would be the last reunion we would have with Nancy's brother, Bill Walker. Just two months later, he died of a fatal fall down the stairs into his basement. I shall never forget Larry calling us to tell us the news. Nancy came to me sobbing, "Bill has only a couple of hours to live." Our good friend, Darrell Gooden, was gracious enough to loan us his SUV for the family to travel in, picking Olive and Sanky up in Memphis before continuing on to Tulsa. It was a sad time.

It was just two years after Mama Walker died that Wayne, Nancy's oldest brother, passed on to glory. In 2012, our middle son Brandon, joined the great cloud of witnesses. He, along with our youngest son Lyle, are now having a reunion with Maw, Paw (Meadors), Mama Walker, Daddy Bill, Aunt Louise, Aunt Florence, Wayne, Bill, and a host of other relatives who have crossed over.



Walker Reunion at Donia's House in Decatur circa 2013

### **Raymond and I at Five Points**

A few years ago, Ray and I were strolling downtown Atlanta at the Five Points MARTA station across from Underground Atlanta when we heard a street preacher preaching to the top of his lungs against homosexuality. He stated that the Bible says, "God is gonna kill all those faggots!" A meek, quiet-spoken young man approached him and said, "Can't you be a little kinder?" The preacher then went on another rampage. My question was, "What are the chances that that little guy along with many others are running to knock down the doors of that church so that they can hear some more "good news?"

### **A Return to Old Mexico**

Forty-eight years ago, Nancy and I went to Matehuala, Mexico to visit missionary friends of ours, Eddie and Geraldine

Griffith. A couple of years later, Jerry and Rebecca Dortch and family moved to Matehuala to pick up on the ministry after the Griffiths left. We never visited the Dortches in Mexico, but in 2007, I had the privilege of returning to Matehuala with Jerry and Rebecca along with three other ministers, Apostle Edmond James, Pastor Ricky White, and Pastor Michael Sweeney. We drove in Pastor White's van from Birmingham all night to reach our first destination, McAllen, Texas. We spent the night there in a ministry facility. We spent the next day and night with the minister, and the following day, he and his son-in-law drove us all the way to Matehuala in their van. They had done this for many ministers, and they were a real blessing and asset.

When we reached Matehuala, we checked into a hotel, where we stayed for about ten days, ministering in adjacent villages. Since it had been over forty years since I last visited Matehuala, it was very interesting to see how the city had grown from about twenty-five thousand to over one hundred thousand. Also, it was interesting to see some of the native Mexicans whom Jerry had worked with over forty years before. The Mexican pastor who took the first church Jerry built in Mexico was still the pastor in 2007! He was in his eighties at that time. Since then, he has gone on to be with the Lord.

There is always at least one exciting adventure on every trip. During our visit to Mexico, we went up into the mountains east of Matehuala to a village called San Francisco. I've been on a couple of treacherous roads, but the dirt road winding around the mountains probably "took the cake." We were on a narrow road running parallel to a gorge over two hundred feet deep, and we were close enough to the edge for me to literally look down the side of that gorge; and, there was no rail! Well, that wasn't as bad as the return trip back to Matehuala that night. As we left San Francisco, it started raining. The road was beginning to get muddy and slippery. I felt the tail end of the van slipping from side to side. I never prayed so hard in my life, and I came to the conclusion that if this was the end, it was the end. It was very nerve wracking, but by the grace of God, we returned safely.

While we were in Mexico, we ministered in many places where Jerry had ministered in the early 1970s. Each of us ministers shared a bit in every service, but one was designated to be the major speaker for the night. We each

alternated. Most of the churches were very small, but there was a pretty significant Pentecostal church in Matehuala where I spoke. To me, the most impactful and impressive church was a spirit-filled Methodist church in the city. The praise and worship was awesome, and they were open to the prophetic ministry of Apostle James.

Before we returned to the states, we went on another adventure, but this was more for sightseeing than for ministry. This trip was to a remote old silver mining village Real de Catorce, which could only be accessed through a one and one-half mile one-way road through a tunnel through the mountain. Following is a description of the village from Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia:

Real de Catorce (Spanish pronunciation: [re'al ðe ka'torse]), often shortened to Real, is a village in the Mexican state of San Luis Potosí and the seat of the municipality of Catorce. It is located 160 miles (260 km) north of the city of San Luis Potosí, and currently has a full-time population of under 1,000 residents. This 'ghost-town' in the high and dry expanses of northern San Luis Potosí state was once a thriving silver mining settlement, has long been a pilgrimage site for both local Catholics and Huichol shamanists, and is now being discovered by international tourists drawn by the desert ambience and reputed spiritual energy.

The village of Real de Catorce sits on the side of a mountain at more than 2,743 meters (9,000 ft.). It is located in the Sierra de Catorce range, one of the highest plateaus in Mexico, where summits may extend over 10,000 feet (3,000 m). These mountains lie in the arid Mexican plateau, cut off from trade winds of the Gulf of Mexico by the high peaks of the Sierra Madre Oriental.

The main road to Real de Catorce is off of Highway 62 between Matehuala and San Tiburcio. This is roughly to the east of Real, near the town of Cedral. From the main highway there is a 17-mile (27 km) cobblestone road which rises into the sierra, then the 1.5-mile (2.4 km) long Ogarrío Tunnel which only accepts vehicles

one way (with travelers in and out having to wait their turn).

To me, the most intriguing site in Real was our visit inside the vast Catholic cathedral with life-size statues of dozens of saints. That was interesting, but the most amazing thing was seeing devout Catholics literally crawling on their hands and knees to pay homage to a saint. I got some amazing video footage of this village and cathedral, but for some strange reason, I never made it home with it.

On the way back to the states, we had another very trying and potentially troubling encounter with the border guards. We were ordered to unload everything in the van and bring it into the station. It was a harrowing experience, and no explanation was ever given to us for this inspection. The minister from McAllen, Texas who took us to Mexico in his van, became very irate, and threatened to complain to a higher authority. Two of the ministers who made the trip with us were African-Americans, and the McAllen brother felt that was the reason for the stop. At any rate, we continued on to stay in a motel before returning to Alabama and Georgia.

When Bill and I grew up in the same church in Gideon, Missouri in the early 1950s, we both were regular musicians at the church; I played the guitar, and Bill played the mandolin. I had an old archtop Harmony guitar, and Bill had a Sears and Roebuck Silvertone Mandolin. When Bill was in high school, our algebra teacher, Mr. Lyman Huckaby, had an old Gibson mandolin that he was willing to trade to Bill for his old Silvertone. The bottom line is that Mr. Huckaby inherited the mandolin and probably had no use for it. I'm sure that he didn't really know the worth of it.

In about 1995 or 1996, the Walker Reunion was held in Tulsa. When I inquired about the old Gibson mandolin, Bill stated that he never played it. It was during this time that I was picking up interest in playing the mandolin. In fact, I had a relatively cheap mandolin that I was learning on. When I offered Bill \$500.00 for the mandolin, he accepted it. In checking the serial number of the Gibson mandolin, it was discovered that it was a 1906 Model A Gibson with "The Gibson" inscribed on the tuning head. I still have the mandolin

to this day, and it will always be in the family, as we consider it a real family heirloom.

When I was a senior in high school, I sold my old Harmony guitar and bought a Gibson ES225T model electric guitar. It was a thin, hollow-bodied guitar. Also, I bought a 1956 Tremolux Fender amplifier. I still have the guitar and amplifier today. In fact, I had determined that I was going to will the guitar to Brandon, as he had shown a lot of interest in learning to play the guitar. I told Brandon that I was giving it to him because I knew he would always treasure it. He took the guitar; but, as of April 25, 2012, I inherited it back. The only other person that was interested in playing a guitar was Ken, and I was planning to leave him my Martin D-35 acoustical guitar. Who knows, I might sell them and travel around the world! Nah, I would probably have to do it by myself as Nancy probably would not go on another cruise.

### **I Began Writing Songs**

It was always my desire to write a song, but I never seemed to be able to apply myself to it. About fourteen years ago (2003), I dreamed of singing a song that I had written. It was so beautiful in the dream. I had similar dreams in the past, but I did not remember enough about it when I awoken to even capture an idea. But, it was the dream in 2003 that was still in my memory when I woke up the next morning. I sat down to begin writing the lyrics to the song, and later captured the melody. From that point on, for the next couple of years, songs kept coming to me. Then I went through a drought the past couple of years without writing a single song, but the inspiration was revived last year. Just this past year, I probably wrote twenty-five or more songs. To date, I have written two hundred and seventy-six songs that have been copyrighted in the United States Copyright Office in Washington, D.C.

My first song was entitled, *Born to Be Free*. Since this was my very first song, I am presenting the words in this autobiography:

## **Born to Be Free**

Copyrighted by William Kenneth Meadors  
October 23, 2003

### *Verse 1*

I was bound by chains of darkness, no hope of light I found.  
Till I heard a voice from heaven; it was a glorious sound.  
A sound of liberty to all who in sin were bound.  
The hope of God's great glory of this new life I found.

### *Chorus*

For I was born to be free; it was a gift from God above.  
Saved by His grace and mercy; changed by His great love.  
Redeemed by the blood of Jesus; cleansed by the blood of the  
Lamb.  
I'm clean, I'm pure, I'm holy; God's righteousness I am.

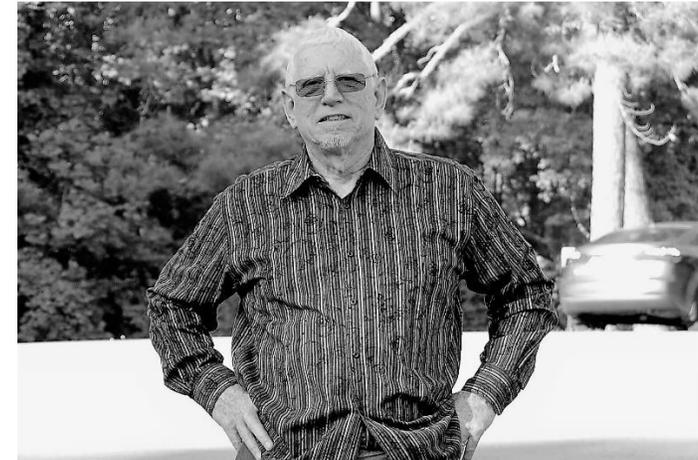
### *Verse 2*

As the seed of the first Adam, I was surely doomed to die.  
But Jesus came to rescue me and gave to me His life.  
Now the seed of Christ lives in me; His life abides within.  
No longer bound by chains of darkness, I'm redeemed from all  
my sins.

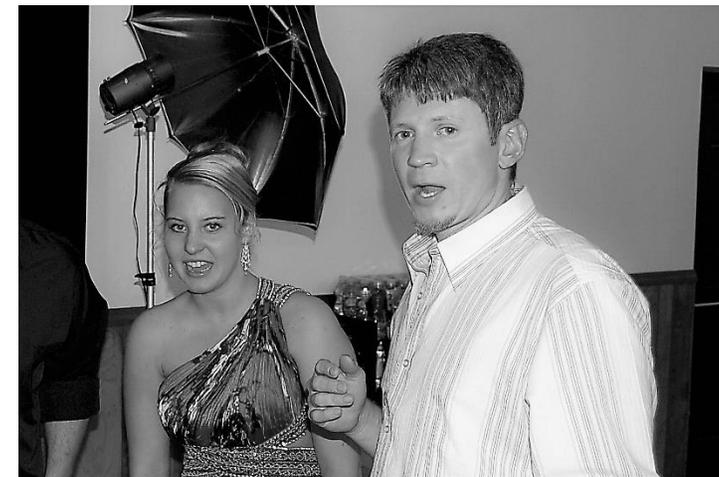
### *(Repeat Chorus)*

### *Verse 3*

And now I can come boldly to God's great throne of grace.  
No longer bound by Adam, I belong to a brand new race.  
With Jesus as my captain, I march to victory.  
Over sickness, sin and bondage—for I am now free.



Kenneth 2014



Lyle and Kandi 2010



Brandon, Donia, and Lyle circa 2008



Walker Family Reunion in Salem, Missouri

## Chapter Twenty-four

### ANOTHER TRAGEDY— BISHOP DAVID HUSKINS

Nancy and I have seen more than our share of family tragedies. Four members of my family had died in an automobile accident in 1979. Our daughter-in-law, Hope, died in an automobile accident in 2001. Then our son, Brandon, died in an automobile accident in 2012. Our youngest son, Lyle, died in 2015. I shall now be transparent in stating that the two auto accidents were contradictory to what I felt the Lord had promised me. After the accident that took my family members' lives in 1979, I believed that the same thing would never happen again. I truly felt in my heart that I had faith that this would be so, but it wasn't to be. Of course, this shook me, and I still don't have an explanation. Knowing that God is faithful to His Word, I must conclude that God must not have given me that promise, that it was the wish of my heart. Some may argue that those promises were contingent. Contingent upon what?

Another experience of thinking I had heard from God was when Nancy's father died from a self-inflicted gun wound. I believed that not another of our family would suffer the same fate (suicide). Sadly, our youngest son died from hanging in a prison cell in 2015. Again, I don't understand the reasons for these disappointments. All I can say is that my faith in God is not shaken, but perhaps my faith in my faith is shaken. I have now learned that when you don't have the strength to have active faith, you just have to trust—trust that God is God and that He will never fail us.

#### Bishop David Huskins' Untimely Death

In essence, we have lost three sons in the past five years. First, of course, was Brandon. Then, in 2014, it was our spiritual son, Bishop David Huskins. It has been painful for the loss of all three of these young men. Brandon died at forty-one years of age; Lyle died at the age of forty-three years; and David died at the young age of forty-seven years.

Bishop David had been very active in a broad scope of ministry all of his adult life. He began pastoring Cedar Lake Christian Center when he was eighteen or nineteen years old. He became a bishop of the Fellowship of Vineyard Harvester Churches in his twenties. He then became the bishop of the International Community of Charismatic Churches (ICCC). In his role as the bishop of ICCC, he traveled on a regular basis to many foreign nations, in particular Nigeria.

Bishop Benson Idahosa had an extensive ministry in Nigeria, with thousands of ministers and millions of followers under his spiritual covering. Bishop Idahosa was introduced to the U.S. on a large scale when he appeared on Oral Roberts' television program. In fact, his son, who is now the chancellor of Benson Idahosa University in Benin City, Nigeria, was a friend and fellow student at Oral Roberts University with our niece, Dr. Andrea Walker. In addition, the Idahosa children had gone to a private school in Nigeria with Nancy's nephew's (Dr. Don Meier) children. So, personally, the Idahosa family has had close connections with many of our family members.

A most unusual connection was made between Bishop Idahosa and Bishop Huskins. It was less than a year before Bishop Idahosa's untimely death that he and Bishop Huskins were traveling to Rome, Georgia after a service at Cedar Lake. Bishop Huskins was in the front seat, and Bishop Idahosa was in the back. Bishop Idahosa asked Bishop Huskins to join him in the back seat, so he proceeded to crawl over the seat to the back. It was then that a covenant was made between the two, and Bishop Idahosa asked Bishop Huskins to promise that if anything happened to him, that he would take care of his family. As a result of this bond, Bishop Huskins has been connected to the Idahosa family in many of their family events, including performing the marriage ceremony of a daughter. He had the honor of dedicating Bishop Idahosa's grandchild. In addition, Bishop Huskins was the featured speaker in the Annual Conference in Benin City, where thousands of ministers gathered.

I share all of this to show you how influential Bishop Huskins had become in worldwide ministries. Because of this extensive ministry, both nationally and abroad, in my opinion, Bishop began burning the candle on both ends. This I communicated to him just months before his death. All of this

was in addition to his pastoral duties at CLCC. To compound his heavy duties was the founding of a new church, The Globe, in Stockbridge, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta. Bishop Huskins had purchased a fifty-three acre campus with extensive buildings, including a large gymnasium and a sanctuary that seated eight hundred people. This was a big vision that no doubt became a heavy responsibility. Bishop never admitted this, but in my opinion, this was the case. He had always said that he thrived under pressure.

To complicate matters, Bishop was experiencing some health issues that most people believe was the primary reason of him taking his own life by a self-inflicted gunshot. Of course, this fatal event shook the entire world of David Huskins.

He had open heart surgery at the age of thirty years when it was discovered that he had a hole in his heart that needed to be repaired. This hole was discovered after he was involved in a car accident on the way to a meeting on the East Coast with his wife and children. He only learned of this problem when he was taken for an examination at the local hospital. As the result of Bishop's heart surgery, his older brother, Dennis Huskins, gave his heart to the Lord. It was through Dennis' testimony that his and David's dad gave his heart to the Lord.

In the year 2014, Bishop was having some serious problems with his heart with a possibility of a debilitating stroke that he feared would make him no more than a vegetable. The truth is, that according to those who were familiar with some of the medications that he was prescribed had a side effect of possible suicidal ideations. In addition to these health concerns, he and his wife Michelle divorced about five or six years earlier. He claimed that this did not really affect him, but I personally know that it did. I don't think he ever got over the heartbreak of losing his wife.

It was a few months before his death that Bishop asked the church for a ninety-day leave of absence so that he could recover physically, mentally, and emotionally. It was at this time, that I had weekly meetings with David, taking him to lunch and counseling him as best as I could. It was brought to my attention that he had expressed to his secretary about not wanting to live. The secretary, knowing of my long-time relationship with him, made me aware of some of his statements

and asked me to confront him. This I did, but he denied having any such thoughts.

On a Friday before his death on Monday, Bishop apparently got a bad report from his doctor, stating that he was a prime candidate for a serious stroke. One of his best friends, Rev. Paul Hudson, had a severe stroke and was did not verbally communicate with anyone for nearly fifteen years. Bishop expressed to me that he did not want to suffer the same fate.

So, on August 25, 2015, Bishop David Huskins departed this life. His son, Michael Huskins, was the last person to speak with him while he was lying on his bed. My wife Nancy had spoken to him by telephone just a few hours before he took his life. She had called him to pray for our son Lyle, who had a traumatic experience that eventually led to his death. Nancy thought he sounded fine. But, according to reports, Bishop asked Michael to not shake the bed because of a tremendous headache he was experiencing. Michael left, and in a few hours, Bishop's youngest son found him. It is believed that Bishop was either having or felt he was about to have a severe stroke. I have a quote from *Charisma Magazine* in

I certainly don't know or understand why things happened the way they did, no more than I understood the tragedies that happened to my two sons, Brandon and Lyle. Again, I have to trust a loving, caring, and merciful heavenly Father that all is well with all three. One thing that Bishop believed and preached was the marvelous grace of a wonderful and merciful God. May all three of these, my sons, rest in peace. I would like to share a song I wrote after Bishop Huskins' passing:



Bishop David Huskins 1967-2014

Under the foundation of this sacred place,  
Are the sweat and tears of you though you've gone on.  
You were not satisfied with what you did and saw.  
There's a generation you believed would carry on.

You chose to invest yourself in this generation.  
You planted a seed and have gone on to your rest.  
So those who sow and reap can rejoice together.  
As laborers in God's field, we will see a great harvest.

Down deep in your heart, you knew that one day  
Your dream would be fulfilled that would bring great  
gain.  
You sowed into this generation as your legacy;  
Though you have gone on your seed still remains.

If it weren't for you we wouldn't be here today.

To bring us to where we are, you made a sacrifice.  
To enjoy our blessings, you have showed the way.  
Because of what you gave we are a brighter light.

Thank you for what you've done in blazing the trail.  
Our testimony is now much bolder.  
Your voice is still heard through this generation.  
New heights we have reached by standing on your  
shoulders.

Today we honor you and give God the glory  
For the life you lived that showed us the way.  
Thanking God for what you were willing to give.  
All you've sacrificed has brought us to this day.

You sowed into this generation as your legacy.  
Though you have gone on your seed still remains.

### **What's Beyond This Mountain?**

Please allow me to share again a song that I wrote years before he passed away. Bishop David Huskins often recalled his childhood when he sat down beside a stream of water with his sister and dreamed of a world beyond where he then was. His statement was, "Where does this river go?" He was a dreamer, and he taught young people to dream. A few years ago, Bishop took me on a reminiscing trip to the place where he grew up outside of White, Georgia. We spent the day together, visiting all of the significant places of his upbringing, including some of the early churches he was a part of. In fact, I videoed much of the events of that day, and hopefully at the reading of this book, the video is still available to view on You Tube. The video is entitled, "Bishop David Huskins Visits the Landmarks of His Young Years Growing Up."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddYtf3K52kA>

In the song, the reference to dream of a bigger place was intended to speak of his dream of bigger and better things in this life. That still holds true, but today it has a greater

meaning because he has now reached that better place for eternity.

Many days I walked down by the mountain stream.  
There beside the water, I would sit and dream.  
What's at the end of the river? Where does it go?  
What's beyond that mountain? I so longed to know.

Many nights I lay under the open sky.  
Lying there dreaming, "What's on the other side?"  
Is there more somewhere else? I'd sure like to know.  
One day I will find out when from this place I go.

What's beyond this mountain? Where does this river  
go?  
I know that one day from here I will go.  
I'll follow the river to see where it carries me.  
I'll cross that mountain; a new world I will see.

My world is so small; there must be more.  
New lands I'll discover, a new world I'll explore.  
One day I'll cross over to this better place.  
When I'm tired of living in this narrow place.

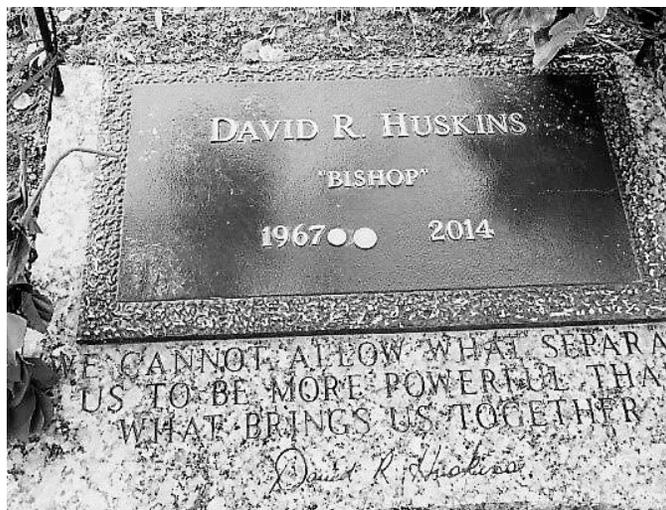
There is a mount to climb; a river to cross over.  
Beyond is a valley with fields of clover.  
There may be many things that we must overcome;  
We will win our battle over each and every one.

I hear a voice calling me, telling me to cross o'er.  
There to this better land where there is more.  
The waters are deep, and the river is wide.  
But I must cross over to the other side.

I've climbed my mountain; on top of it I stand.  
I've looked across the valley, and I've surveyed the  
land.  
It's a land of plenty, this I must confess.  
So I must stake my claim; this land I must possess.



Bishop David Huskins, 1967-2014



WE CANNOT ALLOW WHAT SEPARATES US TO BE MORE POWERFUL THAN WHAT BRINGS US TOGETHER

~Bishop David R. Huskins

## Chapter Twenty-five

### LYLE'S MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL ISSUES

#### Lyle's Mental and Emotional Issues

It would be very difficult for me to chronicle all of Lyle's mental and emotional problems. He had addiction problems since his early twenties, and they grew worse with time. For over eight years of his life before incarceration, Lyle had been under the care of the chief psychiatrist of Peachford Hospital in Atlanta. Dr. Asaf Aleem had given special care to Lyle, and he was saddened to hear of Lyle's tragic death. Lyle had been diagnosed as bi-polar as well as dual-diagnosed, meaning he had addiction problems in addition to mental and emotional problems. The question has always been, "Do the addictions cause the mental problems, or do the mental problems cause the addictions?" I don't know if you could say that either caused the other, but there is certainly a strong correlation between the two. Looking back over Lyle's life growing up, we now realize that he had real fears and insecurities that could well have developed into his mental state and depression.

Lyle had been in all of the noted mental hospitals and recovery centers in Atlanta, including Ridgeview Institute, Peachford Hospital, and St. Jude's Recovery Center. In addition, he had been in recovery centers in Louisville, Kentucky; New Life Launch Pad in Wilmington, North Carolina; Three Rivers Behavioral Center in Cedartown, Georgia; Anchor Hospital in College Park Georgia; Northwestern Regional Mental Hospital, Willowbrooke at Floyd in Rome, Georgia; Willowbrooke at Tanner in Villa Rica, Georgia; WellStar Cobb Hospital in Austell, Georgia; Penfield Christian Home in Lafayette, Georgia; and many others. Without exaggeration, he was admitted into at least twenty-five hospitals and rehab centers—some for multiple times. Lyle, especially in his later years, lived an isolated life. He had so social life, and he certainly was not a partyer.

## A Major Crisis for Lyle

When Brandon died, Lyle was incarcerated in Bartow County jail for some events that transpired shortly after he was released from Providence Ministries. When Bishop Huskins, Donia, and I went to the sheriff to gain permission for Lyle to attend Brandon's funeral, we found that he was due to be discharged that very day. Brandon and Lyle were only eighteen months apart, and they grew up together as each other's best friend. Brandon's death was devastating to Lyle. As a result, he fell back into his self-destructive lifestyle, after graduating from a successful stint at Providence Ministries Treatment Center in Dalton, Georgia. He was due to return to Providence Ministries only two days after one of his greatest crisis.



Lyle and His Mother circa 2014

It was about June 1, 2012, when an incident was destined to become a major turning point for Lyle. Since Brandon's funeral, Lyle had been living in the streets, which absolutely broke our hearts. After having had an impeccable record at Providence Ministries, Lyle had been dismissed from the program for not following rules. On the Saturday of June 1, Nancy and I were at the cabin in north Georgia Mountains. We returned to Cartersville for our great grandson Samuel's second birthday party. Lyle was in his van in the backyard of our house,

and he seemed to be quite normal. Two hours later, we were driving through Ellijay, Georgia on our way back to the cabin. After leaving the north city limits of Ellijay, we saw a big commotion on the side of the highway. The northbound lane was about blocked off by police cars and an ambulance. Nancy and I drove around the congestion when Nancy stated, "I think that's Lyle's van." We went up ahead, did a U-turn to pass back by the van. We still did not determine it was Lyle's, so we made another U-turn to see for sure. I pulled up behind the police car, and an officer approached me. I stated that we believe that is our son's van. Sure enough, it was. Lyle had been speeding through Ellijay at ninety miles per hour and was seeking to evade the police, whereupon they had spikes set up to blow out his tires. In an effort to avoid the spikes, it was claimed that Lyle almost ran over a policeman, and he was charged with aggravated assault. The police broke the windows of his van, and he was tazered twice. While the police officer was dragging him out of the van, the policeman pulled a muscle in his leg. Lyle was charged with a second aggravated assault. All of this information was given to me by the officer who approached our car.

Perhaps the most serious charge was that Lyle had a handgun, and it was claimed that he pointed the gun at an officer. My response was, "And you didn't shoot him?" It just didn't make sense. I don't believe Lyle pointed a gun at them or he would have been dead. However, Lyle being a convicted felon on probation for terroristic threat was in illegal possession of a firearm.

We turned around and went to see Lyle in the Ellijay hospital where he was being guarded by three or four policemen in the emergency room. Lyle said to me, "I didn't mean to hurt anyone. The bullet in the gun was for me. I was on my way somewhere to take my own life." He was taken to Gilmer County jail, where he remained over a year and one half.

Lyle could have been freed on a very high bond of \$95,000, but we chose to not bail him out. First, it was a very substantial bond, which I myself could not have posted. Second, Lyle didn't need to be out on the streets. Besides his addictions, he had been diagnosed bi-polar and had been on medication for several years. Numerous rehabs have been unsuccessful, so it seemed only fitting that he remain in jail.

The first few months of incarceration, Lyle was very positive and upbeat. In fact, he stated, "I don't believe I'm in jail for punishment; I believe God allowed me to come here to protect me." Lyle had ample time for God to deal with him and to speak to him. Lyle was listening to God, and as a result, he was growing spiritually. Lyle always had a very good understanding of the Word of God. It wasn't long before he began to show bizarre mental behaviors, and he began to become delusional. It had gotten so bad, that he was refusing food and drugs, thinking they were seeking to poison him. A state psychologist examined Lyle and claimed that he was able to stand trial.

Donia and I began to seek medical help for Lyle. We were able to get a hearing before the judge. When the time of the hearing came, Lyle's attorney stood up for him adamantly. He stated, "Don't send a psychologist that will ask him simple nonsensical questions. He said Lyle knew the answers to every one of them." The lawyer further stated that Lyle needed extensive evaluation. Donia and I were given the opportunity to address the court right before lunch. We both made an emotional appeal that got the attention of the judge. The judge stated that at 1:30 that afternoon, she wanted the sheriff, jailer, jail nurse, and a local health official to be in court. She said also that she was going to personally contact the state psychologist. This indicated to me that she was very serious. She very well could have said, "Be here in the morning," but she said to be there that afternoon right after lunch.

All of the aforementioned persons, including Lyle, appeared in court that afternoon. Donia and I both gave our account of Lyle's behavior under oath. We basically said the same thing that we had that morning. After this hearing, the judge ordered that Lyle be reexamined. He returned to jail, and was there a few days before the psychologist reexamined him. This time, he was ruled incompetent, and the judge ordered that Lyle be admitted into the State Mental Hospital in Milledgeville, Georgia. He was there for forty-five days and was prescribed the necessary medications to treat his mental condition. He was returned to the Gilmer County jail to await trial.

When Lyle went to trial, he was sentenced to twenty years of probation with time served, which was about eighteen

months. We thought all was clear, but on the day of his release, the Bartow County Sheriff Department was there to escort him back to the Bartow County Jail on a charge by a woman that he had held her captive against her will.

### **Lyle was Falsely Charged by a Spurned Woman**

The week before Lyle was arrested in Ellijay, he had been in a hospital in Cobb County, Georgia. There he met a woman from Cartersville who was twenty years older than he. Since Lyle didn't have a place to stay, she invited him to come stay with her. This he did for about three or four days. Lyle had often been plagued by paranoia, and that week was no different. He stated to the woman that there were snipers outside, and he said that he would protect her. He had her pistol, and he told her to stay in her room. When he left that weekend is when she reported him to the police. She reported that Lyle had come to her house and forced himself in. She stated that she was fearful of him. This may sound like a story to justify Lyle, but this was a false accusation based on a conversation that I had with the woman herself, as well as after reading the police report.

One reason she was not held captive is because he brought her to our house and introduced her to his mother. The woman called me one day after Lyle was incarcerated and told me personally that she had met Lyle at the hospital, and that she felt safe around him. She proceeded to tell me what a nice young man he was, but this was opposite of what she told the police. She went on to say to me that we seemed like nice people and perhaps we could go to lunch one day. The bottom line is that this woman had mental issues of her own. She then called me later to tell me that Lyle owed her \$500.00. I told her that was between her and Lyle. When I questioned her why he owed it, she indicated that she had bought him clothes and other items. In fact, one of our friends saw them at Walmart when she was purchasing these clothes, and there was no indication that anything out of the ordinary was going on. When she told me that she was in danger of having her electricity turned off because of a bill of nearing \$250.00 dollars, I told her, "I'll tell what I will do. I will meet you at a certain place and give you \$300.00 dollars under the condition that we have no further

contact. This I did, and we each have gone our own ways and have had no more contact with each other.

When Lyle's public defender got the police report, I found it to be completely full of lies. In fact, the investigator told her, "Sounds like you weren't held captive; ya'll seemed to be having a good old time, running all over town." If she were being held captive, she had plenty of opportunities to have called 911 when Lyle was out of the house. In fact, the day he left, he had gone next door to get assistance in starting his van, and she could have made a call.

Considering all of the circumstance, Lyle's public defender said that in his opinion, Lyle would be better off to accept a plea deal because of her not having a record, and he did. His thought was that Lyle would be "crucified" by the jury. Lyle agreed to accept a blind plea, meaning that he would rest his fate in the hands of the judge. This he agreed to do, and when the court date came, Donia and I again made our plea. I gave an account of Lyle's medical history, and Donia gave an account of Lyle's plan of action that had already been put into place. That plan included his continued visit with the psychiatrist in Atlanta once a month, attending a psychological counseling session once a week, allowing me to be responsible for his disability check, and also for me to secure his medication. These things he had already done, and he was making good progress. We were seeking for Lyle to be sentenced to probation so that he could continue the treatment that he was needing. The judge listened intently, and adjourned Lyle's case until the next Tuesday. On Friday of that week, the attorney called Donia and told her that it wasn't looking good. The judge had called him, the district attorney, and the probation officer into his chambers to tell them that he had not accepted the proposition presented to him.

When Donia told Lyle on Sunday what had transpired, he lost it. He went out that night, got drunk, and came back home the next morning demanding that I give him all of his medications. I knew what that meant. It meant that he would overdose and he would not be fit for court the next day. When I refused to turn the medications over to him, he and my older son Ken got into a confrontation, and we had to call the sheriff. When the sheriff came out, Lyle told them that I had refused to turn his medication over to him. The officer asked me if I had a

court order allowing me to withhold these medications, and I told him, "No, but I had told the judge the previous week what I was doing." They said that was not enough, and I had to relinquish the medications. I then went to retrieve the meds from my safe, brought them out, threw them on the ground, and said, "This is now on you—because I know what will happen." By the way, it was on this very day that Bishop Huskins had passed away. In fact, Nancy had called Bishop before lunch to have him stand with us in faith that everything was going to be alright. It was just a few hours until Bishop took his own life.



Donia with Lyle at one of his court hearings 2014

Donia spent the night with us on that Monday in order to be there for the court date on Tuesday. Our son Ken was downstairs. About three o'clock in the morning, Donia called me and said in a desperate voice, "Lyle has a gun!" He had stolen Ken's rifle, and while he and Donia were sitting on the patio outside, he put the gun under his chin to threaten to kill himself. I called Ken to come and look out the window to observe what was going on but for him not to do anything unless necessary. When Ken saw what Lyle was doing, he went outside and confronted him. Lyle pointed the gun toward Ken and told him to back off. Ken took a chance by knocking the

gun out of his hand. I got outside in time to see Ken and Lyle in the backyard when Ken knocked Lyle to the ground with the handle of the gun. Ken stated that Lyle was going for a knife, and he did what he did in self-defense. For this threat, Lyle was charged again for terroristic threat and aggravated assault.

When the sheriff deputy arrived, he said to Ken, "I don't know if you accept this or not, but God had you in this place to protect your family from a possible disaster." Ken was still feeling very bad about what had happened. When Lyle went to court later that morning, he was sentenced to a total of twenty years for the woman's accusation, and twenty years for Ken's incident. He was sentenced to fifteen years in prison and twenty-five years of probation, with credit given for time already served of two years. So, he was facing thirteen years in prison. The sentence from the woman's accusation was five years in prison with the two years of time served, meaning he had three years that were mandatory to serve. He could have been paroled after about three years on the ten-year sentence related to Ken. That meant that Lyle would have been in prison for a minimum of about six and one-half years. Even that was too much for Lyle. He had stated many, many times that he could not survive in prison.

Lyle remained in the Bartow County jail before being sent to the most notorious prison in Georgia—the State Prison of Georgia in Reidsville. Lyle was in a total mental disorientation. His calls home were ones of desperation stating that he could never make it. He was fearful of prison gangs. He still contended that he could not survive in prison. Donia and I again made an appeal to the prison to get him the medical help he needed. This they ignored. The psychiatrist told him to suck it up. His counselor only spent five minutes at a time in seeking to help him. Donia and I continued to appeal to the warden's office, and then to various mental health workers. Still, nothing was done. We knew that Lyle was suicidal and desperately needed some help. One time when I called the warden's office, I requested that Lyle be sent to a prison where he could get proper medical attention. We were told that was the reason he was sent to Reidsville because of their medical facilities. My response was, "But, he's not getting any medical help."

Nancy and I went to visit Lyle on a Saturday and Sunday afternoon, and spent about four hours each day visiting

with him in a cafeteria area of the prison. All eight hours we were with him, he was pleading in desperation, stating that the conditions of the prison were intolerable. He said that someone needed to report what was going on. On Sunday afternoon, he revealed to me that he had attempted to hang himself with his belt, but I didn't take it seriously. I should have, but I didn't. Yet, I and my daughter continued to seek help for him to no avail.

On Monday morning, April 6, 2015, Nancy was called by the warden's office. She immediately handed the phone to me, and I was told the horrendous news that Lyle had been found hanged in his prison cell by his belt. I replied, "Somebody is going to be held responsible for this!" When my daughter heard the news and called the warden's office, she asked if they were shipping his body back home. They replied, "No." Donia then proceeded to tell them that it was their responsibility since they were the ones who took him three hundred miles from home. To this, the warden replied, "You don't tell me what to do!" All we got was total insensitivity throughout the process.

Another sign that Lyle was thinking of dying was when he requested that if anything happened to him, he wanted to be buried as close as possible to where we would be buried. He stated that he was fearful that if he died, they would throw his body in the back of the prison. We assured him that would not happen, and we assured him that if anything happened, we would honor his request of being buried close to us.

Let me pause here to say that Lyle's bond was lowered to \$10,000 after having served nearly two years in jail. Donia and I decided to bail him out, and I am so thankful that we did. For about three months, I had the best relationship and time with Lyle than I had ever before in Lyle's adulthood. We spent time together, visiting sporting goods stores. Lyle was his old self, because he was on his medications and was being accountable to me concerning his money and securing his medications. I was taking him on monthly visits to his psychiatrist in Atlanta. In addition, he was seeing a personal psychologist in Cartersville every week. To me, those few weeks were so very special, and I know that God had allowed me to experience the good times I had with Lyle.

After Lyle's death, Donia, Ken, and I went to see our friend, Bob Cagle in Jasper, to make funeral arrangements. Bob was broken-hearted. He sent one of his workers to pick Lyle's body up in Reidsville after he had been dismissed by the coroner. It was on our trip back home from Jasper that all of us were lost in our own thoughts. I was thinking that if Lyle were a soldier, he would have been brought back home as a hero. But, not so for him, because he died a lonely death in a far-away prison. The Lord then spoke to my heart that Lyle WAS a soldier, as he had been engaged in tremendous warfare, and that he would come back a hero. To that end, we made sure that Lyle was so honored.

Even though we had left New Covenant Church over twenty years before, I felt inspired to ask that Lyle's Home Going Ceremony be held in the church. They definitely agreed. In my eulogy for Lyle, I stated that he had said as a young boy that he had to be at that church seven days a week. He said that he went to school at the academy there Monday through Friday, cut the grass on Saturday, went to church on Sunday, and then had to go home with the pastor! So, it was fitting that Lyle's ceremony be at New Covenant Church. The outpouring of love was tremendous as friends from both Cartersville and Cedartown came to show their respect to Lyle and our family. The ceremony in my opinion was awesome. Eulogies were given by me, Donia, Ken, and my brother Raymond. Nancy's brother, Dr. Larry Walker, offered a prayer. The ministers in charge were Pastors Jerry Dortch and Darrell Gooden. The special singing by Demetrius Crespo and Geraldine Gibson was heavenly. Everything was befitting of a hero. Lyle had fought a valiant fight and ultimately won.

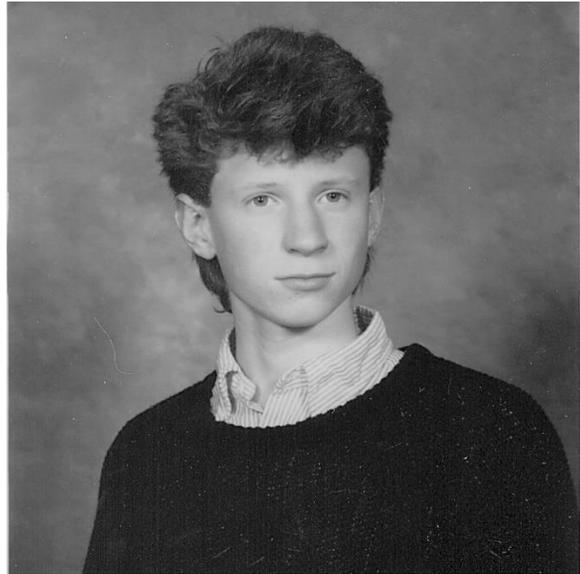
Considering all of the troubles and pain that Lyle had suffered, one might question his relationship with God. There is no doubt in my mind what his relationship with Him was. I knew Lyle's heart. I know that he loved God, but he was bound by the torments of a broken life. One of the true consolations that Nancy and I have is that Lyle is no longer in torment and pain. I know of no other human being who ever suffered any more torment than he. And, this torment was a heavy load on Nancy and me. We still miss Lyle profoundly, and we have been perhaps more heart-broken over his passing than any

other, but we have to remind ourselves that he is now at rest in the arms of a loving and merciful God.

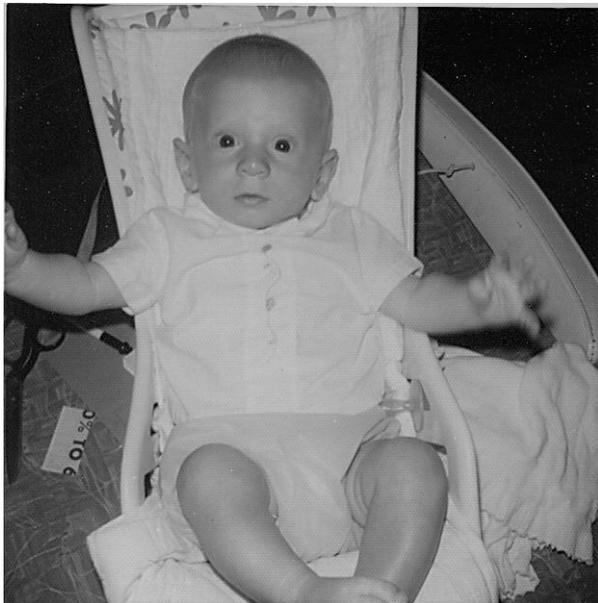
A few months after Lyle's passing, I received a call from CLCC's secretary. She told me that a representative from the Southern Center for Human Rights had called me at the church. I don't know how they knew to call there, but I returned the call. They told me that they were at the Georgia State Prison investigating another case. When they inquired with some cellmates concerning anything unusual that had transpired, they gave them Lyle's name. When they asked if they had seen any unusual behavior on Lyle's part, they responded, "All we saw was that every night he would be facing the wall, praying, and speaking in some strange language. This gives me chill bumps just talking about it. So, I have no doubt where Lyle is. The only thing that we have received from the Center for Human Rights was a copy of all of his records from the prison system. In my opinion, the records were doctored to show that they had not been negligent. About six months ago, the Southern Center called me and told me that they were making an official complaint to the State Board of Corrections. I haven't heard back from them. I still think someone needs to be held accountable, but I'm not sure that anything can be done. One government agency will protect another government agency.

Today, Lyle is resting in a crypt in Sunset Memorial Gardens in Cartersville that is as close to us as possible. Nancy and my crypts are end-to-end on the inside of the mausoleum about three rows up. Lyle's resting place is directly behind ours on the outside just one level up from us. The place of his head will be almost in direct contact with the one who is placed in our crypt first.

I have spent a lot of time and space in relating Lyle's story, and I have debated as to whether I should include all of it in the story of my life. But, I believe it is appropriate, first, to paint a clearer picture of what we have experienced. Second, hopefully, someone can be ministered to as the result of reading Lyle's troubles and the revealing of God's grace to us. Third, to tell the actual facts to clarify Lyle's troubles for those who knew and loved him.



Lyle as a Teenager



Lyle about 4 months old.



The pleasant Lyle we so fondly remember.



Lyle as a handsome young man.



My favorite picture of Bran and Lyle, who were about 12 and 10 years old.



Lyle in 2010



Lyle, Richie, and Brandon on one of summer excursions to New York.



The last picture we have of Lyle, spring of 2014.

### **The Passing of My Dear Friend, Bob Cagle**

Sometime in the summer of 2016, Bob Cagle's son, David, sent me the saddest text stating that doctors had determined that his dad had no more than six months to live. Bob's health had been failing him for the last few years. In fact, when we went to Jasper to eat Mexican food with him and his wife, Bob was very unstable, having to depend upon his walker in order to walk.

Bob always had a love for life and always was full of life. He also always had a great sense of humor. When a discussion was ever brought up about life support, Bob stated, "They better not unplug the support for me. I want a back-up to the back-up!" Another time about twenty years ago, I had a dream about Bob dying. I shared this dream with him in a somewhat humorous manner. When I told the dream, I could see Bob's countenance fall. I then said, "But, I was too old and feeble to come to your funeral!" I was eight years younger than Bob, so he took solace in this revelation, knowing that if I was that old, he would be much older! By the way, even though this was somewhat of a humorous exchange, I really did have that dream.

Let me interject another interesting exchange between Bob and myself. Bob had a beautiful Memorial Garden where he had built a mausoleum while we were still pastoring in Jasper. Nancy and I obtained two crypts next to Bob and Helen's. Bob, in his usual humorous manner said, "When we both are laid to rest, we can come out into the open room in the mausoleum and have a party!" Nancy and I returned the crypts to Bob when we left Jasper in 1997.

Well, the dream came true—twenty years later. Just this past fall, we were informed that Bob had perhaps no more than a few weeks to live. Nancy and I went to see him several times. Bob became weaker and weaker, and his family gathered around him in his home, He then went home to be with the Lord surrounded by the people he loved. It was sad to say good-bye to a great friend. I had the privilege of joining with his pastor in conducting his memorial service in the chapel of his own funeral home.

Bob had been the one who was there as the funeral director for both of my sons who passed away in 2012 and 2016.

Again, he charged nothing for his services for Lyle as he had done for Brandon. Lyle's body was over three hundred miles away, and Bob sent his hearse to bring his body back for burial. This trip alone would have cost \$1200, according to another funeral director friend of mine.



My friend, Bob Cagle

Bob had always been a generous person, having learned the principle of giving from the Word of God. I can truly say that he had always been very generous, kind, and loving to us. I valued Bob Cagle for who he was and not by what he did. Isn't that the way we should relate to the Lord? We love the Lord for who He is, not for what he has done. Of course, we love Him for what he did at Calvary, but not for what He has done in giving us materialistic gifts.



Chris and Kandis at Georgia Aquarium



Nancy circa 2008

## Chapter Twenty-six

### A WONDERFUL STORY OF OUR SON KEN

I have already chronicled the many years of pain in dealing with the struggles of our sons Kenny and Lyle. About two years ago, Kenny had checked into the Center of Hope program in Anniston, Alabama, where he was to complete a twelve-month program. After about four months, he left the program. After his brother Lyle's passing, Kenny called the director at Center of Hope. Kenny reported that he was doing very well, and the director said, "Well, sometimes people can get it sooner than others," basically giving affirmation that he had done okay without finishing the twelve-month program.

Kenny and his wife were living at Horseshoe Lake in Arkansas. He had gone through several harrowing experiences that probably at least contributed to his returning back to a no-win lifestyle. For whatever reason, Kenny had probably reached the lowest point of his life. His wife Kimberly had reached her limit and left him. She became tired of hearing Kenny make empty promise after promise that he was going to straighten himself out. His wife's leaving left Kenny devastated, and he fell deeper and deeper into addictions and became extremely depressed.

Kenny was now living in a very remote area right next to the Mississippi River levee that was miles from just about everything. He was isolated, falling deeper and deeper into his despair. When Donia, Nancy and I went to Memphis to visit Nancy's sister, we went to visit with Kenny and took him to lunch. He was in pretty bad condition, so we took him to the hospital in Forrest City. His blood pressure and blood sugar were sky-high. When he was dismissed from the hospital that same afternoon, we immediately got him the necessary medications and left him to return back to Georgia. Through all of Kenny's struggles, he always made an effort to work. At the time, he was doing carpentry repairs on the houses around Horseshoe Lake. Finally, he apparently wasn't even able to work.

We received a call one night, and Kenny could barely talk. He stated that he was having a stroke and was dying. We told him that we were coming up to see about him, but he insisted that we didn't need to. We were in a state of uncertainty as to what we should do, as it was nearly four hundred miles away. Finally, we contacted Kimberly, who was now living with her daughter in Mississippi, and she went to check on him. We also contacted a couple other of his friends to keep a check on him.

Shortly after this episode, Kenny was having a severe reaction to what we later found out was a near fatal dose of methamphetamine. He stated later that it was his intention to take his life. He couldn't go on like he was. He then cried out to God, and Kenny's life was spared. He then called us, still in a bad condition. I asked Kenny if he were willing to come to Georgia and let us have him admitted into Center of Hope once again. We told him that if he wasn't able to drive, we would come and pick him up and bring him back to Georgia. He told us that he was able to drive, but it took him several hours longer to get here than usual. He arrived about midnight on a Saturday.

While Kenny was still on the road to Georgia, he contacted one of his counselors at Center of Hope and told him that he would like to re-enter the program. Kenny was questioned concerning his sincerity, and the counselor told him to meet him the next day. I had thought that if Kenny came to be with us it would be a few days for him to rest and recuperate before going into the program, but he was insistent on going directly to the center the next day. When he said that, we knew he was sincere.

Because Kenny had left the program before, he was placed under very strict rules including never having even a weekend pass to leave the grounds. Ordinarily, a resident gets a weekend pass after ninety days in the program. It has been eight months now, and Kenny is more focused than ever before. We go about once a month to be in Sunday morning services with him, eat lunch together, spend a few hours, and then return home. In between times, Donia would do the same, so some family member was with him about every two weeks. April 3 was Kenny's birthday, and we all went to help celebrate with him.

Kenny has found his place and is fulfilling a part of his purpose in life, and that is to minister to and be supportive of other men in the program. There are about two hundred men in the program, so he has plenty to work with. Being an older man, young men look up to him and are being helped by his spiritual life as well as his experiences of life. When we visited Kenny, we saw many of these young men gravitate toward him.

An interesting story is when a woman we had known at Cedar Lake Christian Center called Nancy and said she had heard that Kenny was somewhere in a program in Alabama, and she wanted to know where. When Nancy told her, she began shouting and stating that there was where her son had been for about three weeks at the time. Well, immediately we wanted to let Kenny know about this son, and the next time we talked with him by telephone, he stated that he had already met him and they were the best of friends, even though they had never met before. Kenny has been a positive influence in helping to keep this program in the program.

Another interesting connection that we became aware of just this past Sunday was when we met a visitor in our church. Her son was in the same program with Kenny. His aunt had been telling him about Kenny. He and Kenny had already met, and they were bonding together. The son did not know that this was the Kenny of whom his mother and aunt had been speaking. What an interesting story of how Kenny has been such a blessing.

It is Kenny's intentions of remaining at the Center on staff after his graduation in August. Again, we have never seen him so committed and focused. In fact, he has repeatedly stated that he didn't know what was going to transpire between his and Kimberly's relationship, but the most important thing was to follow God regardless how everything turned out. Kenny has been in contact with her through telephone conversations several times a week. Their conversations have been very meaningful and congenial, but she was having a wait-and-see approach.

Kimberly had not made any effort to visit Kenny in person. My daughter had told her that when she thought the time was right to visit Kenny, she would make arrangements for her to fly to Atlanta; she then would pick her up at the airport. Well, this happened this past weekend—April 30, 2017. Kimberly did

not want Kenny to know she was coming, as she wanted to surprise him. After Donia picked Kimberly up at the airport, they immediately came to our house on Friday night to spend time with us until they went to see Kenny on Sunday.

When Kenny saw Kimberly walk into the church, he could not contain himself. He fell to his knees crying with joy. It was an awesome reunion. Donia sent us pictures of this reunion, and they are very moving. They were only allowed to visit each other until four o'clock in the afternoon. We don't know where this is going, but Kenny is still determined to continue his path to total recovery and victory and then continue his journey toward total recovery and healing. His one goal is to fulfill his God-given earthly purpose. One of the things that Kenny had communicated to us while in the program was that he had finally said yes to God to be his vessel to minister for the rest of his life. He further revealed that he knew all of his life that this was his purpose, but he had never surrendered.

As I reflect back on the crucial events of Kenny's life, including the escape from the jaws of death more than once, I realize that God had preserved him for "such a time as this." No doubt Satan has certainly made an effort to destroy Kenny through so many crises in his life, but Kenny has stated that he is in position to continue my legacy in ministry. For this, I rejoice.

### **Decisions of Change: The Choice Is Yours**

To me, one of the most exciting things to come out of Kenny's recovery is the book he has been writing for the entire tenure of his program. I have been so pleasantly surprised, not only to hear Kenny's personal account of the events of his life, but his ability to so effectively communicate them. I have been amazed at his writing skills, but I suppose I shouldn't, because Kenny has an unusually great way of expressing himself verbally. I remember telling my brother that Kenny was a good preacher. Even though he just recently said, "Yes" to God, Kenny had preached a few sermons in the past. My brother's reply was, "I'm not surprised. Anyone who can tell coon stories like he does would be an effective preacher!" Of course, telling coon stories has no direct relation to having knowledge of the Word of God. However, I have discovered that both sons with

whom we have had the most difficulty with addictions, had a knowledge of the Word of God of which I was not fully aware. However, I shouldn't be surprised. They both have been exposed to a lifetime of hearing the preaching of the Word of God. They no doubt were listening more than I was aware, or it might have been through osmosis!

Concerning the book, Kenny tells his story in his own words the events of his life that led to an alienation from important relationships, including that of multiple wives as well as his four daughters. He deals with so many emotional issues in the book that many people can relate to, even though they may not be dealing exclusively with addictions. He interweaves his story with biblical characters whom he believed were dealing with some of the same spiritual and emotional issues as he. In my opinion, this book can be a tremendous blessing to many people. It could very well be a source of supplemental materials in every recovery center in America. It is our hope that it will serve its purpose of helping other people who are dealing with the same issues as Ken. After all, Ken is not so unique that he is the only one who has gone through what he has. So many can identify with his experiences and obtain the same freedom as he has. I would like to share with you an excerpt of the book, *Decisions of Change: The Choice Is Yours*. It is also subtitled, *My Journey Back to Father's House*. Following is on the back of the book:

"Ken Meadors, the son of a pastor, tells his story of growing up in church only to come into the bondage of drugs and alcohol for over 38 years. He experienced tragedy after tragedy, including surviving an automobile accident that took the lives of his grandfather, grandmother, aunt, and niece. This began a downward spiral that saw him struggling with disillusionments, disappointments, and hurts, that led to a destructive lifestyle.

I In this book, Ken deals with the issues of guilt, shame, and self-condemnation that have been brought on by multiple broken relationships, including failed marriages and alienation from his children.

It took a series of physical, mental, and emotional setbacks to bring him to the decision to turn

his life over to God and to give himself completely to His will. He saw himself as the prodigal son who said, "I will return to my Father's house." In so doing, he discovered the unconditional love of God that he had never experienced before. It was through his revelation of who he was in Christ that brought him a newfound liberty from a life of hopelessness and despair.

Ken's amazing story will do doubt be an inspiration to all who are dealing with any struggles in life. A proper view of God, who is full of love and mercy, will bring true freedom and liberty that will lead to a meaningful and productive life.

It is Ken's hope that this book will become an important resource for every recovery program that is seeking to help those who are in the captivity of addictions. The miracle that Ken Meadors is can also be yours!"

This book can be purchased through Amazon.com.

On April 30, 2017, Kenny was presented a pleasant surprise in addition to that of the visit of his wife, Kimberly. Without his previous knowledge, I had his book printed, and Donia presented him a copy of his own book! So, this past Sunday has been a memorable one. We are planning to have a blessed time with Kenny on Mother's Day of this year. One thing that I think Kenny has discovered is that he has a strong family support system to encourage him. We have made an effort to extend to him the same unconditional love that his Heavenly Father has already extended.



## Chapter Twenty-seven

### POST CEDARTOWN MINISTRY

After Bishop Huskins death, we became less involved with the activities of Cedar Lake Christian Center. When Pastor Neil Hopper succeeded Bishop Huskins, I communicated to him that we would be pursuing some other purposes in our ministry, including joining together with my friend of fifty years, Pastor Jerry Dortch. Today, we are working with him at The Gathering Place in Cartersville.

I had told Pastor Neil that as we got older, the thirty-eight mile trip to Cedartown was getting more difficult. We had plans to attend at least one service a month in Cedartown, but our involvement here in Cartersville has not allowed that to be so. Our hearts are still with many wonderful friends at CLCC, but we have had the opportunity to not only reconnect with many old friends but to connect with new friends in Cartersville. Our church family at The Gathering Place is small, but it is intimate. We have wonderful fellowship with these newfound friends, not only in church, but also in a home fellowship meeting twice a month.

#### Vineyard Harvester Bible School and Seminary

Before Bishop Huskin's death, I had already relinquished my duties as the Dean of Academic Affairs of Vineyard Harvester Bible School and Seminary (VHBSS) to Dr. Roger Hutchins. Dr. Hutchins assumed the responsibility of the school until right after Bishop's death. The school was functioning under the covering of the Fellowship of Vineyard Harvester Churches (FVHC) which soon became defunct. As the support for the school was not the same as it was with Bishop Huskins, local live classes were cancelled. So, in essence, the only thing that remained for VHBSS was the online offerings. At that time, I resumed the responsibility of the school's online programs. We had videoed all of our classes that are now available via the worldwide web. Presently, I am the Chancellor of VHBSS.

Since the legal aspects of the school no longer existed because of the severance of FVHC, we were faced with the decision as to how we would continue to offer degrees and to be accredited. I had already been a board member of Apostolic School of Ministry (ASM) with headquarters in Huntsville, Alabama under the leadership of Apostle Edmond James. Apostle Jerry Dortch had been one of the co-founders of ASM, and he had a branch of the school in Cartersville. My association with Apostle Dortch brought me into a closer working relationship with ASM. Today, VHBSS is functioning under the covering of ASM, which is a licensed and accredited organization to issue degrees. As of today, VHBSS has a full offering of online programs that leads to Associate, Bachelor, Master's, and Doctoral degrees in Biblical Studies.

Now I am very busy in my position of ministering at The Gathering Place, teaching some classes in ASM, in addition to being the Chancellor of Vineyard Harvester Bible School and Seminary. I also am pursuing one of my life goals, and that is to leave a legacy through not only the Bible School but also in writing. I stay quite busy, to say the least. I am presently in good health at the age of seventy-seven, and I have no plans to stop being productive. However, it is my hope that Nancy and I can enjoy the fruits of our labor and to spend some times of relaxation, especially in our daughter's cabin in the North Georgia Mountains.

### **Reconnection with Old Friends**

Nancy and I were blessed to have many friends in Cedartown, but outside of having times with the Seniors Group, we had little fellowship otherwise. In fact, even though we lived in Cedartown for twelve years, we knew few people outside the church. We now realize the old saying, "New friends are silver, but old friends are gold." This we rediscovered when we returned to Cartersville. Cartersville has grown exponentially since we first arrived there in 1982. Now, we don't recognize many people we now meet on the streets, in stores, and restaurants; but, we do often run across some of our parishioners from New Covenant Church days. But, we have reconnected with a group of old friends with whom we have regular weekly contact.

We meet with a group of friends every Wednesday at noon at a local Mexican Restaurant. When I say old, I mean old! Old, not only in terms of a longtime acquaintance, but old as in years, as we are all growing old together. The group usually consists of Jerry and Rebecca Dortch, Max and Judy McAbee, Larry and Georgia Hoover, Chic and Kay Rothschild, and Lee Goodwin. Occasionally, some younger people join with us, including Josh and Shain McAbee as well as Lisette and Hector Guma.

Lisette was a little girl when we first met her. She was about four years old, and her sister Heather was about two or three years old at the time. Lisette's parents were Randy and Donna Smart. The Smart family came to New Covenant for the first time one Sunday morning, and the following week, Randy fell twenty-feet as an iron worker, breaking about every bone in one of his feet. When Randy was rushed to the hospital, Nancy and I had the privilege of keeping Lisette and Heather for a day or so. Now, we have reconnected with Lisette and have met her husband and two children.

We had not had much contact with Judy and Max until the past couple of years, but now our friendship has been renewed. A special reconnection was with Lee Goodwin. I think I have already referred to Lee as being the first contact we had in the State of Georgia, as he was the one who was responsible for us coming to New Covenant Church (Victory Temple then) as pastors.



Old Friends



Judy McAbee, Kenneth Meadors, Nancy Meadors, Max McAbee, Josh McAbee and his friend at Los Arcos.



Ricky Thomas, Jerry Dortch, Kenneth Meadors, and Lee Goodwin

Connie Davis was a young single mother with two small children who had gotten saved in our church in Hayti. She and her children moved to Georgia in 1982 to join us in our church. Connie and Nancy became the very best of friends. Connie had been battling serious health problems for a few

years, but because of her tenacity and fight, she always pulled through. She had become a very integral part of the ministry of The Gathering Place and was loved by all. This past fall, Connie went home to be with Jesus, and she is sorely missed. We never pass her house that Nancy doesn't speak out loud, "Connie, I love you."

### Some Concluding Remarks

I could write about more happenings and events, but I am seeking to make my story as brief as possible, hoping that a clearer picture of me and my family can be seen. I have included some additional information in the Appendices of this book. I could have incorporated this material into the body of the book, but I didn't. However, I might add, perhaps some of the material in each Appendix could be more interesting than some that I have incorporated into the main body of the book.

This book is a short synopsis of the story of my and my family's lives. As one can see, Nancy and I have had a lifetime of experiences—some good and some bad. Through it all, God has been faithful. It is my hope that the reader has not only enjoyed some of the humorous aspects of our lives, but can also see that shattered hopes and dreams can be turned into something good. We have experienced our share of tragedies, but God is faithful, and our trust is in Him. I don't believe bad things happened by the orchestration of God, but I do believe that all things do work together for good. In the words of Joseph of the Old Testament, "What you meant for evil, God meant for good." In other words, anything that happens in our lives, both good and bad, can have a positive outcome for the glory of God. I don't necessarily see the full outcome at this point in time, but eternity will tell.

It is my determination to view my life in a positive light, believing that I have done my best to be faithful to God and the purpose He has had for my life. In light of these thoughts, I would like to present the words of a song the Lord gave me about ten to twelve years ago that hopefully summarizes what I am today and seek to be when my days on earth are fulfilled.

## **A Fulfilled Life**

I've been to many places, and I've done many things.  
Now I have satisfaction and contentment that it brings.  
There are no disappointments, and I have no regrets.  
I've faced life's circumstances; each challenge I have met.

In life there are problems, not because what I have done.

It's not what happens to you, but how you respond.

We must make a decision to what we agree.

I've come to this conclusion, God has been good to me.

I have no second thoughts; nothing of value I'm denied.

No good thing in life have I been deprived.

Of all life has given, I have no resentment.

Through ev'ry trial in life, I have found contentment.

So, many things I have seen and many things I have tried.

There's nothing of value that I have been denied.

I have faced my life with true integrity.

Even through life's pressures, I've kept my dignity.

Don't fret over life's problems; from worry we should cease.

When we put our faith in God, then we'll find true peace.

When all is said and done, and we've come to our rest.

We'll have the satisfaction that we have done our best.

I have only been able to share with you a snapshot of the Life and Times of William Kenneth Meadors.

## **Chapter Twenty-eight**

### **SPECIAL WORDS TO MY FAMILY**

In this chapter, I am going to be addressing some important information to my present family and future generations. None of this is personal, so every reader feel free to continue on! I believe what I have to share will minister to everyone something of value, especially when I speak of the purposes of God for each of us.

#### **Not Together Just on Earth**

My sincere prayer is that we will not just be a family here on earth but to be a family who will never be separated from one another. The only way this can be possible is for all of us to make heaven our eternal destination. Our time together on this earth has been and will be such a short period of time compared to all eternity, so may the circle be unbroken.

God put us together as a family. None of us were born by the will of the flesh, but by the will of God. It was no accident that I was born into the Meadors family. It was no accident that the Meadors, Thompsons, Halls, Anthonys, Walkers, and Copelands, as well as all of my and Nancy's ancestors were in our family tree. God saw the end from the beginning. It just so happened that at a specific period of time, each of us was born precisely into the family that God intended.

#### **Don't Resent Who or What You Are**

God makes no mistakes. Don't ever regret being born into the family you were. Sure, you had to accept certain limitations, but there were also some very special assets. You may have been born into a family that didn't possess loads of financial gains, such as silver and gold, and some of you may have resented that. You may not have had what a lot of other people had, but you may have had a lot of what other people did not have. You may be disappointed that your ancestors gave you big ears, a big nose, skinny legs, or a flat butt. You may not be as pretty as someone else, because you had ugly ancestors.

So what? What is beauty? How do you measure it? There are some beautiful people as far as physical and natural attributes are concerned, but they are ugly, ugly where it really counts. Don't resent this. This is what you were given. It's not always what you are given that is important, but it's what you do with what you are given. Are you thankful for what you have?

### **Jesus Sets Us Free**

You may have inherited a tendency for certain sicknesses and diseases, but through Jesus Christ you don't have to be bound by any negative aspect of your ancestry. Don't ever say, "Well, that's just the way I am. I got it from Mom, Dad, Grandma, or Grandpa." Jesus has come that we might have life and that more abundantly. He has come to break every curse and the yoke of bondage. Through Jesus Christ, we are set free. We are set free from the pit of darkness. Jesus has prepared for us an eternal abode in heaven.

### **We Will All Be Accountable**

It is our total responsibility on this earth to reach our full capacity and to stand before God one day and give proper account for the things that have been committed unto us. What will your response be? What will you say? What will you offer Him on that day? What will He say to you? Will he say, "Well done, good and faithful servant? You have been faithful over a few things, now I am going to commit to you bigger and better things. You have been faithful in the things of this earth, now it's time for me to commit to you the things that really count—the things that really matter—the things that are eternal." These are the things that we are to set our sights upon. Nothing in this life even comes close to being compared with those things that are eternal.

### **A Word to Our Children**

You may not have discovered that life was what you thought it would be. However, don't settle for less. Learn to put God first. Find the things that are really important in life. Set your affection on things that are above, for your treasures are in

heaven where moth does not eat, rust does not corrupt, nor thieves steal. Know what it means to sow into the Kingdom of God, and you will reap in due season if you don't faint. Make Jesus the Lord of your life, and let it be for the rest of your days on this earth. Don't compromise. Don't sell out. Keep moving forward.

### **A Word to Our Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren**

To all my grandchildren, great grandchildren, and future descendants, I say, "Make Jesus the Lord of your life." Every one of you is special. You were privileged to be born into the family you were. You have a great heritage—one that you may not fully understand until the day when all things are known. But, one thing is for sure, there were some ancestors who were called and anointed of God to bring each of you to the place you are today. There are some ancestors who chose to build God a house. God, in turn, is now building them a house—the promise of blessings to future generations to express His glory in the earth. You are that house; glorify the Lord through it. It will bring you a great sense of joy, satisfaction, and pride to be a part of God's great plan for each of your lives.

### **A Trail Has Been Blazed**

The trail has been blazed. Things don't have to be as difficult for us as they were for our predecessors. We have many ancestors who blazed natural trails for others coming behind them to have a better life. Only a few short generations ago, they were fighting aliens and the beasts of the field just to survive. They worked long, hard hours just trying to scrape out a living from the dirt of the earth. Many of them died of diseases that are unheard of today. They died of childbirth, of fevers, and many other things that are pretty inconsequential today.

I am saying all of this to say that the way has been made for us to continue on in our journey of life. Because of the suffering and hardships of our ancestors, things are much easier today. We don't have to blaze a trail in the wilderness. We have super highways. We have jet flights that can zoom us to the far corners of the earth in a matter of hours. We think nothing about

jumping into our cars and traveling at a moment's notice several hundred miles, turning around, and coming back the same day. Can you imagine the task of going just five or six miles back in horse and buggy days? A town twenty miles away could seem like another state or country.

We now have the best of everything. We have modern transportation and means of rapid communication. Can you imagine that just in my parent's lifetime that radio and television were invented? Computers are in every home that connects us to the world through the world-wide web. Jets are a phenomenon of our modern generation. There were no such things such as satellites and computers when I was in high school. I could go on and on, but I believe you get a little bit of an idea how things have progressed rapidly.

Materialistic things don't really count for very much when we compare them to spiritual things. New cars wear out and are eventually thrown in some junkyard one day. Houses decay; beauty flees; muscles atrophy. We may lose our good looks, but why be concerned? These things are just temporal—things that are limited to time and will pass away. Only those things that are unseen are eternal, and they will never pass away.

What if we reach the top in this life? What will we find there? You may reach it and ask, "Is this all there is?" Besides that, you may develop ulcers in your climb to the top. Will it be worth it? What if you do reach the top, and you find that everyone that is really important to you is not there with you? It could get mighty lonely. To you guys, the girl that looks good on your arm today may be in someone else's arms tomorrow. What future is this? Don't settle for anything less than the best God has for you. Remember, God wants to prosper you, but the principle was, is, and shall forever be, "Seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

### **Each Has a Responsibility**

Things have changed drastically in our lifetime. So is it in the Spirit. There have been many pioneers of the faith. The Bible speaks about the great men and women of faith in the eleventh chapter of the Book of Hebrews. These all died in the

faith having not received the promises of God. But, God has a better thing for us, for we have come at a later time, closer to the consummation of these promises. We each are important to the plan and purpose of God. It is necessary for us to fulfill our duty, or else everything that has preceded will be in vain. Someone of a previous generation planted the seed, and we can gather the harvest. Someone of another generation laid the foundation, and it is the later generations who build upon this foundation.

### **A Vision of the Finished Product**

To see the finished product of something requires a vision. Without a vision, people perish. Without a vision, there are no restraints—no guidelines, no purpose, and no goals.

There were three men laying bricks one day who were approached by a stranger, and each was asked what they were doing. The first brick layer replied, "I'm laying some bricks." The second man said, "I'm building a brick wall." The response of the third man was, "I'm building a great cathedral!" What was the difference in these men's responses? It was the matter of vision. The first man had no vision at all. All he could see was for the day. He was probably the one who was the most unfulfilled. He was ready to leave his job at the sound of the first whistle at the end of the day. He lived only for Friday when he got his paycheck, went out on the town to get drunk, have a hang-over during the weekend, and then go back to work on Monday to continue laying bricks. It was the same old routine with no real purpose, vision, or goal.

The second man had some insight. At least he saw past the moment. He had a partial vision. But, it was the third man who saw the total picture. He had a real goal that could have him so excited about what he was doing that he didn't want to leave at the end of the day. Perhaps he saw in his mind's eye that something was developing that he couldn't wait to see the finished product.

There is the story of the Canterbury Cathedral, which according to some sources, took over twenty-three generations to build. Can you imagine this? There was a generation who started it, and they may not have known what they were building. They may not have really cared. As far as they were

concerned, they may have been just doing a job that gained them a little money to keep on going. But, there had to be someone with a vision of the completed project. This vision had to be passed on to the next generation who took the tools and carried on. Each generation had a little clearer vision of the finished product, until the fulfillment of the dream.

There is the story of the dedication of Disney's Magic Kingdom where two men were watching the beautiful spectacle of a dream come true. One man said to the other, "It is a shame that Walt Disney did not get to see it." The other man replied, "He did see it, or it would not be here." How profound!

The previous exchange between the two men describes where we are today. Our ancestors started a building that has not been completed yet. When they came to the end of their days, they simply passed the hammer, chisel, or brushes on to the next generation. It took the sincere effort of each of the twenty-three generations to finally one day see the finished product of the completed Canterbury Cathedral. It will take the efforts of every one of the generations of our family to see the completed house. We will not see the finished product until the day we all stand together in eternity. If we have been faithful in our generation and have passed the tools along, we will all one day stand and behold the beauty of the completed building.

### **Running a Good Race**

Life is also like a relay race. In a relay, one runs his leg of the race and then passes the baton on to the next person. This is repeated until the last man takes the baton and crosses the finish line. If there is a bad handoff, or if there is a fall or stumble along the way, this can hinder the race for the whole team. You can still run as fast and as hard as you can as an individual. You may run faster than the man you are running against, but at the end of the race, the whole team will be affected.

There are some ancestors who have run a good race. They have passed the baton on to us. We must run a good race, also, if we are to all stand together at the end of the way. Otherwise, we as a team have lost, meaning that the whole household we're a part of will not be complete. We ourselves may have run an excellent race, but what about all of the other

members of the family? Where will they be? In that day, will we all be together? Will we be able to enjoy the finished work together?"

### **"I Will Build You a House"**

David said to God one day, "God, I want to build you a house." God replied, "David, I want to build you a house. Because you desired to build me a house, I will build a house for your sake." God was talking about a lineage that would continually honor and glorify Him to future generations. God's house that He built for David was that future generations would be blessed for what David had done previously. God promised David that one of his seed would forever sit upon the throne. Of course, this was consummated in the kingship of the Christ, who was a seed of David. Now, the blessings are passed on to those who are in Christ. So, for David's sake, all future generations were blessed; and the same thing can be true of us.

Many of our ancestors have built God a house. I cannot speak for other branches of my children's family tree, yet I know that Mama Walker (Nancy's mother) and Grandpa Copeland (Nancy's grandfather) built God a house. I can speak for my side of the family. There is no doubt in my mind that my mother in particular built God a house. God in return, promised to build her a house. That house is Raymond, Dixie, and I as well as all of our offspring. That means that every one of us are a blessed people because of what someone before us had already done, namely my mother.

I can already see the blessings of the Lord on my mother's house. As the result of her going to an altar somewhere around the year 1943, she lived a life that was committed and faithful to the Lord. She had a great impact upon her family, in particular her children. If she had been loose and half-hearted in her commitment, then that would probably be the way we would be today. Instead, we learned faithfulness to the Lord and His House. We learned what it meant to love the Lord and to serve Him. We learned about faith and the Spirit-filled walk. The call of God has been placed upon our lives and the lives of our families. This call has been passed on to future generations, including you, our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren—as well as to all who are afar off in future

generations who may one day read the account recorded in this book.

My desire is that I can pass something of eternal spiritual value along to my descendants. I believe with all my heart that the hand of the Lord is upon my offspring. I have chosen to build God a house, and I fully expect Him to build me a house in the form of my offspring in becoming a godly lineage to pass on to their future generations.

I am giving my mother the major credit that I believe is due her, but I must give Dad some credit, also. He was a little later coming into God's household of faith, and his level of commitment may not have been quite that of my mother's—but he loved the Lord. He will reap the same benefits, because Mom's offspring is also his offspring. Mom's house is also his house. God has and will build both of them a house!

### **It Is Important to Know Where You've Been**

It is important to know where you have been in order to help determine perhaps where you should go. We learn from previous history. It teaches us to continue to follow that which is good and to refrain from that which is unprofitable. Past history gives us a sense of where we belong in the scheme of things. Besides this, I find it extremely interesting. I only wish that I had more detailed accounts of my ancestors. I would have loved to have had someone prior to me to do what I am doing now. Hopefully, I will add to this story as time goes along, but it is evident that someone else will have to write the last chapter.

I have chosen to write my story at this time so that I could more accurately relate those important events of my earlier years as well as my later years. My prayer is that these accounts will not only tell the story of William Kenneth Meadors, the son of William Henry Meadors and Evie Lorene Thompson, but it will be an inspiration to all my future seed. My prayer is that future generations will be inspired by these accounts. May the God of peace rest mightily upon every blessed offspring of William Kenneth and Nancy Walker Meadors.



Granddaughters Ashley, Anna, Kandis, and Autumn with Papa Ken and Nanny.



Lyle, Brandon, Kenny, Donia, Nancy, and I in 1991



The last picture of Mom and Dad. This picture was at my and Nancy's 19<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, April 16, 1979 just six weeks before their fatal auto accident.



Kenneth and Nancy in Canada

## Appendix A

### 1988—THE YEAR OF POLITICS

#### Prophecy of Political Involvement

I have always had some interest in politics. In fact, Tim Woodson had prophesied to me earlier that I would become involved and would one day hold a political office. I thought this would possibly be true, but I wasn't sure how it would be accomplished. Perhaps it could be as a city councilman, the local school board, or possibly as a state or U. S. representative. Yet, none of these things have transpired.

#### Motivated by Pat Robertson

It was in the presidential year of 1988 that I got involved. It really started sometime around September of 1986. I had gone to the World Congress Center in Atlanta where Pat Robertson had a satellite broadcast stating that he was considering running for president. He had not at that time made his mind up, but it was a very distinct possibility. On the program that day were some very significant and visible political as well as religious leaders who were offering their endorsement for Pat Robertson's candidacy. He would announce his candidacy about one year later.

Earlier that year, I had read an interesting article in Saturday Evening Post that introduced the idea that Pat Robertson could be a serious candidate for president. This was a very favorable article, and it pointed out Robertson's strong family ties in the political arena. His father, A. W. Robertson, had been a U. S. Senator from Virginia. Pat Robertson was also a direct descendant of William Henry Harrison and Benjamin Harrison, who were former presidents of the United States.

Pat Robertson was a well-educated man, having earned his law degree from a prestigious eastern university. He was articulate and was very informed on all the contemporary issues. He was now a very familiar face on national television, being the founder and president of the Family Channel, which

began as the 700 Club. Even though Pat was very religious, he could also intelligently talk about important political issues.

Sometime in the latter part of 1987, Nancy and I, along with a few folks from our church, went to Ball Ground, Georgia to hear Pat Robertson address a small group of Republicans. I went away from that meeting determined that I was going to get involved. I called the state office of Georgians for Robertson, and that was the beginning of my involvement with the Pat Robertson for President Campaign. I talked to Brant Frost, the state campaign manager for Robertson, and he told me that I could get a county-wide organization going on Robertson's behalf. He offered to come to Cartersville to meet with a group of ministers if I could arrange it. I invited several local pastors to a luncheon at the local steak house, and Brant picked up the tab. Pat Robertson had already won the Iowa caucus, and that led to an inspired speech by Brant.

There were about ten to twelve local pastors there at the luncheon, and they all seemed to be very interested in what Brant had to say. Brant was a very enthusiastic person who was very effective in selling Pat Robertson. Brant would put together one of the most effective grassroots level political campaigns that the state of Georgia has ever seen.

### **Grassroots Level of Politics**

During the following year, I attended many organizational and inspirational meetings that in effect would change the face of Georgia politics for that year and the ensuing years. The Christian Right was about to show its tremendous influence. In fact, in the year of 1994, the Christian Right Movement was fundamentally responsible for the election of pro-family Republicans who helped give the Republican Party control of both houses of Congress for the first time in over forty years.

Pat Robertson was a Republican candidate for president. For the past several years, the Republican Party has been more closely associated with the values that are so important to Christians. In my opinion, it would be difficult for born again Christians to support the Democratic Party, which has swung too far to the left. The whole concept of the conservative movement is to stand strong on the foundation of

our founding fathers, who passed on to us the strongest form of government in the history of mankind. This government was founded upon Christian principles and moral codes.

David Huskins, a brilliant young man, was interested in politics. David as a teenager had become involved in politics in his town of White, Georgia. In fact, he was a duly elected city councilman when he was still a teenager. David and I were discussing one day how a person could become a delegate to a national political convention. At that time, we had no idea. I'm not sure than anyone in Cartersville knew, but in 1988, David and I became the first known representatives to the National Republican Convention from Bartow County.

In those earlier days, David and I immediately sought out the local Republican officials. This was a year or so before Robertson. We discovered that the Republican Party in Bartow County was weak and very ineffective. There were a few older men who were involved. There evidently had never been no more than a dozen or so to show up at any of the caucuses leading up to the district, state, and national conventions. Today, not only Bartow County, but the entire state of Georgia votes Republican. Traditionally, the South voted Democratic, but it is the general feeling now that the Democratic Party has left the ideals of our fathers of past generations.

### **I Was Named as County Coordinator for Robertson**

In the 1988 campaign, I was named by the state Robertson office as the campaign coordinator for Bartow County. It would be my responsibility to create as much support as possible for Robertson. I had gone to meetings to learn how to organize the precincts in our county and what to do at the precinct and county levels. I contacted as many people as I could, including pastors and business leaders. I received a great deal of positive responses. It was my responsibility to see that there were representatives of every one of the fifteen precincts of our county to be present at the Republican County Convention. Whereas, there had only been a dozen or so people to show up at previous conventions, we had well over one hundred Robertson supporters, and we controlled the convention that voted on delegates to move on to the District Convention.

Later, in the campaign, through the process of forfeiture, I became the Seventh Congressional District coordinator for Robertson. I met with groups from Floyd County as well as Chattooga County. I was in contact with some other key people in the other counties seeking to create interest to participate in every level of conventions up to the state level. Joe Morecraft had served in this capacity earlier, but after his interest waned, the responsibility fell on me. Joe and I had made a swing together through north Georgia, contacting some key people who had supported Joe's earlier unsuccessful bid for Congress. It would be my involvement at this level that got the attention of the state Robertson organization, which eventually led to my selection as a representative to the National Republican Convention in New Orleans.

### **Many Personal Contacts with Pat Robertson**

Nancy and I were privileged to not only meet with Pat Robertson personally in Ball Ground, but he would be at another rally at Lake Lanier, where Nancy personally told him of a dream she had of him. Pat Robertson was a very sensitive and caring individual. He had a way of making everyone feel important. I met him at a rally at the Atlanta Marriott Hotel. Later, I received a special invitation to attend his election night party at the Radisson Hotel. On this night, everyone who was there had to have a special photo ID pinned to the outside of their garments for security reasons. In New Orleans, David, Michelle, Nancy and I had a great time with Pat Robertson and all of his supporters in a party rally in a blocked-off side street during the national convention. This was a great year, and I feel very privileged that I had so many personal contacts with a great American and a great man of God.

### **The Time of the Caucuses Was Approaching**

The time for the caucuses at the local level was approaching. I went to the courthouse to get the names, locations, and boundaries for all fifteen precincts in Bartow County. I'm not sure that anyone had ever done this before. I then sought to find someone who lived in each precinct who

would try to recruit as many people as possible to come to the precinct and county meetings. I instructed each of the leaders in the procedure to follow for taking control of each precinct at the caucus meetings. The caucuses were held the first Saturday in March of 1988. Everyone met at the courthouse, and then each precinct moved into a separate room to conduct the business primarily of electing delegates to the county convention that was to convene after the precinct meetings.

It was the responsibility of the county Republican chairman, who was of the old order in the county Republican Party, to appoint someone to be the temporary chair of each caucus meeting. Of course, these appointees were also of the old order. Then the order of business was for the delegation in each precinct to vote for the person who was to be the presiding chair of the meeting. This is where our organization came in. Everyone had been well instructed as to what they should do. Prior to the convention, we already had a designated chair person in each precinct to represent our cause. Since we had the majority in each meeting, we took control of every single precinct. There was not a delegate to the county convention that was not a Robertson supporter. It was a historical day in Bartow County. First of all, instead of ten to twelve regulars who usually showed up, we had a force of one hundred and forty people there!

We went into the court house room with a full slate of delegates for the county convention. We nominated and elected David Huskins as the chair to conduct the meeting that day. David was later elected as the permanent chair of the Republican Party in Bartow County, which he held many years afterwards. I was elected to the executive committee of the Seventh Congressional District and served in that capacity for about three years until we moved to Memphis in 1991.

At the county convention, we had the responsibility of setting an agenda that included important resolutions on the party platform. For the first time, these resolutions were Christian in nature and were definitely pro-family. The main responsibility of the convention was to elect a slate of fifteen delegates to the District and to the State Conventions. I along with nine members of my church were elected as delegates to both conventions. These delegates included Grace Boston, Chuck Shiflett, Bobby Lowery, Chic Rothschild, Mike Bailey,

Evelyn Johnston, Cindy Thurmond, Cathy Prather, and myself. There were several from our church who were elected as alternate delegates, including Nancy and several spouses of those who were delegates.

The largest counties of the state had their precinct caucuses in February, and their county conventions were on the same Saturday as that of the smaller counties. The pattern had been set. There were illegal discrepancies that were designed to be prejudiced against the Robertson people in every one of these larger counties, including Cobb County of our own Seventh Congressional District. For example, over one hundred and fifty Robertson supporters had been denied entrance into their precinct meetings for no other reason than to keep them from voting. In fact, my understanding was that they were literally locked in a room that forbid them entrance into the precinct meetings. The outcome was that the anti-Robertson people had a small majority in the county convention, which gave them total control of the slate of delegates to go to the district and state meetings. The margin of their victory was something like less than ten votes, and it is apparent that one hundred and fifty more Robertson people would have given them the overwhelming majority and control of the meeting in favor of the Robertson side.

In all fairness, it must be mentioned that at this point in time, Pat Robertson was out of the picture as far as being the Republican candidate in the general election. The primaries had already been held, and George Bush had won the vote in Georgia. All delegates were obligated to nominate him at the National Convention regardless of the candidate they had supported before and during the primaries. However, if the voting at the national level went past the first ballot, the delegates could have voted for whomever they desired. Additionally, these delegates had power to determine policies, including the national platform. So, in essence, the "Robertson people" were not so much for Robertson now as they were for the principles that Robertson stood for. This was, in my opinion, worth fighting for.

## **The Battle of Chickamauga**

The next step in the process was to go to Chickamauga in north Georgia for our Seventh Congressional District Convention. What took place in this April meeting would soon be called "The Battle of Chickamauga." Chickamauga had been an important battle site in the War Between the States. It now became a modern political battleground.

If all the Robertson supporters had been given their proper dues in the county meetings, there would have been no contest at the district level, for they would have had the vast majority of delegates. Cobb County represented almost two hundred of the total of three hundred delegates at the convention. As you can see, the other counties of Walker, Bartow, Floyd, Dade, Chattooga, and Catoosa were at the mercy of Cobb. Cobb had always been the bully of the district. They controlled all the politics of the district prior to this year.

The strategy of the Robertson supporters had been well planned. I had attended some of these strategy meetings. There was a hearing of the District Executive Committee in Cartersville before the district meeting to hear the complaints of the offended parties in the counties. This was a stacked committee, 90% against Robertson. Not one single appeal was upheld. So, it was to be fought out on the floor at the district convention.

Cobb County sent two opposing slates of two hundred delegates to the district. When there are discrepancies such as those in Cobb County, the rules of the Republican Party (and of Robert's Rules of Order) give the right to the offended group to hold its own opposing convention which is to be arbitrated at the district convention. This is what is called a "rump convention." When there are opposing slates of delegates, only the other delegates who are not contested can vote on which of the two slates is the legitimate one.

The district convention was rigged from the beginning. The first order of business was to determine who the delegates are. Then and only then can official business be conducted. The first order of business was to determine which of the two opposing slates from Cobb County should represent that county. Neither side of the contested delegates was able to vote on this issue. Who were to be the delegates to vote? That was

what the vote was all about, to determine the legal delegates. However, the anti-Robertson slate was recognized by the chair as being the legitimate slate of delegates who then proceeded to vote on whether they or the opposing slate was to represent Cobb County. Anyone with any intelligence could see this discrepancy and its illegality. If the two opposing slates of delegates were eliminated, and their fates determined by the remainder of the convention, the Robertson slate would have won. The remainder of the delegates, which numbered about one hundred, was clearly the majority sympathetic with the Robertson people. The officials of the party knew this. The orders had been sent from the state office to carry out their evil plot.

### **We Had Our Own "Rump Convention"**

What had happened in the district convention was an infraction of Robert's Rules of Order, and when this was done, all the delegates in the convention who were sympathetic to the Robertson cause walked out and proceeded to conduct their own "rump convention" outside on the football field. This was to be an exciting day and one that would prove to be very eventful. It was in this rump convention, that I along with David Huskins were elected by the three hundred delegates of the Rump Convention as alternate delegates to the National Republican Convention in New Orleans during the following month of August, 1988. There were only three delegates and three alternate delegates to represent each district of Georgia at the national convention. Interestingly enough, the turn of events that would follow in the courts would only permit one of these delegates and two of these alternates to represent our district. David and I were the two alternates, and Dr. Ted Cash was the one delegate. He was from Walker County. There were no representatives to New Orleans representing our side from any of the other five counties in the district.

### **The Battle of Albany**

The real fireworks would take place in the month of May in Albany, Georgia. The opposing slates of delegates to the national convention would be reviewed at the state

convention, and the legitimate one would represent each district. There were several districts with opposing slates that were the result of rump conventions and indicated a conspiracy of sorts which no doubt originated with the state office of the Republican Party. The old guard was not going out easily. They would not take anything lying down. They weren't about to give up their power so easily to a bunch of upstarts. What they didn't realize was that many of them of the old guard had come to power in a similar fashion when they as young Republicans had come into the party through the candidacy of Barry Goldwater.

The state convention was a two-day affair, running from Friday afternoon until Saturday afternoon. On the first day, the delegates ordinarily are seated. If there were any challenges, the challenged delegates were to be first of all screened by the powerful credentials committee. Then the final determination would be made on the convention floor by those delegates who were not involved with controversy.

It was evident that out of the two thousand delegates to the state that the Robertson people were in the vast majority. Almost 1100 delegates were denied their rightful place, and all of these delegates were Robertson supporters! That included the Bartow contingency of fifteen delegates who had been elected at the county level with a unanimous 100% vote. We had legally controlled the entire county, and now even we were being denied! Something was drastically wrong. All of the eleven hundred delegates who were denied their credentials went before a makeshift credentials committee in the lobby of a local hotel. We pleaded our case, but to no avail. Not a single person who was originally denied was granted credentials even after our appeal. This was a blatant violation of our rights. It was to be ruled upon by the court system the next day.

We were supposed to be given entrance into the convention hall at 8:00 on Saturday morning. Every Robertson supporter was locked out. The others were allowed inside. The temperature in the South Georgia sun easily reached into the 90s by mid-day. We were standing outside in the hot sun until 1:30 in the afternoon. The powers inside were trying to wait us out, thinking that we would give up and go back home. Some did, but most stayed.

## **The Victory Comes!**

The order from the judge came about 1:30 in the afternoon that we could no longer be denied entrance. We had been duly elected as delegates. It took perhaps 30-45 minutes for everyone to get inside. When we were finally seated inside the convention hall, still there was nothing taking place. Apparently, there was to be another ruling handed down by the court. Finally, the word came. We had been in fact seated, and it was clear that we had the majority. There was an unbelievable wave of victory that swept the convention hall. A shout of praise and victory filled the hall. It reminded me what it must have been a little bit like when the final word came from Pharaoh to let God's people go free. That was the best way I could describe the feeling. The opposing side had lost, but they were not yet going to give up. Wasn't that what Pharaoh had done? After the children of Israel were freed, Pharaoh did not give up. He continued to pursue them but was drowned in the sea.

## **State Convention Adjourned Illegally**

The first order of business that was conducted was for the chairman, John Stuckey, to declare that due to the complexity of circumstances, a proper convention could not be conducted. This was after a judge had ruled that we could participate. If there were no convention, the business would have to be conducted by the state committee, which was loaded with the very same people who were denying us of our constitutional rights. Chairman Stuckey said there would be no convention. He slammed his gavel so hard on the desk that he broke it. He declared the convention adjourned.

All of the Stuckey people left the convention hall with the rest of us still sitting there. The old guard was jeering and mocking us all the way out. They thought they had prevailed. Now, the unfinished business of the convention would be conducted by their people on the state committee. We were to have at least a portion of the last laugh. Through all of this and to the final conclusion of the matter, which to a large degree favored us, justice was not completely served.

## **Convention Reconvened**

Upon the adjourning of the convention by John Stuckey, a vice chairperson of the Republican party of the state of Georgia, Leona Norton, rose to her feet and came to the podium. She declared that the convention had been adjourned illegally, and as the only remaining state officer, she hereby reconvened the convention. Another shout of praise and victory filled the convention hall. It was now perhaps 4:00 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, and under ordinary circumstances, the business of the convention would have been over long ago. But here we were with a full agenda in front of us to conduct. The meeting would go on into the late evening hours.

The first order of business of the reconvened convention was for the chair to call for a meeting of the newly formed credential committee. When the names for the committee were called, to my surprise, my name was one of them. The night before, I had been humiliated before the credentials committee, and now it became my responsibility, along with the others on the committee, to now rule on which slate of delegates coming out of each district was the legitimate one. What a vindication! What a long haul it had been since Chickamauga. But here I was, sitting on that powerful committee, making a determination on who would legitimately go to New Orleans.

## **The Compromise Slate to New Orleans**

We returned to the convention hall, and of course, the legitimate slate of delegates was basically the only one represented in that convention hall that day. The opposing slate had gone home. The battle was not over, as the final determination of the slate of delegates and alternates was made by the National Republican Committee, which met in New Orleans the week before the National Convention. Sad to say, the Republican Committee did not fully recognize the rulings of the state courts, and the results of the properly conducted state convention. There was too much politics involved. The State Supreme Court ordered a compromise slate that included equal numbers from both sides. The terms were that two delegates and one alternate would represent one side in one

district. The next district would be represented by one delegate and two alternates of the same side, and back and forth between the two sides. There were ten districts, with three delegates and three alternate delegates. That meant there were thirty delegates and thirty alternates, of which fifteen of each would come from each side. Additionally, there were eighteen delegates and eighteen alternates, which should have been chosen at large at the state convention, and these were equally divided. This was a total of forty-eight delegates and forty-eight alternate delegates to represent the entire state of Georgia in New Orleans at the National Republican Convention. There should have been no such division. We were either right, or we were wrong. We clearly had won the legitimate battle, but we were not given our full dues.

We left Albany quite late that night, but there was such a sense of accomplishment and joy. I was to preach in Cartersville the next morning, and we had about a five or six-hour drive back home. I tried to get a little rest on the way home, but most of our time was rehearsing the events of the past two days. We would savor this victory for a long time to come.

As things would turn out, we still won some victories at the National level. The first thing that happened when we got to New Orleans was to hold a caucus of the Georgia delegation to elect the national committeeman and national committeewoman for the state of Georgia. These two would represent the Republicans of the State of Georgia in Washington. Our side elected our candidates to both of these prestigious positions.

The sad thing was that Brant Frost, who had spent so much time and energy in this winning cause, had alienated himself with the other side. Evidently, in the process, he had also alienated some of our own supporters. As a result, he was eliminated from consideration as the delegation spokesperson on the convention floor. This distinction was given to then embattled U. S. Congressman, Pat Swindall. Congressman Swindall was a good man, but he later was convicted of perjury and went to prison for a year.

### **An Unbelievable Feat**

Since David and I were both on the compromise slate of delegates to the National Convention, it became even more unbelievable that two people from the same small county of Bartow would be going together. Bartow County only had fifteen delegates to the district and state conventions compared to Cobb County's one hundred and ninety-six! David and I were both very strong in the Robertson organization, and we were both held in high esteem by them. They were the ones who would determine which of their people would fill the openings given to them. That we were both spirit-filled ministers of the gospel, good friends, and from the same county made it even more amazing. What were the odds of this happening? David was one of my former parishioners at New Covenant Church when he was a teenager.

To make David and my selection even more phenomenal, when we looked at the opposing slate of delegates, we found the names from Cobb County of such dignitaries as the chair of the Cobb County Commission and the chair of the Cobb County Republican Party who were not chosen. I do not now recall their names, but they had been ousted when David and I were named to the slate. This was some accomplishment for two relatively politically unknown guys from little Bartow County.

To the knowledge of all the old-timers in Bartow County, David and I were the first they could recall to represent Bartow County at a national Republican convention. It was many of these old supporters of the Republican cause in Bartow County who made the donations to pay for David and my trip to New Orleans. Those who helped us included Clyde Shaw, Chic Rothschild, Bobby Lowery, and Dr. Lester Smith.

David and his wife Michelle, along with Nancy and me, set out for New Orleans on a Saturday in August of 1988. We spent the night in Biloxi, Mississippi, and we drove on into New Orleans the next day. We had borrowed Chic Rothschild's Cadillac, because we wanted to make an impression! And, an impression we would make! Now, Chic's Cadillac was a few years old, but it sure looked new to us. To the discriminating eye, it was not all that big a deal—just another older Cadillac. We drove up to one of the fanciest hotels in New Orleans, which

was the designated one for all the Georgia delegation. It would also be the place where the Oak Ridge boys and Senator Robert Dole would stay.



Dr. Lester Smith and I Discussing the GOP Victory in Bartow County.

I drove up under the drive-through of the hotel like we were really somebody. We had the busboys ready there to take our luggage. Out of the car strolls Nancy and Michelle. They were both carrying their own pillows under their arms into the fancy lobby of the hotel, and each of them was carrying a bunch of bananas. Boy, did we all look like the Beverly Hillbillies! To make matters worse, I returned to the car to drive it around to the parking lot. To my dismay, the car wouldn't even think about cranking. I looked and felt like an idiot sitting there in that stupid car that wouldn't start. Finally, some of the employees of the hotel were becoming indignant. They made a statement somewhat to the effect, that if I didn't have that pile of junk moved within five minutes, they were going to have it towed. One of the bellhops offered to jump start the car, for a fee, of course. Did these guys know who they were talking to? Why, we were duly elected alternate delegates from the mighty state of Georgia, coming to cast our votes for the next president of the United States! How dare them!

Well, I found out later why they were so upset. The honorable Robert Dole was expected at any minute. He was then the minority leader of the Senate, and he would become

the majority leader come January, as the Republicans then held the majority in the United States Senate. He was the highest ranking Republican in all of the U. S. Senate. I'm sure that these guys at the hotel not only did not want anyone to hinder the grand entrance of such a distinguished dignity, but how were they to know whether or not we might have been assassins? That was a very conspicuous beginning of our distinguished trip to the National Convention. David, Michelle, Nancy, and I all shared the same room that had two full-sized beds. After all, who could afford two of these rooms each night? We had a ball, though.

### **Our Welcoming Reception**

We rested for a short time that afternoon, and we were ready to go to a reception in the French Quarters for the Georgia delegation. Ordinarily, there is only one reception for each state. But, because the rift was so great in Georgia, there were two receptions—one for the pro-Robertson supporters and one for the anti-Robertson forces. This distinction remained throughout the whole week, even though the rest of the parties and activities were held in conjunction with both sides. There was a reception or party to go to every single night we were there. We rubbed elbows with the elite. I never saw so much liquor flowing anywhere in my life. There could be no party in their estimation without booze. In fact, it was said that the only reason most of these people even went to district and state conventions was to drink and party.

The opening reception was in a distinguished place of residence in the French Quarters. We were close enough to walk there, which we did. We enjoyed taking in all the scenes of New Orleans, in particular the French Quarters and Bourbon Street. After the reception, we walked on over to take in the sights of Bourbon Street. As David said in a sarcastic manner, "We went to Bourbon Street so we would know first-hand what to preach against!"

We no longer than had left the French Quarters that we were to experience the first of many excitements with Nancy. She entertained us as much as anyone or anything else. Nancy is so skittish about most anything. We were walking merrily along, when out of the blue, came running a vicious-looking

Doberman. He was running, growling, snarling, and barking ferociously toward us. It about caused Nancy to have a heart attack. Well, it didn't really make any of us feel real secure, but fortunately, there was a strong fence between us and the dog!

We took a short tour of Bourbon Street, and there were some sights to behold. You find about every kind of character imaginable on Bourbon Street. There were male and female strippers, and homosexuals seemed to abound. There was plenty of drinking and frolicking. Musicians played on the streets, and the streets were filled with people. One day, Dr. Ted Cash, our delegate from the Seventh Congressional District, asked a saxophone player on the street if he would play Amazing Grace. The musician said, "I don't know that song." (Was he kidding?) Dr. Cash handed him a twenty dollar bill, and the saxophonist played the most beautiful rendition of Amazing Grace! Who said money doesn't talk?

### **Our Credentials Are Issued**

We were each issued a set of badges, one for each day session and one for each night session. The badges were distinguished by color. This was for security reasons. Our wives were issued visitor's badges. They were not allowed to sit in the delegate seating as we were, but they had to stay in the visitor's area. Actually, the alternate delegates were seated in a separate section from the delegates, but David and I sat in the delegate section for every session. One night, we were entering the Super Dome right behind Coretta Scott King, the wife of the slain civil rights leader, Martin Luther King. I have no idea why she was there. I don't recall her being recognized by the convention.

After the Convention began, David and I attended every session, both day and night. Many did not bother to come to all the day sessions, but we were there to take it all in. It was an experience of a lifetime, and we were going to savor every moment of it. Night after night, we witnessed first-hand the top dignitaries in the Republican Party. Of course, the highlight for us was on a Tuesday night when Pat Robertson addressed the convention. Some of our "adversary" made sure we knew that our idol was approaching the Georgia delegation before the

evening session. Actually, I appreciated them being so interested.

Pat spoke a reconciliatory note to help bring unity back into the party. We also heard speeches from Rev. E. V. Hill, Bob Dole, Elizabeth Dole, President Reagan, and of course presidential candidate George Bush and vice-presidential candidate Dan Quayle. We saw Quayle's inaugural arrival to New Orleans via a river barge, which was decorated in red, white, and blue.

### **Back Home to More Political Activities**

We returned home from New Orleans, after having experienced perhaps an event of a lifetime. What would be the chances of this being repeated? What would be my realistic chances of again being able to go as a delegate to the National Convention? We went back through the same political process the following year, except there would be no national convention. We had our precinct, county, district, and state conventions. In 1989, the district convention was held in Marietta. I don't remember this meeting being particularly eventful. The purpose of the meetings that year was to elect officers for the district and state. The state convention was also held in Marietta at the Civic Center.



Kenneth Meadors circa 2008



Nancy and I with our credentials to National GOP Convention.



On the Convention Floor of National Convention.

## Appendix B

### SOME OF BRANDON'S ESSAYS

As I have stated, Brandon was a very talented person in art, music, and photography. But it was only a couple of months before his death that we discovered that he had extraordinary writing talent that wasn't revealed until he enrolled in an English composition class at Georgia Highlands College. These are just a few of his writings.

#### The Kennesaw Old-Timer's Club

As I walk into KB's, I notice Ol' Curtis shaming yet another unsuspecting young lion who thought he could come in from out of town and prove his table skills. The jukebox is spitting out beats not usually played this time of day, and Red's compadres are strutting around, twirling their sticks like they are auditioning for *The Color of Money II*. Curtis notices me coming in and gives me a sly wink and a grin as he hobbles around the table. I shook my head and snickered. I go to the bar to chat with Tommy while he fixes my usual water with a splash of lime and cranberry.

"Apple-bottom jeans, boots with the f-urrrr..." "Who played that song!? I'm swingin' on somebody if I hear that shit again," came a voice from the back corner. I knew from experience that it had probably been played for the fifth time today from one of the outsiders. Tommy slides my drink to me and shakes his head like he was trying his best to avoid any sarcasm about the daily drama. We stop for a moment to watch the entertainment on the smoke-stained felt. I barely take the first sip of my water and Red is already racking the balls. "It takes Curtis ten minutes to walk around a 9-foot table and only two minutes to clear it? How does that happen?" a barfly asks. Oh well, watching the Tom Cruise cue-twirling stop, the knees lock, and the demeanors drop was entertainment enough.

Curtis is a member of the Old-Timer's Club (as I like to call it). The old Kennesaw natives have their own table next to the bar. Tommy keeps their personal cups filled with coffee, tea, and lemonade. Most of the time, I come here during the day

to shoot alone. I've always made a point to find a table in close proximity to the old-timers so I can listen to the story-telling. All of the people-watching I do can easily be taken in at a distance, and the conversations on the other side of the bar I couldn't care less about. I love to hear the stories of this Civil War town during post-World War II and the Civil Rights Era. I take in every word when they talk about memorable 9-ball games they played against Johnny the "Scorpion" Archer, a legendary pool champion and Hall-of-Famer who cut his teeth on that very table. Most of the old-timers never venture to the other side of the pool hall, but Curtis loved spending time with the "youngsters".

I met Ol' Curtis one Sunday afternoon about two years ago. I've known of him for much longer than that. I'll never forget the first game of pool I played with him. I had been coming in here for the last few years to cope with the never-ending heartache and depression I had dealt with over the better part of a decade. I've played pool since I was a kid, but only recently discovered the therapeutic value of the game, at least when played alone. One of those days, Curtis asked if he could join me. I could tell right away that something was different about him. He didn't act like the others. He always wore the same warm, squinty-eyed smile, even when the money rollers attempted to harass him.

It was that game when I began the process of thinking with a different outlook. I listened in amazement as I wondered if anybody else in the room had ever truly took the time to hear this man speak. As we casually played, he revealed story after story, each one giving another small detail about his life. He began a war story and I asked, "Are you a veteran?" "World War II", he replied.

"Wow, how old are you?"

"Ninety-three," he said.

Ninety-three? I couldn't believe my ears. He looks every bit of seventy. His white hair was well combed to the side. His cheeks were rosy. He was a little slow, sure, but he was beating kids nearly a fifth his age. I asked him, "Why don't you show up to play when all the other old-timers do on Sunday?" "Because I don't leave church until the sanctuary is clean," was his response. My eyes shifted from left to right as I struggled to understand what he said. "You go to church?" "Yes, sir. I clean

it and mow the grass, too. Been doin' that since my wife died three years ago...married her when I was twenty-three."

I could feel my chest starting to tremble inside. I can't even begin to imagine what it's like to lose a wife after being married for that long. The old jukebox was faithfully on cue with a house favorite that plays about this time every week. I stopped the conversation, finished the game--and won. I tried to swallow the lump in my throat as I listened to Cash sing *Sunday Mornin' Coming Down*. He let out a chuckle and invited me to the old-timers table.

I don't think I could have felt more excitement if I had won an Oscar. I was a member of the Kennesaw Old-Timer's Club. Of course, the initiation had only begun, but my game improved immensely while I spent more time at the "real" table. I learned to play One Pocket, the chess game of billiards, and Straight Pool, the game Paul Newman played in *The Hustler*. "Where do you live?" Gene asked. "Cedartown," I replied. "So, do you know Wayne?" "Sure do. He taught me how to play real pool." He asked, "What's real pool?" "Snooker," I said. He cut his eyes and grinned. He realized that I really did know Wayne, because Cedartown does have a snooker table. I knew that I had answered wisely, but I couldn't help replaying the conversation I had with Curtis in the back of my mind.

It's been two years since I've played a game of pool. Curtis had restored a little bit of hope and set the stage for something different to happen. I've been tempted to go back to KB's to see the old man. My heart sinks when I think about whether he will still be there or not. He hasn't been the only significant influence in my life over the past few years, but he definitely sparked a kairos moment that has brought me to where I am now. Curtis taught me more than how to be a better pool player. He taught me how to be a sniper. With pin-point accuracy he took his shot and hit me before I knew what happened, when I least suspected it, and without being noticed. Many of my church-going friends will frown upon the subject matter posted here, but I don't care. This ain't no gentleman's war.

In conclusion, here's a word of advice that you might need in the future: Never try to hustle an old man from Kennesaw.

(Thanks, Curtis)

Note: It is my understanding that Brandon was on his way to KB's to see if Curtis was still there. As he stated in his essay, it had been over two years since he had seen him.

The next essay is a beautiful one speaking of his wife, Hope.

### **Then She Laughed**

I was completely changed when I heard that laugh. It wasn't ordinary. It sounded as though it came from somewhere deep inside of her. I've heard her laugh many times before, but something was different. Her voice changed. I tried for a long time to figure out why I was so intrigued by it; I needed to know what made it different. All I knew was that it was the most beautiful sound I have ever heard. I tried often to make her repeat it, but she insisted that she didn't know what I was talking about.

After a while, I gave up trying to make her laugh. I was never good at being funny anyway. The only time I've ever succeeded at humor was when it was unintentional. I settled for enjoying the pleasure of her unique laugh when it came. As time went on, I continued to be mesmerized by it. Then it hit me.

The summer of 1996 brought the excitement of the Olympic Games to Atlanta. We didn't have tickets to enjoy any of the events but we decided not to let the experience pass us by. So, off we went to walk amongst the crowds of people from all over the planet. All of the streets downtown were closed to traffic. The security level was high; law officers were on every corner. We stopped to watch many of the street entertainers. I recognized one of them. He was a homeless man whom I had seen often in Atlanta, drawing pictures of people for money.

By the time we reached Hard Rock Cafe, curiosity struck me and I said, "I've got an idea." "What?" she asked. I grabbed her by the hand and rushed across the street, squeezing through an endless sea of people. I stopped at the entrance of a parking deck. I had to know if the empty building was being guarded. The top floor had always been my favorite chill spot

in Atlanta. I had even watched the sunrise there a few times. There wasn't a single soul inside. It was blocked off to vehicles but it was possible to get in by foot.

I looked to my left, then to my right. The police, with gear from head to toe, had their eyes all over the place; however, I had an urge that would not be satisfied by playing it safe. "Go!" I shouted quietly. As I ran, she quickly followed me until we reached the stairwell. We continued running up the steps, floor by floor, until we reached the top level where we could see the night sky at the heart of downtown. We caught our breath as I pondered my next move. Being seen would be risky. I collected my thoughts and decided to just pretend like I was exactly where I was supposed to be. We strolled innocently across the parking lot until we made it to the ledge.

With the Peachtree Westin towering above us, and the ambient glow of lights below, we watched in silence. We listened to the distant sounds of the busy streets; waves of people moving to and fro like a slow, flowing river. After minutes of speechless awe and wonder, I took advantage of being alone with her high above the world below. The empty parking lot was our own private dance floor and we moved to the music of a faintly roaring crowd. I spun her around and around. Then she laughed.

...and I knew.

### **The Land of "Misery"**

(This is the essay that Brandon's English professor said was the first chapter of his first novel. Sadly, we haven't heard the rest of this story).

I can't count the times I've heard the saying, "Life is what you make it." The older I become, the more I'm aware of how true that statement really is. I have viewed most of my life as pretty ordinary. My brothers and I were basically good kids; however, we were stereotypical preacher's kids and had a high tendency to "explore the world" between our late teens and into our twenties. Eventually, one becomes settled in a way of life and unless a moment of awakening comes, that's where they remain.

As a boy, I lived in the flat-lands of the Mississippi River area. I spent my childhood in Hayti, which is in the Bootheel of Missouri. Tennessee and Arkansas were just a rock's skip away. The tight-knit but oppressed farm town consisted of a town square, a small park, a school, and several churches. Unlike the foothills of the Appalachia in North Georgia where I live now, the night sky was vast and dark. The lights of neighboring towns could be seen as plainly as the stars in the sky, separated only by miles of farmland.

My father supported our family by teaching high school math. He built and pastored Evangelistic Temple, one of the few churches in town. We lived in a blue single-wide trailer on the property just several feet away. Caruthersville, the site of Indian mounds similar to the Etowah Indian mounds in Cartersville, was to the east, on the Mighty Mississippi. I shall never forget the levee road we traveled every Friday for our weekly family trip to a new discount store called Walmart, part of a local chain that began in Arkansas. I had never seen such large aisles full of wonderful toys in one store before. It didn't occur to me that it would become the monstrous national corporation that it is today. To the west was Kennett, a town where we went swimming at the public pool in the summertime. My little brother and I would also make a trip to Rigg's Hardware store in Kennett with our dad occasionally when he needed building materials. It was an exciting trip because we knew it meant buying an eight ounce Coke, Dr. Pepper, or Nehi grape soda in a glass bottle for only a nickel. It was unusually cheap, even then. Sheryl Crow, the singer-songwriter, grew up in Kennett, Missouri. She's close to my sister's age. We didn't know her back then, but it has been rumored that she attended a revival at my father's church in Hayti, Missouri.

When I turned 5 years old, my dad began his second construction project, and life for us changed for the better. He built one of the few brick homes in Hayti during those years, just yards from the park. A ranch-style house, it seemed like a mansion to me as a little kid. Dad even laid a wide concrete slab and installed a basketball goal at the end of the driveway. A few of my schoolmates called us the "rich kids," which made me feel proud, even though we were only middle-class. My dad just knew how to be thrifty and do many things for himself so we could enjoy some of the nicer things in life during those times.

Our home was built on five acres just outside of town. Most of the land was dedicated to a vegetable garden which the entire family maintained. My daily chores included weeding the garden. I believe the garden hoe I used must have been twice as tall as I was. I can still vividly recall the wood grain of that dreadful tool digging into my hands. During our free time, Lil' Bro and I would play amidst the rows of corn, tomatoes, green beans, and cucumbers. The railroad tracks that ran through town came very close to our backyard. Like a Midwest tornado, it would make the windows rattle as the long line of freight cars came rolling through. The train engineer knew we were outside most of the time and would always blow his horn. The sound was frighteningly loud, and the thunderous roll of the cargo pounded the track. It put us in a temporary shock, deafening our ears, and making our chests vibrate to the rhythm of the beat. The other side of the tracks was known as Hayti Heights, where much of the black community lived. Many afternoons, my older brother's high school friends from the Heights would come play basketball at our house. State Highway P separated our front yard from one of the many cotton fields around. We were forbidden to cross the road, but I remember at least once, seeing how far I could venture through the tall cotton before being discovered. Looking back on that memory makes me think of the jailbreak scene at the beginning of the movie *O, Brother Where Art Thou*. I think I may have travelled far enough to scare myself back home without Mom finding out about it.

The real excitement of living in our new home, however, came from living so close to Butch. Several times a day, we could hear his mighty roar from the park. It would echo throughout the town and could be heard for miles. Butch lived on the backside of the park. Iron bars circled the front of his den. He was not a native of our delta farm land. Butch was a male lion. He seemed to be a lonely animal most of the time, but his roar was a reminder that he was still king of a land he no longer inhabited. He did have a few friends. Suzie, a black bear, was his next door neighbor. She sometimes spoke to him in a growl, but was a shy animal most of the time. Several monkeys also lived in the park. We would throw sticks of Big Red gum at them and laugh as they chewed it and shared with each other. I remember my older brother lighting a cigarette and throwing it to them once. They puffed and shared like they knew what to

do. Looking back, it seems surreal to have such exotic animals in a small town in the center of the United States, but Butch and his gang were just members of our humble little town.

Over the years, I have learned that even the most simple, ordinary events of our everyday lives become memories to cherish and reflect upon. One never knows the moments that will become vivid memories while they are happening. When I moved to Georgia at the age of twelve, I was happy to come to such a beautiful part of the country. It was filled with pine trees that remained green all year and rolling hills that scattered throughout the landscape. There were more restaurants, stores, and swimming pools than I could have ever imagined. The Atlanta Braves, Allatoona Lake, and Six Flags were the stuff of dreams. It was so much more exciting than the flat, barren land of Missouri. In the past, I was not proud of being from Missouri and often told people who asked, "I'm from the land of Missouri (pronounced misery)." Now that I am older, I realize that my childhood is filled with memories to be cherished, regardless of how plain it may have seemed at the time. Life is not an endless string of days, some of which seem to be wasted and have no meaning. Life is like a movie film that is forever rolling. Each day, no matter how mundane it may seem, is a different scene that builds upon the last one as the story of our life here on Earth unfolds.

### **I Wrote a Song from Brandon's Essay**

My childhood was filled with memories I now cherish,  
Though at the time they seemed plain and mundane.  
Now that I'm older, I look back with reflection  
To cherish the memories that still remain.

it." I've heard it said many times, "Life is what you make  
The older I become the more I see that it's true.  
I have viewed my life as pretty ordinary.  
Now I cherish days gone by that I've gone through.

The ordinary events of everyday life  
Become precious memories to reflect upon.  
One never knows when those special moments  
Become treasured memories of days that are gone.

Life is not an endless string of days that are wasted  
But life is like a movie film that forever rolls  
Each day, is a different scene that builds upon the last  
one

As the story of our life here on earth unfolds.

Note: This song is on You Tube.

### **A Very Moving Post by Brandon's niece, Kandis, June 14, 2016**

Missing you tonight. You and Uncle [Lyle Meadors](#) were the best uncles a little girl could ask for. You were always there as an advocate, a friend, and motivator. He was silly, fun, and comical. Between the two of you, I knew I was loved. You stepped up when you didn't have to. You called when you didn't have to. You stood outside my graduation waiting for me when you couldn't get in..when you didn't have to. Kennedy would have loved you and I know you would have her also. She's such a little light in this dark world and I know God will use her in a mighty way. Oh, how I wish you could see her smile and hear her giggle. I miss you more than words.



Brandon Meadors 1970-2012



Daddy Bill (Nancy's father), Mama Walker (Nancy's mom), two of Daddy Bill's brothers and two sisters.



Nancy in Cedartown 2008

## Appendix C

### TRIBUTES TO BRANDON BY HIS FRIENDS

#### Posts Left on Brandon's Facebook Page

I can never express in words the warm feeling I have to see a sample of so many tributes to Brandon. These are just a very few of the posts on the day of Brandon's death. I think there are enough presented here to get a picture of the person Brandon was and how much he meant to so many people.

Jerry Dortch posted to Brandon Meadors  
There are times a man's integrity is revealed after their passing by the number of people that pay honor to their life.

Anna Grace Meadors

uncle bran! i miss you so much i dont know what im goin to do with out you, you were my best friend and my favorite uncle and i know this hasnt hit me just yet and i dont want to believe it yet, i just want you to reply and say its okay and that you love me, because i know you love me and always will its just so unbelievable that you aint here for me anymore, and i love you. i love you unce brandon.

Carie Brownlow

I'm still in shock as I write this...sad for us on earth as we will no longer have someone so special, physically in our presence, but so absolutely and supernaturally certain and overjoyed that I know exactly where you are. I am crying tears of joy as this is one of the miraculous stories we will have to tell of an obedient servant of God and the Sovereignty of God that has been demonstrated. I saw you wait upon the Lord and you have been delivered to your Heavenly beloved and your earthly beloved. To me that is precious...Thank you for your faithfulness, humor, and perspective, Bran. I was blessed to have known you. I look forward to seeing you again...

Lisette Guma

The world lost an exceptionally wonderful man today, your spirit was as sweet as the sound of angels singing and your nature was assurance that true kindness did still exist in the world. Brandon you will be truly missed and you are forever loved, I know that you will rest easy now and forever because you are with your heavenly father and getting to have another dance with your beloved Hope.

David R Huskins

Brandon Meadors, I stood watch over you last night but I know you now stand watch over us all from the realm of the cloud of witnesses and "LIFE has overtaken death in this atmosphere." I have come home to get ready and yes tell Hope I came home to iron the purple shirt. I love you both. RIP and enjoy THE DANCE.

David R. Huskins

I had a great time yesterday because I chose to remember you WERE THERE laughing right along with us. I am sure you are enjoying every Hope-filled moment and as much as I miss seeing you and talking with you, I have seen fruit from your departure. God has used it to touch so many lives just as you did when you were here doing it yourself. Love you Bud...talk to you soon.

Matthew John

i will miss you Mr. Brandon. Even though your only a pray away now. You'll always be in my heart. I wanted you to know how much I appreciated all you did to make me successful in my independence today. but your gone and I only pray now you can see me make you proud to have made such an impact not only in my life, but all the children you sacrificed sooo much for. You are a saint and the closest thing to a father most of us ever had growing up. And for that i thank you R.I.P.

Carla Poole

Always on my mind Bran, I miss you, every song, every quote, everything around reminds me of you...I know your safe & Happy, but I and all your Friends & Family are missing you every hour of every day...Love you....

Carla Poole Roberts

Brandon....I miss you soo very much....i had gotten so used to talking, reading& seeing your sweet face on here everyday .....this tragedy has hit me really hard....but i know in my heart you are happy now....i love you &miss you dearly ....

Amanda Horst

Rich and I were talking yesterday about how the past 10 days seem impossible, and it's like you aren't really gone, and then I realized that that's probably because you aren't and never will be. You will always be with those who loved you. We miss and love you, Bran. But it comforts us to know that you will never be gone, not from our memories from our hearts or our memories. PS: Rich was telling me some funny stories last night of you guys the Summer of '87. I am so thankful you and he had so many special times and so much fun together!

Stephen Colditz

Brandon, I will never forget the wisdom and compassion you shared with the kids at the group home at Murphy Harpst. I always had the upmost respect for you. You were truly the heart and soul of the group home. Our world has suffered a great loss. May peace always be with you. With all of my sincerity and deepest love..... Stephen

Kandis Martin

I love you Uncle Bran. I'm back at work today, and seem to find you everywhere. It's hard but I know God is with me. Enjoy your heavenly dance Uncle Brandon. ♥

Stephanie Dotson

Brandon you were such a sweetheart, and Keith and I are so happy to have called you our friend. When I heard the news my heart broke, and my heart is heavy for your family. I know that you are with your true love, Hope now so may you have peace always. You will forever be in my heart, with all my love , Steph and Keith WV God Bless

Mandy Templeton

Bran, my heart aches to know that I will no longer see you on this side, however I know that you and the love of your life,

Hope, are together for all eternity in the presence of our Lord.  
You are the only one I'm not sad for.

Josh Johnson

Wow! I am shocked to hear about this, but I know you are now rejoicing and reunited with Hope, once again. I will continue to hug your wonderful Nancy Walker Meadors; every chance I get. You've blessed so many people on this earth. Love you Brother - Josh Johnson

Jeremiah Davis

You had a gift Brandon, of saying things in a way no one else could. Your talent was yet to be discovered. God apparently had a greater need for you in His Kingdom. You will be missed here my brother, but I know Heaven is rejoicing in your arrival. I had just found the pics of your's and Shawna's birthday party in Abilene. I will get them to your Mom and Dad. Rejoice Brandon. We love you and will see you in the near future in the Heavenly Kingdom. Tell Jesus I said hello, and that I love Him.  
Jerry Jon Davis

Dannielle Renee Gable

Brandon,

I have been trying to think all day of what I wanted to post. Nothing I could say/post could ever describe how I feel about you. I will miss you terribly, and am so glad that you allowed me to become a part of your life. I will try and think about all the talks we shared and the gang going to Waffle House after work back in the day. You are one of my favorite people, and I am very heartsick and sad. I am so honored to have been your friend for so many years. Prayers. Rest in peace, B!

Kersten Heather Valenzuela

Brandon, you were my first love. I remember telling mom that I wanted to marry you when I was 4 years old and you were in the upper learning center at New Covenant. I still have the teddy bear you drew for me. The world has lost a truly gentle spirit.  
Fly Free.

Love, Heather

Peggy Baines

One of my favorite students. He taught ME alot. It's been nice seeing him on Facebook after all these years. I will never forget those days in the Upper Learning Center. Nancy & Kenneth, so sorry, I pray that God will give you His peace that passes all understanding. Love, Peggy Baines

Matthew Hutchins

Love you, Brandon. I don't think you ever knew the impact you made on so many lives, including my own.

Sarah Hutchins Freeman

Brandon you are an awesome man very dear to all my family! You are truly loved and missed by all who have been blessed to know you!

Howard Tuten

I am honored to have known you, and I learned a lot by the courage & strength you showed during very difficult seasons in your life. I'm glad you are with Hope now, but your presence will be missed. I will never forget you my friend. I know the Lord welcomed you with open arms and said, "WELL DONE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT, ENTER INTO THE JOY OF THE LORD...!"

Love you Bran...RIP.

Sara Hardy Williams

I can not cry, because you brought me so much happiness. I can not cry because you brought amazement to so many people. I can not cry because your smile would not be in my thoughts. I can not cry because my heart is broken. I can not cry because you are with your Hope. You are smiling...your crooked grin is smiling so brightly, and you are home. I love you my best friend.

Tim Miller

Mere words can never describe your character. You were truly a friend to everyone that you met. Thank you for being an example to me for all these years.

Dawn Deaver

Brandon, I am going to miss you terribly. I was so looking forward to our visit in a couple of weeks. I am terribly sad you are gone and i loved you very much. Thank you for always believing in me. You were an amazing gift from God to my life. Thank you.

Kara Gagliano-Scott

:( Thank you for sharing heart and struggles with me across the miles and letting me do the same. I will miss the comfort of your prayers and the authenticity of your character, Brandon. ♥ Kenneth Meadors and Nancy Walker Meadors, my thoughts and my prayers for comfort and peace are with both of you and will continue to be. Much love to both of you!

April Gagliano Cullett

Thank you Brandon for being such a great friend to my sister. You were an angel in disguise and you never even knew it. I will always be grateful to you. Can't wait to meet you... one day!



Our three oldest: Donia, Ken, and Brandon

## Appendix D

### SOME OF LYLE'S NOTES FROM PRISON

#### LYLE'S NOTES - #1

Watch selfish prayers, motivations. Pray in the Spirit for the Father's will then with understanding! You are not suffering in vain. This has happened to you because you believe and you're a threat. God will use what the devil intended to kill you with to continue training you, but you must submit, obey, and be willing to persevere. You are in fact chosen. Use His strength and please, watch coming out with your physical strength; it will destroy you. Do not place too much attention on or have thoughts of exercise, diet, conditions, Habeas Corpus, inspection. You know what you're going through. You will not go under; you'll go through as long as you agree with God and not the prison sentence, environment, illusions, what ifs, what you should have done or could have done! Obey the word, "Leave behind what is behind." There is a much greater purpose in front of you. This is a time of great testing, training, applying what you know about "walking "in the spirit.

#### LYLE'S NOTES - #2

Not sure over what period of time these notes were written. There are some repetitions, but I think that further validates his struggles. But, as you can read, he spoke "positive" words.

Don't allow thoughts to come in about your situation, the future, about your looks, health. Don't listen to anything negative. Don't let thoughts like it's the P.A. or the doors opening that is the cause of your anxiety...it's just the thoughts and feelings that the adversary has launched against you. Identify it for what it is and it will flee. It will be difficult at first, but will get easier with each attack as long as you identify it and call it out. This journaling is powerful "knowing" but beware when you read it later. It will "seem like" it's useless. The devil "does not" want you to remember, recall or talk about

this information. He has taken you very seriously. There is the Father's will to live for.

The enemy will work through your thoughts, feelings (emotions) to get you to agree with the environment, your physical situation, what other people are saying (don't listen to them, only the Word of God). Once you agree with what seems to be true in the physical, HE GAINS POWER. He then has "permission" to use your power against you controlling what you are willing to do.

#### LYLE'S NOTES - #3

Each day when you wake up know that it is not just the same thing again. God will show you things that you did not see the day or week before. In the morning the flesh and your thoughts will tell you not to pray just give up while you have the chance. You must seek the Father's Will. Pray specifically against anger, frustration, hopelessness, self-pity! Do not say with your mouth that you cannot do it again another day. God has purposed it so agree with Him. FOCUS ON PURPOSE. Every minute has purpose. Do not pretend to know how long that you have to do this. God knows what He is doing with you so don't listen to other people who don't know how important your purpose is.

#### LYLE'S NOTES - #4

Don't focus on getting out or it will destroy you. Focus on changing the negative spirit (complaining) and remember that to walk by the spirit is a minute by minute affair to which there can be no relaxing. There is no better way to train you and prepare you than this. You are in God's will; submit (don't complain and in everything give thanks and WATCH!!) and then become harmonious. Quit allowing yourself to be distracted from the training. You know what the truth is. Please don't allow a worse thing to come on you. Listen and submit. Don't justify that because now you know the truth. Forget vanity, you gave up your life the rest of it. God will use for His purpose. There is no other way. You are very fortunate...the Holy Spirit Himself is teaching you and training you.

#### LYLE DAY - #5

Walking by the spirit at every moment! You cannot be slack concerning this. When your mind or your spirit becomes disturbed you are dwelling on the natural. Focus on what God has for you in the near future. He saved your life many times because His word will not return void, but it will accomplish what He sent it to do. Stop asking God why because He is showing you. This journey is very difficult but short lived. If you try to do it in the physical with physical strength you will perish. Fear not the Holy Spirit is prompting you at every turn, you just have to learn just exactly what He is telling. Don't allow the enemy to tell you that you are mentally ill and that your delusions are going to get you killed. If God is for you then who can be against you? Your Father is in the process of making Jesus' enemies your footstool. When panic and major fear comes to you it is coming through the natural—combat it with the spirit.

#### LYLE'S NOTES - #6

This is not too difficult nor too far off. You cannot trust sudden thoughts of feelings. When you get struck with that fear of panic thinking that you are not going to make it remember you are not in man's hands but God's. Remember how much Jesus went through. The greater the torment the greater the purpose. Jesus even said if this cup could pass please! Not my will but yours.

This is very intense just for a while. Pay attention. You have to believe and stay focused on what you know to be true in the spiritual, especially when things in the natural get intense. The more consistent you are about believing (don't waver) the quicker you will advance. When sudden intense fear comes over you know that there is something very important that the devil does not want you to see or know.

(As you can see, Lyle's spiritual battles were intense, requiring constant attention to thoughts and the role of the spirit in combating these thoughts and emotions).

#### LYLE'S NOTES - #7

The devil hates you very much and he is planning to work through everything he can against you. No weapon formed will prosper as long as you stay out of the emotion and don't grieve the Holy Spirit. Use extreme caution, do not react, respond very easily, walk away, pray without ceasing.

As long as you continue to fight and don't open any more doors God is with you, but you must guard your thoughts watch your words. The devil has come against you through doors that you have left open and undealt with. Pride, anger, self-pity, accusing spirit, judgmental and critical spirit. Stop judging people even in your heart. The Holy Spirit sees. Don't try to cover up these issues or justify them. NOW IS THE TIME. Stop taking things into your own hands—let God do what He wants to do. Son, despise not my words nor my correction. Judgment is redemptive.

#### LYLE'S NOTES - #8

Most people are here for what they have done. You're here because of what you are going to do. God has not let you down, just be patient, submit and watch what He does. The enemy is coming relentlessly in every direction but you have the strong anointing of the Holy Spirit. Thoughts about your situation "in the natural"—dangers, fears, the negative conditions—this is not fair what has happened to you (self-pity)—you are going to die before you get out—no one will be left when you get out, if you get out. Lyle, stop trying to control the outcome...let go and let God.

#### LYLE'S NOTES - #9

When you become anxious, watch your thoughts. Question: Are you coming out in the strength of the flesh? God is taking you on a journey of "dying to the flesh." Don't be hard headed and stubborn. Once you cooperate you will enter into a truly spiritual life, and those who find this enter a true life of rest...inside the storms. Desires, emotions, affections. You have to let go of your life and God promises that you will find

it. This has not happened to you; it's happened for the kingdom of God. Seek it first, then God will work on your behalf.

#### LYLE'S NOTES - #10

Daily prayers:

Bind specific spirits—spirits working through people. Hedge of protection. To reveal the strategy, let you see from which direction he is coming. Pray for a strong mind, good health, wisdom in dealing with people. Pray scripture. Don't come out into soul life. Living from the spirit is the secret place. You shall abide under the shadow (protection) of the Almighty. Pray for insight/revelation. The devil works from the soulical realm.

#### **A Child of the King**

This is the song I wrote and sang at Lyle's funeral. Lyle had no worldly possessions when he left this world. What is sad and ironic, everyone thought Lyle would be a successful business person and would have accumulated a fortune. But, I believe this song says it all.

Verse 1

With no earthly claim to fame, the world may never know my name.  
Though I'm lacking no good thing.  
Born in obscurity, I belong to royalty  
As a child of the King  
Chorus

As a child of royalty I can walk with dignity.  
Possessor of all good things.  
Great treasures I now own as an heir to the throne  
I am a child of the King.

Verse 2

The blinded world cannot see my true identity  
As a child of the Most High.

Destined to rule from the throne to the King I belong.  
Nothing of value I'm deprived.

Chorus

As a child of royalty I can walk with dignity.  
Possessor of all good things.  
Great treasures I now own as an heir to the throne  
I am a child of the King.

Verse 3

Though no treasures here below, there are riches untold  
Stored up in heaven above.  
As a child of the King, I'm an heir to everything  
And the greatest thing is love.

Chorus

As a child of royalty I stand tall with dignity.  
Possessor of all good things.  
Great treasures I now own as an heir to the throne  
I am a child of the King.



Lyle about 8 years old in Hayti.

## Appendix E

In the story of my life, a lot of attention has been given to our three sons, as they were the ones who have faced the most adversity. However, I want to mention that our daughter Donia has been a beam of light for her whole family, including her three brothers. When people ask me how Donia and Chris are doing, my response is usually, "They're doing great." And, I believe they are doing great, but that doesn't mean they don't have their own challenges. It has been by God's grace that they have been blessed and have met these challenges in an honorable manner. Both Donia and Chris are dedicated Christians who love the Lord as well as their fellow man. They both are quick to help someone who is in need.

An old saying is true, "The squeaky hinge gets the oil," seems to be true. It is too easy to take for granted those who do not cause distress in your life. Lyle and Kenny's addictions have caused great pain for the entire family. The deaths of two of our sons have been distressing to all of us. Our whole family rejoice for the turnaround in Ken's life as he is on track to becoming a great vessel of the Lord to help bring light in many who are dwelling in dark places.

I have mentioned Donia in the most positive light throughout this book, but at this point, I want to give her special honor by displaying some precious pictures of her when she was growing up to be the woman she is today.





Two of my favorite pictures of Donia.



Donia at 16.



Donia's senior picture.



Donia and Chris Culberson



A precious picture of Donia and Ken.

## Appendix F

### SOME OF MY SONGS

These songs are included in the story of the journey of my life because they reflect who I am. Every song included has a special expression of an emotion that I was feeling at the time. Many of these songs are on You Tube that could give a little more flavor, but as far as I'm concerned at the present time, the lyrics can serve as a poetic snapshot of a portion of my life.

#### Songs Reflecting My Pain

I don't know of any more effective way of communicating the emotional pain I've experienced over the past few years than through the songs I've written. There were times when I hurt so badly concerning Lyle that I didn't know how I could cope. That's when I wrote the songs, "Is There Peace in This Life," "Spirit Rise," "I'm All That You Need," "Help Me Once More."

NOTE: All of these songs have been copyrighted in the Library of Congress. All copyrighted titles can be found by going online to the copyright office, go to search, and type in William Kenneth Meadors.

#### Is There Peace in This Life

With one disappointment after another, there is always the thought in the back of your mind if you will ever experience peace in this life. But, we have to come to the conclusion that God is faithful, and He will not allow anymore to be put on us than we can bear.

Verse 1

Out of my desperation; out of my despair.  
I cried to the Lord, "Are you really there?"

Do you see my hurt? Do you feel my pain?  
Is there any help for me? Or in this state I must remain?"

Chorus

Is there peace in this life? From my soul I cried.  
Many things I have searched for; many things I've tried.  
Then I cried, "O Lord, Where are you?  
I must know if you're really there; there's no more that I can do."

Verse 2

In the stillness of my night, He spoke to me.  
"Wherever you need me, that's where I will be.  
I've heard your groanings; I've seen your despair.  
In your time of trial, for you I'll be there."

(Repeat Chorus)

Verse 4

Lord, I now know that you are real; I know that you care.  
I know that you love me; I know you'll be there.  
So Lord I give to you my life and my soul.  
And of your love for me, I now see and behold.

Chorus

Yes, there's peace in this life; this I can't deny.  
Though many things I have searched for; and many things I've tried.  
When I cried to the Lord, "There's no more I can do."  
I found that He was there; His promises are true.

### **Spirit Rise**

One night while I was lying in bed, desperation set in upon me concerning Lyle. It was if the Lord revealed to me that I didn't have to call for help outside myself, because the Spirit of the

Lord dwelled within. So, my prayer was for the Spirit to arise within me to take control of my mind and soul.

Chorus:

Spirit rise, Take control of my mind, of my soul.  
That every idle, word, or thought of my heart shall be brought  
To the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Verse 1

When my thoughts are racing, and my mind is out of control.  
O soul, why are you disquieted? I cry O Lord take control.  
When I lie on my bed at night, and reflect on the things of the day.  
A flood of thoughts come rushing in, then to the Lord I say:  
Chorus:

Spirit rise, Take control of my mind, of my soul.  
That every idle, word, or thought of my heart shall be brought  
To the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Verse 2

When my mind is troubled, and my heart is burdened with care.  
When the pressures of life surround me, I know O Lord you'll be there.  
When my soul is troubled, and my thoughts overwhelm me.  
It's in those moments of time to the Lord I make my plea.

(Repeat Chorus)

Verse 3

When my thoughts come rushing in like a mighty flood.  
A standard will be raised; it's the standard of the blood.  
Casting down the enemy of my mind and thoughts.  
That all imaginations to the Lord will be brought.

(Repeat Chorus)

## **After These Things**

There is always the consolation that anything we go through won't last forever. All of these things will eventually pass. Again, this was a song that I wrote several years before Brandon and Lyle went home to be with Jesus, leaving us with hurt. Yet, we know that they are okay, and one day, we'll be reunited.

### Verse 1

When troubles come our way, they have come to pass.  
Though it's been so long, they'll not continue on.  
Though they may seem so vast.  
Your peace will return with the joy that it brings  
When things are wrong, you'll again sing a song,  
After these things.

### Chorus

After these things, again the sun will shine.  
When the storm passes ov'r, they'll be no more,  
Everything will be fine.  
In the darkness of the night, a new song you will sing.  
You'll be restored where you were before  
After these things.

### Verse 2

In each and every life, difficulties may come.  
Have no fear; victory is near.  
You shall overcome.  
Weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning.  
Before you're through, you'll have your breakthrough.  
After these things.

### Verse 3

After these things; these things will not last.  
Yesterday's pains cannot remain.  
They're just memories of the past.

After the storm comes the gentle soft rains.  
It won't stay this way, there's a brighter day  
After these things.

(Repeat chorus)

## **Songs about Family**

### **“Mama Was a Praying Woman”**

One thing I can say about the legacy my Mom left behind. She left the memory in my mind of the times at night Mom would pray out loud to the Lord. The last time I heard her pray was the spring semester of 1979 in my doctoral program at the University of Memphis when I stayed with Mom and Dad during the week before I went home in Hayti for the weekend.

### Verse 1

Momma was a devout Christian, she loved the Lord with all her heart.  
Her trust and faith in God to others she did impart;  
To other's she did impart.  
Many days came and went, and for many years.  
For her family she prayed; Momma shed many tears.  
Momma shed many tears.

### Chorus

Momma was a praying woman; she prayed to God ev'ry day.  
Many nights I would hear Momma, for out loud she would pray.  
Praying for us every day.  
Praying that one day that each of us would see  
That we all have been called to fulfill our destiny.  
To fulfill our destiny.

### Verse 2

Momma's life on earth was cut short; she died at sixty-two.

She no doubt remained on earth until her work on earth was through.

Until her work on earth was through.

Perhaps her mission while here on earth was to teach us how to live.

And to leave us an example; that we each had something to give.

That we each had something to give.

(Repeat Chorus)

### **Daddy Was a God-fearing Man**

Daddy gave his heart to the Lord later in life when he was almost fifty years old. Mom was the spiritual leader of our home, but I can say that Dad invested in each of us something very valuable—that was the sense of hard work and integrity.

Verse 1

I was born the son of a hard-working man.

From dawn to dusk he worked to meet life's demands.

He always went to work; he took his task to heart.

He never shirked his duty; he always did his part.

Chorus

Daddy was a God-fearing man;

He did what was right; the truth he did defend.

He said that in this life don't be a fool.

The way to live this life is by the golden rule.

Verse 2

Daddy taught us lessons all along life's way.

Don't put off till tomorrow what you should do today.

What you give away is what you will keep.

And what you sow is what you will reap.

(Repeat Chorus)

Verse 3

Daddy's no longer with us; from this life he did depart.

Though he's not here, he's still in our heart.

The lessons he taught, I've made them my own.

All his hopes and dreams, I must carry on.

(Repeat Chorus)

Verse 4

Now I am a daddy, and hopefully I've done

That which is right for my daughter and three sons.

We have been given a tradition and a legacy.

Only things that count will last through eternity.

Chorus 2

So daddy, dear, a good job you've done.

While you were here on earth, a good race you have run.

Thank you for who you are and what you have been.

If we're faithful in this life, we'll see you again.

### **The Saga of Bill and Evie**

This is a true story. Well, I certainly believe it was, especially in the earlier stages of their relationship. In one sense of the word, Mom and Dad had somewhat of a stormy relationship, but there was no question in my mind that they had a true love for one another. It was fitting that they both went home together.

This is a true story, a saga of Bill and Evie

It all started in Arkansas behind the river levee.

Evie was sixteen years old, Bill was twenty-four.

Bill loved Evie very much; Evie loved Bill even more.

Bill worked on the river; he couldn't wait to come home.

To see his sweetheart Evie, together they'd be alone.

Then on Saturday night they went to the local barn dance.

They were glad to be together every time they got the chance.

Evie was more than ready to marry and settle down.  
When this subject came up, Bill was nowhere to be found.  
Bill insisted regularly that he wasn't the marrying kind.  
To be tied down to a woman was certainly not on his mind.  
So five years came and went; Bill and Evie saw each other.  
Then the day finally came when marriage Bill would consider.  
So at the age of twenty-nine, Bill finally took the step.  
It was time for him to marry, his promise to Evie was kept.  
Evie said to Bill, "I don't want to be here alone.  
Can you get a diff'rent job so you can be at home."  
Bill's days on the river would soon come to an end.  
With Evie he'd be at home to become each other's best friend.

Bill worked hard for many years; finally he retired.  
To spend more time with Evie is what he desired.  
Now he could really be at home to do just what he pleased.  
So when the time came, his chance he quickly seized.

Then in June of seventy-nine, Bill took his last truck ride.  
And as fate would have it, Evie was right there by his side.  
Throughout the years of their lives, they did many things  
together.  
So on this dread and fateful day, they both went home together.

### **Forty-five Years Ago**

This song was written several years ago in commemoration of my and Nancy's forty-fifth wedding anniversary. However, this year we celebrated our fifty-seventh wedding anniversary. We have been through a lot together; in fact, we still face challenges, but we're doing so together. Nanny, I love you more today than ever before, and we have had a wonderful ride in life together.

#### Verse 1

Forty-five years ago, we took the walk together.  
Down the aisle of the church to pledge our love forever.  
It was in a small church in Memphis, Tennessee.  
There we took a giant step toward our posterity.

#### Verse 2

Together we've had a good ride in our journey down life's road.  
We've walked in agreement; we've each shared life's load.  
As we approach this special day, we look back with reflection.  
All the wonderful times we've shared brings only satisfaction.

#### Verse 3

In our celebration, let's stroll down memory lane.  
We'll recall all the good times, and enjoy them once again.  
Remember our first night in our two-room apartment?  
You lingered in the bathroom, as I slowly grew impatient.

#### Verse 4

Soon we had four children; together we went many miles.  
With a few ups and downs, but mostly joys and smiles.  
We were a happy family, though challenges were many.  
Sometimes the cost seemed mighty great, but our blessings  
were plenty.

#### Verse 5

So as we celebrate our forty-five years together;  
Many things we've both gone through, even some stormy  
weather.  
Regardless of the circumstance, we have no lasting regret.  
We've now come to the time in life to really enjoy it.

#### Verse 6

So to you my darling wife, to me you've been so faithful.  
For everything you've been to me, to you I'm ever grateful.  
Perhaps for many more years, together we'll be hopefully.  
At the end of life we'll be together eternally.

### **Our Little Boy**

The facts of this song are very true. Lyle has been to hell and back, and I think we've been there with him. It has been

painful to see an upbeat, enthusiastic, ambitious, outgoing young man suffer the things he did; but, now he has fulfilled his destiny. (I wrote this song before Lyle's tragic death in 2015, so the meaning of the song has changed, especially in terms of time).

#### Verse 1

There was this little boy, planned in the heart of God.  
He was destined for greatness before on earth he trod.  
With blonde hair and blue eyes, he was such a charm.  
He was always smiling; he would do no one harm.

Everyone who knew him, knew he had a destiny.  
To be here on earth everything he was to be.  
Then something happened; he heeded wrong voices.  
Then the result was he made wrong choices.

Slowly he departed; there was no more joy.  
What has happened to our little boy?  
The little boy we once knew is no more around.  
His joy and happiness is nowhere to be found.

#### Verse 2

One day he found himself in a state of confusion.  
Because of bad choices, he was given to delusions.  
One night he pulled a trigger; a bullet missed his head.  
For in a split second, he could have been dead.

Then one Friday night, he was in the wrong place.  
There he would have died, except for God's grace.  
A single shot was fired that hit him in the chest.  
For many there with him, thought this was his final breath.  
For days he struggled, not knowing if he would live.  
God had another plan; he still had much to give.  
So son just remember, you still can be great.  
You must understand, that it's never too late.

Many things may happen designed to stop you.

But nothing will happen until your work is through.  
So you may be hindered; purpose you may not see.  
But always be reminded, you have a great destiny.

#### **The Thompson Clan**

Written by Kenneth Meadors  
July 28, 2005

#### Verse 1

In the hills of old Alabam, just across the Mississippi line.  
It was long ago, a story I am told that started S.V. Thompson's  
line.  
You can mark the date, in eighteen eighty-eight.  
Little Sylvester was born right on time.

#### Chorus

In just a few short years S.V. grew up to see;  
That across the holler—was the beautiful young daughter  
Of Bob and Melinda Anthony.  
On a starry night, it was love at first sight.  
In the mind of God it was meant to be.

#### Verse 3

Her name was Mariah Meldora, a lovely lassie was she.  
With cold black hair, and beauty so rare.  
Our grandmother she was to be.  
With loving affection through a divine connection  
Was the beginning of our history.

#### Chorus

To this holy union were born sons and daughters.  
In a matter of time; by purpose divine  
They'd become our fathers and mothers.  
Soon we would be a big family  
Our destiny in life we would discover.

Verse 5

There were born two sons to carry Papa's name.  
First Robert Elton; then Raymond Alton.  
True Thompsons they became.  
The daughters did marry and they would carry  
Their wed husband's family name.

Chorus

We may not all be called Thompson; we all have different  
names.  
As hard as we may try; we can't deny—  
Thompson blood flows in our veins.  
Though far away, still we can say—  
We're still one family just the same.

Verse 7

The Thompson girls were seven, Carmen Hilda and Jessica.  
Then Corrine, and Evie Lorine;  
And then there was Sarah.  
Twins Willie May and Mary Faye.  
That was all and Dora said hallelujah!

Chorus

From the Thompson children came other families.  
Though different names—our blood's the same.  
We're one big family.  
Burns, Collins, Spain, Meadors and Moore.  
Each with different personalities.

Chorus

Except for Aunt Earlene all our uncles and aunts  
Have now gone on; to their heavenly home.  
To fail now we surely can't.  
If we pray then one day together in heaven.  
We'll all be saints.

NOTE: Sarah is Sarah Earlene, and she died after I wrote this song. Jessica Myrtle died at birth. Willie May was Aunt Mary Fay's twin sister, and she died at sixteen months of age. Our grandmother Meldora died of complications of childbirth just two days after giving birth to the twins. That was April 21, 1929, when she was only forty years old.

## Nostalgic Songs

### Butch the Lion and Susie the Bear

This song is a real part of our history while living in Hayti, Missouri. Butch the Lion and Susie the Bear were real animals that became a legacy in Hayti, Missouri. I have taken literary liberty in the description of some of the interaction between the two. However, I will say that Butch's roar could literally be heard from one end of the town to the other. I can truthfully say that Butch could frighten little kids. For all of us who lived in Hayti in the 1970s, consider Butch and Susie to be legends who will never be forgotten. In fact, their legend grows as the years pass.

When Lyle was five years old (1977), he fell out of a walnut tree in the back of our churchyard. We took him to Dr. Bryant, our family physician, who set his broken arm. Dr. Bryant asked Lyle what happened. Lyle replied, "I fell out of a coconut tree." We corrected him, but Dr. Bryant simply grinned and replied, "Well, he wasn't going to totally doubt it. A Hayti Park (Zoo) employee came to Dr. Bryant with a flesh wound. Dr. Bryant asked him what happened. The man replied, "A lion bit him." "Yeah, sure. I know you're kidding." The man was not kidding because that was when Butch was first brought to Hayti, and Dr. Bryant was not aware of a lion in Hayti (of course Butch was just a small cub then). So, how could Dr. Bryant doubt Lyle? This was tongue in cheek, of course.

Let me tell my story, a story that is true.  
Back in Missouri in the year of seventy-two.  
In the Bootheel of Missouri where true friends really care,  
They were in the Hayti Park, the Lion and the Bear.  
Butch came from the jungle; Suzy from the hills.

Together they did rumble, they both gave us a thrill.  
People came from near and far to see this wondrous sight.  
Though the real excitement came when late at night.  
A mighty roar did Butch give that rumbled through the night.  
It shook doors and windows; it created such a fright.  
Little children awakened to Butch's mighty roar.  
They cried, "What happened?" when he shook all the doors.  
Suzy gave a growl to Butch's mighty roar.  
In response the dogs howled; the city was in an uproar.  
Many years came and went, and they were still together.  
Nothing separated them, they were friends forever.

Butch grew old and feeble, old age crept up on him.  
His walk was a little slower, his eyesight grew dim.  
Together they grew old, the lion and his gal.  
Butch lost his roar, Suzy lost her growl.  
Butch was called home, it was time for him to go.  
He had served his time, his roar would be no more.  
No more together in the park, Suzy sits there all alone.  
No more sounds in the night, the roar and growl were gone.

Suzy waits for her friend— for him to come around.  
Days and months are passing, Butch was not to be found.  
Butch was gone away to a land so far away.  
Where old lions go to rest when they've completed their stay.  
Suzy will be leaving to join with old Butch there.  
Again they'll be together, the lion and the Bear.  
The park is dark and lonely, no joy is found there.  
We will really miss them—Butch the Lion and Suzy the Bear.

May God be with us all while on earth we roam.  
Because we too—God will call us home.  
One day we'll meet again in the land so bright and fair.  
There we'll be together, like Butch the Lion and Suzy the Bear.

## Appendix G

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

#### A Goal in Life

One of my goals in life is to be able to leave written material behind that can speak beyond my life on this earth. To date, I have written and published one book, *What on Earth Are You Doing Here? Revealing God's Purposes in the Earth*. I began writing this book in the early 1980s, but it was not until 1995 that I had three thousand copies printed. I still have many copies remaining. Also, I have written numerous Bible College course manuals for various subjects.

My desire is to pursue more of my writing as I think in terms of "retirement." To me, retirement just simply means that you are at the point in time of your life that you can do whatever you want to do when you want to do it! I have a goal of one day writing a meaningful novel that can communicate important values.

I sincerely believe that it is important that every person leave a legacy behind. To me, the greatest legacy is what I have instilled in my offspring, both naturally and spiritually.

It would be a shame for anyone to take anything to the grave with them. It should all be left behind. The graveyard is one of the richest places on earth, with many unfulfilled dreams, ideas, books, poetry, and songs. We should think in terms of emptying ourselves by investing in another generation. That, I trust that I have done. To date, this concludes *The Journey of My Life*, and to reemphasize that *Life Is Just a Journey*.



First cousins Brandon, Shannon, Ken, Donia, Wesley, Valerie, and Lyle



Nieces Valerie and Shannon. Nephew Wesley (notice the halo over my head!)



Donia, Ken, Lyle, and Brandon in 1972



Lyle helping to plant flowers in 2014.

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