

## Chapter 14

## THE CHURCH EXTENSION PROGRAM

The early 1940's saw the beginning of a great influx of people into Southern California and Arizona. In addition to new residents, there was an increase in church attendance which was very unusual. The result of these two changes was a new problem for the churches. Not only was it necessary for established churches to improve and increase their existing facilities, new churches needed to be established in new and growing communities. In the large metropolitan areas comity agreements were worked out so that only one of the "main line" denominations would go into a new community.

If new churches were to be strategically located in their communities someone would have to get the property long before a congregation would be organized. Consequently, the Conference Board of Missions was soon in the real estate business. The policy was that the Board would buy the vacant land upon recommendation of the District Superintendent and his Church Location Committee. Title would be transferred to the new congregation just as soon as it was incorporated. The financial responsibility for the project rested with the new corporation, but both the Conference Board and the Philadelphia Board would make donations to the new church to assist in meeting the costs.

As soon as a congregation could be organized a minister would be appointed. Many times the appointment would be made before any congregation existed. Provision would have to be made for housing for the new minister and his family. Again the Conference and National Boards would make donations to facilitate the purchase of a parsonage. The Conference Board paid the salary of the new minister in full for the first year. The local congregation was expected to assume one-third of the support for the second year, two-thirds for the third year and after that it would be responsible for total support.

We had to constantly guard against a new church over extending itself. The tendency for a new and enthusiastic group was to borrow all they possibly could in order to get needed facilities as soon as possible. We tried to set some safeguards but unfortunately these were not always observed. For instance, we advised that no church should have an indebtedness of more than \$300 per member. We also said that a church should not be obligated to use more than 25% of its annual income for interest and principal on indebtedness. Some new churches went into debt as much as \$800 per member. Some were obligated to use as much as 45% of their annual income for interest and principal amortization. Such churches were soon in deep trouble. Their programs had to be greatly curtailed. In one or two instances the churches merged with some other congregation and the properties were liquidated. In other cases refinancing through the National Division with easier terms had to be worked out.

To begin with, the administrative responsibility within the Board of Missions for this program which was growing by leaps and bounds was assigned to me. I carried the title of Executive Secretary and Treasurer for a few years. A strong Church Extension Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. James E. Dunning made the necessary decisions. When the work load justified a full time Executive Secretary, Dr. Frank S. Williams was appointed. He served for ten years. Dr. Will Hildebrand had served as Superintendent of Pasadena District for six years. He and Dr. Williams exchanged their positions and Dr. Hildebrand served until the current year (1975). He has announced his retirement at Conference this year. Both of these men were superb in handling their responsibilities with the Board. They were great fellows to work with. All during the years of the boom in Church Extension I was handling escrows for the Conference and National Boards, not only for the purchase of new sites but also for building projects. The policy of the National Board was to release loan funds only after the project had been completed and a "Notice of Completion" had been filed. Under the escrow procedure we had worked out, the Board would deposit its money in my escrow knowing that their instructions would be followed to the letter of the law. It was a procedure that no other Conference enjoyed.

The one great need which was never fully provided was for more money than we could seem to muster. Several ways of providing funds were developed.

The Annual Conference placed a major priority on the need for money for Church Extension and salary funds. Many other agencies of the Conference also had increasing needs, but it was now or never in many cases where new churches were needed. Eventually the pressure from inner-city projects and caucus groups succeeded in wresting much needed funds from the Board of Missions and the Church Extension program suffered greatly. Nevertheless, during the years of the greatest pressure, the Conference did its best to meet the financial obligations through apportionments to the churches.

In another chapter I have related how the Revolving Loan Fund was started. Several memorial funds were added to this fund. As interest was earned from loans made from the fund it was added to the capital of the fund. One very unique plan was developed which should be recorded. Dr. Dunning was serving as associate pastor at First Church, Los Angeles at the same time he was Chairman of the Church Extension Committee. There was a layman in First Church whom Dr. Dunning interested in our problem. His name was Lester Balkins. He originally came from Minneapolis and was in Roy Smith's church there. When Lester came to Los Angeles he found Roy Smith was at First Church and he joined there. Lester had been quite successful in real estate ventures and was quite well-to-do. He had heard about the Bishop's Prospectors campaign to add capital to the Revolving Loan Fund. Dr. Dunning brought him down to meet me and a warm and lasting friendship was begun.

One day Lester suggested that if we had a church that needed ten or fifteen thousand dollars to complete a building project he would be glad to help out on two conditions: (1) His identity must be kept confidential; and (2) he did not want any interest himself but he did want the church to pay a modest rate of interest. The interest collected was to be used to establish a memorial to his mother. Thus the Elizabeth Balkins Memorial Fund was established. Over the years more than \$50,000 in interest was added to the memorial fund and is a part of the Revolving Loan Fund.

The procedure I worked out was quite simple. I would give Lester a note executed by the Conference Board for his loan - say \$10,000 - payable in two or three years without interest. The money would be loaned by the Conference Board to the church which would execute a note for the amount at four per cent interest and secured by a Deed of Trust on the church property. This Deed of Trust would, of course, be in second position to the primary loan from a bank or the National Board. If for some reason the church defaulted on its loan, the Conference Board would pay off Lester's loan when due anyway. We never were delinquent on any loan to him. That is why our credit was good.

This process began to expand. Lester traveled a lot and I had problems in locating him. He might be in Minneapolis or Florida or Acapulco when we needed a loan. This led to a new arrangement out of which a very humorous incident developed. We were in the process of making arrangements for General Conference in 1956 which was to be in Minneapolis. I needed a loan and Lester was in Minneapolis. I wrote and told him I was to be at the Curtis Hotel on a certain date and asked him to meet me there. He did and I told him of the loan I needed. He said he was getting tired of all the paper work involved and suggested he just loan us \$100,000 and not bother him any more with the details of our loans. I said that would be wonderful and as soon as I got home I would make out the note and send it to him. He then could send me the check. He said "No, I'll give you the check now and you can send me the note when you get around to it." He took out his check book and wrote the check for \$100,000. Later the same afternoon I was to meet Rev. E. Clayton Burgess, who originally was a member of our Conference. He was Chairman of the Church Extension Committee of the Minnesota Conference and he wanted some ideas about financing their program. After we had visited a bit and he got to the point of our meeting he asked me just how we financed our program. I said "You get hold of someone with money who is interested in your program and make arrangements to use his money. Like this," I said, as I pulled the check out of my pocket carefully covering the signature. When Clayton saw a check for \$100,000 drawn on a Minneapolis bank he almost jumped across the table trying to find out whose signature was on the check.

Eventually news got out as to the identity of the benefactor who had helped so many churches. Efforts were made to get loans directly from Mr. Balkins but the answer was always "See Wes." If it is a loan he will approve he will get in touch with me." We never abused the confidence

Lester had in our procedure and only the angels in heaven know the extent of good his generosity made possible.

Another plan which we worked out was the "Stewardship Loan Fund." This was a kind of building and loan procedure based upon the use of unsecured promissory notes. An individual or a church organization which was willing to do it could loan amounts of \$500 or more for two years or more at 5% interest. The money thus received would be loaned to churches which qualified for limited amounts at 6% interest. The one per cent margin was sufficient to pay the costs of administration. The success of the idea was unbelievable. We had many loans of \$5,000 or \$10,000. We even had some for \$50,000. When a note came due we offered to renew it for another period, or pay it off. It was surprising how few loans had to be paid off. The plan paid as much interest as building and loan associations were paying and the appeal was strong to help build new churches. I don't know how much money went through this plan, but I do know that at one point there was \$1,500,000 on deposit.

This chapter can not be closed without recording deep appreciation for the help we received from the National Division in Philadelphia. Dr. W. Vernon Middleton, who in 1960 became Bishop Middleton, knew as much about our needs and our projects as we did. He made numerous trips out here and had an uncanny memory of what he learned. Dr. Bonneau Murphy, who came out of the former South Church, was a very capable administrator. Southern-California-Arizona Conference owes a great debt of gratitude to these two men.

What has been written really just scratches the surface but will give a sketchy idea of some of the ways by which we tried to meet the needs created by the great influx of people in the post-war period of the 40's, the 50's and the early 60's.

## Chapter 15

## PACIFIC HOMES CORPORATION

The California German Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church established the Pacific Old People's Home on a tract of land on Santa Monica Boulevard at Kingsley Drive in the early 1900's. The main purpose of the Home was to provide housing for retired ministers and widows. In the merger agreement with Southern California Conference in 1928 the Home was listed as an asset to be delivered to the Endowment Fund of the Conference in consideration of the fact that the Conference was assuming full responsibility for the pensions of all members of the German Conference and their widows. Dr. J. H. Durbahn was Superintendent of the Home.

Upon the retirement of Dr. Durbahn, the superintendency was assumed by Dr. C. E. Leitzell who had been associate pastor of First Church, Los Angeles with Dr. E. E. Helms. When Dr. Leitzell retired, a layman, Mr. Neal Ireland, became Superintendent. The name of the Corporation was changed to Pacific Homes, Inc.

During the administration of Leitzell and Ireland the membership of the Annual Conference was also the membership of the Home Corporation. Each year at Annual Conference the Conference session would adjourn and the Annual session of the Pacific Homes Corporation would convene. Theoretically, the business would be a report of the Board of Directors to the Corporation and the election of a new class of Directors. Almost every year some resident of the Home who had been unsuccessful in some gripe with the Directors or the Superintendent would get the floor of the Annual session and make absurd accusations. Such dissension was very upsetting and always resulted in lack of confidence in the administration. Finally the Annual session was such a farce something had to be done about it. Amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws were adopted to create a different corporation membership replacing the membership of the Annual Conference as the membership of the Corporation.

During the Ireland regime a program of expansion began. A branch known as Claremont Manor was built on West Harrison Street in Claremont. New buildings were constructed at Kingsley Manor in Los Angeles. A hotel in La Jolla-Casa de Manana-was purchased and converted into a Home for retired people.

Financing of these expansion projects came partly from borrowed money and partly from funds received from new residents who came into residence on "Prepaid Life Care" contracts. These contracts were actuarially computed on the basis of the age and sex of the entrant which would determine life expectancy, the annual cost of board and medical costs, and the type and size of quarters to be occupied. The amount required for such a contract in those days would average \$25,000 per person. If a Home had facilities for 200 people, a total of \$5,000,000 would be prepaid. This money had

to be invested, and some of it would be "borrowed" to help finance building facilities on the theory that a part of the amount prepaid was for facilities.

I was not on the Board during the Ireland regime but I knew considerable dissension existed. Finally it came to a head and Mr. Ireland was replaced by Dr. Edward P. O'Rear as Superintendent. There was further expansion. Wesley Palms at Pacific Beach, Desert Crest in Phoenix, Pohai Nani in Kaneohe, Oahu were built. Fredericka Manor in Chula Vista was acquired. The mortgage indebtedness of course was greatly increased in order to build these facilities.

The history of Fredericka Manor is interesting. The original Home in Chula Vista was started by the Timken Bearing family. A Miss Saylor who was a close friend of the family ran the Home. When she reached the age of retirement efforts were made to get a benevolent non-profit organization to take the Home over. Dr. Oren B. Waite and I went to Chula Vista in 1940 to investigate the offer which had been made to our Conference. We were interested but there was one catch. The State law required that adequate reserves to protect existing contracts had to be maintained by the owners of the Home. The Timken family had some \$200,000 in securities set aside for these reserves which they wanted to withdraw. This would mean that the Conference would have to set aside cash or acceptable assets in the amount of \$200,000 if we accepted the Home. We were not in position to do that and the offer was declined. In the meantime Mountain View Manor was established by a Methodist group in San Diego under the leadership of Dr. Harold Baker. Ten acres of land adjacent to Fredericka Manor were purchased and a program of building cottages for senior citizens was launched. Eventually Mountain View Manor was merged with Fredericka Manor and Pacific Homes accepted the whole package. Asbury Towers, an apartment type facility, and a new hospital and convalescent facility have since been built.

In the late 50's and early 60's a complete change in the method of receiving new residents into the Homes began. It became increasingly difficult to get people to prepay the amount required for life care. Competing Homes were offering contracts on the basis of monthly room and board payments. Such an arrangement enabled the new resident to invest his money as he chose rather than to pay it over to the Home. Consequently, Pacific Homes was forced into offering monthly payment contracts in lieu of Prepaid Contracts.

This development had a disastrous effect on "Cash Flow." As vacancies were available, instead of a new resident paying \$30,000 or \$40,000 upon entrance, he would pay only a small deposit and room and board for a month. Such a case multiplied by an average of 150 new entrants per year in its seven Homes, really put a crimp in the finances of the Corporation. Several million dollars which should have been on hand in Reserves had been "loaned" to the Corporation, so to speak, for buildings. Now money that was needed to buy bread and butter was on the balance sheet as bricks and mortar.

The Comptroller for Pacific Homes was Mr. Ed Stant who formerly was with U. S. Steel Corporation. He was a genius at such things as projecting the Cash Flow and the need for cash over several years ahead. His projections indicated that the fifteen or sixteen million dollars required for reserves would be needed over a period of several years. He worked out a three phase proposal. Phase 1 would be for an immediate need of \$4,000,000; Phase 2 would be for \$5,000,000 and would be needed in four years; Phase 3 would be for \$6,000,000 and would be needed in eight or nine years hence.

Since all the Homes were already mortgaged, the big question was how to get the money to finance each phase of the projections. Included in the calculations were payments when due of certain mortgages against some of the Homes.

In another chapter I told of the concern of certain creditors and the arrangements that were made with Connecticut General Insurance Company for a \$4,000,000 loan based upon a guarantee by the Annual Conference. This was accomplished at the 1969 session and took care of Phase 1.

Phase 2 was to be an effort to borrow a total of \$5,000,000 from residents and constituents in the Conference. This program involved the incorporation of another agency to be known as "Pacific Investment Company". Bonds were to be issued by this new Corporation and the money realized was to be loaned to Pacific Homes. Without going into details, suffice it to say that through a Board of Control which was established by the Conference as a condition of its guarantee of Phase 1 loan, adequate safeguards to protect the Conference and lenders were set up involving a Trustee arrangement with Title Insurance and Trust Company. I frankly doubted that \$5,000,000 in bonds could be sold. But I am gratified to say that as I am writing this in March of 1975 the goal has been accomplished.

In the meantime after Dr. O'Rear's resignation in December, 1968 three different General Managers have come and gone.

I have reported in a later chapter the fact that Dr. Noel LeRoque was appointed as of April 20, 1969 to be the General Manager of Pacific Homes. He was released eight months later because of the insistence of Connecticut General Insurance Company that a layman be employed as the General Manager. After I had refused to accept the position, arrangements were made for my brother, Les, to accept the position on an interim basis. He had been Treasurer of the Corporation for several years and had a good working knowledge of the affairs of the Corporation. Six months later Mr. Harold Bramson was employed. He had been Business Manager of Chico State College for some twenty years. When Bishop Kenned was pastor at Palo Alto, Harold was the YMCA secretary there. He was an excellent administrator but a firm one. The managers of the various Homes were irritated with Harold's firm policies of administration. They

finally got together and all signed an ultimatum to the Directors that either Harold be fired or all of them would quit. My advice to Bishop Kennedy was to let them quit. The Board of Directors was running scared and conceded to the senseless demands which I considered to be contemptible. Harold's resignation was accepted and a generous termination agreement was offered. Mr. Stant succeeded Mr. Bramson as General Manager but was released because of an affair with a female assistant administrator of one of the Homes. The present General Manager, Howard Washburn, is experienced and competent.

As this is being written, the loan necessary for Phase 3 of the "Conversion Plan" is being sought. It was a real disappointment that the contemplated source of the loan for Phase 3 has been unwilling to make it. Further assistance from the Annual Conference may still be needed. I am convinced that the "Conversion Plan" as it was conceived in 1969 was sound and workable. If the needed "cash flow" can be realized as was contemplated by Phase 3 of the "Conversion Plan", Pacific Homes will be out of trouble.

My involvement in the affairs of Pacific Homes has been quite limited, but nothing I ever worked on took as much out of me as the period between Dr. O'Rear's resignation and the Conference session in 1969 when the guarantee of the \$4,000,000 loan was voted.

I cannot conclude this chapter without saying that Pacific Homes facilities are for wealthy people. Several years ago there was an Endowment Fund held by Pacific Homes Corporation, the income from which was used to help retired ministers and missionaries to pay for room and board in one of the Homes. This fund was a casualty of the financial difficulties experienced by the Corporation and it no longer exists. It is ironical that the Conference has control of and responsibility for an institution such as Pacific Homes whose services are not available to Methodists who really need such services. Maybe someday ways and means will be found whereby needy Methodists who cannot afford the high costs of Pacific Homes can have the benefit of such a great institution.

## Chapter 16

## THE CAMP COMMISSION

One of the most popular activities of youth related to the church in the 1920's, 30's and 40's was the summer camping program. My earliest recollection of this phenomenon was the camp grounds in Huntington Beach known as Arbarnar. There was a large tabernacle in which the meetings were held. The grounds were covered with platforms on which tents were erected. There was also a large tent with tables and benches for meals. When an oil boom developed in the beach area, Arbarnar was discontinued and a new project in one of the canyons at Pacific Palisades was developed. Instead of tents, cabins of a more permanent nature were constructed.

These summer camps became known as Institutes. As they became more sophisticated each Institute would have its own separate organization including a dean and a faculty. Ministers were expected to contribute a week during the summer on an Institute faculty. As the popularity of Institutes grew, there were demands for camps in various sections of the Conference. Some of the camps were quite primitive and were really camping experiences. In other cases, facilities owned by other denominations or by playground departments of large cities, or by YMCA groups were rented. It was inevitable that if we were to have what we wanted in the way of facilities and to have them when we wanted them, we would have to own them.

The programs of the Institutes were planned and administered by the Young People's Department of the Conference Board of Education. If properties were to be owned and operated, a separate Corporation would be necessary. Consequently, a group was called together in 1944 to consider the feasibility of such a proposal. In 1945 the Conference Camp Commission was incorporated by fifteen interested persons most of whom were ministers. I was one of the few laymen among the fifteen. At first the executive responsibility for this new organization was carried by Frank Webber who was my assistant in the Treasurer's office. As the responsibilities for oversight of camps increased a full time manager of the Camp Commission was employed. This manager was Francis La Pointe who had been active in Asbury Church, San Diego.

One of the first camps acquired was the Colby Ranch in the San Gabriel mountains north of Pasadena. Dr. F. G. H. Stevens of Pasadena had been a long time friend of the Colby family. The ranch could be reached by trail starting in the Arroyo Soco, through Camp Oak Wild, past Switzers and Strawberry Peak and on to the north slope of the mountain range. Another access also by trail was several miles off the Angeles Crest highway to Palmdale. The road, such as it was, ended at Camp Wickiup. The trail was quite steep up to the ranch. A group of us from the office made a trip into the ranch one Saturday and were favorably impressed with its possibilities. Arrangements were finally made to buy the ranch from the Colby heirs. The development included putting in a road from the highway. This required building bridges across the stream which was dry most of the time but which could become a raging torrent without much

notice. Camp Colby today is a modern and up-to-date facility that can take care of upward of 200 people at a time.

Another camp we acquired in the 1940's was Camp Sturtevant which is on the Mt. Wilson Trail several miles from Chantry Flats above Arcadia. This is quite a small facility and can only be reached by hikers. When we heard that it was available for purchase it was owned by a boys' group known as "Old Glory Braves." The guiding light of the organization was in prison. We bought all the camp for \$750. It is a beautiful site but is seldom used because of its inaccessibility.

Another ranch named Lazy W which is a mile and a half off Ortega Highway and fifteen miles from San Juan Capistrano was purchased and now has excellent facilities for summer or winter use.

Cedar Glen, another former ranch five or six miles out of Julian in the San Diego Mountains, also has excellent facilities for winter as well as summer use.

Another fine location is Camp Virginia located east of Julian near the Banner grade. This is primarily for children and Junior Highs. It was the home of Dr. and Mrs. Henry Wyatt. Before Dr. Wyatt died they deeded the property to the Conference as a gift, reserving life tenancy in the house in which they lived. Development of the camp has been retarded by recent County requirements growing out of ecological pressures.

A beautiful camp at Mount Mingus in Northern Arizona and one in Pine Canyon in Southern Arizona have been acquired.

First Church, Los Angeles formerly owned a camp at Wrightwood. It is now owned and operated by the Conference Camp Commission. Likewise, a lodge at Pacific Palisades which was owned by "We Boys" of First Church, Los Angeles has been transferred to the Camp Commission.

The Arroyo Grande site was purchased by a Camp Meeting Association in the 1920's for the purpose of having a camp meeting grounds. It was adjacent to the Methodist Episcopal Church where meals could be served. It was quite primitive with a minimum of improvements. After the Camp Commission came into being arrangements were made to transfer title to the new Corporation. The camp has been greatly improved and is used extensively for family oriented camping programs.

There are two camps in Hawaii. Camp Kokee is on the Island of Kauai high on a mountain with a breath-taking 180 degree view of the ocean. It is used mainly in the summer time. Camp Kailani on the Island of Oahu can accommodate 150 people and is used the year around. Title to these two camps is held by the Hawaii District Union.

Today the Camp Commission owns 10 properties valued at 1½ million dollars. It has an annual budget of over \$300,000 of which less than 1/3

comes from Conference sources. More than 30,000 people use the facilities each year. It really is a tremendous program and has been to a great extent the result of the tireless efforts of Francis La Pointe. He has been one of those consecrated and committed laymen who has given twice the amount of time he has been paid for. The Conference owes him much more than most people realize.

Unfortunately, Francis has tendered his resignation to be effective June 30, 1975 after twenty years of unsurpassed service. This move was no doubt motivated by an action taken by the 1974 Annual Conference session to discontinue the Camp Commission as a separate Corporation and to place the responsibility of owning and operating the properties under the Trustees of the Conference.

The popularity of the summer Institutes has decreased greatly during the past few years. This kind of a program joins the Methodist Youth Fellowship, the Sunday School and many other similar traditional projects in suffering from a complacency and loss of interest which is difficult to understand.

No one can foresee what the future holds for church camps, but the record of what has been accomplished in the past has been indelibly inscribed in the lives of most of present day leaders of the Church in our Conference.

At my retirement service in 1971 the Camp Commission presented me with a plaque of appreciation for my service in the interest of the Commission. It hangs on my "ego wall" as a constant reminder of the happy twenty-six years I spent in a program in which I thoroughly believed and was proud to have had a part.

## Chapter 17

### AGRICULTURAL AIDS FOUNDATION

I am sure my readers will understand when I say that some chapters of this story are more difficult to write than others. This is one of the more difficult because it does not end as happily as some of the others. Nevertheless, it is an important part of my story and it should be told. Furthermore, I must tell it as it was.

In the early 1950's a woman attorney in Long Beach-Elsie Ferris-who had a great zeal for overseas missions and who had traveled extensively, spoke to a young adult group in the Belmont Heights Church, Long Beach. She told of the great need in Africa for the people there to learn how to grow crops. Their method of trying to till the soil was very primitive. All they had to use were crudely made hoes which would barely scratch the soil. Her presentation caught the fancy of a young layman in the group named Keith Smith. He finally made a trip to Africa to see first hand the conditions about which he had heard. The idea of developing a small portable type tractor came to him and he began working with tractor manufacturers in the United States to develop such a machine.

His father had been in the moving business on a small scale and when Keith returned from the war to civilian life he went into business with his father. They developed the idea of "piggy back" moving of household goods and soon had some sizable contracts to move belongings of military personnel in these "piggy back" containers. The business prospered and Keith was soon well off financially.

He needed some method of distributing the small tractors in Africa. The thought occurred to him that Methodist agricultural missionaries would be a perfect outlet for the tractors.

Dr. Grover Bagby was pastor of the church at the time and Rev. J. Wesley Neal was the associate. They encouraged his interest in the project and endeavored to get support or at least an endorsement from the Board of Missions in New York. This attempt was not successful. In the meantime Grover had moved to Huntington Park. Wes Neal had taken a church of his own. Bishop Kennedy had replaced Bishop Baker.

Grover called me one day and invited me to lunch at his home. He told me he had a friend who had a great idea but needed some advice on procedure. I went to the lunch and met Keith Smith for the first time. His idea made sense to me and I agreed to do whatever I could to help him along. All attempts to get favorable consideration from the Board of Missions in New York failed. Their "experts" had checked out the feasibility of the idea and had reported that the tractor idea would not work in Africa. Other larger tractors had been tried out but didn't work out. Replacement was almost impossible. The African farmers were not mechanics. There were no bridges across the rivers and the logistics involved in getting tractors around were impossible.

What Keith needed more than anything else was some kind of official status for the project. After all else had failed, I suggested to Bishop Kennedy that we incorporate in California under our Conference Board of Missions. He went along with the idea. We were assured by Keith that there would be no financial involvement (where had I heard that before?)

The Board of Missions finally agreed to become the membership of the Corporation and authorized us to proceed to incorporate. The five incorporators were: Bishop Kennedy, Keith Smith, Grover Bagby, J. Wesley Neal and J. Wesley Hole. The necessary papers were prepared and filed and "Agricultural Aids Foundation" was born.

In the meantime Keith had made several trips to the Congo and had created considerable interest on the part of the missionaries and Bishop Booth. In March of 1959 Keith had arranged for a meeting of Agricultural Missionaries from Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia, Liberia and the Congo. It was to be held just outside of Elizabethville where Bishop Booth resided. He wanted someone other than himself to be there representing the Corporation. He invited me to go with him. I was thrilled to be invited. We had only about three weeks before we were to go. I had to get a passport, all the shots that were required and do a hundred other things, but I made it.

We were to leave Los Angeles International Airport on a Sunday night at midnight. Keith had arranged with a travel bureau in New York for our itinerary and tickets. They were to be mailed to my office. They arrived on Friday before we were to leave on Sunday night. Since I wouldn't be seeing Keith again before we took off, I arranged with him to meet at the airport at 11 p.m. Our pastor at that time was Dr. Chilton McPheeters. He and his wife, Julia, and their ten year old daughter, Tina, went to the airport with us. I learned that night that Tina had remembered me in her prayers and I was really touched. When she grew up she became a model. She was a beautiful girl and I had her picture on my wall for a long time although she never knew it.

We got to the airport before 11 p.m. and I checked my bags through to New York. We waited at the check-in counter until 11:45 for Keith but he didn't show up. Finally we heard the final call for the plane and we went out to the gate. When they were about to close the gate I decided to get aboard without Keith hoping he would follow on another plane and I would get together with him in New York where we had several hours layover before taking a plane to London. I left his tickets with Chilton McPheeters who said he would get them to Keith somehow. I kissed Velma goodbye, went through the gate and boarded the first jet airplane I had ever been on - headed for Africa - alone! They closed the door and were removing the stair ramp when over the fence came Keith with all his baggage! They put the ramp back to the plane, opened the door, and Keith came aboard. To say I was relieved is an understatement. Just as

he was ready to leave home about 9 p.m. some reckless boys ran into his car which was parked at the curb. He had to get the police, make a report, transfer to another car and race to the airport.

We weren't out of our clothes for three nights. Sunday night we were flying to New York. Monday night we were crossing the Atlantic. Tuesday night we were between Cairo and Stanleyville. We finally arrived at Elizabethville about noon. Quite a group met us including Bishop Booth. We were told we were to attend a reception in our honor at the Bishop's home at 2 p.m. As soon as we checked into the hotel where we were to stay we stripped and hastened to the shower. We turned the faucets but there was no water. We called down to the desk and were told they were repairing the pipes and we would have water by 5 p.m. I had accumulated some "wash and dry" packets and had five of them. If you have never done it, try bathing with five of those little chemically treated paper wash cloths. We were at the reception at 2 p.m. as scheduled.

The consultation of Agricultural Missionaries was held at a boys' school a few miles from Elizabethville at Kinando. A tractor was there and the demonstration attracted a lot of interest. It plowed the ground; it excavated a large hole; it skip-loaded. Even Bishop Booth operated it. Most of the missionaries were favorably impressed. A few were skeptical. It was agreed, however, that we should do everything possible to get the tractor to the mission stations.

To make my trip complete I had a bad case of dysentery. We were in Elizabethville only three days. We crossed the southern part of the Congo on our way to Leopoldville stopping at various places. Bishop John Springer had given me one of his books several years before titled "I Love the Trail." It was a record of his several trips through this part of the Congo and now I was actually seeing the places he had visited so many times. I was particularly impressed with the work at Sandoa where Dean and Elsie Freudenberger were stationed, and the Piper Memorial Hospital at Kapanga where Dr. Duvon Corbett was located. We were later to raise the funds for a sterilizing machine for this hospital. We flew from Leopoldville to Accra, Ghana where we stayed two nights. While Keith was busy with some businessmen in Accra, I took a taxi to see some points of interest. One place we stopped was outside the palatial home of Nkrumah who was in power in Ghana. There were armed guards at the gate and I hesitated to take a picture although I was encouraged by the taxi driver to do it. I got out of the cab, focused my camera and snapped the picture. When I looked up I was looking into the barrel of a rifle with a bayonet attached. Boy, was I scared! The taxi driver finally convinced the guard I was an innocent tourist and he let me go.

We took the plane from Accra at night. We stopped at midnight at Kano, Nigeria. The temperature was 100° at midnight! We flew on to Barcelona, Spain and then to London. Again we flew at night over the Atlantic arriving in New York early in the morning. Keith flew on home and I stayed for some meetings of the Board of Missions. I finally got home on Wednesday after being gone ten days.

I had been in London, Paris, Rome and Cairo without getting out of the airports. I had Flown by Mt. Blanc in the Alps; I had seen St. Pet and the Colosseum in Rome; I saw Mt. Etna erupting; I had seen the Rivie on the Italian coast; I had crossed the Mediterranean Sea; I had crossed the equator twice; I had seen unbelievable squalor as well as unbeliev-able splendor side by side; and I had traveled twenty-five thousand mile in ten days!

The laymen of the Conference became interested in the tractor proje and soon many groups of men in the Conference were raising funds to buy tractors. The increased interest in the project necessitated full time attention and J. Wesley Neal was elected Executive Secretary of the Corporation with an office near the Methodist Center. I do not know any thing about Keith Smith's financial affairs. I know that several mysterious transactions were taking place. I was Treasurer of the Cor-poration and as such I was required to sign many papers and checks. The books were being kept either in Keith's office in Long Beach or in Wes Neal's office. One day Keith brought a note for \$50,000 which Agricultu Aids Foundation was to sign in connection with some phase of financing. The Board of Directors had not approved any such note and I declined to sign it. That was the beginning of a rift between Keith and me which was never closed. Keith was always irritated at the red tape involved in getting Board approval. He wanted things done right now and was impatient over any delay in getting action.

Nearly all of the work of the Foundation was being done in Wes Neal office. He was necessarily following instructions given by Keith since Keith was putting up the funds needed to finance the operations. In thi process some letters of promises were written which were never carried o The inevitable day of reckoning came. Keith was unable to meet the obli-gations of the Foundation. Promises made to donors in Great Britain and Germany who had made sizable contributions were not fulfilled. These promises were made over Wes Neal's signature. When they were not kept because Keith was unable to produce the funds, the egg was on Wes Neal's face. Finally the office had to be closed and Wes Neal was out of a job He surrendered his ministerial credentials and sought employment in a secular business. I was deeply hurt by Wes Neal's treatment both by Kei and the Church.

Some of the creditors, particularly the tractor manufacturer in Germany where the tractors were being produced, began to make claims against the Board of Missions of the Conference which was the membership of the Corporation. At one point a lawsuit for over one hundred thousan dollars was filed on behalf of the German manufacturer. This was finally settled by the payment to the manufacturer by the Conference Board of Missions of his claim.

In order to terminate any possible future claims, the Corporation was legally dissolved. The saga of Agricultural Aids Foundation was ended!

Probably no one knows the extent of good which the Foundation accomplished. It was estimated that at least 300 tractors were distributed in the Congo. Others found their way into remote areas of the Philippines and India. Even as recently as last year (1974) I was told that many of the tractors are still being used in the Congo.

Dark days fell on Keith Smith. He became the central figure in a bribery scandal in connection with an attempt to build a World Trade Center in San Pedro. Three city commissioners were found guilty of accepting bribes from Keith who was seeking permits to build the Center. Keith's trial on the charge of giving the bribes was moved to San Francisco on a motion for a change in venue by his attorney and he was acquitted.

I recently saw Miss Elsie Ferris who sparked the idea in the first place and asked her about Keith. She hadn't heard from him for some time. We discussed his financial difficulties and then she made a remark I'll not soon forget. She said "God still loves him."