

THE

HOLE

STORY

THE HOLE STORY

Recollections of J. Wesley Hole



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PREFACE

Recently I was honored to be given a copy of a booklet titled "A Widening Horizon - The Story of the Evans Family." It is a family biography excellently written by Edgar (Ted) Evans and edited by members of his family.

In talking to a friend about the booklet, I remarked that it is unfortunate that more biographies of great Conference leaders have not been written for the benefit of posterity. My friend bore down rather heavily on me and said I owed it to the Conference to write my own memoirs of the thirty-seven years of Conference service while I still have my faculties. Others have urged me to record the experiences of these years, but I have been reluctant to do it for two reasons. I have really never felt what I might say would be of any particular importance, and I am somewhat allergic to anyone who blows his own horn. My story can't be told without seeming to do that. On the other hand, I am now convinced that many of my experiences and projects in which I have had some part should be recorded and I have, therefore, decided that even at the risk of being accused of being an egotist, I will attempt to write "The Hole Story."

Chapter 1

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

I cannot remember when I was not closely associated with the Methodist Church. My parents were always active in the affairs of a local church. They told me that they used to take me and my twin brother, Les, to church when we were still babies and that we would sleep through the service lying in the pew alongside our parents. When we were a bit older the family would always be in Sunday School, go to the morning worship service, and come back in the evening for another service. When we were old enough to go to the young people's service, we did. In the little Sunnyside Church in Los Angeles where we grew up, membership in the Epworth League was not restricted to any age group. My parents were active participants and we became involved in it as a part of growing up. Later on as enough young people of high school age came into the church, our parents and their peer group dropped out and the young people, under the skilled guidance of the ministers, took over with their own leadership.

Considering such a close affiliation with the church in the early years of my life, it is not surprising that life service in the church was a definite consideration later on. I shall always be grateful for parents who never expected me to do something they wouldn't do themselves. They created in me the desire to be related to the church because of their own example.

If my parents ever had a hope that I would serve the church as a vocation they never said so. I know how pleased they both were when I did decide to go to work for the church. I am certain that one of the greatest thrills for them was when I was elected a delegate to the Uniting Conference of 1939. My mother suffered a stroke during that Conference from which she never recovered.

Two ministers who served at Sunnyside during my pre-teen years were a great influence in these formative years. They were Alfred J. Hughes and Wm. Henry Stockton. Both were students at USC as well as pastors of the church. Alfred Hughes later became a District Superintendent and almost persuaded me to go into the ministry. While I wanted very much to work for the church, I never felt I was called to be a minister. I had a conviction that there was a need in the church for consecrated laymen to fill business positions as well as consecrated ministers to fill pulpits.

Henry Stockton was a single man when he was appointed to Sunnyside. My parents had an extra bedroom and we lived only a short distance from the church. Arrangements were made for "Uncle Henry", as we soon knew him, to room and board in our home. My brother and I were always playing practical jokes on "Uncle Henry." For example, we would find my mother's silverware in his pocket. What one of us

didn't think of doing to him, the other one did. How he ever had the patience to tolerate us, I do not know. He loved boys and soon had a troop of Boy Scouts organized. He had been orphaned at the age of seven and seemed to be sensitive to the needs of young boys for companionship and guidance. Again, the example of a highly committed Christian man spoke louder than his sermons.

I didn't realize at the time how great an influence these two ministers were, but later in life I came to appreciate the importance of such understanding leaders in the lives of young people.

EPWORTH LEAGUE DAYS

The organization of the Church to which I owe the most was the Epworth League. Many members of the Church today do not know much about this organization which was a part of the Methodist Episcopal Church since it was discontinued in the unification process of 1939 and was replaced by the Methodist Youth Fellowship. To me the loss of the Epworth League was a tragic price to pay in the process of compromising with other denominations in the merger.

Some time ago I was in a meeting of several of the National leaders of the Church after I had been elected Secretary of the General Conference. The subject of our backgrounds was under discussion. Without exception those in the group which included Bishops and General Board Secretaries testified to the important place the Epworth League had played in their lives.

My first contact with the Epworth League was when I was only twelve years old. My father was president of the League at Sunnyside. The membership was not restricted to "young people." The ages ran from 12 to 60 but it truly was a great Christian fellowship. I loved the singing, the testimonies, the social affairs and the devotional periods. When I was about fourteen there were enough young people of high school age to have a group of our own. The older people bowed out and the youth took over.

At the Conference in 1919 a young minister and his wife - Arthur and Florence Hobson - were appointed to Sunnyside. They soon captured the hearts and affections of the group of young people in the Epworth League. They were a part of us. Arthur played on the basketball team with us. We were all in the church choir. When we went on hikes in the mountains or swims at the beach, Arthur and Florence were with us. What Henry Stockton did for me as a pre-teenager, Arthur Hobson did for me as a teenager.

I held various offices in the Epworth League at Sunnyside and finally was the president. My horizons were widened as we would attend District rallies and conventions. I began to observe the District and Conference organizations, not only of the Epworth League, but also of the Annual Conference itself. It was a great thrill to attend a session of the Annual Conference in 1920 at Long Beach. Bishop Leonard presided. Little did I think then that some day I might be an officer of that impressive body.

The District Epworth League was constantly in search of new leadership. One of the methods used was to send out a letter to pastors asking for suggestions. Arthur Hobson believed enough in me to suggest my name as a possibility. It was one of the great thrills of my young life when I was elected 2nd vice-president of the District and was installed at the District Convention. The 2nd vice-president was responsible for promotion of Missions. It was the experience in promoting Mission study

groups that opened my eyes to the Mission program of the Church.

As time went by I was elected President of Los Angeles District and eventually President of the Conference Epworth League organization. These experiences produced many friends who are still dear to me. If I should begin to mention names, I would be in trouble. Someone would be left out who ought to be included. A few I must mention.

A great influence in the Epworth League was Dr. A. Ray Moore who had been appointed "Life Work Secretary" in the Conference. I became intimately associated with him and admired him to the point of almost worshipping him. Later he was to become Executive Secretary and Treasurer of the Conference Endowment Fund, and eventually I was to succeed him in that position. Whenever A. Ray Moore was to speak a crowd of youth was sure to be present. Never shall I forget his sermon at "Arbamar", the Epworth League Institute at Huntington Beach, on Kadesh-Barnea, the turning point in the life of the Israelites. A solo was sung "Sweet Will of God." I knew then it was God's will that I should serve Him all the days of my life - but it was ten years later before I was offered the position with the Conference.

I was invited to speak at an Epworth League banquet in the fall of 1924 at the Arlington Church, Riverside. The President of the group was Master of Ceremonies. His name was Frank Webber. The Arlington League was an outstanding group of young people. Many of those who attended that banquet have remained life long friends. A mysteriously strong affinity between Frank and me began that night and has never stopped. Frank went through business college and came to Los Angeles to work. He joined the old St. Mark's Church at 52nd & Main Streets and soon became an officer of Los Angeles District Epworth League.

In May of 1928 the General Conference passed what was then known as the "Rally Day Legislation." This provided that an Annual Conference could claim back for Religious Education within the Conference monies which were raised by the churches of the Conference on Rally Day. The Conference Epworth League Cabinet was anxious to have a full time Youth Director for the Conference but lacked the necessary funds. We saw in the Rally Day Legislation an opportunity to secure the funds for this purpose.

I was delegated the responsibility of appearing before the Annual Conference at Santa Barbara in late September, 1928 to ask for the authorization of the Conference for us to promote the Rally Day Fund for the purpose of having a full time Director. Bishop Burns was presiding. A. Ray Moore had explained to the Conference about the legislation. I don't recall what I said but I do recall I was scared to death when I stood before the Conference to speak. The authority was granted.

The next problem was to get someone to do the necessary promotional work to raise the funds. I had been employed by a wholesale furniture manufacturer for several years. It had gone into bankruptcy and I was unemployed. A proposal was made that I work in the Conference Treasurer

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office on a part time basis and use the rest of my time to promote the Rally Day offering. This was arranged and I came to work for the Conference Treasurer, A. Ray Moore. In order to give me proper status in the promotional endeavor, I was elected Conference Director of Young People's Work. This responsibility was really under the Board of Education of which Dr. Jesse Lee Corley was Executive Secretary. It was a rewarding experience, and a successful one. We raised enough money to employ a full time Director, and certainly one better qualified than I had been. At Conference in 1929 Royal Reisner was appointed to this very important work.

I had the choice then of either becoming a full time employee in the Treasurer's office or accepting a position with another furniture manufacturer who had contacted me. I really didn't enjoy the work I was doing and the offer from the furniture manufacturer was attractive so I accepted it.

Before I left the Treasurer's office, I suggested Frank Webber as my replacement. Dr. Moore contacted him and he came into the office in the fall of 1929 as a bookkeeper. Five years later I was to come back into the office. This story will be covered later on. Suffice it to say at this point, Frank stayed on as my assistant until 1949 when he became Treasurer of the California-Nevada Conference. He will retire as of July 1, 1975 after an illustrious career of forty-six years of service to the Church. Another great leader of the Church had his beginning roots in the Epworth League.

Before I stop talking about the Epworth League, I must comment on the most important relationship of my life which came largely out of the League.

We lived next door to a wonderful family named Donaldson. Mrs. Donaldson had a sister who lived with her husband, six daughters and a son in Iowa. Their name was Edwards. The Edwards family had left the farm in 1917 after the son had gone to war, and lived for a time in Jefferson, the County Seat of Greene County. The family decided to come to California. Two of the daughters were married, but the father and mother, son, and four daughters did come out in 1919 and came first to the Donaldsons. One Sunday morning I saw Ruthie, the Donaldson's daughter, in the chicken pen with a beautiful young lady. Her name was Velma Edwards. She and her sisters came to church with the Donaldsons and soon the four girls were to become important members of our Epworth League. It wasn't long before I fell head over heels in love with the young lady I had first seen in the chicken pen. At a church picnic in Lincoln Park in 1920 Velma and I decided we would someday get married, but since I was only seventeen we knew we had a long wait ahead of us.

We shall always be grateful for those precious days in the Sunnyside Epworth League which brought us together and nurtured a love affair that is still going strong.

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Chapter 3

MY CAREER WITH THE CONFERENCE BEGINS

The growth of the Conference Endowment Fund was phenomenal during the period of 1928 to 1933. Under the direction of the Trustees of the Conference an active program of writing annuities was conducted. Some of the contracts were based upon actual cash gifts, but most of them were based upon transfer of real property. Many of the parcels of real property were income producing, such as commercial buildings, apartment houses, duplexes and even single dwellings. Altogether about 150 annuity contracts were written. All went well for awhile, but the recession of the early 30's took its toll. I was not in the Treasurer's office during the period and cannot say from personal experience just what did happen. I do know from the records that early in 1934 it became obvious that a serious financial situation existed. Some of the creditors, including the bank which had made some rather generous loans, requested the Trustees to bring in a layman as Business Manager to relieve the Treasurer who was a minister, of some of the administrative problems.

When it was decided to employ a layman, many nominations were made. Frank Webber who had been in the office for five years nominated me. When it was called to his attention that if I were employed it would probably mean he would never have a chance at the top job, he said he knew that but he still wanted me to come in.

I was offered the position and tried to ask intelligent questions during my interview. I am sure honest answers were given, but I later decided the answers reflected more hope than actual facts. I accepted the offer and on July 1, 1934 I became Business Manager for the Endowment Fund.

The first few weeks were spent in getting acquainted with the properties which were owned, the problems of administration connected with the properties and kindred matters. At the end of July a balance sheet was produced which I studied with great care. I went to Frank to seek clarification and further information. Frank knew the facts but he was very close-mouthed. He finally did confirm what I had feared was the case. The Endowment Fund was in deep trouble. In addition, the pension funds which had been collected from the churches during the Conference year 1933-34 for distribution during 1934-35 had been used for other purposes in an effort to stave off the inevitable showdown. I really was in a panic when I realized how serious the situation was.

The Board of Trustees was composed of nine ministers. One who had recently been elected was Walter C. Buckner, pastor of First Church, Fresno. I had a great love and admiration for Dr. Buckner although up to that time I had not had a great deal of contact with him. I respected very highly his ability to analyze a situation and see through the problems involved. In the hour of my distress and panic I wanted to talk with Dr. Buckner. I called his office in Fresno and found he was at Pacific Palisades on an Institute faculty. I drove down to Pacific

Palisades and found him. Fortunately, he had some free time and we went out and sat under a tree for a couple of hours. I poured out the story as I had uncovered it. If I could have resigned gracefully I think I would have done it. I felt a great deal better after our visit. We decided several steps that would have to be taken. As soon as we could do it, a meeting of the Trustees was called and plans began to be made to meet the emergencies. One of the emergencies was the necessity of raising some immediate cash to replace the pension funds that had been used. Just as soon as it became public information that an emergency campaign was necessary, questions began coming from all quarters. While answers had to be given, every effort possible was made to minimize the apprehension, particularly on the part of the retired men and widows.

One incident occurred that I shall never forget. Nearly everyone I saw and talked to was trying to pry information out of me. I was constantly on guard lest I might give information out that should be kept confidential. I got a phone call one day from Dr. Roy L. Smith, pastor of First Church, Los Angeles asking me to meet him for lunch. He was a man I greatly admired and I was flattered to be asked to have lunch with him. I met him and we had a delightful visit. I was certain he was going to pump me for information and I was just as certain I wasn't going to give it to him. Finally it was time to go and he said "You probably are wondering why I wanted to see you." I replied "Yes, I have been." Then he said "I know you have been going through troubled waters. I don't know much about the problems you are facing and I'm not particularly anxious to know. I just want you to know you have a blank check on my time no matter when you need it. Just call me any time you need me and I'll be available."

For a man as busy as Roy Smith was to say a thing like that was more than I had expected. I never called on him, but a warm and richly rewarding friendship had started. Twenty-five years to the day from the luncheon, I wrote him a letter and told him how much his thoughtful gesture had meant to me and I thanked him for his friendship. He was a great man!

Chapter 4

THE UNITING CONFERENCE

Soon after I began my career with the Conference, discussions were heard about the proposed merger of three branches of Methodism - The Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and The Methodist Protestant Church. I knew something about The Methodist Episcopal Church, South because as a youth I had often attended the Sunday night services at Trinity Church in downtown Los Angeles.

When I was in high school I had a job at a drug store at Manchester and Vermont Avenues in Los Angeles. It was located at the end of a street car line. I would open the store at 6 a.m. and work until 8 a.m. when the owner came. Then I would go to Manual Arts High School until after noon. I would then work another shift of three hours at the store. One of the regular customers early in the morning was Dr. Robert P. Shuler, who always bought a paper before taking the street car to town. He was very much in the news during that period of time. I greatly admired him. Several of the young people at Sunnyside would attend Trinity at night occasionally. The services were always stirring especially the music and the preaching.

The proposed Union of the three denominations was approved by our General Conference in 1936 and by the General Conference of the South Church in 1938. In preparation for the Uniting Conference which was to be held in Kansas City in April and May of 1939, Bishop Baker and Bishop Wm. C. Martin arranged for some consultations between the leaders of the two denominations in California and Arizona. These were held in the fall of 1938 after the Conferences had elected their delegates.

Someone suggested that I ought to be a delegate to the Uniting Conference. The Plan of Union provided that an elected delegate had to be 35 years of age. When the Conference in 1938 was held at which time the delegates were to be elected, I was only 34. I remember four laymen who were prominent in the Conference urged me to be nominated. They were Mr. C. I. D. Moore, West Adams; Mr. Harry Philp, Wilshire; Mr. W. A. Kern, First Church, San Diego; and Mr. Donald A. Odell, Holliston Avenue, Pasadena. Bishop Baker also wanted me to be a delegate. There was a provision in the Plan of Union for a certain number of "delegates at large" to be named by the Bishops. Bishop Baker wanted to name Jim McGiffin who was then Youth Director of the Conference. This meant that if I were to be a delegate I would have to be elected.

It was the first time I ever ran for an elective position. Frankly, I did not believe I would be elected. Most of the lay delegates to Conference, as they were then called, were considerably older than I. Donald A. Odell nominated me and when the ballots were counted I had received 112 of the 125 votes cast. To say I was thrilled is an understatement.

If Judicial Council Decision No. 346 had been made before the elections in 1938 I would never have been a delegate. That decision was made in 1972 concerning several young people who were elected as delegates to the 1972 General Conference prior to their 21st birthday but who would be 21 before the Conference convened. The ruling says that a delegate must be 21 before he is elected. That age limitation has since been removed from the Constitution.

There were two lay delegates to the Uniting Conference who were not 35 when elected but were 35 when the Conference was held. I was one of them. The other one was Edson Deal from Idaho who was three months younger than I. Edson later was Lieutenant Governor of the State of Idaho. He and I had the distinction of being the youngest elected delegates to the Uniting Conference. There were 10 youth delegates who were appointed but not elected.

Velma and I decided we would drive our car east and take the children with us. She had a sister and other relatives in Iowa near Des Moines. They would visit in Iowa while I attended the Conference in Kansas City, Missouri.

As I recall, the opening session of the Conference was April 26, 1939 and was to be a Communion Service in an Episcopal Cathedral. The night before I received a telephone call from my brother telling me that my mother had suffered a severe stroke and asking if I could fly home for her funeral. He was to let me know the next day what arrangements were made. I didn't sleep much the rest of the night. I went to the Communion Service and during the service a strange and unexplainable calm came over me. I was certain my mother would live. While she did not recover from the stroke, she did live three months.

The legislative power of the Uniting Conference was limited to the provisions in the Disciplines of the three uniting Churches. No new legislation was possible. Consequently, the work of legislative committees and of the Conference itself was a process of negotiations and compromises. Nevertheless, for a young neophyte like me it was an eye-opener and a great experience. It sent the chills down my backbone when Bishop John Moore in the final ceremony of Unification declared "The Methodist Church is!"

There were three great and lasting experiences from the Uniting Conference. First, I was very much impressed by the overseas delegates. The experience of promoting Mission study programs in the Epworth League twenty years before had opened my eyes to the missionary program of the Church, but this was the first time I had come into person-to-person contact with other Methodists from all over the world. It was a realization that truly the world is our parish.

The second experience was the making of many friendships across the nation, and particularly with former South Church leaders in California

and Arizona. Many of these new friends were to become leaders in the new church. One of these newly acquired friends was Dr. James L. Lyons who was to become one of my closest friends. At the time of Unification he was pastor of St. Paul's Church, Fresno. Without a doubt he was the most influential voice in the Pacific Conference of the former Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Soon after Unification he was transferred by Bishop Baker to our Conference and became Superintendent of San Diego District.

Dr. Lyons was a very capable negotiator. He had the unique ability to attain the position he wanted without compromising his principles. Although he was shrewd no one could ever accuse him of being less than honorable.

There was something in his character that attracted me in a way that developed a great admiration and affection toward him. Many times when I needed support I would pour out my heart to him. He didn't always say what I wanted him to, but I could always count on him for an honest and objective opinion. Our lives were greatly enriched by the friendship of both Jim and his lovely wife, Mayme.

Comments concerning some others of the new friends and colleagues who came out of Unification will come later on in other chapters of the story.

The third impression was probably quite a personal one and perhaps not so much of general interest. I was greatly impressed with the work of Dr. Lud Estes who had been elected Secretary of the Conference. In spite of his pontifical appearance with his turned-back collar and his swallow-tailed coat, he was a master at organizing a very complex job. The Bishops who preside at a General Conference have only one session to worry about. The Secretary functions at every session. Lud annoyed the presiding Bishops no end by continually telling them what to do and when to do it. Even though most of them needed some guidance they did appreciate Lud's help. As I observed Lud at work I didn't have the remotest idea that one day I would sit where he sat and do the work he was doing. Lud and I became close friends. I had many communications during the years from "Your buddy." I served on his staff in 1952.

GENERAL CONFERENCE ELECTIONS

Various estimates have been made relative to the turnover of delegates to the General Conference. It is generally agreed that between 33½% and 40% of the delegates to any given General Conference are "first timers." Just to find out what the experience in Southern California-Arizona Conference has been I went back to 1880, which was the first Conference to which our predecessor Annual Conference elected delegates, and tabulated the elections to and including the 1970 Special Session. The following table is the result:

| Served | 1 | General | Conference | <u>Laymen</u> | <u>Ministers</u> |
|--------|----|---------|------------|---------------|------------------|
| " | 2 | " | " | 59 | 29 |
| " | 3 | " | " | 21 | 26 |
| " | 4 | " | " | 5 | 6 |
| " | 4 | " | " | 4 | 5 |
| " | 5 | " | " | 1 | 1 |
| " | 6 | " | " | - | 3 |
| " | 7 | " | " | - | 1 |
| " | 8 | " | " | - | 1 |
| " | 11 | " | " | 1 | - |
| Total | | | | <u>91</u> | <u>72</u> |

When one considers that in 90 years only ninety-one laymen and seventy-two ministers have been elected, one realizes what a rare privilege it is to be elected. Obviously, the relationship of most laymen to the Annual Conference is of relatively short duration. On the other hand, the ministers are in Conferences for their lifetime. Consequently, it is quite unusual when a layman has been elected five or even four times. That means a period of sixteen to twenty years of association with the Annual Conference.

An officer of the Annual Conference has an advantage of being before the Conference in the execution of his work. And when an officer serves a long period of time he certainly has an advantage. I started out at a rather young age and had been in the Conference only four years when the election to the Uniting Conference was held. I was elected in that election on the first ballot. I was elected on the first ballot on every election after that through the 1967 election for the 1968 Conference. Those elected to the 1968 Conference were also the delegates to the 1970 Special Session. I declined to run for the 1972 session since I was to be the Secretary. Counting 1972, I was in 12 consecutive General Conferences and was the lay leader of our Conference delegation for 11 sessions. I have been told that no other layman has ever been elected on the first ballot and thus been the lay leader of his delegation as many times as I have. Obviously, the record is one of which I am very happy. It has truly been a marvelous experience. Parenthetically, I should add that the minister who was elected eight times by our Conference was Dr. George A. Warmer.

Each General Conference has been different. No two have had the same problems. No two have had equivalent facilities. No two had the same

weather. No two have had the same leadership. Each one has had its own peculiarities. Naturally the memory of each one has some distinctive feature.

I have already written about the Uniting Conference of 1939 in Kansas City. The Methodist Protestant Church did not have Bishops. In order to be represented in the Council of Bishops this group elected Bishops - Broomfield and Straughn. Both were strong leaders and great preachers.

The 1940 session was held in Atlantic City. The auditorium there is large enough for a full sized football field. The Conference met in the Music Hall. One amusing incident I recall was when one of the Bishops got into a dilly of a parliamentary tangle. He was not much of a parliamentarian. He had motions, amendments and substitutes all at one time. Someone called for a point of order. The good Bishop banged the gavel on the table and literally shouted "There is nothing in order but to get the chairman out of confusion."

One thing happened at Atlantic City that was very unusual and benefited our Annual Conference greatly. It was the adoption by the Conference of a report from a minority number of members of the legislative Committee on Pensions. The minority report was presented as a substitute for the majority report and finally prevailed. The subject was a proposal known as Divided Annuity Responsibility. Prior to this legislation, an Annual Conference in which a man retired was responsible for all of his years of service no matter where they had been served. This proposal charged the Annual Conference in which the service was rendered for the pension for years served within that Conference. Dr. F. G. H. Stevens of Southern California-Arizona Conference led the minority group and did a masterful job. The legislation saved our Conference untold thousands of dollars. The General Board of Pensions set up a "Clearinghouse" procedure whereby a Conference to be charged for service rendered by a man who retired elsewhere was "debited" and the Conference in which he retired was "credited." Because our Conference was largely manned by men who started their ministry elsewhere and ended up in the West, we were from the start the largest Creditor Conference. Under this legislation the Conference in which a man retires actually pays the man's pension, but is reimbursed through the Clearinghouse procedure for all "Outside" years, that is years served in other Conferences. This legislation had far-reaching effects and several cases ended up before the Judicial Council. However, the legislation was air-tight and has never been challenged successfully.

1944 saw the General Conference back in Kansas City. It was only the second time the new church had met in a General Conference. There was still much segregation practiced in Kansas City. A concessionaire served the white delegates coffee in a china cup but a black Bishop was served in a paper cup. He did not raise a question, but some of the delegates witnessed the incident and when the Conference was in session the next day it about blew the auditorium apart. Such an incident did not happen again.

There was a debate on World Peace that was the greatest debate I ever heard. It was agreed to have five speakers on each side. I can't recall all ten. I remember Dr. Ernest Fremont Tittle, Dr. Edmond Heinsohn and Dr. Albert Day were on one side (in favor of the Peace Resolution) and Dr. Lynn Harold Hough and Chancellor Gray of American University were opposed. Dr. Hough stood before the Conference with his thumbs in his vest and modestly admitted that his presence on the platform was worth five hundred votes!

We went to Boston in 1948. There was always pressure from various groups to get an evening for a program to promote their particular cause. Bishop Hammaker tried desperately to get an evening for a Temperance address. The Program Committee sought to appease him by asking him to have the prayer one evening. The Conference met in Mechanic's Hall which was about ten minutes by subway from the Statler Hotel where our delegation was staying. I had left some papers in the room which I needed badly so I decided to go for them. The Bishop was starting his prayer when I left. When I got back twenty minutes later he was still going strong. He had incorporated his address into his prayer and he was really telling the Lord about the evils of alcohol.

In 1952 in San Francisco a great deal of time was spent considering the Frye report on restructuring the Church. Dr. Harold Case was chairman of the Study Committee and handled the floor strategy. One feature that was adopted was the creation of the Coordinating Council. This was later replaced by the Program Council, and now the Council on Ministries is in its place. I remember a wisecrack Herb Caen, a columnist for one of the San Francisco papers, made about the General Conference. He said when the delegates came to San Francisco each one had a ten dollar bill and the Ten Commandments. When we left, he said, we hadn't broken either one!

In 1956 the Conference met in Minneapolis. It was the busiest Conference for me of any of them because I was Chairman of the Commission on Entertainment and Program. One of the evening programs featured Ralph Edwards and Minnie Pearl, both of whom are Methodists. I met them in the dressing rooms before they were to go on stage. Minnie Pearl wanted a Hymnal for her mother and I was happy to get one for her.

In 1960 we met in Denver. There are two auditoriums in the same building. The marquee over one entrance said "Championship Wrestling." The other one said "Methodist General Conference." I think the main difference was the price of admission.

The 1964 session met in Pittsburgh. I have described in another chapter the election of Secretary of the General Conference that preceded the Episcopal Address. That was on the first Sunday night. The second Sunday night was a great Methodist Sing Fest. The auditorium at Pittsburgh has a huge eight part retractable dome. The sections are controlled hydraulically and the dome can be opened so that all eight sections are "stacked" behind the audience; that is the part of the dome the audience facing the stage would see when it is opened to view the sky.

Someone thought it would be a thrill for the audience to have the dome opened unannounced. As the vast crowd began to sing "How Great Thou Art" the dome began to open. No one had anticipated the necessity of closing all the hall doors to prevent a draft. As the dome opened a regular cyclone was created. Papers on the delegates' tables began to fly. The stage curtains swayed out over the audience and as the words "I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder" were to be sung a loud, thunderous roar filled the air. As a part of the stage decorations there was a large cross hanging from the ceiling over the section where the Bishops were seated. This cross weighed a ton. When the huge draft was created the cross began to sway uncontrolled. Had it fallen there would have been a terrible tragedy. Auditorium employees immediately tried to close the dome but something blew out and it would not respond. The auditorium was emptied as rapidly as possible. It took most of the night to get the dome closed. Many of the delegates never did find all their papers.

The 1966 Adjourned Session was in the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago. Nearly all of the delegates were housed in the hotel. The Conference met in the Grand Ball Room. Business was limited to considering the proposed merger with the EUB Church. There were compromises on six major issues. Each of the two groups gave in on three: We accepted the new name "United Methodist Church"; we conceded the guaranteed "disproportionate" representation for 12 years for the EUB; we accepted the concept of a Program Council. They gave up their term "Episcopacy"; they gave up their practice of electing District Superintendents; and they accepted our practice of having "lay leaders." The process of negotiating through "Commissioners" at meal time and after sessions was unique. The Commissioners worked under tremendous pressure, but there was an amazing lack of friction. Many count votes had to be taken on issues which were close, but when the vote for final adoption came it carried by a margin of 85% to 15% in both Conferences.

In Dallas in 1968 the opening day was devoted to the final sessions of the General Conferences of the two denominations. The Methodist Conference met in the Crystal Ballroom of the Baker Hotel. The EUB Conference met in the theater of the Municipal Auditorium. The Unitarian Conference met in the main Auditorium. The Uniting Conference was composed of 900 Methodists and 400 EUBs making the plenary sessions the largest legislative body of either former denomination. It is difficult to have a plenary session of 900. A body of 1300 is impossible. The Conference ran fairly smoothly although there were several incidents with some radical groups which sought ways and means of "crashing" the Conference. They did succeed in passing out a good deal of their propaganda on the sidewalk outside the Auditorium.

The 1970 Special Session in St. Louis was necessary in order to complete some unfinished business left over at Dallas. Originally the 1970 session had been scheduled to be held in Baltimore. The local committee in Baltimore got "cold feet" after many of the arrangements had been made and it was fortunate that St. Louis was willing and able to accept

the responsibilities of setting up for the Conference with short notice. The radical groups were determined to disrupt the St. Louis Conference. The Commission on Entertainment and Program had been warned ahead of time and was expecting something to happen. A youth rally had been scheduled for Sunday afternoon and was to feature Mr. Charles Garry, attorney for Bobby Seal and other Black Panthers, who were to be tried in New Haven. The FBI was following Mr. Garry's movements. I was rooming with Norm Conard who had charge of all physical arrangements for the Conference. The FBI contacted Norm to ascertain what Mr. Garry was coming to St. Louis for. They met the plane at the airport and apparently warned Mr. Garry and some fellow travelers that they were being watched. One of the group was a prominent San Francisco black clergyman who was a delegate to the Conference.

On Sunday morning the service of the Centenary Methodist Church - the large downtown church in St. Louis - was disturbed and interrupted by the dissidents who were scattered through the audience. The police who had been alerted to possible trouble moved in quickly and a total of some 30 of the disrupters were arrested and jailed. They were released later because no one pressed charges.

Several times during the sessions disruptive incidents occurred. One such incident involved a group who had taken over a section of the balcony in the rear of the Auditorium. The delegates were seated facing the platform so this group was behind the delegates. The group had made eight large cloth or paper letters and had placed them over seats so that the letters spelled "Yeah Team." At an appointed moment the group began to play their shepherd's pipes and march out. As they did they flipped the eight letters over so that the spelling became "Bull Shit." As the shepherd's pipes began to be heard all the delegates turned around to see what was happening and of course saw the sign that had been created. Ushers quickly removed the offensive letters.

The St. Louis Conference went fairly smoothly until someone who apparently wanted to terminate the session discovered a very small percentage of delegates present. Someone called for a count of delegates present and when it was determined that a quorum was not present the Conference was adjourned. There were 162 legislative reports ready for consideration of the plenary session. None of these could be carried over for the next regular session and consequently all the work in getting these matters ready was lost.

The 1972 session at Atlanta also produced some problems. The main business was the report of a Commission on Restructuring. Pertinent portions of the report and recommendations were referred to proper legislative committees. Because of overlapping, some matters were considered by as many as three legislative committees. Consequently, there would be three different recommendations to be considered and reconciled. It was really a parliamentary maze. Fortunately, it was all finally unscrambled.

Great pressure came from several groups to have representatives seated such as American Indians, youth and students. The Conference was generous in its attitude to seat these representatives but without vote. There is certain to be a repetition of such demands in 1976 from various caucus groups which do not accomplish their separate representation when their members may be elected as a part of Annual Conference delegations. A complete revision of General Board organizations resulted from the Conference. The only General Boards that came out of the Conference unchanged were the Methodist Publishing House and the General Board of Pensions.

An incident occurred in Atlanta which illustrates how the most unexpected things can happen. A feature of recent General Conferences has been an afternoon preaching service planned largely for the benefit of visitors while delegates are attending legislative committee meetings. These services usually are scheduled for five afternoons. For Atlanta the plan was to have an outstanding preacher from each Jurisdiction. The services were scheduled to be held in First Church, Atlanta.

The preacher chosen from the Western Jurisdiction was Dr. Cecil Williams, pastor of Glide Memorial Church, San Francisco. Dr. Williams had been quite a controversial figure because of his far-out innovations at Glide which had been reported by the press in rather exaggerated terms. When the announcement of the names of the preachers was released the Administrative Board at First Church, Atlanta met and passed a resolution denying access of their pulpit to Dr. Williams.

The Commission on Entertainment and Program met to determine what should be done. There were three alternatives:

1. Cancel the whole series of preaching services. We decided at the outset we wouldn't cancel one service unless the whole series was to be cancelled.
2. Move the services from First Church to another Methodist Church.
3. Replace Dr. Williams with another preacher.

We found another church a mile away that welcomed us to hold the services in their sanctuary. When it became known that this had happened, the Bishop put pressure on First Church to reconsider its attitude and action. I don't know how much change took place in attitudes but the action was rescinded by the Board. By this time the whole affair had been played up for all it was worth in the local press.

The afternoon of the service came. Two hours before time for the service to begin the sanctuary was overflowing and people were standing in every inch of space available. Hundreds of others were milling around outside. Someone (we never were quite sure who) called the fire department and reported that safety rules were being violated. The result was that the fire officials and police soon arrived and ordered

the premises vacated. The Civic Auditorium was only a few blocks away. Arrangements were quickly made for the service to be transferred to the Auditorium. Reports were that more than 5000 people crowded into the Auditorium to witness a typical Cecil Williams celebration including the bongo drums and all the rest. They also heard a stirring evangelistic message. I couldn't help but remember our meeting in Miami Beach sixteen years before when a District Superintendent told our Commission that Negroes would not be welcome in the Miami Beach Churches.

I look for major changes in the concept of the General Conference in the days ahead. The present procedures are objectionable to Methodists overseas. Since ninety percent of the delegates come from Annual Conferences in the United States, it would be very difficult financially to have the General Conference elsewhere. The trend of encouraging the establishment of autonomous churches overseas will result in demands for representation in a World-wide Methodist Conference on a different basis than the present policy of allowing two representatives from each autonomous church who have a seat but no vote.

To have had a part in twelve different General Conferences has been an honor and privilege enjoyed by very few Methodists. While I doubt that such an honor and privilege have been deserved, the experiences were a thrill beyond any possible description.



At General Conference, 1952, San Francisco. Left to right: J. Wesley Hole, Fred Trotter, Alpheus B.P. Wood and Russell Clay.

Chapter 6

THE JURISDICTIONAL CONFERENCES

The Jurisdictional Conference system was a feature of the Plan of Union in 1939 which was designed to induce the former South Church to come into the Union. The plan was to have six geographic units in the United States to be known as Jurisdictional Conferences. The North Central, Northeastern, South Central, Southeastern and Western are descriptive of the location of five of the six units. The sixth was to be known as the Central Jurisdiction. It covered all of the United States except the Western Jurisdiction and was to include all Negro Annual Conferences in the country. Negro Churches in the Western Jurisdiction were already in the predominantly white Annual Conferences. Although this pattern remained until 1968, there were many efforts made to eliminate the organized segregation of Negro Churches and people. The Plan of Union with the EUB Church in 1968 completely eliminated the Central Jurisdiction although several Negro Annual Conferences were still in existence in 1968. Finally all Negro Annual Conferences were merged with white Conferences and the last vestige of a segregated organization for Negroes disappeared. With it there also disappeared the guaranteed representation for Negroes in Annual Conference, Jurisdictional Conference and General Conference elections and on all levels of Boards of the Church. Many black leaders are having second thoughts about losing the representation which was formerly guaranteed to them by the Central Jurisdiction. Efforts to establish mandatory quotas of representation have met with negative decisions from the Judicial Council.

Aside from the segregation feature, Jurisdictional Conferences have had two main purposes: (1) Bishops are elected by Jurisdictional Conferences which gives weaker sections of the Church more of a chance to provide Episcopal leadership; (2) General Board memberships are largely elected by Jurisdictional Conferences. The two southern Jurisdictions have developed strong organizations within their boundaries. They have accomplished some worthwhile objectives. For instance Lake Junaluska conference grounds is owned by the Southeastern Jurisdiction. An effort to have a Jurisdictional Council in the Western Jurisdiction succeeded in 1944 but it lasted only one quadrennium and was dissolved in 1948. In the Western Jurisdiction the one activity that has created interest is the election of Bishops. When a Jurisdictional Conference session is held in which no bishop is to be elected, the general reaction is that we have spent a lot of money and time to accomplish nothing.

When the system was established in 1939 there were three Methodist Episcopal bishops and one Methodist Episcopal South bishop in the Western Jurisdiction. Bishop Wm. Martin lived in Glendale, California and had responsibility for all former South Churches in the West; Bishop Baker had the San Francisco Area which included Southern California; Bishop Brown had the Portland Area; and Bishop Hammaker had the Denver Area. The Plan of Union allowed us to have four

Episcopal Areas. In order to have four, it would be necessary for the San Francisco Area to be divided. In the pre-Uniting Conference consultations in the fall of 1938, we thought the three Methodist Episcopal bishops were agreeable to dividing the San Francisco Area so that Bishop Baker would remain in San Francisco and Bishop Martin would remain in Southern California. Bishop Baker was attending a Conference in Madras, India at the time. Dr. Buckner had visited with him before he left for India about dividing the San Francisco Area and reported to the Fresno consultation that Bishop Baker was agreeable. However, when he returned Bishop Baker said he had been misquoted and rather than to stay with his area divided, he would go east to another area. Bishop Martin sensed what was happening and politely bowed out. He went to Dallas and the West lost one of the great statesmen of Protestantism.

Shortly after Unification in 1939 Bishop Brown died at Portland which meant we had to elect a replacement in 1940. The 1940 Jurisdictional Conference was held in Glide Memorial Church, San Francisco. As most Methodists know, there are no formal nominations made in an Episcopal election. The delegates are given ballots and write down a name for the vacancy, or if there are several vacancies the names of several men are written. An election requires two-thirds of votes cast. The first ballot really is a nomination ballot. When the results of the first ballot were read it was obvious that a four way race was under way. Dr. Buckner was from Southern California; Dr. Grover Emmons was a former South minister (and incidentally was the founder of the Upper Room); Dr. Bruce Baxter was the choice of the Northwest; and Dr. Charles Schofield was the nominee from Denver. Several ballots were taken with no visible change in support.

Finally, late one night after the Conference had adjourned, some of us were in a group discussion and agreed that if no change appeared on the next ballot we would shift our support to Bruce Baxter, who really was a Southern Californian anyway. The next morning this happened and Bruce became Bishop Baxter.

The 1944 Jurisdictional Conference was held in Salt Lake City and no election was scheduled. Many of the young ministers had become very fond of Dr. Albert Day, pastor of First Methodist Church of Pasadena and made a real effort to get support for a proposal to divide the San Francisco Area. Bishop Baker had moved during the quadrennium to Los Angeles from San Francisco. The proposal to divide the area did not have sufficient support. However, a Study Committee was appointed to bring a report in 1948 that did accomplish the division of our area then.

In 1946 Bishop Baxter died. Bishop Hammaker was to retire in 1948. This meant that we would elect three bishops in Seattle in 1948. There was no shortage of candidates. Incidentally, the word "candidate" is a no-no. These men are willing and most are anxious to be considered, but they all resent being referred to as "candidates." Anyway, as I said, there was no shortage of candidates! Dr. Glenn Phillips had the highest number of votes on the first ballot. Dr. Harold Case had the second highest. Believe it or not, I was seated between Glenn and Harold. Harold got up to withdraw from the balloting. I tried to

keep him from doing it. He probably knew then he had a good chance of becoming President of Boston University, but I didn't know anything about that. At least he had enough sense to know if he were elected Bishop he would be assigned either at San Francisco, Portland, or Denver because Los Angeles was not open. Glenn was elected on the second ballot and I had the high honor of escorting him to the platform. The Conference was not in the mood to elect all three Bishops from the Southern California-Arizona delegation although several of our men were getting sizable votes. The men in Northern California proposed Dr. Gerald H. Kennedy who had had a brilliant pastorate at Palo Alto but was then pastor of St. Paul's Church, Lincoln, Nebraska. The idea caught on and he became Bishop Gerald Kennedy without even being at the Conference. Incidentally, his election is the only time since 1939 a Jurisdictional Conference went outside its own boundaries to select a minister to be a bishop. After every ballot was announced someone would withdraw his name which narrowed the field. Finally, after many ballots, Dr. Donald Tippet, pastor of First Methodist Church, Los Angeles was elected.

The Consecration Service of a Bishop is an impressive event. Dr. Charles Robbins of Tacoma, Washington and I were chosen to be the Marshalls for the service. All the participants were in their robes; the music had started, but Bishop Kennedy had not arrived. Air travel in 1948 was not as frequent or as reliable as it is today. He finally arrived just at the last moment and the service went off without a hitch. Bishop Phillips was assigned to Denver; Bishop Kennedy went to Portland; and Bishop Tippet went to San Francisco.

Bishop Baker retired at the Jurisdictional Conference in Santa Barbara in 1952. I was honored to be asked to be one of the speakers at his retirement. Since he had been the only Bishop with whom I had worked since 1934, I had a great concern who might be elected and assigned to Los Angeles. During the eight or ten years prior to 1952, I had worked closely with Dr. Vernon Middleton, Executive Secretary of the Church Extension section of the Division of National Missions. We were in the throes of a great development because of the tremendous influx of people into Southern California and Arizona. Vernon, to me, was the most knowledgeable man in the Church of our situation. He would make a great bishop. I undertook to promote the idea but when the balloting started at Santa Barbara the idea had not caught on. The other sections were not about to elect a Southern California man nor were they interested in going outside the Jurisdiction again. Dr. Ray Grant, pastor of First Methodist Church, Sacramento was finally elected.

I was on the Episcopal Committee at Santa Barbara. It was a strange experience. We met more times and longer than we had in any previous Jurisdictional Conference. We had to either assign a man to Los Angeles who had no previous experience as a Bishop, or take one from another area who had been there only one quadrennium. It was really a dilemma. Finally, after hours of discussion and many prayers, we took one ballot - and all four bishops were assigned. Bishop Grant

went to Portland; Bishop Kennedy came to Los Angeles; Bishops Tippet and Phillips were returned to San Francisco and Denver respectively. The Conference adjourned on Sunday afternoon. On Monday Bishop and Mrs. Kennedy drove down to Los Angeles to see the offices and to find a place to live. Velma and I took them to dinner Monday night. I told Bishop Kennedy that I had worked as diligently as I could to get someone else as our Bishop, but I promised him my loyal support as long as he was to be our Bishop. I will cover my relationship with him in another chapter, but that visit began the most rewarding friendship of my life.

In 1960 the Conference met at San Jose. At the request of the Pacific Northwest, the Portland Area was to be divided and a bishop assigned to Seattle as well as Portland. Everyone seemed to take it for granted that Dr. Ray Ragsdale, leader of our delegation, was a cinch to be elected. Again the other sections of the Jurisdiction resisted the idea of electing a Southern California man. After a few ballots verified such resistance, Dr. Ragsdale asked for the floor on a matter of personal privilege. He calmly said that when he came to San Jose other delegates had convinced him it was God's will that he be a bishop, but it had become obvious that such was not the will of the delegates, and he requested that his name be withdrawn. Attempts were made to generate support for someone else but no one seemed able to get enough votes. Marvin Stuart probably could have been elected but felt his job at Palo Alto had not been completed and he withdrew. The name of Everett Palmer was proposed and, while he was on our delegation, he was really not regarded as a Southern Californian. The idea began to gain support and he was elected and assigned to Seattle. The other four were all returned to their areas.

Bishop Phillips was to retire at the 1964 session, thus necessitating another election. Marvin Stuart was elected handily. He was assigned to Denver. Upon the death of Bishop Grant in 1966, Bishop Phillips was asked to fill out the balance of the quadrennium at Portland.

The 1968 session was held in Honolulu and Bishops Phillips and Tippet were scheduled to retire. No election would be held since Bishop Maynard Sparks, former EUB Bishop, had been assigned to the Western Jurisdiction and would have to be assigned.

Bishop Golden had been assigned by the General Conference of 1968 to the Western Jurisdiction when the Central Jurisdiction had been eliminated by legislation.

Again the Episcopal Committee had a most difficult job. It finally recommended that Bishop Golden go to San Francisco, Bishop Sparks to Seattle, and Bishop Palmer to Portland.

The 1972 Conference had three vacancies to fill. Bishops Sparks and Kennedy were to retire and Bishop Palmer had died. The Conference was held in University United Methodist Church in Seattle. It didn't take many ballots to elect Dr. Jack Tuell of Portland and Dr. Melvin

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Wheatley of the Westwood Church, Los Angeles. Great pressure had been exerted to elect an ethnic bishop. The various caucuses brought forth different names and finally they agreed on Dr. Wilbur Choy and he was elected.

The pre-Conference discussions were that Bishop Stuart would come to Los Angeles to replace Bishop Kennedy. This assumption existed during the entire Conference until the final session. I was not a delegate in 1972 but had been asked by Lawrence Guderian, Secretary, to be his assistant. Consequently, I only got information by "the grapevine." At any rate fifteen minutes before the Episcopal Committee was to make its recommendations for assignments, Bishop Stuart was told he would be going to San Francisco and not Los Angeles. Bishop Golden came to Los Angeles; Bishop Wheatley went to Denver; and Bishop Choy was assigned to Seattle.

I was elected Treasurer of the Western Jurisdiction when it was organized in 1940. I served until 1964 when I gave it up because of the pressure of being Secretary of the General Conference. George Williams, who was one of my assistants in the Los Angeles office, was elected Treasurer in my place.

The experiences in the Jurisdictional Conferences have been pleasant ones for the most part. Being the leader of the lay delegation of our Annual Conference to all the Jurisdictional Conferences from 1940 through 1968 placed me on the Episcopal Committee eight times. While we nearly always had pressures to contend with, it was quite a leisurely pace compared with being Secretary of the General Conference. The fellowship with leaders of other Conference delegations in such an intimate circle was very rewarding.



Bishop James C. Baker and J. Wesley Hole at the General Conference in San Francisco in 1952

Chapter 7

SERVICE ON GENERAL BOARDS

One of the by-products of being the leader of an Annual Conference delegation to the General Conference is the probability that you will be chosen to serve as a member of a General Board, Council or Commission of the Church. Legislation prohibits a person from serving on more than one Board, Council or Commission at a time. However, this restriction does not apply to being named on special Study Commissions or temporary committees which may be established. One other major Commission which is excluded from the rule of serving only on one Board, Council or Commission is the Commission on the General Conference, formerly the Commission on Entertainment and Program. That Commission is not mentioned in the Discipline but is set up under the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order of the General Conference.

It has been my good fortune to have been a member of a major Board, Council or Commission and at the same time to be a member of the Commission on the General Conference from 1940 to 1976. I know that no other member has been on the Commission on the General Conference longer than twelve years. My tenure on that Commission of thirty-six years is likely never to be broken because of the present day policy of rotating memberships every eight years.

The first major Board service was on the General Board of Pensions beginning in 1940. I was thrown into contact with pension problems as soon as I started work for the Conference. The Endowment Fund for which I was brought in as Business Manager, was established for the purpose of earning funds to help pay pensions. It had been paying sizable dividends in the early thirties. In 1935 no dividend was paid. The next year a dividend was paid was in 1941 when \$500 was paid. From that time on the dividend has been increased every year until the present time (1975). In 1974 the dividend totaled \$117,646. The first year after I came into the Treasurer's office in 1934 the pension rate was \$14 per year of service. I didn't know then much about how to improve the situation but I certainly was committed to try. In 1938 the General Board of Pensions scheduled a Pension Conference for Annual Conference Pension officials. It was held in the La Salle Hotel in Chicago. Dr. Oren B. Waite, who came into the Conference office in 1935 as Executive Secretary and Treasurer of the Endowment Fund, and I attended the Conference. One of the speakers was Mr. George Huggins, an actuary from Philadelphia. He spoke on the merits of a Reserve Pension Fund Plan for ministers. Such a plan was not in existence then in the Methodist Church but was being considered. It appealed to me as a possible solution to the pension problems of our Conference. I made up my mind to investigate the idea further. When Bishop Baker nominated me to be a member of the General Board of Pensions in 1940 I was greatly flattered. When I attended the first meeting of the Board I was almost embarrassed.

The next youngest member of the Board was twenty-five years older than I. I must have looked like a mere child to the other men. Dr. T. A. Stafford was the Executive Secretary. He was a poet and an authority on church symbolism. He was also a smart administrator. The total reserves of the Board was \$16,000,000. Today the total is over \$400,000,000. I served on the Board for eight years and the experience was a liberal education in pension fund administration.

During the fourteen years between 1934 and 1948 I had become fairly well known as a Conference Treasurer. There were very few, if any, other lay Conference Treasurers then. I was somewhat of a protege of Dr. Orrin W. Auman, Treasurer of the General Council on World Service and Finance in Chicago. He wanted me on his Council and in 1948 I was elected a member. The work was very similar to the Conference Commission on World Service and Finance except on a much larger scale. Dr. Auman had retired and Dr. Thomas B. Lugg had become the Treasurer. I was not on the Executive Committee which met quarterly. The Council would meet only once a year and its meetings were pretty much devoted to reviewing and approving what the Executive Committee had done.

In 1952 at San Francisco the famous Frye Report was adopted. One of the things it did was to establish a Coordinating Council. Membership on the new Council was supposed to be a "plum." Efforts were made to get experienced General Conference personnel on the Council. It was my fifth General Conference and I was fairly well known by then. I was nominated and elected which disqualified me from continuing on the Council on World Service and Finance. When the Coordinating Council met for organization I was elected Secretary. The Council was new. Its purposes were on paper but it had a great deal of difficulty in getting on course and of being accepted by the Church. Frankly, it was not the most pleasant Board experience I had had. I resigned in 1954 in order to become a member of the Board of Missions.

One of the fast developing programs in the Annual Conference in the late 40's and early 50's was the Church Extension work. I had been designated the Executive Secretary of our Conference Board and had been spending a great deal of time with Dr. Elliott Fisher, Dr. Vernon Middleton, and Dr. Bonneau Murphy, all from the National Division in Philadelphia. In fact, I had attended several of the Annual Meetings of the General Board of Missions representing our Conference interests. Mr. W. A. Kern of San Diego was a lay member of the Board in 1954 and asked me to be his replacement. I agreed and was elected. It was an easy assignment to fit into. I knew all of the staff people and they knew me. Soon I was to be asked to be their representative in our Conference in many ways. The administration of their donations and loans to projects within our Conference was awkward and difficult from Philadelphia. I had attended a class on escrows which qualified me to serve as an escrow agent for the Board. The attorney for the Board would send me his instructions with the money the Board was providing either as a donation or a loan and in many instances both. The Confer-

ence funds for the project were also placed in the account. I worked out all the title matters with the Title Insurance Companies. When I retired I got a very much appreciated letter from John Owens, Attorney for the National Division, in which he said: "There is no area of the country where we have had better cooperation, and we have learned to rely upon you in many ways." Altogether I handled more than 100 escrows for the National Division.

In 1960 Bishop Kennedy was elected Chairman of the National Division. I was elected Vice-Chairman of the Division and also Chairman of the Finance Committee. We had a great time together in this responsibility. While we never used our relationship with the National Division as pressure for the benefit of our Conference projects, our positions with the Division served us well on more than one occasion.

One of the projects which the National Division sponsored in our Conference during the period was the establishment of the home for senior citizens in Hawaii - Pohai Nani. A Corporation was set up in Hawaii with local leaders from several denominations. Quarterly meetings were held. There were four men from the National Division on the Board: Vernon Middleton, H. Conwell Snoke, Elliot Fisher and myself. We had an agreement that we would take turns attending the meetings with only one of the four present for each meeting. It was not always possible for the three men in Philadelphia to take their turns. Frequently they would ask me at the last minute to go in their place, and I was always glad to oblige! The Division did not invest any capital in Pohai-Nani, but I am certain the project never would have been possible had it not been for the sponsorship of the National Division. Later Pacific Homes took over the management and ownership of the project.

Another great accomplishment of that period was the establishment of The Methodist Investment Fund. There was a great need for loan funds from the Division. All available funds were loaned out and applications for more loans were being received almost daily. We had started the "Stewardship Loan Fund" in our Conference. Reduced to its simplest terms, this idea was simply a building and loan fund where members or churches would loan money for a specified period to the Board which in turn loaned the money for building purposes. The idea of establishing such a fund nationally caught on. Southern California-Arizona Conference Board of Missions negotiated an agreement with the Board of Directors of The Methodist Investment Fund whereby the Conference deposited \$250,000 to start the fund in exchange for guaranteed loan privileges up to \$1,000,000. Our Conference Board of Missions holds Certificate No. 1 because of this arrangement which greatly benefited our work in Southern California. The fund has had steady growth and has rendered tremendous aid to many needy projects. In 1972 the outstanding loans were reported as \$21,000,000.

In 1952 the General Conference adopted a 12 year tenure limit for membership on Boards, Councils and Commissions. This meant a wholesale turnover in 1964 which was the end of the first 12 year period. Since I had gone on the Board of Missions just prior to the 1956 Conference, I could stay on until 1968. I knew if I did there would likely be

no place open on any other Board because of the turnover in 1964. I, therefore, decided I would prefer to go on another Board in 1964 for 12 years which would take me up to retirement than to risk finding a vacancy in 1968.

My first love had been pensions and I was elated to be named back on the Board of Pensions in 1964. The membership was almost all new. A few had been on previously as fill-ins for vacancies created by deaths and retirements. Since I had previously served eight years on the Board, I was regarded somewhat as a veteran. I was named to the Executive Committee and in 1968 I was named Vice-Chairman. The 1972 Conference reduced the tenure limit on a Board, Council or Commission to eight years. Although it did not state in the legislation that the eight year tenure was retroactive, this was implied and assumed. While I had hoped I could continue on until 1976, I was replaced in the General Conference election by another layman from our Conference. The composition of the Board of Pensions provided for election by the Board of eight members "with special knowledge and background." When it was discovered that not a single member of the Executive Committee of the Board for the quadrennium 1968-72 was reelected, the Board decided to disregard the retroactive interpretation of the new eight year tenure rule and nominated four previous members of the Executive Committee for another four year term. Fortunately, I was one of the four. I was also reelected as Vice-Chairman. There is only one Bishop on the Board of Pensions. In his absence I had the privilege of presiding at the Executive Committee meeting.

My 36 years on the Commission on Entertainment, now the Commission on the General Conference, has been a most delightful and enjoyable experience. This Commission selects the site of the General Conference and makes all of the plans including the program for the Conference. It has to work several years ahead in order to secure the use of facilities adequate for a General Conference. It endeavors to move the Conference around geographically so that each section of the country has a chance to entertain the Conference. The Commission originally was composed of a minister and a layman from each of six Jurisdictions, plus the Secretary and Treasurer of the General Conference who were ex-officio members. Since 1968 it is composed somewhat differently and has a total of nineteen members.

When invitations are received from various cities for the Conference to be held, an investigating committee of three or four members of the Commission who reside most closely to the city under consideration is selected. This committee visits the city to check out the facilities and the local Methodist leadership. Many invitations originate from Convention Bureaus without the cooperation of local Methodists. No invitation is seriously considered unless the Bishop of the area and the local Methodists are solidly behind the invitation. It would be almost impossible to have a General Conference without the cooperation and help of a large number of local Methodist people. Usually there will be three or four cities which qualify for consideration. The final decision is made by the whole Commission. Once a city is selected the local committee incorporates and executes all contracts that are needed with

the hotels, restaurants, the auditorium and other facilities. The Commission deals with the local committee.

Obviously, the responsibilities of the Commission require men with expertise in the area of arranging for and handling large crowds of people. Few men have this experience. From 1929 to 1952 the authority on facilities was Dr. Aubrey Moore of Chicago. He knew exactly how much floor space was required for 600 delegates to be seated at 24 inch tables with 30 inches between tables. No one questioned his authority and judgment. When the Conference was held in 1952 in San Francisco a young preacher by the name of Norman Conard was chairman of the local committee on facilities. Norm worked with Dr. Moore and learned a great deal from him. Dr. Moore was in the process of preparing for the 1956 Conference at Minneapolis when he became ill and died. No one else on the Commission had the foggiest idea about what was required. Someone suggested we draft Norm Conard into service - which we did. Norm came to Minneapolis and really saved the day. He has served as the chairman of the facilities committee ever since. He will retire in 1976 and his loss eventually will be keenly felt. He probably will continue as a member of the Commission for another quadrennium as a member "at large." He has an understudy on the Commission who is "learning the ropes" so that a repetition of the 1955 catastrophe will not happen.

In 1952 at San Francisco the Commission elected Dr. Fred Newell of New York Chairman for the 1952-56 quadrennium. I was elected Vice-Chairman. Two months later Dr. Newell was elected a Bishop by the Northeastern Jurisdiction. When the Commission met again I was elected Chairman. Dr. Moore had been Secretary from 1939 and in a real sense was the executive of the Commission. The Chairmanship rotated each quadrennium but the Secretaryship was a continuous office. When the 1956 Commission was elected I was the only member out of twelve who had served before. It was the judgment of the Commission that because I had been on the Commission sixteen years, I was the logical choice for Secretary. I served in that office until 1968.

The experience as Chairman of the Commission in Minneapolis was a pleasant one even though there were some tight spots. I soon discovered that no one on a local committee knew anything about setting up a General Conference. Through the years we have been blessed with people on local committees who are dedicated and determined to make good on their assignments. That was certainly true in Minneapolis. Nothing we would suggest that needed to be done was left undone. We had a very smooth running Conference with little friction of any kind.

One thing I remember about Minneapolis was winning a bet for dinner at Charlie's Exceptional Restaurant from Donald Odell. We roomed together at every General Conference from 1948 to 1964 except in San Francisco when our wives with us. Dr. Buckner, who was the representative on the Judicial Council from the Western Jurisdiction, died in 1955. This left a vacancy to be filled in 1956, a ministerial vacancy. I suggested to Bishop Baker that Don be nominated for the Council. He was eminently qualified-a gifted attorney and a consecrated churchman. The Discipline

required that four times the number of vacancies to be filled were to be nominated. It also required the election of at least one member from each Jurisdiction. Altogether there were four ministers and three laymen to be elected. Finally three ministers were elected as were two laymen. No one from the West had been elected. Don Odell was in fourth place. Another ballot was taken late in the day and was to be announced the following morning. That night I made a bet with Don Odell that he would be elected. The next morning I went to Bishop Oxnam, Secretary of the Council of Bishops, and showed him that if the remaining members were elected from other Jurisdictions and the Western was not represented, the requirements of the Discipline would not have been met. He said he would make the explanation to the Conference if asked to do so - but he had no right to the floor except when asked. I arranged with Bishop Franklin, who was presiding, for recognition on a matter of personal privilege. I then requested Bishop Oxnam to make a statement of clarification for the benefit of the Conference. This he did and Don was elected on the next ballot. I really enjoyed that dinner!

There were two incidents during my tenure on the Commission on Entertainment and Program I shall always remember.

The first happened early in 1955 in Miami Beach. The Commission had long wanted an invitation to hold the General Conference in the deep South. Late in 1954 we received an inquiry from Miami Beach. We sent the usual "Memorandum of Requirements" which specified that all public facilities - transportation, hotels, restaurants, etc. must be open without question to members of all racial groups. The answer came in due time that Miami Beach could meet all of our requirements. The National Education Association had met in the new auditorium and had experienced no racial problems. We arranged for a two day meeting of the Commission shortly after Easter - which was the beginning of the "off season" in Florida. We were delighted with the auditorium and the enthusiasm of the local Methodists. It really was more than we had expected. We were in a final business session with the local leaders. A District Superintendent was answering our questions. Dr. L. Scott Allen, a representative of the Central Jurisdiction and now a Bishop, asked the simple question "What would be the attitude of your people in the churches if our Negro delegates attended their worship service?" Without any hesitancy and with perfect candor the answer came "They wouldn't be welcome. We wouldn't want Negroes in our churches." We were all stunned. That of course ended any consideration of Miami Beach. Every other agency we had met with could meet the requirements for complete integration except the agency that had made the requirements - the Church! We didn't get a General Conference in the deep South until sixteen years later when we met in Atlanta in 1972.

The other incident was rather humorous. We had voted to hold the 1964 Conference in Pittsburgh. Our Commission was to meet with about 100 local people for the purpose of orienting them to what would be

expected of them. A luncheon had been arranged in one of the churches. Members of our Commission were seated at a table on the platform. I was asked as Secretary of the Commission to introduce the members of the Commission including a statement about where each one was from and what each member did professionally. We had a lay member, Carl Hall, from Little Rock, Arkansas who owned the Adkins Pickle Company. I introduced him as a lay representative of the South Central Jurisdiction, told his name and said "Carl packs the best pickles in the United States." Immediately a titter went up from the crowd and I wondered what kind of a boo-boo I had made. Someone whispered to me "This is the home of Heinz pickles." I recovered somewhat and said "Until I taste better pickles than Carl puts up I will have to stand by his pickles." About three weeks later I received a letter from Mr. Heinz in which he said he understood I wasn't acquainted with his products and that he was sending me some samples. In a few days I received twelve quart jars of various kinds of Heinz pickles. I learned later that the General Manager of the Heinz plant in Pittsburgh was on the local committee. He and Dave Wynn, chairman of the local committee, had collaborated on how to acquaint me with Heinz pickles.

The experience of being on the Commission brought me in touch with convention facilities all over the country. In addition to meeting local committees and actually using the facilities at Kansas City, Atlantic City, Boston, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Denver, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Dallas, St. Louis and Atlanta, we visited Portland, Seattle, Omaha, Cleveland, New York, Louisville, Memphis, Miami Beach, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Anaheim, Columbus and Detroit. Each city had many pluses to offer. Some were deficient in certain aspects of our needs. Looking back over the years, the assignment on this Commission was about the most rewarding anyone could possibly experience. The fellowship with a great group of men from all over the country is something I shall always cherish in my memory.

 One additional responsibility came to me after "The Hole Story" had been written and typed which I feel is important enough to be added to this chapter.

The General Board of Pensions underwent a major change in its Investment Policies and Procedures in the late fall of 1975. A part of the change involved adding three board members to the Investment Committee with the provision that one of the three was to be Chairman of the Committee. I was chosen as one of the three and was named Chairman of the Committee.

The Investment portfolio of the Board of Pensions is valued at \$450 million dollars. If the Board of Pensions is equated with Commercial Corporations it would rate as the 30th largest in America. Only 14 states have pension funds exceeding the size of the Board of Pensions funds.

Obviously, this will be the last major responsibility to come my way since I have passed the age of eligibility to be elected to any General Board of the Church. In another place in "The Hole Story" I have confessed my love for the cause of Pensions. While the new responsibility is tremendous almost beyond belief, I am pleased that my final service can be related to Pensions.