Please click on the button below to hear the full song of "It's Real" as sang by Rev. C. A. Nelson

This recording was made during the 1984 General Conference Harvestime Songfest.

Click Here

“It’s Real”

The Story of C. A. Nelson

It's Real

(The Story of C. A. Nelson)

By Mary Wallace

©1981 Word Aflame® Press
Hazelwood, MO 63042-229
Reprint History: 2001

ISBN 0-912315-17-2

Cover Design by Tim Agnew

All Scripture quotations in this book are from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise identified.

All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced, stored in an electronic system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of Word Aflame Press. Brief quotations may be used in literary reviews.

Printed in United States of America

WAP WORD AFLAME® PRESS
8855 DUNN ROAD
HAZELWOOD, MO 63042-2299

Contents

	Preface	5
	Foreword	9
1.	In the Beginning	16
2.	School Days	30
3.	Discovering Jesus	48
4.	Courtin' Time	55
5.	Marriage	68
6.	Young Evangelists	75
7.	Willhoite Hill and Tiawah	81
8.	Depression Days	88
9.	Revival at Harmony Star	101
10.	Late Thirties	108
11.	Beginning to Pastor	136
12.	First Baby	145
13.	The Merger	157
14.	Changing Times	166
15.	Moving to Claremore	182
16.	Changing Times	200
17.	Comments From Friends	219

Preface

"My story? Why do you want to write the story of my life? It won't take me five minutes to tell you everything. Ten pages will cover it all!"

Clarence Nelson was astounded that I wanted to write a book about his life. "I'm just a nobody," he said. "I've lived my whole life in a hundred-mile radius of northwest Arkansas and northeast Oklahoma. I've never even been to the Holy Land. Nobody will read the book. You won't be able to sell ten of 'em."

From the first interview until the last visit with him in August 1981, Brother Nelson still seemed amazed that I should think his story worthy of publication. But from the first, I felt that C. A. Nelson was an unusual, colorful, interesting individual. True, he was an ordinary man, yet he was also extraordinary.

As I questioned and quizzed, researched and read, and dug out the story, I was ever more amazed. Against a background of unusual hardship in an environment which promised little hope for achievement, C. A. Nelson set out to serve God and his fellow man.

His beautiful, young Indian wife, Edna, was also an unusual individual. From the first year of their marriage, she kept a simple diary which was an intriguing record of stark simplicity. But in the tedious boredom of the trivia of the days emerged an astounding story of a couple of "doers." C. A. and Edna Nelson literally went about doing good.

The research turned up an incredible cloud of witnesses anxious to collaborate on the story. Letters and testimonies poured in. Officials and fellow ministers gladly shared in writing the story of the beloved keen-witted Oklahoma preacher.

C. A. Nelson is an early riser and a doer who doesn't waste time with trivia and detail but tells a story straight to the heart of the matter with always a humorous twist. He likes it best where the "joke's on him."

My insatiable curiosity and drive for detail, accuracy, dates and data almost drove him crazy. I stayed a week with the Nelsons putting all the stories in chronological order. It seemed totally

impossible to be completely accurate, but he and I both have certainly tried.

The history of the nation and the world in which C. A. Nelson, leader of men, developed has captured my interest, and I read and researched for hours to paint that backdrop.

Then I went to Tiawah—Tiawah, a microscopic part of a country, a state, a nation! The whole town completely seemed to come alive as the Nelsons talked and I read diary after diary.

Now I feel like I am part "Nelson," a real sister to Brother and Sister Nelson. They are easy to love dearly. I know you will love them more as you read the story of an ordinary yet extraordinary man of God.

Mary H. Wallace

Acknowledgements

This story could not have been written without Brother and Sister Nelson—his instant recall of story after story, her daily diaries and myriad assorted memorabilia to verify events and help sort out dates. I felt the continuing support and goodwill of the children, Shirley and Duane, and the affection of the grandchildren, Kimberly, Rodney, Mindy, and Joey. Then there were the saints of the Claremore church so excited over the book, praying and encouraging. There were also lifelong friends such as Barbara Westberg, who wrote the moving incident of the drowning and sketched the Tiawah map, as well as Jack Garrison and R. D. Whalen and several others who wrote letters. Last but not least were his fellow ministers, Brother N. A. Urshan, C. M. Becton, S. W. Chambers, James Kilgore, and numerous others who showed interest and encouraged me so much.

To all who had a part in capturing the C. A. Nelson story on paper, including Rhoda Upton, Sam Grisham, Kathryn Hendricks, and Brenda Jones, my heartfelt thanks.

Mary H. Wallace

Foreword

Love? I don't know of a time in my life when I even considered that Dad did not love me. We never were wealthy, yet I always had some spending money, though just a few coins, so that I would never have reason to steal.

The thing that sets my dad apart from other men was, and is, his ability to share. We were not rich, but I owned a baseball glove, a football, a shotgun, a fishing pole, and I could always use any lures in his fishing tackle box. (Not all dads allow you to use their lures.) Yet there was one time at least that he overspent because of love. I am still amazed to this day.

We had been to California to visit relatives and were on our way home. I think we were traveling the northern route, which would take us over the Continental Divide. At the peak of the mountains, there was a trading post. As we were shopping, I spied a rough-out leather coat. It was beautiful. The price was somewhere around twenty-five dollars. In the midfifties that was a considerable amount of money. Also we were returning from a two-week vacation. (Funds low?) But to ice the cake, the only sizes they had were just a fit (July—August I'd only be able to wear it one year) or two sizes too big. They said they would get my size in and mail it to us. But I wanted a coat then. To my amazement dad bought me that coat! We had the air conditioner on in the car most of the way home, but you guessed it, I wore the coat! Logic said, "Don't buy the coat." Love said, "He really does like it! I'll surprise him."

Care? I was one of the only boys whose dads drove them to school in the winter and came to pick them up. Dad would stop to pick up all of my friends that we saw on the way. (I think that helped me have more than my share of friends.)

Pastor? I have been privileged to be raised under the best pastor I know. My love for Brother Nelson is twofold. I love my dad, but I love Brother Nelson just as much or more. You see, there has always been that distinction between dad and pastor.

I forget the subject of the argument, but we had a pretty good one going into extra innings. All at once Brother Nelson said,

"You are not arguing with your dad; I am your pastor!" That was the end of the argument. I knew it was wrong in God's eyes to argue with His shepherd.

Superintendent? Everyone loved him because:

1. He was frugal with their money.

(He was tighter with district money than he was with his own wallet.)

2. He would do anything to help anyone.

3. He wasn't a politician—he just did a good job.

I can not recall any mistreatment from the boys I grew up with in the district just because my dad was superintendent. I can recall a few preachers that thought they had to make an example out of me. (I could still call their names.) I believe that I was not mistreated because my dad was fair and weighed out judgment on even balances. I do not know of his ever trying to get even with anyone. There was once a conspiracy to throw him out of office. Later these brethren (part of them) saw their error and came to apologize. It was accepted. They now have fellowship together.

My opinion? As a boy I wanted to grow up and preach like my dad. I still want to!

Duane Nelson

Shirley's Comments

My Dad is, and always has been, a very special person in my life. Daddy was always very much involved in the work of the Lord, and this meant many hours away from home. I can well remember the many tears that were shed when he would leave for a General Conference. I knew this meant Daddy would be gone for at least ten days, and those were sad times for me. Oh, I can't leave out the tears of joy when he would finally return.

Daddy and Mother recognized my musical talent, and when I was about four years old, I started taking piano lessons. One of the things that really stands out in my life is on my twelfth birthday I got an accordion. I never could understand how Daddy could have come up with that much money to buy me such an expensive instrument. I played it at church that very night. From then on Daddy and I worked as a team. When the young women who played the paino in our church married and left, this left a void which I soon filled. I never felt better than when I was helping my dad in church. He soon started to depend on me more and more to carry that part of the load for him.

I can let my mind wander back to the days when I was home—it was such a happy place. Those days were filled with "not a care in the world." The best times were going to conferences, master rallies, youth camps, camp meetings, fellowship meetings, youth rallies and Sunday school rallies. They got even better when our family would get to go with Daddy when he would preach a camp meeting. None could preach as good as "my dad." I was so proud of him. None stood as tall in my eyes.

The older I get the more I am able to comprehend the wisdom that God has given my dad. There have been times when I did not understand his advice—at least not at that particular moment. But always later "on down the road" I realized Dad was right. God has given him the ability to see farther down the road than I am able to see.

It has always been difficult for me to separate "my dad" from "my pastor." But just within the past few months God has helped

me in seeing this difference. I am sure that I love C. A. Nelson as a dad more than any other daughter could love her dad. But, oh, I thank God for C. A. Nelson, my pastor who watches for my soul.

Thanks Daddy for everything. I love you.

Shirley

Tribute To
Clarence A. Nelson

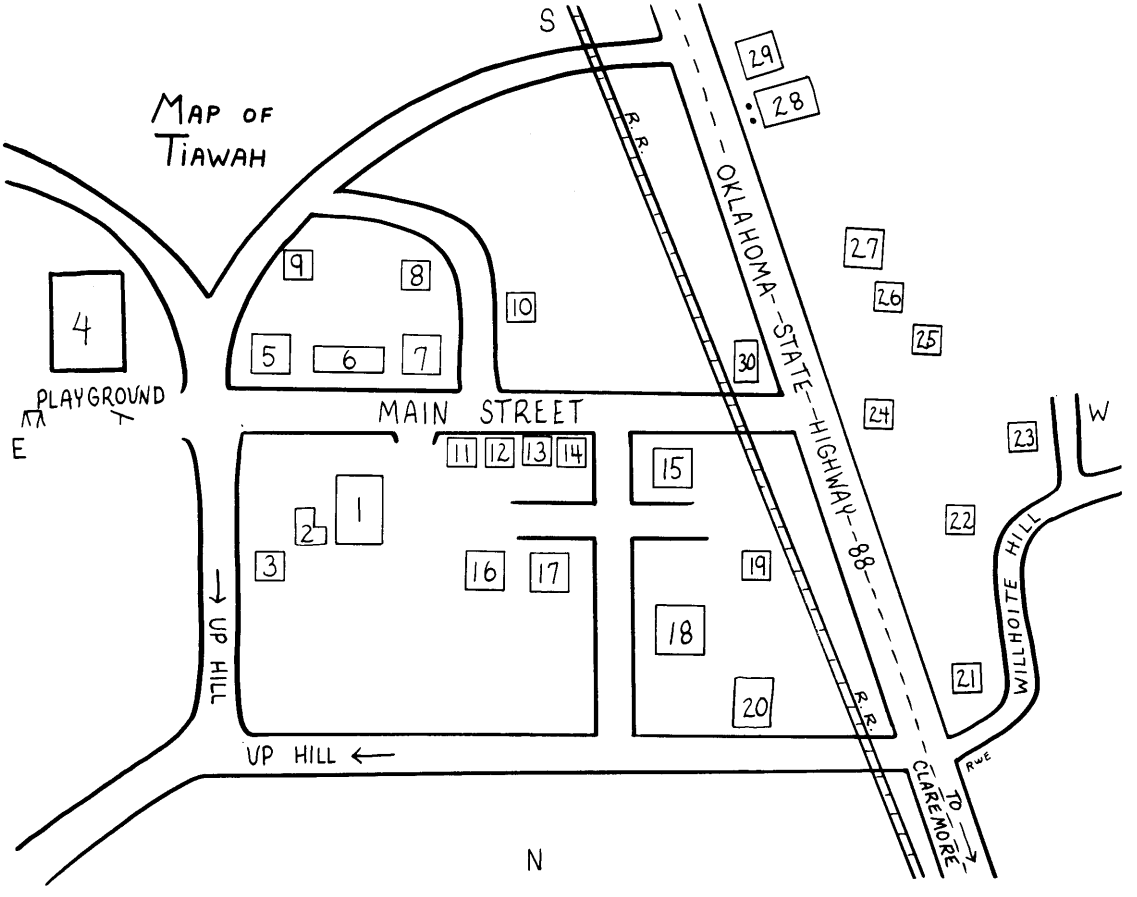
Clarence A. Nelson is a true Oklahoman. What Will Rogers was to a world of entertainment and folklore, Clarence Nelson is to the United Pentecostal Church. These attributes in a spiritual vein stamp him as unique and almost indefinable.

I have known this good, godly man for over forty years. During that time, he has kept the faith and been a leader of men, a pastor of people, a shepherd of the sheep, and an example of Christian grace. As an official of the United Pentecostal Church International, he has led the way for many years. Though he is now an honorary member of the General Board of the United Pentecostal Church, this position rightly deserved and honestly gained not only benefits him as an outstanding champion of the gospel of Jesus Christ but exalts him in the eyes of men because of his achievement in the work of the vineyard of the Lord Jesus Christ.

His preaching has always been uniquely powerful and, in many instances, humorous without losing sacredness. He is a teller of stories that you never forget. He is unafraid to speak what he feels to be the truth. No man or system who has known Clarence Nelson would ever accuse him of compromise.

The book will make you laugh and make you cry. When you lay it down, you will thank God that there lives a Christian of this caliber who blesses us, edifies us, inspires us, and long after he passes from the scene, should it happen, he leaves indelible marks of his spiritual trail behind him. I commend highly not only the book but the man.

NATHANIEL A. URSHAN


MAP OF TIAWAH
S
N
E
W
R.R.
OKLAHOMA-STATE-HIGHWAY-88
MAIN STREET
PLAYGROUND
UP HILL
UP HILL
WILLHOITE HILL
RUE
TO CLAREMORE
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30

Map of Tiawah

1. Church
2. Parsonage
3. Bickford/Vaught
4. School
5. Sears
6. Harvey Rathbun
7. "Tumper" Dan & Marcella Hoselton
8. Bert & Edna Isaac
9. Earl & Amy Willhoite
10. E. Maxwell
11. Sutton (janitor at school)
12. Jessie Lutz (cook at school)
13. Ray Jr. & Ruby Brown (later Brother and Sister Gibson & Dona James—son of Grandma James—lived here)
14. Walters (later Ray Jr. and Ruby Brown moved here)
15. Opal Leonard
16. Mrs. Hess (mother of Sister Helen Koger)
17. Chronister
18. McClure (Sister Virginia Lawson's folks)
19. Evie Stout
20. Mrs. Florence Hughes
21. Bill Woods (later Lawsons lived here)
22. Grandma James
23. Willhoite
24. Rathers
25. Redden
26. Clara Collins
27. Vanaman
28. Shelby & Hazel Sutherland's Store & Station (Operated later by Tom & Lona Dunlap)
29. Sutherland Home
30. Nolan & Bill Gabbard's Store and Station

Chapter One

In The Beginning

"We'll call this boy, Clarence," Albert Pinkney Nelson declared when the doctor told him that the baby born October 1, 1908, was a boy.

"But he's so little and sweet! Let's call him Clarence Audry," his wife, Nora Belle Nelson, insisted softly.

"Whatever you call him, this chap is a *real* fine feller," added the country doctor.

Clarence Audry Nelson was the seventh child of eleven children who were born to Albert and Nora Nelson. In 1908 the Nelson family lived in West Fork between Fayetteville (with a population of four thousand) and Fort Smith (almost three times as big with eleven thousand, five hundred), in Benton County, Arkansas, in the edge of the Boston Mountains. In 1953 this south central state was called the land of opportunity; however, in the early part of the twentieth century, the state offered very little economic opportunity to poor sharecroppers like the Nelsons.

Unknown to the Nelsons, however, God was pouring out abundant spiritual blessings in a most unusual way not too far north of Fayetteville, Arkansas. These blessings eventually touched the Nelson family.

At the turn of the century, eight years before Clarence Nelson was born, the Lord began to reveal Himself in a marvelous way.

In Stones Folly, an old mansion patterned after an English castle, located about two hundred miles north of Fayetteville in Topeka, Kansas, a former Methodist minister, Charles F. Parham, opened a Bible school, *Bethel Gospel School*. This school has been called "the birthplace of the most startling religious phenomenon of modern times." It was here that, according to the February 23, 1901, issue of the local newspaper, *Topeka Mail and Breeze*, God signaled the latter day outpouring of the Holy Ghost.

On New Year's Day 1901, after spending the night in prayer, Agnes N. Ozman was filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak in tongues. Later Parham held a revival in Galena, Kansas, where a young high school boy, Howard A. Goss, repented. Many of these young people full of the Holy Ghost and zeal began traveling to Texas, Louisiana, and on to Arkansas, preaching the gospel and spreading the good news eventually even into many small towns and country places, such as West Fork.

Some twenty-five years before Clarence Nelson was born in this small, isolated, rural Arkansas community, five other sons were born to five other families under widely differing circumstances but with certain common factors in their backgrounds. Together these five men were destined to change the Western world of the twentieth century in which not only Clarence but millions of other individuals lived.

First at Blinheim Palace, Oxfordshire, England, on November 30, 1874, a son was prematurely born to Lord Randolph Churchill and his beautiful American wife, Jeanette Jerome. Although he was not especially close to his aristocratic father, Winston had a warm, close relationship to his mother.

In 1893, because Winston was an indifferent student, Lord Randolph entered his son in Sandhurst, the Royal Military college, where the boy happily and seriously applied himself to his work. He graduated eighth in a class of 150. The next year, when Winston was twenty-one, his father died, but by this time the young man had his education. Soon, he entered the Fourth Hussars and left as a soldier-journalist for Cuba and later India. Thus he began a career headed for leadership not only as a soldier and a politician but also as a writer.

Five years after Sir Winston's birth, on December 21, 1879, in

Georgia province, southern Russia, a poor shoemaker and an illiterate but deeply religious washerwoman had an only son, Joseph Dzhugashvili. The shoemaker died when Joseph was only eleven, but the mother brought up her son with much tenderness and devotion, choosing for him an ecclesiastical career in the Georgian Orthodox church. In 1894 Joseph entered the theological seminary of Tiflis. He was a very able student, a voracious reader, and an ambitious debater. Three years later he joined a patriotic socialist organization, and just before he was to graduate, he was expelled for his "disloyal" views. The young man then plunged into revolutionary activity and became a supporter of V. I. Lenin's journal, *Iskra.*

For his political activities he was imprisoned from April 1902 until the end of 1903. While in prison he was elected to the Social Democratic Committee. He escaped and returned to Tiflis and began translating Lenin's ideas from the Russian into the Georgian. In 1913 he adopted a pseudonym, Stalin—man of steel, and he became the first editor of the Communist paper, *Pravda.*

A scant three years after Stalin's birth, on January 30, 1882, an only child, a son, was born to a wealthy older gentleman, James Roosevelt, and his young wife, Sarah Delano, at Hyde Park, New York, U.S.A. He was carefully educated at home like Churchill. His social position, his being responsible toward those less fortunate (such as blacks and sharecroppers) were assets.

At fourteen, Roosevelt, a shy loner, entered Groton, a school modeled after the great public schools of England, where Rector Endicott Peabody trained young men to exercise Christian stewardship through public service. Later, Roosevelt studied law at Harvard, became more sociable, and entered extracurricular activities. When he was a senior, Roosevelt was chief editor of the college newspaper, the *Harvard Crimson.*

Roosevelt admired his famous fifth cousin, President Theodore Roosevelt, and in 1905 he married Teddy's niece, Eleanor Roosevelt, who at that time was active in settlement work in New York City.

One year after Roosevelt's birth, on July 29, 1883, an antireligious Italian blacksmith with socialist opinions and his school-

teacher wife became parents of a son whom they named Benito, after Benito Juarez, the Mexican revolutionary leader. At school, young Benito became known for his hot temper. At eighteen he qualified as a schoolteacher and obtained an appointment at an elementary school. In 1902, looking for a better career and hoping to avoid military service, Benito Mussolini went to Switzerland and engaged in revolutionary and atheistic propaganda. In 1908 he joined the staff of local Italian socialist newspapers in Austria. He returned to Italy and in 1912 was made editor of *Avianti*, organ of the Socialist party. In October 1914 because of his conflicting views, Mussolini was expelled from the Socialist party, and on November 14, 1914, appeared the first issue of Mussolini's new daily paper, *Il Popolo d' Italia*, a Socialist daily in which he now advocated Italy's entry into the first World War.

Six years after Mussolini's birth and fifteen years after Stalin's birth, the last of the five men, Adolph Hitler, was born on April 20, 1889, on the Bavarian border of Germany to a customs service employee and his wife. With an overindulgent mother, Hitler grew to be a loner with artistic inclinations, apparently something of a dreamer who lived in a world of fantasy. Like Stalin, his father died in 1903 when Hitler was only twelve, and when he was sixteen, his mother allowed him to drop out of secondary school. When his mother also died in 1908, Hitler was not at all prepared to make a living and had no direction but lived a lonely, precarious life, painting postcards and advertisements and drifting from one municipal lodging house to the next.

In contrast to these five men, Clarence Audry Nelson, born a few years later, lived most of his life in a hundred mile radius of northwest Arkansas and northeast Oklahoma, a small but a real slice of a much larger, real world. Born in poverty but into a large, warm family with both mother and father who were loving and concerned parents, simply educated, C. A. Nelson had a native, keen, curious mind and a tremendous sense of humor with an ability to laugh at himself. He early learned what was really real in life, and he, too, affected his world although it was a small, small world.

In the early nineteen hundreds, a sharecropper was a small tenant farmer who depended upon the landlord to supply him and

his family with the necessities of life. He had a contract with the landlord to cultivate his land for the next year. In the meantime the landlord fed the family through the winter. At harvest time the sharecropper's family gathered the crop, then paid for their supplies and rent if they were able to do so.

It was often a scrabbling, precarious existence. The sharecropper rarely was ever able to get ahead. He just kept living one day at a time, putting one foot down in front of the other. Although the sharecropper worked long, hard hours, he was able to work close to home, and he could always be home for dinner. The whole family, especially the father and the sons, all worked together, making a strong family unit. The Albert Nelson family was this kind of tough, strong sharecropper family.

Clarence's father, short and dark-haired Albert Nelson, was originally from Illinois. His family had moved in a wagon to Waco, Texas, then on to Prairie Grove, Arkansas. Here Albert met and married Nora Belle Burrow from Cane Hill, Arkansas. Nora with her ready wit and hearty laughter was a real asset to her husband. She was an attractive, big-boned, brown-haired, blue-eyed girl. What a combination they made! The team of Nora and Albert Nelson was to leave its mark on quite a few people.

Nora's mother, Mary Anne (Polly) was a Clanton. These Clantons were related to the Arthur L. Clanton family. (Before his death, Brother A. L. Clanton was editor-in-chief of the United Pentecostal Church.) It was also rumored that Nora's ancestors may have been some of the gang of Ike and Billy Clanton, who with Tom and Frank McLowry faced Wyatt Earp, city marshal, his two brothers, Virgil and Morgan, and Doc Holliday in the legendary gunfight in Tombstone's O.K. Corral, Tombstone, Arizona, on a cold chilly day, October 26, 1881. At the end of the gunfight, Tom and Frank McLowry and Billy Clanton lay dead. Morgan and Virgil Earp were wounded, but Doc Holliday had only been barely grazed by a bullet.

Nora was never sure whether her family was really descended from this "bunch of outlaw Clantons," but it made a good story which her little Clarence enjoyed telling. Nora had also heard that part of her family was Irish, and this was easy to believe when Nora teased, laughed, cut up, and played merry tunes on her

cheap, little accordion.

Nora, like other farmers' wives of that day, was a hard worker with the care of all her small children. Her days were spent cooking dried beans and hog jowl and fried middling meat, biscuits and gravy, along with lots of cornbread and buttermilk. In the spring "poke sallet" with eggs was a delicious and nutritious addition. But always on the Nelsons' table there was jelly. The boys picked 'possum grapes, and Nora made jelly by first boiling the grapes, then straining the juice through a white cotton flour sack. Nora was very busy in the summer with her kitchen garden and canning, not to mention the washing every Monday.

First she had to haul water from the well to fill the big, black washpot, and then carefully she built the fire under the pot. "Hand me that battling stick to poke the overalls and work shirts down in the hot water," she said as she added the homemade lye soap to the boiling washpot. After boiling, Nora's white things were rinsed twice with a final bluing water to "keep 'em nice and white."

The family cow was often a part of a farm woman's responsibility also. Pure milk and sweet butter added a great deal to the Nelsons' nutrition.

"Why, they tell me that even President Taft had his own milk cow while he was at the White House," Albert encouraged his wife, but when Daisey's tail slapped Nora in the face or the supposedly "contented" cow stuck her foot in the milk pail, it was hard for Nora to remember to count her blessings.

It was said that a kicking milk cow once caused a saintly old Quaker to holler out in anger to his stubborn animal, "I can't beat thee and I can't curse thee, but one more time, Bossy, and I'll sell thee to a Baptist who will knock the stuffings out of thee."

One by one of the Nelson children learned to help milk the cow, slop the pigs, and gather the eggs. But Clarence always found some time to play.

One hot summer day little Clarence was laying back behind the barn. "Mabel, you and Retta take these hyar quilts out to sun," Nora called from the back door.

"Now, Clarence, you leave Momma's quilts alone, yuh hyar me," the feisty, little boy was warned after the last clothespin was fastened.

Clarence had no intention of bothering quilts. He and his hound pup, Spot, had other fish to fry. At the moment he was stretched out on the ground, trying to coax a doodlebug out of a hole:

Doodlebug, doodlebug
Come get some corn
Your house is on fire
And your children will burn.

Suddenly a big, fat bumblebee buzzed by Clarence took off after that bee. Mr. Bee buzzed right inside the fold of the fancy pieced quilt, and Clarence followed.

What a tussle they had! Clarence was the loser. He finally yanked the quilt off the line, scrambled out, and headed for the back door yelling to the top of his lungs.

"What in the wide world? What happened?"

Carefully Nora pulled the stinger out, then plastered the red, swollen bite with a wad of chewed-up tobacco.

"There, that oughta draw the pizen out," declared the mother-doctor.

"That little scamp! Mamma's nice, pretty pieced quilt is down in the dirt, but Clarence will get off scot-free," declared the outraged sister.

Bee stings were not the only troubles Clarence had. Pink eye, boils, ringworms, and warts were common ailments of country kids. Clarence was plagued with styes on his eyes. One morning he was rubbing his eyes in despair, "Got the pink eye again, I think."

His sister decided to take this opportunity to get even with him for all his teasing. "Clarence, I'll tell you what to do to get rid of them sore eyes."

"How can I get rid of 'em, Sister? I'll do whatever you say."

"Well, just go outside and holler this poem as loud as you can:

"Stye, Stye leave my eye;
Go to the next one passing by."

Soon the whole neighborhood heard the little, towheaded boy yelling as loud as he could, but the stye must not have heard the

magic words.

Hard working Albert kept the growing boys busy in the summertime cutting careless weeds and chopping crabgrass and Johnson grass out of the corn patches. Although the Nelsons never once lived in a painted house (always just a drab, dingy sharecropper's cabin), Nora kept flowers growing. Zinnias, snow-on-the-mountain, cockscomb, hollyhocks, cosmos, marigolds bloomed in profusion around her dooryard, and she insisted that the girls keep the yard nicely swept. Ragged-top post oaks and blackjacks, catalpas, sycamores, and pecan trees made good trees for the growing boys to climb. Mockingbirds used the same trees for serenading purposes. The Nelsons enjoyed the birds. Also, they liked the wild grapevines which they used as swings. What fun they had! How handy these vines were to land a boy in the middle of a cool creek.

Although Albert and Nora were sharecroppers at the time of Clarence's birth, Albert also had a job refueling coal-burning trains for the Frisco railroad as they chugged into the drab, dingy, dusty country depot.

The oldest Nelson children were the twins, James Pinkney (Pink) and Mary Agnes. Then Mabel, Retta, and Grace were born and later Clarence. After this, three more girls were born: Esther, Opal, and Elizabeth.

West Fork was just a small Arkansas community of perhaps five hundred people. Dusty dirt roads led to the general store and the small United States Post Office with its red, white, and blue flag rippling in the breeze. The railroad with its puffing steam engines furnished most of the excitement for the whole neighborhood. Albert was indeed fortunate to have a job with the railroad which kept him from being too short of cash money. But many men, who were not fortunate to have a job or change to jingle, had another kind of association with the railroad. Among these unofficial travelers on the railroad in those days were the rugged individuals called hobos. As often as twenty times a year a housewife would hear a knock at her back door.

"Got any wood that needs splittin', ma'am?" the knights of the road would inquire. It was understood quite well that he was willing to do the lady of the house a favor in exchange for a hot,

home-cooked meal. However, because Albert Nelson worked for the railroad, hobos were not encouraged to call at the Nelsons' back door. Also, the Nelson children always had pet dogs, and dogs did not like hobos at all.

It was highly suspected that hobos had a system of signs which denoted the hospitable households, as well as the biting dogs. Some wary housewives would bargain with the hobos.

"Yes, I'll give you a good, hot dinner of fried chicken and gravy if you'll take that 'Welcome hobo' sign off my property." Then she would march down to the fence or barn to see that the hobo did remove the sign. The era of hobos continued into the thirties.

Later Albert moved his family to a little four room, shotgun house with a steep roof. The house was set right in the middle of Farmington, Arkansas. A shed built on the back added a little space, and there was a well-worn path down to the outhouse. Fortunately, the sharecropper again found a job. This time it was with Starks Nursery at Farmington.

What fun it was for the two boys to head for the nursery with their dad armed with his Hopkins Allen single barrel sixteen gauge shotgun. "We need to get enough squirrels to fry for supper, boys," Albert whispered as they spotted a show-off, feisty squirrel tail flashing in the sunlight as he tried a long leap from one tree to another. Clarence felt big and strong and sure of himself as he joined his father's hunts. This started a lifelong love for the outdoors and hunting and fishing.

"When will we go quail hunting, Dad?"

"Might skeer up a few quail this fall. This winter we'll trap rabbits. Times get much harder, we might hafta make rabbit sausage," Albert added half teasing yet partly serious. "Then they's allus 'possum," he added.

"They say 'possum's good with plenty of sweet 'taters," Pink (James) chimed in.

All the Nelson children liked Farmington. There was even a general store right across the dirt road where Clarence was occasionally sent to buy a loaf of "light" bread. After years of hard country living with cornbread for breakfast, dinner, and supper, light bread tasted as sweet as cake.

One cold, frosty Saturday morning Nora called to Clarence,

"Run get Momma a loaf of bread, Clarence. Put your jacket on, son. It's chilly outside." The skinny, little towhead dashed across the dirt road, down the four-foot embankment, followed by a little old brown speckled, flop-eared hound pup. Tugging hard on the handle, Clarence tried to open the big door of the store.

"Mr. McNeilly must not be open yet," he finally decided. But light bread was such a special treat! Anxiously Clarence peered through the iron bars on the store window, trying to see if the store manager had started a fire in the potbellied stove.

"Ouch," he cried. Inadvertently Clarence had touched his tongue to the cold iron bar, and the tender skin was stuck tight.

Tears streamed down his cheeks as he tried to explain to his mother, "I ain't got no bread but I sure do have a sore tongue!"

Later, as a consolation prize, Momma found a stray nickel. "Here, honey, go get you a Long Tom." A Long Tom was Clarence's favorite, a paraffin-like chewing gum with a flavorful sweet juice inside.

Slamming the screen door hastily, Clarence ran across the road and tugged open the heavy store door. A mixture of odors assailed his nostrils—salty cracker barrel, the cheese hoop, sour pickles, kerosene, mingled with the black oil that Mr. McNeilly used to settle the dust on the splintery floor. The little boy squeezed between hundred-pound sacks of flour and sugar, clutching his precious nickel. How hard it was to decide! He lingered a long time looking at the striped peppermint candy, chocolate drops, and horehound drops, but the Long Tom won out.

"Momma spoils him," one of the girls grumbled.

"Yeah, it's 'cause he's a boy," agreed another sister.

Clarence started to the two room grade school in Farmington. Miss Hazel Carnahan was his teacher. Slowly, painfully, he struggled through the pages of his reader. "Help Brother with his reading, Sister," Nora quietly insisted. She knew it was hard for her active little boy to sit in school quietly all day.

But recess was fun. How Clarence wanted to play with the big boys! "Gwan, you're just a little old bitty boy," sneered one of the big boys. Pop the Whip, Red Rover, Sheep My Pen, Annie Over, Mother May I, Hop Scotch—the country children played hard every time they had a chance. Clarence joined in wholeheartedly

and spent precious little time sulking or feeling sorry for himself. Emotionally and socially he was growing up as a real, healthy, well-rounded American boy.

Clarence was always a tease and a cutup. He knew every dog in Farmington, let alone all the children and grown-ups. There were pigtails to pull, paper wads to shoot, and tricks to play on his teacher or his friends.

"Clarence, you quit that, or I'm gonna tell Momma!" one of the girls yelled when he pulled her hair for the nth time.

One day Clarence yelled at the tough, big fellows who were always loafing in the front of the general store. "Look at me," he hollered as he rode his mother's broom down the four-foot embankment to the sidewalk. But the joke was on Clarence as he somersaulted in the air and—plop—he came down right on his head! The loafers looked all right, as well as laughed heartily at that Nelson "young 'un." But Clarence Nelson joined in the fun and laughed at himself.

These shiftless loafers always hung out around the general store a-whittlin' and a-chewin' and a-spittin' and a-talkin'.

"Hard times is coming. They tell me they's talk of war in Europe."

"Hit don't make me no never mind 'bout no war way over in Europe. Hit's this here dreadful dry spell right here in Arkansas that I'm a-worried 'bout."

"Yup, boys, it's dry all right. Last I heard the Baptists was a-sprinklin' and the Methodists was a-usin' a wet cloth." The dried-up old man slapped his knee and bent double laughing at his own story.

Clarence loved to listen to all those tall tales, the jokes, and the yarns. His fertile brain was busy recording and remembering how to tell a good story that gave everybody a good laugh. But he also was like other little boys with a head full of ideas and pockets full of "you name it."

About this time in 1913 in Hot Springs, Arkansas, a young man, Claiborne P. Williams, received the Holy Ghost and was baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. But as yet the Nelsons had not met Brother Williams, nor were they involved with any church folk.

In 1901, before Clarence's birth, the first three horsepower Oldsmobile 425 were made, and by 1904 there were twenty-five companies manufacturing the "new-fangled" horseless carriages. In 1903 the first Ford was sold and seventeen hundred were made that year, but the new machines were still not common in small towns. It caused a lot of excitement when one came to Farmington. When he was about six years old, Clarence got to see his first automobile.

"Look at those great big wheels on that thing," commented one of the locals.

"Betcha she'll do twenty miles an hour or better," added another.

"Aww, gwan, that's better than Doc's best team of horses!" doubted another.

"Did you hear about that team of mules that got scairt and ran away with old man Hobb?"* All the farmers hated those new-fangled horseless carriages.

"Oughta be a law . . ."

"Ye-es, and our preacher says those new-fangled autymobeels are a-takin' more folks to hell than saloons," added one worried ole granny. However, one progressive sister did risk her reputation and testified, "Thank God for the Ford. It never took nobody anywhere it didn't bring 'em back." She thought these new horseless carriages were a blessing from God. "Now, mebbe more folks will come to church—that is, whenever we do get to have a service."

About this time Clarence got a chance to go to church and hear a preacher. A preacher, his wife, and three children came to Farmington and built a brush arbor and began to preach. The first time Clarence heard them, they came down the road with the preacher plunking on an old guitar and singing:

> *O they tell me of a home far beyond the skies,*
> *O they tell me of a home far away;*
> *O they tell me of a home where no stormclouds rise,*
> *O they tell me of an unclouded day.*

This was Clarence's first contact with anything that pertained

to a church. The family went to the meeting, and Albert and Nora prayed in the altar. Little Clarence was touched by the service, and he cried too. He soon forgot the itinerant preacher's name, but he always remembered the first time he felt the touch of God on his heart. At last God and the church were becoming *real* in the isolated Arkansas village.

As a child Clarence Nelson often suffered from earache evidently caused by deep infection in his left ear. "Let's go pick berries," brought no joy to this little boy because he always got a gnat in his ear, not to mention the prickly briars nor the poison ivy nor the possibility of snakes hiding in the briars.

"Let's go to the house, Momma. You've got enough berries for a great big cobbler. And I've got another gnat in my ear." Before they got home, the little boy was crying in earnest.

"Hush, now, Clarence. Dad will blow some warm smoke in your ear. That'll ease it." Somehow the little boy did suffer it through with home remedies, but the problems left him with a bursted eardrum and a hearing problem in that ear. Never one to complain or feel sorry for himself, he just used the hole in his ear to blow smoke through and amuse his friends in later life.

Never a whiner, Clarence used even his troubles to make fun and entertainment for his friends, and he retained a lifelong ability to laugh at himself and the troubles that came his way.

Later Clarence took a severe fever. "I think he's kinda puny and bilious," surmised Nora as she laid a wet cloth on the child's fevered brow.

"Momma, skeer the birds outta here," cried the young lad hallucinating from the high fever.

"There ain't no birds in here, Clarence. Hush now and try to go to sleep," she comforted her sick son.

"I wanta drink, Momma, just a cold drink outta the spring," begged the feverish lad.

"Yes, honey, you can drink all the water you want. Just as soon as you're able to be up and about," promised his mother as she wiped her hands on her apron and pushed her hair back.

"Now, you be still. Momma's gotta warsh. You need to hurry up and get better. I ain't got nobody to haul water for the warsh pot. Them girls are too flighty."

Clarence was very sick for several days, but before the summer was over, he was up teasing the girls, chasing the dogs, and looking forward to school again that fall. "Miss Hazel Carnahan will be my teacher," he bragged.

*Not his real name.

Chapter Two

School Days

When Clarence was in the second grade, Albert moved his family again, down to Alma, Arkansas, where they picked cotton in the river bottoms.

"I'm a good picker, Daddy," boasted one of the girls.

"I'm a good picker too," Clarence added.

"Sure you can pick," Nora promised. "I'll make you a little sack outta this flour sack, and you can help too."

Everybody picked—Momma, Daddy, James, the girls, and Clarence. Long lines of people moved steadily across the field, heavy sacks dragging the middle of the rows smooth.

"Good crop here! Grab 'em bolls! We gotta go after it now," encouraged Albert.

"I could pick cotton in the dark," James "Pink" bragged, his long, slender fingers flashing from boll to boll.

"Yup, Pink makes a good hand in the field," added his mother.

A full sack of cotton, when shaken down, weighed forty-five or fifty pounds. It was a real achievement to go to the scales with a full sack. To pick two hundred pounds in a day was hard work for a grown man.

Cutworms and spiders clung to the heavy green leaves. The pickers bent to their task, grabbing the heavy clusters of cotton

with their skinned-up hands until they could hold no more. Then they thrust the cotton into the mouth of their sacks, constantly increasing the load against which they pulled. Hangnails and cracked cuticles marked the places where the sharp, dry, cotton bolls scratched the blood from the busy, chapped hands.

Clarence tried to fill up his own little flour sack, but when they went to weigh up, Daddy just threw Clarence's little sack on the scale with his own big sack.

"Reckon my sack don't count," Clarence lamented. But his father assured him that his efforts did count. "You're my big boy."

The Nelsons found a big pecan tree for shade at dinner. Momma opened the dinner bucket and handed out cold, buttermilk-soda biscuits with fatback. Later there was a cold sweet potato and a lukewarm drink of water. Then, after a short rest, they once again bent their backs to the long, empty sacks.

"Gotta git this patch finished 'fore dark." Albert urged his family on.

"Yep, fall o' the year's the best time to make a little cash money for you all's school clothes," reminded Nora.

"I'm a-wantin' a good long look at thet Sears Roebuck 'wish book.' There's several things that'd be nice for Christmas," added one of the girls.

In 1915 seeds of truth were about to produce spiritual harvest. The Pentecostal message of baptism in the Holy Spirit, water baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus, and the oneness of God traveled east across the Mississippi river. Pastor G. T. Haywood, of Christ Temple, Indianapolis, Indiana, was baptized by Brother L. V. Roberts. Later, at a large meeting in Jackson, Tennessee, hosted by Brother H. G. Rogers, Brother L. V. Roberts preached and baptized Howard A. Goss and E. N. Bell. There was a great spiritual harvest.

About this time, American farmers were busy contributing to the war efforts. Many boys from Arkansas were destined to see Paris along with Missouri-born General John Joseph (Black Jack) Pershing.

"I sure hope this war don't last so long that Pink will hafta go," Nora, like mothers all across the nation, worried about her son.

In Germany, another young man named Adolf Hitler volunteered for the army. He served as a runner from headquarters to the front lines. Hitler, a loner, received the Iron Cross in December 1912.

Stalin attended a Bolshevik conference at Cracow, in Austrian Poland, in 1912 and then went to Vienna where he wrote *Marxism and the National Problem*.

When he returned to St. Petersburg, Stalin was again arrested and deported to the Turukhan Province in the polar circle. He remained in exile there until the outbreak of the March Revolution of 1917.

Churchill, who had resigned his military commission, was into politics. He had served in the admiralty since 1911; World War I was no surprise to this astute young leader.

As early as 1910, Roosevelt had become involved in politics. With the help of his farsighted Albany, New York, newspaper friend, Louis McHenry Howe, he was now assistant secretary of the United States Navy. FDR was engaged in trying to bring reforms to that institution.

Italy declared war against Austria in May 1915; in September Mussolini was called up and served as a private. Early in 1917 he was wounded and spent some months in a hospital.

American sharecroppers of that day moved frequently. The Nelsons were no exception. Their next home was out of the state of Arkansas, over into northeast Oklahoma. They moved to a place between prosperous, fast growing Bartlesville and Nowata, called Hog Shooter.

Oklahoma, the Sooner state, had been admitted to the Union in 1907 and was experiencing the problems that go with the formation of a new state. It was soon to become nationally known for its oil. Already in 1907, Oklahoma produced forty million barrels annually. This was a long way from its small beginning in oil in 1882 with an annual production of about thirty barrels. Oil fields offered jobs, and Tulsa was soon to have the title, "Tulsa, Oil Capital of the World." Albert Nelson, too, found work in the oil fields with the Kansas Natural Gas Company.

The largest Indian population in the United States was settled in the state of Oklahoma. At one time or another, some sixty-five

tribes were represented. Many of the Cherokees, as well as others of the Five Civilized Nations, had struggled over the infamous *Trail of Tears* from Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama when Andy Jackson insisted that they must be moved further west.

From Missouri into Oklahoma came a family with Cherokee roots. Charley and Ollie Stone and their three children left Cape Fair (near Branson), Missouri, about 1918. Their infant daughter, Edna, never remembered living in Missouri. Charley's great-grandfather, Judge John H. Stone, for whom Stone County, Missouri, was named, was a descendant of William Stone, a Virginian, who had migrated to Missouri in 1883.

Edna's grandmother, Tennessee Clementine Bowlin, was part Cherokee Indian. Her mother, Martha Nance, had been disowned by her father when she fell in love with her penniless schoolteacher, Dow Bowlin. The Nances, well-to-do Indians who had servants, were bitterly opposed to their beloved daughter marrying beneath her status. The schoolteacher had only a small cabin with a dirt floor to offer Martha.

When the cool-headed "perfesser" came for his bride, Mr. Nance and his sharp shooting son were stationed at the gate of the homeplace with their shotguns. With steel in his soul and a deep love for the beautiful Indian girl in his heart, the schoolteacher rode unhesitatingly up to the gate and said, "Howdy," then proceeded straight on to the house.

"Why didn't you shoot 'im, Paw?" inquired Mrs. Nance.

"Well, if he wants her that bad, he can have her," the Indian father said resignedly. But still, the Nances disowned their daughter and dropped her name from the tribe. It was thus impossible for her many descendants ever to verify their Cherokee heritage.

The Nelsons already had kinfolk in Oklahoma. The general store at Hog Shooter was run by Nora Nelson's brother. There was a cracker barrel, an apple barrel, a pickle barrel, and a kerosene barrel. Yard goods sold three yards for a quarter. Shoes, socks, lanterns, plowshares, and horse collars made up a part of the merchandise. The store even featured a drug counter where mothers bought remedies such as Black Draught, Quinine, and Calomel.

But Mrs. Nelson did not patronize the primitive pharmacy. Rather, she leaned heavily on home remedies such as a drop of

kerosene on a teaspoon of sugar for an old hacking cough. All winter she hung evil-smelling asafedita around her children's necks.

"You'll all catch pneumony if you ain't careful," she cautioned as she checked to see if they all had on their long-handled underwear. "That pneumony is a killer. Better give you something to clean yer system out." She took down the old faithful cure-all—castor oil. In the spring she dosed them all good and proper with sulphur and molasses.

At Hog Shooter, Clarence enrolled in the Trustic school. Here the high-spirited, fun-loving youngster met his match. The school teacher, "Miz" Stovall, was a large, muscular woman who was firmly in charge of her class of fifteen children.

"Our other teachers had some trouble making some of them no 'count young 'uns mind," one of the school board members confided when Hannah applied for the school at Hog Shooter.

"Even my own boy needs a firm hand," another board member confessed somewhat shamefacedly. "He's feisty as a banty rooster. I hafta stay onto 'em alla the time."

"It's probably because of the War," another tried to rationalize. "Nobody seems to have no respect for authority. Everybody has just sorta got slack these days and times."

"Well, I believe in law and order," the teacher said firmly in a coarse voice. "I also believe in love of God and country," she added. So "Miz" Stovall took up the challenge of her one room country school. She lined her pupils up and made them march to class with military precision. She even marched the boys across the school yard with sticks for pretend guns on their shoulders. Every morning she opened the class in the el-shaped classroom by reciting the Lord's Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. Then they sang "America the Beautiful," as well as a popular new song with these inspiring lines:

"If you don't like Uncle Sammie,
Then go back to your home o'er the sea.
To the land from whence you came
Whatever be its name,
But don't be a disgrace to your fair countree."

Clarence soon learned to shape up. He could always hear "Miz" Stovall coming as she walked heavily in her high-top button shoes. The rowdy, little, towheaded boy got flogged several times for throwing spitballs. He was a pro at chewing up a whole bunch of spitballs and keeping his ammunition in a paper horn in his desk. Every time the teacher turned her back, he risked firing some of his ammunition. But after several stinging spankings, he was ready to declare peace instead of war.

Although neither Clarence nor his brother, "Pink," were old enough to be involved in World War I, the conflict did touch lives even in remote country places. And "military" discipline of a sort helped shape this young boy's life.

The United States declared war on Germany in March 1917, and General John Joseph (Black Jack) Pershing, after a trip to Europe in June, returned to declare, "We'll need a million men in 1918 and three million in 1919." The Western world was in for an agonizing war. But in Hog Shooter, patriotism ran high, especially at the one room school.

"Them young 'uns are sure learnin' how to read and spell and cipher since Miz Stovall took over our school," one of the community leaders commended.

The little old school was stifling hot in the summer and miserably cold in the winter. The potbellied stove had to be stoked constantly against the frigid temperatures. With an inkwell filled with blue ink on the side, the old desks were heavily decorated with alumni initials. These desks were bolted to the splintery wooden floor. Many a little girl's pigtail got dipped into the ink by a mischievous boy. Books were scarce. A tattered old dictionary and sometimes an old world globe along with a yardstick pointer were the only equipment. Small broken pieces of dusty chalk squeaked against a slate blackboard.

"Teacher, can I dust the erasers?" This was a privilege often sought by the students.

"*May I,* Clarence. No, you may not. Read that last lesson once again, please. And I need a strong, big boy to get a load of wood and another to bring a fresh bucket of water." A community dipper clanged against the zinc bucket as the favored big boy rushed to do an errand for the teacher.

Every morning "books took up" and the day started with the Lord's Prayer and Bible reading. Then everybody stood, saluted, and pledged allegiance to the United States flag:

I pledge allegiance to the flag
Of the United States of America,
And to the Republic
For which it stands,
One nation under God,
Indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Down a little pig trail that ran north of the highway, the Nelsons' old unpainted farmhouse (which still stands) sat alongside Hog Shooter creek about two and a half miles from Trustic school. The little ol' skinny, blue-eyed, sunburnt boy had to stay after school more than once. "Miz" Stovall heard every class recite, regardless of how long it took. Sometimes the stars were out before the Nelson children ever got home.

There were only fifteen or twenty children in the school, so they got quite a lot of "individual" attention. But in time, they began to shape up—even the school board member's bad boy. And the quick-witted Clarence soon learned to enjoy reading, especially history. And history was being made. Leaders, both good and evil, military and clerical, were being developed.

The Nelsons were a hardy, healthy, self-sufficient family. Although they were sharecroppers and never owned their own home, they did have a cow, some hogs, chickens, and a good garden. Store bought bread (light bread) was a treat, but Nora always had a full pantry and set a good table.

"Mabel, bring me a can of tomatoes outta the pantry. I'll put a pot o' soup on," Nora decided early in the morning.

"You boys chop that corn this morning. I've got to do a little plowing," Albert planned the day. "You girls can help your mother here in the house today," he added.

"You girls help me sweep the yard, too," reminded Nora as she put on her sunbonnet and started for the yard. "If you have time, Clarence, them summer weeds are a sight. They're 'bout to get into my flower beds. Sharpen that weed blade good, and clean 'em out for me."

"Aw, Mom, I'm already wore to a frazzle just thinking about all them chores," Clarence answered. But the whole family all worked hard together.

However, life was not all work. Nora herself was quite a tease, and Clarence was always tantalizing his sisters.

"That Clarence! Momma, just look at this stuff he had in his overalls—a katydid, a grasshopper, a June bug, a red worm! It's a wonder he don't have a snake wadded up in his britches," one of the girls complained as she sorted out the wash. "Makes me so mad I could wring his neck."

But Nora let the responsibilities of her large family rest lightly as she herself began to tease. Before long another rowdy romp was going strong, and everybody was laughing.

"Our house was always like a three-ring circus," Brother Nelson recalls.

After supper Nora often got her accordion, and music and singing began. Clarence Nelson learned early that the right song could get a *real* message across. Singing and laughing, telling stories and teasing, life was never dull or dreary to Clarence. He liked people and people liked him.

Elizabeth learned to thump on an old guitar to contribute to the music and singing. Young Clarence, ever quick to learn, was soon a-pickin' and a-singin' as good as his sister. Later he also learned to play the harmonica.

"I declare that boy's a plumb show-off," someone commented.

"He's as feisty as a red ant in a hot skillet," another added.

There was always plenty of good garden "sass" on the dinner table—beans, purple hull peas, early speckled butter beans, corn on the cob, turnips, new potatoes, and so many greens that Clarence declared that he had to wear a rag soaked in kerosene around his ankles to keep the cutworms off!

Year by year this skinny, towheaded boy grew, always displaying a keen sense of wit and humor. Because of his humble origin, he also developed a deep sense of appreciation for what was real and genuine. He scorned the counterfeit and the fake. With good country boy sense, he soon learned to note the sham and the bogus. Confidence and a firm belief in his own ability to survive were also born in the struggle of those early years. A leader of

men was being molded in the simple country home.

The Nelsons were still living at Hog Shooter when the Armistice was signed, November 11, 1919, at the end of World War I. The oldest Nelson boy, James, "Pink," thought surely he was going to be drafted into the war, but everybody was relieved and happy that the dreadful conflict was finally over. The doughboys had seen "Gay Paree," and they were quite thrilled to be going back to farms, small towns, and cities where they could get back into the mainstream of the American way of life. But many harsh hours were still in store.

In 1918 the third most devastating epidemic ever to hit mankind struck America. The first case of influenza was reported at Camp Funston (part of Fort Riley), Kansas, on March 11, 1918. By noon of the same day, one hundred and seven cases had been reported.

In Eureka Springs, Arkansas, several Pentecostal leaders had gathered for a special meeting. Among them were Daniel C. O. Opperman, M. E. Mills, William Booth Clibborn, Brother and Sister W. L. Stallones, W. R. Pair, A. O. Moore, Mother Barnes, A. D. Urshan, Arthur Duck, Brother and Sister J. O. Johnson, Sam Nalley, Odell Cagle, Claiborne Williams, and Mary and Sybil Kraus. (Brother Williams had not yet met the Nelsons, but their lives were soon to intertwine.) In the middle of this special meeting, about forty people were stricken with the dreadful influenza at one time—preachers, wives, and children together with workers.

"Worst Epidemic Ever To Strike Oklahoma!" reported the state newspapers The situation was worsened because more than a third of the state's physicians and an even larger proportion of its trained nurses were still with the troops in training camps or in Europe. More than 125,000 cases of influenza were reported in the state. Oklahoma Health Commission rules closed all churches, schools, movie houses, and other public places, and forbade gatherings of more than twelve people, even for funerals. In some Oklahoma cities, all businesses were closed except food stores, bakeries, and laundries. An estimated seven thousand deaths resulted in the state from the terrible epidemic.

In the Nelson family, the father, Albert Nelson, was struck by

the terrible flu. At that time antibiotics were unknown. Most doctors were only prescribing quinine, which had little effect on the vomiting or the raging fever which was followed by clammy chills.

"Albert, I'm gonna fix you a nice mustard plaster," Nora declared as she prepared the raw leaf mustard ointment and bound the odiferous poultice to her husband's chest. He buttoned up his coat and started the long walk to the oil fields, but he soon had to turn back.

"Nora, this stuff has blistered me! Lookie here!" The "cure" had only caused a further complication. In time, however, the good nursing or perhaps even the mustard plaster seemed to help, and eventually Albert recovered from the frightening illness that had taken so many lives.

The Nelsons were relieved that they had no further complications, and no one else in the family had a severe case of the flu. There was much talk in the community of death and dying from the terrible epidemic.

"That Little Rock paper, *The Arkansas Democrat,* says there's hundreds dying up north," one neighbor reported. "They are just tagging bodies and covering 'em with a steam shovel in one town."

"They say the stuff is raging all over the world," another declared.

Many of these shocking rumors proved to be true. The epidemic was worldwide except for the tiny island of Trist da Cunha in the extreme South Atlantic. It was finally reported that twenty-two million people died in this global epidemic during 1918 and 1919.

The young assistant secretary of the Navy, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, made an extended tour of naval bases overseas. While on this trip, he also contacted the dreadful influenza. Rich and poor, national leaders and obscure sharecroppers, all fell victim. In Boston, the wife of a Pentecostal preacher, Hattie Cook, was one of the grim fatalities.

Small Oklahoma town newspapers may not have carried another news event that occurred on the night of July 29-30, 1918, but it left its mark on world conditions. For some time, the members of the royal family of Russia's tsar had been in hiding,

but on this dreadful night they were all butchered by revolvers and bayonets.

European leaders, especially royalty, were appalled. But the British and French electors wanted their boys home after the long, devastating war. They organized labor in sympathy with the "workers" and said, "Hands off Russia!" So the Communist leader, Lenin, felt sure that the time was ripe for his party to move.

In January of 1919, the *Bartlesville Morning Examiner* carried the news of the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The Women's Christian Temperance Union, and all the churches and ministers, rejoiced. John D. Rockefeller, a wealthy businessman, contributed heavily to the prohibition cause, as well as Pierre du Pont and S. S. Kresge. Only in Finland and the U.S.A. was national prohibition ever attempted.

"We've got Demon Rum on the run," the temperance leaders exulted.

But, unfortunately, the morals and life and times of the Arkansas people, as well as most other Americans, was not quite so simple. Moonshining and rum-running began to flourish. Sheriffs on very small salaries and with no other noticeable means of income began to drive better cars and wear good clothes. Beer joints and honky-tonks prospered in the rural areas, and speakeasies sprang up in the cities. It was said that Al Capone made sixty million dollars as a bootlegger. Country boys always managed to find a quart of liquor to take to a party or a square dance.

Clarence Nelson, like many other teenagers, also began to drink a little. But he was always careful not to let his mother and dad know. Although they were not strong church folk, the Nelsons certainly did not approve of drinking moonshine.

In March of 1919, Mussolini founded a new political movement, Fasci di Combattimento (national socialism). He stood as a Fascist candidate for Parliament but won only a few votes.

About this time, Hitler left the German army and joined the tiny German Workers' party in Munich.

The last fires of the great war in Europe were dying. The Poles captured Kiev, Russia, in May, but were soon driven back. In

October, armistice was signed between Poland and Russia.

In November of 1920, the civil war in Russia between the Whites and the Communists ended in a Communist victory.

On June 6, 1919, while they were living at Hog Shooter, Nora Nelson gave birth to her last child, a little boy. The cold realities of life and death struck the family, especially Clarence, when the little boy lived only a few days. (There had been one other baby girl who had died in infancy, but this was before Clarence's birth and he knew little about this death.)

Although the last baby lived only a few days and later Clarence could not even remember his name, he did vividly recall the harsh rat-a-tat-tat of a hammer as a tiny coffin was built by hand. Neighbors dug a small grave in a lonely country cemetery. Children were indeed a heritage of the Lord, and the Nelsons, especially Clarence, were devastated by the loss of their last little boy.

That chilly, sad day, Clarence was sober, his face white as a bedsheet. He was still young, but he realized that there was something dreadfully final about death. By the graveside, an old gray-haired neighbor with a mustache, Mr. Briggs, thumbed through a battered songbook. Then, lifting his quavery voice, he led the few friends and the family in a hymn.

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Ev'rything to God in pray'r!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Ev'rything to God in pray'r!

The death of the Nelson infant was probably little noted beyond the immediate neighborhood. But a few years before this, the newspaper had been full of another tragedy—the sinking of the splendid White Star liner, the *Titanic*. Shortly before midnight on April 14, 1912, this mighty ship struck an iceberg, ripping a three-hundred-foot gash in its right side. The "unsinkable" *Titanic* sank about 2:20 A.M. the next morning. One thousand five hundred and

thirteen persons drowned. But Clarence Nelson could hardly comprehend the death of his tiny baby brother, let alone all those who died in the Titanic tragedy. He was just beginning to get an inkling of the meaning of the poem:

> *Life is real and life is earnest*
> *And the grave is not its goal.*
> *Dust thou art to dust returnest*
> *Was not spoken of the soul.*

Grandmother Burrow (Mary Anne [Polly] Clanton) came to comfort her daughter, Nora, once or twice. Clarence was astonished when the tall, yet stooped, old woman lit up her corncob pipe after supper. Grandmother Burrow was the only grandparent Clarence ever remembered seeing. Although his father had worked for a while with the railroad, the Nelsons traveled very little.

From Hog Shooter, the Nelsons moved over to the little town of Big Heart, Oklahoma. The town had been named for the Osage chief, James Big Heart. (In 1921 the town was renamed Barnsdall.) It was a hard time for sharecroppers, and Albert's main work was with Manhattan Oil Company. Postwar prices of farm products had collapsed, and Clarence was beginning to be more aware of the terrible struggle a farmer had just to survive.

On May 5, 1921, Mussolini, editor of the Fascist newspaper, *Il Popula d' Italia,* along with thirty-five other Fascists, was elected to Parliament.

At this time, Hitler became president of the Nazi party. His power was unlimited. With a unique talent for magnetism and mass leadership, he was totally dedicated to his cause. Hitler neither smoked nor drank (not even tea or coffee). Nor did he take any interest in clothes or personal comfort, although he rebelled against routine or regular work.

In Russia, Lenin was in charge. Now no political opinions, let alone organization, other than Communism were allowed. Lenin was head of the Central Committee and more rigidly dictatorial than any tsar had ever been.

In August of 1921, while on a vacation at his family cottage on Campobello Island, New Brunswick, Canada, Franklin Roosevelt

was severely stricken with polio. He refused, however, to give way to depression. Within two weeks, although he was in much pain, he was writing political letters. Mrs. Roosevelt was sent to political gatherings to act as his eyes and ears. Under Louis Howe's expert guidance, Eleanor Roosevelt became an effective worker and speaker.

Not only polio, but also accidents, happened to young and old, rich and poor.

In Big Heart, the Nelsons moved into a small house not too far from the school. Clarence was in the eighth grade at this time—he was growing up—about fourteen years old. For some forgotten reason he left school early on this cold winter day and headed for home. Suddenly a man dashed out of a nearby house.

"What in the world? That man is on fire!" Clarence raced toward the scene as the man's brother ran out screaming, "Lord help us! My brother is burning up." The flaming man staggered and fell to the ground, burnt to a crisp. His body was hardly recognizable as a human being. His shoes had to be cut off. Right then and there Clarence realized not only the finality of death but also what it meant to burn to death. "I sure don't want to go to hell and burn forever," he declared soberly, almost in shock from the horrible sight. Death, tragedy, and change are a part of life.

In the spring of 1922, Lenin and Stalin attended the eleventh Party Congress. It was to be Lenin's last congress. At this meeting, Stalin was appointed secretary general of the Communist Party. It was a turning point in this ambitious man's life. He was a far way from the young theological seminary student who had attended the Orthodox seminary in Tiflis in the Russian province of Georgia.

On October 28, 1922, Mussolini led a so-called "March on Rome" and King Victor Emmanuel III entrusted to him the task of forming a new cabinet. Within three days, Mussolini had concentrated all power in his own hands and eliminated anyone who showed an inclination to independence.

In the religious world, the Pentecostal movement was growing. In November 1922, several Pentecostal ministers met together in Arkansas and called a Southern Conference for the purpose of prayer and fasting to find the will and purpose of God. Young

Ralph Cook, from Boston, and his Louisiana wife, Nellie, were hosts to this great conference. After hours and days of prayers, fasting, and great humbling of themselves, these servants of God heard from heaven and left to continue the task of spreading the gospel of the message as preached by Peter in Acts chapter two. Though a small group, these dedicated and devoted people were destined to have a place in the world.

In Oklahoma, Clarence Nelson had finished the eighth grade. Since there was no local high school, he wanted to repeat the eighth grade just to learn a little more history. "I might as well go on back to school, Daddy. There ain't nothin' else to do," Clarence reasoned. "Besides that, I love history."

"Well, it don't make me no never mind. Go on back if you wanta. Leastways you'll stay outta trouble whilst you're in school," agreed his father.

The small one and two teacher country schools offered little insofar as extras. There was no library, and Clarence dearly loved to read. He was forever borrowing a western magazine from some friend.

Always a tease and a cutup, Clarence had also begun to develop quite a temper. More than once, his sharp tongue sent one of his sisters crying to his mother.

"Momma, Clarence hurt my feelings! He blessed me out good and proper just 'cause I mislaid his ole western magazine."

But Clarence still teased and entertained his family and friends far more than he lost his temper and tormented them. The plain country upbringing that he had enjoyed had left its lasting imprint. Though he was no rebel or revolutionary, he was destined to develop lasting convictions and an ability to recognize "truth" when he heard it. But for the time being, he was still into pranks.

In Barnsdall, a family by the name of Grant had two boys who were chums of Clarence's. They also had goats that ran loose.

"There's a man up here who works in the oil fields that's got a big garden, and his watermelons are about ripe. Now if anyone sees us, we're a-huntin goats," they planned. So they sneaked into the garden, spied a big 'un, grabbed it and ran. They carried the melon to the edge of the woods.

Suddenly a voice rang out, "What are you doing, boys?"

With a big slab of watermelon in his hand, juice dripping off his chin, Clarence looked up, blue eyes wide and innocent. "Have you seen anything of Grant's goats?" he asked. He thought sure the man would tell his folks and he would be in deep trouble. But instead, the man just muttered something about "triflin' young 'uns," warned them severely about "messin' 'round in his garden anymore," then left.

Clarence found out quickly, "Be sure your sins will find you out." For days he worried for fear his folks would find out, and his conscience bothered him. Sin was sin in those days and usually dealt with promptly and severely.

"I'd ruther sleep with a wet dog as a guilty conscience," he decided.

While Clarence was living at Barnsdall, he started carrying the *Bartlesville Morning Examiner*. Long before daylight and schooltime, he walked a mile and a half to the top of the hill where the truck threw off the roll of papers.

One morning, the paper carried the story of officers who had fanned out through the Osage hills. One had met an outlaw. Both men had rifles. The officer went past him, then stopped and said, "You must be the man I'm hunting." The outlaw leveled his rifle and shot the officer. But when the lawman fell to his knees, he managed to pump two or three bullets into his attacker—both lay dead. Other officers heard the shots and converged on the gruesome scene. After surveying the carnage, they called the local hearse from Barnsdall and took the officer in. But the outraged lawmen did not bother to give the dead crook much attention.

"John Burrow's got his old flatbed truck here," one noted. So they turned to Clarence's uncle who lived at Camp 284, north of Barnsdall. They threw the criminal's body onto the back of the truck and hauled him to the morgue. Clarence Nelson, the newsboy, learned early that "crime does not pay."

At Barnsdall, some boys who lived near the Nelsons had horses. Some of these creatures were so poor you could count every rib. "I'm a-gonna ketch a horse and ride in to the show," decided Clarence Nelson.

The other boys not only had horses, but they also had beautiful saddles and bridles. Of course, Clarence had no saddle at all.

Ever resourceful, he decided to fill a tow sack with hay. Carefully, he tied the tow sack onto the back of the old nag he had caught. Then he climbed on the horse. "Feels almost as good as a saddle," he announced as he galloped off to town to go to the show.

But coming back was another story. With an awkward, stiff-legged gait, a grinning Clarence led the horse all the way home.

Although the Nelsons were still extremely short of cash money, they did manage to get together a little change to send Clarence to the movies. The Saturday afternoon westerns featured Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson, and William S. Hart. Clarence absorbed not only the plot but every action. Then, coming out of the show, he bought a Sunday paper. "The girls will like the funnies," he thought. When he finally got home, there was a second show as Clarence told and retold the entire western story and acted it all out. How the girls laughed!

"You're as good as a show yourself, Clarence."

"He's a three-ring circus," another remarked.

While the Nelsons lived in Oklahoma, they returned to Arkansas one summer on vacation. Albert Nelson parked his old 1923 Chevrolet halfway up the mountain, and the boys and their father, together with some cousins, walked up to a favorite swimming hole. Quickly, they shucked off their clothes and dived into the cold, crystal-clear mountain stream.

Just over the swimming hole, in a tall oak tree, hung a large wasps' nest. Without thinking of the disastrous results, Clarence sailed a rock into the air, hitting the nest squarely in the middle. ZZZZZZZZZZZ! The wasps were infuriated. Trying to attack their enemies, they hovered all over the top of the clear water while the boys hid out under the surface. When a head had to surface for a breath of air, it was promptly and viciously stung.

The whole bunch almost drowned before the wasps finally buzzed on off.

"Clarence, you smart aleck! You liked to drowned us all. I sure hope you have learned to leave a wasps' nest alone," scolded Albert.

While the Nelsons were living in Barnsdall, Clarence broke his arm. There was a long, slick slide on the school playground,

Clarence's favorite piece of play equipment. But instead of climbing up the ladder properly, he tried to improve his skills by running up the slick side of the slide. He ran as far as he could and grabbed for the top of the slide, but his feet slipped out from under him and he toppled right over the side, breaking his arm and pulling the ligaments loose in his leg.

But Clarence didn't let a broken arm hinder him much. When he dressed up in his knickers wearing kneesocks and with his arm in a sling, he still cut quite a dashing figure.

"Clarence is growing up. He'll be wanting long pants soon," observed Nora.

"Yeah, he's about to get too big for his britches, all right," added Albert.

In 1923, across the world from Oklahoma, an ailing, dying Lenin was afraid that his Russian protégé, young Stalin, was getting too big for his britches, also. In his last will, Lenin advised his followers to remove Stalin from his office as General Secretariat. "He is rude and inclined to abuse power." But after Lenin's death in January 1924, Stalin, supported by his colleagues Zinoviev and Kamenev, retained his office and began to plan to gain even more power.

In November 1923, Hitler also made a play to grab power from the existing government in Munich. He was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison, but he served only nine months. During that nine months in prison, Hitler wrote his extraordinary book, *Mein Kampf*.

Hard times and severe economic stress ruled in American small towns, though this was the beginning of the Roaring Twenties—the days of the flappers, the bootleggers, and the quick buck. But large families in small towns never locked their doors, always paid their bills, worked from "can" 'til "can't," and raised their "young 'uns" right. Clarence Nelson was just one of many such young 'uns.

Chapter Three

Discovering Jesus

From Barnsdall, Oklahoma, the Nelsons moved south of Gentry, Arkansas, not far from Siloam Springs. There, in the edge of the Ozarks, they raised tomatoes for the Henbest Canning Company. While living in Gentry, Albert, Nora, the three girls who were still at home, and eventually even Clarence worked for this canning company.

By this time Clarence was about seventeen. He was quite a showpiece at local play parties, picking his guitar and calling square dances. His sister, Opal, and her husband, Veral Crowder, helped with the playing with a guitar and a violin.

Late one afternoon, the excited teenage boy came leaping up on the porch and into the house calling, "Momma, Momma, I got me a job! I got me a job! I'm a-gonna go to work Monday morning for Mr. Allen down to the sawmill!"

So Clarence began his work with the Allen Sawmill. He made ten cents an hour and worked a twelve-hour day. It was during the 1930s, before a child labor law was passed. (This company later became the Allen Manufacturing and Canning Factory, a large vegetable canning corporation with eight or ten plants now in several states.)

Clarence bought his first car, a 1926 Model T Ford, while he worked at the sawmill for Earl Allen, a jolly, red headed Irishman.

He was supposed to cut twenty cords of wood to pay for the car, but before he cut the wood, he got sick and tired of changing flats and buying gas, so he traded the car to another man on the job.

"Woodcutting is not for me," he decided as he struck out afoot for home. It was fifteen long years before Clarence Nelson ever tried to buy another car.

Next, the Nelsons moved west of Gentry to a 640-acre ranch, a whole section of the old Tom Carl Ranch. Pink and some of Clarence's sisters had by this time left home and married. Clarence and Opal got the main share of the chores. Long before daylight, they milked eighteen cows, and by the time the sun was up, Clarence was plowing with either the old double shovel or the turning plow and a-hollerin' at the slowpoke mules.

"A mule will work ten years just to get a chance to kick you in the shins one time," he declared.

Occasionally, he got a little pocket money when he played his guitar for a dance.

None of the Nelsons were going to church. Clarence, like many other country boys, was beginning to smoke and cuss as well as drink a little moonshine.

Prohibition had not ended liquor drinking at all. It just opened the way for bootleggers, who saw to it that country boys had a source for their drinking. However, when Clarence came in from carousing around at night, he was mighty careful to slip off his shoes. He dared not let his mother and father know that he had been messing around with moonshine. They were good moral folk and did not hold with that kind of behavior.

Once in a while, a preacher would conduct church services in a schoolhouse. Although Clarence felt like he was a wicked sinner, he always tried to go to these services.

The most peculiar thing happened one day when Clarence was following an old turning plow down a corn row behind the team of mules.

"What in the world?" he wondered. There, plain as day, he saw a huge congregation of people. And who was that in front of them? Was it Clarence Nelson? Was he preaching to a big crowd of people? "What do you mean, Lord? Am I seeing a vision?" Hot tears coursed down his sunburnt, dusty cheeks. As he cried, he

began to preach all by himself, following those mules down that corn row. For at least an hour, he felt a warm glow and carefully refrained from hollering and swearing at the stubborn mules. He wondered about the vision that he had seen. Or was it a vision? Like Mary of old, he told no one of this strange happening. He just kept pondering it in his own heart. "Was that really real?" questioned the practical, country-raised boy who wanted no part of anything that was not genuine. He had no aspirations or burning ambitions to become even a small-time leader. He was hardly aware of country leaders and knew nothing of "movers and shakers" in world affairs.

Okies and Arkies were just plain ole real people, living in a real world that certainly was not always easy. True, the United States had helped whip Kaiser Bill and these were the Roaring Twenties, but life in remote country towns was still quite hard for poor folks.

Clarence was the only boy at home, and occasionally he got a glimpse of the responsibility that weighed on his father's broad, strong shoulders. "I don't know how my dad managed even to feed all of us," he later wondered. Nora and Albert both worked hard, but they also enjoyed their family. A responsible father and a cheerful mother were blessings that not all—even famous people—had. Teenaged Clarence especially enjoyed play parties and cutting up and showing out, but he was growing up. Physically, socially, mentally, emotionally, and soon the most important of all—spiritually—C. A. Nelson was maturing.

Occasionally, there would be a box supper at the schoolhouse for the young folk. The girls would carefully decorate a box, making it all fancy. Many times, they covered a shoe box with crepe paper, ruffling the edges and tying a big pink or red bow on the end. The boys were not supposed to know which box belonged to which girl. Although he did not bid on the boxes, Clarence enjoyed watching the other big boys as they tried to outbid one another on a box that they thought belonged to a pretty girl who was also a good cook.

Once at a box supper that he attended, someone baked a pie crust, filled it with cotton, then carefully beat up egg whites really stiff to make a tasty, sweet meringue. When the unlucky fellow who had paid for that box tried to cut his pie, everyone laughed,

"You sure got fooled!" "Yup, he sure got took." "That warn't no real pie at all; you got hornswoggled."

But Clarence Nelson was rarely ever fooled in things that really mattered. He had an eye for the genuine, and God had something genuine, really real, in store for this backwoods country boy.

About this time, a new preacher came to the West Point schoolhouse north of Siloam Springs. "Mom, did you hear about the 'holy roller' meetin'?" Clarence questioned.

"Yeah, they tell me that Sister Cotton is a real prayin' woman."

"Is that her that moved in that ole house 'bout a mile down the road? Musta' been her that I heard prayin' the other day when I was plowin' that back field. I tell you that was real prayin'!"

After that, Clarence heard Sister Cotton praying several times. Her daily prayer hour seemed to correspond with his plowing time, and her voice carried loud and clear. Was it the Lord wafting those fervent prayers to the ears of the curious teenaged boy? It had a ring of *reality* to his young mind.

"I hear the Adams' are a-gonna get us a preacher to hold a meetin' in that old schoolhouse," Albert announced one night at the dinner table. "A man by the name of C. P. Williams outta Tulsa, and he's bringin' some other preacher from Tennessee, they say. I think his name is Gentry. They was passing out a tract that this feller Gentry wrote . . . somethin' about, *Buy the truth and sell it not*."

"I'm a-gonna go to that meetin'," Clarence decided. To the naive country boy, the old schoolhouse was a pretty sizeable place (about 18' by 40'). From the first night of the meeting, curious folks packed the schoolhouse. Many had come to see the show, but a few, honest-hearted country people with a sincere desire to follow God also came.

Sister Cotton's daily prayer life paid off. That first night the glory of the Lord came down. The minister preached with heartfelt anointing as he told once again the sweet old story of a Savior who died on Calvary for sinners. The reality of the message rang true to Clarence Nelson.

"That's me," Clarence cried. "I'm just a no good sinner." He made his way to the mourner's bench and really repented, "God, forgive me for my wicked temper. God, forgive me and help me

to clean up." He vowed then to quit his cussing, his cigarette smoking and never to touch moonshine again. That night Clarence did not have to slip in the house so that his mother would not smell liquor on his breath.

Turning points! All lives have them, including world leaders and insignificant country boys working for ten cents an hour. "There is a tide in the affairs of men . . ." Brother Gentry threw out a lifeline that night and Clarence Nelson eagerly grabbed hold, and it made a lifelong difference for not only him but hundreds of others. His world would always be a small world—mostly around northwest Arkansas and northeast Oklahoma—but doesn't the Bible say, "who hath despised the day of small things?"

The cussing and drinking were fairly easy to lay down, but for two weeks, Clarence struggled with the nicotine addiction. A chain-smoking cattleman who owned a produce store in Siloam Springs often came out to the Nelson's farm to do business with Clarence's father. It had been a week since Clarence had a smoke, and he was getting very nervous, chewing elm switches and pieces of grass, as well as his own fingernails.

"If he offers me a cigarette today, I'm a-gonna take it," Clarence was weakening. But he soon found that the Lord never allowed him to be tempted above that which he could bear.

"Clarence, I want you to go down on the west forty. There's some timber down there I want you to see 'bout. Also some of our cows got out of that back pasture, and I want you to walk the fence row. Find the break and fix it," his father instructed.

"Thank you, Jesus," Clarence breathed, "Now I won't have to breathe old man Holt's* smoke." It had been sort of rainy all day—one shower right after another. Clarence's heart was heavy, and when he got to the stand of timber, he knelt down under one of the trees to pray. "O God, help me to live right. Help me to give up them stinkin' old cigarettes. I need You, Jesus." Suddenly the sun came out bright through the rain clouds, and at the same time the glory of the Lord shone down on the earnest, sincere young lad's soul.

He was just a country boy, destined never to achieve world-wide fame. But the God of glory knew where he was and who he was and how to help him with every temptation. "Praise God! I

know You are gonna help me!" Clarence rejoiced in his newfound faith. God was indeed a mighty God and a sure Deliverer. It seemed that the very trees lit up with the glory of the Lord, and from that day on, Clarence never had a desire for another cigarette nor another drink of liquor. He didn't even want to go to any more dances or play for them, either. God was already working a great change in Clarence Nelson's life. He had found something *real*!

Influences and relationships also help or hinder any life. Mussolini's father was an atheist and a revolutionary from a part of Italy which seemed to breed revolutions. Stalin was expelled from seminary and joined the Communists. But when Clarence Nelson was a very young man, he met C. P. Williams, a Pentecostal of leadership ability. Brother Williams had received the Holy Ghost in 1913 and had been ordained by Brother Samuel C. McClain in 1913. Because he knew Brother Adams, Brother Williams and Brother Gentry held the revival in Arkansas. Later Brother Williams declared that he had felt the Arkansas revival was a failure. But not too long after that their paths crossed again.

Although he was a changed boy in many ways, C. A. Nelson always retained his infectious sense of humor. The work of God is serious business and requires sacrifice and dedication, but there are also many amusing things along the way.

Soon after he received the Holy Ghost, Brother Nelson found something funny!

When he was in a cottage prayer meeting, an enthusiastic young preacher told him, "I've found a beautiful Scripture in the book of Pal-sums."

Brother Nelson hunted that evening all through the Bible hunting the book of "Pal-sums." At last the light dawned, "He means Psalms. How dumb can a man get?"

"Who's the dumbest? A man who mispronounces a word or a man who hunts all through the Bible looking for the book of 'Pal-sums'?" whispered the Lord.

"Green? I was so green that if they put me out to pasture, the cows would've eat me," Brother Nelson recalls. "But everybody else was green, too. I guess the Lord just used a greenhorn to

reach those ole hillbillies with the gospel."

The Bible became his constant companion. Even some young Americans of that day were being swayed by the *Communist Manifesto* and Hitler's *Mein Kampf,* but simple country folk like Clarence Nelson were reading the letters that Paul had written in jail. They were especially thrilled by the action in the book of Acts, Clarence Nelson wanted a Bible so badly that he had sold his best hound dog to buy a big Bible! With his Bible under his arm and his guitar in a flour sack, he walked miles night after night just to be in a cottage prayer meeting.

*Not his real name.

Chapter Four

Courtin' Time

Young Clarence truly prayed through to a real conversion. Later Brother Gentry from Tennessee baptized him in the name of the Lord Jesus. Clarence earnestly sought the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It was two long years, however, before he finally received it.

Meanwhile he faithfully attended every cottage prayer meeting in the area. Brother Elmer Adams and his wife, Lydia, and their son, H. P., took a deep interest in young Nelson and encouraged him to work and witness for God.

At a cottage prayer meeting one unforgettable night, several sinners were present. The anointing of the Lord came on young Nelson. As he recalls the occasion, his comment is, "I just blanked out to my surroundings, and when I came to, my hands were up. I thought I was going to be raptured." He had preached mightily, and Sister Adams gave an altar call. Some said at this time that he had spoken in tongues. Although it was a marvelous experience in the Lord, young Brother Nelson knew little of what had actually transpired.

"On the way home that night, my feet would hardly touch the ground," Brother Nelson recalls. "For about three days and nights, I walked in heavenly places."

In those days, folks refrained from saying, "You got it! You got it!" Since he was not sure that he had spoken in tongues, young Brother Nelson continued to seek earnestly for the Holy Ghost although he definitely knew that he had had a tremendous experience in the Lord.

There was no church nor pastor in the area, so Brother Adams continued for several months to tutor his young friend. "The Lord is coming soon, Clarence! We must work and witness for Him." As for Clarence Nelson, his whole heart and soul were in the work of the Lord. He felt surely that the Lord was coming. "I am sure we don't have long to work."

So Clarence Nelson plunged enthusiastically into the work of God. In those days, Pentecostal preachers had rotten eggs and rocks thrown at them. Clarence Nelson also endured this, but nothing hindered him.

While Brother Nelson was at Brother Adams' house in Siloam Springs, his host suggested, "Let's go visit this sick old man, Frank Trammel. I think he might come to church." But, to their chagrin, the unbelieving son of the man met them at the door. "Dad is too sick. Don't you all pray."

"Humph," said Brother Adams, "I have known folks to pray for the dead." But the two men just visited awhile, then left.

When Brother Nelson was just beginning to consecrate to the work of the Lord, he stayed with Elmer and Lydia Adams. A preacher by the name of Ridgeway was also staying there. A brush arbor had been erected. Brother Ridgeway preached, and Brother Nelson picked his guitar, preaching just a little and doing the chores.

"If them preachers think they built that brush arbor for me, they might as well tear it down and go on home." Mr. Trammel sent word that he would have nothing to do with Christianity. His wife had been baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost, as had several of his children, but this big man thought he was tough and didn't need God.

"I am not going to eat or drink until that man gives his heart to God or until God lifts this burden for him from my heart," Brother Ridgeway promised the Lord. Brother Nelson did not feel that strongly about it. But the fast was on for the rest of them. On the

second day of that fast, they went down into the woods to pray. It was a beautifully clear spring day, following a rainy, stormy night.

Suddenly, Brother Ridgeway screamed. He looked up wildly and cried, "Look at that fire! My God, look at that fire." Brother Nelson didn't see a thing, but Brother Ridgeway wept and screamed for several minutes. Then he began to smile and laugh and worship and praise God. "Look at that beautiful city," he pointed. But Brother Nelson could see nothing. God had showed Brother Ridgeway the nations going to hell, screaming as they went into the fire. He had seen them, whole nations of people. Then God let him have just a glimpse of heaven.

"I'll never forget this," thought Brother Nelson.

They went in then and sat down to eat. Brother Ridgeway was in the living room reading the Scripture. Unexpectedly, a door burst open and a fifteen-year-old girl burst in crying, "Come quick, Momma is dying."

The preachers jumped up and ran to crank Brother Adam's old Model T Ford. By the time they got it started and turned around and chugged down the road through the woods to the house, the girl had beat them there. They filed into the house and saw that, indeed, Sister Trammel appeared to be dead. "If I ever looked at a dead person, I looked at one then," Brother Nelson recalls. He did not know what to do. But when old Brother Adams came in, he began to rebuke death in the name of Jesus. Then Mr. Trammel rushed in, wringing his hands and crying, "Do something! Do something!"

Brother Ridgeway offered Mr. Trammel no sympathy. He simply commanded, "Get down on your knees. Repent of your sins." Trammel fell on his knees as though hit in the head with a stick.

While they prayed, the preachers went over and laid hands on the woman. Miraculously, God raised her up. About the time Brother Trammel prayed through, she was up. What a shouting time of victory they had! Mr. Trammel was baptized in Jesus' name the very next day. "The miracles we saw. God is great."

During those days, Pentecost was young and leaders were developing. But leaders were emerging in other fields as well.

Earlier in 1927, to the amazement of all Americans, especially country people, a tall, young, blonde Swede from

Wisconsin, Charles A. Lindbergh, actually flew through the heavens. He made his famous solo flight to Paris, France. After this, there was even more preaching about the signs of the times. In 1932 Albert E. Brumley wrote the gospel hymn, "I'll Fly Away," expressing the hope and desires of the saints of the 'thirties to leave a weary, depressed world for a better one far beyond the blue.

After Charles A. Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic to Paris, he returned to America aboard a ship. While touring the states, he landed in Tulsa. Brother Nelson, along with several other friends, went to Tulsa to see this great hero. In Lindbergh's autobiography he tells of the tour.

"I returned to the United States and landed in every state in the Union, spoke in scores of cities, dropped messages on still more. I inspected sites for airports, talked to engineers and politicians and tried to convince everyone who would listen that aviation had a brilliant future in which America should lead."

Little did the young country boy from Arkansas or anyone else dream of the tremendous future that aviation did have—all the way to the moon. Nor did Clarence Nelson dream of the future of small, storefront Pentecostal missions.

Down on Barren Fork Creek, between Westville and Stillwell in Adair County, Oklahoma, lived Albert Nelson's youngest sister, Annie Winkle. Aunt Annie and Uncle Ed attended church at Wright's Chapel schoolhouse, which was down in a creek bottom under an elm tree. Aunt Annie had received the Holy Ghost, but she had not been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Uncle Ed, who had been in some trouble, was trying to live right.

A lady preacher, Sister Small, held services at the schoolhouse. Aunt Annie, a trinitarian, did not know that Clarence had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus though she had heard that he was preaching. She told Sister Small about her "preacher" nephew. After some time, Clarence went over to visit the folks on Barren Fork Creek.

"Clarence, why don't you preach for us at the schoolhouse tonight?" Sister Small invited.

Clarence was still bewildered. He had had a tremendous experience with the Lord. He knew that it was really real, but he was

not absolutely sure that he had spoken in tongues. He was still seeking a "know-so" experience.

"Well, Sister Small, I'll try. If God anoints me, we'll have church," Clarence agreed. So Clarence Nelson held his first revival at Wright's Chapel school in April 1932.

He noticed some new young people in the service, including Ralph and Edna Stone.

In a crude setting in the rural schoolhouse, lighted not only by gasoline lanterns (there were none of Edison's incandescent lights in that area) but also by the light of the gospel, these simple country folk gathered to hear a young man preach about a Holy Ghost experience which he was not even sure he had received. But he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that it was real.

Again, freedom and anointing came. Here was a young man who was not even sure he had received the Holy Ghost; neither was he a pastor. His education was limited, but he had a desire to be used of God. And indeed, God did use Clarence Nelson. He preached with freedom and anointing, then gave the altar call. Even though he was the preacher, C. A. Nelson was one of the first to kneel at the altar. Many others received the Holy Ghost and spoke fluently in tongues, but not Clarence Nelson.

"Why, God? Why do they get the Holy Ghost and not me? If I had not been here to preach, they would not have heard the Word!" Clarence Nelson questioned, but all he learned was to humble himself under the mighty hand of God. Although, in later years, he was to be in demand to preach revivals and camp meetings, Brother Nelson always remained conscious of his humble beginnings and desired only that which was really real.

Meeting after meeting he preached. God anointed him; souls were saved, filled with the Holy Ghost, and every need was met. Although, as had been taught earlier by the Parham group of Pentecostals, no public offerings were taken; neither was there any mention of needs.

It was absolutely necessary to lean on Jesus. All around them businesses failed. The farmers, particularly the sharecroppers, were almost destitute.

"But the *Arkansas Democrat* says things are even worse in the cities. One family lived on potatoes for eleven days. . . ."

"Yeah, there was another story about some woman who borrowed fifty cents and bought stale bread at three and a half cents a loaf, and that was all they had to eat for several days. . . ."

People had to trust God for everything, including the food they ate. Although at this time Clarence was not aware of it, God had been in the supply business for His Holy Ghost-filled people since the turn of the century. Ethel Goss, in her book, *Winds of God*, told of a testing time late in 1905 when a group of workers in Galveston, Texas, together with Howard A. Goss, subsisted for several days on raw turnips. They did not even have fuel to cook with.

"When mealtime came, we would kneel around the dining table and have a period of prayer and worship, in which we returned thanks to the Lord for His love and care for us. There on each plate would be a raw turnip which we ate with grateful hearts. For eight days raw turnips made up our entire menu. The love, joy, and fire with which our hearts were flooded made up for such slight things as lack of food or warmth."

Then Brother Goss added, "From that day to this I appreciate a raw turnip as it never fails to remind me of this time of great spiritual blessing. I have since found, from a standpoint of health, that a raw turnip diet is excellent."

In the October 7, 1931, issue of *Business Week,* an article told of one hundred thousand applications for a job opportunity in Russia with the Amberg company. About eighty-five percent of the applications were from Americans. All but ten of the states were represented! Banks folded, corporations were in deep trouble, and the farmers, especially the sharecroppers, were hit hard.

It was also in 1931 that Thomas Alva Edison, the creative inventor, died. But his inventions began to have a great influence. Radios blared entertainment like Amos 'N Andy and Fibber McGee and Molly while Victrolas spun the records of the jazz and swing bands of Tommy Dorsey and others.

The economic situation in the United States had grown steadily worse, but some optimistic citizens thought things might improve since Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected in November as president. He was inaugurated in March 1932. Many bright ideas

bloomed during the fertile spring of 1933. On April 19, Roosevelt placed an embargo on gold—thus serving notice that the gold standard had been definitely abandoned. Then he offered to pay the farmers to leave part of their acreage unplanted, thus penalizing everybody a little in order to help the hard hit farm population. Some in Arkansas had already planted their cotton but were paid to plow it up.

"Seems a downright shame to plow up a good stand of cotton!"

A quarter of a million young men, including some of C. A. Nelson's friends, were offered jobs with the Civil Conservation Corps and went off to plant trees and such. A bill was passed providing $3.3 billion for public works. Progress was slow in this area, however. Another innovative bill was passed in May 1933, establishing the Tennessee Valley Authority. This ultimately brought electricity to many rural families. But when the National Recovery Act (NRA) was passed, many folks thought the new president had gone too far. Several Pentecostal preachers, including Brother Nelson, wondered if this could be the mark of the Beast. They studied prophecy and preached that the second coming of the Lord was indeed near.

But the politicians were hopeful. Huey Long from Louisiana warned, "Don't trifle with this bird," talking about the blue eagle.

On the night of March 1, 1932, news of a tragic event filled the *Tulsa Tribune* front page. The infant son of Colonel and Mrs. Charles A. Lindbergh was kidnapped. The entire nation was outraged and grieved for their hero—the Lone Eagle.

"Took him right out of his crib!"

"Propped a ladder up to his second floor window and went right in and nabbed the little feller!"

"Strange that that nurse didn't hear a thing."

"Lot of wickedness in this old world."

"Perilous times! Things are waxing worse and worse!"

From day to day, the search went on. After about six weeks, on May 12, the newsboys called, "Extra, extra! Read all about it" "BABY DEAD" announced the headlines. Preachers declared that there was no safety in riches and fame; security is found only in God.

Nineteen thirty-two may have been the cruelest year of the

depression. In the summer, the Bonus Expeditionary force of fifteen to twenty thousand veterans of World War One marched on Washington and set up camp on some vacant land on Pennsylvania Avenue, just below the Capitol. As a whole, they were well behaved (some had their wives and children along), but it was decided to clear them out.

On the morning of July 23, 1932, General Pelham Glassford, the Washington superintendent of police, was told to evacuate the veterans immediately. He took four troops of cavalry, four companies of infantry, a machine gun squadron, and several tanks and rode into the large crowd, throwing tear gas bombs. Women and children were trampled while others fled across the ground, screaming as they stumbled and fell. Bayonets were drawn in Washington on the nation's hungry ex-soldiers and citizens.

Meanwhile, back on the rural farms, things were tough. For several years, times had been hard for farmers. The agricultural prices had fallen in 1921 after the war. Now in 1932, the depth of the depression, there was a tidal wave of mortgage foreclosure sales. Farmers had borrowed and mortgaged their farms to meet emergencies and buy equipment. Even the most industrious farmers lost farms, some of which had been in the families for several generations.

A Pentecostal preacher, Brother J. W. Wallace of Scotts Hill, Tennessee, was one who was caught in that squeeze. Rather than take bankruptcy after the bank foreclosed, he moved his family of four children to Bemis, where he went to work in the cotton mill. His young sons, Cleatus and James Onell, were ready for high school.

"Boys, you'll need to get you a job and help me pay this debt," their father said soberly. Cleatus went to work in the stock room, but J. O. chose a night shift filling batteries for the weavers so he could go to high school in the daytime. For four long years he worked a man's job eight hours a night and went to school in the day.

About sixteen years earlier, up at Table Rock around Branson, Missouri, a little girl, Edna, was born to an Indian family by the name of Stone. Edna's great-grandfather Stone was a white man, a federal judge. Stone County, Missouri, was named for his fam-

ily. Her grandfather, William T. Stone, was a Church of Christ preacher who had little use for Pentecostals. He had married Tenie Clementine Bowlin, a half Cherokee. Their son, Charley, was Edna's father.

Tenie Clementine attended an Indian academy in Berryville, Arkansas, (eighty-fifth on the roll) and graduated a straight A student. She was baptized into the Church of Christ when she was eleven. The Charley Stones moved to Oklahoma when Edna was just an infant.

In April 1932, Edna Ivone Stone and her brother, Ralph, attended the meeting at Barren Fork Creek, where Clarence Nelson was preaching. Her mother had gone to Tulsa to see her father, Charley, who was working there as a maintenance man at the Philtower building.

Clarence Nelson, the young preacher, had done little or no dating since he had repented. "I don't want to get involved with a girlfriend. I want to stay free just to work for God," Clarence had decided. But that was before he met Edna Stone!

Edna was only sixteen, with beautiful, thick, long, black hair. Her laughing brown eyes accented her gorgeous coppery olive complexion. She and her mother, Ollie, had both already received the Holy Ghost in an Assembly of God church.

All Clarence could think of was the story that he had heard of the harelipped man from Tennessee who met the beautiful girl, Sally. "Lord, I want You to have Your way, but, Lord, I want Thither Thallie." Clarence knew he wanted this beautiful girl, Edna Stone.

As a prospective suitor, Clarence didn't have a lot to offer. By this time he was twenty-three years old, had no job, no money, and no car. He was just out preaching, and he actually did not know if he even had the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues. But he did know that God was really *real* and that He was with him. Although he had never been to high school, college, or Bible school and though he had never had a pastor, when he yielded to God and preached, God anointed him, souls were converted, and men sought and received the Holy Ghost. "That young feller preaches like an angel," some of the folks enthused

as they responded to the move of God.

Many trinitarians attended the meetings, including Aunt Annie Winkle, Sister Small, and the Stones. They did not know that young Brother Nelson was Oneness. Had they known he was caught up in this "new issue" doctrine, they would not have permitted him to preach at all since they were very bitter against it.

The trinitarians were planning a big, all-day service. A preacher was coming from Westville. So they announced a baptismal service at Barren Fork Creek, close to the school.

Young Brother Nelson knew nothing of their plans for a baptismal service. But when he sought God for a message for that night, all he could get for a text was Acts 2:38.

Previously, response to his preaching had been great. Many nights the power of God fell and the saints really "whooped it up." But when young Nelson stood that night and read Acts 2:38, a hush fell on the congregation. Brother Nelson could feel the opposition rise and see prejudice written on the faces before him.

"Come on! Let's get out of here," one man got up and hollered out to his family. "If I had a dog, I wouldn't let him listen to this!" he shouted as he stomped out and slammed the door shut.

But Brother Nelson was not dismayed, discouraged, or defeated by the opposition. He felt as though he walked in a halo of light as he preached fervently the truth of God's Word.

The results? Although one family did leave, seventeen saw the light and wanted to be baptized in the wonderful name of the Lord Jesus.

Edna's mother, a trinitarian, had come that night, too. But Edna's mother had some serious reservations about young Nelson. "That's just terrible for him to preach without the Holy Ghost!"

"Well, Mom, God anoints him," Edna tried to console her mother. "What else can he do?"

Among others attending the meeting was a fine family by the name of Choate. Sister Choate's grandmother, Sister Capp, a full-blooded Cherokee, was also baptized. It was a great night for Brother Nelson.

Then Mrs. Stone had a dream about Jesus telling Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me,

Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). This was a great revelation to Mrs. Stone.

Another remarkable thing happened during that revival. A little girl attended who was very sick with leakage of the heart.

"That child is so sick she can't even walk to school. She has to ride a horse," someone told Brother Nelson. "Her mother is spending all her money on doctors, but the little girl is not doing well at all."

"That sounds familiar," Brother Nelson recalled the Bible story of the little woman with the issue of blood. "Let's pray!" They prayed, God heard, and the little girl was healed.

For two or three weeks, the revival continued. As God blessed, they moved from the schoolhouse to a brush arbor right close to Wright's Chapel.

One night after Brother Nelson had preached on the Second Coming, an Indian woman was convicted and repented. Although it was the middle of the night, the sister was afraid that the Lord would come before morning, so she insisted on being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus right then. "I want to be ready," she declared.

Brother Ridgeway had started evangelizing. Since there was some talk about Clarence not having the Holy Ghost, he decided, "Brother Ridgeway, you preach, and I'll just help you." Brother Nelson led the singing, played his guitar, and did the baptizing.

Later that year in July another revival was held in Wright's Chapel. This time Edna, her mother, and several more hungry souls were baptized.

One candidate was a very large woman. Brother Nelson, a skinny, five-foot nine-inch tall man, waded out into the water to baptize this woman. But he stepped off in what seemed to be a "bottomless" hole, pulling the woman in after him. However, Brother Nelson did not go completely under. "The Lord really helped me get that sister back up. It's a wonder we didn't both go under," he exclaimed.

A possible drowning was an anxious moment for the Pentecostal preacher, but the crash of hopes and dreams of many Americans was among the real problems of that day.

The facilities at Barren Fork were very poor—just oak slabs

fresh from the sawmill for seats. So it was not too great a calamity when a flash flood came up and washed away everything but the pulpit! Clarence had driven a stake in the ground for the pulpit and it stood firm.

Edna, Ralph, and Mrs. Stone had continued to attend more of Brother Nelson's revivals.

"Well, they do need help over there at Piney, so we'd better go," Mrs. Stone decided. "We'll just camp out." So the Stones traveled some eight miles although they had only one old horse. Edna walked the distance; on the return trip, they took turns riding the horse. Buford drove over with the truck and brought a camping outfit. Later, Ralph and Clarence slept on the seats, and Edna, her mother, her brother, Jim, and her sister, Edith, stayed in a little log house. Brother and Sister Ridgeway and their three girls stayed with friends nearby. Jim, Edna's brother, got blood poisoning in his foot while they were there, but through prayer he was healed.

"I sure am glad to see you all," Clarence exclaimed when the Stones came up. "Folks are mean around here. Some of the men have ridden up and down the road threatening us with shotguns!" Other threatening events occurred.

The stock market crash on September 3, 1929, had left the country in a deep, dark depression. Down, down, down went business. By October 29, American Telephone had dropped from 304 to 197¼, General Electric from 396¼ to 168, and U.S. Steel from 261¾ to 150. One newspaper said, "The present week has witnessed the greatest stock market catastrophe of all the ages." In the fall of 1930, the International Apple Shipper's Association had an oversupply of apples.

"Let's sell apples on credit to the unemployed men at wholesale; then they can retail them at five cents a piece." Suddenly apple salesmen shivered on every corner in the large northern cities.

The United States of America needed a Savior. Revivals began to prosper as expensive entertainment grew more and more scarce. Many debt-ridden, discouraged, depressed people turned to God and heard the gospel gladly. But some just went to meetin' (especially "holy roller" meetings) "to see the show." To their

astonishment they found that this was that spoken of in Acts chapter two. "It's really real."

The gospel spread. There had been good revivals in Eureka Springs, Hot Springs, Malvern, and Benton, Arkansas. Howard A. Goss, D. C. O. Opperman, and Ralph Cook were all preaching in Arkansas. G. T. Haywood had been baptized in Jesus' name in 1915 and had a large church in Indianapolis. Odell Cagle and B. H. Hite preached in Missouri and Illinois. Brother and Sister J. W. Stallones had left Arkansas and headed for California, while O. F. Fauss, S. C. McClain, and many others were holding revivals.

None of these leaders ever achieved worldwide stature, but they certainly did make an impact for good on the part of the world which they touched.

Brother Nelson was in a revival in Siloam Springs. He had only one pair of trousers. A kind family loaned him a horse, but every time he came back from preaching, the seat of his one pair of pants split. The lady of the house where he stayed would take her darning thread and patch them.

"There, Brother Nelson, maybe that'll hold you."

But then the next night the pants split again. Before the meeting was over Brother Nelson thought he was sitting on a cushion, the patches were so thick!

Times were hard; money was scarce. But God had His hand on C. A. Nelson, and he knew that he had a destiny.

Chapter Five

Marriage

After the revival at Piney, Clarence felt more strongly than ever that he was definitely called to preach. He decided to leave Wright's Chapel and Brother Ridgeway. So he caught the milk truck and went by Siloam Springs to see his family. Then he went on to Maysville, Arkansas, to hold a meeting.

At Maysville he found a place to pray down in an old dry creek bed. "Lord, You know I'm willing to sacrifice. But, Lord, I do need more than one pair of pants."

The Lord heard that prayer. Two ladies came to Brother Nelson. "Brother Nelson, do you care if we take up an offering for you?" they inquired.

"Well, no, I don't care," he replied, and then he whispered, "Thank you, Jesus." The two ladies did not stop with just taking an offering; they went to the stores in Southwest City, Missouri, and asked for clothes and money. Now the young preacher had new clothes to wear when he went to see Edna, plus money left over to buy her a pretty scarf. So he took off to Westville to visit her as soon as the revival was over.

Edna was at a friend's house nearby. Her brother, Buford, always a big tease, hid Clarence in the back of the truck, then called to this sister, "Look in the back of the truck, Edna!" She was surprised—but very happy indeed—to see the young preacher.

After the Stones received the revelation of Jesus' Name baptism and the oneness of God, they began to suffer persecution in their former church. So they started prayer meetings in their home.

About this time, they met a schoolteacher, Paul Leake, and his wife, Lucy. The Leakes lived at Proctor, Oklahoma. This schoolteacher and his wife attended the prayer meetings, and Brother Nelson preached in some schoolhouses near their home. One such place was Chance, Oklahoma.

The Stones had to haul barrels of water from a nearby creek to use for laundry and other purposes. One day, although Edna and her mother had done a large washing on the rub board and she had ironed all day, heating the sadirons on the cookstove, they decided that they wanted to go to Chance to the revival.

"Let's bring Brother Nelson home with us, Mom. Tomorrow is his birthday," suggested Edna. Her mother agreed. Quickly, they prepared a meal and set the table so that all would be ready when they returned with their guest. Buford teased Edna about her new friend, "Momma, where are you gonna put this feller?"

"Oh, I'll just hang him on a nail," Mrs. Stone retorted.

But their plans ran into a serious snag. Before they arrived back home, they met some neighbors who reluctantly reported the evening's grim developments. "Sister Stone, we have some bad news for you. Your house burned while you were gone."

"Someone must have set our house on fire," Mrs. Stone replied. But Mrs. Stone knew that she had received a direct revelation from God regarding the truth of the oneness of God, and she would not be hindered. Soon they had built a log house with a second story reached by a ladder. All three of Edna's brothers, Buford, Jim, and Ralph, her Uncle Clora, as well as Brother Nelson, when he visited, slept in this second story room. For some mysterious reason, the boys soon had another problem. They had all gotten the itch!

"Edna, I'm afraid to go home with this itch," Clarence confided to his girlfriend. "My mother would not like this at all. I gotta pray about this."

At the Stones, Clarence had a prayer place down by the pigpen. There he went to take this itching problem to the Lord. But

the answer did not come. He still scratched. After several miserable days, he decided to go into town to see if he could find some sort of salve to get a little relief from the terrible prickling sensation.

On the following Sunday, several people came to the Stones' for prayer meeting. But no one brought food.

"Edna, go around to the neighbors and see if you can buy something—eggs if nothing else." Hospitable Mrs. Stone wanted to feed her guests. Well, eggs it was. "They was five cents a dozen, Mom." Fried eggs, scrambled eggs, and boiled eggs made up the unusual menu, but no one was sent away hungry.

Some of the preachers who enjoyed the Stones' hospitality tried to be quite severe with young Clarence Nelson, accusing this preacher of using medicine instead of trusting God. "You'll go to hell for using that salve," they warned. Clarence Nelson threw the salve into the large King heater. God honored his step of faith, and the itch was soon gone!

The young couple was very much in love, but there was little time to "spark." The day before they were married, Clarence helped Edna wash on the rub board. Then he walked twenty-five miles to Chance to get Paul and Lucy Leake to take them in their car to get married. Edna spent the day heating the sadirons and finishing the large ironing. That afternoon her mother kindly said, "Here, Edna, go rest a bit. I'll finish that ironing."

Edna's father was still less than enthusiastic about his daughter marrying a penniless Pentecostal preacher without a parish or a pulpit, but Mrs. Stone generously gave the young couple her blessing, along with six dollars to finance the event. They were married at Stillwell, Oklahoma, by the Justice of the Peace, A. Dornbrack, on Saturday, May 6, 1933. On the following Sunday, they went to the Leakes for an all-day service.

"But I didn't ask her to marry me," Brother Nelson recalls with a twinkle in his eye.

"And I surely didn't ask him," Sister Nelson adds firmly.

"We just got married. We both felt that this was what was right to do so that's what we did. I had six dollars. I gave three dollars for the license. Since there was no Oneness preacher around there and I didn't want to be married by a trinitarian preacher, we just

went to the justice of the peace. I gave him my last three dollars."

The neighborhood was not too thrilled over the Nelsons' marriage. In fact, some were furious and planned to chivaree the young couple. When the Nelsons returned to the Stones' after the wedding, Mrs. Stone warned them, "These fellers are gettin' ready to do somethin'." Sure enough, right after supper when Clarence and Edna were washing the dishes, Mrs. Stone looked out the door and a big bunch of young folks were gathered just a few yards from the house.

"Kids, you had better make your getaway." Clarence and Edna slipped out the back door, ran as fast as they could over a field of plowed ground, and sat down on a log in a thicket. Soon they heard a terrible noise. The young folk beat on Sister Stone's washtubs, water buckets, and dinner pails, and rang cowbells. After a little, Mrs. Stone came to the door, "You have had your fun. Now, leave."

"No, not 'til we find them," they retorted.

"They aren't here! Can't you see that they aren't here?"

"We know they are; we just saw them." Well, the young people looked and searched, but they could not find Edna and Clarence. Finally they left, muttering, "We'll get them later."

The very next service at the schoolhouse, the young people again attempted to chivaree the newlyweds. One man stood on each side of the door.

"I'll go first, Edna," suggested Clarence, "just in case they try anything." With his guitar hung around his neck and his Bible in his hand, he started out. But when he got to the door, it seemed as though a halo were about his head. Was the angel of the Lord there protecting the young preacher?

"I thought you was going to get him," said one man.

"Why didn't you get him?" retorted the other. Gradually, emotions calmed down and real married life began.

From there the Nelsons went to their friends, Baxter and Emma Choate, for a while.

"You all can stay with us," invited Sister Choate. "We ain't got but one bedroom, but we do have two beds and I'll hang a quilt down the middle of the room," she added. Clarence and Edna Nelson began life together with nothing but a cardboard suitcase

and a few clothes, but they soon found they were rich in friends. It is true that these friends, the Baxter Choates, were no richer in this world's goods than the Nelsons, but they were all young, full of the Holy Ghost, and full of faith. Every night Brother Nelson preached in the little country schoolhouse down in Adair County, close to Arkansas. Also each night they went home to their one-half a bedroom in the little flat-top, shotgun, single boxed, unpainted house out in the strawberry patch where the Choates lived.

An old, black Home Comfort range reigned in the kitchen. Bathwater was heated in the reservoir at the side of the stove. A cold, worn linoleum rug covered the floor, but colorful rag rugs added a touch of warmth. A yellow Black Draught calendar served as a wall hanging. A touch of class was added by a few pieces of crochet. Hand-embroidered dresser scarves silently testified to Sister Choate's busy hands. Straight, cane-bottomed chairs, a homemade table, and a cupboard completed the kitchen furnishings. A zinc bucket and a gourd dipper stood on a shelf on the back porch, along with a wash pan, a towel, and a small mirror. There was a path out back.

But the black-haired, part Cherokee Indian bride of C. A. Nelson always dressed with certain style in bright, cheerful colors. The young preacher had no suit. In 1933 the country was still in the throes of the Great Depression. Overalls and a couple of pairs of wash trousers, plus a white shirt or two and one pair of shoes, was not too unusual a wardrobe. Everything the Nelsons owned fit easily into one cardboard suitcase.

Phones and phone calls were out of the question for these people, but the Nelsons faithfully kept in touch with friends and relatives by mail. (They still do!)

"I need a stamp to mail this letter, Edna. Have we got a single stamp left?" questioned Brother Nelson.

"No, the last stamp is gone. I am sorry," explained his young wife.

"And there's not any money either. I only need two cents for a stamp. Well, I had better pray about that," decided Brother Nelson. Those were the days when trusting saints told their financial needs only to God. Leaving the little shotgun house, Clarence

walked down the dirt road alongside the creek to a little grove where he had an altar of prayer. There C. A. Nelson prayed—not just five minutes or ten—he prayed until he felt the victory. "Thank You, Jesus, I know You hear me!" For an hour this humble Pentecostal preacher prayed for one two-cent stamp. He lay on the ground weeping and seeking the Lord until he felt assured that God had heard him.

When he got back to the little shotgun house, Sister Choate and Sister Nelson were just finishing dinner. Baxter Choate's little girl, Wilma, was sitting on her daddy's lap. Abruptly, Brother Choate sat the little girl down on her feet, fished in his pocket, extracted an old-fashioned, snap-top change purse, and carefully removed two coins. One was a copper Indian head penny, the other a buffalo nickel.

"Here, Wilma, take this and give it to Brother Nelson. He might need to mail a letter." The little girl obediently gave the six cents to Brother Nelson.

"Thank you so much, Brother Choate," Clarence Nelson said gratefully. "And thank You, God for hearing my prayer. This is enough to mail three letters!"

Sometime earlier, Clarence had noticed a small sore on his face next to his right ear. "What is this?" he wondered.

A few days later the sore was large, inflamed, and very tender. For some time the diseased spot lingered, getting worse instead of better.

"Brother Nelson, I do believe that is a cancer on your face. We're going to have to do something about that," Sister Adams declared soberly.

Again Clarence Nelson knelt at his altar of prayer under some old willow trees. Here, he sought God for his healing. "I know You can heal me Lord, and I believe You will." In just a few days the sore disappeared without a trace. Clarence Nelson learned to lean on Jesus, to trust Him for financial needs and healing, as well as salvation.

"I'm sure that really was a cancer," Sister Adams insisted. "I have had more than one skin cancer myself, and that spot on your face certainly looked like cancer."

"Well, it's gone, whatever it was, thanks be to Jesus," Brother

Nelson said firmly.

There's healing, as well as salvation, in the mighty name of Jesus. There was plenty to preach and testify about in those days, including current news events.

On June 6, 1933, one month after the Nelsons were married, President Roosevelt, with much fanfare, signed the National Recovery Act. Soon the sign of the Blue Eagle with the words, "We Do Our Part," appeared in the windows of cooperating businessmen. Many of these community leaders were hopeful that perhaps this legislation would help stem the tide of the Great Depression. But Brother Nelson and other Pentecostal preachers were not so sure.

"Did you look closely at this bird, Brother Nelson? He had seven tips on one wing and ten tips on the other. Remember in Revelation that beast had seven heads and ten horns." So they studied the Scriptures and preached prophecy and warned sinners of impending judgment. Their preaching was effective, too.

Families went to town with their cream to sell it in order to buy sugar and flour, but when they saw that sign of the "Mark of the Beast," they took their cream home and let it sour before they took a chance on being "marked."

Clarence prayed, studied his Bible, and continued preaching revivals. Edna was a real help to her husband with her guitar-playing, singing, and working in the altar. One of her favorite songs was "Something Got Hold of Me." She was well aware that something bigger than either of them was leading them although she did not foresee the many areas of service God would open up for her Arkansas preacher man.

From Baxter and Emma Choate's house, the Nelsons went to stay for a while with Baxter's brother, Roy, and his wife, Margaret. The young preacher and his bride had hopes, dreams, and aspirations. One of their first dreams was to build a little log "church in the wildwood" complete with a modest log parsonage, but the Lord had other plans. Along about Christmas they felt they should go on to Tulsa, where the Stones were living at this time.

Chapter Six

Young Evangelists

The Stones, Momma, Ralph, Jim, and Edith, (all except Mr. Stone) now lived on Second Street in Tulsa and attended the First Apostolic Church of West Tulsa, pastored by Brother C. P. Williams. One of the saints, Brother Sam Grisham, uncle of Brother Charles Grisham, recalls the first time he saw Clarence Nelson. It was in 1933, during the Great Depression.

"He wore an old, faded-out, cream-colored jacket, a pair of faded Levi jeans, and an ancient, light-colored hat. His hair stuck out through a hole in the hat. Did he look like a preacher? Far from it! But, of course, none of us common people had much in the way of material goods. I had only one secondhand suit which cost $12.50. I had paid just a little bit down on this suit, and it took me six months to pay it off.

"Out of the hills of Arkansas came this 'John the Baptist' type preacher, declaring the true plan of salvation, which originated on the day of Pentecost as recorded in the second chapter of the Book of Acts.

"But the peculiar thing about Brother Nelson was that although he preached this apostolic, tongue-talking, water baptism in Jesus' name plan of salvation as an absolute necessity to have a born-again experience, it was two or three years before he was baptized with the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in

other tongues.

"This may sound almost like a 'believe it or not' tale. How could he preach like that without the Holy Ghost? Then one night it happened. I was sitting on the floor at the altar right behind Brother Nelson, praying for and with him, when God did indeed baptize him with the Holy Ghost. It was just like the night that I, Sam Grisham, was baptized with the Holy Ghost back in 1932, lying under an old, ragged tent, flat of my back in the sawdust, weeping before God when He so sweetly spoke through me as His Spirit gave the utterance.

"I went with Brother and Sister Nelson when he preached his first revival at Tiawah after he had received the Holy Ghost. I know the enemy tormented him because during the day, while we were in the revival, Brother Nelson and I would go to a big, flat rock to pray. The Willhoites, with whom we stayed, lived on a small rock-laden mountain.

"While in prayer we had many struggles and battles with the power of darkness, but we also had many victories."

For some time the Nelsons continued to attend the church at West Tulsa, pastored by Brother Williams. There they met many other Pentecostals.

Brother Williams welcomed the young minister and his wife to the West Tulsa church. He, too, noticed the tattered clothing that the Arkansas preacher wore. "Brother Nelson does have one pair of fairly good shoes, and he takes care of them, I have noticed. When he works down at the church, he always wears those old work shoes with the Panco soles. What he really needs most is a suit." So the older pastor took his young friend down to Dick Bardon's pawn shop on North Main Street in Tulsa to buy his first suit.

"Let me see if this pair of pants is too worn in the seat." Brother Williams held the pants up to the light. After looking over several old suits, he finally found one he thought was in reasonably good condition. He shrewdly bargained the pawn man down to about five dollars. "Here's your suit, Brother Nelson."

Now Clarence Nelson had his Bible, his guitar, his beloved wife, a new suit, and a call of God on his heart. All he needed was an official notice that he was a full-fledged preacher of the gospel.

He got that when he was licensed with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ in 1934. He enjoyed the fellowship of those of like precious faith. But as one old preacher woman in Tennessee commented, "A license is somethin' like the tail on a pig. You ain't got no more pig!" But a license for a young preacher is certainly a nice finishing touch.

The young pastor from Okmulgee, Brother Voar Shoemake, was a step ahead. He was ordained in 1934 by Brother C. P. Williams and Brother C. E. Carter.

The church was in its infancy, and a number of people worked together, shared vegetables from the truck patch, and enjoyed the hospitality at the Williams' home in Garden City. Brother and Sister Williams were frequently called upon to minister in other places, and Brother Nelson filled in at the Rock Church. His unique preaching style and her singing added to the lively worship. The home was miles from the church, so they were delighted when Brother Leo Upton and his wife, Rhoda, offered to lend them an ole flivver. "Sure beats walking."

One winter while the Nelsons were evangelizing before going to Tulsa, they held a meeting in an old store building in Rogersville, Missouri. The formal churches in town were not doing much good. "Need a good Holy Ghost meetin' in this town." The Great Depression was on, and although it was bitter cold, five degrees below zero, the Nelsons did not have warm clothes. She had only a light coat with the elbows about worn out. He had no overcoat at all and there was no money, but they had a call to preach. People were stirred, especially the young people's leader in the Methodist church. As soon as their service was over, the young girl would hurry over to the store building to get in on the Pentecostal meeting. God soon rewarded her faithfulness and filled her with the Holy Ghost. She was baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Then the notorious town drunk got under conviction. He came to the altar. The Nelsons prayed and sought the Lord with him. One night he just came up to the altar and told the Lord, "Here I am. Fill me with the Holy Ghost or take my life, but I'm right here until you do, Lord." Then the man lay down on the cold floor. Most everybody finally left; just a few faithful ones stayed around

to pray with the man. Most of them were praying silently.

Along about midnight they began to feel the presence of the Lord. The man began to groan. The Spirit of God filled the place, and soon he began to speak in tongues.

Leaders of the town came and begged Brother Nelson to stay. "The Presbyterian church needs a pastor. Why don't you stay and be our pastor?"

"I'm sorry, but God has called me to be an evangelist," Brother Nelson explained as Sister Nelson packed their one small suitcase with their few belongings to go on to the next revival. One man was called to preach in the meeting, Brother McVay. He now pastors in California. Later Brother Nelson wondered if he should have stayed. There is yet no Oneness Pentecostal church in the town that he knows of. "I think they would have given me the whole town at that time," he recalls.

Among those who stayed with the Williams at Garden City in the early thirties was a young woman, Teelie Dover. Teelie had been put out of her home in Checotah when she accepted this truth and was baptized in Jesus' name. The Williams took her in. She was a high-strung, emotional young woman who wrote lots of letters and had many friends. She prayed secretly, her knees hitting the floor with a thud which was heard throughout the house repeatedly all during the day. They enjoyed teasing Teelie about her "secret prayer life." Edna passed the time of day singing and playing the piano with Teelie, who was moved to tears many times.

From her personal files, Edna shares a letter from her friend, Teelie Dover.

Tulsa, Oklahoma
October 4, 1935

My darling little Edna,

I have loved many people immensely when I first met them, but you are one person I loved before I met you or even saw you. Our getting acquainted was rather odd. When I came to Tulsa and saw your picture, I loved you very much. Then when you wrote me that letter, I loved you very, very much, and when you came

home and I met you, I loved you very, very, very much.

I am very thankful that I've got to be "your little sister" out here at the Williams' home. I can't never forget you, for your grand personality and sweet smile wins many. Who could forget such a dear little worker for God as you are? I hope soon to get to yell "amen" at your preaching.

Edna, you are as pretty as a picture, but forget that and remember these: when I begged you to go to the ministerial meeting, when I got tickled washing dishes, when the Lord blessed us the night Henry leaped so, and our being at Tiawah together.

Honey, it's grand to have the privilege of loving each other here on earth, but oh won't it be grander still when we get to heaven!! Aren't you glad you've realized a Christian life is the only life worth living?? I am!! Isn't Philippians 4:19 a grand scripture? In fact, well just everything God has anything to do with is grand.

Edna, "sugar dump," just stay true to the beautiful ideals that now comfort your Christian life, and you will find the truly abundant life. That is why I want to be true. God bless you. I love you. An everlasting friend in Jesus' name.
Teelie Dover

P.S. Remember me as the girl with the gab!

Teelie Dover

Back in the thirties, a three-week Bible school (more like a Bible conference) was regularly held in February in Tulsa. One year a well-dressed stranger came in and spoke a few words to Brother Williams. Then Brother Williams turned to Brother Nelson.

"I want you to go with me." They went to the north part of Tulsa. Though the home at which they arrived had its doors and windows closed due to the cold weather, Brother Nelson heard a groan in prayer as the men walked up the sidewalk to the porch.

Once inside, a most pitiful sight greeted them. An elderly man lay there like a reclining scarecrow. The bone had come out through his hip and joints. The skin was broken. The old man cried out, "Oh, Brother Williams," he said, "if I would have known when I went to church . . . if I would have thought that I had this cancer, I would have been baptized that night. Brother

Williams tried to get me to be baptized, but I wouldn't. I didn't know I had cancer!" The pitiful man was in the agony of death with cancer of the stomach.

"Will you please baptize me, Brother Williams?"

It was utterly impossible to take the man out of the house. Too late. Brother Nelson looked at Brother Williams, then they both looked at the son.

"Anything you want to do, do it if you can for Dad."

They went in and looked at the bathtub and decided that they could baptize him in it.

"We'll pick him up in the sheet." It was easy to do. The man wasn't heavy.

"I baptize you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of all your sins," Brother Williams declared. Then they let the man down under the water, picked him up again, and carried him back to bed. He died that week. He prayed a prayer that day that every sinner ought to hear. He told God, "I don't ask for help. I'm not asking you for a well body. All I'm asking for is one little hope. Just to give me one little hope is all I ask for."

That day Brother Nelson found out that there is something more important than a well body or plenty to eat. The important thing is just to have a hope of eternal life when one comes to the end of the road.

Chapter Seven

Willhoite Hill and Tiawah

In the early thirties, a small group of Pentecostals lived in Tiawah, five miles south of Claremore, Oklahoma. It was a small community; the city limits sign announced that 75 people inhabited the town.

In 1916 a preacher, Brother Ray Bernard, had come to Tiawah preaching about the infilling of the Holy Ghost. He received permission to hold services in the two story brick, schoolhouse. The Lord moved and many were filled with the Holy Spirit. Among them was a staunch Methodist, William J. Willhoite. He, like many others, went to the meeting out of curiosity to "see the show." The first night he was convinced that this truth was real. The second night he was filled with the Holy Ghost, along with some of his grown children. From that time on, the small, white Willhoite house on the hill was open to Pentecostals.

The Willhoite family helped to get a building in Tiawah. "We do need a church," they decided and soon located a twenty-by-thirty-five-foot office toolshed that was left when the Tulsa water line was laid east of Tiawah. This unpainted, tar-roofed, swayback building was moved and set upon rocks in the middle of town to serve as a "mission" for the saints.

Most of the saints were small-time farmers with very little money. "We'll each plant an acre of cotton for the Lord," they

decided. They were pleased when this acre seemed to yield more than the rest of their crop. Gasoline lanterns lighted the mission. Occasionally the saints would be left in the dark when a bug flew into the mantle of the lantern or when the gas had to be pumped up. An old coal stove heated the mission in the cold winter; many times the coal scuttle was upset by someone shouting and dancing as the power of the Lord swept through the small building. A bucket of well water complete with a dipper sat near the pulpit. During the sermon a child would invariably have to have a drink. Brother Benton James, Sister Ruby Brown's father, and Brother Arthur Lutz preached there and served as pastors.

In April 1934 Clarence and Edna Nelson were asked to hold a revival in Tiawah. Together with Brother Sam Grisham, they arrived on the Willhoite front porch with their one little cardboard suitcase.

"We're here to hold a revival, Brother Willhoite," Brother Nelson explained.

"Come right on in, Brother," Brother Willhoite opened the door wide, and the Nelsons walked into the Willhoite family home not only for that day but also for a lifelong, close relationship. For several years the house on the hill was home base for the Nelsons.

Facing west, the little white house sat on a spacious plateau on top of Willhoite hill. A breeze constantly blew on top of the hill. Four towering elms shaded the front porch; a walnut tree and a delicious pear tree were on the north. It was a treat to sit on the front porch and watch the splendid sunsets. When the moon came up, whippoorwills called; a cardinal streaked by. Later a coyote howled at the moon.

A narrow, rocky road wound steeply up the tree-shrouded hill. Elms, oaks, and maples bordered the road. Honeysuckles covered the fencerows. Queen Anne's lace grew in the fields. Small cottages nestled here and there along the roadside in the shadow of majestic trees. Rich gardens full of vegetables thrived in the black dirt alongside the cottages.

Grandma James lived close by, as well as Dempsey and Marie Coker. Later, Wardie and Minnie Lawson lived in a small, two room house. J. T. and Mabel Sutton lived next door to the church on the west. On the south of the railroad about a half mile away

was Nickel's Grocery.

Nolan and his wife, Willie (Bill), and daughter lived in a small, little, white four room cottage just a little to the west of the church. Later the Hoseltons, Marcella and "Tumper" Hoselton, and their daughters Barbara (Westberg) and Maudine (Deenie Little) lived there.

The Willhoites had the long dining table with the benches on each side in the front room when the Nelsons first visited them. They sat there at night after supper and had Bible sword drills while Grannie sat in an old, wooden, high-back rocker, piecing quilts. Roasted peanuts, popcorn, and molasses candy were favorite snacks.

Everybody knew everybody. Seldom a day passed that a home had no visitor. "Just dropped by to say 'Hello.'" Soon the Nelsons were right at home in Tiawah.

Some of the Tiawah neighbors thought the Willhoites were too hospitable and generous. "Old man Willhoite's liable to starve to death tryin' to feed that preacher."

Far from it. The Willhoites were one family in the country that never had to go on relief. "Give, and it shall be given unto you." However, Brother Willhoite worked hard as well as gave generously. Every morning he was up early, loading vegetables and produce to take into town to peddle.

Hours were spent not only in preaching, teaching, and fellowship at the church but also in visiting with the Willhoites and other Tiawah saints. Together they shared experiences and testified of the goodness of God. The Willhoites believed in healing.

When Dolly Faye was only ten or eleven, she had typhoid fever. Doctors were out! The Willhoites trusted the Lord. It was the Fourth of July when Dolly Faye took sick. By the next day, she was unconscious. They sent word to everyone, "Pray!" (No telephones, just foot power.) For three days one could hardly tell if Dolly Faye were dead or alive. (An elderly lady in Tiawah always told Dolly Faye that they had laid her for dead, but she never verified this.) After days of travail, she began to mend and is today a witness to the power of God. She has had excellent health ever since. She is a hard working mother of three and hardly ever misses a church event.

Another outstanding healing occurred when Mother Willhoite was healed of gallstones. "We had been fishing, and she took sick. She was in so much pain we hardly knew whether she would live even until we got home, so we called on God. He touched her, and she never had another attack. We had to trust the Lord. We didn't believe in taking even an aspirin." The Willhoite family lived by that kind of faith.

When the Nelsons first met the Willhoites, Grandma Mary (60) and Grandpa Bill Willhoite (69), May Earl (21), Dolly Faye (16), and Donald (14) were still at home. Manula and Jesse had married brothers, Arthur and Earl Lutz. Manula and her husband had first lived in the "weaning" house down at the corner. Later Jessie and her family lived there.

"This sure is a nice, neighborly community," Edna confided happily to her newfound friend, Dolly Faye, the seventh Willhoite daughter.

"Yeah, Sister Nelson! I do believe God has His hand on Tiawah," Clarence agreed. "Let's pray that a real revival will break out."

Why the attraction? Tiawah was "back of beyond," just a tiny village nestled at the foot of Willhoite hill across the railroad track. The Tiawah school was the biggest thing in town. It was in front of this schoolhouse that the Nelsons held one revival—right out in the open.

"They did say that we could use the school piano, Sister Nelson. Sure do wish we had someone who could play." Edna had taken a few piano lessons as a child, and she was full of an inner confidence and faith. Like her guitar-picking husband, she had a real ear for music and a good sense of timing.

"With God's help, I believe that I could play that piano," she smiled at her husband. God did bless, and she has played the piano ever since.

The main transportation was the Willhoites' old Model T truck. Fifteen or twenty people would pile in the back of this vehicle and go to church. Most of the time they took up a collection to pay for the gas (three gallons for twenty-five cents), especially when they went to Harmony Star, which was about ten or twelve miles away. Ernest Willhoite was usually the driver.

The old truck did not have a fuel pump. When gas was low in the tank, they turned the truck around and backed up the hill in order to get gas into the carburetor.

The back of the truck was cold in the winter and hot and dusty in the summer. The girls arrived at church with windblown hair and rosy cheeks.

Occasionally they all walked down the hill to church. In the winter when it was too cold to ride on the back of the truck, they piled in the back of the slower moving wagon and covered up with blankets and hay.

"Gonna have to get these horses shod soon," Grandpa reminded Ernest. The town blacksmith shop was run by David Walker. "Dave's got his boy, Dan, helping him now."

"How can that kid help much?"

"Oh, he helps all right. He holds the horse's head while his daddy shoes 'im." All the children in Tiawah had chores. Parents perhaps had not heard the old Jewish proverb, "Teach a boy a trade or you'll teach him to steal," but they knew and practiced the principle.

Mr. Leonard ran a small general store. Edna thought it was a real treat to get a cold bottle of pop or a Baby Ruth candy bar at the store. For some time the post office was located in this store, but in the late thirties it was closed and mail was delivered out of Claremore.

Tiawah—a small, isolated community. The daily train was the most tangible link with the outside world, but the Tulsa newspaper carried news from faraway places. Clarence occasionally brought a newspaper home from a trip into Claremore.

In the spring of 1934, the famous Dionne quintuplets were born far north in Canada. That summer Public Enemy Number One, John Dillinger, was shot. But the big news in Oklahoma and the surrounding area concerned the Great Plains Dust Bowl.

During World War I farmers had sowed lots of wheat to meet the great demand for food. The wheat, as then grown, did not adequately protect the ground from the winds that blew across the Great Plains at eight to sixteen miles an hour. Severe dust storms began in the Dust Bowl in the early 1930s. The Dust Bowl was made up of fifty million acres, including parts of Texas, New

Mexico, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Kansas. In 1934 great curtains of dust swept across the continent to the Atlantic coast and far out into the Gulf of Mexico. During such a storm, it was impossible to see farther than a few feet.

"Better wear a mask, or you'll never make it to the barn and back," farmers were cautioned.

"This sand and dust has drifted so bad you can't see where the fence ought to be."

"Crops are 'bout burned up. Might as well leave." Another sharecropper loaded up his old truck and headed for California.

"Did you hear about the new parsonage they got over to Collinsville? Bought it for back taxes. A five room, brick bungalow, and it only cost 'em six hundred dollars."

"Well, hope they can pay even that much for it. These sure are the 'perilous times.' The Bible speaks about these kinda times."

"Yep, that sun sure is darkened all right. Cain't see a thing in all this dust. You going to church to hear Brother Nelson preach? You oughta heard his sermon t'other night. He preached on 'Your Rain Will Be Powder and Dust!' He's one more preacher! That altar was full of folks a'cryin and a'prayin."

In a revival at Paoli, a stylishly dressed, heavily made-up lady came in. When Brother Nelson saw her, he began to pray, "Lord, save that woman. In Jesus' name, I claim her soul for You, dear Lord. " For three nights the lady came and listened. Then, on the third night, she came to the altar and began to cry and repent. The next night Brother Nelson hardly knew her. She came back dressed modestly, with a clean face shining with the light of the Lord.

"People sure are hungry for God, Edna. I didn't have to 'hang out a clothes line.' I don't think I said a thing about dress, and look at the change in that woman."

"Thank you, Jesus," responded Edna as she smiled to herself. "An evangelist's wife who sets a proper example helps a little, too," she decided.

Times were bad. The government was buying and killing cattle, yet people in the large cities were starving. Soup kitchens and breadlines were long. When a job was available, the lines of applicants were even longer. Everybody was in the same boat. Nobody

locked up their houses. There was little or nothing to steal. All the Nelsons owned fit into one small, shabby suitcase, and they rode buses, trains, and hitched rides from one town to the next preaching, preaching, preaching.

In the April revival that Brother Nelson held in Tiawah, he preached hell so fervently that "Tumper" Hoselton declared, "I can smell the smoke." During the day Brother Nelson helped sow oats, plant cotton, and haul water. But occasionally he slipped off to Otter Creek to "wet a line." "Maybe I'll catch a big 'un!" When something was needed from town, the restless, energetic preacher thought nothing of hiking right down the railroad track five or six miles into Claremore. On a nearby hill, he and Sam Grisham found a flat rock prayer place. Brother Nelson also studied and prepared his sermons.

Sister Nelson began to keep a daily diary and recorded her many activities: churning, washing the separator, patching, making bread, quilting, mopping the kitchen, polishing white shoes or brown oxfords, feeding the turkeys, guineas and chickens, canning beans, sewing, and reading the New Testament through twice as well as reading the *Outlook*.

The friendly, outgoing young couple also began to make lifelong friends, especially in Tiawah. Over a hundred names appear in the diary of 1934.

The young preacher's wife was growing spiritually and showed a tremendous desire to work for God. She began to keep a songbook: "It Pays to Serve Jesus," "Pentecost Has Come Again," "Tell the Folks It's Jesus," "Something Got Hold of Me," "Baptized into the Body," "Talking About Heaven," "Greatest Name," "I'd Rather Be On the Inside," "Put It to the Test," "You Will Need Jesus Someday," and of course, "It's Real." According to her diary, fifteen received the Holy Ghost in July, and nineteen were baptized in Jesus' name.

For the next six years, the Nelsons made the Willhoite home on the hill their home, with occasional trips out to Sherman, Prairie View, Okemah, Turley, Dennison, Locust, Whitesboro, preaching or going to services. They rode buses and trains and caught rides with others.

Chapter Eight

Depression Days

Rallies, conferences, and fellowship meetings were held by the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ brethren. But it did not require a certified public accountant to keep track of their finances.

A conference met on October 1, 1935, at Morris, Oklahoma, where Brother Voar Shoemake was pastor. An offering of eight dollars was received to defray conference expense. The chairman of the Resolutions Committee was Brother C. P. Kilgore. Brother William King and Brother C. P. Williams also served on the committee. In an unusual burst of generosity, a five-dollar offering was given to help Sister Teelie Dover go to the national convention.

"Five dollars was a big offering in those days," declared Sister Nelson.

Although times were hard, yet one Oklahoman had made good. Will Rogers had became the highest paid entertainer of his time. It was easy for the average American to identify with this cowboy-philosopher who made shrewd, homely comments on people and events. "Well, all I know is what I read in the papers," he would begin in a slow, southwestern drawl while he twirled a lariat and chewed gum. His comments appeared daily in about 350 newspapers, but he was declared to be at his best on stage or in movies. Then one day in 1935 it happened! "Well, ole Will left

Oklahoma and beat the depression, but his love for airplanes got him." While on a flight to the Orient, Rogers and his pilot died in a crash near Point Barrow, Alaska. "Death comes to all, the famous and the unknown, the rich and the poor. Be ready. That's all that matters," warned preachers from pulpits.

The U. S. government, in an attempt to provide some sort of stability for its needy, orphans, and aged, passed the Social Security Act that same year.

The terrible drought and the resulting dust storms caused many poor farm folk to hit the road and become Okies and Arkies. The highway west was crowded with floppy flivvers piled high with household goods belonging to the exhausted family inside. Many of the men were not too used to driving. They gripped the wheels of the dilapidated cars, listening anxiously to every rattle and whine. "Hope that's not a bearing giving out." Hardly a freight train went through Tiawah without a hobo on board. It was estimated that two hundred thousand children also roamed the hot dusty roads of the land. Among them were two young boys from Hodge, Louisiana.

"Might as well catch a freight train outta here, Ray," suggested C. C. Wheatly to his friend, Ray Thomas. (These two friends later married sisters, Ruby and Myrtle.) "I finished high school, but there ain't no job here in Hodge for nobody," he added.

"Well, I sure can't find work. Let's go," Ray agreed. So they hopped a freight train and rode up through Arkansas and Oklahoma. But prospects for jobs were no better there. Finally, after several days with no food, they took a train back to Hodge.

"Aww, at least we can have a home-cooked meal." The two were hopeful.

Jumping off the train, they spied a little black boy trudging along the street with a loaf of stale bread tucked under one arm. Suddenly, they were overcome with hunger. "Here, boy, give us some of that bread." They took the bread, ate half, then felt guilty. So they returned the other half to the little boy who was snuffling and crying by this time.

But times were hard and boys would be boys. Many years later, C. C. Wheatly and C. A. Nelson met and served together on the General Board of the United Pentecostal Church.

Clarence and Edna Nelson were on the road traveling too. Through those rough, penniless years, they kept traveling and preaching, but they always returned to northeast Oklahoma. Most of their traveling was within a hundred mile radius of northwest Arkansas and northeast Oklahoma. A lot of their time was spent in West Tulsa and Tiawah.

Sister Nelson had started a Scripture book, and she spent many a rainy day writing it.

Edna's Scripture book was a small, black, loose-leaf notebook about 6½-by-8 inches. As she listened to the preachers' teaching and preaching, using charts, illustrations, examples, and lots of Scriptures, she wrote them down to be copied later in her own Scripture book. This was her own personal study book. She became so proficient that when they had sword drills, Donald Willhoite would beg, "Tell Sister Nelson to give out the questions. She always wins if she plays."

Daily prayer and Bible reading were a first priority with the Nelsons. Also, Sister Nelson was adept at planning and drawing large Bible charts for her husband to use as teaching aids. Occasionally the creative girl drew and colored pictures. She titled one such picture "When Life's Sunset Ends." Later she used these talents to draw and paint large streamers to advertise street services.

In January 1936, the Great Depression still gripped the whole country. Although Roosevelt had tried many innovative ideas and programs, recovery was by no means complete. Edna Nelson was grateful even for two flour sacks that Earl Lutz gave her husband.

"Here, Brother Nelson, here's two flour sacks." No gift was too small to use.

Later during that first week of January, Brother Nelson and the Willhoite boys went pecan hunting. Edna was delighted with the results.

"A hundred and thirty-four pounds! You boys really do know how to pick up pecans! That's a right smart lot of pecans."

"Yeah," Clarence grinned. "Me and Earl climbed up in that tree and flailed 'em out."

The days were busy for both the Nelsons. Whether they stayed at the Williams in West Tulsa or the Willhoites or the Lutzs in

Tiawah, Sister Nelson helped with the housework, washing dishes, mopping floors, or helping with the large family washing, in addition to meticulously washing their own clothes. Hours were spent in remodeling an old dress or turning a frayed collar or patching a tear in her husband's pants.

Eat it up,
Wear it out.
Make it do
Or do without.

The old proverb simply and graphically pictured the lifestyle of the thirties, particularly for a young Pentecostal evangelist and his wife.

Edna Nelson, however, was not only an active, thrifty housewife, she was also a creative, artistic individual. Early in their ministry she began to help musically with their services.

In almost every service (they were in service nearly every night), she either sang a solo or she and Brother Nelson sang a duet. Or perhaps she and Dolly Faye or Sister Mary Williams sang—sometimes in a trio, sometimes in a duet. New groups—duets, trios, and quartets—formed frequently as the Spirit-filled saints lifted their voices in praise.

In late February 1936, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ Conference was held in Paoli in Brother Frank Parkey's church. Brother Oliver F. Fauss from Houston, Texas, chairman of the South Central Council, presided. Several pastors and preachers were there: R. C. Wise from Oklahoma City, Voar Shoemake from Okmulgee, Mark Baughman from Glennpool, C. P. Kilgore, and W. H. Lions. Brother C. P. Williams was elected District Superintendent and Brother Nelson was chosen secretary.

At this meeting Brother O. F. Fauss ordained Brother Parkey and Brother Nelson. This began a long life as an official for the young evangelist from Arkansas. For many years and over many long miles, C. P. Williams and C. A. Nelson traveled, preaching, organizing, presiding, and officiating. Edna had to learn to stay at home.

Busy days! According to Edna's diary, many hours were spent working on the car and preaching on the streets. Occasionally

Brother Nelson cut wood. Often he went fishing. In February they went to a Negro meeting in Claremore. Brother Nelson was called on to testify and enjoyed the lively way the congregation responded.

Winter weather in Oklahoma was rainy and dreary, subject to frequent storms. Late in February a sudden storm turned to a cyclone which impacted near Turley.

The Nelsons were again at the Williams' in Tulsa. In addition to helping with the cooking and housework, Sister Nelson also did some typing (hunt and peck variety) for Sister Williams.

God continued to bless the dedicated young couple, and on Friday, February 5, 1936, while she was singing a solo in the service, the anointing of the Lord fell on Edna Nelson and she began to sing in tongues. What shouting and rejoicing filled the service! On the following Friday, Sister Nelson was dedicated at a special ordination and dedication service. Several prayed through during this service and received the Holy Ghost, including Archie and Thelma Turner's sister.

Sister Mary Williams did a lot of the preaching at the West Tulsa church. But other speakers included Brother Nunley, Brother Henry Turner, Sister Rhoda Upton, Brother James Moran, "Mother" McCarty (Dorothy) from India, Brother Coy Yarbrough, Brother Yocum from Cotton Valley, Louisiana, Brother C. P. Kilgore, Brother W. H. Wilkins, Brother L. J. Hosch, and Brother Langford.

Finance was always a problem, but transportation was not easy either. The last Sunday in January 1936, Clarence went down to Bill King's car lot to see about buying a car to go to Collinsville, Oklahoma. But when they tried to start it, the starter locked. They didn't get to go to Collinsville. The starter was repaired on Monday and once more the Nelsons prepared to go to Collinsville. Then the clutch went out!

"Well, the Lord must not want us to go to Collinsville," Brother Nelson decided. "That ole car didn't have no brakes anyhow!" he added. The day was not a total loss, however. Edna churned twice and made four pounds of butter.

Friends observed the young couple's striving and helped them when they could. Brother Ben Green bought Edna a new blue

dress. God heard their prayers and rewarded their efforts. Three or four or more were in the altar during the cold, rainy weeks of January and February. They included: Ralph, Rena, Cecil, and Arthur Meek and Essie Crabtree.

On March 26, 1936, Brother Nelson performed his first marriage ceremony. The newlyweds were Eulalah and Harlan Gregg. Although it was no big deal (they just got married after church), the preacher was almost as nervous as the groom. Later, Brother and Sister Nelson spent the night at Brother J.R. Graves in Sherman, Texas.

The next day Edna and Sister Graves finished a sugarloaf quilt. Then they went on to Savoy to church where Brother Nelson preached on "Spiritual Crimes." The next day he and Brother Graves held a street service in Bonham.

Preaching, testifying, singing. Their days were filled, and Edna and Clarence were constantly on the road preaching wherever there was an open door. Although they were often traveling, they kept in close touch with the Stones and the senior Nelsons by mail. Hardly a week passed that they did not get a letter from Rena or Mother Stone, as well as many of their friends. Birthdays, not only those of mothers and fathers, but also of brothers, sisters, grandparents, and friends were remembered with loving thoughts and, if at all possible, a small gift. Edna's busy hands made handkerchiefs, dresses, blouses, embroidered dresser scarves, kitchen tea towels, and hemstitched handkerchiefs. She was prompt to answer letters. Also, Sister Nelson sent off for songbooks to add new songs to her own collection.

Sunday, March 1 started off properly when Sister Nelson got up at 3:00, made bread, and then they left for Savoy, Texas, at 4:15 A.M. Sister Mary Williams preached in the morning service and Brother Nelson that night. Then the Williams, together with John David and Grandpa, went on to Dallas. The Nelsons went home with the hospitable Greens and stayed the night. Brother R. L. Blankenship was there and preached Monday night on "The Works of the Flesh." Brother Blankenship was a keen promoter and set the stage for the next day. "Come back tomorrow morning, and I'll prove to you that Noah was a woman."

Clarence Nelson's mouth fell open. His blue eyes snapped as

he scrambled through his Bible stuttering, "What's the matter with Brother Blankenship? He knows better than that."

The next day Brother Blankenship read from Numbers 26:33 about a man who named his daughter Noah.

The Nelsons always tried to help the local preacher when they were evangelizing. All sorts of help were needed. Once they were staying with Brother Ben Green at Dorchester, Texas. The Greens had five or six cats, and the cats had hundreds of fleas. "We've got to do something about those fleas," declared Sister Green in despair.

"We-ell, down in Arkansas where I was raised, we always had dogs, and when our dogs had fleas, we would dip them in creosote," suggested Brother Nelson helpfully. So they fixed up a batch of creosote and dipped all the cats. The next day every last cat was dead. "Well, we sure fixed those fleas," Brother Nelson laughed weakly. "Cats must be different from dogs."

Not far from the Greens lived some old friends from Arkansas, Walter and Kate Jackson. Sister Jackson was a large lady with a big heart. She was especially kind to the little Indian bride with the laughing brown eyes who was far from home and lonesome. "Sister Jackson was my friend, too," Brother Nelson recalls. "She could make the best chocolate pies." Good friends and simple treats made the thirties pleasant even if they were penniless.

While in the area, the Nelsons also preached at Prairie View and Whitesboro. Although their cash money was very limited, Edna did get to do a little shopping. Her list included: a card of buttons, glycerine, a box of Mum, material for a gown, spool of thread, a pair of hose, and a pair of panties. An ice cream cone was a special treat, and just for the fun of it, she spent a penny to weigh. She tipped the scales at 109.

While they were at Prairie View, Mildred Baldwin prayed through. Brother Nelson again preached on "The Signs of the The Times" and "Spiritual Crimes."

Preaching hard made Brother Nelson feel his responsibilities somewhat heavily. To her amazement, Clarence called Edna down for laughing in church!

Later they went to Sherman, did a little shopping, mailed two cards, ate some ice cream, then on to service where Brother

Nelson preached. Several were in the altar and two were baptized. The revival continued at Savoy, and they also began working here on another chart. The Lord blessed, and by Sunday night there were ten persons in the altar seeking the Holy Ghost. The faithful saints brought a pounding in for the young couple. Edna's days were filled with helping with the housework and quilting. But one day, they sneaked out and, just for the fun of it, slid down a haystack!

One summer on an evangelistic tour into east Texas, Brother and Sister Nelson took a Bible school student, Kathryn Hendricks, along. "Brother Nelson was a great source of help and inspiration to the students and young preachers who attended Apostolic Bible College. His church was the place where many of the young preachers got their first ministerial experience."

On the trip, Kathryn Hendricks was able to return a small kindness to Brother Nelson. The weather was dry and hot. Brother Nelson had enthusiastically played his guitar and sang, "It's Real." Then he preached earnestly and worked in the altar service.

"Sure wish I had a cold drink," he sighed. But there was not a cent in his pocket—not even a nickel for a coke.

"Here, Brother Nelson, I have thirty-five cents. Let's buy all of us a cold pop," offered Sister Hendricks. Little did she realize that the small offering would be returned to her multiplied many times and received at an hour when she would desperately need it.

On one occasion, Brother and Sister Nelson had a chance to ride in style to a meeting. Brother Frank Parkey came to pick them up to take them to Elmore City for a service. He arrived with a schoolteacher friend named Chrisler, who drove his car with a rumble seat. Brother Nelson had the pleasure of riding all the way from Oklahoma City in the rumble seat. He arrived dusty and tired but with his Bible in his hand and a sermon in his heart. Today he drives a luxurious Buick diesel, but he still has a Bible in his hand and a sermon in his heart and is quick to remember a funny story that will add a chuckle and a laugh to any group.

At Elmore City, it was necessary to meet the ice truck once a day to get ice for cool water. The water was carefully rationed out. Was it time for a sermon on "Living Water"?

In those days Brother Nelson had a minister's pass on the

Midland Valley Railroad. While the Nelsons were at Sherman, Texas, in a meeting, they decided to go up to Tulsa to visit the senior Nelsons who lived on Nogales Street close to the West Tulsa church.

"You take the luggage and go on the bus," instructed Brother Nelson. "I'll ride the train on my pass."

Dutifully Edna obeyed. The only seat available on the bus was right beside a good-looking man. Meekly she sat down and settled herself for the long, hot ride. The hours passed slowly. Her big, brown eyes grew heavy, and soon the young girl was fast asleep. When she woke some time later, her face flushed blood red and she quickly straightened up. "Dear goodness, my head was laying right on that stranger's shoulder!" After that, it was not too hard to persuade her husband to spend a few cents more and buy her a ticket to ride the train with him.

"It's high time I had my own car," Brother Nelson began planning. "Me and Sister Nelson need to ride together, and there's so many district meetings that I need to go to. Let's pray about a car, Edna."

One summer they stretched the old camp meeting tent (they usually used Brother C. P. Kilgore's tent) on Lake Luger out by Altus. It was a government park, but they had to build a platform and stretch the tent.

The first night, while they were singing, the props fell out from underneath the back part of the platform and dumped all the preachers off. "We had just straightened up the platform and started the service again when a big, black cloud rolled in, and we were in the middle of quite a storm," Brother Nelson recalls. "Three times that one night a storm came up. It split that tent all the way up three times."

"Tonight I do believe the Lord is going to protect us, Brother Nelson," Brother Blackburn predicted full of faith. "We don't need to hold the tent tonight."

Brother Nelson certainly did believe that the Lord could have his way in the storm, but when the wind hit that tent, he yelled, "Hang on to her, men!" He himself held on for dear life, but his 130 pounds just wasn't anchor enough. His feet went higher than his head while the wind billowed the tent. The next morning the

tent lay disconsolately on the ground.

"Come on, men, we've got to sew this tent back up." So they repaired the tent and stretched it back up. But the very next night, it split again. Three nights during that one camp, the wind picked up that tent. But God moved and poured out His blessings, and many folks received the Holy Ghost. Brother Shoemake, Brother Nelson, and Brother Mark Baughman preached, along with others who came in. During the daytime, Brother C. P. Kilgore, Brother Williams, and others taught. James Kilgore, Barbara Westberg, and many others recall those wonderful services when God poured out his blessings during Oklahoma camp meeting days.

In October 1936, a church business meeting was held. "Everything's fine," the auditor of the books reported. "All is in good condition with the adjustment of a $5.06 mistake in Bible school expenditures."

Two offerings were taken at that meeting. Brother R. C. Wise received five dollars and Brother Carter five dollars. "Little Is Much If God Is In It." God was surely with the Oklahoma district. The day would come when they would have a thriving district with a spacious campground and not one debt.

Brother Williams and Brother Nelson, full of zeal and wanting to be good administrators, traveled frequently throughout Oklahoma on district business—west around Altus, Mangum, and to those churches further out west. Their journeys took them toward the panhandle of Oklahoma. The roads were poor, many of them unpaved. Rattletrap flivvers chugged along.

"Sure hope we don't have a flat this trip, Brother Williams."

"Well, we'll get an early start and then stop at Brother and Sister Wise's in Oklahoma City. Sister Wise always has the 'prophet's chamber' ready."

But the preachers were later than they planned. The Wise family had retired, so Brother Williams and Brother Nelson just quietly eased into the house and headed for the guest room.

"Brother Williams, there's someone already in this bed. . . ."

"Well, maybe he'll just scoot over, Brother Nelson. It's too late, and we're too tired to go on."

The occupant of the bed was covered up head and ears, but

he moved over. No one said anything for a while, but about the time Brother Williams and Brother Nelson settled down, the sleepyhead raised up and asked, "How many are there of us, boys?" Holiday Inns for traveling Pentecostal preachers were many "light-years" away and it was "catch as catch can." But God blessed, and the steps of good men were ordered of the Lord.

Back home, sewing, embroidering, and quilting filled Sister Nelson's days, but she also wrote poetry, drew pictures, and set hair, as well as studied hard for Bible sword drills and Bible quizzes.

The Nelsons were in church almost every night, and in many of these services, Brother Nelson preached. His sermons included:

Highway #12
Spiritual Crimes
Signs of the Times
The Devil's Tree

His days were busy, too. He went hunting with Brother Burton and Brother Williams. (Fresh meat was always a welcome and needed addition to the sometimes skimpy menu.) There was always the sick to be prayed for. The Binghams had a new baby as did Pearl Bickford. This called for visits. There was always work to do at church.

They dug a basement under the West Tulsa church and installed a kitchen and Sunday school rooms. Work and ministering went hand and hand. Somehow, they got almost everything done.

They also prayed for the family when Mr. Smith* suffered a tragic death. This man had been under deep conviction, tightly grasping the back of the pew, shaking, but he refused to yield to God. Ten days later he was killed suddenly when his truck overturned near the Verdigris river.

Dealing with tragedy and trouble is the work of a minister, but the daily cares of life continue to gnaw and nag at the saints as well. Preachers counsel and pray. Other leaders work out programs and legislate to try to make life in society meaningful and fulfilling.

Roosevelt continued to try new ideas to break the Great

Depression. The WPA put many men on a payroll. The farmers were told how much they could plant. Cattle were killed and potatoes were polluted with kerosene as the government toyed with the nation's economy.

Down in Magnolia, Arkansas, some Pentecostals, the Smelser family, spent only $120 one year to make a crop. Norman took eggs to town and was offered only six cents a dozen. The next Saturday, when he was offered only five cents, he turned around and took his eggs home. His aunt was hired by the government in one of the federally sponsored kitchens canning beef as the farm folk brought it in. In other towns, farm wives were taught how to make excess cotton into mattresses. Farm production fell and prices increased a little.

Across the Atlantic in Germany, after the death of the aged Hindenburg, the chancellorship and the presidency merged. The army officers and men took the oath of allegiance personally to Hitler.

April 8, 1936, was a red letter day for Clarence and Edna Nelson. At last they felt they had found a car they could afford. It was a 1934 secondhand Chevy, but they were proud of it. "It needs new tires, but we'll get them at Montgomery Ward," planned Brother Nelson. Owning a car brought new responsibility to the couple. On the way home that night, the lights went out.

"We drove home in the dark," Edna wrote in her diary before she retired.

Someone who went to town and saw a paper brought back the news on April 8, "Well, they executed Hauptmann today." Americans had been terribly disturbed by the heartless slaying of the Lindbergh baby, and there was talk of more stringent laws in regard to kidnapping. Evangelists exhorted, "Be sure your sins will find you out."

Cold rains and frequent thunderstorms persisted throughout May. But it turned hot in June. On June 28, a terrible dust storm hit Oklahoma; more farmers left.

But many Pentecostals kept holding on. "It will soon be time for camp." Camp meeting in Oklahoma was a special time. "Dad, are they going to use your tent for camp meeting?" James Kilgore, Brother C. P. Kilgore's boy could hardly wait. He thought camp

meeting time was next to heaven.

In July they stretched the big tent, and soon it began to fill up. God blessed, the preachers preached straight and hard, and sinners repented. "Three got the Holy Ghost at camp," Edna wrote in her diary.

In 1936, the senior Nelsons, Albert and Nora, moved to Bellflower, California, mainly because of his asthma condition. He entered the carpentry business, doing some roofing. Her health already bad, she suffered from high blood pressure, diabetes, and other problems. Albert Nelson's health got better in California, but not Nora's. From time to time she would be so weak that they would think she was dying and would call for Clarence. In June 1941, Clarence and his brother, James (Pink), answered an emergency call from their mother and left for California.

*Not his real name.

Chapter Nine

Revival at Harmony Star

About ten or twelve miles from Tiawah was a small community called Harmony Star. In the fall of 1936, before Brother and Sister Nelson became pastor of Tiawah, Brother C. P. Williams talked with them about the spiritual needs of this area.

"Brother Nelson, my cousin lives on a turkey farm near a little schoolhouse between Claremore and Pryor at a place called Harmony Star. In the schoolhouse there, they have a union or community church. It is just a small Sunday school, but these people need a good revival. Why don't you and Sister Nelson go out there and preach a while? You can stay with my cousins, Brother and Sister Duke. He is not feeling too good. Ever since he got back from the war, he has been sickly. Perhaps a good revival would help the whole community."

September 3, 1936, Edna and Clarence packed their battered little suitcase and went to Harmony Star. As they left the Willhoite house on the hill, Mother Willhoite followed them out on the small front porch, wiped her eyes on her kitchen-soiled apron and said, "We sure are gonna miss you folks. When do you think you will be back?"

"Bless your big heart, Mother Willhoite," answered Brother Nelson. "We will miss being up here on this hill with all you folks. Now you all be sure to load up that ole Model T truck and come

over to Harmony Star and help us. We'll sure need some good altar workers."

The Harmony Star folk received the Nelsons hospitably, even giving them their own bed. In the household was an extra person, Harvey Rathbun.

"What does Harvey do?" questioned Brother Nelson.

"Oh Brother Nelson, Harvey looks after our turkeys. He herds turkeys all day out on the prairie."

"Herds turkeys out on the prairie?"

"Yeah, we gotta scratch for a living out here at Harmony Star. Even the turkeys scratch. They scratch and eat bugs and grasshoppers and worms. We don't have to feed 'em too much by the time they get home with Harvey from a day out on the prairie."

The Nelsons began to preach. Night after night they preached. Several friends from Tiawah came, prayed, fasted, and worked in the altar. During the day, Brother Nelson tried to make friends with Harvey Rathbun. He followed Harvey and the turkeys out on the prairie, but Harvey was not too friendly.

However, Clarence Nelson was a warm, kind, sociable man and not easily rebuffed.

"Wait up, I'll walk a piece with you." In the hot sun Brother Nelson followed Harvey, trying to reach him with the gospel. Every day Clarence tried to witness especially to Harvey. Both Clarence and Edna, together with the workers from Tiawah, fasted and prayed for the meeting.

"Oh, God, send a revival. Move on hearts, Lord. Convict men and women, especially Harvey, Lord. Move on Harvey Rathbun's heart." Still no results. Night after night they preached and sang. For several weeks Clarence and Edna Nelson preached. Not a hand was raised and there was not a dime in the offering for the evangelist and his wife. What small amount of change came in was desperately needed to feed the workers. Arthur Pullen, who worked for the L. B. Price Company at Tulsa, came over to assist in the revival. Nora Durham also helped.

"Sister Nelson, here's some mail for you." In the fifth week a letter arrived.

"Oh, this letter is from Harley and Eulalah!" The letter was

from their old friends, Harley and Eulalah, the first couple for whom Brother Nelson had performed a marriage ceremony. "Ten dollars! Looky here, Sister Nelson, Harvey and Eulalah have sent us an offering. Now I can go to that conference over at Hennepin." So Brother Nelson divided the offering. "This five dollars will be all I will need to get to Hennepin and back. Here Sister Nelson, you take the other five and get you some new clothes."

So Brother Nelson went to the conference in Hennepin, where he met the song writer, Thoro Harris. Although it had been stifling hot, once the conference started, it began to rain. Poor Brother Harris! He wasn't used to all that Oklahoma mud. He slipped, fell flat, and got his suit all muddy and dirty. That night when he returned to church, he said with a grin, "I have a new song."

"Another new song? What's the name of your new song, Brother Harris?"

"'Oklahoma Mud,' brother. I have had a real experience with Oklahoma Mud, Brother Nelson, and let me tell you, my brother, 'It's Real!'

"These 'Showers of Blessings' reminds me, Brother Nelson, how is the revival coming along at Harmony Star?"

"Well, we sure are doing a lot of seed sowing, Brother, but we are having to wait a bit on the harvest. Good folks out there at Harmony Star, especially that turkey herder, Harvey Rathbun. I sure have had a burden for him."

After a time of fellowship with the brethren at Hennepin, Brother Nelson returned to Harmony Star determined to 'hold out to the end.' Every night he preached the truth, "You gotta repent and be baptized in Jesus' name; then God will give you the Holy Ghost."

At last, during the eighth week, a breakthrough came. The altars filled. The folks knew what they had to do. They were convicted, especially Harvey. They cried and prayed and God began to fill them with the Holy Ghost. Before the meeting was over, Brother Nelson baptized eighteen in Jesus' Name and seventeen were filled with the Holy Ghost.

"All but one got the Holy Ghost, and he wouldn't give up his snuff. You gotta clean up before you can get the baptism of the

Holy Ghost." After eight long weeks, the revival finally came.

"Jesus is the only name given under heaven whereby a man can be saved. Show me anywhere in the Scriptures where anybody ever baptized in any other way, and I'll go to any creek, any pond, any baptistry, to any preacher you wanta name and I'll be baptized myself all over again," Brother Nelson challenged under the anointing of the Holy Ghost.

The eighth Sunday night a man by the name of Bump was in the service. He had been in about everything that had come along in that country, and when he heard Brother Nelson's challenge, he began to search the Scriptures for himself. Monday night Mr. Bump was back, Bible in hand, with his finger stuck at Matthew 28:19. "Here, preacher, what about this?" It was written all over his face what he wanted to say, but before he had a chance to say a word, Brother Nelson announced his text.

"Tonight I am going to preach on Matthew 28:19."

He started at that point and preached mightily on the truth of the oneness of the Godhead and the baptism in Jesus' name. The Spirit of the Lord came down. Light was revealed and honest hearts were touched. Ten, including Brother Bump, received the Holy Ghost. It was certainly not a blue Monday, but a bright Monday night in that basketball gym of the old Harmony Star schoolhouse as the court, from one goal to another, was filled with men and women receiving the Holy Ghost. People shouted and spoke in tongues as a mighty wave of the Holy Ghost swept in. On November 8, when the Nelsons finally left Harmony Star, the old turkey herder, Harvey Rathbun, had become so attached to them that he wanted to go with them. As soon as they became pastors of Tiawah, that is exactly what Harvey Rathbun did. He moved to Tiawah to help in the church there, and he stayed close to the Nelsons the rest of his days.

Usually in February when it was freezing cold and raining, if not snowing, the Williams conducted a twenty-one-day Bible school. In 1937 Brother C. P. Kilgore was the night speaker. Brother B. E. Echols taught in the afternoon. Various preachers took turns teaching in the morning. All the saints and ministers from many miles around gathered for this Bible school. Cots and odds and ends of beds and mattresses were arranged for dormi-

tories. Canned fruit and donated food was served in the dining hall by volunteer cooks. Dolly Faye and May Willhoite always served up their speciality—homemade biscuits.

During the 1937 Bible school, hardworking Granddad Noah Williams was baptized.

In 1937 the Oklahoma camp was held at Wynnewood. Brother and Sister Olen Parkey had moved there to raise up a church, so the Nelsons and the Williams stayed at their house during the camp. Their son, W. C. Parkey, was only six years old. The camp was held in the park in a large tent.

"Brother Guidroz will be preaching for us." The news spread and the crowds started coming. Night after night the Lord blessed. Finally the movie theater closed down. "Everybody has gone to that Pentecostal meeting." Brother Nelson particularly enjoyed Brother Guidroz with his Cajun wit and his ability to hold an audience spellbound, but he especially appreciated Brother Guidroz's hard, straight preaching on the message. Although he was only six years old at the time, W. C. Parkey still remembers Brother Guidroz's stirring message on "Death March."

In September, after the camp, the Nelsons left to visit relatives in California. "Sure will be nice to have a few days with Mom!" The Nelsons loved their relatives and enjoyed their stay in California, but Tiawah still beckoned.

In the fall of 1937, the saints in Tiawah were all excited. "Our first official pastor!" "Sure will be nice to have a preacher living right here in Tiawah all the time." Brother and Sister Van Esler from Shreveport, Louisiana, had accepted the pastorate of the little mission. They were southerners and used to southern hospitality, and they walked right into the warm, friendly little community of Tiawah, where folks were just folks and no door was ever locked.

To be pastor of Tiawah was just a small, insignificant position in a small, insignificant town. But down in southern Europe, an ambitious leader finally decided to check out a possible alliance with another aggressive leader to the north. Mussolini paid a visit to Hitler. Before he left Germany, he had decided to cast his lot with the Nazi dictator. From that point, his own affairs began to go downhill.

In November 1937 in a secret meeting, Hitler discussed plans for future conquests, beginning with Austria and on to Czechoslovakia.

In December 1937 the militaristic Japanese sank a United States gunboat on the Yangtze river. With amazing duplicity, they calmly apologized. Franklin Roosevelt accepted their apology.

The winter of 1937 was a hard one. The Great Depression still ruled the country. There was very little money for churches to sponsor revivals, so Brother and Sister Nelson spent most of the winter in Tiawah with the Willhoites at the house on the hill. At this time there were five adult children at home—May, Earl, Ernest, Dolly Faye, and Donald. The last two were still in school. Everybody pitched in and helped with work.

Usually Edna washed the dishes, then the cream separator, while May swept the floors and made the beds. Then Grandma Willhoite would go to the garden to get fresh produce for the day. The eggs had to be gathered and the chickens and guineas fed (sometimes they also had turkeys). Many times they made cottage cheese from the clabbered milk. They put this on the stove to heat, then strained it through a white sugar sack. Next they added salt, a little sugar, and a small amount of cream.

Brother Nelson helped the men of the family to cut stove wood. They sold this and some of the cream to get cash money to buy groceries. Brother Willhoite had a sorghum mill, so there was a little touch of sweetening in their lives. That year they raised a splendid crop of turnips and put up a lot of "turnip kraut" (made similar to regular kraut).

To put a little meat on the table, the boys, including Brother Nelson, would go out to the big prairies a few miles from the house and catch jackrabbits. One day they came back with thirty-five rabbits! They took the meat off the bones and ground it with just a little fat pork and seasoned it for sausage.

Rabbit Sausage Recipe

Grind raw rabbit meat which has been cut off the bones. Mix with fat pork, also grind. (Rabbit meat is all lean, so put in the fat so it will cook). Add salt, black pepper, and sage to taste. Fry the

meat until it is done and put into quart or half-gallon fruit jars, cover with lard. Turn upside down so the grease will cover the sausage. To serve: open and heat in black iron skillet. (Special note: Use only a small amount of salt pork).

But all was not work. At night after the chores were done, they sat at the long supper table on two benches and conducted Bible sword drills. Then they popped popcorn and made taffy candy or popcorn balls. The Willhoite house on the hill was closely tied to the small mission below.

Chapter Ten

Late Thirties

The winter of 1937 was long and hard with few revivals. The Nelsons spent most of the time at the Willhoites' house on the hill. But 1938 was a different story.

According to the *Claremore Progress*, Hitler was making threatening noises in Europe. But whether the average Americans were aware of the struggle ahead is not known. Apparently something was causing some folk to turn to God. According to Edna Nelson's diary that year, numerous people received the Holy Ghost. Some of the names are:

Holy Ghost

January
Vivian Jones
Ralph Meeks
Melinee Sadler
Maxine Brown
John Carter
Elmer Priest
March
Opal Armbrister
Merle Doty
Leon Bickford
Jimmie Lack

Water Baptism

January
Nelson Frenchman
February
Ted Ray
Corine Sanders
Hill from Sperry baptized
March
Dora Marie Bickford
Leon Bickford
John Allen Pickerman
Maggie Wright
Jimmie Lack

Holy Ghost

March
Dora Marie Bickford
Emmajean Lockhart
Dempsy Coker
Marie Coker
April
Florence Woods (Thompson)
Orval Doty
Clara McDaniel
Monroe Langston
June
Theda Bea Sanders
July
Juanita Harlow
September
"Toots" Ruth Rich
Juanita Baldridge
Nancill Ball
October
Estell Baldridge
Merle Haile
November
Daphna Cook
Crawford
December
Hazel Doshier

Water Baptism

March
Clifford James
Merle Day
April
Orval Doty
Jim Barton
Clara McDaniel
Vashti Thompson
Sylvia Kilpatrick
Montor Langston
Baker Russell
Anna Jean Van Esler
Florence Woods
Cora Doty
Viola Doty
J.D. Armbrister
Blacketer
Monroe Langston
Barton boy
Frank Worley
Garfield McDaniel
May
Mary Mathis
Myrtle Land
Cox
June
Delores Lambert
Theda Bea Sanders
Erner Dukes
Pauline
July
Jack Harlow

Water Baptism

September
Ross Grishom
October
Baptized 13
December
Jackie Daphna Cook
Ernest Doshier
Herman Hadlock
Brother Cook
A Hollis man was baptized
Johnnie Faye Hatcher
McCutchen girl

But the big revival was, of course, remembered well by the Willhoites. That was the meeting at Tiawah.

In the spring of 1938, Brother A. Van Esler, who was then pastor of the church at Tiawah, contacted Brother Nelson. "We need a revival, Brother Nelson. Can you come?"

"We are always happy to go to Tiawah." The Nelsons started the meeting on March 6. Night after night the altar was full of hungry seekers. For fifty nights the Lord blessed. Twenty-one converts were taken to Otter Creek and baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Eighteen of them received the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues. One of them, Orval Doty, later married Dolly Faye Willhoite. They, along with two sons and their families, are still faithful members of Brother Nelson's church in Claremore.

Revivals are the highlights of a minister's life. But there are also other functions which need a preacher.

One such occasion was on June 17, 1938.

While they were in West Tulsa, Sister Mary Williams was called to conduct a graveside service for the newborn twins of Mr. and Mrs. McHenry. The two women, Sister Edna Nelson and Sister Mary Williams, conducted the service, sang the song "Jewels," and comforted the bereaved parents. The rich and the poor, the famous and the unknown, lie in the cemetery in Claremore.

The regular church services were good in Tiawah. Often the

group went in to West Tulsa for special events. There was usually a Bible school during the cold month of February. Then the longer term Bible school had its graduation on March 30, 1941. Edna had a special corsage for the event. At many of these affairs, Brother Nelson was called upon to preach. Often they both sang or Sister Nelson sang a solo. She kept adding songs to her songbook.

Hand in Hand with Jesus
Joyful in Jesus
I'm Gonna Cling to the Cross
One or Two Times Won't Pay
Take Up Thy Cross
Judgment Will Come On The Morrow
Beautiful Heaven
I Never Shall Forget the Day
Too Sacred for Eyes to See
Salvation Has Been Brought Down
Jesus Knows and Cares
List to the Voice
I Would Not Miss It, Would You?
He Whispers Sweet Peace to Me
The Stone Song
Farther Along
I Guess I'm Just a Little Old-Fashioned

It was camp meeting time again. The camp was being held in Guthrie, Oklahoma. They pitched Brother Kilgore's big tent. "Who's going to preach? Why, Brother Shoemake, I thought you could preach one night, and I'll preach the next," Brother Nelson planned with his longtime friend, Brother Voar Shoemake.

So they cut the weeds and pitched the tent right in a residential neighborhood. In those days they did not have to get a permit or have city council approval. Everything went well until Brother Pullen from Tulsa shouted, "Wellllll, glory!" several times from a set of lungs as efficient as Gabriel's trumpet, strong and loud. The neighbors began to complain, "Can't get no sleep with that holy roller meeting going full blast 'til long after midnight." The police investigated and cautioned, "Need to keep the

peace." But when Voar Shoemake and Clarence Nelson preached, the Holy Ghost fell, sinners repented, and the fire came down. Two or three people finally prayed through along about midnight, and Brother Pullen did it again, "Wellllll, glory to God!"

Up drove the police car. Brother Pullen met the officers as they got out. "Now I want to know why you have come down here? This is three times you have disturbed us. We're having church!"

Openmouthed, the policemen stared at the Spirit-filled saint. They did not know what to say. Finally they apologized for disturbing and assured the Pentecostals that they did not care. "We wouldn't think of coming down here if we didn't keep getting complaints. But when we do, we are forced to investigate. Glad you are having a good meeting! Good night."

Such preaching, such singing, such testifying!

"They're *all* preachers," declared one newcomer.

"It beats anything I ever seen. I never seen so many preachers. And the last one," he added, "he's the dumbest of them all. He had to read his out of a book." He was referring to Brother Nelson, the evangelist, who had finally gotten the floor about 10 P.M. after all the saints had testified. He had opened his Bible then to preach.

Crowds pressed under the tent. Every night people came out to the revival. The Great Depression was on. The Dust Bowl was a way of life. Crops had failed. Jobs and security were things of the past. Those who had jobs went to work during the day and to church at night. Those who had no work often went to the church to pray, even in the daytime. It was not unusual to be poor. Everybody was. The greatest joy was the peace and contentment they had in their walk with God.

In a small Tennessee country community, one poor sharecropper with a large family was the only man in the tiny Pentecostal church. He was not learned, but always his sweet testimony was, "I praise the Lord for food, raiment, and shelter." Night after night in service after service, in the rain, through the snow, Brother Bobo was there with his word for the Lord, "I praise the Lord for food, raiment, and shelter." And that was all in the world the poor man had.



Evangelist and Mrs. C. A. Nelson and her brother, Ralph Stone.



Brothers C. A. Nelson, C. P. Williams and Melvin Pyatt.



Wrights Chapel School



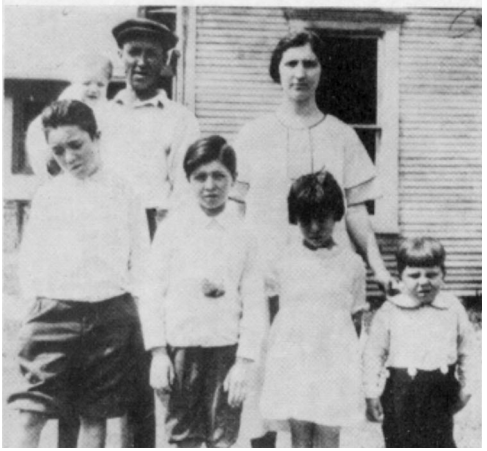
Clarence Nelson, infant.



Nora and Albert Nelson, parents.



Clarence Nelson, youngster.



Charley and Ollie Stone, Buford, Ralph, Edna, Jim and baby Edith.



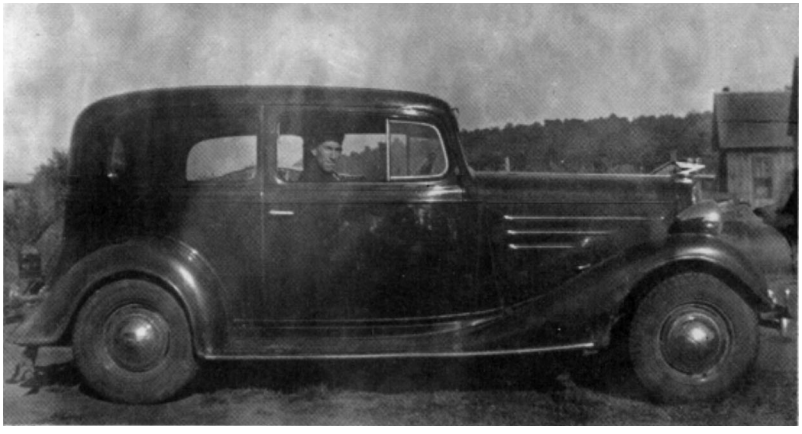
The Willhoite family, 1945.



Edna Nelson



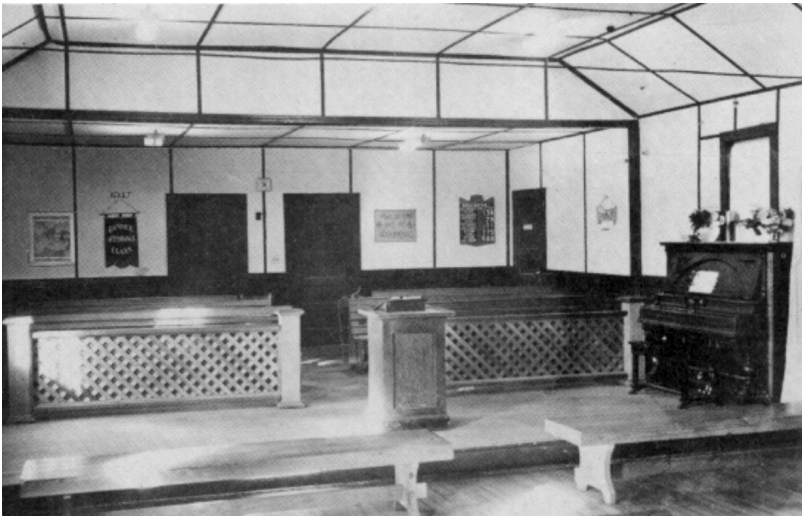
Evangelist C. A. Nelson



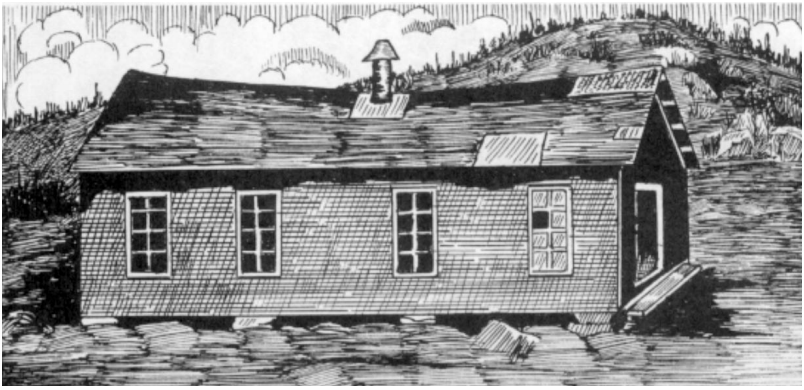
First car.



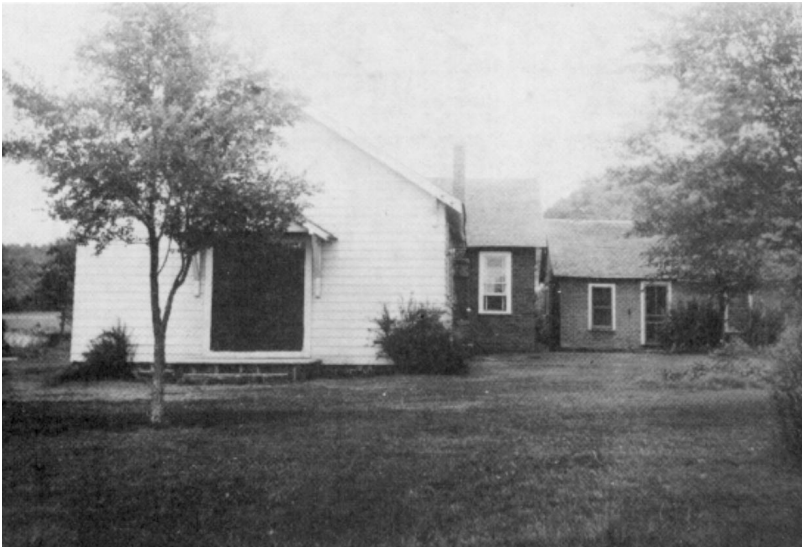
Pastor and Mrs. C. A. Nelson and church.



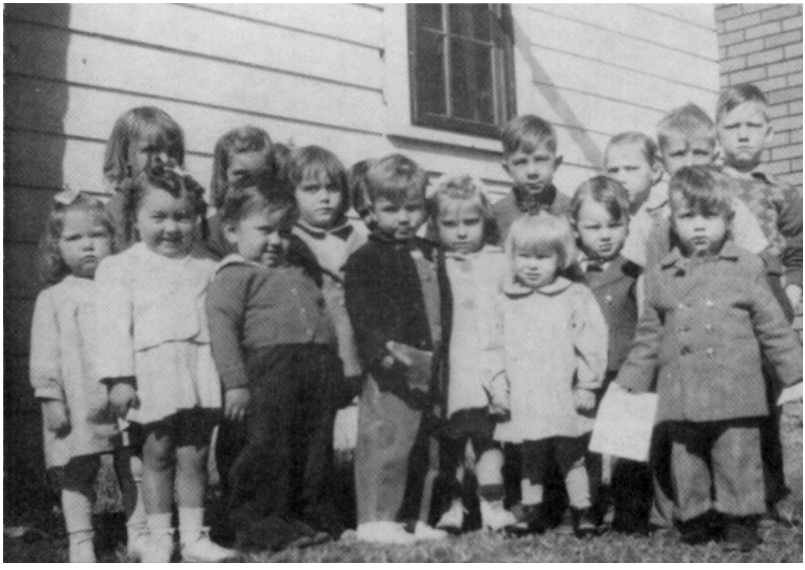
Inside of Tiawah church.



Sketch of old Tiawah mission.



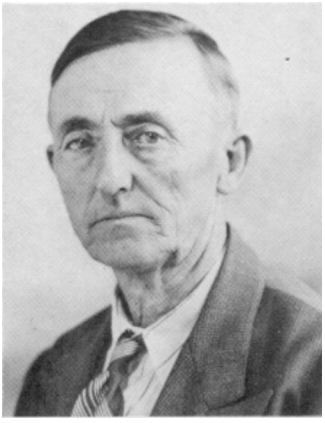
Tiawah church and parsonage



Sunday school class, 1945.



Duncan camp meeting, 1941.



Harvey Rathbun



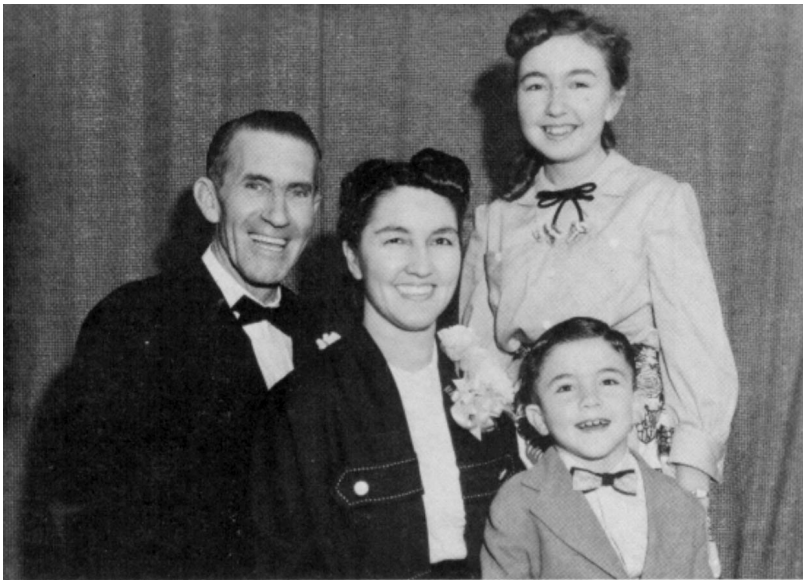
C. A. Nelson on
top of Willhoite hill.



“Grannie” Norton, 1951,
healed and baptized in her
late years.



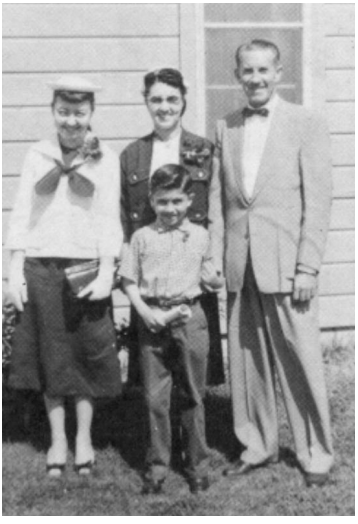
The Willhoite family in the ’40s.



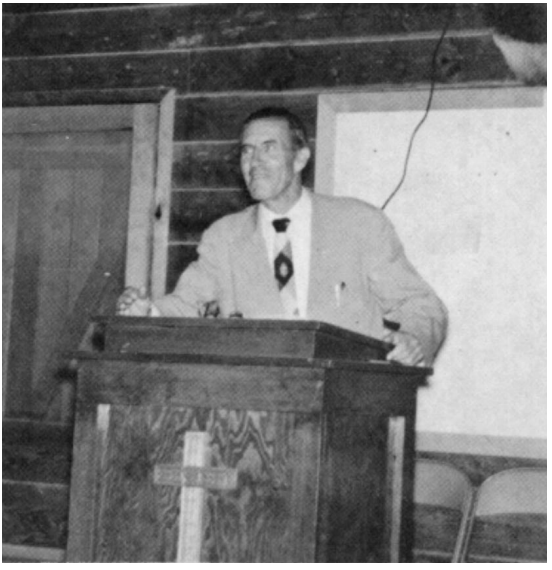
The Nelsons, 1956.



Let's go fishin'!



Mother's Day, 1958.



Brother Nelson, camp meeting preacher!
Mt. Lemon, Arizona, 1955.



Brothers S. W. Chambers,
C. A. Nelson and A. T. Morgan
at Robbers Cave Camp.



Clean-up time at
camp meeting!



Baptized in Jesus' name!



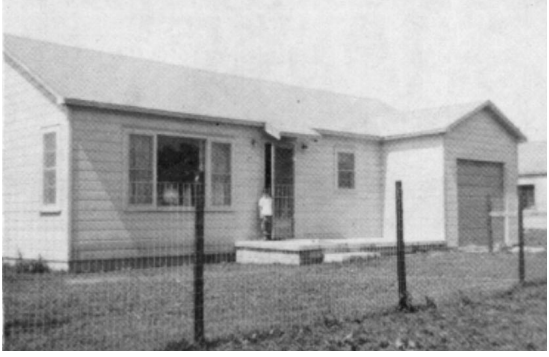
Ordination time for Brothers Langham,
Whalen and Bentley.



Surveying for the parsonage, 1954.



United Pentecostal Church, Claremore, Oklahoma



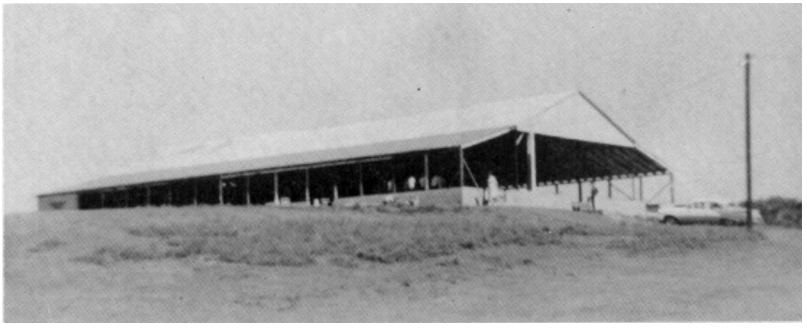
The new parsonage in Claremore.



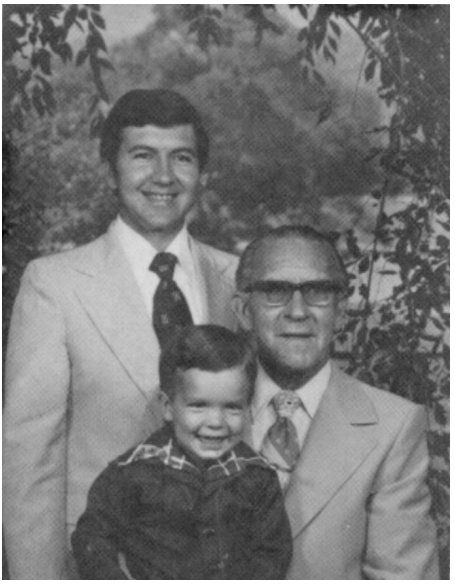
Twenty-Fifth Anniversary.



Old friends
Rev. and Mrs. Henry
Ivie, California
camp, 1959.



Oklahoma camp-
ground, 1960.



Three generations - Rev. C. A. Nelson, Rev. Duane Nelson, Joseph Duane Nelson, Jr.



Sister Nelson and Sister George.



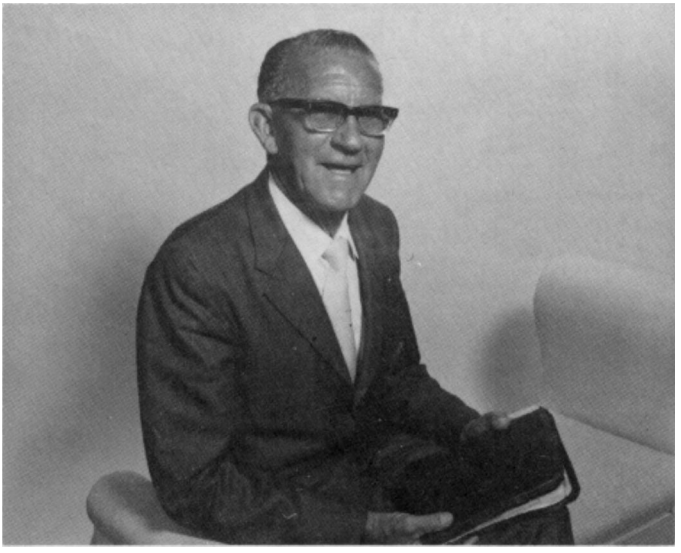
Quilting time!



Fortieth Anniversary.



Rev. M. D. Deal and Rev. and Mrs. C. A. Nelson.



Still a pastor.



Time for fishin'.



Grandma's creative!

"In every cemetery across this nation are saints of God whose only possession was their great joy, peace, and contentment in their walk with God," Brother Nelson says firmly.

While Stalin, Mussolini, and Hitler schemed in their respective revolutionary ways to seize power and while Roosevelt was trying to pull this nation out of the Great Depression as Churchill watched, worried, and warned of the ever threatening storm clouds in Europe, itinerant preachers across America, many of them "unlearned and ignorant" as Peter in the New Testament, preached the same message that Peter preached in Acts chapter two, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). God confirmed His Word and poured out His Spirit upon town after town and village after village as His messengers such as E. J. Ewart, Howard A. Goss, R. G. Cook, Oliver F. Fauss, A. D. Gurley, Robert F. LeFleur, C. P. Kilgore, Voar Shoemake, and Clarence Nelson preached and preached and preached.

During the Great Depression all facades were stripped away so America could squarely face the truth. Perhaps this nation came nearer to knowing its real aims and worth than at any time before or since. The Great Depression was popular. Everybody had it. Not only did the Oklahoma farms suffer; so did the big cities back east. In New York, seventeen thousand families were put out on the street every month in the year that Roosevelt took office. Some action was desperately needed, and Roosevelt was a man of action. Some, however, of the actions seemed to help as little as a parasol in a typhoon.

Religious leaders and churches were stirred. Aimee Semple McPherson had a soup kitchen at Angelus Temple. Doctor Norman Vincent Peale declared, "There's nothing wrong with this country that a good prayer meeting on Wall Street won't help!" But simple preachers filled with the Holy Ghost knew that in the midst of trouble and poverty they had stumbled upon the Pearl of great price. They continued to preach in schoolhouses, on the streets, and in storefronts, calling men to walk in the light. "Find out what's really *real*!"

The reality of war and peace, life and death, was accented at

the camp meeting at McAlester when a shocking event happened. An older man who had been somewhat sickly came to the altar to seek God. While praying he had a sudden heart attack and died right there in the altar. Although the preachers and saints earnestly sought God for a miracle, the man was dead.

"That sure shook us up, and it was a sober meeting. But there was no repercussion—just a startling realization that life was indeed short and 'now is the day of salvation.'"

Brother W. T. Witherspoon, chairman of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ, was a visiting minister at that camp and taught during the day services. Brother Mark Baughman and Brother Nelson took turns preaching at night. Their anointed preaching stirred hearts, and soon the camp was ringing with the praises of God.

But when God moves, the devil tries to stir things up. Two mothers got into a heated discussion concerning their daughters' boyfriends. Out back of the tent, down by the railroad track, the argument raged. But those in charge rebuked the mothers firmly and made them come back to apologize before the whole congregation. "Confession is good for the soul, sisters, and you ladies need to confess. We can't have church unless everybody has a right attitude."

"Amen, Brother, and while you're at it, someone needs to preach to these fine young folks about parking and petting, too."

Well, Brother Nelson bore down on it. "When Sister Nelson and I were courting, I sat on one side of the church and her on the other. How can you get into the service and worship God if your mind is on your sweetheart?" Morals, dress, attitudes, worldliness—there was strict teaching in Oklahoma.

The men in those early days slept in the main tent to be handy to help in case of storm. The women and children at least had a mattress. Some of them rigged up little tents and placed their mattresses in these shelters. Others just took their mattresses out under a tree. That was their motel or dormitory. But men such as James Kilgore remembers those days fondly, especially all the fun the young people had at camp.

Was there a cook tent? Oh, no. The tent was the sky. The kitchen stove was an old flat-top model which sat in the open with

three joints of stove pipe protruding from it. When it started to rain, they just put an elbow in the stovepipe to keep the rainwater from putting out the fire and kept on cooking dinner!

Along about that time, Brother V. A. Guidroz from Texas came to Oklahoma camp to be the evangelist. This began a lifelong friendship. When V. A. Guidroz and C. A. Nelson get together now, whether it is at a camp meeting or in a General Board session, you can be sure there is never a dull moment. Cajun talk and Oklahoma dry wit spark off one another.

One night a pastor from McAlester, Brother W. O. McCoin, was at the camp. Under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, God gave this songwriter-pastor a new song. Someone wrote the music to it that same night, and it was sung in the service. Singers at camp included Sister Williams' nieces, Lyndal and Bernice Krause.

During the day services at camp, Brother C. P. Kilgore often spoke. He was a steady, solid Bible teacher, deeply devoted, dedicated, and consecrated to the work of the Lord. Bro. S. L. Wise was heard to remark, "Brother Kilgore can get more people to the altar by just looking them in the eye and motioning than anybody else could by going back and getting them by the arm and taking them to the altar." He was not demonstrative, hardly moved from behind the pulpit, and preached long sermons—two and three hours long. He had lots of tremendous personal experiences—visions from God—which his son James heard him tell about two or three hundred times. But in James' own words, "It always made me sit on the edge of my seat every time I heard Dad tell of those visions." The deep, long lasting impression this Oklahoma preacher left on his son is still real today.

The Kilgores, like other families in the thirties, had little or no money. The Kilgore kids had never drunk any pop until there was once some at a conference. They thought it was free and kept going back for more. The kind ladies who were taking care of the concession stand just let them alone. "They didn't have the heart to ask us for the money."

In the cold month of February, the Nelsons often took saints with them from Tiawah and went to West Tulsa for a short-term Bible school. They also brought in canned goods and helped to support the school. Brother S. L. Wise, from Hodge, Louisiana,

was a favorite Bible teacher. His brother, R. C. Wise, was pastor of the church in Oklahoma City. It was in this home that Sister Wise, a well-loved hospitable woman with a lovely daughter, Alma Lee, had a special guest room set aside for preachers.

"I want you young preachers to sit and listen," Brother S. L. Wise would begin. "You need to get rid of them old chimney corner scriptures such as 'Every tub will set on its own bottom,'" he smiled. "That's not Bible!" "And 'you can't tell the summer from the winter only by the coming and going of the leaves,'" again he admonished. "That's not Bible; that's just chimney corner scripture. We need to listen to sound Bible teaching. Some of you get up and quote that the Lord will cast our sins in the sea of forgetfulness never to remember them against us any more. That's not Bible, either."

The saints and the young preachers and their wives listened carefully. Many diligently took notes. Edna Nelson wrote down many verses in her Scripture book, and later she and her husband discussed these "nuggets."

So they were astounded and somewhat amused one morning when a visiting minster-teacher got up and in his introductory remarks said, "The Lord will cast our sins in the sea of forgetfulness never to remember them against us no more." Clarence and Edna Nelson discovered that great and supposedly profound teachers were just men. "We were all in the same sack together. Pull us out, and you couldn't tell one from another. We were just all humans. But we were eager to learn, and we had lots of good fellowship and love toward one another. We had one thing in common and that was to live for God. Times were hard. There was no money."

Brother Nelson remembers a time that Brother Voar Shoemake worked for King Motor Company in Tulsa. Brother Shoemake called Brother Nelson. "Brother Nelson, my company has got a group of cars down at Weleetka, and we need someone to drive those cars up here for us. Let's get a carload of us men and go drive those cars back."

So Brother Nelson and Brother Mark Baughman and some other men went with Brother Shoemake to Weleetka. There Brother Shoemake said, "Brethren, I've got some money to get

breakfast with. We are really going to eat. We are going to eat all the bacon we want." That was like music to the ears of these preachers. Brother Shoemake went in and ordered two pounds of bacon fried and two eggs each. The cook in the restaurant was astonished at the order, but she started frying bacon. In those days bacon was thirty or forty cents a pound. As the aroma filled the room, Brother Nelson thought of his wife back home with so little in the cupboard to eat. "I could hardly enjoy that crisp bacon. Times were hard, but we shared everything together. In spite of the poverty, it was a great life."

Brother and Sister Shoemake were pastoring at Morris, Oklahoma. They had two children at this time, their oldest daughter and Jimmy. There were times Jimmy cried for milk. But there was no milk and no money to buy it. Sister Shoemake had been raised in a preacher's home (Brother C. P. Kilgore), and she knew how to do without as well as how to trust God. Together they managed to preach this gospel regardless of the hardships.

But in the midst of hardships, C. A. Nelson and Voar Shoemake found something to laugh about. Once a carload of Oklahoma preachers were going to a meeting, and they got into a heated discussion. The question was, "Do cows have teeth?" On and on the debate raged, and no conclusion could be reached.

"Stop, Brother Shoemake," Brother Nelson cried. "Right there, there is an old cow right out there in that pasture." Brother Shoemake slammed on the brakes. All the preachers piled out of the car, raced into the pasture, and chased the poor innocent cow down.

"Hold her steady, fellers! I'll pry her mouth open. There, that proves it. A cow does have teeth." Brother Nelson crowed triumphantly.

They all had a hearty laugh, climbed back into the car, and went on to meeting. "Well, we got that question settled. Now what was that you said about Melchisedec?" Preachers are a funny breed—not only funny as in peculiar but also funny as in ha, ha.

In December 1938, the Van Eslers resigned. The Tiawah church called Brother Nelson to be their next pastor.

Soon after Brother Neslon became pastor, he wanted to build

a new church. "Why, the floor in the mission was so uneven they had cut off the center legs of the altar to keep it from wobbling." The young pastor called a business meeting at which it was discussed whether to rebuild or just repair the old mission. An elderly man, Uncle Mike Stout, raised his bony old hand and at the same time stamped his foot. The floor jarred, the altar wobbled, and the whole building shook. "I've got a hundred dollars for a new building and not one dime to repair." The vote soon carried. Plans to build were under way! The first service in the new church was held in the fall of 1939.

Although Uncle Mike was generous with his money, he was unable to help much with the building. Strong in faith, he remained true all his life. When he lived with his daughter, Sister John Gooden, he took diabetes, and blood poisoning set up in his foot. "Don't call the doctor, John," he insisted as they dressed his foot. It was a terrible sight. One could almost see the bone. "If I get to where I don't know what I'm doing, don't put me in no hospital."

"I won't, Dad. It will be over my dead body if anybody moves you." These Tiawah Pentecostals were strong men, real men, and they would die for their beliefs.

The church prospered. The Sunday school often had over one hundred in it in a town of seventy-five. "You folks ought to get your whole town in church," Brother Nelson witnessed at rallies and fellowship meetings.

God was blessing in Oklahoma camp meetings regardless of summer thunderstorms. But in middle Europe a dark cloud of political tension kept growing darker. In January 1939 Neville Chamberlain, British Prime Minister, had gone to Rome in an effort to persuade Mussolini to be neutral. During March, in a speech at the eighteenth Communist Party Congress, Stalin hinted at his willingness to come to terms with Hitler. In August, Russian Foreign Minister, V. M. Molotov, and German Foreign Minister, J. Von Ribbentrop, signed an agreement by which Stalin had struck a bargain with Hitler to divide their sphere of influence in eastern Europe.

On September 1, 1939, the German Blitzkrieg humbled Poland. Two days later Great Britain and France declared war on

Germany. The storm had burst. Churchill was promptly appointed First Lord of the Admiralty. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a former secretary of the U. S. Navy, immediately sent congratulations to Churchill. Roosevelt later called a special Congress to revise the Neutrality Act to permit belligerents to buy arms on a cash-and-carry basis.

Terrible, traumatic times were ahead for the entire Western world. Churchill had watched, worried, and warned for ten years. God-fearing Pentecostal preachers, who had preached that "tobacco will defile the temple" years before the Surgeon General's office issued a warning, were also watching. They warned, "Trouble's a-comin' on this old world." Some had begun to preach about the Antichrist. Could Mussolini be the Antichrist? Brother Nelson thought so and preached, "Get ready. Jesus is coming."

Chapter Eleven

Beginning to Pastor

In July 1940, after eight years on the evangelistic field, Edna and Clarence were elected pastors at Tiawah. They stayed with the Willhoites on the hill until the parsonage was built. Lewis I. Doty, overseer, built the little, two room parsonage out of green oak lumber. When the lumber dried out, large cracks appeared. But Brother Nelson just tacked one-by-four-inch boards over the cracks. They covered the inside walls with cardboard boxes. Thirty-six-inch wide building paper was tacked over this—not just common old red or blue building paper—pretty paper with pink flowers and green leaves.

Sister Maggie Wright gave the Nelsons a little, golden oak dresser. Someone else donated a bed and a small, three burner kerosene cookstove that had a tiny oven which fit on two of the burners, leaving only one burner to cook on. But Edna had always loved Tiawah. She was so glad to settle down after eight years traveling in evangelistic work that she was in "hog heaven."

On a cold day, November 14, 1940, they moved into the small cottage. That night the young couple shivered, their teeth rattled, and they almost froze. A sinner man, Mr. Russell, had gone to town and bought a double blanket for the young couple. Before the long, cold winter was over, they were thankful for the warm cover.

A week before this on November 7, in a Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ meeting, Brother Nelson had been elected secretary, Brother C. P. Williams chairman, and Brother Voar Shoemake vice chairman.

Although Brother Nelson was a PAJC official and pastor of Tiawah, times were still hard. They still had to "make do."

Apple boxes and orange crates completed their furniture. Edna hung bright print curtains. "There, these orange crates look real nice!" After a while they got a secondhand oak icebox with brass handles. "Every time we go into town now, we'll get fifty pounds of ice," Clarence planned.

"And we'll get Maggie Wright to come and make ice cream, too," added Edna.

Everything was fine! Iced tea was especially good. But the first time they forgot to empty the drip pan, Clarence decided to drill a hole in the floor for a drain pipe to run through. "No more mopping up the overflow," Edna rejoiced.

The icebox was under control, but Edna had trouble with her stoves. First, there was a three burner kerosene stove. But one burner would not work, and there was always a faint odor of kerosene in the little parsonage.

Times were still very hard, but fortunately prices were quite low. Edna's shopping list for that year went something like this:

(January)	tea strainer	.05
	hair net	.05
	hose	.49
(February)	embroidery thread	.05
	shoes	.85
	printed material for a dress	.45
	match holder	.10
(March)	hose	.59
	tooth powder	.10
	hairpins	.05

	zipper	.10
	sheet music	.10
	bus fare	.10
	taps for shoes	.10
	pepper	.20
	thread	.10
	collar	.25
	dresser scarf	.10
	British tan oxfords	1.98
	tape measure	.05
	crochet thread	.10
(June)	electric iron	3.98
(July)	white slippers	1.67
	ironing board	3.49
	print for dress	.46
	yarn	.25
(August)	2 yds. outing	.30
	2 yds. nainsook	.38
	hose	.31
(October)	pink and blue material	.62

Edna Nelson still irons on that ironing board! Needless to say, the big purchase was the electric iron. That is, until they bought a bassinet late that year!

The other big purchase of the year was the red-letter day they bought the two door 1934 Chevrolet. It had been sixteen long years since Clarence purchased the 1925 Ford. But cars bring problems. The back springs went out in May; then the car caught on fire June 20, 1941. Brother Langston had to pull them in when they had car trouble shortly after the Fourth of July. It was a Sunday, and church was half over before they arrived. But Brother Nelson certainly did not let that hinder him. He went right ahead and preached.

In addition to preaching, Brother Nelson also served as clean-

up man in his church. "I like to do my own cleaning," he declares. Every Saturday he took the broom and other supplies and went to the sanctuary of the little Tiawah church. As he cleaned, he recalled where various saints often sat. As he dusted pews, he prayed for each family. "God bless the Willhoites." "Jesus, keep your hand on 'Tumper' and his family." Family by family, he prayed for them all as he cleaned. He began the practice as a young pastor in Tiawah, and he still continues to clean and pray in the church every Saturday.

Both Brother and Sister Nelson are warm, family-minded people who like to visit relatives and keep in touch. They did not have a phone at this time. Occasionally they would drive several miles only to be disappointed when they did not find the "folks" at home. But Edna did enjoy the drive along the scenic Spavinew and Grand rivers when they went out to see Aunt Grotha.

"Here, Edna, could you use these feed sacks?" offered the hospitable older woman.

"Yes, ma'am, I sure can use those sacks. I'll crochet around them and make me some dresser scarves," planned the young preacher's wife. That is just what she did.

In those days, people helped one another. Edna washed on the Willhoite's old, gray, square Maytag washer and constantly sewed on Mom Willhoite's old treadle Singer sewing machine. The Nelsons even saved their table scraps and took the slop for pigs to the Suttons who lived next door. Washing and ironing took up a large portion of Edna's time. At first, in order to expedite the worrisome ironing task, she frequently borrowed a gasoline iron from Marie Coker, but then she got her own iron.

Marie had two active little boys. One boy bore visible signs of their activity. One morning when there was only one piece of bread for the boys, one asked, "Momma, make him divide it." So divide it they did: Lester held the piece of bread on the chopping block while the other boy, Dub, grabbed the axe to split the bread in two. As well as dividing the bread, he chopped off two of Lester's fingers. Country kids played rough in those days!

In Europe things were rough all over. The goose-stepping "Master Race" continued to push far beyond the borders of their homeland.

In April 1940, the German troops marched into Norway, Denmark, and the Low Countries. But King Christian of Denmark did not flee the country. "Who protects your king?" a German storm trooper asked. "We all do," a small lad replied. An underground army arose and immediately began a systematic rescue of frightened Jews. A young, Holy Spirit-filled nurse, Elly Hansen, joined this underground army of Danes. Time after time she helped Jews to escape into Sweden. A memorial to their friends, the Danes, stands in Jerusalem today. In 1980 Elly, now a Pentecostal missionary to Thailand, at last had a chance to visit the land of the Jews when she attended a United Pentecostal Church International World Conference in Jerusalem.

In Holland, Corrie Ten Boom and other Christians also helped the Jews. They paid a dear price for their efforts.

The first year that Edna lived in her new home, the weather was terrible. Cold rain in January turned into snow, then back to rain. Edna passed the time quilting a wedding ring quilt, crocheting rag rugs and pillow tops, and embroidering pillowcases. Despite the weather, Brother Nelson managed to get in some of his favorite pastime—hunting and fishing.

Edna was concerned about her mother. Since 1920 Ollie Stone, Edna's mother, had known that she had a cancer on her face. When she moved to California, the cancer was small (perhaps in remission). In Tulsa she had radium treatments. In 1940 she and her daughter Edith went to Arizona seeking more treatment.

While they were out there, however, Edith fell in love and married. Early in 1941, the family heard of the Nichols Hospital in Savannah, Missouri, which was said to cure some cancer patients. While visiting the Nelsons in January 1941, Mrs. Stone had a severe hemorrhage with her nose and began to think and hope that perhaps she could find help at the Nichols Hospital.

Although she was concerned about her mother, Edna kept busy with her daily housework, including hauling water, scrubbing the outside toilet, mopping floors, and washing on the old rub board. Once the clothesline broke, dumping the laundry on the ground. She had to rinse every piece all over again.

She still had no washer, no sewing machine, and for a while no

iron. Often she went up the hill to the Willhoites' to do a big wash on their faithful, square Maytag washer. She borrowed an iron from first one, then another, and she either went to Mrs. Clucks' or up the hill to the Willhoites' to sew on their machine.

Brother Nelson enjoyed three square meals a day. He especially loved sweets, so his little homemaker was becoming a skilled cook.

"I think this chocolate cake is my favorite," he would decide. Then the next day Clarence would polish off a banana cream pie.

The Nelson cottage was extremely small, but there was a constant stream of company—Momma Stone, Buford and his wife and kids, the Williams from Tulsa, and the saints from far and near who came to sample Edna's good baking and enjoy Brother Nelson's fellowship. His jokes and funny stories were a special treat during those trying days.

Church attendance was somewhat skimpy in January of 1941, due in part to the poor weather. It continued to stay low in February. On February 20, twenty-two were in Sunday school. But in the spring, things improved. Mother's Day saw 101 in attendance. The rainy weather climaxed with high water raging in April, complete with a big hailstorm. On into June the rain continued. Backwater was out in June. Edna despised rainy weather and never felt well during that time. But she and Brother Nelson went right ahead and put out four-o'clocks and a few shrubs. She strung up wires for morning glories to provide a little shade that summer at one window.

Things were looking up somewhat for the young people. Brother Nelson bought a new gray mingled suit in May. When Grandpa Edwards (William Jackson Edwards) died in that same month, Edna got a new black hat with a pink flower to wear to the funeral.

"It will go with my pink dress and my new pink satin blouse," she thought.

At Tiawah the penny march was used to buy their first Oneness Sunday school literature published by the South Western Council. Before that they had used trinity literature, but every Sunday had found it necessary to deal with the trinity doctrine. In a town of seventy-five people, Brother Nelson had 135 in Sunday school. In

addition to a thriving Sunday school, the church also had a Tuesday night young people's service, a Thursday night Bible study, Sunday morning worship, and Sunday night evangelistic service.

There was one man in Tiawah for whom Brother Nelson had a special burden, Donald ("Tumper") Hoselton. He and his wife, Marcella Garrison, and their two daughters, Barbara and "Deenie," lived across the street from the Tiawah church. The girls started coming to Sunday school. Later, their mother prayed through. "Tumper" had heard Brother Nelson years before and had commented, "When Brother Nelson preaches about hell, you can smell the smoke." But he still had not turned to God.

"Tumper" worked in Claremore at the Western Auto store. It seemed to him that Brother Nelson came by Western Auto every day.

"I'm not gonna turn him loose, Lord. I'm gonna win 'Tumper' Hoselton." When Tumper saw Brother Nelson coming, he would crawl under a car. But when Brother Nelson got there, he just crawled under the car, too. (Oh, the problems this gave Sister Nelson in the laundry!) Tumper crawled out the other side, and Brother Nelson followed. Finally, one day in broad daylight, Tumper was out at the barn alone when he was suddenly frightened. ("The Lord scared him," Sister Nelson affirms.) He started coming to church. Before long, he had received the Holy Ghost.

"What a fine couple they made. That man stood by me. Oh, we had our problems. He was stubborn. I don't know which was the most stubborn, he or I. But we would really lock horns.

"One time he came to me after his girls got up to be teenagers.

"'I want a letter. I'm a-leavin'!" Of course, he wasn't doing like I thought he oughta.

" 'You are not leavin'. I'm not giving you no letter!'

" 'I'm a' leavin'.'

" 'No, you're not. You are not going to leave 'til you pray through. You're not fit to leave, and you're not leaving. If you would mind your own business and let me pastor you and your family, things would straighten out around here.' Finally I guess he decided he would just turn it over to me. Sure enough, it wasn't no time 'til he prayed through and I prayed through and every-

body prayed through, and we was all happy again. I wrote him a letter and took it to him. 'Now, you can go.' He looked at me so funny and said, 'I don't want to go.' 'Well,' I said, 'You wasn't fit to go before, and now I will let you go.' If he had taken me up on it, I would've went off and bawled. But he didn't take me up, and I am glad. Years after that, he had a stroke, and as he was laying on the bed he said, 'Brother Nelson, if you would have let me go, I wouldn't be here laying on this bed. That stand you took there saved my soul. Words cannot tell how I appreciate the stand you took!'"

The Hoseltons went to Tupelo and served for a while until he started having strokes. The Hoseltons were a close family. They had very few relatives, but Brother Nelson preached Brother Hoselton's and his mother's and father's funeral.

One year the camp meeting was held at Okmulgee, where Brother Voar Shoemake was pastor. Again they used Brother Kilgore's big thirty-by-fixty-foot tent. All the preachers and other available men helped stretch the big tent. "Here, Brother Nelson, you string up this wire so we can have some lights." No ladders were available, so slender, agile Brother Nelson hopped up on a folding chair and began to stretch the electric wire. Suddenly the chair tipped over, fell over on another chair, and folded up. "Oh, no, I'm not hurt." Brother Nelson jumped up, laughing and brushing off the sawdust. But he was hurt. He had broken a rib and soon began to have quite a bit of pain. But his troubles had just begun.

As usual, several of the men and boys slept under the tent just to be ready in case of a storm. The tent was old and had not been waterproofed. In the middle of the night, the rains came. Drip, drip, drip! Jimmy Shoemake and James Kilgore woke up and moved their quilt. Brother Still covered up his head and ears, but the rain kept falling. Finally Brother Nelson called, "I have found the only dry place in this tent, right here where the pole goes out. It's reinforced double canvas." So he and Brother Still stood up, sort of locked themselves around that tent post, and slept standing up. Others forgot about sleep and began to pray. But when the sun came up the next day and the meeting started, the "showers of blessing" really fell.

Pentecostal blessings were falling in America, but lowering, frightening, dark political storm clouds still hovered abroad.

In May 1940, Neville Chamberlain resigned as Prime Minister of Great Britain. Winston Churchill was called by the king to be Prime Minister. On May 13 he made the famous speech: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat." He announced his policy to wage war by sea, land, and air "with all our might and with all the strength God can give us. We have one aim: "Victory, at all costs, in spite of all terror, Victory! However long, however hard the road may be." The Commons gave him a unanimous vote of confidence.

That same month Parliament passed legislation placing all "persons, their services and their property at the disposal of His Majesty." (Many poor Pentecostal preachers had made this kind of consecration to the King of kings years before in the all-out war against the god of this world.) After Dunkirk, Churchill again spoke: "We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end . . . whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing-grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and liberation of the Old."

On June 10 Mussolini joined with Germany and declared war on Great Britain and France.

At the end of June, Hitler at last avenged Versailles when he crushed the French and forced them to sign an Armistice.

Still, the war in Europe had not really touched America, especially small-town America. The church in Tiawah was developing nicely and life with the Nelsons progressing.

Chapter Twelve

First Baby

1941 was a great year!

After eight years, the couple's first child was on the way. "I want your shower to be at my house," insisted Edna Isaac, but the whole church and community came to honor the happy, proud mother-to-be.

Another good friend, Helen Koger, had already given Edna several things. Helen's little girl, Judith Ann, had died in infancy, leaving her two little boys, David and Kenneth. So when Judith died, Helen wanted Sister Nelson to have her things.

On the windy spring day of April 23, 1942, Dr. R. C. Malloy congratulated Brother Nelson, "You have a fine baby girl. She weighs eight pounds and is nineteen and a half inches long." They named the baby Shirley.

"What are you doing? Naming her for a movie star?"

"Not at all," Sister Nelson replied. "My friend's name is Shirley, and I just like the name." She found out then that it hurts when saints starts "pickin' on the PK."

On April 27 Edna went home from Claremore General Hospital in an ambulance, with Clarence following in the car. Together he and Ollie Stone got the new mother and baby settled. Exhausted with his new responsibility, he went to the church and lay down on a cot for a nap. But suddenly, he heard thunder in

the southwest. Clarence got up and opened the west door of the church. A huge thunderhead threatened in the southwest. "That cloud looks bad," he thought as he stepped out on the west steps of the church. A finger from the cloud licked out about a third of the way to the ground.

"Mr. Sutton, there's a tornado in that cloud!" Brother Nelson called to a neighbor. Again the finger licked out of the cloud, this time about two-thirds of the way to the ground. People began to scream and race to the schoolhouse cellar although about a foot of water stood in it.

"I sure can't leave Edna and the baby!" Clarence Nelson knew his responsibility.

Again, the tornado came out of the cloud. This time it touched the ground about one and a half miles away with an earsplitting explosion. The menacing finger moved right toward the flimsy little parsonage. The funnel cloud whipped back and forth, throwing out trees and buildings, then carrying them back up into the cloud. Everybody else had jammed into the schoolhouse cellar.

"There's a tornado on the ground coming our way," Clarence hollered as he ran into the house. "Let's pray! Every nail in this building belongs to you, Lord." Clarence consecrated all to God.

The tornado turned, heading east! The occupants of the first house were killed. The funnel roared right down Highway 20 into Pryor. It plucked up a Rainbow Bread truck, carrying it high in the sky. The tornado separated the driver from the truck, demolished the vehicle, then set the driver back down on the ground. But the poor man was in such a state of shock that he was sent to the state hospital in Vinita for treatment. The storm killed Doctor Malloy's son-in-law by viciously beheading him with a piece of sheet iron.

The devastating tornado sliced through the main street of Pryor, killing eighty-six people.

"I saw a house in Pryor without a wall or a roof, but the furniture was all there, complete with the bedspread on the bed!" recalls Brother Nelson. "That tornado picked chickens. I saw chickens without a single feather. It was a 'chicken pickin'' tornado, but we learned that there's peace and safety in the hand of One who rules the winds and the storms."

The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord. It almost seems that the Lord has ordered the steps of Brother Nelson, causing him to be right at the scene of several fatal car wrecks. In May 1941, near Vinita, he happened upon a terrible accident that claimed the lives of two men. When he preached on the uncertainty of tomorrow, he was able to speak with authority. God always blessed Clarence Nelson. No matter how many times a week he was called on to preach, people always enjoyed hearing him. In Tiawah, West Tulsa, and in later years at many camp meetings, people always seemed to appreciate his ministry.

In June, Brother Nelson had to make a trip to California to see his sick mother. Although Edna did not get to go, her husband brought back several nice gifts for her, including a seashell lamp from Long Beach, a knife from Raton, New Mexico, and a yellow fingernail file from Old Mexico.

In June 1941, Edna's mother, Ollie Stone, went to the Nichols Hospital in Savannah, Missouri, and stayed about a month. The treatment they used for the cancer on her nose did seem to kill the cancer, but it also took most of her nose. For the next thirty years, she had to wear a bandage across the opening and get a fresh dressing each day. She was crushed by this, and when she returned to Edna's house, she leaned her head over on her rollaway bed and wept bitterly.

"Don't cry, Momma, I'll dress the place for you," Edna promised. And she did. Day after day, in addition to hauling water, getting in the night wood and water, cleaning, cooking, sewing, and the multitude of other duties that were hers, she helped attend faithfully to her mother's needs. Though the house was small, Brother Nelson kindly shared his home and his wife with his despondent mother-in-law. Whenever she stayed at their house, as she often did, he slept on a cot in the church. As a special labor of love, Edna made her mother an attractive topper (short coat), in addition to dresses, slips, and gowns.

Sunday, August 31, 1941, the Fifth Sunday Fellowship Meeting was at Tiawah. Edna's mother quickly fried two chickens that Edna had picked and dressed the day before. Her brother Buford's wife fixed a salad, and Edna put on potatoes, straightened up the house, and went to church, where she played the

piano for the morning service. There were several preachers present from Tulsa. The Tulsa girls' quartet sang as did the Smith quartet. After the service, Sister Habeck asked Edna to take her home. Sister Habeck had moved to Tiawah from Collinsville and had taken a liking to Edna. Occasionally they went downtown to the hotel and had lunch as a special treat. Her husband was a good businessman with an excellent job, but he never came to church.

One day in September when Brother Nelson was putting on his shirt for the night service, he suddenly yelled, "Help me get this shirt off!" He grabbed a scorpion which was inside the shirt, but it stung him five times before he could remove the shirt. Although it hurt badly, he went right on to church and preached. "Can't let a little scorpion bite keep me outta service."

Young people's service was an important part of the Tiawah church. Occasionally a contest between the reds and the blues sparked new interest. They used the questions from the *Outlook*. Points were earned by being present, having an offering, bringing a Bible, and answering the questions, quoting the memory verse. Each lesson had a verse to memorize, and the Tiawah young people hid the Word in their hearts. The contest usually ran a month at a time. They taught the lesson written by Sister Mary Williams and published in the PAJC *Outlook*. Edna and Clarence religiously attended these services and part of the time were in charge of it. Edna was always highly competitive with those Willhoite kids: Dolly Faye, Donald, Earl, and Ernest. She liked to win. Most of the time the services were held on Tuesday night. Brother Nelson deeply admired Brother and Sister Williams and always tried to do things in Tiawah just as nearly as he could like they did in West Tulsa.

Although there were no rich saints in the Tiawah church, it was a generous congregation which gave much in offerings not only to visiting preachers and to the Bible school but also to missionaries.

Once they sent an unusually large offering to Sister Kathryn Hendricks. They had not intended to send so much. "It was all by mistake, but God had His hand in that mistake." Sister Hendricks desperately needed that exact amount of money to cover the expense of her unexpected evacuation from China and her relo-

cation. Germany had invaded Russia, and the Japanese took advantage of that opportunity to expand farther into North China. The Christian missionaries had to flee before them.

All kinds of people visited the little parsonage, but one day a strange event happened.

"I've got a crazy man in my car." A fellow had come to Brother Olen Koger's door for help. The story had been going around that there was a varmint in Verdigris river bottoms. And this was the man. Brother Koger drew a bucket of water and offered the man a drink, but he just looked about wildly and would not drink the water. They called the sheriff for help. The wail of the siren soon reached their ears.

Suddenly, the crazy man got loose and ran up the side of the mountain, the others on his heels. Some barbed wire obstructed the path of his flight, and the demented soul became tangled in it. When the sheriff, Brother Nelson, and the other man approached, poor fellow snapped at them like a mad dog. They finally subdued the pitiful, benighted man, handcuffed him, dragged him downhill, and took him to Claremore. Later he was sent to Vinita for treatment. "Preachers have to deal with many problems. A sound mind and a healthy body are gifts from God."

Insane people are a threat to the world! There were mighty men in places of leadership who did not have a sound mind but who did possess much authority.

Stalin and the Russian people were caught unaware when Hitler launched a surprise attack against Russia in June 1941.

"Scorch the earth!" Stalin demanded of the Russians as he began his strategy to withdraw, conserve strength, gather new reserves, and force the attacker to spend his impetus and extend his lines. Stalin, a coolheaded leader, stayed in the Kremlin when Hitler's armies were at the gates of Moscow.

Also in 1941, the Italian armies in east Africa were overrun by the British and were saved only when German General Erwin Rommel came to their aid. Italy's influence in the Balkans was largely replaced by Germany's. Mussolini had to submit while Italy itself became virtually a colony of the "Great German Reich."

In the bitter cold winter of December 1941, the Russians

launched a counterattack against the Germans.

But in America, the greatest storm of all struck one Sunday afternoon, December 7, 1941, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. The sneak attack heavily damaged four of eight U.S. battleships, including the *U.S.S. Oklahoma*. That ship was hit by four torpedoes within five minutes and rolled completely over with her bottom and propeller rising above the waters of the harbor. Also sunk or heavily damaged were most of the one hundred U. S. ships anchored in the harbor, as well as most of the fighter planes based at Wheeler Air Base. Over two thousand U. S. soldiers lost their lives that day. "Remember Pearl Harbor" became the rallying cry as the United States of America geared itself for an all-out war on two fronts. "Dr. Win the War takes the place of Dr. New Deal," Roosevelt announced. Kate Smith began to sing "God Bless America."

The draft had been in effect for a year and many American boys were already in the service. Prayer lists for the boys in service were added to the usual prayer requests included at the church at Tiawah. Before long most of the boys had left Tiawah for faraway places, but the mothers and fathers and sweethearts joined in earnest prayer. Not one boy who left the church in Tiawah was lost in the long four and a half years of the war!

"Wars and rumors of war—trouble ahead. Now is the day of salvation. It is time for America to pray." Simple country folk like those in Tiawah had learned to trust God for their daily bread and for their healing. Now they were joining heart and hands to pray for this country.

The daily newspaper, *The Claremore Progress*, carried big headlines about the war. But the top priority with Edna Nelson was the daily care of her firstborn child.

When the Nelsons' daughter, Shirley, was about six months old, she had flu or pneumonia. At the same time, Edna had an abscessed front tooth. Brother Nelson was in St. Louis for a church business meeting. The Stones were visiting with their daughter in the small parsonage in Tiawah. Seeing that his little granddaughter was very ill and his daughter was also suffering, Mr. Stone said, "We'd better get someone in to pray for Shirley or get her to a doctor."

So the Tiawah saints gathered in—Frank Worley and some of the women—and they began to call on God. The Lord healed both the mother and the daughter. However, the dentist warned Edna, "Later that tooth will swell up again." The dentist was wrong. The tooth never bothered Edna again.

Due to his growing family, Brother Nelson decided to build two more rooms on the back of the parsonage, twelve by twenty-four feet. This gave them a living room, kitchen, and two bedrooms.

"This is a real nice place now," one of Edna's neighbors commented. And it was—just as nice as most of the other houses in Tiawah. They had their own well, sulphur water, and eventually an electric pump. They also had a little pitcher pump in the house along with a sink. The water drained out on the ground. But they never did get indoor bathroom fixtures as long as they lived in Tiawah.

"We need a phone, too, Sister Nelson," her husband said. "Folks need to be able to call their pastor." So one of the very few phones in Tiawah was installed in the Nelson's home. The number was 1614F22.

While a Pentecostal preacher was adding space to his small parsonage, Hitler was enlarging concentration camps and adding to them the extermination camps, Auschwitz and Mauthausen. The terrible holocaust that was engulfing God's chosen people—the Jews—was little known to Pentecostal preachers. They knew that Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin were godless, powerful dictators. Some Bible scholars preached that Mussolini might be the Antichrist because he appeared to be restoring the Old Roman Empire.

In Washington at the time of Pearl Harbor, however, the United States' war production was already nearly as great as that of Germany and Japan combined. By 1944 it doubled the total output of all the Axis nations. Washington must have known something, but did they know that the lives of seven million Jews were at stake?

In November 1942, the Germans were driven back in North Africa. By February 1943, the defenders of Stalingrad (together with the severe weather) wiped out the German Sixth Army, and in May, Tunisia fell.

At the end of 1942, the defeat of the Germans in Russia signaled the turning point of the war in Europe. Hitler's character and way of life began to change. His "mission of the German people" to be masters of the world was beginning to be shown to be a fantasy—not a reality. Hitler never knew or valued what was real. He began to isolate himself from reality, and his secretary saw that only pleasing information reached him.

In August 1942, Churchill climbed from an RAF bomber to begin the first conference with Marshall Joseph Stalin in Moscow. Politics makes strange bedfellows.

It began to be apparent in 1943 that, for all his claims to be "strong man" with his strutting walk, chest thrust forward, head thrown back, popping eyes, and jutting chin, Mussolini was just a mortal man, not the dreaded "man of sin" that some had feared. The Italian army was beaten on all fronts. The Fascist Grand Council turned against Mussolini; he was overthrown and imprisoned by his king. He was kept prisoner in a country villa for a short time but then was rescued in a brilliant coup ordered by Hitler by German parachutists. There, behind German lines, Mussolini became head of a shadowy puppet government. A broken and demoralized sick man, he now had become a servant of Hitler, whom he despised.

In late November 1943, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Commander of the European theatre of operations for the Allies, began to plan and prepare for the coming Normandy invasion. (The Allies landed in Normandy on June 6, 1944.)

In December 1943, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin, known as the "Big Three," had their first joint meeting at Tehran, Iran. It was there that the Allied Powers agreed upon the Normandy landing of 1944.

In the fall of 1944, Roosevelt, although he was failing in health, ran for an unprecedented fourth term as president of the U. S. A. "Don't change horses in the middle of the stream," was a campaign slogan. America agreed. Roosevelt received 432 electoral votes to Dewey's 99. Senator Harry Truman, who grew up on a farm in Missouri, was elected to be vice-president.

Kingdoms rise and fall. There is a tide in the affairs of men . . .

but the tide was ebbing for many of the world's great leaders.

The first leader to go was the American president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. His fourth inauguration was exceedingly simple; the inaugural address was one of the briefest in American history. The entire ceremony lasted only fifteen minutes. Two days after his inauguration, Roosevelt left for Yalta, where the "Big Three" drew up plans for the final defeat of Germany. Their aim was for the meeting in San Francisco to lay the foundations for a world organization of the United Nations. "But the best laid plans of mice and men . . ." On April 12, 1945, just eighty-three days after he had taken office as president for the fourth time, Franklin Delano Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage at Warm Springs, Georgia. Harry S. Truman, the farm boy from Missouri, felt the weight of the nation-at-war fall on his sturdy shoulders.

Since the German forces in Northern Italy had collapsed in the spring of 1945, Mussolini and his mistress fled for their lives toward Switzerland. Disguising themselves, they hid in a German military caravan which was moving northward. Italian underground troops discovered Mussolini and Clara Petacci. After a brief trial, they were shot. Their bodies were taken to Milan, where they were hung by their heels in front of a garage. How are the mighty fallen!

"They killed my Antichrist!" Brother Nelson remarked when he heard the news.

The third leader who fell also died in April, on the last day. But it was five months before the details of the death of Hitler and Eva Braun were publicized. In December '44, Hitler tried one last stand in the Ardennes, talked of new weapons (especially after the death of Roosevelt), and never attempted to salvage anything. Instead, Hitler ordered mass material destruction and condemned his armies to death by refusing to surrender. On April 29, he married Eva Braun. Then he wrote his will. Then on April 30, he shot himself. Eva took poison. According to his instructions, their bodies were burned. His dream of a master race had collapsed, and Germany was more abjectly humbled than any other nation of modern times. By the time Hitler was defeated, he had broken down the structure of the world in which he lived.

The United States welcomed V-E (Victory in Europe) day with

wild celebrations and services in churches on May 5. Meanwhile, thousands of people had worked for many months to build a city in East Tennessee. The work progressed daily, yet only a limited few knew anything of what was being developed. "Something to do with the war."

Brother J. W. Wallace, who had built the first Pentecostal church east of the Tennessee River, had gone there and held services in a schoolhouse with saints who worked in the plants. Nobody knew and certainly nobody asked questions about what they were working on.

On July 16, 1945, a test bomb was exploded at Alamogordo, New Mexico. "What is that?" The locals wondered as they watched the mushroom cloud. Still the world was not prepared for the fantastic explosion when the first atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945. On August 8, the Soviets invaded Manchuria. The next day the United States dropped another atomic bomb on Nagasaki. The Japanese at once agreed to stop war. Unconditional surrender was accepted at Potsdam. V-J Day! Now all the boys could come home. But sadly, some of the boys never came home. Others returned crippled in body, soul, and spirit.

Mighty leaders had changed the face of their world and ushered in a new era with even greater potentialities for power and destruction. The Great Depression and the Second World War were over. The simple life that people like Clarence and Edna Nelson had lived in Tiawah was destined to continue only in nostalgia. But God still had His way in the affairs of men; not one of the boys on the prayer list of the church at Tiawah was lost in the devastating war. This was a record that more than one Pentecostal church thanked God for.

In one of the many revivals that Brother Nelson preached, an unforgettable altar service occurred in the West Tulsa church. The husband of one of the saints was home on furlough from the service. During this time he decided to work a few days at an oil refinery.

One night, as he sat in the service, the man was greatly under conviction but refused to go forward for prayer when the altar call was given. It was the type of altar call where one could feel that

the Spirit was giving someone a last call. Brother Nelson extended the altar call, and all hoped and prayed that the man would go forward for prayer. His knuckles grew white as he gripped the back of the seat.

The next morning, while some were in the church praying, a terrific explosion rocked the town. Sister Williams, with divine insight, spoke sadly, "I'm afraid that got our friend." She was right. That man and another workman were on an oil tank which was struck by lightning. Life is uncertain, but death is sure. It was a sober group of people who met later for church.

During World War II, the year the Pentecostals held their ten-day camp meeting at Durant, Oklahoma, word was out to all the pastors. "Be sure and tell your saints to bring some chickens with them when they come to camp this year. Also, we will need some rationing stamps. Perhaps some of the farmers may have extra stamps so that we can buy food for the camp."

So the good saints dutifully gathered up chickens: White Leghorns, Buff Orphingtons, Rhode Islands Reds, and Dominecker chickens came to camp in sacks and coops on top of trucks and cars. The saints had come to dine!

"I sure like the day we have fried chicken. That's the best dinner we ever have at camp," was the consensus of opinion not only of the children and the saints but also of the preachers.

Out back of the kitchen, the chickens waited their fate (to enter the ministry) in large, common coops. By some unknown accident, one of those coops came open. All the chickens flew the coop! "Help! Come help us!" screamed the cooks. That was one call the ministry answered. Long, tall, skinny preachers, big, fat, chubby preachers all joined the chase. "Come on, Brother Nelson! There goes dinner!"

"I'm a-coming, Brother Shoemake. Grab that old Dominecker rooster."

The camp was located in a residential area, and, truth to tell, other chickens lived there, too. It was highly suspected that when the chase was over, the coop was far more crowded than before. "Well, brethren, the Lord moves in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform," extolled one perspiring brother when he could catch his breath.

Brother Nelson turned inventor. Edison had died in 1931; there was now room for other great minds to come to the forefront. Brother C. P. Kilgore's big, old tent was hot. Those parched, dry winds sapped the energy of all of God's children. But what was a leader to do?

"Brother Williams, why don't we get some big Number Three washtubs and fill them with hunks of ice? We'll set it in the south end of this tent right where that wind can blow over it. I do believe that would sorta cool this tent off." So it was done. As the brethren sat on the platform and looked at that ice, it did indeed seem just a mite cooler anyway. "We had our own air conditioner." But unlike Edison, who registered one or two new ideas every couple of weeks for forty years, Brother Nelson failed to register this invention and never got credit for it.

Chapter Thirteen

The Merger

At last, the Great Depression ended. The terrible Second World War was over. But in Pentecostal circles the big news of 1945 was that of the merger. The two largest Oneness Pentecostal organizations, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ and the Pentecostal Church, Incorporated, were on the brink of a bright new day of unity. But Brother Nelson was not in favor of it. Not at all!

"We must be sure to go to St. Louis to that conference, Brother Nelson," Brother Williams planned. So Brother Nelson and Brother Williams went to the convention in St. Louis, Missouri, found a cheap room to share, and joined in the meetings to discuss the merger.

During the day, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ met at the spacious church pastored by Brother Walter Guinn on the north side of the city, White Way Tabernacle. The Pentecostal Church, Incorporated, brethren met at the First Apostolic Church, 13th and Gravois, pastored by Brother Harry Branding. The General Boards of both groups met together throughout the week in an attempt to find an agreement for the merger. Everybody met at night for services in the Kiel Auditorium. But Brother Nelson was not impressed. He was still not in favor of the merger.

Each day the two men listened to various reports and discussed the meetings when they went to bed at night. One night Brother Williams sat straight up in bed. "Now, Brother Nelson, you are missing God. I know this merger is of God. I've heard from God, and I know it." He spoke so firmly that the tone of his voice shook Brother Nelson. So he quit arguing and decided he should go along with the merger. Brother Howard A. Goss, former General Superintendent of the Pentecostal Church Incorporated, was almost unanimously chosen to serve as General Superintendent of the new United Pentecostal Church. Brother W. T. Witherspoon, former General Chairman of Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ, was selected Assistant General Superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church, and Brother Stanley W. Chambers was chosen to be General Secretary-Treasurer.

"The smile of God seemed to be upon this union (the merger). As whatever questions or adjustments arose, they were quickly, easily, and sweetly settled to the pleasure of all. Some who, before the conference, for various reasons, could not see how it would work out satisfactorily, when they saw how easily God slipped us past all the shoals and hidden snags, felt a mounting confidence in God . . . and decided to see it through," wrote Sister Ethel Goss about the conference.

But Brother Nelson was not at all sure about whether things were "sweetly settled to the pleasure of all."

"Truly it was nothing less than supernatural, the way the blessed Spirit of God enabled the brethren to overcome. It means more than the average preacher can understand to bring about the uniting of two such bodies with the many, many matters that have to be considered. There were practically no dissenting voices, and as we look back over the proceedings of the convention, we can only exclaim, 'What hath God wrought!'" Brother Witherspoon summed up the successful merger.

"I'm just one of them 'average preachers,' and I still don't know for sure how this is all gonna work out," thought Brother Nelson.

The conference was over in St. Louis, and everybody had merged. But merging back home in Oklahoma was another matter, strictly a horse of a different color. Brother Goss immediately

took to the field to try to implement the merger and help in the district conferences. Tension. Trouble. Problems.

In the PAJC, Oklahoma was a district of its own. Brother C. P. Williams served as chairman and Brother Nelson as secretary. In the PCI, Oklahoma-Kansas-Arkansas comprised one district with Brother G. H. Brown, pastor at Fifth and Victory, Little Rock, serving as district superintendent. And the PCI brethren owned a campground located in Arkansas.

The first joint district conference met at Fort Smith, Arkansas, after the merger. Brother S. W. Chambers and Brother Paul Box drove down in Brother Box's car, but the gear kept slipping. Finally they wired the gear in place and arrived in Fort Smith. Brother Nelson soon found out that Howard A. Goss was a tremendous administrator and a very patient, wise man. After a lot of discussion about the distance from Little Rock to Tulsa, Brother Nelson declared, "We need two districts." Arkansas became a district and retained the campground. Oklahoma-Kansas became another district. Brother G. H. Brown (formerly PCI) was elected as district superintendent of Arkansas, and Brother M. H. Howard (formerly PCI) was chosen as district superintendent of Oklahoma-Kansas. Brother Ashcraft was nominated as secretary of Arkansas, and Brother C. A. Nelson as secretary of Oklahoma.

"I think I'll just decline to serve," Brother Nelson mentioned to Brother Ashcraft, still a bit miffed at the merger. So he and Brother Ashcraft together declined the offices.

So both district superintendents were PCI men, and Arkansas had the campground. Later as they sat at a table eating together, Brother Nelson was still a bit hostile, but Brother Goss began to talk in that patient, reasonable way that he had. He cautioned Brother Nelson about bitterness. It stung a bit at the time, but Brother Nelson managed to hold his peace. Later he realized how wrongly he had treated Brother Goss, and being the sensitive, humble man that he is, Brother Nelson sought out the elder minister and apologized.

"I'll cooperate. I want peace and harmony," he decided.

Sister Nelson also wanted harmony, as well as music, in the home. So Edna started Shirley taking piano lessons when she

was between three and four years old. Sister Nelson and several others, Barbara and Maudina (Deenie) Hoselton, the Steidley children, and others took music lessons from an Assembly of God music teacher, Miss Mabel Rooker Jones, who came to the church once a week. Shirley was intrigued. She sat on the teacher's lap and drank coffee from her cup. When Sister Nelson was expecting her second child, she hated to tell Miss Jones. But before she was ready to announce it, Miss Jones detected her condition. "I'll teach Shirley five minutes a week. If she seems ready, I'll give her a regular lesson, and you can pay for it." Soon Shirley was the star pupil. She continued as long as Miss Jones taught.

For music when the Nelsons started pastoring Tiawah, they only had their own guitars, Donald Willhoite's mandolin, and Arthur Lutz's guitars. Later they bought an old square piano, but it was not much good. One day Brother Nelson located an old player piano, a Lexington, for only $12.50. The two things Edna wanted most in her life were a piano and a sewing machine.

Her father had been so opposed to her marrying a penniless preacher that he had promised to buy her a piano if she would not marry Brother Nelson. But she chose the preacher. Now the preacher chose to buy her a piano for their humble home. So they went to Tulsa and paid down on a nice two-hundred-dollar piano so that Sister Nelson and Shirley could take lessons and practice. After Edna had the new piano in her home, she realized that it sounded much better than the old piano in the church. So they swapped. "But I will still have something to practice on at home when it's too rainy to go over to the church to play," thought Edna.

The most provoked Edna ever got with Brother Nelson was when he was at a General Conference she did not get to attend. They had a revival scheduled, but due to a change in plans for the convenience of someone else, Brother Nelson was asked to start the revival early. "Sure, that will be all right," he agreed without thinking. Then he called Sister Nelson to tell her to go ahead and start the revival, "I'll be home later."

"Oh, that means I will have to miss Shirley's piano recital." But the work of the Lord came first, so she went ahead with the meeting and sent Larae to the recital.

The Nelsons had a new neighbor. Jessie Willhoite Lutz moved off the hill and down to Tiawah, two doors west of the church. Her home was a small, two room cottage where she settled down to raise her three boys, Carl, Glen, and Loyle, by herself. At first she left the boys with her mother and worked by the day chopping cotton, cleaning house, or any other kind of an odd job she could find.

One day the Nelsons heard a piercing scream for help. Jessie's oldest boy, Carl, had found some acorns and poked one up his nose. Brother Nelson was so upset he could hardly pray. But Sister Nelson and Jessie kept working and finally removed the acorn. There weren't too many toys in those days, and country kids played with what they had. "You leave those acorns alone."

At night after work, Jessie collected her boys, cut the wood, fed the chickens, and did the chores. Later she did housework for a schoolteacher and finally got a job cooking for Tiawah school.

The long, lonesome sound of the trains as they blew the whistle for the crossroads often haunted Edna Nelson. She was left alone in the small cottage with her little girl while Brother Nelson traveled mile after weary mile on work for the Oklahoma-Kansas District.

One night he was driving fast down the narrow dirt wilderness road coming into Tiawah from the north. It was late—near midnight—and he was dog tired.

"You had better wake up. There might be a horse or a cow in this road." An audible voice spoke to him. He jerked upright, slowed down, and rounded a slight curve just past the Colliers' house. There in the middle of the road stood two large horses.

"Thank you, Jesus," whispered the weary preacher, but he was back on the job the next day. "Have to go pray for Sister Moore, Sister Nelson. Be back later." Up and down the narrow, winding roads he drove under the shade of towering sycamore, post oak, elm, and pecan trees, always moving, on the go for the Lord. He was never still. (Now at seventy-two years of age, he has not slowed down much.)

December 25, 1948, Jessie Willhoite Lutz had talked with her pastor's wife. "You aren't feeling up to it. Don't bother to cook Christmas dinner. Come on over to my house." So the Nelsons

joined Granddad, Merle and Loretta Doty, Orval and Dolly Faye Doty, Grandma Willhoite, Donald and Ruth Willhoite, along with Jessie and her three boys, and others for dinner in the tiny cottage.

They had just arrived when Sister Nelson realized she would not get to stay for dinner. "I need to go to the Franklin Hospital, Brother Nelson." Before long the doctor informed Brother Nelson that he had a seven-and-one-half-pound boy. Earlier Brother Nelson had warned the doctor that he would not pay him if the child was not a boy. Everybody was elated, especially Brother Nelson. "Now, I'll have somebody to fish in Panther creek with me." They named the baby Joseph Duane.

In 1949 the Oklahoma District had camp meeting in southwest Oklahoma near Lake Luger, at Mangum. Attending that meeting were two sharp-looking young evangelists who had been preaching in the state since 1947. Brother Rexie Wilcox and Brother Cleveland Becton were friends of Brother Howard's. According to Brother James Kilgore, a young pastor at the time, they held some outstanding meetings in Oklahoma.

Brother Becton had married his childhood sweetheart, Margie Dyson, and their first child, Rudy, was born. The young people stayed in the small town of Mangum with Brother J. L. Franks. Brother Wilcox preached one night of the camp, and the Bectons' music was a special treat.

"When that young feller plays 'When They Ring Those Golden Bells,' I can almost hear the bells of heaven!"

But back home in Tiawah, Sister Nelson was ringing the telephone bell frantically. She had stayed at home that year with her baby boy and little girl. Now Shirley was sick—burning up with a high fever. Those were days before the Salk vaccine had gotten polio under control, and when Shirley screamed with pain as she put her feet on the floor, Sister Nelson panicked. "Has my little girl taken polio?"

The camp was quite isolated, and the nearest phone was at Brother Franks, twenty miles away. She called and asked that someone notify Brother Nelson, then ran to get Edna Isaac. "I'll spend the night with you, Sister Nelson," the kind neighbor offered. The two young women waited anxiously.

After a long wait and still no return call, Sister Nelson tried again. "Oh, did you want him to know tonight?"

"Yes, please, tell Brother Nelson to please call me. It's an emergency." At last the call came, and the frightened young woman heard the dear voice of her husband and poured out all her fears.

"Don't worry, Sister Nelson. I'll go back and call the whole camp to prayer." They did just that, and within a few hours, the pain left and the fever cooled.

When camp was over, Brother Nelson returned and took Shirley to the doctor. From all indications it had been polio, but God had healed her. The doctor still wanted to send the little girl to Tulsa to tap her spine, but Brother Nelson asked, "Hasn't it done what it's going to do?"

"Yes," was the doctor's reply.

"Well, then I am not taking her to go through all that. We'll just give God the glory!" So they put her on her tricycle, and she rode off. Later, when Shirley was in the hospital for some other tests, the doctor commented, "You have had polio sometime in your life."

"Yes," she replied, "but God healed me."

Carrying out the merger back home in Oklahoma was not easy. There were still problems for two years after the merger. Brother Nelson was astounded, however, when he was called to the highest administrative office in the district in 1947. "What in the world? I am Mr. Nobody! Why would they want me for that office? O Lord, You will have to help me."

Brother Nelson cried and prayed all night, but when the load was heavy and the brethren asked him to take it on, he reluctantly did so. He was misunderstood by some, and old friends soon became distant.

The new responsibility meant hours more of traveling. Days and nights were spent away from home, his wife, and two small children, but God helped.

World leaders such as Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin had risen to places of leadership by brutally exterminating any opposition, by astute political manuevering and selfish ambition, but C. A. Nelson took the leadership of the small Pentecostal work in the district of Oklahoma only because the constituency insisted. He

would much rather have served under others.

The pay was only thirty-five dollars per month. So the Tiawah church helped underwrite the expense of administering the district of Oklahoma. Local preachers, together with Sister Nelson, filled the pulpit time and again while their pastor was away attending to district affairs. However, the most disappointing thing of all was the breakdown in relationship of old friends. That hurt!

But all was not trouble. Many humorous things occurred, and Brother Nelson was quick to see the comical. "Right after the merger, after I was elected district superintendent of Oklahoma-Kansas, along about 1948, the presbyter and I went down to see about this place. There was supposed to be three or four saints there, along with one man who claimed to be a preacher. When the service was underway, he got up and announced, 'Now we are going to sing. My daughter is going to play. She had her first pianny lesson yesterday, but we laid hands on her and prayed for her and now she will play for us.' She played, all right! There wasn't a key on that piano that she didn't hit. I never heard such a racket in my whole life. I punched the presbyter and whispered, 'We're going to have to lay hands on her, I guess.' We had many things that happened. They weren't trying to be funny. It was just a way of life. Oh, we had a great time in those days, preaching the Word of the Lord and traveling."

The job of superintendent was a big one. Brother Nelson had to furnish his own car and drive it on thirty-five dollars per month. "But, you know, the brethren of Oklahoma, I loved them and they loved me. I've been all over this state preaching. And they fall right in behind me. They have supported me, right or wrong. They have stood by me. And God moved. Brother and Sister Urshan were quite young then. We were trying to get on our feet and get started. There was no money. We couldn't pay a camp speaker hardly anything. Did we dare ask Brother Urshan? To my amazement he seemed overjoyed that we would ask him. They came, they sang, and they preached and certainly drew a crowd. We rented facilities from the state of Oklahoma at Robbers Cave State Park, close to Wilburton.

"We will forever be indebted to our general superintendent and his wife for the support they gave us years ago when we were

not able to return a thing. God helped us, and the work began to gel and we began to get better organized. We started tithing, and the work began to grow. Most of us started in just little bitty buildings, but now most of our churches are just great."

Chapter Fourteen

Changing Times

The worst problem that Brother and Sister Nelson ever faced at Tiawah began in the summer of 1951. False accusations, like feathers from a pillow, filled the community. Brother Nelson thought that he had dealt with the problem sufficiently, so they left and went on a long vacation to California.

When they returned, the problem was not solved at all but rather had grown worse. Brother Nelson became discouraged at the insidious attacks and considered leaving Oklahoma. But Sister Nelson insisted that they stand firm and trust God.

"I know all these accusations are totally false, and I feel that the truth will come out!"

"Could it be that we are like Joseph in Egypt—placed here for God's purpose?" she wondered.

Later, in February of 1952, Brother Nelson decided that a good revival would help. So he contacted a young Arab student at Apostolic Bible Training School in Tulsa, John Kershaw. This was the first revival this young man had ever preached. A group of people from Lone Elm began to attend the meeting, and God moved on them. Several were baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost and are still in the work of the Lord today. Among them are: Jack Garrison, who pastors a church in Enid, Oklahoma, Sally Rumbaugh, who later married Brother Harley Shirel (they

now pastor in Lawton, Oklahoma), Beulah Morgans, who later married Brother Dale Hill (they now pastor in Malden, Missouri), Betty Morgans, who later married Brother W. C. Parkey, who pastors at Poplar Bluff, Missouri, and Brother John Morgans, who later built a work at Liberty, Missouri. Also converted in this revival were Leo and Josephine Faught, who assisted Brother Nelson for several years at Claremore and are now pastoring at Chelsea, Oklahoma.

Troubles come in every minister's life. The devil will try to attack the minister's children. If that is not successful, he will try to attack the minister's wife. If that does not succeed, he will attack the minister himself. But victory will eventually come to those who stand fast and "let the Lord fight their battles." The Nelsons learned not to be swayed by every wind of doctrine and certainly not by every bit of gossip or slander that may and often does circulate among the children of God.

"Don't expect my wife or my children to be your example," Brother Nelson admonished the saints. "I am the one who has the call to preach. I am your pastor. I'll be the example."And indeed he has been a shining example.

Although troubles came, God sent special blessings too.

In June 1951, one of the friends of the Nelsons, Grannie Norton, fell and broke her hip.

"No use settin' it," the doctor declared. "As old as she is, it won't heal." But Brother Nelson prayed, the Lord healed her, and she was baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus when she was ninety years old.

"Here, Sister Norton, we'll help you get into the baptistry."

"No, I can walk," she insisted, and walk she did. She lived on until she was almost one hundred years old.

Shirley Gay was in the fifth grade. God was dealing with her heart, and she often went to the altar and prayed. Duane was still just a small lad but was learning to help. Shirley was being taught housekeeping skills by her efficient mother. She could wash dishes and help fold and put the clothes away.

The faithful saints were an influence in the community. Brother Worley, who lived on Highway 20, was approached about having cottage prayer meetings in his home. Some prayed through to the

Holy Ghost in his home.

March 4, 1952, Sally Rumbaugh, Emma Jean Gifford, and Josephine Faught were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. The next night Leo Faught, Joy Bump, Cora Bump, and Josephine Faught received the Holy Ghost. Later Brother Faught and Cora Bump were baptized. On the seventh, Brother Nelson left to preach for his old friend Brother Mark Baughman in Fayetteville, Arkansas. A few days later he drove to Oklahoma City with Brother Worley and Bill Estes.

In April Brother and Sister Nelson left to preach at the Arkansas District Conference. Brother Lester Thompson was there from the headquarters office in St. Louis, and he preached one night. Sister Nelson enjoyed his message, "Go, Work, and Preach." On another night Brother Nelson preached on "Standing on Jesus' Name." The Nelsons stayed with Brother and Sister C. H. Webb.

After the service they, together with the Webbs' old friend, Brother Elmer E. McNatt, and Brother Lester Thompson, went out to eat. Brother Nelson entertained the whole group with his keen wit and great repertoire of humorous stories.

"Let me tell you about the slow train through Arkansas," he began, his blue eyes twinkling. "The towns are so close together in Arkansas that the trains have to back up to whistle for the next stop." Ministers and their wives enjoyed the food and fellowship, as well as a good hearty laugh.

Brother John Kershaw, a student at Apostolic Bible School in Tulsa, had held his first revival some time before. There was a mighty move of God. Saints asked to be prayed for, prayer was offered in homes, and the Sunday school attendance began to climb.

After his return from Arkansas, Brother Nelson went one night to a revival in Chelsea and later on to Sperry to a fellowship meeting. From there he then went back to Chelsea. Brother and Sister Nelson, Duane, and Brother Turner Merrill were at Okmulgee in a service on April 27. The very next night Brother Nelson and Brother Merrill went to a service at Salina, Oklahoma.

Traveling! Traveling! The month of May began with a service on the second at Edmond. Then there was a big fellowship meeting at Tiawah the second week in May. "Well, Daddy can stay

home tonight. The service is right here at home." Brother Nelson preached and Sister Nelson sang the old favorite, "If Jesus Goes With Me."

While her husband was gone so much in district work, Edna Nelson kept busy, especially with her talented hands. She had traded her old, electric, secondhand Singer sewing machine for a brand-new, portable Singer. "I need that buttonhole attachment too, Brother Nelson. I can make buttonholes for all of Tiawah if I have this attachment." Before she moved from Tiawah, she had almost succeeded.

During the cold winter months, Sister Nelson made a slip for Shirley Gay, a yellow, crinkled crepe skirt, and some pajamas for Duane.

After knocking on the door, Amy Willhoite stuck her head in. "Can you make some buttonholes for me, Sister Nelson? I need fourteen." But Edna Nelson did not let the number faze her. She just got up early, sent Shirley off to school, and got busy.

Brother Nelson and Brother Arthur Lutz drove back over to Fayetteville the last of May to preach again for Brother Baughman.

On the first day of June, the Nelsons met Brother Arthur T. Morgan and Brother Chambers at the Tulsa airport. Together they went to the Chamber of Commerce but could not get permission to hold General Conference in Tulsa. Then they all drove to Borger, Texas, where Brother and Sister Aaron Thomas had a beautiful, large church. The J. O. Wallaces were there from the Sunday School Department at St. Louis. Brother Nelson preached one of the evening messages. "This Truth We Love."

"Nobody ever doubts where Brother Nelson stands on this message," laughed Brother Wallace. "He preached plain, and I respect him for it."

The Nelsons had supper one night with their old friends, Brother and Sister Nelson Frenchman. Brother Frenchman, a full-blooded Choctaw Indian, had served in the U.S. Army in supply for paratroopers. He had attended one of Brother Nelson's revivals at Hennepin, Oklahoma. At that time he had such a severe case of tuberculosis and was so weak that his wife had to lead him into the service.

"You will never be well again," his doctor had said. "In fact, you will never be able to raise your hands above your head."

Brother Nelson preached the message, the Lord anointed, and Nelson Frenchman responded, making his way to the altar. "You need to raise your hands and praise the Lord," he was instructed. Slowly he raised his hands above his head. When he did, he really touched God.

"When I looked up, Brother Nelson, I saw a hole in that beaded ceiling. Slowly the hole opened up right on through the roof, then a hole opened up in the sky right into the heavens. Out of the heavens a strong hand reached down through the roof, through the ceiling, down into my mouth, and to my lungs. That hand got hold of that tuberculosis in my lungs (that's when I screamed so loud). The hand disappeared through the ceiling, through the roof, and slowly into the heavens. Then the three holes—in the beaded ceiling, the roof, and the heavens—closed up again. Praise God, I am healed." Not only had the Lord blessed, but He had also healed Nelson Frenchman.

The very next day the determined, changed Choctaw put his new faith to the test. His wife had a problem with her clothesline pole—it broke. "Hand me the axe. I am going to cut you a pole," announced her husband.

"You are not able to do that, Nelson."

But he did cut the pole. Slowly, he lifted the heavy persimmon pole to his shoulder.

"You really are not able to do that, Nelson. Here, I'll carry the axe for you," his concerned wife offered.

"I'll carry the axe," he insisted. So he carried the pole and the axe back home, dug a hole, and set the pole. It was cold in the winter near Christmastime, but the very next Sunday Brother Frenchman was baptized in a cow pond.

Two years later Brother Nelson went back to hold another revival in Hennepin. The first night he preached on II Thessalonians, chapter one, verses seven and eight. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Actually, Brother Nelson did not

intend to make an altar call, but Brother Frenchman and two or three more came. Brother Bill Shirel's wife, Donna, has reason to remember that meeting. Her father, Mr. Low, received the Holy Ghost, along with Nelson Frenchman. Later Brother Frenchman built a church and pastored. In the fall of 1972, he was killed in a car wreck. Brother Nelson and Brother Chapman preached his funeral.

The same year Jack Garrison got blessed the Nelsons went to California for a camp. It was way up in the edge of the mountains close to Los Angeles. Just a little ways down the mountain was a small hotel in a little town. Sister Nelson's mother stayed at Brother Roney's house and helped take care of his sick brother. Brother Roney brought Momma Stone up to visit with the Nelsons. A Santa Ana came up. They let the sides of the tabernacle down, and the wind came underneath the edge of it, lifting the shavings up "rnan high." Then the dirt and shavings settled all over the congregation, but Brother Nelson just kept on preaching. The Nelsons had a good time with all their old friends, including Brother and Sister Henry Ivie, Kathryn Hendricks, Ina Ammons, and the Lutzes. They took Mom back to Upland and stayed with her a few days. Although she still wore a bandage over her nose, she was feeling pretty good about this time, and the Nelsons enjoyed the brief visit with relatives.

Sister Nelson met Brother Roney's brother and his wife who was blind. Edna was amazed when someone told her about this woman who was able to feel a person and identify them just by touch. "My, that's a pretty white dress you're wearing," she was supposed to have said.

The guardian angels must have kept quite busy guarding C. A. Nelson on the long miles that he traveled on the highways carrying the gospel. He actually had very few wrecks. The year he preached the California camp when he was returning to Oklahoma, Shirley was asleep in the back seat. Just west of Williams, Arizona, on U.S. 66 a big, old, white-faced cow slipped right out in front of Brother Nelson's bullet-nosed car. The car picked up the cow and threw it into the air. "What in the world," cried Sister Nelson. Happily no one but the cow was injured. "The Lord sure watches after his own," Brother Nelson responded as

he headed the car on home to Oklahoma.

J. C. Penney, Montgomery Ward, and McClellan's were beginning to feature back-to-school sales. "Shirley, those little, old blue, pink, and yellow summer sandals are about gone. Let's go shopping." They found a neat pair of red loafers and also a pair of blue, low-heeled "cadets" for Sister Nelson.

"Those Tuesday Bible studies for the children need a little something different too. These children are going to school, and they are smart," so Sister Nelson added flannelgraph to her teaching. But she kept on making buttonholes and sewed a brown and green plaid dress and a green smocked blouse for Shirley, as well as a lavender dress for herself. "I'll make Duane a little suit," she planned.

Piano practice was sometimes a bit much for Brother Nelson. "Why don't you practice over at the church?"

But Mrs. Mabel Jones encouraged both Sister Nelson and Shirley. "Why don't you order this nice periodical, Perry's Musical Magazine, from Sedalia, Missouri, Mrs. Nelson? They are an old reliable company. They have been in business sixty-five years." So Sister Nelson ordered it.

After the Borger convention the Nelsons returned to the little mission church and the small parsonage below Willhoite hill in Tiawah. "That old train sounds like home," Brother Nelson remarked concerning the Missouri Pacific Railroad crossing about a block from the church.

Soon Brother Nelson was back on the road with his '51 Studebaker, attending all the Oklahoma fellowship and sectional meetings. There was one at Collinsville and another at Garden City.

"Let's go to the Arkansas camp meeting, Brother Harvey," Brother Nelson invited his friend, Brother Rathbun. So they drove up to Mt. Crest for a great camp, where they enjoyed meeting old friends from Arkansas.

Then it was time for them to go to Robbers Cave for the Oklahoma-Kansas camp meeting. "Brother Urshan is a great preacher," commented Brother Nelson enthusiastically. But Shirley said, "I want to hear Sister Urshan sing 'Cry, Holy.'"

Tuesday, July 29, 1952, was a busy day at the little parsonage

in Tiawah. Brother and Sister Nelson were packing to go to camp meeting. Brother Nelson went to town five times! They finally left Tiawah about 3:30 P.M. and got down to the campground at Robbers' Cave around 6:00 P.M. The Nelsons settled down in cabin number four, next door to Eddie and Goldie Goddard. Shirley Gay was with them, but they had left Duane at Marcella Hoselton's. Shortly after they got to camp, they received word that Mr. Dunlap, who ran the small general store in Tiawah, had died in Seattle, Washington. "We'll miss him," they thought. Tiawah's population was only seventy-five, and everybody knew everybody.

En route to the Oklahoma camp to speak at the night services were Brother and Sister Nathaniel A. Urshan and her niece, Nila Hobig, from Indianapolis. On the way the ladies got hot and tired, and they rolled the car windows down.

Swooooosh!!

"My notes!" Brother Urshan threw on the brakes. "Go find my notes!" he commanded. Years later at the Urshans' twenty-fifth pastoral anniversary, Nila Hobig Rose still remembered hunting a camp meeting preacher's sermon notes out in a cornfield somewhere between Indianapolis and Oklahoma.

There was a big crowd at camp, and the Lord really blessed. Brother Arthur T. Morgan, General Superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church, preached on Friday morning.

"The thing that I appreciate most about Brother Morgan is that he preaches the truth," declared Brother Nelson as he introduced the respected leader. People continued to drive in, and Brother Stanley W. Chambers from St. Louis, Secretary-Treasurer of the UPC, preached on Saturday.

"We've got all the big shots from St. Louis here with us in Oklahoma this year."

Brother Urshan's dynamic preaching held the audience spellbound. Nila played for Brother and Sister Urshan as they sang, "Hypocrite Shoe." The saints in Oklahoma especially liked Sister Urshan's solo, "Little Country Church 'Way Out On The Hill."

"She sure must be singing about Tiawah," Brother Nelson thought.

Sister Nelson was amused at the young city woman from

Indianapolis. "Sister Nelson, I am going to sit here by you so that you can keep those big bugs out of my hair." Sister Urshan and Nila were city girls, and country living was at times a bit scary for them. One night there was a terrible clanging noise. "What in the world! Is someone trying to break into our cabin?"

"Go to sleep. It's probably that 'coon trying to get into the garbage." Later when they went to the refreshment stand, there stood a big buck complete with a large rack of horns. "They are feeding that animal strawberry soda pop!"

Then there was the day that Sister Urshan and Nila were late for church. Brother Urshan sat wondering, "What's keeping those women? It's almost time for us to sing." Still the ladies did not come. At last he slipped out of the service and went back to the small cabin to see what was the matter. There they were, both of them, in bed covered up from head to toe, angry wasps dive-bombing persistently.

"They'll sting us, Brother Urshan!" wailed Jean. Nila chimed in, "You can die from a wasp bite." Soon the dignified minister had taken charge of the situation, and everybody made it on to service. "The Lord's work must come first, Sister Urshan. If David didn't stagger at a giant, surely you can cope with a wasp."

At that same camp, a Texas girl was also having trouble with insects. Brother James Kilgore, his beautiful wife, Imogene, and their little girl, Jan, had come to the camp from their church in Paris. "I wonder what's happened to Ima and Jan," Brother Kilgore wondered as he hurried to their cabin. There they were both huddled on top of the kitchen table. "That's a scorpion, James! Kill that thing before it bites my baby."

Sunday, Sister Nelson, along with Sister Faith Verbal and Sister Munsey, gathered ninety-one children together for Sunday school. Sister Nelson read a story, illustrating it with flannelgraph, then they sang choruses. On Monday Marcella and Tumper Hoselton, together with Barbara and Deenie, brought Duane down to be with his parents. Soon he was off hunting pop bottles.

On young people's day, Sister Nelson and Shirley Gay sang "Only A Branch." Tuesday Margaret Ann King (Harden), Brother Deal's sister, along with Sister Nelson and Nila, left to go horse-back riding. But soon Sister Urshan came looking for them. When

Sister Nelson got back to her cabin, Shirley was crying, "You went off and left me."

"Well, those old horses were pokey. Shirley, it wasn't much fun!" But camp at Robbers Cave was always fun, as well as a blessing.

Always it rained at camp meeting, making a muddy mess. But the crowds kept coming. "We must have fed seven hundred in the dining hall today, Brother Nelson." It was a great camp, and the shouts rang out in the large tabernacle.

On the way home, the Nelsons spotted a car in the ditch.

"We'd better see if we can help that man," Brother Nelson said as he slowed to stop.

"What's the trouble, mister?"

"Well, I'm a Singer sewing machine agent, and I have gotten in the ditch." So the Nelsons took him into the next town to get help.

When the Nelsons finally got into Tiawah about 12:00 noon, the pump was out of sorts, and Brother Nelson had to get to work on it. It took him two hours to fix it.

After the Oklahoma-Kansas camp, Brother Nelson went over to the Texico District to see his old friend, Brother Browning. "I've got to go to their camps if I want them to support us," he reasoned.

The fifth Sunday meeting in August found Brother Nelson preaching at Collinsville. Here Sister Nelson tried out a new song that she added to her notebook, "Cry, Holy."

Duane had had several spells with his stomach. September found him sickly again. "Cora Bump is at the Franklin Hospital, Brother Nelson," Sister Nelson informed her husband. The phone (1236W2) at the little parsonage brought many requests for prayer.

This was one of the few phones in Tiawah. The local school had no phone, and many a school child knocked at the Nelson door. "Can I call my momma?" The Nelsons are a warm, friendly, hospitable household, and a constant parade of friends and relatives were in and out. Sister Nelson's diary records many names: Faith and Esmer, Donna Pink and Bud, Robert Wilburn and his wife, Jim, Sylvia and the girls, Ruby Brown, Amy and her kids, Brother Land and Brother Dock, Brother Merrill, Sister

Sutherland, Rhodana, Harvey, Brother Gilstrap, Ivone, Don and Emma Jean, and Betty Moore. In addition to entertaining saints and "strangers unawares," Sister Nelson cooked three meals most every day (now on her butane gas stove). She tried often to accompany her husband on his many trips and continued to use every spare moment to sew and crochet. "Summertime, Shirley needs a nice, cool, organdy dress."

In preparing for her first General Conference, Sister Nelson sewed for days. "I'll need several dresses for all those services." She wondered about style, color, and fashion, but with her deft touch and sense of style, her wardrobe was more than adequate. Brother Nelson had a nice new suit from Robert Hall. He went to the conference a few days early for committee meetings.

It was cool that Wednesday, October 22, 1952. Sister Nelson lit a fire to take the chill off the room. Then she took her flowers over to Mrs. Sutton for care. Duane had the stomach flu, but after a while he felt better. He went home with Marcella Hoselton, and Shirley went over to Edna's. Sister Nelson went home to finish the last minute packing, getting to bed about 11:00 that night. Early the next morning, about 3:15, Sister Nelson was up and had a cup of coffee. About 4:30 A.M. J. W. and Bonnie Gilstrap came by and picked her up.

"This is my first General Conference." Sister Nelson was excited. They arrived at Little Rock about noon and were able to attend the afternoon services. Sister Ruby Keyes preached that afternoon. "Brother Nathan Urshan is going to preach this evening."

While Brother Nelson attended afternoon board sessions, Sister Nelson went downtown to do a little shopping. "I couldn't find Duane's size in boots."

But she was delighted with the four silk handkerchiefs and a puzzle for Duane.

After the evening service, Brother Nelson said, "Another board meeting. Don't wait up for me. Tomorrow is Bible school day." The Bible school program was good. A play was presented, "You Never Mentioned Him To Me." Sister Nelson decided to practice in the choir.

After church that night, the Nelsons, along with Beulah and

Betty Morgan, Sally Rumbaugh, Barbara and Deenie Hoselton, and other friends went to a restaurant to eat. While they were there, some local youngsters who had had a little too much to drink came in and began to cut up and show out. "Girls, that is what you have missed by being baptized in Jesus' name. This is what you have missed by getting the Holy Ghost. The devil has told you that you have missed a lot. This is exactly what you have missed," Pastor Nelson gently pointed out to the young girls.

When Edna got back to the hotel, there was a letter from Shirley.

Shirley's Letter

Tiawah School
Claremore, Oklahoma
October 23, 1952

Dear Mother and Daddy,

How are you, hope you are o.k. When are you coming back? Hope you can read my writing. I am having a good time. I all most cryed when you left from Edna's. I got all most all of my arithmetic while Edna was gone. Then I went out to watch Bert. Edna wondered where I was. I was in the coner of the well house. Then Edna and I went in the house. Then we put on coats and went to watch Bert again. We was over at the house after Edna left. What time did you leave this morning? I told Edna to watch my baby. She said she would watch her. I guess I will close for now. Daddy Bro. Vocal called the morning you left. he called to tell you to be a good boy. Ha Ha.

Love & Kisses
Shirley Nelson

P.S. Have a good time mother.
P.S. Daddy you have some fun to.

Sunday! Missionary day at General Conference! Sister Carrie Eastridge was there, along with many others who were busy working for the Lord. She brought with her a girl who sang a beautiful

song, "One Day." "That sure was a pretty song," Sister Nelson thought. The cash offering for the missionary day was forty-eight hundred dollars. It was wonderful how God moved! Sister Nelson practiced with the choir again that night. They learned a song that was new to her, "Ship Ahoy." After choir practice they went with Mary Lou and Henry Stevens to the Chicken Shack.

The Gilstraps and Sister Nelson were planning to return the next day, but she and Sister Deal took a little time to shop. She found Duane's boots—brown and tan with yellow trim. They went back for a final service, then checked out and hit the road for home, arriving about 11:00 Monday night.

Tuesday night at service, the saints called on Sister Nelson for a report. But she was so hoarse she could hardly talk. In addition to that, Duane had set a fire beside the butane tank at the house that day, which frightened her. Edna, Bill, Ruby, Mrs. Hess, and Betty had worked with her frantically to put out the blaze. "Boys will be boys. Even preachers' boys."

However, like his father, Duane was usually thoughtful. While he was just a small lad living in Tiawah, Duane showed evidence of becoming a helpful, concerned person just like his dad. Jessie Willhoite Lutz recalls his helping her haul rocks for a rock flower bed bordering each side of the walk to her small cottage. Various summer flowers bloom all season long in the beds—tulips in the spring, then poppies, and still later, petunias and moss. A bed of flags (iris) enlivens the backyard. Chrysanthemums greet you at the back door in the fall. Honeysuckle grows on one fence and sweet peas on another. Under the drain at the front west corner of the cottage blooms a plant called "houseleek." A sprig of Indian sage (salvia) adds a bright note of color. Queen Anne's lace grows wild in vacant lots and meadows. Tiawah doesn't need a City Botanical Garden. Every household is a botanical garden! Duane's rocks still border Jessie's flower bed!

When his mother and father were away on church business, Duane often stayed with the Hoseltons, right across the street. Barbara and Deenie enjoyed babysitting with the preacher's little boy. "Tumper" Hoselton made Duane a really neat go-cart.

One fall Evelyn Griffen (Mrs. David Walker) and her friend Opal Leonard took Duane along trick-or-treating. As they

knocked at the first door, the little boy piped up, "Tickle your feet?" Opal also gave Duane his first haircut. There are definitely advantages in living in a small community. Everybody helps everybody!

When Clarence went out to California to see about his sick mother in June of 1953, he brought back from Kansas a kerosene stove that Pink and Donna had given him. Up until this time, the Nelsons had only a little, three burner stove. This one was a lot larger, and the oven was attached.

"Boy, now I can cook chocolate cakes," said Edna. "Don't forget the lemon pies." "Yeah, and the pumpkin and coconut will be good too." They cleaned the stove up, and Edna used it for some time. But later it caught fire. She had carefully filled the tank and turned it over into position to let the kerosene run down the line to the three burners. Somewhere along the line, a leak sprang. When Edna lit the stove, she dropped the match in the kerosene. A blaze shot up.

"Oh, my! What will I do?" she screamed. Then she fled from the house to get some sand. "I know better than to throw water on a kerosene fire!" But the sand had very little effect on the flaming kerosene. Edna almost panicked, remembering the time her parents' home burned to the ground in Westville on the last day of September 1932. With help she was able to put out the fire before much damage was done.

The Nelsons lived in Tiawah until Duane was five and Shirley ten. Brother Nelson had a special place for prayer up on a hill north and back of the church. He also had a special place to fish, Panther Creek. Maggie Wright lived close to the foot of the hill (where Brother Nelson prayed) in a quaint, little, peaked-top house. The Willhoites and Nelsons loved to visit the Wrights for homemade ice cream. It was so rich with country cream that you could eat only a little at a time.

Edna and Burt Isaac and their son, Jackie, lived behind the Gabbards. Shirley often stayed with Edna when the Nelsons were away on a trip.

One day Jackie was injured while playing horseshoes at the school. The heavy iron shoe hit him near the eye. Edna took him to the Nelsons for prayer. When Shirley got down to pray, she

entreated, "Lord, help Jackie not to play with them horses."

The children had good friends, but the Nelsons had many friends, too. One was Brother M. D. Deal, who served the Oklahoma District as secretary-treasurer.

In 1947 at a healing service in Tulsa, Brother Nelson met Brother M. D. Deal. Brother Deal had moved to Oklahoma from Memphis, Tennessee, where he had worked with Brother E. E. McNatt. Later on Brother Nelson heard Brother Deal preach at a camp meeting. Although he was not a large man, M. D. Deal was a great man as Brother Nelson soon discovered. He became district secretary of Oklahoma and served with Brother Nelson for eleven years. Then, when Brother Nelson resigned because of poor health, Brother Deal was chosen district superintendent.

Brother Deal served the district in the number one official capacity for six years, then resigned. To Brother Nelson's amazement, he was re-elected! Regarding the long years of close work these men had as officials, Brother Nelson affirms, "Not a cross word! Not ever! We worked together. Brother Deal is a fine man."

Brother Deal confides regarding Brother Nelson, "He was a great organizational man—an unselfish man. It was almost purely a labor of love for years. He did a lot of this work with a paintbrush. We have a beautiful friendship. Confidences were shared. Brother Nelson never let me down. He has keen, quick insight—very perceptive. I have seen him reduced to tears because of lies that were told. Never have I seen a vicious or malicious spirit from Brother Nelson. I have traveled the roads of Oklahoma, preaching and presiding at all hours of the night and morning, and I have always enjoyed Brother Nelson's company. We have never had one cross word though we have had different views. There have been times when we walked a hairline, but not once did he raise his voice. We have had a beautiful rapport always. I appreciate the contribution that C. A. Nelson has made to the work of God."

Brother Voar Shoemake once said, "You won't see much of Brother Nelson. There goes C. A. Nelson and his wife. She had to have surgery. That was almost a capital offense. Some were so strong on trusting God they would not have a doctor. (Tulsa is sort of a center for various sorts of healers). But when Brother Nelson stepped out for his own ministry, he became an outstanding

preacher. He will make you sit on the edge of your seat."

Brother W. C. Parkey adds, "Brother Nelson can lead men right off the bluff. He can convince men."

Across the world in Russia was a leader who did not seem to try to convince men. He only coerced or crushed them.

In 1945, the month of April, three of the world leaders of the twentieth century died within a few days—Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mussolini, and Hitler. Mussolini was shot by Italian underground soldiers, Hitler committed suicide, but exhausted by the years of heavy responsibility, Roosevelt suffered a cerebral hemorrhage.

After the war, Stalin retained his chairmanship of the Politburo, the highest policy-making and governing body of the Communist party and of the Soviet Union. In October 1952, the Politburo was replaced by the even more powerful Presidium, with Stalin as chairman and first Secretary of the Secretariat. Meanwhile, he remained central committee chairman of the Communist party.

Power, power, power! It has been said that "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." From a student in a seminary to absolute power in Russia, Stalin brought that nation from the wooden plow era to the atomic reactor stage. But, in doing so, he had crushed all who opposed him, causing even his own daughter, Svetlana, to flee her homeland to the United States. But on March 5, 1953, Stalin died from cerebral hemorrhage in the Kremlin. His body was placed on view in the mausoleum in Red Square. In the future even the Russians themselves discovered to some extent the horrors of his rule.

But good as Tiawah had been, better days were ahead for the Pentecostals.

Chapter Fifteen

Moving To Claremore

Much earlier that year the church people, after many discussions, decided to move the congregation into the town of Claremore, a fine town of about twelve thousand, complete with a courthouse (Rogers County). It boasts the Will Rogers Memorial, which attracts thousands of visitors every year, as well as the largest gun collection in the world in the Jim Davis Gun Collection Museum. Brother Nelson, a progressive man, knew that as much as he loved Tiawah and all of the memories associated with it, the community had little future. "We have already lost our high school, and our post office has been gone since December 31, 1938.

"Those who want to stay here can stay. No one will be forced to move." Brother Nelson generously tried to be more than fair with all concerned. Of the twenty-six women who were present during the business meeting, nineteen voted yes, and seven voted no. Of the men who voted, eighteen voted yes, and two, no.

Soon Brother Nelson and some of the brethren found property at 204 West 11th. On June 14, Brother Nelson, Leo Faught, Dewey Decker, Odie Collier, Donald Willhoite, and Brother George Vogel dug the trench for the foundation.

Brother D. W. Hoselton encouraged the members to contribute. "We can give ten percent tithes, then add another ten percent to the building fund." And they did. They had a mind to work and to

give. When money ran low, one of the members would take his car in and mortgage it; then all of the members would help pay off the mortgage. Then when the money ran low again, another faithful saint would offer to do the same.

"We got started. We finally got the roof on the little, old, flat-topped forty-two-by-one-hundred-foot building. One day we were working and a black man came up. 'What's you all building? A garage?' We ran out of money, so one of the brethren volunteered to go down to mortgage his car for all he could get and we would all pay it off. Then another would do the same, and all of us would pay that one off.

"One hot day we had pillars dug to set, steel poles to put the roof up, but no money to order cement. (We were going to make cement.) We sat there dreading it.

"We heard the roar as a cement truck came up. The man got out. 'I have extra cement. Could you use it?' He had just enough cement to fill six holes.

"Thank you, Jesus!

"The church building was just old raw blocks inside and out. Since then we have built a new addition at thirty thousand dollars. We tore all the roof off the old building. Trusses and lumber were laying on the ground, so I called for help. We took two days from the time we started until we had trusses up and were in the building. We put in wall-to-wall carpeting and beautiful padded pews. It was so red that it would make the pope of Rome blush! Now we have a building worth two hundred thousand dollars and don't owe a dime on it."

In hard times, Brother Nelson painted for a living—houses, restaurants, barns, stores—inside and outside—built the church, built the parsonage, and served as superintendent for the Oklahoma-Kansas district.

The workers labored in two shifts—a day shift and a night shift. Brother Nelson often worked both shifts. In addition, as has already been noted, he fulfilled faithfully his many appointments as the district superintendent. Whistling, singing, telling a funny story, he lent zest and enthusiasm to the entire project.

For the first service in the new church, just the faithful few who had worked so hard gathered. Without any singing, music, or

other formalities, they knelt for prayer. With this simple beginning, the new work started.

"Brother Nelson's pulpit has not always been in a lovely church. He has preached in tents, brush arbors, out in the open, behind the church, in schools, on the street, in jails, and in little storefront buildings," commented Sister Kathryn Hendricks.

Sometime later Brother and Sister Nelson, along with Sam Grisham, went to Indianapolis for a Sunday school convention. It would take some hard work and perhaps some new ideas to make as good a showing in Claremore as they had done in Tiawah. No longer could Brother Nelson talk about having more folks in church than were in town.

But evangelism has always been Brother Nelson's candy stick; they have had some good revivals in Claremore. A book could be written about the blessings that God has given in revivals, not to mention the funny things that happen when an evangelist comes to town.

The Nelsons moved into town to a house on Catalayah Street, which is now Lynn Riggs Boulevard. Shirley continued to ride to school with a teacher back to the rust brick Tiawah School with the blue door.

She was only ten years old and had been reared in the warm, friendly, little country community of Tiawah. Life in town was not too attractive to her. At the start of the new term, Shirley started to Claremore grammar school.

When she was twelve years old, she got a small accordion. Barbara and Deenie Hoselton played accordions, as did Beulah Morgans. Betty Morgans played the vibraharp. Later Danny Faught played the trumpet, Duane the saxophone, and Gary Horner played trombone.

Music has always been a top priority with the Nelsons. Sister Nelson encouraged her talented daughter, Shirley. Their first public appearance was a mother and daughter duet at the camp meeting. They sang "Only a Branch."

In addition to pastoring, superintending the large Oklahoma-Kansas District, and building a new church, Brother Nelson found time to fish a little bit. But he also took the opportunity to paint some on the Kelsey Apartments for some cash money. "We have

got to keep meat on the table. Soon as I get a chance, I want to wet a line down in Otter Creek."

After some time Shirley got adjusted to the Claremore school system and began to play for programs. She was in demand to help out with her talented accordion playing as well. Jack Garrison often requested her to play "the two Eagles" ("Under the Double Eagle"). She was a member of the National Honor Society. She was very proficient in her business courses and also entered speech contests. Shirley graduated with honors in May of 1960. She was a popular girl and was married within a year and a half after she finished school.

In the late fall of 1953, Brother Nelson and his brother James (Pink) again went to California to visit their mother.

Pink's wife, Donna, a tiny blonde with wispy hair but a warm lovely smile, always welcomed Edna and Clarence when they came to visit. So Donna came to stay with Edna. "Those men will be gone through Christmas," Edna wailed. So they shopped, wrapped packages, then drove up to Clafton to Donna's home (near Lyons, Kansas), where they met their husbands.

Neither one of the girls had driven much, and they lost the way around Skiatook. Shirley and Duane began to cry, "We're lost."

"No, we aren't lost. We just don't know where we are." But Edna Nelson always knew where she wanted to go and how to get there.

July 4, 1953, was a fun time, but in the midst of the festivities, an accident happened.

"We had sparklers (not too dangerous), but we lit these sparklers and set them up in the ground. Duane stomped one, and it went up in his shoe, burning his foot with third-degree burns. They brought him in the house; he had hard chills. I had never had anything to do with a burn before, so they just slapped some salve on it and wrapped it up. After a few days, we took him to the doctor, and he said, "Third-degree burns. He'll be scarred for life. I'll probably have to do a skin graft." After much prayer, Duane's foot began to heal, but he was unable to wear shoes all summer.

When the Nelsons lived on Catalayah, two young evangelists, Jimmy Shoemake and Albert Dillon, came to hold a revival. Soon Jimmy took sick with a high fever and chills which turned into the

flu. He left to go stay with his parents, the Voar Shoemakes, who pastored in a nearby town.

"That room stinks," Albert complained as he opened wide all the windows.

"It's probably that fever. It'll be all right after it's aired good." But the next day the odor was worse. By the third day Albert declared the odor was impossible, and they all began to search.

"Can you believe a dead cat?" cried Brother Nelson as he dragged the offending odiferous animal out from under the house. "Nothing stinks worse than a dead cat unless it's a filthy sinner!" They all laughed, but Albert was glad the cat was gone.

About this time the district held their camp meeting at a government camp at Robbers Cave State Park amid the pine trees. Small cabins provided dormitory space.

"The Winds Were Blowing Again" at the Oklahoma, camp. Brother W. C. Parkey was the official choir director. Sister Nelson was singing in the choir right beside Betty Morgans. Suddenly the high winds began to pick up songbooks, papers, and even stray underwear that had been hung out near the cabins on lines to dry. The choir cracked down on their first song, "He's Already Done What He Said He Would Do." The winds began to pick up momentum. Cars flipped over; the tents that were being used for the boys' dormitories sailed through the air. "It blew that red clay mud right through my white shirt," Brother Nelson recalls. "My wife liked to have never got those shirts clean again, and I had to scrub with lye soap to get it off my skin." Red clay dust or mud (according to the weather) was the holy hallmark of camp meeting in those days in Oklahoma. "Word must have got around, for when it came time to come to Oklahoma, guest speakers suddenly had to lay carpet in their churches or got sick or something else happened.

"One time I had a cancellation, and I called Brother Orlen Ray Fauss in desperation. 'Sure, I'll come, Brother Nelson, if I can possibly get out of this other engagement.'

"A few days later he called back, 'They won't let me off, Brother Nelson, but I am down here in Louisiana and there's a nice, young evangelist who says he can come, Brother Will Cohron and his wife.'"

"Send them on. It's time for camp," Brother Nelson urged.

Brother Nelson sometimes thought the devil really tried to hinder the Oklahoma camp meeting. One year he thought he surely had planned well. "Brother Corliss Dees is gonna be our speaker. The Lord will sure bless. Everybody make a special effort to go." Well, the people came and Brother Dees came, but the "Winds Were Blowing Again." This time it was not the winds like on the Day of Pentecost, but a one hundred-mile-an-hour wind that roared through the middle of the camp like a freight train. Most everybody huddled up against the block wall on the platform or rushed off to the wooden dorms. Some hunted frantically for their children. But one woman found God in the midst of the storm. She was huddled up on a quilt right about in the center of the open-air tabernacle with her children around her. She began to pray and seek God, and God filled her with the Holy Ghost right in the storm. "But Brother Dees has never been back," recalls Brother Nelson with a twinkle in his eye.

In the fifties Sister George, a black sister, came to the Claremore church. Here is her story in her own words. "I praise the Lord for Brother Nelson. He has been more than a pastor. He has been a father to his saints. I was under a leader that I loved very much, tried to obey her. She tried to get me to confess to something I didn't do. She said God told her to put sin out of the church. She spoke in this manner, that she had come to a conclusion that we meet downtown off the street, speak, and keep going. So I wrote a pastor in Tulsa. He and his wife came up and talked with me and I told them about the accusation, thought he would straighten out the matter and I would have somewhere to go to church. But he told me that he believed my report were true but said by her being a preacher, she could make it hard for me. So all I could do was stay home and pray. So I prayed in this manner. So I said, 'Lord, send someone along that loves you and loves your people.' I was so destitute and so determined, most time I was on my knees all night.

"So it seemed like I did all I knew to do and had come to the wit's end. Couldn't see no way out. But deep down within I felt like something had to be done because my soul was hungry. So on that Monday morning on my way to work, God had a plan for me.

"I looked up Brother Nelson's phone number and went straight to his home and laid out my grievous complaint. Held nothing back; told everything.

"So him and Sister Nelson had compassion, and he said, 'God is not going to point His finger at me for you not having a place to worship. All I ask of you, like I do the whites, is to do right.'

"While I was going through this test, I took upon me the story of Joseph. How he was put in prison for something he did not do. But all the witness he had was God. The same with me. Brother Nelson has been the best pastor I ever had. My eyes has been open to lots of things I didn't know.

"Brother Nelson teaches us to love one another, to keep up our prayer line, dedicate our lives to God. I have been here better than fifteen years. Now I am seventy years old.

"When my own race turned their back on me, Brother Nelson took me in and nursed me with his own saints. I could have been lost had it not been for Brother Nelson and the church. It means so much to have a church home.

"I'll always respect Brother Nelson and the saints. All my success is because of this church."

In Jesus' Name,
Anna Maude George

The big event early in 1955 was the completion of the new parsonage at Claremore. Frank Worley was the construction overseer, but the men of the church took turns helping with the building. Finally the major part of the work was completed. Then Brother and Sister Nelson, Brother Arthur Lutz, and Orval Doty, along with many others, helped to add the last finishing touches. Sister Nelson and Dolly Faye Willhoite Doty did the woodwork. Later Brother and Sister Nelson lacquered the hardwood floors.

"Imagine hardwood floors throughout! Won't they be nice?"

But pastoring continued. "Ruthie Hardison is in the hospital. You'll need to stop by to see her," reminded Sister Nelson concerning the little girl who had fallen while running to greet her grandmother at her birthday party. Ruthie had broken her hip and was in traction. Later Brother Nelson called on Sister Maggie Moore and Jean Rumbaugh and Sister Maudine Hoselton. Then

there were special meetings to be attended at Sperry, a fellowship meeting at Skiatook, and the last day of January there was a sectional conference at Quinton.

Brother Nelson did not let rain, snow, or ice keep him from attending these meetings. He also had to run over to Arkansas during the third week of January. By the time they were ready to move, January 29, to the little, white parsonage at 209 West Twelfth Street, Brother Nelson was sick with hard chills. But Brother Glen and Sister Edna Coffman, Leo Faught, Dewey Decker, Marcella Hoselton, Ivone Decker, and Sister Nelson moved the family anyway. Sister Nelson and Josephine Faught already had everything packed, so they moved and got everything fairly well straightened out by night in spite of a sick preacher husband.

Now it was time for a little bit of new furniture. Sister Nelson shopped for a new bedroom suite and also a living room chair and a planter lamp. She had already made drapes for the master bedroom and for Duane's bedroom.

Sister Nelson's diary reveals that a steady stream of guests dropped by the new parsonage both day and night just as they had at the humble little house in Tiawah. Guests included Ruby King, June Knight, Jack Garrison, Mrs. Bright, and many others. Guest preachers often came by. Brother Arthur Lutz, Leo Faught, and M. L. White were among those who preached at Claremore early in 1955.

Recreation for the ladies consisted mostly of a few Tupperware parties plus going to visit mothers with new babies and a few activities at school. But Edna found time to help with the singing. She and Betty Moore Harrod and Shirley Gay had a trio. Their songs included: "When I Fly Away Home," "I've Been With Jesus," and "One of His Own."

But the busy preacher not only worked on the parsonage and preached about four times a week in Claremore. He also attended a sectional conference at Checotah, a fellowship meeting at Hennepin, a sectional conference at Mangum, went to Brother Massey's at Tulsa for a fellowship meeting, and to Brother Still's (probably at Garden City). Many other Oklahoma preachers enjoyed these times of fellowship. They built a sense of

unity and oneness of purpose. It did, however, leave many a lonely minister's wife home alone with the kids.

When the Nelsons moved to Claremore, Harvey Rathbun moved too. "I need to be close to you and Sister Nelson and close to church, Brother Nelson." So he found a small place above a business and cleaned the business building to help out a bit with the rent.

In 1954, shortly after the Nelsons had returned from a visit to relatives in California, someone called them. "Brother Nelson, Brother Harvey is real sick."

"Gotta go check up on my old friend, the turkey herder," Brother Nelson called to his wife as he left the house. Later he returned, looking sober.

"Where's Harvey?" inquired Sister Nelson.

"Well, Harvey's real sick, Sister Nelson, but I thought it would be too hard on you to take care of him. You just got in from that long trip from California . . ."

"Go get him and bring him here where I can look after him," responded the compassionate preacher's wife. And that is what she did.

"I don't want to be no trouble to nobody, Brother Nelson." But the aged saint needed nursing care, and Edna Nelson had carefully cared for her own mother, changing bandages on a cancerous nose time after time, so she knew how to care for the sick. On July 2, 1954, as she was propping up the elderly man so that he could breathe better, he breathed his last.

The children came to gather Harvey's worldly possessions.

"Wait a minute, Brother Nelson," the oldest son stopped. "The last time Dad talked to me, he said everything he had belonged to the church. So it's all yours, Brother Nelson." So the few pictures and mementoes were all that was left of a life poor in this world's goods but rich toward God and full of love for his beloved pastor. The church poured out their love toward their old friend. A nice monument marked the final resting place. Brother and Sister Nelson still go out to lay a flower on the grave of the turkey herder who found God and found a church and a pastor who filled his days with glory.

In 1954 Brother Nelson decided to broadcast a thirty-minute

weekly radio program from the church every Sunday morning at nine o'clock. One man, who was suspected of being a bootlegger and never attended church, was a faithful listener to the program. When the Claremore churches took their annual religious census, the man would always say that he was a Pentecostal believer. He regularly sent in a monthly offering of ten or fifteen dollars but never attended church.

In the fall of 1954, Brother Nelson preached at the annual General Conference of the United Pentecostal Church which met that year at Columbus, Ohio. In his usual inimitable style, Brother Nelson stirred hearts and provoked some solemn thinking with a great sermon, "Hell and Who's Going There." Later this sermon was published in the church periodical, *The Pentecostal Herald*. Twenty-seven years later, when the sermon is mentioned, ministers especially remember it.

Hell and Who's Going There

By Clarence A. Nelson

This subject was born from a radio program I heard recently. The program was broadcast from a street corner, and the announcer asked the people, as they passed by, three important questions. "Do you believe in life after death? Do you believe there is a heaven and a hell? If you believe there is a hell, who's going there?"

Everyone agreed there was a heaven. And there wasn't a one of them who didn't agree there was a place called hell.

Hell is mentioned in the New Testament two hundred and forty-three times. Hell is a place of punishment, torment, a lake of fire, a bottomless pit, outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. Heaven, the place we all dream of and want to go to, is only mentioned once for every five times hell is mentioned in the New Testament. We should think about hell and who's going there.

An average of nine times in each book, the New Testament tells us there's a hell out there, after the end of this age. There's a heaven out yonder. There's a destination for your soul and my soul. And God's Word is going to be the deciding factor.

Suppose those twenty-seven books represent twenty-seven miles from here to eternity. That would leave nine great big signs to each mile. Suppose you traveled twenty-seven miles from here to a point down yonder. Every mile beside the road, the most conspicuous place, a large sign tells you there's a terrible pit down yonder. Nine big signs every mile; every 586⅔ feet a large sign, warning that there's a stopping off place, a hell out there, a horrible pit out yonder. Why shouldn't we stop and think? Isaiah 14:9 says, "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming." That same book, in the twenty-eighth chapter, says, "Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not

come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." Psalm 9:17 reads, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Paul tells us in the first chapter of Second Thessalonians: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction." Revelation 20:15 says, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

In the closing of the nineteenth chapter of Revelation, the Bible says that the beast and false prophet were cast alive into the lake of fire. The devil was bound with a great chain and shut up for a thousand years. In the closing of the twentieth chapter of Revelation, that same book says that when the thousand years was finished, Satan was loosed out of his prison to go forth and deceive the nations. Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured him, and the devil was cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and false prophet are. Not was—but they are still there. If you don't burn up in a thousand years, you never will burn up.

There's a hell out there somewhere. God has warned us. The Scripture calls it a bottomless pit, outer darkness, the lake of fire. It's a place where people pray. God was good enough to us in the New Testament to take us into the regions of the lost. There we find a man in the bottomless pit, the lake of fire, and he cried out he was tormented in "this flame." He prayed not for a glass of water, not for a spoon of water, but for one drop of water. At the end of an age for ten thousand years, he had to hope for one drop of water to have something to live for. But in the regions of the damned, you have nothing to live for. When hell's gate clangs shut on a sinner's back, it must be an awful feeling. I don't want

to experience it. Hope forever gone, lost without God. He only asked for water, but he prayed for his people back home. "Oh, tell my brothers not to come to this place." But he was told they had the law and the prophets. But if they won't hear the Word of God, neither would they hear one though he rose from the dead.

As I read the headlines of the paper tonight, I thought of the fear this nation feels. The evening paper said: "President Eisenhower calls the nation to prayer tomorrow." Prayer tomorrow—not to look for salvation but for survival. Not to be saved, but for peace. They tell us they have a bomb that can destroy the entire nation. It is equivalent to forty-five million tons of TNT. We're not praying for salvation; we're praying for survival. There is no hiding place. It's judgment without remedy. "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man." The world has forgotten God and is on its way to destruction.

I believe God wants His church to be saved. We need a prayer meeting in the church of the living God. We need to get on our knees and have a rebaptizing of the Holy Ghost and fire in our souls. We live in danger of being carried away with the things of the world, and we will find ourselves at the mercy of a just God, and hell will be our doom, at the end of the road—we're headed that way. We can't turn back. I would to God I could recall my twenty-three years of ministry—I can't—I have to go on, you have to go on whether you want to or not. This little thing we call time or life is about to run out. The old clock is clicking away fast; it's about to run out on us. God said if He did not shorten the days, there would be no flesh saved at all. The great hand of God is going to stop the hands of the great clock of time. The coming of the Lord is upon us.

When John the Baptist came preaching, he said the axe is laid to the root of the trees, and every tree that doesn't bear good fruit is going to be cut down and cast into the fire. Jesus, in the fifth chapter of Matthew, says that if a man called his brother a fool, he's in danger of hell fire. He said that if we bring our gifts and know that our brother has ought against us, we must leave our gifts there and go back and get our trouble settled with our brother and come back and offer our gifts. He came preaching there's a

hell out there, a lake of fire. Judgment is laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet.

There are no shortcuts to a Pentecostal experience. It is the same as it always was. The standard of holiness is the same. Man has changed, fashions have changed, time has changed, but God never changes. Moses, back when he was leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, preached to five million—maybe seven million people. There were those in the crowd that did their best to take the people back to slavery. Moses called for a separation of Israel.

I wonder if it comes to that in our case if we'll have the strength and power to do it. I wonder if it is possible that we can be sold into politics, and then our church be led into the pits of hell? I wonder if we will have strength to take our stand?

There came a time when Moses did it; he finished his mission. God let him look at the Promised Land, and while he was up there, he died. The children of Israel camped around that mountain. I don't know how long they camped, but there came a time when God spoke to Joshua and He told him with words he could understand: "Moses my servant is dead; now get up and take this children, these people, take them across Jordan to possess this land." He said, "Joshua, as I was with Moses, I will be with you."

There were possibly some in that crowd that were glad to see the old man Moses dead. "You held a rod over us long enough." But we need some rods. I think it would be a great help if some of you brethren would make some bylaws and stop me by them. I don't want to go to hell any more than you do. I want to shun that place.

He said, "I'm going to be with you just like I was with Moses." No doubt a lot of them just whooped and shouted when they heard Moses was dead. "Now we're free, and we're going to have a great time. We can set our own morals and we'll preach our own doctrines, and we'll have our own standards."

But God said, "Wait a minute, Joshua, just a minute, there's just one little condition you must meet if I'm going to be with you and that is that you don't forget to keep all the commandments that Moses, my servant, commanded. Don't you forget that part of it. Joshua. Moses is dead, but I'm still living. And this Word lives on."

Folks say, "Oh, but God doesn't have anybody ready." Brother,

God has a church people under the sod. The rapture can come anytime. God already has a church. Just multiplied thousands of them have already sealed their testimonies with their own blood, and they're sleeping under the sod, waiting, just waiting, for the call of the trumpet.

I picked up a paper awhile back and read an article written by a man when he was dying. He said there was nobody in this wide world to be left here when he was gone. I thought, "Is that the way I'm preaching? Is that what I'm building? Am I standing here or am I in this little church where I am indispensable? If I were to die, would this thing fall? Isn't there anybody in this world that could take my place?" Thank God, I have a vision of a group of people I can band myself with and work with, that when I'm dead and gone the Word of God will roll on.

The Bible tells me that on the Day of Pentecost, they were gathered in that upper room, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit of God gave the utterance. Thank God, it was a Pentecostal church, and they were in one accord. The first message was: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." And no man has the right to quote the promise to anybody unless he quotes the verse ahead of it, to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. It all goes together in the same message. The Scriptures tell me that they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.

Paul said you mark them that cause division among you and preach contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and to avoid them. There came a time in the apostle Paul's ministry that certain men from Jerusalem came down and taught the people they had to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses to be saved. Paul looked at him and said, "Now that's a good man and he's got a little business over there and he puts quite a bit in this thing. I know his doctrine is wrong, he's got some bad doctrine, but then he is not an adulterer or a fornicator, and he lives a good life, etc., and we'll just keep him on here, and maybe he

will get out of that thing."

I've made the same mistake, but I found out they didn't get out. They grow worse and worse all the time. No, that wasn't what Paul said. He said when they did this, he didn't stand for it an hour. He didn't put it off till the next General Conference, he didn't stand for it for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might remain.

If it comes to the separation, will we compromise this doctrine? It is not possible that we compromise this doctrine and survive. I don't believe there is any compromise going around that can compare with this doctrine which the apostles preached. I believe you must preach it to be saved. Paul said if my gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost; the god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not. Paul tells us that if man or angels preach any other doctrine other than what I have preached, let him be accursed. We need the rebaptism of the Holy Ghost in our lives, with some strength and courage from God, to take a stand for the truth and preach the truth. If we are going to survive, we have got to preach this doctrine. Why? There's a hell out yonder! Right out there, every 568⅔ feet you see a big sign saying there's a hell out there—slow down, get off this road, get out of that doctrine, get out of that worldliness, there's a hell down there. If that place is mentioned two hundred and forty-three times in the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, I am fully persuaded God wasn't just kidding or joking. There's actually a hell down there.

And what about the moral and holiness standard? All you have to do is pick up the paper—thrill killings. Where do you get it from? Sex magazines and televisions. The FBI spoke to the Oklahoma Police Officers Association in Tulsa, Oklahoma, just a few months back. He said that by 1960, if we didn't get a revival, this nation would be ruled by gangs of teenagers. He said we do not have the answer to the situation. In Pryor, Oklahoma, a nice little town eighteen miles west of where I live, I heard a man speaking on the radio. He said the hour is fast approaching when honest, God-fearing, and law-loving men and women would have to strap a six-gun on their hip again, to live. Are there those in our midst that would lead us back into sin and worldliness? Can't we

ministers take a united stand against worldliness in every form and preach the gospel of holiness? Why? There's a hell out yonder. I need strength from God and this church needs strength from God. I know there's pressure being put on every Pentecostal preacher and every pastor. Saints of God are sitting in churches and continually putting their thumb on the preacher, and they glory in their hearts that they are able to feel good when they can make him squirm and twist. We need a revival in the United Pentecostal Church, a revival of holiness in our midst.

God said hell has opened its mouth without measure. I can hear someone say, "I am glad that old pastor's gone. He's one of those harebrained, narrow fellows, and he is one of those fellows that held a club over us all the time." He might be gone, but this Bible isn't. This lives on. The plan of salvation hasn't changed. Nineteen hundred years ago it began, and to an honest-hearted Christian man or woman, to a conscientious saint of God, it seems only hours ago. As Jesus stood in Pilate's hall and felt the whip upon His back, He opened not His mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. His visage was more marred than any man; He was bloody, He was beaten. Sandwiched between two thieves, He died on the cross in sorrow; he bore the great pain. And there as He died to save me from loss, His wonderful heart was broken for me. There's a time coming when that same loving Savior is going to laugh at men's calamity.

Suppose you are going down the highway tonight and you see a car turn over. It is on fire. And you stop your car and jump out. The car is on fire, and you can see there's a woman and a man pinned underneath. You could with a hand reach down and pick it up and spare the two lives. And with that fire burning and touching their feet, you just stand there and laugh at them. What would make you do it? What kind of an inhuman would you be? What would anger a loving Savior that was beaten and bruised and spit on yet opened not His mouth? He had power to call twelve legions of angels, but He would not do it. He died of His own will. What would make Him stand and laugh at a man when he is slipping off into the fire? The Bible tells me it is "because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded it." Rejection of truth will cause God to laugh at

your calamity. I feel in one sense that we are at the crossroads, either to go back into the world and lose the vision of God or to retain the vision of foreign missionary work, home missionary work, Sunday school work, and all of our departments. We can either be old-fashioned Pentecost, or we can go back into this world and lose God out of our lives and find ourselves at the door of hell to meet eternity. A little poem, that was in one of our tracts, reads:

When the great plants of our cities turn out their last piece of work,

And our banks rake in their last dollar and pay their last bill,

When the judge of the earth says closed for the night—what then?

When the choir has sung its last anthem, and the preacher has made his last prayer,

When the people have heard their last sermon; the sound has died out of the air,

When the Bible lays cold on the altar, and the pews are all empty of men,

Each one stands facing his record and the great book is opened—what then?

Chapter Sixteen

Changing Times

The year 1955 was a year of change. Brother Nelson had worked long and hard not only on the new church building and parsonage at Claremore but also in district work. One night way after midnight he was coming home from a trip that had involved district work. He realized that he was tired. When he was supposed to swing home to Claremore, he went straight east on Highway 33.

"Where am I? Which way is home?" He was confused and lost within twenty miles of home.

A day or so later, he was shocked when his car was nearly rammed by a train. In a great hurry, he raced in front of the train. As he came barreling off the track, he saw a man sitting in his car with his arms over his eyes, horrified by the near fatal accident. Brother Nelson recognized the man as his family doctor, Dr. M. E. Gordon, who had delivered his only son, Duane.

The next day Sister Nelson got a call from Dr. Gordon. "Have the reverend come down to see me," Dr. Gordon insisted.

When Brother Nelson went to Dr. Gordon's office, he was immediately ushered right in to see the concerned doctor. The physician pulled Brother Nelson's chair close to him and looked him right between the eyes. Then he called the nurse and said, "Nurse, this is a dying man. I want you to give him a B-12 shot

every time you can catch him. He's a dying man," the doctor repeated soberly.

Then he turned his attention back to Brother Nelson and continued, "Reverend, I want you to go to the cemetery. Spend two hours out there each day. Walk around. Look at the tombstones. Read the names on them. Every last one of them thought the world could not live without them. Now it's up to you." This was the time that Brother Nelson decided he would decline to let his name run again for re-election as district superintendent of the state of Oklahoma.

"I had reached the end of the road. I knew I must have some time to slow down." He was pleased when his good friend and associate, Brother M. D. Deal, former secretary-treasurer, was elected as district superintendent.

"Brother Deal is a fine man. He has worked closely with me for many years. He will make a fine district superintendent." Brother Nelson was glad to commend the district's choice of a new superintendent.

"The phone did not ring so much," Brother Nelson soon found out. "No one came by very often. Perhaps because I was already weak and worn out, I had to fight some feelings of depression," Brother Nelson confided to his close friend, Brother W. C. Parkey. No doubt others hardly realized this as Brother Nelson is adept at hiding his innermost feelings. Cracking a joke and telling a funny story is his style rather than complaining.

No longer on constant call as an official, Brother Nelson was still very busy as pastor of the UPC church of Claremore. He also had more time at home. His son, Duane, began first grade this year. "Daddy, my teacher's name is Mrs. Denny." Duane was growing up.

Claremore, with a population of about twelve thousand, is twenty-five miles from Tulsa, twenty miles from Pryor, and eighteen miles from Collinsville. It is the county seat of Rogers county and is inordinately proud of its homespun hero, Will Rogers.

Will Rogers Memorial stands at the end of the impressive Will Rogers Boulevard along with Claremore Junior College (originally Oklahoma Military Academy).

The tallest building in town is the OK Grain Elevator. The

typical American business establishments are a U-Tote-Em grocery, Safeway grocery, and DX filling station. Then there is the Will Rogers hotel for the visitor in town. An Indian hospital furnishes free medical care for anyone who has his name on the roll of some Indian tribe. (As previously stated, Sister Nelson's family name was dropped from the roll of the Cherokee Indians.) Wigwam Trading Post and Wigwam Chicken Hut signal that this was once (and to a large extent may still be) Indian territory.

"This is a far cry from Tiawah," some of the saints thought. But others may have missed the unique situation of having 135 in Sunday school in a town of 75.

"Brother Nelson won't be the sheriff here, either," another may have thought.

"Yep, I was sheriff of Tiawah. I stood for law and order," Brother Nelson recalls, and anyone who has ever heard him preach knows that this is true. But Brother Nelson is much more than just a hard-hitting, straight-on-the doctrine, holiness-loving kind of preacher as his saints well know.

One day while Brother Nelson was painting a house, the assistant Sunday school superintendent of the Claremore church, O. B. Collier, came by. "My wife has had twin boys, and they died. Will you preach the funeral?"

The undertaker told Brother Nelson that one baby weighed fourteen ounces, the other eighteen. "I embalmed them. I was proud that I could. I went down to a store and bought doll clothes and dressed the babies."

A slow rain fell in the country cemetery. Beulah Morgans and Sister Nelson sang. Later Beulah asked, "Did those babies have souls?"

"That's a good question."

Brother Nelson asked the undertaker. "Did those babies both breathe?"

"Yes," answered the undertaker. "One lived an hour. The other three hours."

"Then they had a soul because the Bible says God made man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

Then Brother Nelson asked, "How big was that soul? Both

babies lay side by side on the same pillow of a tiny coffin. So the soul is so small that it can be put in a fourteen-ounce body. What makes the soul so valuable? It is so small you can't weigh it. You can't see it. Why is it so valuable?" continued Brother Nelson.

"It is the only thing about a human being that came direct from God, and it is the only thing that wants God. Your flesh does not want God. Lots of people take their soul to church and it wants to go to the altar and talk to its Maker, and they get up and take their soul out and let it starve." The wise pastor, C. A. Nelson, used every opportunity to stimulate his young people to think.

In the summer of 1960, Brother Nelson was asked to preach the camp meeting in the state of Louisiana. Louisiana has a large, well attended camp. Louisiana church officials, Brother J. Roy Weidner and Brother C. G. Weeks, were looking forward to Brother Nelson's preaching. Sister O'Brien led the choir, and each night the tabernacle rang with songs of praise.

At that time the big news in the Alexander, Louisiana, newspaper was the turmoil in the Congo when Belgium granted that country independence. Rapes, murders, and strife filled the news. Each night as Brother Nelson began to preach, he reminded the listeners, "Trouble is a-comin' on this ole world. It's time to seek God." Pentecostals prayed and sinners did seek God in these great camp meetings.

After six years of traveling almost continuously and conducting camp meetings, district meetings, presiding over business meetings, and all the multitude of tasks that are the responsibility of a district superintendent, Brother Deal decided that he needed a rest and declined to serve after 1961.

Again Brother Nelson was surprised, although he was honored and pleased, when he was asked once more to assume the position as district superintendent of the state of Oklahoma. "Oklahoma is a great state. The work of the Lord is a worthy work." Again he felt unworthy and well knew the many long hours that would be involved. He also knew that he was not as young as when he first took the task. But after prayer, he felt he did have something more to contribute, so he accepted the challenge and again was elected district superintendent in 1962. Rested and refreshed from the time he had been out of office, he

began traveling long miles again as the calls came in.

"Brother Nelson could you . . . ?" Yes, he could and he did, leaving his family alone again night after night.

After Brother Nelson was re-elected, he soon found himself enjoying his old role and feeling right at home in the district superintendent's job again. He went over to Texas to their district conference and astonished himself. When his old friend, Brother Guidroz, called on him to say a few words, he responded, "We had a great conference in Oklahoma. I got re-elected."

Brother Nelson never forgot his roots in Arkansas. He went to the Arkansas camp just about as faithfully as he went to Oklahoma, especially when it was held at Mt. Crest. He preached at three of their camps. One time the Nelsons went and took Duane and Doyle Woods.

Mosquitoes were so bad. "A lot of them would weigh a pound. They would light upon a tree and bark. They always sang 'Nothing but the Blood.'

"I don't know how many people prayed through in these camps. The Lord keeps count. I never was one to try to keep track of big numbers."

About this time Brother G. E. Wesson called Brother Nelson to preach the camp at Arizona.

"We have our camp at a Boy Scout camp on Mt. Lemon in the Catalina Mountains out of Tucson. There are lots of big pines way up on that mountain. A beautiful place. Bring your family and we'll enjoy it."

In 1962, Shirley Nelson was married to Leroy Shirel, and Marcella Hoselton made her wedding dress. The little white parsonage was at one moment extremely busy, then suddenly very quiet. "I miss that piano playing."

January 1963 started off right. Brother Nelson and his teenaged son, Duane, went rabbit hunting on New Year's Day. On the third day of the month, he and Sister Nelson drove to Oklahoma City for a meeting. The Urshans were the guest speakers.

The Lord showered down a good blessing to start the year right on January 13. Linda Garrison, who had been baptized the week before when they had sacrament, received the Holy Ghost. It was a shoutin', dancin' service. Then on January 15, the washer quit.

On February 10, Sunday school attendance was 138. Also in February, Brother Nelson traded cars and got a '61 Ford.

The year continued very busy. In spite of the cold winter weather, Brother Nelson had made thirty-three trips out of town to various meetings: fellowship meetings, sectional conferences, and Ladies' Auxiliary rallies, as well as dedicating the Henryetta church on the first of March. In May he went to Borger, Texas, for a Sunday school meeting. The last of May he was over in Hannibal, Missouri, for a meeting with Brother Calvin Albert.

Because of her many household responsibilities, Sister Nelson did not always go along. The Nelsons had discovered that they were to be grandparents, and she was thrilled with the prospects of her first grandchild. There were maternity clothes for Shirley plus baby sweaters to be crocheted and little baby clothes to make. The weather was getting warmer, and Edna Nelson set out flowers around the little white parsonage.

Services were always good at the home church in Claremore. While Brother Nelson was away on official business, faithful men of the church helped with the preaching. These included Brothers John Morgan, Olen Shirel, Arthur Lutz, Richard Harrod, and Leo Faught. Out-of-town ministers were Brother Stallard from Pryor and Brother Lloyd Still from Tulsa.

Other babies were arriving. Melda Shirel had a little boy, Timothy; Maxine Brown, a little girl, Dana Lynnette; Joy (Bumps) Edwards, a baby boy, Joe Allen; Betty Morgans Parkey, a daughter, Beth; Katherine Gideon, another boy.

Although 1963 was a hard year physically for Sister Nelson, she still entertained a constant stream of guests, including Esther Dennis and her daughters, Betty and Beverly, Louise Coffman and her sister, Margie, Linda Garrison, Junior and Cathy Shirel, Ruth Willhoite, Sister Sutherland, Jack Garrison, Edwin and Sharon Doty, next-door neighbors, Mrs. Richardson and Jane Ann Jones, Barbara and Francis Westberg, Brother Anderson, and Grace and Roy Greer.

There were usually sick calls to make. In January Ruth Willhoite was sick; then Donald, her husband, fell off a ladder and broke five ribs. Jessie Woods was sick for some time, then died of cancer. An acquaintance, Mr. Bolen, died. Some of the ladies of

the church helped Sister Nelson take care of the music.

February 18, Brother Nelson got a telegram from Brother S. W. Chambers, General Secretary of the United Pentecostal Church, informing him that the beloved Brother S. L. Wise had died. Brother Nelson and Jack Garrison left for Louisiana for the funeral. As they returned, they stopped in Springdale, Arkansas, for service.

Music was always in the air at the little white parsonage as Sister Nelson and Shirley learned new songs to sing. They included: "The Gentle Stranger," "If Jesus Goes Along With Me," "Longing to See Jesus," and "I Could Never Tell You What My God Has Done For Me."

In the early summer, the Stone and Potter family reunion was held. Fifty-nine were in attendance. But the fall brought the year's greatest blessing: Kimberly Gay Shirel, the Nelson's first grandchild, was born. She was a beautiful, little, dark-haired baby weighing six pounds and five ounces.

For some unknown reason, Sister Nelson's diary was rather blank for the rest of the year. Perhaps everything else was anticlimatic!!

New babies are born and old leaders, no matter how famous, eventually die.

Winston Churchill, the last of the great leaders of his era, was out of top leadership position in England shortly after the war was over. But in October 1951 he became prime minister once more. One of his first acts was to visit Washington in January 1952 to repair damage to the "fraternal association" since 1945. After Stalin's death in 1953, Churchill again planned a Bermuda meeting with President Eisenhower. But due to a stroke, he was unable to come until 1954. In 1955, he retired from office with the respect not only of his own nation but the entire world. In April 1963, Sir Winston Churchill was made an honorary American citizen by an act of Congress. When he died in London on January 24, 1965, the whole world paid tribute to a great leader!

This was the death of the last of that mighty five—Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Roosevelt, and Churchill. But time never stands still, and the lowly and the mighty each plays his part for a few days, then goes to his Maker.

About this time God began to speak to both Brother Nelson and his son, Duane, about life's choices and the commitment necessary to become any kind of leader.

When Duane Nelson was just a young teenager, God first began to deal with him about his life's direction. Leaving the small white parsonage one day, he went across the lawn and into the church to pray. Later he came out and sought his dad, who was sitting out in the yard.

"Dad, how do you know when God calls you to the ministry?"

C. A. Nelson began to cry. Just the day before, God had impressed upon his heart that He was calling his son into Christian service.

Next service night, Duane sought out Sister Marcella Hoselton, who had been a key figure in his young life as a children's church teacher and a Sunday school teacher.

"Sister Hoselton, I've got something to tell you."

"What is it, Duane?"

About that time Brother Nelson started service so Duane whispered, "I've got to go play my sax now, but I'll tell you after church." Later he was surprised to find that God had already revealed to Sister Hoselton Duane's call to the ministry. Others also confirmed to the young boy that they, too, knew that God had a plan for his life.

The next year, 1966, new Pentecostal leaders were elected in Kansas. Kansas had become a district by itself. Brother Paul Cecrle was their new district superintendent and Brother Jimmy L. Hall, the district secretary. "Now we won't have to travel quite so far for district business," thought Brother Nelson.

But soon he was involved with Kansas again as Brother Cecrle called and asked him to preach their Kansas camp meeting.

"I'll be glad to," Brother Nelson replied. He enjoyed preaching camps, and he talked about shoutin' and dancin' and having a great time in the Lord. "I never have danced in the Spirit," he said. "I almost envy those who have. Perhaps I will during this camp." But he did not.

When Duane finished high school in Claremore in 1967, he wanted to go to Bible school at Apostolic Bible Institute in St. Paul, Minnesota. While his son was in Bible school for two and a

half years, Brother Nelson visited the school many times and preached there for Brother Norris and the saints. He and Brother Norris became close friends.

One of the interesting topics of conversation among General Board members in the sixties was the possible relocation of the United Pentecostal church headquarters. As early as 1957, the general superintendent, Brother Arthur T. Morgan, had been authorized to appoint a committee to make a thorough investigation into the possibility of moving the headquarters to a city somewhat smaller than St. Louis. Tulsa was one of the possibilities as was Little Rock. Brother Nelson was vitally interested.

On June 1, 1965, the General Board, in a meeting in St. Louis, authorized the purchase of an eight-acre tract of land in Collinsville, Illinois, nine miles from downtown St. Louis. Brother Nelson knew that Brother Morgan actually admired Tulsa very much, but there were some who were opposed.

In 1966 at the conference in New Orleans, there was some discussion of a possible move to Little Rock, Arkansas. But this was defeated. "Well, we won't be moving the headquarters to Little Rock," Brother Nelson told his wife.

The next year, the conference was planned for Tulsa. Duane, Junior Shirel, and Danny Faught, along with others, came home from Apostolic Bible Institute for the conference.

On October 18, 1967, Brother Nelson and Brother Ray Agnew were having breakfast together prior to an early board meeting.

"May I join you, brethren?" It was Brother Morgan. He sat down and enjoyed a good breakfast and mentioned that he had been praying and felt that he had a message from God.

Later Brother Nelson went into the General Board meeting. Brother Morgan, chairman of the meeting, was seated at a table at the front of the room. He rose, picked up some papers from the table, and walked around the table to address the board.

"Brethren, I am going to open my heart to you." Then he sat back on the table and toppled over.

"What happened?" The question was on every tongue.

Fellow ministers laid their beloved leader, Brother Morgan, gently on the floor. "I'm afraid he's gone."

The whole constituency of the United Pentecostal Church was

shocked and grieved at the death of their beloved leader. Several of the officials left Tulsa by chartered plane and flew to DeRidder, Louisiana, for Brother Morgan's funeral.

When the officials returned and the conference convened for their business session, Brother Oliver F. Fauss, Assistant General Superintendent for the Western Zone, was appointed to preside and to fill Brother Morgan's unexpired term (lasting until January 1, 1968). Then the conference elected Brother Stanley W. Chambers, former general secretary, to serve as general superintendent, and Brother Cleveland M. Becton, from Nashville, Tennessee, as general secretary.

It was a sober time. Brother Nelson never forgot the last breakfast he shared with Brother Morgan. The new leaders had to make many important decisions. In 1968 the General Board, of which Brother Nelson was a member, decided to purchase an eight-and-one-half-acre tract of land in Hazelwood, Missouri, for a new headquarters building. On December 20, 1968, a cold and dreary day, Sister Nell Morgan turned the first shovel of dirt at the ground breaking ceremony for the new headquarters building, which would be named in honor of the memory of Brother A. T. Morgan.

Christmas 1968! Perhaps Brother Nelson remembered the widowed Nell Morgan as he presented his own dear wife with a beautiful, new Scofield Bible. Inside he wrote these words:

December 25, 1968

Dear Wife my love,

With all my heart I give you this Bible. You have been and still are a wonderful wife to me. I would not want to take out one year of our married life.

Read this book. It's a lamp unto our feet and a light to our pathway. Follow its directions and it will lead you to that city of God where we will meet those who have met and conquered their

last enemy, death.
May God bless you now and forever.

Your husband,
Clarence.

In 1969, when the United Pentecostal Church built their new headquarters at 8855 Dunn Road in Hazelwood, Missouri, the officials planned for a large bronze plaque to be placed in the front foyer. Anyone who wished to especially honor some relative, friend, or old pioneer Pentecostal saint, could give a donation, and the name would be engraved upon this plaque.

"Sister Nelson, I am going to give a nice offering and have Brother and Sister Willhoite's name put in headquarters," Brother Nelson confided to his wife. And that is just what the generous, thoughtful preacher did. Along with the names of many other faithful pioneers are those of W. J. and Mary E. Willhoite. But a far more effective memorial exists in the lives of the children of these faithful people.

At one time there were forty of the Willhoite's relatives in the Claremore church. Still today there are thirty faithful saints in the church who are related to the Willhoite family.

"Brother Nelson has been pastor to five generations of Willhoites," Dolly Faye said with a smile. "But I can't stay to talk. I just came by to bring a mess of new garden peas. Here is a quart of fresh pickled beets. I've got to run. There are several ladies already over to the church ready to quilt."

When questioned about sorrow and trouble, Brother Nelson replied with a grin, "Sure, I have had trouble. Let me tell you about it." This is the story.

Brother Thompson had invited both Brother Nelson and Brother Norris to come to a meeting in Bloomington. One engine of the plane that Brother Nelson boarded in Tulsa was not functioning properly, and they sat on the runway two hours.

"Breakfast, sir?" asked the pretty little stewardess. So he ate breakfast on the runway. At last they left, flew into Kansas City late, and missed their connection to Indianapolis. When he finally

arrived in Indianapolis, his luggage was missing! Brother Norris flew in a little later. Brother Thompson picked them up, and it was time for Brother Nelson to preach.

"Brother, I sure need a bath and a shave." But the work of the Lord had to go on, so he had to make the best of it.

The next day his luggage arrived. When Brother Norris and Brother Nelson went to get their breakfast, they both ordered at the same time. But Brother Norris had finished his breakfast long before Brother Nelson's was brought to their table. When Brother Nelson finally arrived back at Tulsa Airport, he went for his luggage. Just as it was arriving, the carousel broke down. He finally retrieved his bags, stopped by a store in Claremore to do a little shopping, stood a long time in the check-out line, and just as he got to the cash register, it broke down!

"This is not my day," Brother Nelson decided. "They that will live godly shall suffer persecution!"

"Yeah, I've had a right smart of trouble in my life." But there is never a hint of a "poor little me" attitude in Clarence Nelson's life. He does not indulge in "pity parties." He is well aware that just as surely as he has a host of friends and loved ones, he also has a few enemies. But trouble sets lightly on the shoulders of this outgoing, friendly, people-loving preacher.

In 1969 Brother Nelson met Brother and Sister Urshan at the Tulsa Airport to take them to Mustang to the campground. Brother Nelson always enjoyed having the Urshans preach the Oklahoma camp. Others might call and cancel at the last minute, but never Brother Urshan. When they saw the Urshans, Brother Urshan had a splint on each hand.

"What happened? What has happened to your hands, Brother Urshan?"

Then they heard the story. Sister Urshan was at the Indiana camp, and Brother Urshan had gone home to conduct his Thursday night Bible study. His sister, Grace Larson, was going to drive back to the Indiana campground with him after the night service. "Wait in the car for me, Sister Larson. I have a phone call to make." She waited a few minutes. Then along came a couple of suspicious looking young characters.

About that time Olga Hyde, from Jamaica, who lives with the

Urshans, came out and invited Sister Larson to come inside.

"I believe I will," she accepted and mentioned her fears of the suspicious looking boys.

"Aren't you afraid to stay here by yourself, Olga?"

"Oh, she isn't afraid," Brother Urshan said reassuredly. "And if she is, she has a machete." He reached down to get a machete encased in a shield which he had brought home from Jamaica for his son, Andy. It appeared to be stuck in the shield, so Olga grabbed hold of the shield and Brother Urshan pulled on the machete.

Suddenly blood spurted everywhere! Brother Urshan exclaimed, "Oh, I'm cut!" Olga ran for towels for a tourniquet.

"Are you all right?" cried Sister Larson. She was so upset that she could not even call for Brother Hugh Rose to take Brother Urshan to the hospital. Both thumbs were badly cut, almost to the tendons. Olga reached Brother Rose, who came quickly and drove them to the hospital.

Brother Urshan remained calm and even joked as Olga and Brother Rose each held one of his arms aloft to staunch the bleeding. "Someone will think you are holding me up!"

They arrived at the hospital about 11:30 P.M. The surgeon worked until 6:00 A.M. But Brother Urshan did not let the temporary loss of the use of his thumbs hinder him. Sunday morning he was in his pulpit preaching, Monday he and Sister Urshan flew to Oklahoma to preach the camp although she had to take care of him totally—even brush his teeth for him.

"Brother Urshan can be depended upon. He carries the gospel like the old-time Pony Express used to carry the mail. The mail must go through. The gospel must be preached. That's the kind of leader who is great to follow."

Things are much better at Oklahoma camp now. They have sixty acres with two tabernacles (one is huge) and six dormitories. There is a nice dining hall, good concession stand, a Ladies' Auxiliary room which houses pretty things that the ladies have made to sell. Trees surround the property. But there is still plenty of red clay although the sidewalks help when it rains. And it always seems to rain during camp meeting. There is a ball field, a first aid station, and there is always a crowd at the services. It is a

large, open-air tabernacle with garage doors along the sides to be lifted to catch the breezes or lowered in case of rain.

As at most camps, young people try to skip the altar service and head for the concession stands, but Brother Nelson has guards with walkie-talkies stationed to patrol the entire place. A truck with a loud siren makes the rounds with a wake-up call every morning about 6:30. Long lines of hungry families form at the dining hall, as well as the concession stand. But the real winds of Pentecost blow through the camp, and many a service ends with everybody shouting and dancing as the Holy Spirit thrills and fills the saints.

On June 13, 1970, the Nelson's son Duane was married to Miss Denise Anne Ammons. Their courtship had started in an unusual way. Duane and Donnie Dobson were good friends. For some time Donnie had been dating a good-looking, blue-eyed blonde from Tulsa, Debbie Ammons. It was sort of an "on again, off again" relationship, and at this time Duane thought it was off again so he decided that he would call that good-looking blonde for a date himself.

"Have you called Donnie?" Debbie giggled. "Well, you had better call him. I think he already has a date lined up for you. As for me, I am dating Donnie tonight."

When Duane called Donnie, he was surprised to hear that Donnie did indeed have a date with Debbie. "But did you know that Debbie has a neat sister? She has dark eyes and hair, and her name is Denise." The first date let to the courtship, and the courtship led to marriage.

After leaving ABI in the spring of his senior year because of a repeated problem with stomach ulcers, Duane had gone to computer programmer school in Houston, Texas. He stayed for a few days at Brother Orlen Ray Fauss' home, then got an apartment.

After their marriage, Duane and Denise spent their first six months in Houston, where he worked as a programmer with the Methodist Hospital. Sometime after their marriage, Duane went to youth camp, where he was a teacher, a counselor for the senior boys and in charge of the recreation for the junior boys. He was praying with one of the boys in the altar at youth camp where he was serving as a counselor. Prayer turned to praise, and suddenly

he got drunk on the spirit. He began to speak in tongues, and he could not stop. He motioned to his mother, "concession stand." He thought that if he could get a drink, the tongues would stop, so his mother led him to the concession stand. But the tongues did not stop. He couldn't even scold the boys for their hijinks that night. He was too drunk on the Holy Spirit. Then they returned to Tulsa, where they lived for six years. While they lived in Tulsa, they attended the Claremore church. They have two children, Mindy Anne, born October 26, 1971, and Joseph Duane, Jr., born August 15, 1974.

On May 6, 1973, Brother and Sister Nelson celebrated their fortieth wedding anniversary. "It will just be simple," thought Sister Nelson. "We'll just go out and eat with Duane and Denise."

"Come on over," invited the daughter-in-law, Denise. "I'll fix your hair." Brother Nelson took his wife by Denise's, then went on to have lunch with his son, Duane, at Vincent Oilfield Supply, where he was working.

Later Sister Nelson asked, "Will we all go in one car?"

"No, bring your own car," answered Denise. "But don't forget to wear your white dress and your silver sandals."

"O.K., and I'll see if I can get Brother Nelson to wear his blue suit," she promised. So she rode with Denise and Mindy, and Brother Nelson with his son, Duane.

"The ladies of the church have prepared a dinner for your anniversary," Denise explained.

On the way, Buford and Fern, Jim and Sylvia passed and acted as though they hardly saw the honored couple. This amused Edna, and she began to laugh. When they got to the church, friends pinned a red rose corsage on Sister Nelson and a red carnation boutonniere on Brother Nelson. Then they went into the rear of the church for a delicious dinner. The members of the church presented the Nelsons with beautiful ruby crystal dishes with silver trim. "I really do appreciate this," commented Brother Nelson. "We didn't get to have a nice wedding, so we really appreciate this."

"Well," drawled Duane with a grin, "you don't know it but this is what you are going to have tonight. You are going to have a wedding." Then they took Brother Nelson to a side room with

Leroy and Brother M. D. Deal, and Ralph took his sister, Sister Nelson, into the office along with the grandchildren, Kimberly, Rodney, Mindy, and the daughter-in-law, Denise.

"You don't know it, Sis," explained Ralph, "but I am going to give you away."

The Nelson's daughter began playing traditional soft music on the organ. In walked Brother Deal, Clarence, and Leroy. Then Denise and Mindy with long stemmed red roses and Kimberly and Rodney with more red roses. Denise sang, "Whither Thou Goest, I Will Go." Then the strains of the traditional bridal march filled the auditorium, and Ralph escorted Sister Nelson down the aisle. The auditorium was crowded with dear friends and relatives. By this time Sister Nelson was really tickled and about to laugh, but Ralph thought she was about to cry.

"Who gives this woman to be wed to this man?" asked Brother Deal, and Ralph responded, "Her two brothers and I." Brother Deal then used the long ceremony, and Brother and Sister Nelson reaffirmed their marriage vows as each thought of the long-ago day when the "first" wedding occurred. The occasion concluded with a saxophone solo by Duane and a beautiful arrangement of the Lord's Prayer expertly played by Shirley.

"I now pronounce you husband and wife," Brother Deal played the occasion to the hilt. And Clarence Nelson did not fail them; he kissed his beautiful, laughing, brown-eyed bride just as fervently as he ever did as a young sweetheart.

"Now, get out of here!" So they all adjourned to the reception area, where they cut the beautiful cake baked especially for the occasion by Ladean Willhoite.

Thus marked forty faithful years of ministry and marriage by a wonderful couple who have been mightily used of God in a real way. But the ministry still continued. Many folks still needed help.

Coming from Tulsa down Highway 44 one morning in 1975, Brother Nelson came upon a horrible wreck. A young woman was driving with her dog, with her husband preceding her on his motorcycle. She lost control of her car, hit the median, and ran up the metal separator. The car became airborne, turned over two or three times, came down on its top, bounced back up, and finally came down on its wheels. The poor little dog was cut in two with

half of it outside the car and half inside. Immediately Brother Nelson got on the CB, "There's a wreck down here on Highway 44!" He called for an ambulance, then parked. Quickly he ran to the scene of the accident. The car was smoking and he expected it to explode. A patrolman, Cliff McCall, from Claremore answered the call together with the Tulsa police. This was the first time that Brother Nelson met Cliff McCall. He gave what assistance he could to the police, then went on his way.

Sometime later Cliff McCall came to church. In talking with Brother Nelson, he asked, "Do you folk smoke at your church? My little girl is allergic to smoke, and I am looking for a church where they do not smoke." Brother Nelson was happy to explain that, "Certainly we do not smoke, dip or chew or drink." Then Cliff McCall pulled off to the side of the road, took out a pencil and paper to help him explain what he was seeking. "This is heaven," he explained as he drew a circle. "This is the earth, and this is hell. I don't want to go to hell; tell me how to get to heaven." Brother Nelson later baptized the man, and he got the Holy Ghost and became a faithful saint in the church.

Sometime later Patrolman McCall had an opportunity to take Brother Nelson's name to the State Troopers Association, and after he had explained how helpful Brother Nelson had been and how that he had given assistance at the scene of several wrecks, the Association made Brother Nelson an honorary member of the Oklahoma State Troopers Association. He was honored with a plaque and a membership card.

Another wreck where he was able to give some assistance occurred a little north of Claremore. A woman was badly hurt in the wreck, and Brother Nelson and the state trooper both arrived at the scene of the wreck about the same time. "Here, Brother Nelson, will you help me?"

"Sure, I'll help. What can I do?"

"Take these flares and direct the traffic." So the preacher and the patrolman worked together for almost an hour trying to help the poor woman, but unfortunately, she was dead on arrival at the hospital.

In the spring of 1975 at the district conference, Brother Nelson again resigned as district superintendent of the Oklahoma district

of the United Pentecostal Church. It was time to retire from that office. Again Brother M. D. Deal was elected to fill the office.

The first of March, Brother Nelson was pleased to receive a letter from President Gerald Ford.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON
March 3, 1975

Dear Reverend Nelson:

Mrs. Ford and I are pleased to join with your many friends and admirers in honoring you as you retire as Superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church.

You deserve to feel a great sense of satisfaction from your years of dedicated service. Your firm commitment to the spiritual values of your faith has touched many lives and strengthened the moral fiber of our nation. I pray God will grant you the peace, joy and contentment you so richly deserve.

Sincerely,

Gerald R. Ford

The Reverend C. A. Nelson
Post Office Box 564
Claremore, Oklahoma 74017

After he resigned in 1975 as district superintendent, some thought that Brother Nelson would surely slow down, but 1979 found him again at ABI, where he was asked once more to sing "Its Real."

"I'll be like Will Rogers when he landed in Nicaragua after that terrible earthquake. They had invited him to come. He said, 'If you don't want me to come, don't invite me.' If you don't want me to sing, don't ask me. Praise God!

"You want to know the truth? This is the only song I know with-

out looking in a book. So you see, I don't make a living singing. Amen!

"This song was written by a Church of Christ lady when she was a young lady a little ways from Zack, Arkansas. Now Zack was so far back in the woods, I don't know how they ever found it. I thought maybe they had followed an outlaw in there and established a little town named Zack not too far from Harrison. It was under a brush arbor—first time Pentecostal experience had ever come to that part of the country. It was under a brush arbor, and her whole family, as well as herself, belonged to Church of Christ, they're the folks you know that's got a form of godliness but they deny the power thereof, and Pentecost was Pentecost. Sort of like we got started here tonight. There wasn't as many of us, the music wasn't as good, the singing wasn't as beautiful, but they sang anyway. So she thought it over, and under threats of excommunication from her family, her need was greater than the circumstances around and God baptized her with the Holy Ghost. So she wrote this song. There was never any music ever with this song that I know of: printed music. I sing it in the key of C. Now who's going to help me?

"All right, Brother Martin, you're over there. But they tell me it's original. It's just like she sang it. Not as well, of course, but the tune and the words are yet the same, and that happened many, many moons ago. But there are some things that live on.

"The Book of Acts reaches down to this day. It has never changed. Do you realize that we obey it right to the word? Do you realize that we obey the first message preached in the New Testament church? Do you know we obey it right to the word? Did you know the first message was: Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, not part of you one way, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of all your sins, and you shall, without reservation, you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is unto you and to all your children and grandchildren and to as many as the Lord our God shall call? So this song came from that meeting."

Chapter Seventeen

Comments From Friends

Jack Garrison Says

Youth! The time of anxiety and frustration—that awkward time of life when young people are seeking identity. I was no different from any other teenager.

It would seem logical for a farm boy to identify with the farm, but that was absolutely the furthest thing from my dreams. The hot field work—baling hay, harvesting grain, plowing fields, milking cows, and all the other drudgeries of the farm were never meant for Jack Garrison. While struggling with my future dreams, not knowing what I would be, I soon determined the one thing I would not be was a farmer.

About the only thing I could really identify with in my teen years was sports. Highly competitive, I could even get excited about a good game of marbles. Not just as a spectator, I wanted to be a participator. I was looking forward to high school athletics. God was in my thoughts but certainly not first on the list. During my first year of high school, my life took a drastic turn. At this time the most important people in the world were my athletic coaches. During baseball season I had my first encounter with Pentecost.

I was recovering from an injury when I visited a revival that John Kershaw was preaching at the United Pentecostal Church in Tiawah, Oklahoma. Here I met the man who would totally

change the direction of my life.

Some men are imposing because of their physical stature; however, such was not the case with Pastor C. A. Nelson. Brother Nelson was not a physical giant. I don't think I really understood for some time why I was in awe of this man.

That first meeting was really not too eventful. I had attended the revival with some friends, and I even went to the altar. Near the end of May of 1952, I again attended the Tiawah church—but this time it was different. I was baptized with the Holy Ghost!

My association with Pastor Nelson began in earnest. I am amazed that he ever tolerated me! He was firm and unwavering in pointing out that one could not participate on the athletic teams of the world and be on God's team at the same time. Without the concern of this wise man, I could easily have made the wrong choice. The first two years were very frustrating. Constant temptations beckoned me back into the arena of competition. Perhaps the desire to compete and win was an asset in the long run. Not only did I hate to fail the Lord, I also did not want to disappoint Brother Nelson.

When I was about seventeen, I told Brother Nelson I felt called to preach.

The first sermon I preached in our local youth service, I rambled on for an hour and a half.

"No young preacher knows enough to preach that long," Brother Nelson commented.

Talk about being deflated! Brother Nelson used me in the church as much as he could, but I'm sure it wasn't easy to ask a fellow to preach when it might take him ninety minutes to say nothing.

With much prayer, sweat, and tears, I finished high school. One of the greatest lessons I learned from Brother Nelson during those early days was faithfulness.

My first assignment in the church was as the official offering taker-upper. That really pleased me until I realized that I had lost my job. I was going through a trying time, and I remember Brother Nelson calling me in his office and the words he said.

"Bless God, Brother Jack, what am I going to do with you? You are sitting on these pews, and you're going to dry up and blow

away." He proceeded to tell me that he couldn't even use me to take up the offering anymore.

"I know you aren't going to shows, smoking, or any of those things, and I know you will be here every time the doors are open—but, son, you just don't do anything," Brother Nelson let me have it.

I was crushed. Later I realized he was trying to help me to see what was happening. It's not always easy to realize that a person can backslide while sitting on church pews.

Later, Brother Nelson made me the assistant youth leader of his church. I was so thrilled when he made the announcement because that meant he had confidence in me. With his wise guidance, I did my best as the local youth leader until I left to begin evangelizing.

On March 1956 I made application and met the board for a local license. The day I was supposed to meet the board I was so excited that it didn't occur to me that I would need some money. The District Conference was being held in Claremore, and I forgot to bring any money with me. Just before I was called in, Sister Nelson told me she would loan me whatever money it would take. I was called in and asked what I assumed was a series of routine questions. At the time Brother Deal was the superintendent and Brother Nelson was the presbyter of our section. After answering the questions, Brother Deal asked the question, "Do any of you brethren have anything further that you would like to ask Brother Jack?"

Brother Nelson's hand went into the air—

"Brethren," he said, "Brother Jack is a fine young man, he's my youth leader, and he is an assistant Sunday school teacher in my church (I thought "Oh boy! I've got this cinched!"), but bless God, he's just too silly!"

Talk about coming down to earth with a mighty crash! When I stepped out, I told Sister Nelson that I didn't think I would need to borrow the money after all. I will never know what happened after I left the room, but the board did through their goodness give me my local license. I have always felt that my pastor came to my rescue after I left the room.

It is very interesting to note that the license did not improve my

preaching; I still struggled along—victory and anointing seemed to forsake me. I still remember after I had served my allotted time and preached my one sermon per week, I was all set to apply for a general license. But Brother Nelson wanted to know why I wanted a general license if I wasn't going to preach. I did not need a general license to be his youth leader. Another setback, I thought.

I think I shall never forget the Oklahoma camp meeting in July 1958 at Robbers Cave State Park in Wilburton, Oklahoma. That particular camp was being preached by Brother Nelson. I may be somewhat partial for several reasons, but I consider it to be one of the best camp meetings Oklahoma ever had. I remember the presence of God falling one night, and the Lord blessed me abundantly. I shouted all over that place—the victory that I had not had before certainly came that night. Brother Nelson contends that up to that time I had not preached a lick, and I rather suspect that he is right. I do know that preaching has been much easier since that night. As an evangelist, I really needed that experience.

Throughout my years of evangelizing, I always considered Claremore to be my home church and Brother Nelson was (and still is) my pastor. The do's and don'ts of an evangelist were impressed upon my mind by this man who knew how an evangelist should conduct himself. Ministerial ethics were a way of life with Brother Nelson.

Earlier, I mentioned that I didn't fully understand why Brother Nelson was such an imposing personality. I began to understand this during my years in the evangelistic work.

I had returned home from a series of revival meetings. I went to the church one day, and while in prayer I sensed that someone had come into the church. After I finished praying, I noticed that Brother Nelson had joined me. As we began to share the excitement of working for God, Brother Nelson placed a hand on my shoulder, and with his eyes filled with tears he said, "Brother Jack, I know I was tough on you back in those early days, but when you said you felt called to preach, I decided I would see if you were really sincere."

"Preaching is a tough calling, and I didn't want you to be a sissy preacher," he added. I have never considered myself to be

weak, but just hearing my pastor tell me that he felt that I had been strong left me with a feeling I could never explain.

I thought how much like a military general Brother Nelson was. He would send one into the heat of the battle, but he was always concerned about the welfare of young preachers.

There is a strong principle that dictates *sternness* along with concern. I have watched with amazement the number of young people who sat under the watchful care of Pastor Nelson and have been awed by the character they exhibit. Brother Nelson is a master of the old school—he strongly believes that nothing takes the place of the Word of God. It isn't too hard to see that characteristic in the young people who have come through Brother Nelson's church.

When I decided to take the pastorate of the Enid, Oklahoma, United Pentecostal Church, Brother Nelson helped me accept the Lord's will in this facet of my life. Having taken the church while still single, I rather doubt that I could have stuck it out had it not been for his invaluable help. What a venture! A young preacher, fresh from the evangelistic field, assuming the pastorate of a church presented a very complex situation. The load was made lighter just by knowing that he was available if I needed him.

Although Brother Nelson has been a district official for almost as long as I have known him, I have always looked upon him as more than an official. He was and still is my pastor.

Although I was eager to acquire my general license, I was not nearly so anxious to be ordained. I had certain personal goals I wanted to reach before I was ordained—the most important was that I wanted to be married when I was ordained. Sister Garrison and I were married in October 1965 and on March 10, 1966, (some eight years after receiving my general license), we were ordained at the District Conference in Okmulgee, Oklahoma.

After the ordination sermon, Brother Oliver Fauss asked the sectional presbyters to pray with those from their particular sections. Brother Nelson was the district superintendent at that time. With tears in his eyes, Brother Nelson embraced us and said, "I just feel like you are my children."

What golden moments of Christian development to cherish. If I have in any way been productive in God's work—if I ever in the

future do anything that will be a blessing to the Lord's work—I owe it all to this very good, great, and compassionate man—my leader, my pastor, my friend, and my father in the Lord—C. A. Nelson, a unique and great man.

R. D. Whalen Says

"I was introduced to Brother C. A. Nelson in October 1952 at the General Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas. He was forty-four years of age, and I was twenty-two," Brother R. D. Whalen recalls.

"Just previous to this convention I had been asked to pastor the church in Gallipolis, Ohio, and, because of a definite check by the Holy Ghost, turned it down.

"At that first meeting with Brother Nelson, he insisted that I try out for a church in Ardmore, Oklahoma. He said it was a new building (auditorium only) and a town of about twenty thousand people. I informed him that I was from Ohio and that was a thousand miles from home; I was not interested. He said the least I could do was to preach there the next weekend.

"I know now that the persistence of Brother Nelson was the result of the Holy Spirit working through him in my behalf. Upon visiting that small assembly (approximately fifteen people, children and all), God showed me beyond a shadow of a doubt that this was to be my field of labor.

"I became pastor at Ardmore, Oklahoma, in November 1952 and was introduced to the brethren of Section Five in January 1953 at the sectional conference in Hennepin, Oklahoma. Brother Nelson said that a 'Yankee' from up north had taken the church in Ardmore and asked me to say a few words. He told all of those preachers that I probably would not stay in this country too long, especially after they gave me a scalping or two. (He admits that I surprised him by staying in Oklahoma the past twenty-eight years and several scalpings.)

"A better question could not be asked about Brother Nelson than Jesus asked His generation concerning John the Baptist, 'For what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, more than a prophet.' The preaching of C. A. Nelson in those days was surely something to see. The stomping of his foot, the shaking of his fist, the redness of his face, and the bugging of his eyes seemed to captivate his audiences. The whole auditorium became his plat-

form, up and down the aisles, pointing in people's faces, upon the altar benches, and back in front of the podium. After leveling with the congregation concerning sin and righteousness, he would inform them that, 'I ain't been hired and I can't be fired.'

"About two or three years after coming to Oklahoma, Brother Nelson was having some health problems and refused to run for superintendent. Brother M. D. Deal became the district superintendent, and different events brought me and my family to a small church in southeast Oklahoma City. Brother Nelson's health improved, and he was elected again to the superintendent's office in the beginning of the sixties. In 1962, I was elected presbyter of section six and became more closely associated with Brother Nelson in the ministry.

"Brother Nelson has a natural ability in leadership. As chairman of the Oklahoma District Board, he commanded the respect of every district official who served under him. His recommendations were almost always accepted by the board, and if some expressed opposition to the project suggestion, he often set it aside for the sake of unity.

"One of the well-known expressions of Brother Nelson when attempting to get an opposing thought across was, 'Well, bless God, Brother.' He left the impression of a very hard man, but in reality he carried a spirit of compassion and kindness unsurpassed by any.

"When district boards had to deal with preachers and hand down discipline, the parties dealt with often accused the superintendent of being hard; but in our case it was always Brother Nelson who asked the board to be merciful. There were times that the board felt we should be harder on an individual, but we would generally yield to his request for mercy.

"It certainly is not true that C. A. Nelson and I have always agreed on everything. In fact, our own differences at times made very strained relationships between us. One time he asked the whole board to vote for something that I was very much opposed to. When he asked for raised hands of those in favor, everyone raised his hand but me. He was very much disturbed and said we were going to vote again, and he wanted everyone to vote. I did not raise my hand a second time, and he looked at me and said,

'Brother Whalen, I want you to vote,' and I said, 'I'm fixin' to vote when you ask for those opposed.' Thank God for his true Christian spirit that made him forgive and forget.

"In the first part of 1981, I had a speaking engagement in southern Missouri and felt I should go by and visit with Brother Nelson, who had been retired from the superintendent's office about six years. While we were eating lunch, I invited him to go with me that night to the service in Diggins, Missouri. At first he was reluctant but then said if I would drive back after service, he would go.

"It had been some time since we had been together for so many hours, and we reminisced over the past three decades and the wonderful people of God that we both have been associated with over the years. We talked about God's goodness and provision in the beginning of our ministries. He mentioned Rogersville, Missouri, and said we would be going near it, and he thought we might have time to drive into town.

"As we approached this small community, I could see it was built on both sides of the railroad track. The main street was lined with old-fashioned storefront buildings. Brother Nelson said it looked this way in the thirties. He wasn't quite sure which building he had held services in, but I listened intently as he talked about himself and Rogersville back in the thirties.

"He said it was five below zero, and he had no topcoat. He was afoot and came to town looking for a place to preach. He was given permission to use an empty store building on Main Street as he started revival services. God began to bless, and the crowds began to grow. A young woman who was youth leader in the Methodist church wanted to be baptized. They went to the creek, broke the ice, and baptized this young lady in Jesus' name. Revival broke out, and many were filled with the Holy Ghost, including the Methodist youth leader.

"Brother Nelson said, 'Brother Whalen, I missed God here. These people wanted me to start a church here. I was offered the Presbyterian church building. It was ready to move into, but I was young and felt I had to get on down the road.'

"As we drove out of town, I was wondering, as I'm sure he was too, what would this town be like today if C. A. Nelson had stayed there forty-four or forty-five years ago.

"Diggins was about fifteen or twenty miles on east of Rogersville. As we drove up to the lovely brick church, we saw an elderly woman in an old Chevrolet. Brother Nelson introduced himself to her and asked if she had lived in this area long. 'All my life,' she replied. He asked her about the old church and where it was located. As she pointed out the location back down the road, he informed her that he had preached there back in the thirties. She told us that she was probably there because she had the Holy Ghost over fifty years.

"After service we drove back to Claremore. It was about 2:45 A.M. when I let Brother Nelson out and continued toward home. I could not help but think of what he said, 'Brother Whalen, I missed God here' (Rogersville, Missouri); and I couldn't for the life of me see it.

"What would Oklahoma have done all these years without a C. A. Nelson? What would Claremore have done without C. A. Nelson? What about the preachers that have come out of his church—the Harrods, the Shirels, Jack Garrison, Leo Faught, Harold Ridenhour, and others with whom I am not personally acquainted? And then last of all and least important, what would R. D. Whalen have done from that initial meeting in front of Robinson Memorial Auditorium, Little Rock, Arkansas, 1952, unto the present hour?

"Brother Nelson has been to many of us a superintendent, a fellow pastor, and a real friend."

R. D. Whalen

Barbara Westberg Relates

Life and death, a preacher's business.

Life for Brother Nelson held many comical experiences, especially at a backward glance. But life also involved him in many heartrending, tragic deaths. Such an experience occurred Sunday, July 4, 1955.

Service was in progress at the church in Claremore on a hot, humid Oklahoma evening. The side door of the auditorium opened, and a strange man stepped inside. A member of the Rogers County sheriff's department, he had come with an appeal for help.

A teenage boy, James Franklin Reese, from the west Tulsa church had drowned that afternoon in the Verdigris River, about ten miles south of Claremore. They were dragging the river and needed men to help in the search for the body. Could anyone help? Immediately Brother Nelson and three or four men volunteered.

Sister Nelson's brother, Ralph, was on the scene, along with several men from the Tulsa church, members of the fire departments from several towns and the county sheriff's department.

All night Brother Nelson and the Claremore church men took turns using Ralph's boat and a hay hook, up and down the river, dragging the bottom, searching. The waters were dark and muddy, defying the searchers to find its victim. The night was sticky and secretive. The job was distasteful and difficult. But it had to be done. So on they searched.

The silence of the night was broken by the splash of the oars and cries of men and hoot owls. "I've snagged something," a voice filled with hope and dread punctuated the night air again and again. The glare of floodlights focused on one boat and then another as brush, old car tires, miscellaneous trash were pulled to the surface and thrown aside.

Dawn was only a promise behind the horizon when Brother Nelson felt the tug of the rope in his hand. Ralph held the boat

steady as Brother Nelson pulled. The long night's vigil was over. Reluctantly, the watery grave gave up its victim.

The hook had caught on the elastic of the boy's shorts. There was not a scratch on his body, for which everyone breathed a prayer of thankfulness.

Before the funeral a prayer was found written in the lad's Bible. "Lord, if I sin, correct me, but please don't let me fall into the hands of sinners."

How merciful a God to answer the prayer of a dead teenager. Surely it was God who guided that hay hook as it probed the depths of the muddy Verdigris River and gently slipped it into the band on the only piece of clothing the boy wore. It was the love of God which let this teenager fall into the hands of the man of God.

Epilogue

Always busy, especially with her hands, Edna Nelson still stays occupied. She has a small photo album filled with pictures of beautiful afghans that she had crocheted and given away. They include a beautiful ripple one for Denise, her daughter-in-law, in earth tones, a bright multicolored shell design done in a diagonal pattern for Shirley, another one in autumn thread of orange, gold and green with fringe, another called "fanfare and feathers" in tones of green for Shirley, another one done in "grannie squares" in bright "Indian" colors, another in brown, beige, burnt orange and off-white for Kim. For Rodney there is a jolly red, white, and blue design complete with sailboat and anchor, but he said it was too small, so she turned around and made another larger one in avocado and olive green, gold and off-white. For Mindy a lovely, large, antique white with an intricate design taken from Simplicity pattern book, number 6647. For Joey a zigzag design done in bright fiesta colors. For Dolly Faye's granddaughter, Dana, she did a white, pink, and blue shawl. Sister Nelson and the ladies of the church quilt every Thursday, and she plans to complete a fancy quilt for each child and grandchild. She has already completed Mindy's quilt, which is called "Colonial Girl."

Is Brother Nelson getting forgetful? Recently Sister Nelson had an appointment with her daugher-in-law to get her hair combed at 9:00 A.M. Brother Nelson gets up early every morning and usually goes to the doughnut shop for a cup of coffee and a doughnut. Oftentimes he stops by and picks up and old friend, Jim Finley, who is nearly blind. They enjoy having coffee together.

This morning 8:30 A.M. came and no husband to take her to Denise's. 8:45.

Shortly after nine Denise called, "What happened?" "I don't have a ride," Sister Nelson lamented to the dutiful daughter-in-law, who came and picked up the stranded preacher's wife. Just a few minutes later the front door opened, and Brother Nelson came in.

"Where's Sister Nelson?"

"Sister Nelson has already gone to her appointment."

"Appointment? I plumb forgot her appointment."

At eleven he went to pick her up. Sister Nelson and Denise had decided to say nothing. Brother Nelson stood around a bit sheepishly, then blurted out, "I duh-got!"

They all laughed, recalling the way that Duane pronounced the word *forgot* when he was small.

But he never forgets what he considers important, such as a preacher who preached false doctrine twenty years ago.

"I am close to where I don't have an enemy in the world. I've outlived them all," Brother Nelson chuckles.

But it is remarkable how many funerals that Brother Nelson is called to preach. He has touched lives in a meaningful way, and when friends are in their darkest hour, they want Brother Nelson with them. "Now, I am burying the old saints."

General Board Talk

"You want to know how old I am," said Brother Nelson with a twinkle in his eye. "I am old enough that I knew V. A. Guidroz when he had hair on his head. You can tell a Texan, but you can't tell him much," he added firmly.

"Yeah, you've got an Oklahoma credit card, Brother Nelson. That is a six-foot siphon hose," retorted Brother Guidroz. These elderly honorary members of the General Board always add life to any meeting.

So C. A. Nelson still preaches every week, and he and his son, Duane, pastor the church. He attends General Board meetings as an honorary member. "Me? Write a book about me? Why? It won't take ten minutes to tell you all about me. A book about me

would never sell." This ordinary man has lived out an extra-ordinary life because early in his life he found out what was really *real*.

Bibliography

Allen, Frederick Lewis, *Since Yesterday*, New York: Bantam Books.

Bahr, Robert, *Least of All Saints, A Biography of Aimee Semple McPherson.* Engelwood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1979.

Booth-Clibborn, William E., *A Call to Dust and Ashes, First Southern Bible Conference*. Little Rock, 1922; reprinted, Hazelwood, Mo.: Word Aflame Press, 1979.

Cagle, Odell, *Echoes of the Past*. Stockton, Calif.: Apostolic Press, 1972.

Clanton, Arthur L. *United We Stand*. Hazelwood, Mo.: Pentecostal Publishing House, 1970.

Encyclopedia Britannica, London, Toronto, Geneva, Sydney, Tokyo, Chicago, Manila: William Benton, Publisher, 1968.

Dugas, Paul D., *The Life and Writings of Elder G. T. Haywood.* Stockton, Calif.: Apostolic Press, 1968.

Ewart, Frank, *The Phenomenon of Pentecost*. Houston, Tx.: Herald Publishing House, 1947; reprinted, Hazelwood, Mo.: Word Aflame Press, 1979.

Fauss, O. F. *What God Hath Wrought*. Hazelwood, Mo.: Word Aflame Press, third ed., 1976.

Foster, Fred J., *Think It Not Strange, A History of The Oneness Movement*. St. Louis, Mo.: Pentecostal Publishing House, 1965.

Goss, Ethel E., *The Winds of God*. St. Louis, Mo., Pentecostal Publishing House, 1958; reprinted, Hazelwood, Mo.: Word Aflame Press, 1977.

Hickok, Lorena, *The Road to the White House, FDR: The Pre-Presidential Years*. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1962.

Lindbergh, Charles A., *We*. New York, Grossett.

Marks, Geoffrey and Beatty, William K., *Epidemics*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976.

McPherson, Aimee Semple, *The Story of My Life*. Waco, Tx.: Word Book Publishers.

Nash, J. Robert, *Blood Letters and Bad Men,* New York, M. Evans and Company.
Shannon, David A., *The Great Depression*, Engelwood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1960.
The World Book Encyclopedia, Merchandise Mart, Chicago, Illinois: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation.
Zeoli, Anthony with Strober, Gerald S., *Free Forever*. Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1979.