**A History of Ambassador University**

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**Ambassador University full of history, memories**

**By Mac Overton**

Ambassador College, later Ambassador University, was built on land originally donated to the Radio (later Worldwide) Church of God by the **Buck Hammer** family, who lived about two miles east of Big Sandy. The Hammers made the donation in 1951.

At the time of the WCG Big Sandy congregation's 50th anniversary in 1993, the campus boasted 2,500 acres.

Ambassador College, Big Sandy, opened in the fall of 1964 on the property that had been donated by the Hammers, joining the original campus in Pasadena, Calif., which opened in 1947, and a sister campus in Bricket Wood, England, which opened in 1960 and closed in 1974.

**105 pioneers**

A pioneering group of 40 Pasadena transfer students and 65 freshmen arrived on the rough-hewn campus to take residence in the small cabins, called "booths" because they had been originally built for the Feast of Tabernacles, also called the Feast of Booths in the Bible. The two- and four-person residences, which were used until the current (1996-97 school year) were called Booth City.

**Leroy Neff** was named acting deputy chancellor (the title of the on-site administrator for the school's first several years) to open the first school year until Leslie McCullough was named deputy chancellor in the spring.

Over the next 25 years both the Big Sandy congregation and the college grew rapidly, fueled by the national, and then international, expansion of the work of the Radio/Worldwide Church of God.

The Big Sandy campus would serve as the location for several departments of the WCG's far-reaching ministry.

The campus would undergo vast changes, as shown in this year-by-year account:

* In 1965 construction on the college dormitories and the WCG's mailing department began, and the campus produced its first seven graduates. This was also the last year that the Feast of Tabernacles was kept in the college field house until 1992. The field house was originally built in 1958 and expanded in 1959 to accommodate Feastgoers, who outgrew it after 1965.

**Under the big top**

* In 1966 Lake Loma, named after Herbert W. Armstrong's first wife, was doubled in size, and 12,000 Feastgoers met under a gigantic circus-type tent for the Feast.
* In 1967 a new water plant was constructed to service the campus, Booth City was renovated, a major landscaping project in the valley below the Roy Hammer Library was nearing completion, a transportation building was going up, and the home-economics department was added. Paved walkways were constructed around campus, the field house's entrance was redesigned, and a new waterfront facility was added at Lake Loma.

In 1968, 59 Ambassador College seniors received diplomas. Work was completed on a 96,000-square-foot metal building to be used as a convention center to accommodate up to 16,000 Feastgoers and an accompanying Feast administration building. During this time Spanish editions of The Plain Truth and Tomorrow's World magazines were printed in Big Sandy.

* By 1970 the festival office, which in those days handled transfers and housing for the Feast of Tabernacles, moved to the Big Sandy campus.

**News of Worldwide**

* In April 1973 the WCG's internationally circulated newspaper, *The Worldwide News*, began in Big Sandy, using many students as employees. It stayed in Big Sandy four years until it was moved to Pasadena after the closing of the Texas campus.
* In 1974 the U.S. government granted Ambassador College in Big Sandy the right to accept foreign students. The move came in conjunction with the WCG's decision to close Ambassador College in England.
* In 1976, as the college decided to try for accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the field house was remodeled. (This early effort at accreditation came to an untimely end in 1977 when Mr. Armstrong closed the campus.)
* In 1977, after 111 students received degrees, the Big Sandy campus of Ambassador College closed. At the time of its closure, the college had expanded to include farm and stables, a golf course, a remodeled physical-education area complete with coated-surface track, tennis courts and racquetball courts, a science-lecture hall, the conversion of the former Imperial School complex into a humanities complex, an airstrip and a faculty housing area known as Faculty Row.

Although the college in Texas closed as part of the "consolidation" with the original campus in Pasadena, the church continued to use the Texas facilities as a base for local and regional church activities, including ministerial and youth conferences. Sports tournaments were also centered in Big Sandy, which served as the site for the 1978 national basketball finals for teenage church teams.

**College for sale**

* The property was put up for sale in the late 1970s.
* In 1981 the Big Sandy campus reopened as a two-year, or junior, college. **Leon Walker** was named deputy chancellor, **Donald Ward** served as academic dean, and **Ronald Kelly** was dean of students.
* In 1984, to augment the system in Pasadena, Wide Area Telephone Service (WATS) lines were installed on the campus to help process literature requests from WCG advertising.
* In 1985 Mr. Armstrong announced plans to close the Big Sandy campus again and sell the property.
* After Mr. Armstrong died in January 1986, the new WCG pastor general, Joseph W. Tkach Sr., rescinded that decision and kept the campus open.
* In 1987 Mr. Tkach appointed Dr. Ward vice chancellor, over both Ambassador campuses.
* On Dec. 14, 1989, just a week after ground was broken on Ambassador College's Big Sandy campus for a new three-story administration building, Mr. Tkach, who was also the college chancellor and chairman of its board of regents, made the startling announcement at a student assembly in the Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena that the Pasadena and Big Sandy campuses would combine into a single liberal-arts institution in Big Sandy.

New women's dormitories were constructed, as were a fine-arts hall and Jackson Hall, which contains faculty offices and classrooms.

**Finally accredited**

* Ambassador received candidacy status for accreditation from SACS in 1992 and gained accreditation in 1994. In June of that year, simultaneous with accreditation, Mr. Tkach changed the name to Ambassador University.

In 1995, as doctrinal changes swept the WCG, the church's income declined, resulting in a cut in its subsidy of AU. (See related article in this issue.)

Student enrollment, which had hovered at the 1,100-1,200 mark for several years, declined to about 650 with the 1996-97 school year.

The campus, in addition to employee terminations and budget cuts, gave away most of the booths. A university spokesman said that the booths went to anyone who would move them off the grounds.

The university also leased out its golf course to a private club.

**NB: According to http://www.ambassador.edu/**

Ambassador University, founded as Ambassador College in 1947, was a privately supported Christian university in the liberal arts tradition, incorporated in the State of Texas.

The University first began operations at Pasadena, California, as Ambassador College, a unit of the Worldwide Church of God. A second campus opened in 1960 at Bricket Wood, St. Albans, Hertsfordshire in the United Kingdom.  Four years later a third campus commenced operations in Big Sandy, Texas.  As graduates began outnumbering employment opportunities within the Worldwide Church of God, the campuses consolidated in Pasadena: Bricket Wood in 1974, and Big Sandy in 1977.

In August 1981, to meet increasing enrollment demands, the Big Sandy campus reopened.

In the fall of 1990, Ambassador College, at Pasadena and Big Sandy, consolidated operations in Texas.  In 1994 the college became Ambassador University and was granted full accredited status by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Ambassador concluded its mission to liberal arts education in August of 1997, having awarded 9,362 degrees, closing its doors as a fully accredited institution.

For 14,732 young men and women, over 50 years, Ambassador has been instrumental in the preparation of lives of service to Jesus Christ and His church.  Its students and faculty continue to be “Ambassadors for Christ.”

**A History of Ambassador Auditorium**

**By Paul Brown**

**Chronology**

1960 Early plans for "a House for God" are laid.

City wanted to drive the 110 freeway through where the auditorium now stands to connect it with the 210

1972 Ground breaking.

1974 Carlo Maria Guilini and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra Inaugural Concerts

1974 Dedication by Herbert Armstrong

1975 Arthur Rubinstein "Last Recital for Israel" BMG Classics January

1977 Bing Crosby 50 Years in show business March 3,

1978 Pavarotti

1980 Benny Goodman October 8

1981 George Shearing: Live at the Ambassador Auditorium

1982 Opera A La Carte, Pirates of Penzance May 1

1982 Berlin Philharmonic October 27, 28

1982 Vladimir Horowitz, February 28

1992 Yo Yo Ma

1994 Auditorium concert series goes dark

2004 Purchased by Harvest Rock Church used for Services and Concerts once again

**Staff**

1974-87 Ellis LaRavia Ambassador Auditorium Director, 1974-87 Roman Borek Ambassador Auditorium House Manager Kevin Gardner Stage Manager, John Prohs Technical Supervisor, John Hughes House Electrician, Tom Maydeck Sound; Trale Sotebier House Nurse, Timothy Morgan Public Safety Supervisor, Wayne Abraham, Raymond Epperson & Charles Singleton Staff Co-ordinators; Ed Stonick Ticket Office; Willie Edwards, Tina Dennis & Rose, Custodial; Kerry McNair, Diane Bailey, Matthew Morgan, Mike Rasmussen.

**Student Staff**

(HU) Head Usher (TS) Tickets Supervisor (P) Parking (R) Refreshments (BR) Bar Reception Coordinator

1979-80 Randy Redell (HU) Choo Sian Ong (TS)

1980-81 David Mosby (HU) John Andrews (TS) James Hirstay & Craig Minke (P) Gary Childers (R) Nathan Naquin (BR)

1981 John Andrews (HU) Bruce Dague (TS)

1982 Phillip Hopwood (HU)

1982 Paul Brown (HU)

1984 Gary Campbell (HU)

**Voluntary Staff**

(Particularly for Sabbath Duty)

Janet Young

**List of Early Ambassador College Graduates**

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By the end of its 50 years of operation, Ambassador College (in 1994 accredited and renamed Ambassador University) had enrolled 14,732 students on three campuses: in Pasadena, Calif., Bricket Wood, England, and Big Sandy, Texas.

Following is a list of some early AC graduates. A version of this list appeared May 22, 1978, in The Worldwide News (WN), originally published by the Worldwide Church of God from 1973 to 1978.

(WCG pastor general Herbert Armstrong in 1978 ended the WN after its original five years of publication under editor John Robinson and started it back up a short time later with mostly different staff members under Dexter Faulkner.)

**Pasadena campus**

1951: Herman Hoeh, Betty Bates Michel.

1952: Richard Armstrong, Raymond Cole, Roderick Meredith.

1953: Kenneth Herrmann, Marion McNair, Raymond McNair, Gene Michel.

1954: Dean Blackwell, Wayne Cole, Burk McNair, George Meeker Jr., Charlene Glover Smith, Norman Smith, Paul Smith.

1955: Mary Jo Burrow Dennis, Jimmy Friddle Jr., David Jon Hill, Isabell Kunkel Hoeh, Frank J. Longuskie Jr., Elva Russell Sedliacik.

1956: Garner Ted Armstrong, Jo Ann Felt Dorothy, Bob Seelig, Gerald Waterhouse.

1957: Cecil Battles, Robert Boraker, Lawson Briggs, Jr., Bill Glover, Bernell Michel, Kemmer Pfund, Carlton Smith, Beverly Battles Swisher, Kenneth Swisher.

1958: John Bald, Ronald Chandler, Bryce Clark, Charles Dorothy, Allen Manteufel, Ernest Martin, Hugh Mauck, Dennis Prather, J.W. Robinson, Gary Sefcak, Donald Wofford.

1959: David Antion, Shirley Nash Apartian, Charles Braden, Jessie Emmett, Clara Willingham Fischer, Roger Foster, Natalie Pyle Hammer, Robert Hoops, Norman Dennis Kelly, Norva Pyle Kelly, Lila Powers, Klammer, Leroy Neff, John Wilson.

1960: Charles Black, Donna Carter, Ronald Dart, Allen Dexter, Ray Fisk, John "Tony" Hammer, Dale Hampton, Gene Hogbert, Dirk Hudson, Gene Hughes, Marjorie Hughes, Shirley Engelbart Jones, Ina Lou Grabbe Lain, Ronald Kelly, Arthur Kirishian, Bill McDowell, Kenneth Mowat, Lawrence Mumme, William Myers, Avon Pfund, Albert Portune, Benjamin Rea, Mary Ann Weinbarger Roush, Kenneth Register, Richard Rice, Arlen Shelton, Janette Elaine Smith, LaVonne Tangen, Leon Walker, Florence Watson, Clint Zimmerman.

**Bricket Wood campus**

1961: Carn Catherwood, Guy Engelbart.

1962: Benjamin Chapman, Robin Jones, Gerhard Marx, Dennis Pebworth, David Wainwright.

**Big Sandy campus**

1965: Robert Bertuzzi, Karen Curtis, Kenneth Mattson, John Pruner, Dale Schurter, Ivan Sell, Gerald Witte.