

# The Journal

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## Big Sandy Ambassador College started in 1964

The following is an update of an article that appeared in issue No. 68 of THE JOURNAL, dated Sept. 30, 2002. This article is the third in a series.

By John Warren

**B**IG SANDY, Texas—In the two previous articles about the history of the Radio Church of God (which became the Worldwide Church of God) in East Texas and beyond, THE JOURNAL looked at Sabbath services, festival observances, Imperial Schools and, briefly, at Ambassador College.



Leroy Neff

(The two previous articles ran in THE JOURNAL in issues No. 166 and 167, dated September-October 2014 and Nov. 30, 2014.)

This third report aims to focus on the college years: the era of the church's sponsorship and operation of Ambassador College, especially the Texas campus.

Readers can check THE JOURNAL's previous two issues for details about the founding of Ambassador in Big Sandy.

For this month's article THE JOURNAL interviewed people who were involved with the Texas campus of the church-run institution of higher learn-

ing during its early history, beginning with its founding year, 1964.

### To be or not to be a college

Kenneth Swisher was serving as the church pastor at Big Sandy at the end of last month's historical review of the Radio/Worldwide Church of God in Big Sandy. Mr. Swisher served the local congregation from 1957 until August of 1963.

Now is the time to introduce Leroy Neff, who was 78 years old and residing in Big Sandy with his wife, Maxine at the time of the interview.

Since the original version of this history ran, both Mr. and Mrs. Neff have died, Mr. Neff in January 2014 and Mrs. Neff in 2010.

Mr. and Mrs. Neff, who were married in 1942, observed their 60th wedding anniversary on Aug. 15, 2002. Mr. Neff retired in 1995 from the employ of the Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, Calif., where his final duties were as a member and secretary of the church's board of trustees.

He entered Ambassador College in Pasadena in 1955 at age 35 and graduated in 1959. He was ordained in May 1958 as an elder.

He worked as manager of the Radio Church of God's mail-receiving department and served as pastor of the Long Beach, Calif., congregation before church founder Herbert W. Armstrong sent him to Texas in 1963 as business manager for the project at Big Sandy.

See **THIRD AMBASSADOR**, page 4



More Feast 2014

**FEAST IN THAILAND**—A young lady rides an elephant during the Feast of Tabernacles in October 2014 in Thailand. Beginning on this page is the second installment of Feast reports from the 2014 observances. See reports from Thailand, Colorado, Kachinland and Iowa beginning on this page. See more photos from the Feast on page 23. [Photo courtesy Leon Sexton]

## History lesson No. 3 begins on this page

**B**IG SANDY—JOURNAL writer and amateur historian John Warren has dug up

more information about the early days of the Radio and Worldwide Church of God, especially the part of the history that centers on the church's



John Warren

formerly extensive property and membership in the Big Sandy area.

Don't miss Mr. Warren's interviews with Les McCullough, Leroy Neff, Jeanette Weinbrenner and Gerald Tucker in this issue. See also the historical photos on pages 4, 5 and 22.

The article begins on this page.

## LCG council discusses succession, the spirit world, habits of communication and doctrine

By Edward Malone

**L**iving Church of God founder and presiding evangelist Roderick C. Meredith recently conducted a meeting of his church's council of elders to discuss doctrinal issues.

The council members also passed an "affirmation" stating who would be next in line to succeed Dr. Meredith in the event he was no longer able to preside over the church.

The council, which also deliberated several other matters, has no binding authority over the church or its administration. It serves strictly in an advisory capacity.

However, Dr. Meredith and the council discussed a wide range of issues, and a church announcement described the meeting as "very profitable."

### Topics talked about

The council met Nov. 10-12, 2014, to discuss, among other things, the church's manpower needs, the church's

handling of emerging social issues including the spirit world, the communication-intake habits of young people vs. older adults (Internet, television, etc.) and several doctrinal issues.

During the meetings, as reported to THE JOURNAL by council member Dexter Wakefield, Dr. Meredith stressed the importance of staying close to God and working together in unity to finish the "work."

Mr. Wakefield said that, although doctrinal issues were discussed, no doctrinal changes were considered. Doctrinal discussions usually consist of a review of current events as they relate to the church's teachings on prophecy, Mr. Wakefield said.

He cited progress in the church's work in 2014, including an 8.3 percent increase from the previous year in Feast of Tabernacles attendance (10,289), a 5 percent increase in income and a Tomorrow's World magazine circulation approaching 500,000.

According to information from pastors and regional directors as

reported in a news release, church attendance for the LCG was calculated to be at an average of 9,100 throughout the world in September 2014, representing an increase of about 3 percent for the first nine months of the year.

The LCG, headquartered in Charlotte, N.C., produced 55 Tomorrow's World telecasts, drawing nearly 2,500 Internet visitors.

### 220 students

As of the time of the meeting, the church's online institution of higher learning, Living University, had about 220 distance-learning students enrolled. The university recently added three new faculty members.

The council of elders of the Living Church of God, which consists of about 14 members, all of whom are selected by Dr. Meredith and may be removed at his discretion, meets at least twice a year in person and once or twice a year via telephone.

The purpose of the council is to See **LIVING REPORTS**, page 23

## Start your virtual Feast 2014 tour in Thailand

**F**east of Tabernacles reports sent in by readers of THE JOURNAL continue below for Feast 2014. Many, but not all, 2014 observances started on the evening of Oct. 8 and ran through Oct. 16.

If you haven't done so already, you're invited to send your Feast report for THE JOURNAL to info@thejournal.org or P.O. Box 1020, Big Sandy, Texas 75755, U.S.A.

### REPORT FROM THAILAND

**C**HIANG MAI, Thailand—In 2014 the Legacy Foundation played host to the Feast of Tabernacles in Chiang Mai.

We had 45 guests show up to keep the Feast at the Empress Hotel in the center of Chiang Mai. We had brethren come from America and Australia as well as our Legacy students, employees and volunteers (of whom I am one).

We also had the pleasure of having two *ajaaans* (Thai for teachers) who were here last year come and visit for two weeks. The students were so thrilled to see them again, and it was a joy to see that reunion.

The current Legacy volunteers had a taste of what it's like to have many responsibilities at the Feast, and it was a tremendous learning experience for us.

We had many activities planned for the Feast in Chiang Mai, and all

were excited for each new day.

Three days into this wonderful spiritual week we hopped into the vans bright and early and took off to a day filled with elephants and rafting.

Guests and third-year students enjoyed a day watching an elephant show, petting the elephants and even being picked up by their powerful trunks.

After the show and one-on-one time with the gentle creatures, we took turns two by two hopping onto the top of an elephant and swaying off on a 20-minute trek through the jungle and across two rivers. It was an amazing experience filled with smiles and elephant trumpets.

### Legacy school and farm

We also visited the Legacy school and farm. The students and volunteers had spent weeks preparing the farm and school for our guests. We took great joy in giving them a tour of our grounds.

The guests were impressed with the farm and crops that we grow, and they enjoyed the fresh chicken dinner provided by one of our Burmese families.

### The queen's project

We also went to Queen Sirikit's Royal Project at Mae Tam. That was See **FEAST**, page 23

## BSA publishes annual Directory of Sabbath Observing Groups

**B**ATTLE GROUND, Wash.—The Bible Sabbath Association (BSA) invites Church of God members to sign up as official BSA supporters.

The BSA began in 1945 to promote the Sabbath and cooperation among Sabbath observers.

It is not a church denomination "and does not promote church ecumenism," according to a promotional brochure.

Members may vote to elect officers of the association.

A one-year membership is \$25. A family membership costs \$30. Institutional memberships are \$50 each. A lifetime membership goes for \$500.

The BSA's board of directors has been working on its new *Directory of Sabbath Observing Groups* and hopes to have it available in February 2015.

For more information visit *The Sabbath Sentinel* magazine's website, bible Sabbath.org.

Or write the BSA at 802 NW 21st Ave., Battle Ground, Wash. 98604, U.S.A.

# Third Ambassador campus came to East Texas in 1964

Continued from page 1

Mr. Armstrong appointed Mr. Neff as "acting deputy chancellor" in 1964 (Mr. Armstrong was chancellor) and charged him with the responsibility of preparing for the opening of the third campus of the college. The two others were in Pasadena and in Brickwood, England.

"Why I was chosen [to head up the Texas campus] I don't know," Mr. Neff told *THE JOURNAL*. "Maybe it was because I was a little older than most of the students who went through Ambassador in Pasadena and had some business and supervisory experience."

"At first they were going to make me the registrar, but they made me acting deputy chancellor."

Mr. Armstrong, his son Garner Ted, Al Portune (executive assistant to the younger Mr. Armstrong) and other church officials had discussed the possibility of opening a Texas campus for years, but, for one reason or another (usually finances), the proposed opening was invariably postponed.

## On again, off again

Mr. Neff was not involved with the preliminary discussions about a third college campus.

"In the summer of 1963 my wife had been sick for about nine months, and then she was healed," he explained. "We came to Big Sandy after that."

"We arrived in August. It seemed like a logical decision to open a college because the church had the property here and Imperial [the elementary and high school] was already here."

Mr. Neff said the decision to start Ambassador in East Texas was "on again off again" many times.

"It was probably Ted Armstrong who wanted the college here. His wife [Shirley, daughter of Roy and Pearl Hammer] was from here, and he liked this area."

When Mr. Neff arrived in Big Sandy as business manager of the church's building project, Mr. Armstrong had not yet decided to open the campus.

(The project already included facilities to accommodate the yearly Feast of Tabernacles observance on the church's grounds.)

Mr. Armstrong appointed Mr. Neff as the new church pastor and district superintendent in 1964 when he transferred Mr. Swisher to another area.

During the 1960s Mr. Armstrong and other officials of the church's administration placed prominent ministers over regions of the United States to supervise church pastors. These men were known at various times as district superintendents, regional directors and area coordinators.

Mr. Neff remembered that Buck Hammer of Gladewater, Texas, had possession of the checkbook, serving as a one-man business department before the opening of the new business office.

"Bob Ruxton had been sent down from Pasadena before I got here, and he was put over buildings and grounds," said Mr. Neff. "I came as business manager, and before that time there had not been a business office."

"I had never done anything like this. We started from scratch. It took time to set up accounts payable and accounts receivable and other business systems."

Mr. Ruxton, an engineer, worked as a church employee until his death in a car accident near the property in 1965.

## The biggest challenge

Readers of this series of articles will remember the financial challenges that greeted the opening of Ambassador in Pasadena and that church employees sometimes went without paychecks for extended periods.

After years of discussions concerning a possible college in Big Sandy, money was still an issue.

"The biggest challenge was money," said Mr. Neff. "As I recall, we opened the college on a shoestring budget of \$50,000."

The property included two "tabernacle" buildings—the Redwood Building and the Field House—and the little metal cabins called Booth City that accommodated Feast observers.

The first Ambassador students lived in the booths of Booth City (see Leviticus 23:42 for why the cabins were known as booths).

Mr. Neff first tackled the problem of where to conduct classes. He directed

(with Mr. Armstrong's authorization) the purchase of "temporary classroom buildings" that church work crews assembled near the Redwood Building.

The supposedly temporary buildings were used by the college until the 1990s, when they were sold and moved just before the church sold the whole property in 2000.

"The booths were completely bare," said Mr. Neff. "There was no air conditioning or heating. We had to add gas heaters to each booth. We ordered big fans [for each booth] because of the summer heat."

"The fans arrived in November."

Early challenges concerned plumbing, the sewer and the weather. But those weren't Mr. Neff's only problems.

"I was the business manager, church pastor, district superintendent and acting deputy chancellor. I also taught three classes."

"We did not have the luxury that other colleges had where an instructor could dedicate his time to one class. We all had multiple responsibilities."

## That first year

Classes of the new school began in September 1964. The Redwood Building served as classroom space and as the site of the first "faculty reception."

Even though the first social event of each academic year was called the faculty reception, it was more of a reception for the new batch of freshmen. (In later years it became appropriately known as the freshman reception.)

"The faculty was in their formal attire," remembered Mr. Neff. "Herbert Armstrong was wearing a tuxedo and his wife, Loma, an evening gown. The students were in their best clothes."

"The reception was held in the non-air-conditioned Redwood Build-

ing while the temperature and humidity were very high."

The same building that had subjected Feastgoers to freezing temperatures welcomed pioneering college students with just the opposite. But the college's opening couldn't be delayed simply because of the lack of a few creature comforts.

"There was no fine place [in Big Sandy] like Ambassador Hall in Pasadena," said Mr. Neff. "The best we could do was to hold it in the still-unfinished lounge area on the west side of the Redwood Building."

"The lightbulbs on the ceiling were bare bulbs. We found some decorative plastic covers for them. There was no carpet on the bare concrete floor. For decorations we used what we had the most of, the boughs of pine trees."

Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong and other members of the faculty stood in line to shake hands and briefly speak with each student.

In spite of the hot, sticky and rustic surroundings, Ambassador College in Big Sandy was open for business and was to have a "very memorable year," said Mr. Neff.

"Everyone worked very well together. We were really pioneering, and there was good camaraderie."

## 62 freshmen

In the summer of 1964 a few students from the Pasadena campus came to Big Sandy to work at dressing and keeping the grounds and finishing out the offices, kitchens and classrooms.

The first day of classes was Sept. 8. Mr. Neff taught three of them, Principles of Living, World History, and Old Testament Survey.

Administrators included dean of faculty Charles Dorothy, dean of students Ron Kelly and registrar Lynn Torrance.

The faculty included members of the administration and Kermit Nelson, Willis "Jack" Bicket, Sidney Hegvold, Eugene and Ruth Walter, Ben Chapman, Wiley Black, Wilmer Parrish, Guy Carnes, Marilyn Russell, Cecil Reece and Leo Bogdanchik.

"Obviously I was busy and not able to do any job as it should have been done," said Mr. Neff.

The students that first semester included six senior transfers from Pasadena, 22 juniors, 18 sophomores and 62 freshmen.

"Dale Schurter transferred in for the second semester to give us seven sen-



**CAMPUS ADMINISTRATORS**—Above left: Les McCullough addresses a crowd assembled for the dedication of the United Church of God's new home office in Milford, Ohio, in 2002. Above right: Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Neff. [Left photo by Victor Kubik; right photo courtesy Leroy Neff]

iors and a total enrollment the first year of 109 students," Mr. Neff remembered.

Mr. Neff served as acting deputy chancellor until Mr. Armstrong appointed Leslie McCullough as permanent deputy chancellor later that year.

Mr. McCullough moved to Big Sandy in January 1965 and began his

Varner Courts.

"Mr. Neff had told me he would be staying at Varner Courts," Mrs. Weinbrenner said, "and he had checked in the day before."

"He put me in contact with Mr.



Swisher and Mr. Rice."

A new ranch-style brick house was going up on the church property adjacent to Lake Loma for the Neffs, but it was not complete by the time of their arrival.

Mr. Swisher, the church pastor, and assistant pastor Richard Rice found housing for the new college employee

*'The biggest challenge was money,' said Mr. Neff. 'As I recall, we opened the college on a shoestring budget of \$50,000.'*

duties as administrator of the college, pastor of the Big Sandy congregation and superintendent of the district that included Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma and New Mexico.

## Who was that woman?

A young lady played a pivotal role in the preparation for the new college, said Mr. Neff. Jeanette Raetz was a 23-year-old Pasadena student who had spent the summer of 1963 in Big Sandy as a counselor for a summer camp for church youths on the church property.

Miss Raetz, later Mrs. Loren Weinbrenner of Big Sandy, told *THE JOURNAL* how she came to assist Mr. Neff in his duties.

"I had graduated from college in Illinois, and I was in my third year at Ambassador," said Mrs. Weinbrenner, who died in April 2014. "I had been to Big Sandy for the Feast and I said, 'I didn't know God made a place on earth so hot.'"

"I was back home in Illinois during the summer break when one morning the phone rang at 8 o'clock and a voice said, 'Do you know who this is?'"

"I recognized the voice as that of my college speech teacher, Mr. Neff. He told me Mr. Armstrong had decided to open a sister campus in Big Sandy and 'you are going down there.'"

"I cried all that night. It was totally unexpected, and I had to change all my plans. I got on a train that took me all the way to the Gladewater depot."

When Jeanette Raetz, the college's newly hired executive secretary, arrived at the railroad station in Gladewater, eight miles from the college campus, no one was there to meet her.

She remembered that she was the only train passenger at the depot the day she arrived. The station manager shut down and locked the depot, then drove her around Gladewater looking for a church employee's residence.

Miss Raetz thought she knew where Cecil Reece, an Imperial Schools instructor, lived, but she and her volunteer chauffeur could not locate the Reece residence.

After returning to the train station, Miss Raetz called a Gladewater motel, Claibourne Courts, later known as

## Jeanette gets married

Miss Raetz witnessed the pleasant events that impacted the local congregation and campus when the students arrived that fall.

"I really liked the college coming because I could fellowship with the students again," she said. "Everyone liked the element of having the students around."

"The church had sent widows [literal widows whom the church financially supported] to Big Sandy, so it was nice to have students here. When I arrived they looked at me as young blood."

Miss Raetz, at one point, was rooming in Gladewater with a recent Pasadena graduate, Marilyn Russell (now Mrs. Dwayne Canup of Big Sandy), who became the college's first librarian.

"My office was in the Field House; Marilyn worked in the Redwood Building," remembered Mrs. Weinbrenner. "I felt so bad for her because I had air conditioning and she didn't."

In 1964 a sophomore transfer student from Pasadena arrived and changed things for the first executive secretary. That student was Loren Weinbrenner of Lehigh, Kan., who was to marry Jeanette Raetz June 19, 1966.

"We were the first married students on the campus here," remembered Mrs. Weinbrenner.

Over the years many Ambassador students chose the beautifully landscaped and outfitted campus as the location for their wedding ceremony.

## Five valedictorians

Once the Weinbrenners were wed, Jeanette's employment ended.

"I had to stop working when I got married because in those days married women were not allowed to work," she said. "Mr. McCullough came to me and said, 'You are getting married. You know what that means.'"

(Some married women did indeed work on campus. The rule was not hard and fast.)

Alice Rothery, sister of Marion McCullough (Miss Rothery would eventually marry John Robinson), took the place of Mrs. Weinbrenner, who had worked as executive secretary for 3½ years.

The Weinbrenners' first child arrived one week after Mr. Weinbrenner's graduation from the Big Sandy campus.

Melissa Weinbrenner, that baby girl, would earn her Ph.D. in history from Texas A&M University and would be offered a contract by history-department chairman Rick Sherrod as an instructor at Ambassador in 1996.

However, the Worldwide Church of God of 1996 considered Melissa's contract null and void because she did not agree with then-new doctrines of the WCG and because of her affiliation with the new United Church of God.

(More about the WCG and its doctrines and splits in a later issue.)

The Weinbrenners were to have two more children, a daughter, Lori, and a son, Jared.

All three were valedictorians of their senior classes at Big Sandy High School. (Both parents had been valedictorians of their senior classes as well.)

## Providing planes

The Neffs stayed in Big Sandy until 1971, when he returned to Pasadena to manage a burgeoning flight-operations department. Mr. Neff had flight training and eventually acquired his private pilot's license.

At that time the WCG began providing private planes for the convenience of its executives and others. Planes owned by the church in the '70s included a Beechcraft Queen Air, a King Air and a Cessna Citation.

Later Mr. Armstrong would fly in a Gulfstream G-2, then a G-3 (both jets), while his son, Garner Ted, flew in a Falcon jet.

Church officials decided to develop a dirt landing strip on the Big Sandy property and expanded it over time to include 5,000 feet of paved runway and a hangar.

The Big Sandy curriculum included flight training during part of its history.

See **NEW DEPUTY**, page 5

# New deputy chancellor, pioneer students built the college

Continued from page 4

## The McCulloughs on board

In November 1964 Mr. Armstrong sent Garner Ted Armstrong along with Mr. McCullough to the Texas campus to make the announcement at a college forum (a weekly meeting of college students and faculty members) that Mr. McCullough would become the deputy chancellor as soon as he could move from Pasadena to Big Sandy.

Mr. Neff continued as business manager and served as pastor of the congregation in Shreveport, La., 90 miles east of the campus.

## Mr. McCullough reflects

Mr. McCullough, now 84, lives in retirement with his wife, Marion, about a mile east of the former college campus.

This writer for *THE JOURNAL* sat down with Mr. McCullough in 2002 as he reflected on the challenges and excitement of his first assignment as deputy chancellor.

The newly appointed college administrator graduated from Ambassador in Pasadena in 1961 and worked as an assistant to Albert Portune, who himself was executive assistant to the younger Mr. Armstrong.

As Mr. Neff had explained, because of financial and other problems the often-contemplated opening of the campus in Texas was delayed.

During one of those delays "I was supposed to become the business manager in Pasadena and Al Portune was to be sent to Big Sandy as the first deputy chancellor," Mr. McCullough remembered.

"Ted told me that if I was to become the new manager I needed to see the church's operations. He and I were on a trip to Bricket Wood when someone in Pasadena asked Mr. Armstrong a question at Bible study.

"The man wanted to know how long it would be before the employees would get a paycheck."

That Bible-study question inspired Mr. Armstrong to make a change in the business office: He appointed Mr. Portune as the new manager.

"After that I was made the deputy chancellor," said Mr. McCullough, "and Ted Armstrong made the announcement in November of 1964."

## Upholstery work

Mr. McCullough was not new to Big Sandy. He had attended his first Feast of Tabernacles on the church grounds in 1956.

He also had applied that year to Ambassador (in Pasadena; that was the only campus at the time) and had been denied admission.

He continued working in Portland, Ore., as an upholsterer until his acceptance to the Pasadena college in 1957.

Mr. McCullough's wife, the former Marion Rothery, who grew up in a Church of God Seventh Day congregation, had wanted to apply to attend Ambassador but did not because of lack of funds.

The McCulloughs married in 1952 in Oregon.

Mr. McCullough recalled visiting Marion one day during their courtship.

"There in the living room talking to her mother was an elder from the Church of God Seventh Day named Dodd," Mr. McCullough said.

The man was Clarence O. Dodd, who, with fellow CG7 elder Andrew N. Dugger, wrote *A History of the True Church Traced From 33 A.D. to Date*, originally published in 1936. (Later printings changed the name to *A History of the True Religion*.)

## Early Big Sandy

Mr. McCullough recalled the Big Sandy property in the early days.

"When we got here there really wasn't anything here," he said. "The Redwood Building was used for almost everything, although my office was in the Field House."

Developing the church grounds into a college campus was a monumental undertaking. During the first year an enrollment of just more than 100 students taxed the facility to its limits.

The water system was not adequate for the demand. The septic system burst. Classrooms and "booths" used as student residences were not air conditioned.

Undaunted, the new deputy chancellor, his faculty and staff and the brave pioneering students set out to build a new institution on the sandy hills and in the valleys between Gladewater and Big Sandy.

One of the first big projects was the construction of modern dormitories.

Construction crews also built 21 pleasant ranch-style houses near Lake Loma. The line of residences would become known as Faculty Row.

Campus employees and outside contractors remodeled space in the Field House for a kitchen, dining hall, offices, basketball court and classrooms.

## Ma Tucker's is no more

Along with the construction came some demolition. The little country cafe and motel immediately adjacent to the college entrance popularly called Ma Tucker's disappeared.

The college, after several years of negotiating with Mercer Dell "Ma" Tucker, bought her property and landscaped it into part of the college's entrance.

"We paid a terrible price for Ma Tucker's Cafe and so-called motel," said Mr. McCullough. "Then we tore it down."

Buck Hammer, by then the college's director of buildings and grounds, recalled the college's arrangement with Mrs. Tucker.

"I had negotiated with the Tuckers, and we had settled on around \$70,000," he said. "But the important people from Pasadena came down and ended up paying around \$90,000."

Gerald Tucker, one of Mrs. Tucker's sons who in 2002 still resided in Big Sandy, told *THE JOURNAL*:

"People still talk about my mother's cheeseburgers. Vernon Rogers [an electrician who worked at Ambassador] and John Schuster [a college student in the 1960s who worked with the late Mr. Rogers as an electrical contractor] still comment to me how much they liked those burgers.

"My mother loved those church people. She would order beef sausage, and that was a special order because nobody around here had ever heard of beef sausage.

"She also rented out every bed in the place [during the Feast of Tabernacles]. During the Feast she would even rent out my bed."

## Just water, you mean?

A growing campus had a growing thirst. In those days the college pumped from wells for drinking water, and the church bought untreated water for irrigation from the City of Longview.

Longview pumped water out of Big Sandy Creek just south of the campus and piped it to a treatment facility 20 miles east of the college. Longview officials allowed the campus to tap into the water on its way to Longview.

The City of Longview "notified us they were going to cut us off," said Mr. McCullough. "We applied to the state to be able to have water rights on the Big Sandy Creek for 900,000 acre feet of water per year."

The water from Lake Loma provided treated water for the campus and the faculty residences. The lake and Big Sandy Creek provided irrigation water that turned what was dry, sandbur-infested pastureland into a landscaped showplace.

The campus also pumped water from Big Sandy Creek into Lake Loma to maintain the lake's water level.

The water rights gave the campus use of 200,000 acre feet of water each year for "municipal" use and 700,000 acre feet of water for "recreational" use, said Mr. McCullough.

With the building of a new dam in 1966, the size of Lake Loma doubled.

The campus's sources of gas, electricity, telephone service and trash disposal were always a challenge. Ambassador in Big Sandy was a city unto itself. College employees developed the water system and ran gas, water and telephone lines.

The college hired carpenters, painters, custodians, farmhands, equipment operators, landscapers, laundry personnel, mechanics, electricians, plumbers, masons, architects, telephone technicians and many other skilled workers.

Mr. McCullough personally directed a massive landscape project that involved building rock retaining walls in the valley behind the Redwood Building.

He was also involved with the construction of a concrete bridge spanning Lake Loma after the lake's expansion.

"The decision had been made to build three new homes across the lake," he said. "After I had signed the contract to have the bridge built, Al Portune called me and said don't sign that contract. He didn't want to spend the money on the new houses.

"I told him it was too late. The contract had already been signed.

"Those houses were never built, and the bridge became known as the bridge to nowhere."

## Taking shape

The buildings, grounds and lake were not the only things whipped into shape. The college had a dedicated physical-education department headed by former Imperial Schools instructor Kermit Nelson.

College employees Mr. (later Dr.) Nelson, Avon Pfund, Ray Daly and Charles Black teamed up to help the stu-

lege officials brainstormed about how to deal with the campus refuse.

The college, and its output of waste, was on the grow.

The students and a small cadre of instructors grew rapidly to more than 600 students and more than 100 faculty and staff members, many of whom lived on the church grounds.



**ALL-PURPOSE BUILDING**—The Redwood Building sits on the original donated property on which the Radio/Worldwide Church of God built a Feast of Tabernacles site and one of the three Ambassador College campuses. Over the years the structure served as the festival tabernacle, a dining hall, college classrooms and, finally, the Roy Hammer Library of Ambassador University. [Photo by John Warren]

The church property had increased in size as well, explained Mr. McCullough.

"We started out with 1,600 acres," he said. "In a short time we owned or leased over 5,000 acres."

The former deputy chancellor remembered a trip to Pasadena and a discussion he had out there with a college-and-church official, Herman Hoeh.

"He [Dr. Hoeh] told me, 'There is a place out by Thousand Oaks [Calif.], and they are having a terrible time get-

ting rid of their waste,'" said Mr. McCullough.

"We went out there and met this inventor from Sweden who was there trying to help them. His name was Eric Eweson, and he had invented what was called a digester."

Garner Ted Armstrong was interested in ecological topics, preaching often about pollution and its effect on the environment on his daily *World Tomorrow* radio broadcasts.

So, remembered Mr. McCullough, the younger Mr. Armstrong decided the college should have its own digester.

"It was constructed in Oklahoma," said Mr. McCullough, "and I believe it arrived here in one piece."

Jack Martz of Big Sandy, whom *JOURNAL* readers met in an earlier installment of this history, remembered the college's and church's waste-disposal problem.

"We used to bury all the garbage on the hill," he said. "Even for the Feast we would dig a pit and bury all the trash."

Mr. Martz, who worked at the college as a welder, equipment operator and heavy-equipment-crew foreman, remembered the arrival of the huge tube called the digester.

"They brought it in on a truck, and I think it was 11 feet tall and 120 feet long."

Scott Hammer, son of Buck Hammer and today manager of Vital Earth Resources, a commercial operation in Gladewater, was 20 when the digester arrived.

"The digester began operating in 1971," he said. "It got the nickname of Frank, named after one of the church's pilots who had the reputation of eating a lot."

Vital Earth Resources purchased the digester from the Worldwide Church of God in 1982 and continued to use the giant tube in its composting and soil-mixing commercial operations.

By use of the digester much of the biodegradable waste from the college

turned into compost and ended up as fertilizer on the grounds.

## The 1-W work program

Besides the full- and part-time employees at the college and the students who were working their way through school, the college employed another classification of worker.

Radio/Worldwide Church of God members did not as a rule participate in military service; most, during times of military conscription, declared themselves conscientious objectors to military service and war.

If conscientious objectors (COs) were called up to service, and found to be truly conscientious in their objection to war, they were directed by the Selective Service Department of the U.S. government to report to work at certain government-approved jobs for their "alternative service."

Such COs were termed 1-W's, after the code on their Selective Service cards (also known as draft cards), and could end up working for Goodwill Industries or certain municipalities including the City of Dallas.

Or they could end up working for Ambassador College, Big Sandy, Texas, for \$1.50 an hour.

During the late 1960s and early '70s quite a few young church members—probably almost 100 in all—made East Texas their home while they performed their mandatory service at the college in lieu of service in one of the armed forces.

The late Wilmer Parrish of Big Sandy, a medical doctor and church member and church employee who administered the 1-W program for the college, would assign these men duties anywhere on campus, but most of them worked in landscaping, on the janitor crew, as heavy-equipment operators or in other areas of the building-and-grounds department.

Ron Avey of Big Sandy, an Imperial graduate who became a college employee, remembered an incident involving a 1-W worker.

The young man, who will here remain nameless, was pushing a lawn mower on a hillside above a pond near one of the women's dormitories.

"A good-looking coed came walking by, and he let go of the mower," recalled Mr. Avey. "As he watched her walk past, the mower went down the hill into the pond."

The 1-W workers, all males, were not allowed to date college students. During much of the college history, college students were not allowed to date outside the student body without special permission from college officials.

Mr. Martz, a longtime employee who saw two daughters go through Ambassador, remembered working with many 1-W's over the years.

"Some of them became full-time employees of the heavy-equipment crew or in other departments," he said.

John Good, then of Akron, Ohio, who later lived in Leesburg, Fla., was a 1-W worker at Big Sandy in the 1970s. He was assigned to the custodial department, where he worked for many years as a 1-W employee and later a regular employee.

After his 1-W term of service the college hired him as a full-time crew foreman.

Mr. Good eventually became Dr. Good when he earned his Ed.D. and became a faculty member at Ambassador in the 1990s. Dr. Good worked a total of 25 years for the church and college.

At the time of this writing Dr. Good was an administrator at Beacon College in Leesburg, where he was director of institutional research and educational-support services.

Several 1-W's, including Mr. Good, Les Meitzler, John Rollins, Ernie Rattliff and Murray Frenzel, lived communally in an old rented frame house near downtown Big Sandy.

"We had a good group in that house," Dr. Good recalled. "I think there were seven or eight during the six months I lived there. It was too crowded, so I found another place to rent."

## Working one's way through

Besides regular full- and part-time employees and the 1-W's, the college and church hired many Ambassador students, most of whom were using that means to pay for their education. Many

See **ORIGINAL VERSION**, page 22

*As the property developed, so did its production of trash. College crews dug immense pits to handle the growing amount of garbage.*

# Original version of *The Worldwide News* began in Big Sandy

Continued from page 5

students worked half time, about 20 hours per week.

Mr. McCullough explained that working one's way through college was an important part of one's education.

"Mr. Armstrong felt that learning how to work was an important part of the college experience," he said. "All students were required to work, and most of them at that time could not afford not to work."

Besides working 20 hours a week during the school year, many students would stay on campus during the summer and work 40 hours or even, in some cases, as many as 70 hours a week.

JOURNAL publisher Dixon Cartwright of Big Sandy, a student laborer in various departments during his Ambassador career from 1966 to 1969, remembered "working 60 and 70 hours a week on the plumbing crew on campus the summer of 1967."

Mr. Cartwright recalled "baking in the sun in June 1967" while laying 8-inch sewer pipe with Edward Phillips, Vance Bailey, Mac Hanna, Don Griffith, Dean Koenke, John Dickerson, Frank McCrady, Garry de Jager and others "while listening to a play-by-play of the Six-Day War on a portable radio."

"It was like we had our own city," said Mr. McCullough. "We had to develop our own water system. SWEP-CO [Southwestern Electric Power Co.] brought electrical power to the campus, and we had to take it from there."

"We raised our own beef cattle and even sent beef to Pasadena. There were 300 to 400 head of beef. We had 50 to 60 Brown Swiss dairy cattle."

Campus crews, including many students, worked on the college's ranch.

"At one time we provided our own meat, milk and eggs," said Mr. McCullough.

This writer remembers a campus fruit-and-vegetable program that provided fresh produce for the college for a time in the 1970s.

## More departments in Big Sandy

With an abundance of manpower, Mr. McCullough convinced church officials in Pasadena to transfer some of the church's operations to the East Texas campus.

The Spanish department worked out of the Big Sandy location for many years writing, translating and publishing church literature in Spanish.

For a while *La Pura Verdad* (*The Plain Truth*), *Albores* (the Spanish version of *Tomorrow's World*) and many reprint articles and booklets were a product of the printing department on campus overseen by Ellis Stewart of Big Sandy, as well as the Spanish version of booklets and lessons of the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course.

"Dr. [Benjamin] Rea was over the Spanish department, which was in Bricket Wood, England," said Mr. Stewart. "When Dr. Rea died of a heart attack, the department was moved to Big Sandy, and Dr. [Charles] Dorothy became the manager. The circulation of the Spanish *Plain Truth* was 126,000 when we printed it here."

"I was always trying to get other jobs here," said Mr. McCullough. "I got the mail department moved here."

Mr. Stewart recalled the move of part of the church's mailing operations from Pasadena to Big Sandy.

"Ray Dick was sent down as manager," said Mr. Stewart. "People [fans of the church's radio broadcast] would request information, and Mr. Dick would have us print the needed material. We reprinted a lot of articles and booklets."

"The work program for the students was wonderful. We trained quite a few students in printing and binding and related jobs."

## 'The Worldwide News'

In 1973 Garner Ted Armstrong approved the publishing of a church newspaper.

Involved with the early planning of what became *The Worldwide News*, which came out every other week, were Big Sandy dean of students Ron Kelly and especially a 1966 Ambassador graduate and faculty member, John Robinson.



Mr. Robinson and Mr. Kelly, aided by printing-department employees including several students, wrote, laid out and printed a prototype of what the newspaper could look like and presented it for approval to the younger Mr. Armstrong.

## Staff inflation

"The on-site mover and shaker of the original version of *The Worldwide News*, which began in Big Sandy April 1, 1973, and ended in the spring of 1978, was John Robinson," said a staff member of the original five years, Mr. Cartwright.

"I just checked the old masthead, or staff box, of the first issue," he said, "and was surprised that we included 56 people on the original staff."

That staff listing was "grossly inflated," said Mr. Cartwright, as were the staffs of other WCG publications, to make them look "more official and more impressive."

The original listing included people who had nothing to do with *The Worldwide News* such as Colin Adair and Norman Smith, said Mr. Cartwright.

"Early in 1974, the second year of the *WN's* publication, the staff list magically shrank to a more-realistic 13," said Mr. Cartwright.

A partial listing of the staff, employees who actually were involved in the *WN's* administration or production over the five years, included:

Editor in chief Herbert W. Armstrong; editor Garner Ted Armstrong; managing editor John Robinson (who died in 2006); writers and layout artists Scott Ashley, Rick Baumgartner, Randy Brelsford, Linda Cartwright, Paula Cummins, Gerry Ghearing, Sheila Dennis, Janie George, Tom Hanson, Dave Haver, Gene Hogberg, Kimberly Kessler, Clyde Kilough, Sherry L. Marsh, David McKee, Dave Molnar, Michele Molnar, Ava Norton, Faye Odie, Mac Overton, Klaus Rothe, Vivian Rothe, Linda Moll, Ken Treybig, Tricia Willhoite and Jim Worthen; photographers Pete Leschak, Scott Moss, Roland Rees, Eugene Smyda and John Wright; circulation managers David Blue and Karen Gardner; and copy editor Dixon Cartwright.

Though not always named as staff members, personnel in the college's printing department contributed to the *WN's* production, including Mike Hale, Dean Koenke, Ellis Stewart and Marty Yale; and many local-church-member volunteers.

The printing-department crew would do the camera and other prepress work, then furnish the printer, *The Gladewater Mirror*, with negatives from which to burn the plates for an old Harris web offset printing press.

"Although the elder Mr. Armstrong was acknowledged as editor in chief, he was not much involved with the early issues, as I remember," said Mr. Cartwright.

"GTÁ [Garner Ted Armstrong] was directly involved, although in the five years of the original *WN* we could never get him to visit our production area or meet with the production staff in any way except over the phone."

Mr. Cartwright said the original *Worldwide News*, published from 1973 to 1978, was an "interesting phenomenon."

"It was the closest thing the Radio/Worldwide Church of God had had to a free press," he said. "We were still controlled, but we did manage to write and publish hard news."

"For example, we reported on our front page when a church employee, a



**WEDDING BELLS**—Above left: Loren and Jeanette Weinbrenner on their wedding day, June 19, 1966. Top: This is the digester at the Vital Earth Resources property between Big Sandy and Gladewater. Above: Booth City originally served as residences for Feastgoers, then as domiciles for Ambassador College students. In 2002 the owner of the property, the International ALERT Academy, had the booths up for sale at \$2,000 apiece. [Photos by Leo DuBry and John Warren]

church pastor, shot and killed his wife and then himself in a courthouse. That kind of story would probably not have been openly talked about, much less reported, before or after the original *Worldwide News*.

"We had a team, an esprit de corps and a professionalism that I'm proud to have been a part of in those years."

The original *Worldwide News*, which published until the spring of 1978—four years in Big Sandy, then one year in Pasadena—was also unusual in that it carried a subscription price.

With a beginning circulation of about 32,000, WCG members could subscribe for \$4 a year in 1973 (later \$6) in the United States.

The elder Mr. Armstrong discontinued the *WN* in 1978 during one of the church's crises, reportedly because he considered it to be too closely associated with his son Garner Ted.

After some months, when Garner Ted was no longer a part of the WCG,

the elder Mr. Armstrong directed that the paper start up again.

It did, but with a mostly different staff, with no subscription price (and thus a much higher circulation) and with a much more tightly controlled editorial policy.

It continued for several years, although it was a newsletter in format rather than a newspaper.

## 100 Feast sites

Big Sandy became the home of the WCG's festival department, which handled convention reservations and housing arrangements for American church members attending the annual Feast of Tabernacles observances.

The WCG's Feast of Tabernacles sites eventually numbered about 20 in this country and 100 around the world.

"There was so much going on," remembered Mr. McCullough. "We were building and developing. It was an exciting time, and I was thrilled to be involved."

## Mr. Neff begged to differ

The decade of the '70s brought new challenges and many changes to Ambassador in Big Sandy. The church was once again experiencing financial, public-relations and various other difficulties.

Whether it was the failed prediction of the return of Jesus, other doctrinal issues or headline-grabbing personal difficulties between church and college founder Herbert Armstrong and his son Garner Ted, the church and college were in for some rough times.

When *THE JOURNAL* remarked in passing to Mr. Neff about some of the WCG's failed prophecies, specifically that Christ would return Sept. 18, 1975, Mr. Neff begged to differ.

"No one ever said Christ would return in 1975," said Mr. Neff.

"It was commonly believed that it

would be Trumpets in 1975 and that 3½ years earlier, in 1972, the church would go to Petra [which the church believed would be a prophesied 'place of safety'].

"This was never taught by Mr. Armstrong as a certainty to my knowledge. Rod Meredith preached strongly around 1970 that it was very unlikely."

Cutbacks and layoffs came during the 1970s, but some construction continued.

In 1974 a new student lounge and bathhouse adjacent to Booth City and a new classroom facility called the Science Lecture Hall were completed.

## Trading places

Mr. Armstrong recalled Mr. McCullough to Pasadena in 1973 after he had served as chief administrator in Big Sandy for eight years.

"Ron Dart and I exchanged jobs," Mr. McCullough said.

"He had been vice president of the international division of the work. That included everything outside the United States."

Mr. Dart served as deputy chancellor at Big Sandy from 1973 until 1976, when he returned to Pasadena and became director of the church-administration department (CAD) and was replaced in Big Sandy by long-time dean of students Ronald Kelly.

(Mr. Dart and his wife, Allie, nowadays live in Whitehouse, Texas, and operate Christian Educational Ministries, which sponsors Mr. Dart's syndicated *Born to Win* broadcast on radio in the United States and other countries.)

To Mr. Kelly fell the emotionally draining chore of announcing that the Big Sandy campus of Ambassador College would close and the property be put up for sale in 1977.

One hundred eleven students were Big Sandy graduates that year.

## Property reverts

Mr. Armstrong and his assistants named Guy Carnes, associate dean of students at Big Sandy, as property manager to oversee the crew of 25 employees who remained to maintain the facility that had shrunk to 1,600 acres.

The church property reverted to a See **RON DART**, page 23

## A Reconciliation of Exodus 23:14-16 with Leviticus 23

**E**xodus 23:14-16 lists three *chags* or *chagags* (Hebrew for "feast"):

- 1) Seven days of unleavened bread, Nisan 14-20: the days include the Passover on the 14th (Ex 12:18; Deut 16:4-5; Eze 45:21; Mat 26:17; Mark 14:1, 12; Luke 22:1, 7; Acts 12:3, 4), the feast (Lev 23:6; Ex 12:17, Num 28:17) on the 15th celebrating the exodus, and the waving of the firstfruits on the Sunday during the days of unleavened bread. Notes: "Times" in Ex 23:14 does not mean "seasons." Lev 23:6 in the Hebrew language does not state the feast begins on the 15th.
- 2) Feast of weeks/harvest/firstfruits, i.e. Pentecost, on the seventh Sunday after the days of unleavened bread.

3) Feast of tabernacles, Tishri 15-21.

Leviticus 23 lists *moeds* (Hebrew for "fixed time" or "appointment"): they are the three feasts above, and the weekly sabbath, and the annual sabbaths. The annual sabbaths are not feasts; otherwise there would be more than three feasts as listed in Exodus 23. But God commands only three. There is no scripture in the Hebrew/Greek that contradicts Exodus 23:14-16 and suggests more than three feasts. The annual sabbaths are Tishri 1, 10, and 22.

Conclusion: all *chags* are *moeds* but not all *moeds* are *chags*. The word "feasts" in Lev 23:1-4 is a mistranslation, should be "fixed times" as in the Tanakh, or "appointments."

—David Rydholm

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# Feast of Tabernacles is a blessing, and crickets are cricket

Continued from page 1

a day spent outside in God's glorious beauty. The weather was perfect, and it was a great day to reflect on the perfection of God's creation while the workers showed us the vegetables and fruits.

We also grubbed on some crickets, which was a really neat and crunchy experience.

Along with Queen Sirikit's project, we spent another day at the Wood Carving and Umbrella Center, where we got to witness skilled craftsmen (men and women) create beautiful furniture, umbrellas and artwork right before our eyes.

The Feast was a joyous occasion with many activities, but, although they were fun and exciting, that is not what made the Feast.

What made the Feast of Tabernacles was the oneness, love and excitement that buzzed in the room each day we all sat in church.

## Just the way God likes it

The Feast is about God's perfect plan, and we sat in church learning about God's future for us. We listened to inspiring music that told stories of God's love, we fellowshiped with each other, and we focused for eight days on God's Kingdom.

The Feast this year in Chiang Mai was enriching and inspiring and incredibly unified, just the way God likes it. *Lacey Hilgen, volunteer teacher.*

## WORK AND TRAIN HARDER

**GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colo.**—Around 100 brethren were blessed to keep God's Feast of Tabernacles at beautiful Glenwood Springs, sponsored by the Grand Junction Christian Church of God, down the road about 80 miles.

Brethren came from many states to attend and gather together with love and caring for all.

Messages were inspiring, including the offertory message given by minister Del Leger.

Ken Miles encouraged us to work harder in our training in his message, "Developing Your Ministry."

Rich Traver gave "What We Should Be Doing." Dave Chandron presented "The Coming World."

We also heard "Things Will Happen by Coy Cobert and "Where Is Here?" by Jim Adrianas.

We listened to moving messages such as "God Will Be Gracious Still" by Les Jenkins, "Repentance and the Second Exodus" by Jeff Maehr and "We Only Have One Enemy" by Gerald Steenport.

Elbert Keefauver instructed us in "The Jubilee Principle."

We had so much to bring home with us and mull over and study in the coming year.

Family Day was wonderful up on Iron Mountain, accessed by tramway. The senior luncheon and dinner-dance are always enjoyable: eating and visiting with old friends and new.

The free day allowed brethren to do whatever their hearts desired: traveling or sitting beside the pool visiting.

The trees turning color in the surrounding mountains were spectacular. We could only wish that it would last longer. *Colleen Ateberry, Hawkins, Texas.*

## Festival at Honey Creek

**MORAVIA, Iowa**—What a wonderful festival out in the sticks at Honey Creek Resort, just west of Ottumwa. We were about 50 miles southeast of Des Moines.

Most of the Feast was a little cool, with rain now and then.

Sermons were on education and growth mostly, and a little on the world tomorrow.

For most, the Feast of Tabernacles started Wednesday night, Oct. 8. We had a meet-and-greet dinner and group prayer and sukkah consecration.



**FEAST IN GLENWOOD SPRINGS AND CHIANG MAI**—Photo 1: Friends observe the Glenwood Springs Feast in Colorado. **From left:** Colleen Ateberry, Melody Bacher, Marita Corey, Sherry Merritt, Rose Stech and Tina Slater. Photos 2 through 4 are from the Chiang Mai, Thailand, site sponsored by Legacy Institute. **Photo 2:** Feastgoers in Thailand pose for the camera. **Photo 3:** Volunteers, workers and students attend the Feast in Thailand. **Photo 4:** Lacey Hilgen, a volunteer teacher at the school operated by Legacy Institute, eats a cricket. See another Feast photo on page 1 of this issue. [Photos courtesy Colleen Ateberry and Leon Sexton]



■ On Friday, Oct. 10, were services and then lunch at the pavilion. Later came a welcome Sabbath with Hebraic dancing.

■ On the Sabbath of Oct. 11 were services. Later we had a group dinner and dance.

■ On Sunday, Oct. 12, were seminars and lunch. Sunday night saw personal forums.

■ On Monday, Oct. 13, there were Bible studies, services and a scheduled cabin-loop dinner, moved indoors because of rain.

■ On Tuesday, Oct. 14, were seminars and lunch.

■ We had split services on Wednesday, Oct. 15, along with the blessing of the children and dinner. There were also seminars.

■ Thursday, Oct. 16, was the traditional Eighth Day. There were services and lunch.

■ There was also a Jerusalem-time Eighth Day service on Friday, Oct. 17, for believers in Jerusalem time.

One day, after breakfast, I got word that Sharon Ledy was sick and vomiting and passing out. I said we needed to pray for her.

At the morning service I asked Nate Rolling, the morning announcer, to pray for her. A moment later Sharon and Jeff Ledy appeared and Sharon was healed.

I must admit there were several seminars during the period. Some were by Jeff and Sharon Ledy and Dan and Margie White. Andy Laws gave the series on men conquering.

I was grateful for the Greyhound running with only three or four passengers between Columbia and Ottumwa.

I was also grateful for Jeff and Sharon picking me up at Ottumwa. *Larry Graff, House Springs, Mo.*

## FEAST IN THE MIDST OF WAR

**LAKE INDAWGYI REGION, Kachinland**—We and a few groups successfully celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day in our hometown without any difficulties.

But all the scattered church members from various areas could not come to participate in our Feast site because of the terrible fightings. Kachinland is still a war field.

On Oct. 27, 2014, I received the Aug. 31 issue of *THE JOURNAL*. I thank you so much that you kindly described the address of our Feast site in your Feast listings of 257 sites for 2014. We were all very much happy and glad to see our Feast site in that issue.

*THE JOURNAL* is one of the very important bridges for the Churches of God members from around the world. Through reading *THE JOURNAL* we have come to know about the mission activities from various countries.

Even though the children of God have many names, such as the Church of God, United Church of God, Living Church of God, Church of God a Worldwide Association and Continuing Church of God, we all have the same faith and belief, and we must be united in our hearts to accom-

plish the work of God very rapidly.

Church of God members faithfully pay tithes to God, but it is not enough for our new vast mission fields. Every month I usually need at least US\$20 for my gospel ministry.

In October two heavenly angels were seen flying over Myitkyina, the capital town of Kachinland. Some

Kachin people caught the picture of flying angels on their phone cameras. I myself have seen the flying angels on the phone screen. Amazing!

We remain hopeful and thankful. *Pastor Lazum Brang, gospel minister and frontier evangelist, P.O. Na Mawn-01114, Lake Indawgyi Region, Kachinland, Via Myanmar (Burma).*

## Ron Dart, Les McCullough switched jobs

Continued from page 22

site for only a local congregation and a venue for the Feast of Tabernacles.

Two more Feasts of Tabernacles took place at Big Sandy, then church leaders decided Big Sandy would not serve as a Feast site in 1979.

That was also the year that officials from the State of California abruptly visited the Pasadena property in a move that resulted in the headquarters property of the church falling into a court-ordered receivership.

Although Big Sandy was not an official Feast site in 1979, about 75 people observed the fall festival on the former campus to ensure security and keep necessary systems running at the mothballed facility and provide a Feast for some elderly church members who could not travel.

Jim Lee, a WCG elder and employee who worked out of the local church office, coordinated the tiny site while most of the Big Sandy congregation transferred to Biloxi, Miss., for the Feast.

## Back in Big Sandy

In 1980 the Feast was back in Big Sandy, and the WCG continued sponsoring a festival observance here until the late 1990s.

The loss of more than 600 college students as well as most of the staff and instructors decreased the local mem-

bership, but the congregation continued.

Church officials—and local real-estate brokers—aggressively tried to sell the Texas property.

In anticipation of losing the facility, many church members in the Big Sandy area were assigned to the nearby WCG congregation in Tyler pastored by Don Ward, who had served in Big Sandy and Pasadena as dean of faculty and in Pasadena briefly as president.

Selmer Hegvold served as pastor in Big Sandy at that time and was assisted by former Imperial Schools principal Norvel Pyle.

## Still using the property

Although the college was to remain closed until 1981, the church continued to sponsor church and community activities on the property.

The facility was the site of training for church ministers and youth programs including talent contests, local and national track meets, basketball tournaments, volleyball tournaments and cheerleading competitions.

The Big Sandy and outlying congregations also made use of the church property for adult sports events such as basketball, volleyball and softball tournaments.

**TO BE CONTINUED**

## Living reports on HQ council meetings

Continued from page 1

advise the presiding evangelist, giving him input and insight on doctrines, practices, programs and functions of the church. Membership in the council is rotated every two or three years.

## Top down

Over the years Dr. Meredith has been a staunch supporter of a strong centralized, top-down church government as opposed to the presbyterian, congregational and locally autonomous church-governmental systems that have gained momentum in the Churches of God over the last few decades.

In 1995 Dr. Meredith participated in a series of commentaries in the independent (and now-nonexistent) *In Transition* Church of God newspaper in which he debated with antihierarchy advocate Norman Edwards over the issue of church government.

Besides discussing matters reported in the church's press release, Mr. Wakefield informed *THE JOURNAL* that the council of elders also issued a unanimous affirmation concerning the succession of the office of presiding evangelist of the Living Church of God.

After Dr. Meredith has completed his service, Mr. Wakefield said, Richard Ames of Charlotte is next in line to serve, followed by Gerald Weston of Mississauga, Ont., Canada.

Mr. Ames is a former presenter on the WCG's *World Tomorrow* telecast and current presenter in the LCG's *Tomorrow's World* telecast. He served as registrar at Ambassador College, Pasadena, 1988-90.

Mr. Weston is also an LCG TV presenter and an LCG youth director. The council, according to Mr. Wakefield, adjourned with members expressing enthusiasm for returning to their respective areas and continuing to do the work of God.

For more information about the LCG, write P.O. Box 3810, Charlotte, N.C. 28227, or call (704) 844-1970, or visit lcg.org.

For decades Dr. Meredith was a prominent minister in the WCG, spreading the church's message through booklets, magazine articles and evangelistic campaigns, even serving as director of the church's field ministry in the 1970s.

Many ministers and other members including Dr. Meredith objected, seceded from the church and formed several independent groups and multicongregational denominations.

Dr. Meredith founded the Global Church of God (GCG) in 1992 but was controversially fired in 1998 from his positions as chairman of its board and presiding evangelist.

He soon thereafter formed the LCG in December 1998, with as many as 80 percent of Global's membership following him.

(See "RCM Says No Takeover in Offing," *THE JOURNAL*, issue No. 19,

dated Aug. 31, 1998, and "Roderick C. Meredith and Global Church of God Part Because of Differences on Governance," issue No. 22, dated Nov. 30, 1998.)

## Succession of office

Dr. Meredith was one of the original evangelists of the Radio/Worldwide Church of God, ordained by the late Herbert Armstrong in December 1952.

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**Dexter Wakefield**