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Lester Roloff tried to raise money to buy AU campus

The following is an update of an article that appeared in issue No. 70 of THE JOURNAL, dated Nov. 30, 2002. This article is the fourth in a series.

By John Warren

BIG SANDY, Texas—In our last installment (in issue No. 168 of THE JOURNAL) we saw the Worldwide Church of God's property near Big Sandy mothballed. What had begun as a Feast of Tabernacles site and developed over the years to include Imperial grade and high schools, Ambassador College and many church departments was suddenly up for sale.



Lester Roloff

Herbert W. Armstrong, WCG and AC founder, had decided to sell the Texas property.

Mr. Armstrong decided in 1977 to close Big Sandy because of a drop in donations to the Worldwide Church of God from members of the church.

But his asking price for the property of \$10 million turned out to be more than potential buyers were willing to pay.

Two potential purchasers did show considerable interest in acquir-

ing the Texas property. Lester Roloff, a Baptist evangelist and radio preacher from Dawson, Texas, got busy and requested donations from his supporters to raise the needed funds.

Mr. Roloff's ministry operated a facility for troubled youths in Corpus Christi, Texas. His supporters could pledge to supply only \$2 million, so his attempt to purchase the facility failed.

Home for wayward girls

During his negotiations with the WCG to buy the property, he set up shop on campus and broadcast live over a network of radio stations an all-day solicitation of funds for what he referred to as a new home for wayward girls.

Mr. Roloff died near Houston on Nov. 2, 1982, when the Cessna Skywagon he was piloting crashed on his way to a meeting in Kansas.

Another man, F. William Menge of Virginia, also worked to find investors who would be willing to join in an effort to procure the property.

Some of those investors were reported to be evangelists James Robison (of the James Robison Evangelistic Association, later known as LIFE Outreach International), Pat Robertson, Kenneth

See **WCG HISTORY**, page 4



More Feast 2014

FEAST IN MARYLAND—Brethren from three Churches of God, including the host group First Century Church of God, meet in a Baltimore suburb for Feast 2014. For another version of this photo, with more of the brethren pictured and with their names listed, see page 12 of this issue of THE JOURNAL. For the corresponding Feast report, see the article beginning on this page. [Photo courtesy Beverlie Ramocan-Woodland]

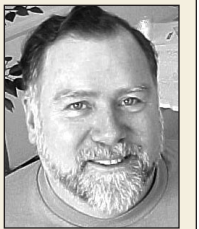
For the WCG, time marched on

BIG SANDY, Texas—John Warren's history series—about the Worldwide Church of God in East Texas—continues on page 1 of this issue with an account of the first time the WCG almost sold the Big Sandy property.

The church eventually did sell it, in 2000.

But it almost sold it in the early '80s. The campus went relatively unused from 1977 to 1981. During that time a parade of would-be purchasers traipsed through Big Sandy, much to the discomfort of local church members.

Mr. Warren's history includes the account of a nationally known Baptist evangelist broadcasting from campus over several radio stations, trying to attract enough donations to buy and open the property as a home for wayward girls.



John Warren

The United Church of God's flagship Good News magazine will get a new name in 2015

By Dixon Cartwright
For several reasons *The Good News*, published by the United Church of God an International Association, will have a new name beginning later this year.

Council-of-elders member Scott Ashley of Arvada, Colo., said that starting with either the July-August or September-October issue the publication will become *Beyond Today* magazine.

Dozens of other magazines

United News, the UCG-member newspaper, reported in its January 2015 issue that one reason for the change is the existence of "dozens" of other magazines that all have the words "Good News" as part of their title.

Many of those, said the report, stand "in opposition to the Church's biblical beliefs."

"By contrast," stated an article bylined "Media Staff," "there are no other religious magazines with trademarked names similar to *Beyond Today* (nor are there any other religious television shows with the name.)"

Further, stated the article, "*Beyond Today* is a name that's been building an audience for the Church in television and online for 9 years."

The Armstrongs' 'Good News'

In Church of God history, *Good News* and *The Good News* hark back to a publication begun by Herbert and Loma Armstrong and their fledgling Radio Church of God around 1930.

For much of the history of the Radio/Worldwide Church of God, *The Good News* (formerly *The Bulletin*) was a magazine tailored for baptized members of the church and their families.

A similar magazine, *The Plain Truth*, was designed specifically to spread the church's message to people who were not baptized members.

Aaron Booth suggestion

A UCG employee, Internet manager Aaron Booth, suggested *Beyond Today* for the church's television program in 2005. The 12-man council of elders approved the name that same year.

Before 2005 the church sponsored TV programs called *Good News TV* and *Tomorrow Television*.

Beginning in the fall of 2015, 10 years after Mr. Booth's suggestion, the same name will identify print, television and Internet media.

The UCG's manager for media and communications, Peter Eddington said the new name will help the church do more.

Increasing the reach

"By consolidating the simplifying of our media identity in this manner we expect to increase awareness of the benefits of God's way, the gospel message, and the Church—and increase the reach of the limited financial resources available to us," Mr. Eddington said.



Aaron Booth

Baltimore Feast teams up three sponsoring COGs

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

The report below from Beverlie Ramocan-Woodland is probably the last report of the 2014 Feast that will appear in THE JOURNAL. A few issues from now THE JOURNAL will begin running its official listing of 2015 Feast sites.

If you would like your or your church's or ministry's site to appear on the 2015 list, you're invited to send the appropriate information to THE JOURNAL at info@thejournal.org or P.O. Box 1020, Big Sandy, Texas 75755, U.S.A. Or fax it to 1-888-488-6603.

By Beverlie Ramocan-Woodland
LINTHICUM, Md.—First Century Church of God in partnership with the Church of God International and Feast-Keepers Church of God is pleased to report another wonderful Feast of Tabernacles in the Baltimore, Md., area.

In attendance in October 2014 were brethren from Jamaica; Canada; New Mexico; Queens and Yonkers, New York; Pennsylvania; Virginia; Washington, D.C.; and the areas of Maryland surrounding D.C.

The theme of the Feast was

"God's Plan for Humanity: The Millennium and Beyond."

On the first high holy day of the Feast we had 55 in attendance. During the Feast the numbers fluctuated between 48 and 57 and on the last holy day we had 62 in attendance.

We had a glorious time together in the Lord.

Brethren are still talking about the sermons that came forth at the Feast. The brethren testified of the knowledge and inspiration they received from the Word of God presented by the speakers, who included Pastor George Ramocan, Elder Louis Williams, Elder Mark Ellis, Elder John Carnegie and Deacon Hopeton Anderson.

Great inspirational music was provided by Elder Louis Williams and our new drummer, Bro. Mark Lawrence, who also blessed us with his amazing solo renditions throughout the Feast.

Musical-group renditions were also highlights of inspiration from the FOT Melodies; namely, Deaconess Beverlie Ramocan-Woodland, Deaconess Vadim Sealy, Sis. Medina Saunders, Sis. Juet Ramocan and Bro. Mark Lawrence.

We were also blessed with special musical items from Sis. Agatha Perry and Sis. Norma Saunders.

Brethren are still talking about the

See **FEASTERS REPORT**, page 12

UFO reported near Big Sandy in 1897

By Mac Overton

I've been reading a fascinating book, *Solving the 1897 Airship Mystery*, by Michael Busby (Pelican Publishing, Gretna, La.)

It represents six years of research by Mr. Busby into so-called airship sightings over Texas and much of the United States in 1897.

Some have heard of the purported "spaceship" that crashed in Aurora, Texas, 160 miles from Big Sandy northwest of Fort Worth, after which the sightings ended. That was reported in *The Dallas Morning News* and *The Dallas Times-Herald*.

The spot where it crashed allegedly emits high radioactivity to this day.

Photo by Klaus Rothe



Mac Overton

allowing the exhumation of bodies looking for the "alien."

The Dallas-newspaper account of April 19, 1897, said: "It sailed directly over the public square [of Aurora], and when it reached the north part of town collided with the tower of Judge Parker's windmill and went to pieces with a terrific explosion, scattering debris over several acres of ground, wrecking the windmill and water tank, and destroying the judge's flower garden."

What you may not know is that the airship was reportedly parked in a clearing near the railroad tracks between Big Sandy and Hawkins not

See **MYSTERIOUS**, page 5

WCG history: Ambassador College returns to East Texas

Continued from page 1

Copeland and Mr. Roloff.

Mr. Menge and his associates placed \$500,000 in escrow as earnest money for the property but lost that amount when they could not raise the reported \$8.5 million they had agreed to pay for the property.

Mr. Menge died in a suspicious accident while riding a tractor and mowing on his Forest, Va., farm near Lynchburg shortly after his investment venture failed.

Other potential buyers visited Big Sandy in those days, much to the consternation of local WCG members, who in the main were hoping the property would not sell.

Among the prospective buyers was another evangelist, Jim Bakker, husband of Tammy and founder of the PTL (Praise the Lord) television network.

Leon Walker to Big Sandy

In 1981, after three years of trying to sell the 1,600-acre property, Mr. Armstrong announced that Ambassador Texas would instead reopen as a two-year school (a junior college), rather than resume the former four-year format.

Mr. Armstrong transferred Leon Walker from Pasadena to Big Sandy to serve as the on-site administrator (called, in those days, deputy chancellor).

Mr. Walker, a 1960 graduate of the California campus of Ambassador College, was living in Pasadena at the time of the announcement to reopen and was employed as regional director of the Spanish department of church administration.

Mr. Walker, who had worked as a student employee in the Spanish department at Pasadena assisting Benjamin Rea, had signed on as a full-time employee when the Brickwood, England, campus of Ambassador College opened in 1960 and Mr. Armstrong appointed Dr. Rea as dean of faculty for the second Ambassador campus.

Originally from Shreveport, La., Mr. Walker had married Reba Roper of Wilmot, Ark., after their graduation and moved to England to continue assisting Dr. Rea and teach at the college.

When the Brickwood campus closed in 1974 Mr. Walker and his family transferred to Big Sandy, where he served as chairman of the theology department.

Mr. Walker served in Big Sandy until the Texas campus closed in 1977, at which time he and the Spanish department he directed moved back to church headquarters in Pasadena.

The Walkers have five children, all of whom were born in England.

Message to Mr. Walker

Concerning what had precipitated Mr. Armstrong's decision to reopen the campus at Big Sandy as an institution of higher learning, Mr. Walker, who in 2002 was back residing in Big Sandy, explained:

"We had the property here, and it did not sell. It was costing a lot to maintain, and it was not being utilized. Mr. Armstrong was not ready to reopen a four-year college. It was decided to open on a smaller scale."

This writer, who was one of about 30 employees who comprised the skeleton crew that maintained the deserted campus before it reopened, recalls the mothballed facility costing nearly \$1 million a year for utilities, upkeep, equipment and personnel.

The enrollment at Big Sandy had reached more than 600 students by the time of that first closing, in 1977, graduating 111 young men and women its last year.

The two-year college would open in 1981 with a student body of somewhat fewer than 200 students.

Ambassador is back

Eric Case, who now lives in Pritchett, just up the road from Big Sandy, was in the new freshman class in 1981.

Mr. Case, who had moved from Nucla, Colo., to the Texas campus, remembered AC's first year as a junior college.

"They transferred in 75 sophomores from Pasadena," he said. "There were 116 in the freshman class equally divided between male and female. Mark Mounts was the student-body president, Bruce Dague was the sophomore-class president, and Jerry Wilson was the freshman-class president.

"All of the leadership positions were held by sophomores who had been imported from Pasadena."

The students lived in eight small (24-student) dormitories and Booth City (small metal cabins that could accommodate hundreds of students).

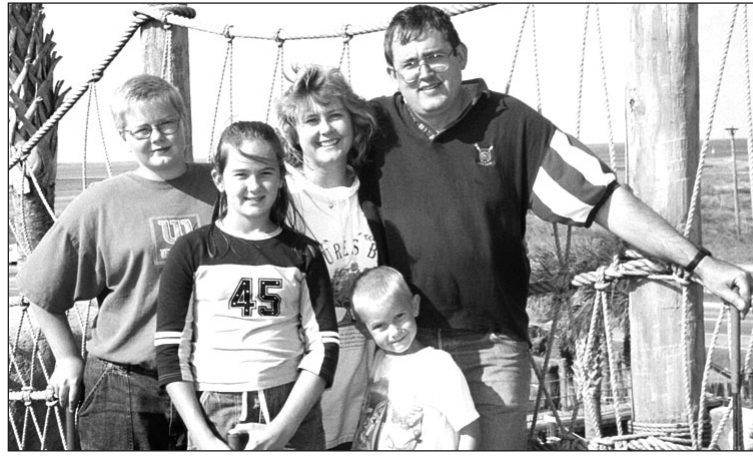
"I lived in Men's Dorm 4," remembered Mr. Case. "My roommates were Eugene Kubik, Stan Daniel and Jim Miller."

Mr. Case, who married Nancy Monson of Regina, Sask., Canada, who would be a 1985 graduate of the Big Sandy campus, said most of the college's "infrastructure" was still in place, since it had been closed for only four years.

"We were not there to rebuild the buildings or the landscape of the campus," he said. "We were pioneering in the sense that we needed to create an environment based on true values to set the stage for future classes. We saw it as our responsibility to help the college flourish as a God-centered institution."

Mr. Case, who at the time of this writing was working as a senior computer-support specialist for Marshall and Swift-Boeckh in Hawkins, Texas, was a full-time church and college employee for 12 years after his graduation in 1983.

Mr. Walker, who served one year



AMBASSADOR AS A JUNIOR COLLEGE—Eric Case (right) was a freshman in 1981, the year Ambassador College in Texas reopened as a two-year, or junior, college. Mr. Case relaxes here with his family during the Feast of Tabernacles in September 2002 in Corpus Christi, Texas. With Mr. Case and his wife, Nancy, are (from left) Michael, Cassie and Cody. For Mr. Case's remembrances, see John Warren's history installment beginning on page 1. [Photo by Stacy Monson]

Don Ward (along with Mr. Walker) was transferred to Pasadena, and Mr. McCullough returned to Big Sandy as deputy chancellor (Mr. Armstrong was chancellor).

Mr. McNair would remain in Big Sandy until 1988, when Ken Giese, a 1973 graduate of the Big Sandy campus, would begin serving as pastor.

WATS happening

In 1984 Mr. Armstrong decided to transfer part of the church's telephone-response operations from Pasadena to the rejuvenated campus.

Known as the WATS (wide-area telephone service) program, it included many volunteers in the Big Sandy congregation who donated their time to assist in fielding 20,000 to 30,000 calls each weekend that came in as a result of the church's California-based television broadcast.

Six WATS crews with a total staff of about 200 volunteers would answer a total of 4.5 million calls from March

Is "the work" over?

Some WCG leaders believed Mr. Armstrong—or perhaps the church under Mr. Armstrong's leadership—had fulfilled the commission of preaching the gospel to the world (Matthew 24:14). Now it was time to prepare the bride, the church, for Jesus' return.

Joseph Tkach, whom Mr. Armstrong had hand-picked only days before his death as his successor as WCG pastor general, became head of the church and chancellor of the colleges.

But we're getting ahead of the story. Let's go back to review some college history.

Kids on the floor

Dr. Ward became a familiar figure at Ambassador College—in Big Sandy but also Pasadena—for more than two decades beginning in 1969. The Mississippi native had come in contact with the Radio Church of God in 1961 when he heard Mr.

Armstrong's voice on radio. At that time Don Ward was a 24-year-old teacher at Winona High School in Winona, Miss.

In 1969 he and his wife, Wanda, and their two daughters left Cleveland, Miss., where he was a teacher and coach at Delta State University, and moved to Big Sandy for his enrollment as a freshman at Ambassador.

The Wards' first WCG church service (the Radio Church of God became the WCG in January 1968) was in Big Sandy. That event made a lasting impression on the new convert.

"The [Sabbath] service was fine," he said. "What left the biggest impression was all the quilts, blankets and toys with the kids on the floor."

The memory of children sleeping on blankets during Sabbath services would later inspire Dr. Ward to team up with Kermit Nelson and others at Big Sandy to pioneer a Sabbath-school program in 1975 for church children called Youth Educational Services (YES).

The YES program would later be instituted in the WCG around the world and would provide WCG children Bible classes to attend while their parents were listening to sermons and sermons.

"We had a ready pool of instructors [for YES] with former Imperial School teachers and Ambassador instructors," he said.

Dr. Ward, who entered Ambassador with a master's degree, began teaching at AC in the spring of 1970. In 1973 Mr. Armstrong appointed

him as assistant dean of faculty (assistant to Don Deakins), and in 1976 he began serving as dean of faculty.

Turbulent times

The next few years would prove to be turbulent times for the Wards.

In 1977 the college here closed and the students transferred to Pasadena. In 1978 Mr. Armstrong approved the appointment of Dr. Ward as executive vice president of Ambassador College at Pasadena.

"Garner Ted Armstrong, Wayne Cole, Ray Wright and Robert Kuhn had gone to Tucson to talk to Mr. Armstrong," Dr. Ward explained to *THE JOURNAL*. "He [the senior Mr. Armstrong] made the decision to appoint me and made a tape [that included that announcement] and sent it out. But during the Days of Unleavened Bread someone got to Mr. Armstrong, and he reversed the decision. There was a power struggle going on."

Ironically, he said, "one of the reasons I was brought out there [to Pasadena] was to get the college back on track."

"Back on track" was a phrase Mr. Armstrong frequently employed to mean back on the strait and narrow, back in the good graces of God, etc., whenever he perceived the church or college had veered from a godly doctrinal or administrative course.)

The accreditation debate

As many old-timers in the WCG recall, a debate periodically ensued over whether the college should become regionally accredited. Accreditation would bring certain real advantages to the college and to its graduates (including accredited bachelor's degrees). But it would mean the school would need to adhere to certain standards mandated by the accrediting association, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools of Atlanta, Ga.

Seeking accreditation for the Texas campus necessitated changes in the college and incurred some increased expenditures, especially in the library.

Some church elders and other members were not happy with the pursuit of accreditation, which they equated with going to the world for its approval. Others welcomed the prospect that Ambassador graduates would possess credentials from an institution of higher learning that could grant accredited degrees.

Dr. Ward recalled a meeting he attended in Pasadena.

"We were in a meeting to discuss the library needs," he said. "There was no place to build on the campus in Pasadena. Garner Ted commented that in Big Sandy we could toss a rock over our shoulder and build anywhere it landed. The others said, 'Ted, that is a great idea.'"

Dr. Ward said he was "the only one" in the meeting who was not in favor of reopening the Texas campus, even though "I was to be the president of Ambassador here in Big Sandy."

As reported in *The Worldwide News* of April 24, 1978, Dr. Ward was named president of the Big Sandy campus before its planned reopening in the fall of 1978. (The article did not say who named him president, but it was Garner Ted Armstrong.)

An article appeared on page 1 of the *WN*, "Newly Named President Reports on College Move."

Legend has it that when the elder Mr. Armstrong saw that headline and article (although the article carried no byline, it was written by *WN* staffer Dixon Cartwright, who is now publisher of *THE JOURNAL*), he angrily reversed the decision not only to cancel Dr. Ward's appointment as president but to reverse the decision to reopen the campus at Big Sandy.

See **FORMER AC**, page 5

The memory of children sleeping on blankets during Sabbath services would later inspire Dr. Ward and others to pioneer a WCG Sabbath-school program in 1975 for church children.

as Big Sandy's deputy chancellor, recalled the college's reopening.

"One thing I remember was the opening address when I introduced Mr. Armstrong," he said. "I had seen a slogan in Gladewater that said 'new beginnings.' So I used that in my first message to the students."

Mr. Walker remembered excitement in the air at the reopening ceremonies.

"Everybody was thrilled the property was being used again. Everything got off to a very good start."

Mr. Walker, who was an evangelist-ranked minister in the WCG, told *THE JOURNAL*, "I was still the regional director for the Spanish department, and that department remained in Pasadena [even though Mr. Walker resided at Big Sandy]. It was difficult wearing two hats."

Another college official was Don Ward, serving in Big Sandy as pastor of WCG congregations on the campus property and in nearby Tyler. Mr. Armstrong appointed Mr. (later Dr.) Ward as dean of faculty.

Also, Ron Kelly returned to his old Big Sandy job as dean of students, Lynn Torrance was again the registrar on campus, and Kermit Nelson returned as athletic director.

With the rebuilding of the staff and faculty and admission of almost 200 students, the local church congregation was growing again.

In 1982 Mr. Armstrong sent Burk McNair, younger brother of Marion McNair, the first Big Sandy pastor, to East Texas to replace Dr. Ward as pastor.

1984 until December 1992.

Frank Parsons, who resides in Big Sandy and until late 2014 pastored the WCG congregations in downtown Big Sandy and in Texarkana, Texas, was the manager of the WATS department.

Mr. Parsons, a graduate of Mississippi State in Clinton, Miss., had enrolled in Ambassador at Big Sandy in 1982 and after graduation moved to Pasadena to work for Richard Rice, director of the WATS department there. In January 1984 Mr. Parsons returned to Big Sandy to manage the Texas WATS operation.

"We employed as many as 400 students, with five full-time supervisors," Mr. Parsons told *THE JOURNAL*. "We also had 5,000 in-home operators who helped on weekends."

What does Mr. Parsons most remember about the WATS program?

"It was the teamwork. With all the Sabbath crews coming in, there was a lot of cooperation."

Mr. Parsons remembered the busiest weekend his department experienced.

"We had heard on television that Mr. Armstrong had died [on Jan. 16, 1986]. That weekend we had 80- to 82,000 calls that came in here, in Pasadena and to the in-home operators. That was the most we ever received."

Another new era

The WCG was shaken with the death of church founder Herbert Armstrong. The church and college wondered: What will happen now?

Former AC administrators reminisce about college and church

Continued from page 4

The next issue of *The Worldwide News*, dated May 8, 1978, assumed a decidedly different tenor. Mr. Armstrong had suddenly taken a personal interest in article selection and the newspaper's editing.

A front-page banner headline proclaimed "HWA Announces Administrative Changes." In that article, under his own byline, the elder Mr. Armstrong announced to the WCG membership that he was relieving his son, Garner Ted, of several important duties because his son had been forced to "wear 'too many hats.'"

A few weeks later Mr. Armstrong, in fact, ceased publication of *The Worldwide News*, reportedly because he believed it was too closely associated with his son. (Later Mr. Armstrong brought the *WV* back, with a mostly different staff and without its founding managing editor, John Robinson.)

In another front-page article under his byline, in the May 8 issue, Mr. Armstrong announced that he had "no choice but to defer, if not permanently cancel, transference of Ambassador College from Pasadena to Big Sandy."

He also announced in May 1978 plans to shut down the Pasadena campus as a college and that it would operate only as a school to train ministers.

Regarding the latter decision, Dr. Ward told *THE JOURNAL*: "They [the college in Pasadena] instituted a certificate program [for ministerial trainees] that was short-lived. After the receivership [imposed by the State of California] in January 1979, Mr. Armstrong brought in Raymond McNair and started up the college again. But actually the college [in Pasadena] was never closed."

The Texas campus did not reopen in 1978 (although it would reopen in 1981). Mr. Armstrong transferred Dr. Ward to the field ministry in 1978, with the Mississippi native becoming the new pastor of the Tyler, Texas, congregation.

A few months later, in 1979, Dr. Ward also assumed the pastorate of the congregation on the former college campus at Big Sandy.

GTA disfellowshipped

As a benchmark decision during a painful period of church and college history, Mr. Armstrong disfellowshipped his own son, Garner Ted, in 1978 in a move that led to turmoil and a decrease in income from tithes and offerings that seriously affected church and college operations.

The younger Mr. Armstrong and his immediate family moved to Texas, where he founded the Church of God International, based in Tyler.

In spite of that period of even greater unrest than usual, which included Herbert Armstrong's second marriage to a much-younger woman, the State of California's action against church headquarters that led to a court-ordered receivership, and Mr. Armstrong's heart attack, the church survived, and so would the college.

When Mr. Armstrong decided to reopen the campus here in 1981, Dr. Ward served once again, until 1982, as dean of faculty, concurrent with his duties as church pastor.

Mr. Mac is back

In 1982 Leslie McCullough returned as deputy chancellor to Big Sandy, where he served until his replacement by Roderick Meredith in 1986.

During Mr. McCullough's second tenure as chief college administrator at Big Sandy, church and college founder Herbert Armstrong suffered poor health, even though he had recovered from a heart attack in 1977.

In a letter to church "coworkers" dated Jan. 10, 1986, Mr. Armstrong, by then in a profoundly weak physical condition, announced to the church membership that he had appointed Joseph Tkach to the new office of deputy pastor general, and upon his death Mr. Tkach would become pastor general.

Before his death six days after writing that letter, Mr. Armstrong announced that Ambassador College in Big Sandy would close after his death.

But after Mr. Armstrong's demise Mr. Tkach, as pastor general and college chancellor, reversed some of Mr. Armstrong's decisions, announcing that the colleges in California—and Texas—would continue operation.

In 1987 Mr. Tkach named Dr. Ward vice chancellor for the Pasadena campus.

Renewed quest

Mr. Tkach renewed the quest for regional accreditation, which proved to be a daunting task for both campuses.

"In 1987 through 1989," Dr. Ward recalled, "our plan was to accredit both colleges, but it became apparent that that would be too expensive. Mr. Tkach came up with a plan to move the whole headquarters and college here [to Big Sandy], you might say to build a city."

The church hired an architect to plan offices, residences and class-

rooms on the Texas grounds.

But then Mr. Tkach, said Dr. Ward, "changed his mind and [decided that] only the college would move here."

One and only

Mr. Tkach changed Dr. Ward's



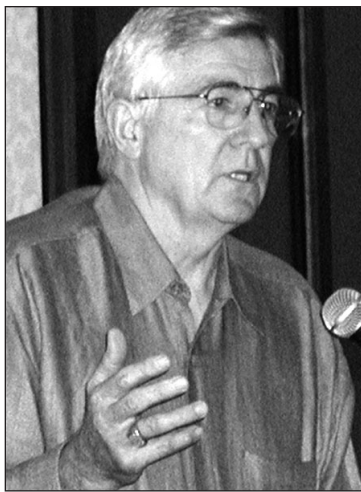
Lester Roloff

title from vice chancellor to president, replacing Dick Thompson, who had served as campus leader with the title "acting provost." (Mr. Thompson had earlier replaced Dr. Meredith as ranking campus officer.)

Dr. Meredith returned to Pasadena, where he remained until he resigned from the WCG and founded the Global Church of God in 1993.

Dr. Ward was appointed as president in 1989 of both campuses of Ambassador College. Pasadena remained as church headquarters but was never again, after the 1989-90 school year, to be the site of an Ambassador campus.

The closing of AC Pasadena was announced as a "consolidation" of the two campuses, because the students in Pasadena were invited to



BIG SANDY ADMINISTRATORS—Two former resident administrators of Ambassador College or Ambassador University attend the United Church of God's general conference of elders in Cincinnati, Ohio, in May 2002. **Left:** Don Ward, who lives in Big Sandy, served as deputy chancellor and president of Ambassador College and Ambassador University in Big Sandy and Pasadena. Dr. Ward is pastor of the UCG congregation that meets in Big Sandy. **Right:** Leon Walker, the UCG's director of Spanish operations and a Church of God a Worldwide Association (CGWA) elder, served as an early deputy chancellor of Ambassador Big Sandy. [Photos by Victor Kubik]

transfer to Big Sandy, and most did. The consolidation officially took place Dec. 14, 1989, during a student assembly.

Mr. Tkach told a stunned audience of students and headquarters employees on that day:

"We are at a crossroads because of the legal requirements governing higher education in the states of California and Texas. The church could not support the demands of accreditation for both campuses."

Crash program

Dr. Ward remembered the Hercu-



leus campus operations]. We had between \$7 million and \$8 million in that fund."

Why only one Ambassador?

Dr. Ward remembered the advantages of consolidation: economic efficiency, a pooling of the faculties and a hoped-for "doing away with the us-vs.-them mentality between campuses."

Accreditation was on the administration's mind because of recent changes in Texas law that meant the college would not be able to grant degrees if it were not to become regionally accredited.

"We had to become accredited or become [only] a Bible school," he said, and "it would not have been good to have Big Sandy accredited and not Pasadena. We did not have the degrees [mainly Ph.D.s] needed to receive accreditation for both campuses."

Dr. Ward fondly recalled the commitment of the employees to help the college gain accreditation.

"I remember the dedication of the staff in getting all the buildings completed. They gave it their all, and they did it."

At a special Sabbath service to commemorate the successful consolidation on what was called a "celebration Sabbath" on Sept. 15, 1990, Dr. Ward said what had been accomplished was "a heartwarming example of dedication." He thanked the Big Sandy congregation for its "sacrifice, loyalty and patience."

Sometime during the accreditation process, the college had decided to become a university. So upon accreditation Ambassador University was born.

Church effect

In anticipation of the autumn influx of students, faculty members and church employees, the church administration in Pasadena decided to reconfigure the Big Sandy congregation.

Even before consolidation, the Field House had been pushed to its limits for Sabbath services. In the spring of 1990 the congregation that saw 13 people observe the first East Texas Passover in 1951 in nearby Gladewater filled the Field House with 1,589 members who participated in that annual spring observance.

And Passover was only for baptized members. Sabbath services on occasion could swell to 2,500 people sitting in folding chairs in front of the stage in the Field House auditorium.

The reconfiguration came during the summer of 1990 when Ken Giese, church pastor, assisted by local-church secretary Colleen Bailey, engineered the dividing of the WCG's single largest congregation of (officially) 1,300 into morning and afternoon churches.

Mr. Giese would stay in Big Sandy to pastor the P.M. congregation, and Randal Dick transferred to Big Sandy in July 1990 to oversee the A.M. churchgoers.

More transfers

After several months Mr. Tkach transferred Mr. Dick to Pasadena to serve in church administration in June 1991 and transferred Dave Havir, a 1974 graduate of AC Big Sandy, from Lexington, Ky., to Texas to become the second pastor of Big Sandy A.M.

As Ambassador University grew, the two Big Sandy congregations maintained an average weekly attendance of about 1,200.

Once again Big Sandy had become a hub of church activity. Ambassador was still on the grow, and many church departments located or relocated here from California.

A university abuzz

The university was again abuzz with classes, lectures, banquets, dances, club meetings, concerts and sports events.

The local congregations were also the hub of activities for youths, the elderly, sporting events and annual feast-day observances.

The 1990 Feast of Tabernacles would see 6,000 church members in attendance on the transformed church-and-college grounds.

TO BE CONTINUED

Mysterious airships seen in Calif., Mich., La., Texas

Continued from page 1
long before the crash in Aurora.

Chapter 6 of the book, titled "Friday, April 16, 1897," mentions Hawkins and the "Hawkins Tank" (this was the age of steam engines) many times.

The author writes that two things the railroads had in those days were water tanks and telegraph lines. Telegraphs needed electricity, and with electricity you can generate hydrogen from water, needed for lighter-than-air craft.

The back cover of the book says that "six years before the Wright brothers' successful flight and more than 50 years before the term 'UFO' was invented, eyewitnesses from California to Michigan to Louisiana reported seeing mysterious craft sailing through the sky."

"Newspapers across the country chronicled these sightings, like the account of the spectacular crash in Aurora, Texas . . . Theories abounded, but the facts have eluded historians."

Mr. Busby's research led him to believe that a "secretive group of inventive men" created the hundreds of sighted airships.

The book is a fascinating read, especially if you like solving old mysteries.

