

# The Journal

## News of the Churches of God

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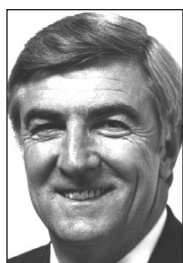
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- 1 Tom Geiger updates *THE JOURNAL* 10 years after the Milwaukee massacre
- 1 12-year-old eyewitness to massacre sees his cousin and best friend die
- 1 John Warren's history continues in this issue with events of 1994-95
- 1 An organizer of the Pasadena reunion, Bob Geringer, tells how it went

## Upheaval was a big part of WCG history in East Texas

**By John Warren**  
BIG SANDY, Texas—The previous article about Worldwide Church of God history as it related to the church and college at Big Sandy (see the Jan. 31, 2015, issue of *THE JOURNAL*) covered the years leading up to Ambassador College officially becoming Ambassador University.



Don Ward

Don Ward of Big Sandy, who was university president in the mid-1990s and the school's penultimate president, related how the students and faculty members from the Pasadena, Calif., campus were consolidated into one campus in East Texas.

In this issue *THE JOURNAL* continues with Dr. Ward's recollections and talks with other people who were intimately involved with the university and the local WCG congregations (which met for Sabbath services on campus).

The previous installment of this history noted that WCG administration in Pasadena had directed that the Big Sandy church separate into two congregations in July 1990 when Randall Dick came to Big Sandy as pastor of the A.M. congregation.

Church administration in Pasadena, directed by Joseph Tkach Jr., had appointed Ken Giese as pastor of the Big Sandy congregation in 1988 and, upon

the departure of Mr. Dick in 1991, designated Mr. Giese as pastor of Big Sandy P.M. and appointed Dave Havir as pastor of the A.M. church.

As part of a building project to help with the consolidation of the college, campus crews and outside contractors constructed two new residences on Faculty Row to house the two pastors and their families.

New construction for the college also included an administration building, five more dormitories, an office complex, a lecture hall and a chiller plant (for air conditioning).

The chiller plant and accompanying utility corridor (an underground network of tunnels full of wires and ductwork) provided heated and refrigerated air to the new buildings on the main campus. The construction project came with a \$20 million price tag.

### After accreditation

When Ambassador finally achieved regional accreditation in 1994 (from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Atlanta, Ga.), it seemed the financial and other crises that had hounded the institution throughout its history might be relics of the past. Students could now apply for government loans and grants. Students could also more easily transfer their class credits and degrees to other colleges.

"Candidacy and full accreditation was a highlight," Dr. Ward told *THE JOURNAL*. "We had students go on and get master's and doctorate degrees. They are doing well now, and Amba-

See **SPORTS**, page 6



*It's already been 10 years*

**MILWAUKEE MEMORIAL**—Four young residents of the Milwaukee suburb of New Berlin, Wis., place tokens of remembrance March 12, 2005, at the makeshift memorial in a snowbank at the Sheraton hotel in Brookfield, Wis., for the victims of the shooting earlier that day. Eight members of the Living Church of God, including the gunman, died. See two articles beginning on this page related to the tragedy in Brookfield. [Photo by Jeffrey Phelps, reprinted by permission from *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, © 2005 *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*]

## Big Sandy's upheaval is focus of history

**T**HE *JOURNAL* in this issue continues John Warren's history of the Worldwide Church of God and Ambassador College in East Texas by focusing on the traumatic events of 1994 and 1995.



John Warren

On the Sabbath of Dec. 24, 1994, Joseph Tkach Sr. delivered his historic sermon to the Big Sandy brethren assembled on the Ambassador University campus.

In that address Pastor General Tkach revealed in some detail the WCG's intention to change fundamental doctrines of the church founded by Herbert W. Armstrong.

## How are the survivors and others affected by the Milwaukee shooting doing 10 years later?

The writer is publisher of *THE JOURNAL: NEWS OF THE CHURCHES OF GOD*.

**By Dixon Cartwright**

**B**IG SANDY, Texas—It doesn't seem like it's been 10 years since a Church of God member gunned down several members of a congregation during a Sabbath service in Wisconsin.

Tragedy struck the Sabbath of March 12, 2005, in a suburb of Milwaukee when Living Church of God member Terry Ratzmann, 44, began shooting.

It took only about 60 seconds for him to shoot a dozen people, fatally wounding eight, including himself.

I arrived in Milwaukee on March 17 of that year just in time to rent a car

and motel room and attend the LCG's press conference led by an LCG spokesman, John Ogwyn of Kilgore, Texas. (Mr. Ogwyn died at home in Texas of natural causes a month after the shooting.)

During my stay in the area I attended the press conference, three funerals for five people (including Mr. Ratzmann) and the first Milwaukee-area LCG Sabbath service after the shooting.

I also interviewed members of the family of Bart Oliver, who at 15 was the youngest person killed on that tragic Sabbath day.

### A decade later

I spoke by phone with Tom Geiger, on March 22, 2015, and asked him how people with connections to the LCG in his area were faring after a decade.

Mr. Geiger, now 66, was one of my main sources 10 years ago when I reported on the circumstances and events centered on the tragedy.

"There has been some recovery," Mr.

Geiger said a few days ago. "I believe that a few who were really deeply troubled have finally come out of seclusion and the dark place they were in."

"I probably shouldn't mention names, but there are some that have somehow put it behind them and just moved on."

"I'm not sure how that's done. Most of us carry baggage, some vestige at least of what was there. There's fallout that we still have to deal with in the wake of what happened."

### Mr. Geiger wrote a book

Mr. Geiger, who was then and still is an LCG member, wrote and published a book about the events of that day and the aftermath called *Martyrdom in Milwaukee: A Treatise on the Brookfield, Wisconsin, Shooting*.

Still, he said he's "no expert in all this."

"Yes, I'm still a Living Church of God member," he said. "In fact, I was just in Charlotte [N.C., home base for the LCG] and came back late last

See **CHURCH MEMBERS**, page 4

## Hundreds meet and greet at Pasadena AC reunion

**By Dixon Cartwright**

**A**mbassador College students from the school's "first 30 years"—1947 to 1977—met for a reunion in Pasadena, Calif., Feb. 27 through March 2, 1915.

This writer for *THE JOURNAL* spoke with one of the organizers, Bob Geringer of Altadena, Calif., a few days later, on March 10, and asked him how it went.

"Everyone seemed to enjoy it immensely," Mr. Geringer said by phone, "and the many comments since the reunion ended have certainly confirmed that impression."

Hugs, tears and laughter abounded as classmates caught up on 40 or 50 years of missing stories from each other's lives, he said. Some of the comments posted after the reunion on the reunion website:

■ "Atmosphere of acceptance, warmth and friendliness were astounding."

■ "I did not hear one negative comment."

■ Wayne Cole's words were positive and healing."

■ "Appreciation for everyone showing kindness and respect for each other and the journeys we have made."

■ "It was so wonderful to see so many lay aside their differences

and come together."

■ "We are still savoring the wonderful experience of the AC reunion."

One way to accentuate the positive was to ensure that the reunion stayed "nonreligious," Mr. Geringer said.

### No overtones

Some, he said, had asked if the reunion would have "religious overtones."

No, he replied. It was to be a reunion of friends. A smaller reunion in 2013 in Las Vegas went well, even though it included a mix of people who were still a part of a number of Church of God groups or mainstream Christianity or were nonreligious."

Therefore the organizers of the 2015 gathering figured it was possible to have a similar happy time.

"We all had a wonderful time there, and religion was not at all an issue of contention."

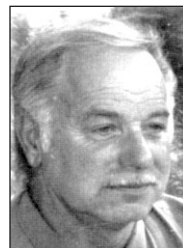
Mr. Geringer noted that "Bill Damm, former swimming instructor at AC Pasadena, recommended avoiding divisive theological topics because, he noted, religion is what brought us all together. But it is also one of the factors that has separated us and kept us apart."

*THE JOURNAL* wondered if talk

See **PASADENA**, page 22



Bob and Connie Geringer



Tom Geiger

## 12-year-old eyewitness described mass murder

The following is an essay Robert Geiger wrote for an English assignment at school two months after the shooting during a Sabbath service on March 12, 2005, in a suburb of Milwaukee, Wis. It is an account of the last two days Robert, then 12 years old, spent with his cousin and best friend, Bart Oliver, 15. See the lead article about the Sabbath-service shooting of 2005 beginning elsewhere on this page of *THE JOURNAL*.

**By Robert Geiger**

**S**ULLIVAN, Wis.—Three . . . 2 . . . 1 . . . I counted down before the bell rang. *Beep!* When the bell rang I grabbed my binder and

zoomed out the door because I was so happy that I was going to my cousin Bart's house.

I love going there because I have so much fun riding around on the city buses with my favorite cousin.

Bart lives in a city called Waukesha, and he really knows his way around.

When I got home I jumped into the car and my mom drove me to Bart's house.

When I got there Bart was waiting at the door. I dived out the car door and then I grabbed my bag and cruised inside. We ran upstairs and got unpacked.

Then I grabbed my money and we

walked two miles to a George Webb's, where we had chicken strips and fries.

### Funny pictures

After we were done eating we went to Kmart and I bought Bart the Gwen Stefani CD. After Bart got through checkout we went to have our pictures taken. They were really funny.

After our pictures were taken we went to Pick 'n Save and bought cookies, soda and a ton of candy. Then we took the bus back to Bart's house.

I was all hyper because it was my

See **12-YEAR-OLD**, page 5

# Sports were a big part of AC-WCG history in East Texas

Continued from page 1  
sador was a springboard.”

During the decade of the 1980s Ambassador had grown in enrollment, and, with an annual subsidy from church headquarters in Pasadena of \$20 million to \$21 million, the financial picture looked pretty bright.

Joseph Tkach Sr., WCG pastor general, had steadied the church after the death of church and college founder Herbert Armstrong in 1986 and seemed to have both institutions poised for growth. Ambassador's enrollment was around 1,200 students.

## Besides academics

Although Dr. Ward is proud of the academic programs Ambassador offered, he says the institution offered more than just academics.

“We were building the curriculum, our outreach was improving, and our involvement in the local communities was growing,” he said. “The intercollegiate [sports] program also brought us a lot of attention, especially track, including cross-country, basketball and volleyball.”

Dave Goethals and Laura Radtke, both employees of the athletic department, coached the track teams.

Mr. Goethals also coached the men's basketball team during the 1990s, and the female netters were coached by Andy Burnett, who also worked in the athletic department.

Rick Sherrod, who was also the chairman of the history department, coached the cross-country team. Long-time coach and physical-education instructor Larry Haworth coached the volleyball team.

Ambassador had a long history of athletic activity that included an intramural program in which student, faculty and staff teams competed in softball, volleyball, flag football, tennis and basketball.

In the early years of Ambassador, at least at Big Sandy, the college played host to an annual activity called Field Day during which each class competed against the others in running and field events.

## Building the program

From the earliest days of Ambassador, physical education played a major role in college life. That role expanded during the 1970s (the Big Sandy campus had begun operation in 1964).

In 1973 Alvin Hicks and Paul Alexander, both coaches at Big Sandy, organized a team that participated in marathons (footraces of 26 miles 385 yards) at Albuquerque, N.M., St. Louis, Mo., and Big Sandy.

Some of the marathoners on that first traveling team were Mike Pettit, Wayne Janes, David Sutton, Ron Berlin, Dave Link, Don Smith, Terry Kennebeck, Jim Todd and this writer.

That team transitioned into a cross-country team that competed in NLCAA (National Little College Athletic Association) competition in 1976.

Ambassador won the national meet led by Mr. Berlin, who had entered Ambassador in 1973.

Other team members were Skeets Mez, Wiley Greene, Louis De Vlugt, Mike Kennebeck, Jim Todd, Petros Manzingara and Terry Kennebeck.

Mr. Berlin, who died in 2009, informed *THE JOURNAL* in 2003: “We went



**24-HOUR RELAY**—Above photo: The 1974 Ambassador College women's cross-country team poses with coach Paul Alexander. **Front row, from left:** Darlene Ussery, Rose Willhoite, Evelyn Wilson and Karon Martz. **Back row:** Dorothea Strnad, Barb Pawlowski, Elaine McMillan and Malvina Kardos. (The former Darlene Ussery is the present Darlene Warren, wife of the writer of the history article on this page.) **Above-right photo:** This is a plaque awarded to John Warren in 1975 for his team's Texas record (261 miles) in the 24-hour relay. [Photos courtesy Darlene Warren and John Warren]

to West Baden, Ind., to run the meet in October 1976 on the campus of Northwood College. It was a four-mile course.”

In the 1970s the college also fielded intercollegiate teams in flag football, track and volleyball.

## 24-hour anomaly

An anomaly of the college at Big Sandy was an athletic event known as a 24-hour relay. For four years running (so to speak), Ambassador played host to a day-long relay race each spring beginning after sundown on a Saturday night and ending on Sunday exactly 24 hours later.

In 1974, the first year of the relay, three teams competed in the event: two from Ambassador (one men's and one women's) and one from Imperial High School (a WCG-sponsored secondary school on the Ambassador campus).

Al Hicks coached the 10-man college team, Paul Alexander coached the eight-woman college team, and Charles Black (who died in 2012) ran with and coached the Imperial School team, which included athletes of both sexes.

Mr. Berlin, who ran all four years of

ambassador's accreditation in 1994, intercollegiate sports took the spotlight, and events such as Field Day, the marathon and the 24-hour relay passed into history.

The college increased its intercollegiate track, cross-country, basketball and volleyball programs and added a men's soccer team.

Ambassador would go through other major cultural shifts during the 1980s and especially beginning in the decade of the '90s.

## A secretary's view

*THE JOURNAL* now looks at some church and college history through the eyes of a lady who spent many years on the Big Sandy campus.

Linda Isom of Clinton, Ark., came to Ambassador as a 19-year-old freshman in 1967 and was to have a long history with the college and church, first as a student and later, for a total of 11 years, as a college and church employee, including almost a year in Pasadena in the late '70s.

In December 1970, during her senior year at Ambassador in Big Sandy, she married Dixon Cartwright, a 1969 Big Sandy graduate and college printing-

department employee.

The Cartwrights still live in Big Sandy. Their son, Trey, and his family live in Nacogdoches, Texas, and their daughter, Jamie, and her husband live in Tyler, Texas.

As an AC student at Big Sandy Miss Isom worked in the printing department under the supervision of Ellis Stewart in the bindery and prepress areas and later as the department's secretary.

Later, in 1975, she worked part time for the church's member newspaper, *The Worldwide News* (at that time based in Big Sandy). She became a full-time college employee in 1976.

“I became the executive secretary for [chief campus administrator] Ron Kelly and [dean of faculty] Don Ward,” she said. “Both of their secretaries were leaving, and they replaced them with me.”

Mr. Kelly replaced Ronald Dart as chief administrator of the college in 1976.

Mrs. Cartwright served her first term as executive secretary from 1976 until the campus closed in 1977, when she transferred to Pasadena and continued to serve as Mr. Kelly's secretary in his new capacity as executive vice president of student affairs.

## On campus again

In 1978 the Cartwrights (Mr. Cartwright, until 1978, was an employee of *The Worldwide News*) returned to Big Sandy and started a family business.

When Ambassador reopened in Big Sandy in 1981 the college offered Mrs. Cartwright employment again.

“I had a year-old baby in 1981 so I told them no,” she said. “But I went back nine years later, in 1990, and worked in the personnel department, and during a general layoff of several employees



because of budget cuts I was transferred to the student-financial-aid department.

“During the time I worked in student financial aid the college became eligible for federal financial aid for students, which took an enormous amount of preparation and training.”

In 1994 Dr. Ward asked Mrs. Cartwright if she would be willing to transfer from student financial aid to the executive office.

“I started as the president's executive secretary in the fall of 1994,” she said. “It was kind of interesting that back in 1976 and 1977 we were working on accreditation. Twelve years later, when I went back to work in 1990 in personnel, the pursuit of accreditation was back on.”

“The year I became executive secretary again [1994], the process was just completed and the university was finally accredited.”

Mrs. Cartwright said one of the things she liked best about her job as the president's secretary was working with all the departments of the college.

“I did that in personnel as well,” she said. “It was a small campus so I got to know everyone.”

An event that came as a surprise to Mrs. Cartwright and others on campus, she said, was the day Bo Pilgrim—a businessman from the town of Pittsburg, 40 miles north of Big Sandy, and founder and CEO of Pilgrim's Pride, a regionally famous purveyor of chickens and eggs—addressed the students during one of the campus's weekly assemblies.

“No one expected it,” she said, “but at the end of his talk he announced that he was donating \$100,000 to Ambassador.”

## Doctrinal changes

As people familiar with WCG history are aware, major doctrinal changes shook the WCG to its foundations in the early and mid-1990s. The changes in the church's official statement of beliefs

had a tremendous impact on the church and university. Some people were more directly affected than others.

President Ward—one of the many who were distressed about the changes—was one of those most directly involved.

“Talks of doctrinal change started in 1987,” he said. “I was in a constant memo war with those in Pasadena. It was a constant battle to maintain the doctrinal integrity of the college. In the early 1990s, especially in '93, I wrote lengthy [private] rebuttals to the new doctrinal teachings.”

Dr. Ward reminisces about a “constant drift” of church doctrines and “a line being drawn in the sand.” On the traditionalist side were Dr. Ward and many others. Pushing for radical doctrinal change were the church's pastor general, Joseph Tkach Sr., Mr. Tkach's son, Joseph Jr., and others including faculty members and theologians Mike Feazell and Kyriacos Stavrinides in Pasadena.

“In 1993 Dr. Stavrinides' Trinity paper came out and was endorsed by Mr. Tkach,” said Dr. Ward. “The [church's] doctrinal committee [in Pasadena] was dissolved that same year.”

Dr. Ward says he remembers “a battle going on to recapture true values. Leon Walker [a theology-faculty member and WCG elder] and I were the two at the college that were members of the doctrinal committee. Meetings became very secretive and then ended altogether.”

Dr. Ward knew his days were numbered when Pastor General Tkach came to Big Sandy to speak to the local brethren, college students and employees in church services on the Sabbath of Dec. 24, 1994.

“His so-called New Covenant sermon

basically said the law [of God] is done away with,” said Dr. Ward. “After [the WCG implemented] the so-called New Covenant teaching, I had a number of face-to-face meetings with Joe Tkach.”

Dr. Ward's meetings with Mr. Tkach did not go well, remembers the former Ambassador president.

## Feeling the pressure

Mrs. Cartwright says that, on the job in the executive office, she also felt the pressure of the doctrinal changes.

“After the December sermon when Mr. Tkach was here and talked about the changes, things started to build up on campus,” she said. “People were wondering what changes would be made at the college.”

“That was in 1995, when there was so much turmoil in the church with doctrinal changes and concern about what the college would do in light of the changes. I had to ask myself as one who disagreed with most of the changes: Should I be quiet and not let my feelings be known, or should I stand up for what I think is right?”

“That was not a good time. The doctrinal changes were a major issue.

“Our office was not given any concrete guidelines [from church headquarters] as to what would be required of students doctrinally in the coming fall 1995 semester. Students and parents were asking us because they naturally wanted to know the situation before committing to attendance at AC in the fall.

“We requested information, but I don't remember that they [members of the new order in Pasadena] ever got back to us before I was fired.”

(Read more about Mrs. Cartwright's termination later in this article.)

## Two pastors

As mentioned earlier in this article, beginning in 1990 two pastors were serving the two Big Sandy congregations.

Ken Giese, originally from Lake Crystal, Minn., had graduated from Ambassador Big Sandy in 1973 and married the former Kathy Prunty the same year. He had already pastored several WCG congregations, in Atlanta, Ga., Minneapolis, Minn., Richmond, Va., and Houston, Texas, before transferring to Big Sandy in the summer of 1988.

“It was an honor to be asked to pastor the congregation in Big Sandy,” he said, “and return to my alma mater to serve.”

One of Mr. Giese's challenges, he said, involved the “restructuring of service opportunities” in the Big Sandy congregation to encourage the brethren's participation in local service and activities.

“It was exciting to see the talents and skills of the brethren blossom as they undertook major projects and activities with zest and enthusiasm.”

Mr. Giese fondly remembered encouraging the WCG brethren to become more involved with “the community of Big Sandy,” which included the local public-school system.

The Big Sandy population “may not have agreed with our doctrines,” he said, “but we came to be accepted and respected as part of the community.”

The Gieses raised three sons during their years in Big Sandy, with much of that experience taking place in the Ambassador environment.

It was only a matter of time before the office shared by the two church pastors on campus (with a staff of about 12 full-time and student employees) was drawn into the wider church's doctrinal debate.

## Something was wrong

Mr. Giese knew something was wrong in the WCG, he said, a few years before the doctrinal bombshell in December 1994.

“The signs of doctrinal deterioration were subtle yet noticeable in the early '90s,” he said. “It was our hope that God would see fit to turn things around and avoid the catastrophic meltdown that eventually occurred, but that was not to be.”

A few months before Dec. 24, 1994, in the fall of that year, “I came to a disturbing conclusion that in all probability—barring God's intervention—the day would come when I could no longer in good conscience work for the

See **EVENTS OF '94-'95**, page 7



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# Events of '94-'95 traumatized Big Sandy WCG brethren

Continued from page 6

Worldwide Church of God."

Mr. Giese said he wasn't interested at that time in joining another Church of God (there were scores if not hundreds of spinoffs of the WCG in existence, including the Church of God International, Association for Christian Development, Philadelphia Church of God, Global Church of God and Church of the Great God).

"Neither was I interested in starting my own church by dividing brethren who were already confused and disillusioned."

Things came to a head, he said, when a WCG official questioned Mr. Giese about a sermon he had recently delivered in which he compared "our former teaching to our new teaching on certain subjects."

In that sermon, he said, he encouraged his listeners to evaluate certain new teachings in light of Scripture. After that sermon he received a phone call from officials in Pasadena.

"During that phone call I was told that I would be replaced as pastor of the Big Sandy P.M. congregation with someone who was more supportive of the changes."

WCG headquarters personnel offered to transfer him anywhere he liked, he said, but he told them that even in a new location he would not change his opinion about the newly mandated "beliefs."

"It was now clear to both Kathy and me that I had no choice but to resign."

## Where to now?

Mr. Giese began looking for another job. He resigned, he said, on March 10, 1995, and went to work for another company on March 12 (although he continued to live on campus until early June).

"It was only a matter of time before others in the ministry and membership would be faced with the same decisions," he said. "Our moment of decision simply came earlier than some others."

THE JOURNAL asked Mr. Giese what the local membership could have done differently to perhaps effect a different outcome.

"Initiatives could have been launched, people could have stood up, etc.," he said. "However, from our perspective God must have had something else in mind or the church and college would have survived in spite of our efforts or lack of same."

In spite of the trauma at the end, Mr. Giese remembered his years at Big Sandy as "a wonderful and memorable time in our lives. We will always cherish the friendships we built and the people we met during our seven-year stay."

## The Havir history

Also serving in Big Sandy was Dave Havir, a 1974 graduate of Ambassador. Mr. Havir, who as a student came to East Texas from Allentown, Pa., first served the WCG as a ministerial trainee in 1974 under Charles Groce, then pastor of the WCG congregation in Omaha, Neb. (and now CEO of the Church of God International, Tyler, Texas).

The WCG ordained Mr. Havir as an elder in June 1975. He went on to serve in congregations in Wausau, Wis.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; Davenport, Iowa City and Waterloo, Iowa; and finally in Lexington and Mount Sterling, Ky., before transferring in 1991 to Big Sandy.

"Joe Jr. [the younger Mr. Tkach was director of church administration in Pasadena] called me and told me I was being transferred here," said Mr. Havir. "I tried to talk him out of it. I didn't want to go to a headquarters-type area."

The younger Mr. Tkach told Mr. Havir that he and the assistant director of church administration, Larry Salyer, had prayed about the decision and had both come up with Mr. Havir's name as the choice as Big Sandy A.M.'s pastor.

When Mr. Havir arrived in Big Sandy with his wife, Pam, and sons David, then 10, and Jonathan, then 7, he recalled that, counting students, "there were around 1,000 members of the A.M. congregation. The local members numbered around 600."

Mr. Havir liked many aspects of his new situation.

"We had a dynamic teen program and Sabbath-school program and an adults' sports program," he said. "I really enjoyed interacting with the students.



**THAT WAS THE WAY IT WAS**—The '90s were a turbulent time in Big Sandy when many members left the Worldwide Church of God. These four Church of God members are interviewed in the latest installment of John Warren's history of Big Sandy (beginning on page 1). **From left:** Ken Giese of Houston, Texas, former pastor of the WCG's Big Sandy P.M. congregation. **Next photo:** Linda Cartwright of Big Sandy, former Ambassador Uni-

versity executive secretary and currently copublisher of THE JOURNAL. **Next photo:** Don Ward of Big Sandy, Texas, current pastor of the UCG's Big Sandy congregation and former Ambassador University president. **Next photo:** Dave Havir of Big Sandy, former WCG Big Sandy A.M. pastor and current pastor of the Church of God Big Sandy. [Photos by Victor Kubik, Trey Cartwright, Linda Moll Smith and Dixon Cartwright]

The students were a responsive audience on the Sabbath."

Besides the responsibility of pastoring their respective congregations, Mr. Giese and Mr. Havir also had the annual duty of jointly coordinating the Feast of Tabernacles observance on the campus, which served as the site of many church activities.

## Shutting down the Piney Woods

The Piney Woods campground on the church-college grounds had served for decades, since the earliest spring-and-fall-feast observances of the 1950s, for church members who would set up their tents or pull in their motor homes and camping trailers and live on the grounds for a week or more.

"A lot of people might hold this against me, but I was instrumental in getting the campground closed," said Mr. Havir. "I asked Joe Jr. to close it



visit with him, and he saw us on Sunday [Jan. 15]. We asked about the report of his intention to fire me. He denied it.

"My most significant memory about this 90-minute meeting was his insistence that he had believed the new doctrines of Worldwide for many decades."

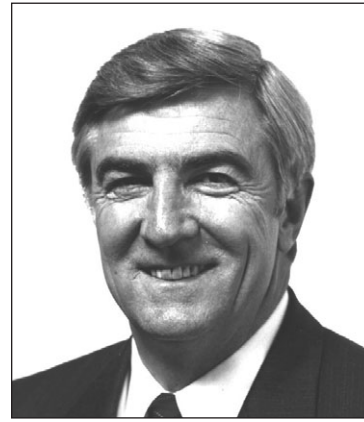
## One down, one to go

When Mr. Giese resigned in mid-March 1995, church headquarters asked Mr. Havir to pastor both congregations until a new pastor could move in.

"I found out about Ken's resignation just before he gave his final sermon," said Mr. Havir. "Headquarters asked me to pastor both congregations until Don Mears arrived."

Thinking back on those turbulent times in Big Sandy, the former WCG pastor told THE JOURNAL:

"Things escalated when Doug Winnail [a theology instructor at Amba-



of the Field House just before services.

The men, including Norm Bronnum, Dale Bailey, Jim Baugher and this writer, informed Mr. Havir just before that service that they had been informed by various church members there would be a walkout if Mr. Havir introduced Dr. Duke for the sermon.

Mr. Havir, in the parking lot, asked this writer what he could do to avert the walkout.

This writer responded, "As the coordinator of the ushers, if you want me to I could make sure no one gets on stage except you."

## Controlling foot traffic

This writer also told Mr. Havir at the time: "We have a policy, you know, that everything should be done decently and in order at church services and that only one man should speak at a time."

Nothing was decided in the parking



pastor within the space of a few weeks.

"I found out I was disfellowshipped shortly after my sermon when I heard a message on Tom Clark's answering machine," said Mr. Havir. "Tom played the message [from an unidentified female secretary in Pasadena] over the telephone for me after I got home." (Mr. Clark was Mr. Havir's assistant pastor.)

Dr. Duke did give the sermon that same day in the afternoon church service and announced that Mr. Havir had been disfellowshipped.

"Days later Dr. [Herman] Hoeh called and said, 'You can work this out. All you have to do is apologize,'" said Mr. Havir.

Mr. Havir informed Dr. Hoeh that "it's not that simple."

"Joe Jr. called me on Monday and we talked for a few minutes," Mr. Havir said. "Joe and I have not talked since."

Although Mr. Havir had been disfellowshipped, headquarters had not terminated him from church employment.

"I got word from a friend in Pasadena that the legal department had a problem," Mr. Havir said. "I had been disfellowshipped but they had not terminated me."

"I guess I did them a favor because I sent them a letter telling them I did not wish to be reinstated and I did not want to be employed by them."

## What about Passover?

Many disillusioned church members expressed their dismay about what to do now that neither Mr. Giese nor Mr. Havir would be conducting the Passover service for the two congregations. Mr. Havir was no longer attending, and, although Mr. Giese attended WCG services until around early June, he was no longer functioning in the ministry of the WCG.

"A lot of people called me up and asked what we were going to do about Passover," said Mr. Havir. "I was so bummed out for the first week I said I didn't know. Finally a few of us got together and made arrangements to meet for Passover in a warehouse leased by Don and Michele Mischnick near Big Sandy."

The Mischnicks, both of whom entered Ambassador in Big Sandy in 1973, live near Big Sandy and operate AgPro Systems, which sells agricultural additives to an international market.

"On the Sabbath of April 8 [1995] we as a family stayed at home," commented Mr. Havir. "Many people stopped by our home to visit us that day. Some people came and tried to give us their tithe money. We did not take their money at that time."

## Alternative service

Many members of the Big Sandy congregations said they were looking for an alternative to meeting with the WCG congregation for the Passover service in the Field House.

"On April 9 Peter Nathan [a theology-faculty member] called me and asked me to come to his house [also on campus]," said Mr. Havir. "There was a room full of people."

"When I got there these people explained to me their desire to commandeer the Convention Center [a huge campus auditorium built for Feast services in the mid-1960s] for an alternate

See CHURCH OF GOD, page 8

*'As the coordinator of the ushers, if you [Dave Havir] want me to I could make sure no one gets on stage except you.'*

down because of some serious behavioral problems that were occurring in the campground during many Feasts.

"Through the years camping in Big Sandy may have reflected some of the best stories of what the Feast of Tabernacles pictured, but some of the behavior in the campground also reflected the worst of what could happen at the Feast."

## Into clearer view

Years before he arrived in Big Sandy, headquarters sent out a tape to be played in all churches, remembered Mr. Havir.

"The tape concluded that Jesus could not sin. That bothered me, but I did not see where the church was heading."

A turning point in Mr. Havir's thinking emerged in 1993.

"A major event that occurred that year was when Ken [Giese] and I were asked to go with the college faculty to a refresher program [for WCG elders] in Pasadena about the nature of God.

"I remember walking out of the classroom towards the Hall of Ad [the administration building in Pasadena] with Mike Fezell. I asked Mike if the church could slow down in teaching this doctrinal change [concerning the ontological nature of God] because the faculty was addressing good points to refute what the instructor [Dr. Stavrinides] was saying."

"He replied that the faculty wasn't trained to critically analyze doctrines like this."

Mr. Havir recalled the senior Mr. Tkach's sermon on Dec. 24, 1994.

"It was a historic event in Worldwide," he said. "People were questioning where the leadership was heading, and in his sermon Mr. Tkach gave a clear public signal."

Mr. Tkach returned to speak in Big Sandy on Jan. 14, 1995.

"Some people say Mr. Tkach returned to do some damage control about a few things he misspoke in his Dec. 24 sermon," said Mr. Havir.

"One sidelight to this visit is that someone in Pasadena got word to me that Mr. Tkach was upset with me and intended to fire me. My wife and I requested a

sador and WCG elder] gave a sermon in the P.M. congregation."

Dr. Winnail preached that sermon from the Gospel of Matthew, casting scriptures in a light that scraped against the grain of what church headquarters was newly teaching.

"When Doug ended his sermon, half of the congregation applauded and the other half was upset," said Mr. Havir.

"I got a conference call from Joe and Mike blaming me for the sermon. Then they talked about having Russell Duke [the chairman of the university's theology department and a supporter of the new doctrines] give both sermons the next Sabbath."

## Averting a walkout

During the next week quite a few members of both congregations were obviously upset, and some were ready to publicly register their disapproval of the new church teachings.

Mr. Havir has been accused of planning and fomenting a rebellion and planning ahead of time that he would not allow Dr. Duke to give the sermon in the Field House on campus that Sabbath, April 1, 1995.

Mr. Havir says that, rather, he didn't plan anything of the sort.

"I heard there was going to be a walkout if Russell spoke," said Mr. Havir. "I was trying to intervene and help things go as smoothly as possible and avert a mass exodus during the Sabbath service."

Mr. Havir remained on stage after giving announcements and, instead of walking off the stage to make way for a sermon from Dr. Duke, launched into an unscheduled sermon about the value of being a peacemaker.

"That was a spontaneous decision on my part to continue speaking and not relinquish the stage and microphone. I did have a sermon ready, but I didn't know what I was going to do until the last minute."

Mr. Havir admits that he was influenced in his decision by a group of men who had met him in the back parking lot

lot, but this writer walked up to the ushers and informed them of what might happen.

This writer chose the biggest men in the congregation and assigned them areas on stage behind the curtain and stationed one man at each side of the stage near the steps.

This writer's instructions to them were to allow no one else on the stage while Mr. Havir was speaking. This writer did not mention to the ushers any individual specifically who might try to walk onto the stage.

Once it became evident that Mr. Havir would stay on stage and give the sermon, Dr. Duke did attempt to go on stage by the front steps and was stopped by Don Bjoraker, an usher who was stationed in the front row of the audience.

Dr. Duke also attempted to enter the stage from a back entrance but was stopped by Tony Contos.

Mr. Contos asked Dr. Duke, "Are you trying to take the stage?"

Dr. Duke "assured me he was only checking to see why the choir wasn't going on stage to sing," remembered Mr. Contos. "I made him swear that he would not try to get on stage."

Significant behind-the-scenes events were also transpiring in the sound booth. After Dr. Duke frantically telephoned Joseph Tkach Jr. in Pasadena after his failed attempt to deliver his sermon, Mr. Tkach called the university switchboard during Mr. Havir's sermon and tried to make a connection to override Mr. Havir's voice being amplified through the Field House's sound system.

Mr. Tkach's attempt to override the sound system was not successful, however. Apparently the sound man either attempted and failed to make the connection or the sound man hindered Mr. Tkach's attempt.

## Events waiting to happen

Since Dr. Duke didn't give his sermon, the walkout didn't happen, but many other things did. It was a matter of only a few minutes after Mr. Havir's sermon that Big Sandy lost its second

# Church of God Big Sandy formed in '95 as a reaction to WCG

Continued from page 7

Passover. I reminded them that the police would be called if anyone tried using the Convention Center without permission, but they felt that God would not be happy if His people walked away from the campus.

"I asked the group 'And who do you propose will conduct this Passover?' knowing full well what the answer would be. I told them I wasn't interested in commandeering the Convention Center."

Mr. Havir and Dr. Winnail conducted a service at the Mischnicks' property on Thursday, April 13, with 128 in attendance.

Besides Passover, the small group of members who felt disenfranchised by the WCG conducted feast-day services also on the first and last days of Unleavened Bread.

"We went to the Holiday Inn in Longview for the first Unleavened Bread service," Mr. Havir said. "We did not collect an offering. One man chastised me by saying that I was required to collect an offering. I responded by saying that, although he may have felt an obligation to give an offering, I was not required to accept it."

"On the first day I recommended that people send their offering to a Church of God that didn't preach heresy or to a family in the Houston area that had just lost a child."

"On the seventh day I again advised them to send their money to a Church of God that didn't teach heresy or to a widow in another state whose husband had recently committed suicide."

## UCG association

The congregation continued to meet every Sabbath, and Mr. Havir continued as the pastor.

(Dr. Winnail shortly thereafter joined the Global Church of God and eventually became a member of the Living Church of God's council of elders.)

This new Church of God congregation in Big Sandy, which began April 13 at Passover, became associated with the United Church of God the next month, an affiliation that lasted from May 1995 until May 1998.

Mr. Havir told *THE JOURNAL* that the initiative of the brethren in Big Sandy led to his continuation as pastor.

"Months after our congregation started, I was told that some regional pastors, who helped form United, had originally planned for Ken Giese to be the pastor in Big Sandy," he said. "Since the brethren and I did not know what was occurring behind the scenes, the brethren asked me to help them before United began, and I accepted."

*THE JOURNAL* asked Mr. Havir about

an old report that a few people had criticized him for not offering to share Big Sandy pastoral responsibilities with Mr. Giese before Mr. Giese moved to Minnesota in June. *THE JOURNAL* asked if the report was true.

"Yes, one or two in the congregation did," he said. "A surprising incident occurred in November of 1996 when Ken and Kathy came to our house and asked me why I hadn't given them half of the congregation a year and a half earlier."

Even if Mr. Giese had let his interest be known in the spring of 1995, said Mr. Havir, "this would not have been my decision to make."

"What happened was very much a decision of the Big Sandy congregation."

Mr. Havir wished the Gieses well in their service to the brethren.

"I hope that things have worked out well for the Gieses," he said in 2002. "Like many other people, they were

When asked what he meant by an attempt to "save the college," Mr. Stewart said he personally felt betrayed by the doctrinal changes. That feeling, he acknowledged, inspired the thought in himself and many others that the new leaders of the WCG were somehow wielding authority that was illegitimate. Therefore the rightful owners of the property should somehow be able to reacquire it.

"That kind of thinking was a little naive on my part," said Mr. Stewart, "but we did discuss whether it would be possible to go to court with the new church leaders to do something about what was happening to us."

Something that especially upset Mr. Stewart, he said, and made him amenable to the meeting was that "people were being fired right and left [from college and church employment] without a reason, and those being fired then had no income whatsoever."

*Dr. Ward told THE JOURNAL: 'I knew a parting of the ways had come. They had already chosen a new president, so I resigned on June 15, 1995.'*

in a tough situation during difficult times."

## Behind the scenes

On the same day the WCG disfellowshipped Mr. Havir, other developments inspired by the WCG crisis were brewing in Big Sandy.

Fifteen WCG members assembled in a private meeting near the church and college grounds at Big Sandy. Two of the people were George Crow, who helped to form the "Worldwide Church of God Texas," and John Bethea, both of the Houston, Texas, area.

Others in attendance were Charles Black, Dixon Cartwright, Aaron Dean, Buck Hammer, Kim McCullough, Melton McNeely, Steve McNeely, John Robinson, Linda Moll Smith, Ellis Stewart and Leon and Reba Walker, all of the Big Sandy area. (One more person attended the meeting, but no one seems to be able to remember who it was.)

One of the participants, Mr. Stewart, said the meeting, in a building on property rented by Mr. Robinson a few miles east of Big Sandy on Old Highway 80, was organized by Mr. Crow, a Houston-area attorney.

"The main reason the meeting took place," said Mr. Stewart, "was to discuss the ownership of the church and college property at Big Sandy and brainstorm about ways to save the college."

"I think one of the things Melton McNeely wanted to discuss at the meeting was to think about ways to help out those people who were being laid off and fired because they didn't agree with the changes of doctrine."

Founders of the Worldwide Church of God Texas held a conference in Houston in April, putting together some bylaws and waiting to see what would become of a conference near Indianapolis, Ind., beginning April 30. When the UCG began from the Indy conference, the WCG Texas offered its bylaws as a model.

## The terminations begin

In the recollection of this writer, the first wave of terminations directly affected Norm Bronnum, landscape-department manager; Pam Bronnum, Mr. Bronnum's daughter and Dr. Duke's secretary; Eric Case, landscape foreman; and Rick Oswalt (who died in 2014), a heavy-equipment mechanic in the transportation department.

Mr. Case, who was first introduced to *JOURNAL* readers of this series of articles in the Nov. 30, 2002, issue, told this writer:

"I think they were trying to make an example of us to try to intimidate anyone who was thinking of attending church services with Dave Havir [at various rented facilities in the Big Sandy area]."

"They disfellowshipped us, but we were not terminated from the college until after Dr. Ward resigned."

The university's executive secretary was also affected.

"I came back from lunch one Friday after graduation and there was a notice on my computer that said there was to be an all-employee meeting," said Linda Cartwright.

"Only Dr. Ward could call those meetings, so I would have normally been the one who notified the computer department. So how could this message be on my computer?"

She soon found out.

"I called the computer department and they told me Russell Duke had called the meeting with [the senior] Mr. Tkach's approval. Dr. Ward was not in the office that day. I called Russell Duke's office, and when I finally got to talk to him he told me I was no longer executive secretary and they would

was to teach the truth and to fulfill Ambassador's motto, 'Recapture true values,'" he said.

"It is very painful to see what you gave your heart and soul to make such a dramatic shift. The product and fruit had been so beautiful. But some people loved the product but hated the process."

Mrs. Cartwright concurred.

"The church became so fragmented they did not have the finances to support Ambassador," she said. "Once it shut down it was like there was a big hole there. It was basically your life. Your life revolved around the church and the college. I have so many memories. It was our college and our campus, and it's just not there now."

"Our children always assumed they would go to AC. We also assumed they would. It was a part of their lives, and all of a sudden it is not there anymore."

First Mrs. Cartwright and then her husband, Dixon, received letters of disfellowship (dated July 30 and Aug. 31) from the new Big Sandy pastor, Don Mears.

Mrs. Cartwright was disfellowshipped for nonattendance; Mr. Mears informed Mr. Cartwright he was disfellowshipped because he had "heard" that Mr. Cartwright no longer wished to fellowship with the WCG.

## The end

Not long after Pastor General Joseph Tkach Sr. introduced the church to its new list of doctrinal beliefs, the church learned that its leader had cancer. Mr. Tkach died in September 1995.

On his father's death, Joseph Tkach Jr. became pastor general. With dwindling finances (some estimates had annual WCG income at its peak in excess of \$200 million) and a continuing loss of members, and with a corresponding loss in student enrollment, Mr. Tkach and Ambassador's board of regents made the decision to close the doors of the institution.

Dr. Duke, who became the university's president in June 1995, served in that capacity until its final semester of operation, ending in May 1997 (see "Family, Friends, Alumni Meet in Texas for the Last Graduation of Ambassador," *THE JOURNAL*, May 30, 1997).

Ambassador had been an integral part of life in Big Sandy since Herbert Armstrong decided to open a campus here in 1963. He founded the original campus in Pasadena in 1947.

Another, in Bricket Wood, England, operated from the fall of 1960 to the spring of 1974.

Just a few months short of its 50th anniversary, Ambassador passed into history.

## More letters from our readers

Continued from page 4

or teach or have authority over men?

People will equivocate the Word of God when it is contrary to their own ideas (which elevate their own ego).

They are not willing to say to God "Your will be done."

They will either take scriptures out of context and/or ignore those that nullify their ideas. For example, Phoebe is never quoted or shown to preach or teach any man. "Minister" does not mean "preacher."

These people (as wimpy husbands) who promote women to preach ignore the words of Paul (who God used mightily, who put to shame by statements and commands that are diametrically opposite to those ideas of women's lib). Some of these say the Bible should be modernized.

Paul was in favor of women (but not their preaching, teaching and bossing men). Phoebe gave excellent service, but nowhere was she contrary to Paul's words (which are the commandments of the Lord as in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, 37).

Why do these people call themselves Christians while they hate and defy the words of the holy apostles (including Paul's letters)?

There never were any apostles. If Jesus Christ wanted women to preach,

He would have selected at least one for that job.

God inspired Paul to write that chapter of 1 Corinthians 14. This is one of the most important chapters about conducting the services on the Sabbath day.

See verses 33-37 and 1 Timothy 2:9-14 and 1 Peter 3:1-6. Some women hate those verses.

Lawrence G. Mumme  
Tucson, Ariz.

*'After the sermon I asked her how she could give the sermon when the WCG did not allow female ministers.'*

## Lady ministers

I was interested in your article (front page of issue No. 170) about Cathy Dickerson delivering a sermon in a Church of God in Arkansas.

I admire her and her congregation for this.

I've debated the subject of lady ministers with many professional ministers and priests over the years. Most churches do not allow ladies to be ministers or priests, not even elders.

Their reasoning seems valid until we examine this subject closely.

They quote the Bible out of context and the opinions of religious pundits.

I remember in the spring of 1994, about a year before the WCG busted up, I attended a small WCG congregation in Kauai, Hawaii. A lady did a great job of delivering the sermon, which surprised me.

After the sermon I asked her how she could give the sermon when the WCG did not allow female ministers. She smiled and said she was a

teacher at a local school and she was merely teaching a biblical subject.

She didn't believe the WCG correct and used "teaching" as an excuse.

I think women are as smart and capable as men and can be excellent ministers. These churches are making a long stretch to say this is not correct.

In the old days no priests were women in the Bible because women had many children and consequently didn't have time to be church leaders.

Earl Cayton  
San Francisco, Calif.

## Fallacious exegesis

I look forward to the time when the fact that a woman gave a sermon in the Church of God will not be considered news, let alone front-page news [see the article about Cathy Dickerson's sermon on page 1 of issue No. 170].

And to a time when a woman can give a sermon that is dull or boring or soporific, just like so many sermons men have given, and the reaction to it will be identical to the reac-

tion had a man given it.

Kudos to Cathy and John Dickerson and to Tom Justus. To everybody else: What are you waiting for? For too long we have disregarded the talents that God has given to half of humanity and to more than half of the church, premised on fallacious exegesis.

Didn't Jesus have something to say to the man who refused to do anything with the talent God provided (Matthew 25:24-30)?

Reginald Killingley  
Big Sandy, Texas

## God's priorities

For some time I've been mulling over the thrust of meaning of "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

Listening to Matt King's sermon today (on the Church of God the Father's Call website, thefatherscall.org), it occurred to me that that seems to be exactly what God has been doing in all that He has chosen to do or not do in the entire enterprise that began "in the beginning" until now—and as, I suppose, will continue forever.

I think that to advance the Kingdom of God and increase the righteousness of His family is His aim from the beginning through the ages of eternity to come. The exhortation to seek the Kingdom and righteousness is an exhortation to share His priorities.

I see the creation story as an account of the founding of the Kingdom of God, making a place to live for Himself and His family. Then He starts His family with "Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:38).

God's intentions seem to me to be expressed in the thought of Hebrews, that the benefit He seeks for us is "that we may be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10).

Jeffrey Caldwell  
Walnut Creek, Calif.