

Robert Macdonald
Lebanon, Mo. 65536
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Kenneth C. Herrmann Remembered

Like many other incoming Ambassador College students, Kenneth C. Herrmann as college registrar was one of the first officials I talked to back in 1958. He helped me choose my classes and told me that even though I already had a degree that I should plan on taking 3 years instead of two at Ambassador. He once talked me into taking Leon Ettinger's class in voice phonetics because he thought I had a regional accent which I did not believe I had.

As a student and after graduation I worked for Ken Herrmann in several capacities as an assistant. Besides being registrar he was director of admissions. He was but one of a number of others on the admissions committee, so the final choice of new admissions rested with the group. He had the task of writing turndown letters to those not admitted. In most cases such letters were routine. However in some cases well qualified students were turned down for one reason or another. While assisting him in reviewing student applications, he shared with me some of those letters and how he had agonized over writing them. He kept a folder of carbon copies of every letter he wrote, half jokingly referring to it as his "PhD dissertation".

I received a good lesson on not being a bureaucrat while assisting Ken Herrmann in his duties as registrar. A bureaucrat is often characterized as putting the following of regulations over getting the job done. Sitting at a table in Ambassador hall in the registration line, Carn Catherwood's wife Joyce stood before me wanting to sign up for a class in French as her husband was ministering in a French speaking area in Canada. Technically she did not qualify to take the class, but I could have bent the rules to allow her to do so anyway. I had it in my power to do good, but I did it not! That experience taught valuable me a lesson: Don't be a bureaucrat!

Taking his pictorial journalism class I found myself on the staff of the Envoy, the Ambassador yearbook. I learned much from him about layout, writing and photography. I spent many hours in the photographic darkroom in the basement of Dr. and Mrs. Hal Lissman's house making photographs for the Envoy and other college and church publications.

For several years I worked under Ken Herrmann as photographer for college and church publications. In addition he gave me the job of annually pasting up the church publication of God's Calendar. While doing this I pondered the meaning of the Holy Days, and remember thinking that we had just scratched the surface in understanding their significance.

Pasting up the calendar launched me into a lifelong study. I used to read the Jewish Encyclopedia during my lunch hours and found out that there was much more to learn about them. I credit him with igniting the spark of inquiry within me that resulted in a paper on the meaning to the Christian of the Holy Days. I felt honored that he agreed to proof read it for me in about 2001.

I had previously proofread several of his papers including his Master's Degree Thesis: *Calendar Eclipse Interrelationships*. I proofread everything but the title page. After it was published he noticed that the title should have been *Calendar and Eclipse Interrelationships*! Ken Herrmann's thesis was a groundbreaking work in the field that will forever go misnamed, all because I failed to note the error!

I took Ken Herrmann's course in astronomy at Ambassador, which mainly reflected his primary interest of the cycles of the Earth, Moon and Sun. I also took his courses in geology which sparked another lifelong interest. I took courses in geology at Pasadena City College and was soon teaching Physical Geology at Ambassador. Later I went on to study geology at Cal State Los Angeles and UCLA, getting my master's degree in geology in 1977.

The “reconciliation” of the geological and biblical records is an interesting study and to this day a controversial topic. It has come up many times in the past, and it was repeatedly examined at Ambassador. Ken Herrmann proposed that a catastrophe prior to Noah’s Flood took place during a “gap” of an indefinite duration between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. He believed that this postulated catastrophe was associated with Lucifer’s rebellion and accounted for the earth becoming without form and void (Genesis 1:2), and thereafter the deposition of first part of the geologic record. .

The “gap theory” had been originally proposed in the early 19th century by the Scottish theologian Thomas Chalmers to attempt to reconcile the obvious antiquity of the earth with the then current view that the entire geologic record was the result of Noah’s Flood. Ken Herrmann’s model included two catastrophes, a pre-Adamic flood and the Noatian flood to account for a major portion of the geologic record, and became known as the “two flood model” as opposed to the previous “one flood model”.

Dick Burky, another of Ken Herrmann’s geology students also studied geology at Pasadena City College and elsewhere. He, John Hopkinson and I went on field trips in several western states to check out the geologic record in person to see if it could be reconciled with the “high speed deposition” necessitated by the “two flood model”. To make a long story short, we found from our observations that the two flood model could not be reconciled with reality any better than the one flood model. Contained within the geological record are countless confirmations of long time periods interspersed with indications of rapid deposition.

Both the geological and biblical records have the same Author, and it became apparent that it was our interpretation of those records that was faulty, not the records themselves. Others more qualified than us including Dr. Hugh Ross of *Reasons to Believe* in Pasadena, California have gone on to devise better ways of reconciling those two records. Nonetheless the controversy regarding geology, astronomy and the Bible continues. Several are promoting young earth creationism. However I believe that reality can not substantiate such a view. I remain to this day an ancient earth/universe creationist.

Dick Burky and I wrote up several papers and did presentations that showed that the notion of high speed deposition required by the two flood model did not fit with reality. Ken Herrmann and others came to see that this model was incorrect. To his credit he was able to change his views on something he had spent many years formulating.

The activities of our two families were very much intertwined: Sharing meals, field trips and outings including fossil and rock collecting. The second of the four Herrmann daughters was named after my wife, Peggy. In 1964 Ken and Elise Herrmann entrusted the three youngest girls, Peggy, Edith and Brenda to us while they went to Europe for a couple weeks. Susan and Karl, their first two children stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Leskey.

The bond between our two families continued over the years. Our family has benefited from that relationship, and both Ken and Elise Herrmann will be remembered in many ways. I will always remember Ken Herrmann’s dry humor. In his pre-field trip instructions he would say to the class: *Remember, there are two places to find rocks, on the right hand side of the road, and on the left hand side of the road!*

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