

# The Oldtimers' GRAPEVINE

July-September '07

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*"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you."*

Matthew 7:7 NRSV

## Final in Series on African American Ordained Disciples Clergywomen

The Reverend Vertie Powers is an ordained Disciples of Christ Minister with Ecumenical Partner Standing in the Eastern North Carolina Association of the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ. She serves as the Associate Conference Minister for the Eastern North Carolina Association. Over the past two years she has taught a class in "Spiritual Formation" at Duke University, Durham, NC to incoming students at the Divinity School.

Rev. Powers was ordained at Twelfth Street Christian Church, 1812 12<sup>th</sup> St. NW, Washington, DC, in July 1992. She was installed as Pastor of Fellowship Christian Church, Philadelphia, PA, April 30, 1995. Before being called to North Carolina, she was Minister of Evangelism for Church Development and Renewal with the United Church of Christ, Cleveland, OH.

She has served the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) on the general level in Indianapolis, IN, as Director of New Church Establishment and as Interim Director of Reconciliation.

Rev. Powers was educated in the public school systems of Martin County, NC and Washington, DC. She obtained her Bachelor of Science degree from Trinity College in Washington, DC and her Master of Divinity degree from Duke University, Durham, NC. She is an internationally known preacher and singer having used her gifts of word and song on four continents.

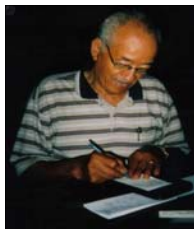


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## OSCAR'S NOTES

*From the desk of the Managing Editor*



Nostalgia overcomes me as I share with our readers my notes for this issue of the OTG. It takes me back some 60 years to my early years of publishing newsletters. Like printers ink, this love has filled a major part of my life-journey. It was the excellent congregational newsletters of Rev. Dr. Forrest D. Haggard that started a beautiful friendship.

This very special friend will be remembered by our mutual friend Rev. Dr. Richmond Nelson and me as a bridge builder, reaching out with hands and heart across the seas, facilitating better understanding and closer relationship between the church in the U.S.A. and Christians in the Third World, particularly Jamaica –the land and the people he loved.

Memorial services for Dr. Haggard and his wife, Eleanor V. Haggard, whose deaths were only ten days apart, were held at the Overland Park Christian Church, Overland Park, KS, on September 8, 2007. I had lost contact with Forrest until several months ago, when I received a call from him to let me know that our friend Richmond would be coming to Washington for a visit following the board meeting of the World Convention of the Christian - Churches of Christ – Disciples of Christ. Both are former presidents of the World Convention.

In a tribute to the couple, the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (Congregational/Disciples/Presbyterian) remembered with deep gratitude the invaluable contribution Forrest and Eleanor made to the life and witness of the Church in Jamaica. He recalled that Forrest and Eleanor and the congregations they served have been partners in Mission with the Church in Jamaica for over 40 years.

In recalling how Forrest shared the love of Christ with everyone regardless of race, color, or station in life, Richmond declared “some of the ways” are:

- Support for the training of men and women in Jamaica for the Ministry of the Church;
- Providing scholarships through Jamaica Partners, which he founded, for continuing education of students, Scouts and staff of Oberlin High School;

Creating an endowment for the Haggard/Nelson Chair in Theological Studies at the International University of the Caribbean in Kingston.

Dr. Nelson shared that sincere concern and care for the good health of the Jamaican people led them, through Jamaica Partners, to build a medical clinic to serve the needs of the students and people in the community. In their honor, he said, we have renamed the facility “The Forrest and Eleanor Health Centre”.

During the years Rev. Dr. William K. Fox was Executive Secretary of the National Convocation, he built a remembered relationship between the Convocation and the Churches of Jamaica, and during the years I served as President of the Convocation, we intensified that working relationship.

Due to the tireless effort of Forrest, Eleanor, and Richmond, the World Convention of the Churches of Christ was held in Jamaica in 1984. This was the first for a cruise ship, with hundreds of Christians on board, anchored in Kingston Harbor for one week serving as a floating hotel during the Convention.

The 17th World Convention will convene in Nashville, TN, July 30 – August 3, 2008, just over ten months from now. This is the only global gathering of churches with a heritage in the Stone-Campbell tradition. The prominent guest speakers include Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale, Ray of Hope Christian Church, Decatur, GA. Registration forms may be secured from World Convention, 1279 Brentwood Highlands Drive, Nashville, TN 37211. One of the sponsors of the World Convention, held every four years, is Greenwood Cemetery, Inc., Nashville, TN

I look forward to worship and fellowship with my brothers and sisters of all church streams with a Campbell-Stone heritage from all around the world.

## World War II Tuskegee Airman Receives Gold Medal in Spring

“Yes, I support Senator Barack Obama in his bid to become the next president of the United States,” declared Col. Charles Edward McGee, USAF (Ret), in his soft-spoken voice.

This was the reply Col. McGee gave the Oldtimers’ Grapevine during a recent interview in his lovely Bethesda, MD, home amid the many medals he has been awarded over the past several years, the latest being the Congressional Gold Medal. This is the highest civilian award bestowed by Congress, and it was presented by President George W. Bush during ceremonies at the White House.

Col. McGee went on to explain that, even though he supports Sen. Obama, he is not comfortable with individuals who use the military for political goals. In his response to a question about the war in Iraq, he briefly replied, “We are not going to win.”

This personable World War II Tuskegee Airman entered Army Air Corps Pilot Training in



November, 1942, and was commissioned 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant on June 30, 1943. He flew more combat missions than any other pilot in the armed forces, earning the Legion of Merit with Cluster, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Bronze Star, 26 Air Medals, and the Elder Statesman of Aviation Award.

Col. McGee said he was motivated by love of aviation – “I loved to roll and spin”-and lived his life by the Boy Scout motto: “On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself

physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.”

In 1995, Col. McGee moved from Kansas City, MO, to Bethesda, MD, following the death of his wife, the former Frances E. Nelson of Champaign, IL. He is an active Elder of North Chevy Chase Christian Church, and in 2000 was Chairman of the Elder Board.

The biography of this outstanding American hero, ***Tuskegee Airman: The Biography of Charles E. McGee***, authored by Dr. Charlene E. McGee Smith, Ph.D. should be in every library, school, and home in the United States. It was published by Branden Publishing Company, 17 Station Street, Box 843 Brookline Village, Boston, MA 02447.

(I urge every reader of the OTG to learn the whole story on this 80-year-old role model for American males by purchasing this book, which tells the whole exciting story of his life.) *Editor*

### OVERHEARD

An elderly woman walked into the local country church. The friendly usher greeted her and helped her up the steps. “Where would you like to sit?” he asked.

“The front row, please,” she replied.

“You really don’t want to do that,” the usher said, “The pastor is really boring.”



“Do you know who I am?” the woman asked.

“No”, he said.

“I’m the pastor’s mother,” she said indignantly.

“Do you know who I am?” said the usher.”

“No.” she said.

“Good,” the usher replied.

## CANDL FOUNDATION OF HUNTSVILLE HONORS DR. JUNE SCOBEE RODGERS



Dr. June Scobee Rodgers, Founding Chairperson of the Challenger Center for Space Science Education, received the 2007 CANDL Light Award during ceremonies May 2, 2007 before a standing room only crowd at the Embassy Suites Hotel, Huntsville, Alabama. The recipient of the 2006 award was S. Truett Cathy, owner of the Chick-fil-A food chain.

Dr. Rodgers is the widow of Astronaut Dick Scobee, commander of the Space Shuttle Challenger 51-L Teacher in Space mission. The families of the Challenger astronauts

founded the Challenger Center in 1986 to encourage math and science education for children and youth.

Prior to establishing the Challenger Center, Dr. Rodgers had been an active and prominent leader in education throughout her professional life. She is proud to have taught in every grade-level classroom from kindergarten through college. Much of her work in the early 1980s was devoted to integrating the “Aha” of the science community into the classroom, using the theme of space exploration.

Other recipients of the CANDL Award include Mrs. Norman Vincent Peale, Dr. Benjamin Reaves, Rev. Dr. William C. Howland, Jr., Rev. Whintley Phipps, Rev. Dr. William & Rev. Linda Curwood, and MG (USA,Ret.) Gaylord T. & Mrs. Gunhus.

The CANDL Foundation is a nonprofit, tax-deductible organization whose focus is children’s literacy.

The Foundation’s founders are Dr. Louis & Mrs. Carolyn Brown.



The foundation was the prime sponsor of the series of videos Grandfather Reads, seen on National Public Television and now available to the public.

The foundation also supports the distribution of the Phonics Phone. This instrument is a teaching and learning tool that helps children improve their reading and enunciation skills. More information on the monumental civic and charitable work of the CANDL Foundation may be had by contacting 256.859.4957, ext. 157, and

[www.phonicsphone.org](http://www.phonicsphone.org)

## Phillips University Legacy Foundation

**PHILLIPS UNIVERSITY TRADITION PROJECT** - Phillips University in Tulsa, OK, formerly located in Enid, OK, has chosen to tread a unique path of survival. Rather than close the doors and walk away like so many others, the Trustees and administrators found a way to honorably close the school and sustain its ideals and mission for educating Christian leaders.



Dr. G. Curtis & Becky Jones

Here are the steps taken upon closure, as reported by the Co-Chairs of the newly-formed Phillips University Legacy Foundation, Dr. G. Curtis Jones, Jr., and his wife Becky: Following payment of all debts, efforts are now underway to strengthen the spirit of brotherhood with Phillips Theological Seminary.

## OSCAR HAYNES DAY AT NATIONAL CITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

On September 30, 2007 more than 130 people gathered on Sunday afternoon from around the Capital Area Region and beyond to honor a man who has given his whole life to the church and dedicated himself to making life better for humanity. I have yet to be in his presence when he has not greeted everyone: family, friend or stranger, with the full attention of his heart. He makes everyone feel as if they are the most important person in the world to him and they genuinely are. Every encounter with him is an event filled with the blessings of his encouragement, wisdom, support, intellect and love for Jesus.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Gentle, senior pastor of National City said in his opening remarks that “everyone in this room has been touched by Oscar Haynes and we are here to celebrate that today”.

Oscar Haynes Day was a fundraiser to help support the efforts to restore the Exhibit Hall in the T.W. Phillips Memorial in Nashville. Since 1941 Disciples of Christ Historical Society has served its mission of preserving and making available to researchers the many documents, books, periodicals, and audio-visual materials telling the story of the Stone-Campbell Movement: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Churches of Christ and Christian Churches/Churches of Christ.

This celebration drew the presence of two (2) past presidents of the Disciples Historical

Society: Dr. Roland & Mrs. Kitty Huff, now residents of Vermont; Dr. Peter & Mrs. Lynne Morgan, Washington, DC, and Dr. Glenn Carson, Nashville, TN, the Society’s current president.

Rev. William Lee, senior pastor of Loudon Avenue Christian Church, Roanoke, VA and most recently, the Moderator of the Christian Church in the U.S. and Canada gave a stirring message entitled: Angelic Assistants. Rev. Dr. Timothy James brought greetings from: General Minister and President Dr. Rev. Sharon Watkins, Ray of Hope Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale and The National Convocation. Rev. Lari Grubbs, Capital Area Regional Minister, Rev. Dr. Paul Saddler, pastor, Twelfth Street Christian Church and Rev. Dr. Bruce Irwin, co-pastor, United Christian Parish also brought greetings.

### HOW CAN YOU HELP?

**Display Cases—Five (5) new display cases /w Donor Name Engraved plate: \$6,000 per case.**

**Book Nook—Custom Shelf/w Donor Name Engraved plate: \$10,000.**

**Flat Screen TV—\$4,000.**

**A DVD w/Historical Overview —\$5,000.**

**Brass Plaque Naming the Hall—\$3,000.**

**Lighting Upgrade—a \$500 gift helps.**

**Paint Hall & Entry-way—a \$100 gift helps.**

The goal is to dedicate the Oscar Haynes Exhibit Hall in the summer of 2008. *Joan Bell-Haynes*



## *Beliefs Lead Him To Prison: Rev. Don Coleman Shares His Journey*



Rev. Don Coleman, co-pastor of University Church in the Hyde Park area of Chicago, who put his faith into action by protesting the continued existence of the School of the Americas military center in Fort Benning, GA, extended these

greetings to the Oldtimers' Grapevine at the General Assembly in Fort Worth, TX.

"Greetings to you from convict 92949-020. I have been out of prison for two months and am pleased to be able to resume my work with my wife, Ann Marie, and University Church people. Ann Marie and I are co-pastors and find our ministry challenging and continually exciting, and I have much appreciation for the church's support of my recent journey to prison.

One of the first things I did after leaving prison was celebrate my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday on June 18, 2007. It was a marvelous celebration with friends welcoming me home and celebrating this landmark year in my life. You never get so old that God doesn't have surprises for your life.

Let me remind you of my circumstances. Last November 19, 2006, 22,000 people descended on Fort Benning, GA to demonstrate against the School of the Americas (SOA) which has been renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, (WHINSEC). SOA/WHINSEC has as its mission the training of military personnel, sent from Latin American countries, in the use of terror. Over the last decades hundreds of thousands of people have been killed or "disappeared." Those targeted most directly for death are religious leaders, union organizers, schoolteachers, and community leaders wanting to help common people create a better life for their families.

We have a family in our congregation who fled to the United States during the Sanctuary Movement in the early 80s because their village was burned to the ground, crops and animals destroyed, and many family members slaughtered. Saq Ja was one of six hundred

villages destroyed by the scorched earth policy of Guatemalan President Rios Mont. Many of the troop leaders in this action were trained at Fort Benning.

I was one of 16 people who climbed over or through the fence at this demonstration and was arrested. We were tried, convicted of a federal misdemeanor, and sentenced. We received various penalties depending on age and the number of times participating in such actions. I was sentenced to 60 days in prison to be served at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in downtown Chicago.

My experience in prison was very interesting. The prisoners welcomed me with generous hospitality. They made sure I had things needed, such as toothpaste, tooth brush, soap, shower slippers, disinfectant for toilet seat, etc., and that I understood the rules and would not get into trouble.

Upon discovering I had only 60 days they were curious as to what I did. I told them the story of the SOA and they were amazed that the U.S. government would teach this kind of violence. Most had never heard of a federal misdemeanor charge. However, it did not take long to understand that there is government-sanctioned violence that far exceeded anything any of them were convicted for. They asked, "Who are the real criminals?"

I want you to understand that I was called by God to participate in this action of civil disobedience. I felt the presence of God so strongly that I refer to the action I took, and that of the 15 others, as an act of "holy obedience." I appreciate the support of family, friends and church people around the country. I received hundreds of letters of encouragement and knew many congregations were remembering me each Sunday in prayer.

"The next SOA/WHINSEC demonstration will be held the weekend of November 23, 2007. Plan to join us. It will be great fun and a way of struggling in a significant way for a more just and humane world.

**Donald Coleman**