

**INASMUCH...**  
THE SAGA OF NBA



# INASMUCH...

THE SAGA OF NBA

HIRAM J. LESTER  
MARJORIE LEE LESTER



Saint Louis, Missouri

Arthur L. Buell, Editor  
William C. Mauk, Photo Editor  
Joni Fredman, Layout Artist

Copyright© 1987 by The National Benevolent Association

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

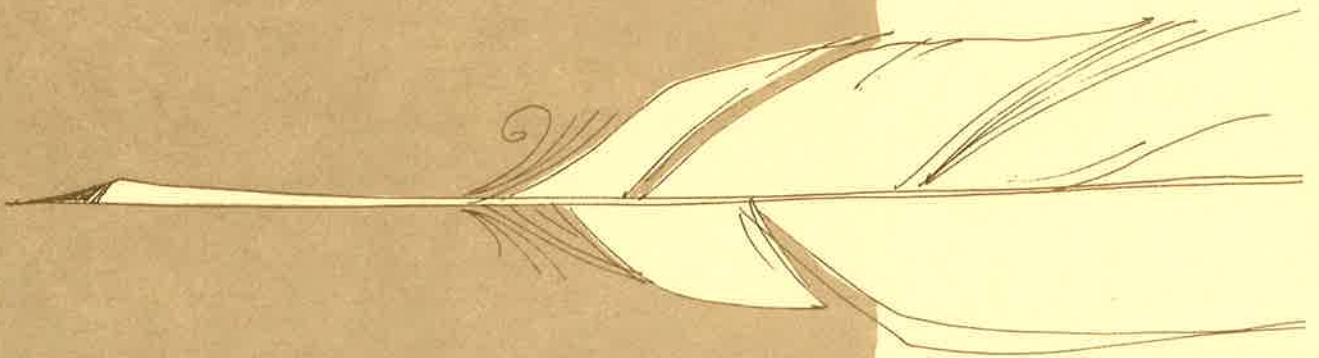
Lester, Hiram J., 1933—  
Inasmuch . . . the saga of NBA.

1. National Benevolent Association (Christian Church (Disciples of Christ))—History. 2. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—Charities—History.  
I. Lester, Marjorie Lee, 1926— . II. Title.  
BX7327.3.L47 1987 286.6'3 87-24754

Rev.

Inasmuch  
as ye have  
done it unto  
one of the  
least of these  
my Brethren,  
ye have  
done it  
unto me.

ST. MATTHEW 25:40



This book is given in memory of Althea Whitcraft Schiffman by her loving husband, John. The volume is intended as a tribute to her and to those pioneering Disciple women who, in the National Benevolent Association's early history, devoted themselves to giving—to their families, their church, their fellow human beings. Their devotion to helping others has brightened the lives of untold thousands of individuals and contributed significantly to the betterment of society.

An advocate all her life for those individuals less fortunate, Mrs. Schiffman felt a special compassion for abused and neglected children and for those who, for whatever reason, were shunned by society. She made numerous gifts to NBA and two of its Units, Woodhaven and ECHO, to help with the care of those unable to provide for themselves. Mrs. Schiffman also contributed generously to many other organizations and causes, including Columbia College (which named her *Outstanding Alumnae* in 1984), and the Webster Groves Christian Church where she was a member and where her husband still holds membership.

Althea Whitcraft Schiffman's generosity was perhaps even more evident in the giving of herself. Known for her thoughtfulness, helpfulness, friendliness and gentle wit, she was a person who understood, as have so many other women in the history of NBA, Christ's reassuring words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."



**Althea Whitcraft Schiffman**  
**1921-1987**





## CONTENTS

Dedication . . . . .	8
Editor's preface . . . . .	13
Preface . . . . .	17
Chapter 1	
The First Year . . . . .	21
Chapter 2	
The Struggle for Acceptance . . . . .	27
Chapter 3	
The Sweet Taste of Success . . . . .	37
Chapter 4	
Uncle Jimmie . . . . .	57
Chapter 5	
The Gift and the Giver . . . . .	71
Chapter 6	
Laying the Second Foundation . . . . .	81
Chapter 7	
Lengthening the Cords and Strengthening the Stakes . . . . .	97
Chapter 8	
Breaking Out or Breaking In . . . . .	109
Chapter 9	
From Orphanages to Treatment Centers. . . . .	137
Epilogue . . . . .	153

“In as much~”



## EDITOR'S PREFACE

Encouragement to commission an NBA Centennial history has been forthcoming from a variety of sources for a number of years. To the uninitiated, the reason for such urging may not be so clear. To those who are at all familiar with NBA's colorful past, however, the why is obvious.

Indeed, the National Benevolent Association, as the Division of Social and Health Services of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), has a record of accomplishment unequalled by any similar organization, as you will discover in the pages which follow. NBA has stood the test of time, has triumphed over adversity, and is stronger today than ever before. Moreover, NBA has touched with understanding and compassion the lives of literally thousands upon thousands of individuals.

To research and write the history, several individuals were considered, but ultimately Marjorie and Hiram Lester, noted historians, Disciple ministers and longtime followers of the NBA ministry, were asked to accept the challenge. Each had already authored a number of historical papers and tracts. Marge, a former teacher and Christian educator, and Hiram, a Bethany College Religion Department faculty member, were both seasoned writers and more than qualified to undertake such an assignment.

In contemplating what events to include in such a history, one must, of course, deal with the nature of the intended volume. There are seemingly endless perspectives to consider. Should it be, for example, a critical study, a comprehensive survey, a thoroughly documented analysis, or a collection of stories? A case could be made for any one of these.

But almost as soon as the Lesters began their research, we realized that the content must be a mixture of these various possibilities. As they examined early minutes of the organization and gleaned from the files of letters and early publications, they found that the real history—the struggles, successes, and tragedies associated with the founding and growth of NBA—had never been told. Nowhere did a single volume exist that even began to relate that total story. As Hiram Lester reported: "It is a story that *must* be told. It is a vital and dynamic part of our heritage as Disciples."

Within these pages, we have attempted to focus on major periods in the life of NBA: the founding of the organization, its growth years, and some of the strong influences that have changed the nature of the organization. As it turned

Opposite—Cleveland Christian Home

out, pre-planning of chapters was merely an exercise, for the history itself soon became the dominant factor in determining how the book would develop. The Lesters were excited about what they were finding because the changes in NBA history were rich with stories of human struggle and sacrifice. They were, indeed, finding a story that had never before been told.

For those readers who are at least somewhat familiar with NBA's history—and certainly for those who are conversant with its current operation—one name in the volume, *Matilda* Younkin, may sound “not quite right.” It is *Martha* Younkin who is familiar to us as one of the motivating forces behind the founding of this organization. It is *Martha* Younkin who is referred to in NBA publications throughout this century. What we have come to realize, however, is that *Martha* Younkin may have been a misnomer. How this seeming substitution of names came about is a mystery. Known as *Mattie*, her name was usually recorded as Mrs. Edwin Younkin or Mrs. M. H. Younkin in those early days of the organization.

To shed light on this confusion, we examined a number of sources.

Elizabeth Benson, her great-granddaughter, informed us that on a 1947 visit to St. Louis' Bellefontaine Cemetery, she found a tombstone at her great-grandmother's grave that read, “Martha H. Younkin.”

Today, however, the stone at the grave site reads, “Matilda H. Younkin.” The cemetery office has no record of a change of stones, but apparently one has taken place.

Our visit to the cemetery revealed that some confusion existed even at the time of her death. One record in the cemetery office shows her name as Matilda, another as Mathilda, while her obituary from the 1899 newspaper lists her name as Mathilda.

We attempted, also, to locate a birth certificate. Upon investigation, however, we discovered that an office fire in the county seat of her birth, Eaton (Preble County) Ohio, destroyed that record, if it existed.

Elizabeth Benson, in answer to our query, sent NBA several pages from the family photo album along with exact copies of handwritten notes from her grandmother, Mattie's daughter, showing that Mattie's family considered her name to be Sarah Matilda. It is obvious that confusion about her name existed even in her early years, for one of those handwritten notes reads, “Sarah (*not* Martha) Matilda Hart.” Was there also a Sarah Martha or a Martha Hart?

With family papers so clearly indicating Sarah Matilda as her name, the authors have used that name throughout this volume rather than “Martha” by which we have come to know her in NBA records.

The Lesters have done a marvelous job of researching the NBA story. They have brought together scattered bits of information and woven them into a pattern that becomes in many respects a study in the positive qualities of human nature. If there is a regret, it is that space does not allow us to name more of the employees and residents so vital to NBA's story. A dynamic, changing organization employing nearly 3,000 dedicated workers and caring for more than 8,500 residents at a given moment, dictates that only a few can be mentioned in a volume of this size. The absence of their names does not in any way minimize their valued contributions.

Likewise, we wish we could personally acknowledge all who have helped in the preparation of this history. Dozens of former and current staff members gave freely of their time by providing information, offering suggestions and reviewing portions of the book. Current and former administrators of the many NBA Units have, in every instance, reacted with alacrity to calls for confirmation or clarification of details. Donald Hiscox, keenly involved in activities of the

Centennial Celebration, played an important role in urging publication of the history. Don was the original liaison with his former professor, Hiram Lester, and has tested his own knowledge of church personalities and history in assisting our efforts. The contributions of all these people are deeply appreciated by everyone who has had anything at all to do with this volume.

A note of special thanks is due William C. Mauk, photo editor, who spent many hours searching out and selecting the photographs that have become such an integral part of the book. Copying and selecting from several thousand possible photographs, and finding just the right ones to help tell the NBA story, was a monumental task. Thanks is also due Joni Fredman, layout artist, for her overall design and attention to detail in the layout of the book. Both have provided invaluable assistance to me in my work as editor.

Every Disciple congregation in the United States and Canada is to receive, without cost, a copy of this book, a gift of John Schiffman, who has underwritten publication of the volume.

Arthur L. Buell  
Editor



Southern Christian Home Hospital



## PREFACE

In the beginning . . . the story of The National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is, very simply, the story of women and faith. They speak to us today from the pages of their Board minutes, periodicals, letters, memoirs, and pictures. Enlightened and self-assured as we like to think we are in 1987, their lives provide an amazing saga of visionary leadership and sacrificial risk-taking equal to any in this liberated age and far beyond the scope of female culture in their day.

In every way, they were courageous innovators. Why did they step out in boldness and determination to create a benevolent association on a national scope in a denomination that was clearly anti-institutional? Having no property, no money, and no support, how did they have the courage to launch an organizational effort for the sake of one abandoned baby and construct an agency that would eventually serve thousands of children and older adults? And where did they acquire the personal fortitude and the assurance in themselves and in their cause, to contend with the critics of women who dared exert their influence outside the home?

Much has been written and spoken about that small group of women that changed the course of benevolent history in the Christian Church and blazed a new trail for all American churches. No records were kept of their first few meetings, mainly because they were prayer meetings, seeking direction as to what to do to alleviate human suffering in their home town of St. Louis. But we are fortunate to have some of their later reflections which will often be quoted in this treatise so that the reader may feel the intensity of their mission, their dependency upon God's direction, and their sense of sisterhood as they were challenged again and again by formidable odds.

Why did they undertake such a mission? The answer is clearly one of discipleship—of being "called" to a task larger than themselves, of hearing that call in terms of the Kingdom of God on earth, and of taking unto themselves the admonition of James 1:27 that "Pure and undefiled religion . . . is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." This scripture became their polar star and rallying cry.

This is their story, a living memorial to their faith and vision. You can imagine yourself one of them, sit in those prayer meetings, feel their concern, join in their anticipation, experience their discouragement, celebrate their victories, and hope for God's blessing, as they became more and more involved with





throughout the book according to the use of the time.

Third, we have used the NBA system of capitalization. Throughout NBA's history, the word "Home," which always had a connotation of "family," has been capitalized when it refers to one or more NBA institutions. Association and Central Board are also capitalized for the same reason.

Fourth, we have labored long and hard over the names for women. NBA was a woman's organization from the beginning and many of the women in it indicate, through their correspondence and speeches, that they were truly liberated and liberating women. We think that many of them would be in sympathy with current trends. Wherever their names are found on an official document (e.g., the Charter), the names in this 1987 text are exactly as they are found on the document. In all other cases, we have used women's given names (or the nicknames by which they were known to their sisters), if that information was available. Whenever a woman is denominated by her husband's name and initials, it indicates that we have not been able to find her given name. If we need justification for the seeming inconsistencies, it should be noted that there was no consistency in the way that the women listed their names in the primary accounts.

NBA has had three full-time Presidents and all three are still active and alert. We appreciate the time that Orval D. Peterson, William T. Gible, and Richard R. Lance gave to us so generously, and their candid responses to all our questions. We were fortunate to be able to interview at length four editors of *Family Talk*: Bess White Cochran, Jessie Burke, Nancy Wahonick, and Arthur Buell; they have been more helpful than anyone can imagine. William Mauk, NBA's Associate Director of Communications, has spent weeks locating the right photographs for us; to him we are grateful. Special appreciation is also due Donald Hiscox and Lois Flanagan of NBA, and James Seale and David McWhirter of The Disciples of Christ Historical Society for their help in locating resources and persons throughout the project.

We are grateful to the scores of people, too numerous to mention, who have granted interviews, researched details, perused rough drafts, and sent us materials. Staff members of NBA have been generous with their time and support in every instance. Everywhere we traveled we found administrators, employees, and volunteers eager to share their enthusiasm for the NBA story.

And what a story! If we have even halfway communicated the excitement we felt as we "delved into the musty, dusty tomes of memoirs and periodicals," then we have achieved our goal. The journey has heightened our spiritual awareness of those "saints" who have dedicated their lives to the admonition of Jesus Christ that, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

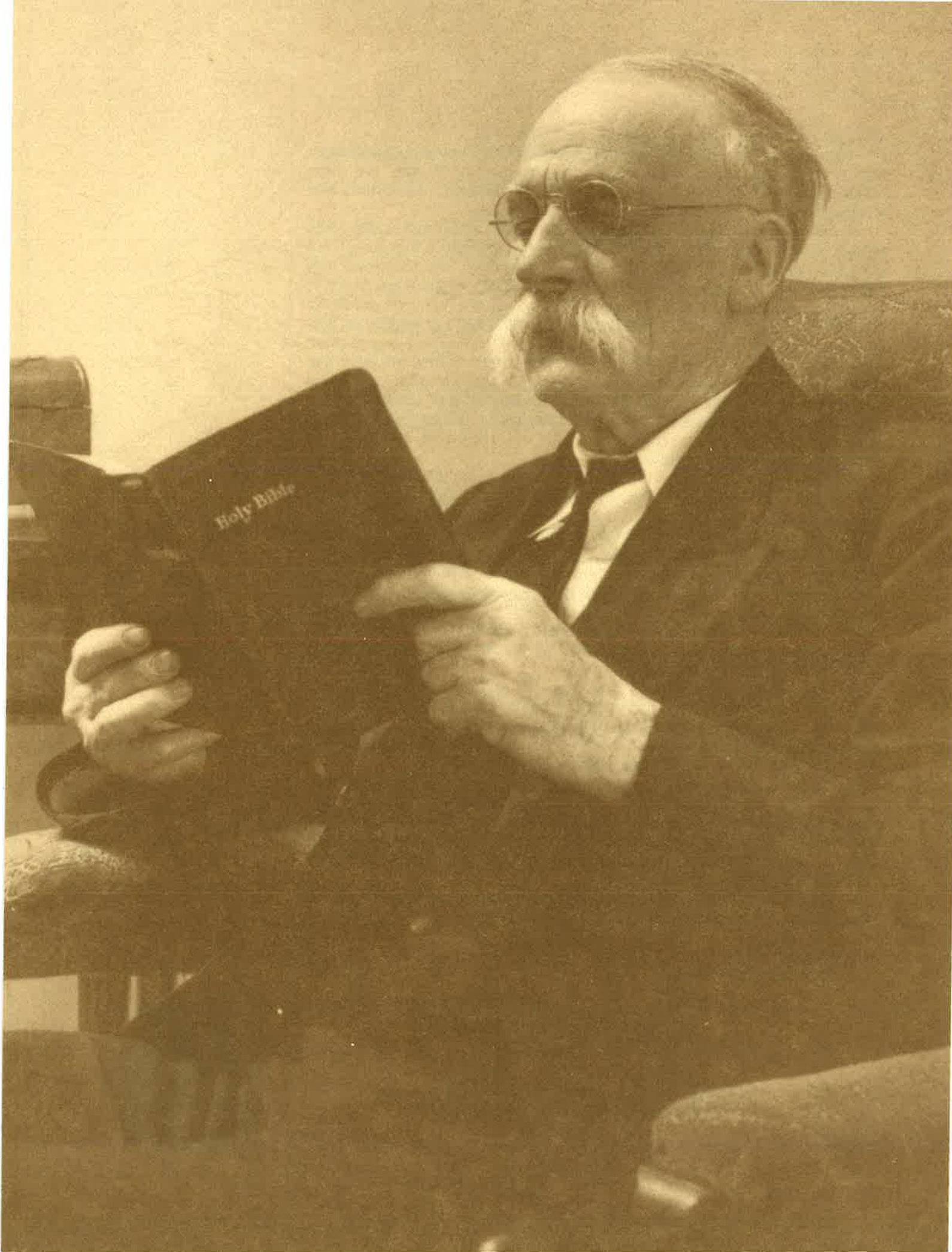
In the words of Donie Hansbrough, NBA's Corresponding Secretary for 50 years, whose recollections were our fount of information:

What is writ is writ . . . .

Would that it were worthier!

Marjorie Lee Lester  
Kiram J. Lester





## Chapter 1

### THE FIRST YEAR

It all began in a seemingly insignificant prayer meeting in 1886—in February, that month of so many NBA anniversaries. Sarah Matilda Hart Younkin gathered a group of six concerned women in a basement room of old First Christian Church at 17th and Olive in St. Louis to pray about the plight of the homeless and helpless.

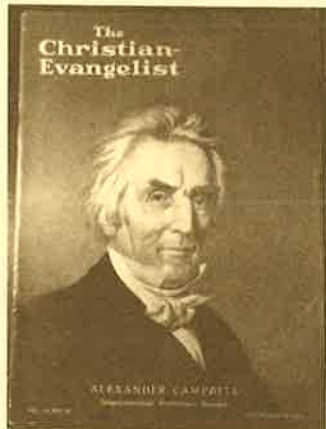
Viewed from a hundred years later, such a genesis seems all too typical of the church's frequent ineffective response to overwhelming social evil: an inauspicious, local phenomenon—hardly one to move a major denomination or to set new patterns for American Christianity. In fact, it resembles nothing so much as the rural Pennsylvania and Kentucky origins of the Disciples of Christ themselves. Of such, the Scriptures seem to say prophetically: "And although your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great" (Job 8:7). Indeed, the beginnings were local and insignificant, but from the first moment the vision was cosmic and compelling.

What was the burden of the prayers of that little band of women? We relive their spirit as they gathered informally around the gas-lit table in the church basement, through the memoirs of Donie Hansbrough, long-time corresponding secretary:

It was in the spring of 1886 that we first began talking of this great venture of faith, the venture of helping the helpless. We met informally that year to talk it over and there were no records kept of those early days. But out of those meetings our purpose gradually crystallized into form and in January, 1887, a permanent organization was effected.

We conceived as our sole purpose the task of helping the helpless—to give a home to the homeless, to provide care for the sick and comfort for the distressed. In other words, the purpose of the organization was to restore to the church that brotherly love and benevolence taught by Christ and practiced by the disciples in the early days of the church.

Although these women heard with renewed freshness the Biblical exhortation to help the afflicted, they were not the first Disciples to recognize the necessity



of benevolence in the Disciple plea for the restoration of New Testament Christianity. Alexander Campbell himself not only spoke and wrote often on the obligations of Christians to care for the needy, but also regularly included in his own household several indigent pensioners.

From the beginning, Disciples were fiercely free and anti-institutional, having been born as an evangelical missionary society in the midst of hundreds of such societies spawned by the Second Awakening, the religious and social revival that swept like a prairie fire through America and Western Europe between 1790 and 1820. Although these Reformers were pro-benevolence, their churches and leaders were pragmatically opposed to para-church societies because they recognized that these early associations tended to fall under clergy control and become instruments of sectarian pride and expansion, no matter how ecumenical and democratic had been their origins.

The early Disciple churches were generally small and rural, as was most of America. The care of the needy, both old and young, was a local and an individual matter. Campbell's inclusion of elderly pensioners in his family circle was a common enough phenomenon to elicit no comment or praise by his followers and associates. Some congregations developed elaborate systems of shepherding to assure that any need in the community was met immediately. One church in Illinois built two houses just to care for the elderly and disabled of their own congregation.

As America and the Disciples changed in the post-Jacksonian era, so the needs for and the approaches to benevolence changed. Even before the state systems of universal free education, Disciple leaders responded to the gender gap in American education by establishing schools for females. But at a time when there were so many orphans, who would educate orphaned girls?

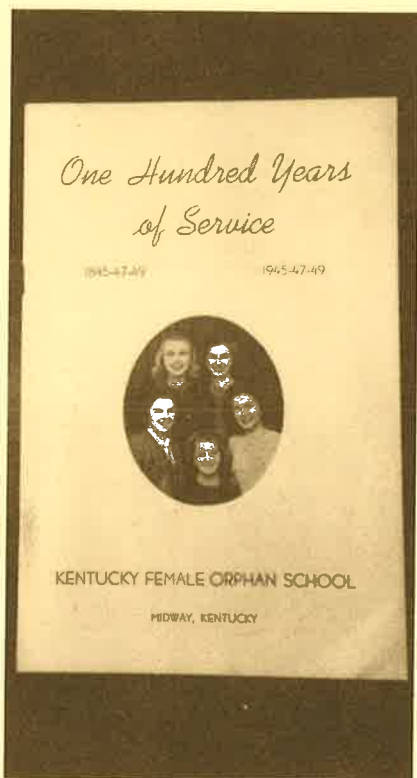
In 1846, L. L. Pinkerton of Midway, Kentucky, shared with the churches his dream of a school for orphaned females. Out of his vision and the committed sacrifice and work of James Ware Parrish and John T. Johnson, the first Disciple benevolent institution emerged in 1849. The Kentucky Female Orphan School is now known as Midway College. Walter Scott's effort to start a similar institution for orphaned boys never came to fruition.

Kentucky Female Orphan School served as the model for most Disciple benevolent institutions in the late 19th century. Soon after the Civil War, the Missouri Disciples began a female orphan school at Camden Point. Later, Add-Ran College, the forerunner of Texas Christian University, included an orphans' department. Of these institutions only the Missouri institution had any kind of official denominational status; all were educational institutions and were dependent upon obtaining a sufficient paying clientele to make it possible for them to serve the indigent orphan.

The post-Civil War period in America was a time of rapid social change. An agricultural society with its insatiable appetite for unskilled labor had heretofore guaranteed a place for most orphans in the fields and kitchens of neighbors. Now economic dislocation in the South and industrialization in the North altered the situation.

But some good came from this. As children ceased to be seen as cogs in the wheels of economic productivity, concern for their welfare grew. This was a natural outgrowth of the crusade for public education. The nation's destiny rested on its future citizens. There was a growing recognition that children were individuals who needed careful preparation for adulthood.

Still, the idealism never caught up with the reality of expanding industrializa- tion. In the transition to a world that became increasingly mechanistic and



pluralistic, cities became cauldrons of poverty and disease; social and medical technology had not kept pace. Many children suffered the misery of being left parentless or of being abandoned on doorsteps. By 1880, the streets of American cities had become the only home for tens of thousands of children. J. H. Garrison, editor of the *Christian Evangelist*, wrote in 1887: "The terrible struggle for bread so absorbs people, they have little time for anything else."

In the maelstrom of late 19th-century industrialism and social change, Disciples made two additional attempts to deal with the plight of indigent orphans. In 1882 the Fanning Orphan School was chartered in Franklin, Tennessee, to train "destitute orphan girls in letters, industry, morals and religion." The school's philosophy that "it is much cheaper to educate and train mothers to lives of usefulness than to deal with their children as outlaws and criminals for generations to come" indicates that some awareness of the problems of urbanization and industrialization was beginning to affect even the most conservative Disciples.

In 1883, W. A. Broadhurst led the churches of Louisville, Kentucky, to establish the Christian Church Widows' and Orphans' Home. Believing that "the family was God's ordained means for the training of children," Broadhurst saw the agency primarily as a facilitator helping "the deserving orphan and the family wanting to care for it" to find each other. Thus, the orphanage was a necessary, but temporary, way-station. In its first three years, this innovative and successful home placed 25 children in Disciple homes in the Louisville area, laying the foundation for the valuable continuing work of the Christian Church Homes of Kentucky.

In another area, a concerned churchwoman named Sarah Matilda Hart Younkin could not understand why so many local churches seemed oblivious to the human misery of city slums, especially those in St. Louis where the Christian Church was strong. Her own childhood memories of losing her father made her search for ways to alleviate the hardship of the orphan and the poor. At 15 she had married a college classmate who entered the medical profession and they had moved to St. Louis in 1875. Even with two daughters, her duties as wife and mother, and her activities at Central Christian Church, she did not lessen her interest in the plight of the needy.

At 43 Mattie went back to visit her alma mater, Abingdon College (later merged with Eureka College), in Illinois. Something happened there that changed the course of her life and made her spiritual quest an eventual reality in the lives of so many others. Upon her return home, she called together a small prayer group of women and formed the sisterhood that resulted in the founding of The National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Donie Hansbrough remembers her in this way:

Vivid in my memory of the first steps in accomplishing this is the staunch character of Mrs. M. H. Younkin, the true founder of the work. Tirelessly she went up and down the land—as much as a woman could in those days—preaching the gospel of help for the needy. From house to house, from church to church, day after day she went, urging cooperation in organizing for benevolent work. It was with Mrs. Younkin that a few of us went to the office of B. W. Johnson, one of the editors of the *Christian Evangelist*, seeking his advice and encouragement in our endeavors. His gracious helpful advice and fervent prayer at that time was a tower of strength to us.

In the first or formative year of the Association, 1886, \$86.76 was all the money contributed, but it seems to me as I think of it now, we were not



Mattie and Edwin Younkin (right) with friends Willie and Fannie Ross. The Younkin children, Minnie and Carrie, are below at right.





Emily Meier



Landonia Hansbrough



Rowena Mason



Sophia Roberson Kerns

especially looking for money then. Our efforts were to lay a good foundation in plans and to get our people interested in the need of this work. *We had not the experience of any like association to guide us. There was no national benevolent association in any church body. We were pioneers in this work.*

And pioneers they were!—Mattie Younkin, Donie Hansbrough, Sophia Anna Kerns, Fannie Shedd, Rowena Mason, Emily Meier, Elizabeth Hodgen (president for the first six years), Judith Garrison, Mrs. E. M. Bowman, Ida Harrison, Mrs. B. W. Johnson, Sue Robinson, Cecelia Wiggin, Mrs. S. F. McCormack, Mrs. R. P. Leach, Mrs. J. E. Cash, Mrs. John Burns, Loulie Clarkson (mother of W. Palmer Clarkson), Mrs. T. W. Grafton, Mrs. O. B. Harris, Mrs. Wheeldon, Mrs. F. M. Dodd. They were innovators in two notable ways: First, from the very beginning, even before they obtained a corporate charter, the women recognized that the needs of the homeless and helpless in an urbanized America required both a national and a total denominational approach. Although the Disciples had spawned a host of para-church associations to advance key aspects of the church's mission in the world, no one ever suggested that such agencies should be official agencies of the church.

Furthermore, as Donie Hansbrough suggested, there were no national benevolent structures in any other denominations at the time. "Significantly, the NBA pressed far beyond the isolated and separate local benevolent activities of most Protestant churches of the time and established a protective network of institutions across the nation" (Leroy Ashby, *Saving The Waifs*, Ch. 3, pg. 70). The battle to realize that goal was rudely rebuffed at both state and national levels, but these pioneer women pressed on. It took 12 years before their efforts were recognized on the floor of the national convention of the Christian Church!

Second, the audacity of what they sought to accomplish is even more amazing when one remembers that they were women who acted with almost no encouragement, in fact, with blatant discouragement from many male church leaders. There is evidence that national women church leaders were also threatened by their zeal.

The 19th century, of course, was the era of the great national women's societies throughout American Protestantism. The Second Awakening had freed women to organize locally to "do good." By 1860 almost every congregation had its Dorcas Society, Widow's Mite Society, and King's Daughters aimed at supporting the benevolent and missionary work of the church.

Beginning with the organization of the interdenominational Women's Union Missionary Society of America in 1861 and of the Women's Board of Missions of the Congregational Church in 1868, the post-Civil War period saw the rapid multiplication of national societies in every major denomination to coordinate the missionary activity of women. Neither the fears of men on general missionary boards nor the misgivings of other women were able to halt the momentum of women's entry into large-scale and well-coordinated missionary activity. The Christian Woman's Board of Missions (CWBM), founded in 1874, was quickly the largest and most successful of the three Disciple missionary societies.

But all of these national women's societies, including CWBM, were for women, i.e., to recruit women, to develop a mission awareness in women, to harness the resources of the church's women. Such activity might first be despised by the male establishment of most 19th century denominations and then viewed with envy, but it was acceptable. After all, it was women organizing women to do women's work. But that was not the aim of NBA. These women may have received little male encouragement—so little, in fact, that they were careful

to remember every male (both of them) who encouraged them that first year— but their aim was not to organize women to care for the needy. It was to galvanize a whole denomination to restore the early church's concern for the helpless to the center of its spiritual life. Now that is pioneering!

This was their vision, but they did not wait until their ultimate goal was realized to begin their ministry to the needy. In a way characteristic of NBA throughout its history, practical application began before all the theoretical questions were settled. Dr. Sophia Kerns found a small boy, hungry, ragged, and with no family, on the streets of St. Louis. Convinced that her own church should sponsor an orphans' home, she was the first to broach the idea of such a project.

The first year ended with the work confined to helping the poor of St. Louis. The minutes report:

It was decided to send donations to Mrs. Younkin for a sick man near Mound Street (October 11, 1886). . . . Mrs. Younkin reported a ticket and dress bought for the lady who went to Mt. Vernon . . . \$3.10. . . . Mrs. Goodwin was reported as still in need as her husband had not gotten work. Mrs. Garrison promised to look after them the next day. . . . Mrs. Younkin stated that Mr. Wells, a butcher near her residence had kindly donated meat for the poor under her care. A vote of thanks was tendered him by the ladies of the society (January 24, 1887).

Mrs. Younkin had volunteered her services as missionary without any compensation; she received and distributed donations of food and clothing, plus the small contributions the Board could allow her. But the idea of a "Home" had germinated, and "as days went by our enthusiasm grew for opening a home for such as should need its care."

On January 10, 1887, the women formed a permanent organization and elected officers. They took the name, The Benevolent Association of the Christian Church. Although none of them could truly estimate the sacrifice, these courageous women had answered the call and seized their destiny. As Rowena Mason would later say, they had "taken up their crosses." Neither they nor the Disciples would ever be the same again.

If in this short story you have seen an association which conceived of itself from its small beginnings as intentionally national and denominational in scope; if you have observed courageous women who had a clear sense of mission which would require constant innovation as the needs of the helpless and homeless determined the approaches taken; if, above all, you have observed Christians who cared enough to hear with radical freshness the call of a compassionate Lord, then you have discovered key themes of the entire history of the National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).



Mattie Hart Younkin



Fannie Shedd Ayars

Judith and J. H. Garrison with sons



Waiting for admission





## Chapter 2

**"There is no time to hear you . . . .  
We are here to preach the Gospel!"**

### THE STRUGGLE FOR ACCEPTANCE

On March 10, 1887, the State of Missouri granted a charter to The Benevolent Association of the Christian Church. The charter had been signed on March 2 by Mrs. E. D. Hodgen as President, Mrs. O. C. Shedd as Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Donie P. Hansbrough as Recording Secretary, and Mrs. G. P. Wiggin as Treasurer. A young Disciple lawyer named Lee Grant handled the legal work. Those names suggest something of the stability of the association and of the dedication it inspired. Donie Hansbrough devoted the remaining 50-plus years of her life to NBA as corresponding secretary and editor. For many years she received no salary and even paid for mailing costs from her own resources. In her last decades she received \$60 per month and a room at the Christian Orphans' Home in St. Louis. Lee Grant was elected treasurer in 1905 and later became legal counsel; most of his service for the next 30 years was without salary. He continued as full-time treasurer and general counsel until June 1, 1943. Celia Wiggin, the first treasurer, eventually lived at the Home for the Aged at Jacksonville, Illinois, and died there in 1911, "having realized the benefit of the work she helped start."

In addition to the officers who signed the charter, Judith Garrison was general vice president of the Association and Mrs. Wheeldon, Mrs. O. B. Harris, Mrs. S. M. McCormack and Mrs. J. E. Cash were vice presidents representing the four major St. Louis Christian Churches. The elected Missionary and Solicitor for the association was Sarah Matilda Hart Younkin. In the very first year, the association's determination to properly credit and acknowledge all gifts led Fannie Shedd to become Recording Secretary and Donie Hansbrough to become Corresponding Secretary.

Donie Hansbrough writes:

There was not a cent in the treasury except as it was paid in for annual membership dues, and at that time the membership did not exceed a score.



Lee W. Grant

Landonia Hansbrough



It was decided that annual dues should be \$1.00 and life membership \$25, to be paid in \$5.00 annual installments, if preferred.

The president, Elizabeth Hodgen, paid for the first life membership of \$25, which was unanimously set aside as a nucleus for a "Home" building fund. Mrs. E. M. Bowman was immediately elected treasurer of the Home Building Fund.

Mattie Younkin was allowed \$10 per month for the needy. She was also allowed the same amount for her expenses, as she was elected the agent to travel to churches in Missouri, Illinois, and Kansas to interest women of the Aid Societies in becoming auxiliaries to the Association. Membership fee (\$5) for an auxiliary meant that its Aid Society would have the privilege of placing a child in the Home when it opened. Abilene, Kansas, was the first church to pay the \$5 fee as an auxiliary.

Membership in the Association grew from "a score" in 1887 to 72 in 1888. The lack of resources to open a home for destitute and homeless children did not dull their passion for, nor deter their efforts to serve, the urban needy. During the year, the women initiated a Saturday afternoon sewing school and a Sunday afternoon Sunday School in two rented rooms at 1620 North Leffing. The minister at Fourth Church "conducted a mission Bible School while plans and preparations were going on for the opening of the Home, the object to which all efforts centered from the beginning."

Along with their solicitude for the "dark continent of unexplored child suffering" was the interest in the future of Protestant Christianity, and those two concerns fit together rather well. "Save the children and you save the world!" was the rallying cry. While the debates over New Testament doctrines still raged in the Disciples of Christ, the women became aware that Roman Catholics were the only ones responding to the needs of urban masses in their city; they saw the influx of millions of immigrants to this country; and they studied a report that five-sevenths of all criminals in the United States came from homeless, neglected children. "Our neglect in the past, we are convinced, is not because of a lack of interest upon the part of the more fortunate followers of the Lord, but rather because of a lack of a system of caring for the unfortunate." They wanted to organize the benevolent impulses around the country into one organized agency to fight poverty and crime by training children for virtuous and useful citizenship. "If you have never lived in a city you can scarcely realize what a gigantic work we have undertaken," Mattie Younkin observed.

Unable to bridle their compassion any longer, the following resolution was adopted in January 1889, at a meeting held in Mrs. Hansbrough's home: "Resolved, that we rent a house and open a home for children only, until such time as in the judgment of the Association, and on the part of our Brotherhood at large, our ability shall justify enlargement of its work." Mrs. W. D. Harrison, "having a conveyance at her disposal," was made chairman of the committee to find a suitable building. Mrs. D. E. Cook offered her services as matron and said "if the Board suffered for lack of support she would suffer with it."

With less than \$50 on hand, a five-room cottage was rented at 1235 Bayard Avenue for \$25 a month. The building fund of \$181.90, together with \$119.25 from a canvass of the four churches in St. Louis, constituted the total capital with which the first Home of the NBA was opened.

On February 18, 1889, the cottage was ready for Sister Cook and the children . . . Here, then, was the beginning of the long hoped-for and worked-for Home, the Christian Orphans' Home, as it was decided it should be called.



Ida Harrison

Bayard Avenue Home



The very first child was the baby of a homeless woman who arrived on opening day from St. Joseph, Missouri, to serve as cook and general helper, therefore, our Orphans' Home was from the first a Mothers and Babies' Home also. Before long four orphans were on their way from Houston, Texas—two boys and two girls—Swedes, left orphans by the sudden death of their father. Their mother, who had been a member of the Christian Church, had died some years before. Thus we see that the first children cared for in the first Home of the Benevolent Association were not of St. Louis, nor even of Missouri, thereby showing its national interest from the beginning.

The Home was besieged with applications to receive children. During the first year, thirteen dependent children received care, and fifteen months after it was opened, the Home was so crowded that an eight-room house at 1529 Webster Avenue was secured.

A building of their own was obviously necessary but the funds for it seemed forever in coming:

Mattie Younkin took to the field, went from one to another, inspiring hope and arousing energy when reverses and discouragements came. By her enthusiasm, we were led to believe in her prophecies of success. It was she who came forward now, with a willingness to endure the hardship of a solicitor's fate. . . . Through her good work, many friends to the cause were made and our list of life members increased. (Hansbrough)

By 1891, Mattie's efforts produced sufficient results to purchase a lot on Semple Avenue. The publishers of *Young Folks* magazine, F. M. Call and W. W. Dowling, undertook a campaign to raise \$10,000 within eighteen months for the erection of a building, on the condition that the Home would be located near one of the established St. Louis Disciple churches. Combined with their promotional efforts was an exchange of the property on Semple Avenue, and the women saw their dream of a Home within reach. Appeals were made to Societies of Christian Endeavor and Sunday Schools to contribute to the new building. "Brick cards" with a view of the new building were sold at 10 cents each for the Building Fund, and hundreds of individuals and churches responded, from New York to California.

In late 1892, a 130-foot lot was purchased at 915 Aubert Avenue near the Mt. Cabanne Christian Church. In answer to an appeal from Judith Garrison, Dan Dulany of Hannibal, Missouri, sent a check for \$1,000 to build the foundation and the work was begun. O. C. Shedd made a proposition to give \$100 if 19 others would join in, to get the roof on before bad weather set in.

In April 1893, the children and staff moved to 1121 St. Ange Avenue to await completion of their own house, since "they were almost washed out by rainstorms" on Webster Avenue. Hope and grief seem always to be intertwined; it was in this temporary Home that the first death occurred. "A frail little waif had been left on our hands; . . . our little Peterkin who came to us in January went to live with Jesus in July. There he is safe."

Though stopped intermittently by lack of funds, construction on the Home moved along, and on February 1, 1894, the building was ready for occupancy:

On the first day of February, 1894, we moved our children, then 37 in number, from the rented house on St. Ange Avenue to our own new building of the Christian Orphans' Home, 915 Aubert Avenue, the first building owned by the National Benevolent Association.



Webster Avenue Home

Aubert Avenue Home



February seems to have been a propitious month for the Association. Our charter was secured in February, 1887; the first Life Membership paid in and set aside for a building fund in February of that year; the Home was opened in February, 1889; the first ground purchased on Semple Avenue, in February 1891, and exchanged for the Aubert Avenue site in February, 1893, and finally the removal into the new Home in February, 1894.

There was great rejoicing as the leaders and the residents were escorted to the Mt. Cabanne Church amidst banners that Sunday morning. An important milestone had been reached; a new era of benevolence had begun. This event marked the beginning of real growth for NBA, for benevolence among the Christian Churches, and, in fact, for the self-conception of these scattered congregations as one body.

But, if the women expected success in securing a Home for homeless children to move the care of the destitute to a central role in the Disciple mission or to win a reluctant denomination's acceptance of the Association as the responsible instrument of benevolence, they were soon disillusioned. Acceptance was a victory much longer in coming. The historical details—dates, names, places—often obscure the disappointments that were a part of the continuing struggle toward that goal. Even memoirs tend to minimize these discouragements.

In those years the national assembly, known as the General Convention of the Disciples of Christ, was a mass meeting sponsored annually by the "accepted" mission agencies of the church. Recognition of NBA at this annual meeting was crucial to its support and expansion, but it would also have increased the already vigorous competition for support that characterized the relationships between the "accepted" sponsoring agencies.

Although NBA had the support of J. H. Garrison, the influential editor of the *Christian Evangelist*, these energetic women, including Judith Garrison, were rebuffed regularly by both the General Convention and the state conventions. But their anguish did not deter them. Finally, in an action that was typical of the women, they called their own convention:

Since we had not been able to get this work of our Benevolent Association before our brethren in the Annual Conventions, our Board decided to have a Convention of our own, hence in September, 1892, a Convention of two days duration was held in the First Christian Church, at that time located at 3100 Locust Street. Brethren and friends near and far were invited. The record of that gathering says it was a convention seldom equalled in excellence of papers and speeches . . . The amount of \$915.25 in cash and pledges was contributed and much interest manifested.

At last, in 1895, the women succeeded in getting the General Convention in Dallas to consider a petition to recognize the NBA as an official agency of the church, only to have a hostile majority table the resolution. Leo Ashby said:

The sarcasm she (Mrs. Younkin) confronted in Dallas grew partly out of opposition to establishing a national organization separate from the church, but the fact that Younkin was a female unquestionably sharpened the hostility of her opponents. According to the association's magazine, 'elders, ministers and convention managers, who saw no place for a woman in the program of the church,' battled her again and again.

Friendless at its birth and born in weakness and obscurity, 'the beginning

Judith and J. H. Garrison



of NBA owed far more to the tenacity of these women who battled considerable odds than it did to enthusiastic recognition from Christian congregations across the country.'

To boost support, NBA's Finance Committee in 1893 adopted Easter as the day on which Sunday Schools across the nation would be urged to collect a special offering for the Christian Orphans' Home. Widespread criticism met this announcement, because Easter was considered to be a Catholic holiday. A substantial Easter offering (\$3,000+) was received that first year, and NBA continued the practice for 32 years, until it was relinquished in 1925 in favor of a Christmas offering.

NBA's history of distinguished promotional publications began in May 1894, with the first issue of *The Orphan's Cry*. For some time, the Board had been discussing a publication to further the aims of their work and to encourage donations to the building fund. F. M. Call agreed to edit and publish the monthly for two years, i.e., until the building was paid for and finished.

After F. M. Call's two years, Rowena Mason came to the rescue in 1896 by assuming the necessary expense for publishing *The Orphan's Cry* until subscriptions and advertising should make it self-supporting. Mrs. Hansbrough became editor and manager, and her home became the office where it was made up and sent to the Christian Publishing Company to be printed. Boys from the Orphans' Home delivered the handwritten copy back and forth to the printers in flour sacks until the volume became too large to carry. Then Donie Hansbrough took the addressed wrappers to the publishers where she would fold, wrap, and mail the little paper to more than 1,000 subscribers.

In order to procure funds, strawberry festivals were held, "entertainments" and lectures were given. Summer boat excursions begun in 1894 helped with expenses of the Home for several years. John Burns, a life member of NBA and a St. Louis publisher, conducted these excursions on his side-wheel steamer "City of Providence" on the Mississippi River, charging adults 25¢ and children 15¢, plus 25¢ for a meal.

But the most important support came from contributions, large and small, and the letters of encouragement which accompanied the gifts. Donie Hansbrough writes:

Being the corresponding secretary it was my duty to receive, read and answer all of these. They came from as far as Boston on the one hand to faraway Oregon on the other. I could tell you of the dear old "mothers in Israel" who, with feeble, trembling hands, sent sometimes \$1, sometimes as much as \$100, along with such loving words of commendation that we could not but be inspired to be better women—more worthy of the good will and the faith of these, our elders.

In answer to the many questions about the purpose and management of the Home, the Fifth Annual Report states:

We place children in good family homes whenever such are offered. We take orphans, half-orphans and other destitute children free of charge if given up wholly to us so we can put them in good family homes. When we have room we take children of worthy unfortunate parents for a limited time at a low rate of board. The Admission Committee has the right to fix the amount charged and they are guided by the circumstances in the case.



Mr. and Mrs. John Burns



No matter how many contributions were received, no matter how many boat excursions or strawberry festivals were held, the need was always greater than the financial resources available. By December 1895, there were 57 children in the Home and 210 from 21 states had been cared for since opening. The treasurer reported at the year's end:

\$4621.92	received
<u>4612.08</u>	expended
9.84	to begin 1896

The key to survival and success of the enterprise was that the vision was equally matched by unceasing physical labor and personal financial sacrifice. Board members were responsible for their committee functions: one shopped for all of the food everyday, another organized the sewing brigade, a third took care of all health matters, and so forth. Donie Hansbrough wrote thousands of letters. Even with the increased financial support, in the *Orphan's Cry* of June 1896, Fannie Shedd (Ayars) made a plea for herself as head of the Admission Committee, and for Mrs. Hansbrough: "Many think the Home makes an allowance for postage stamps and other necessities for its workers, but the fact is, not an officer receives a salary or an allowance for any of the expenses of her office."

The constant day-to-day care of a household of dozens of children fell to the matron's watchful eye and was a 24-hour job. The health of the first matron, Mrs. Cook, failed in 1891 and she was replaced by her sister, Mrs. L. E. Minton. Mrs. G. A. Longmire took Mrs. Minton's place four years later; her health failed in less than a year. Miss Mattie Williamson followed; 5½ years later, she married a minister in the Home's first wedding, a beautiful affair with children as attendants. "The most important event of 1901 was the marriage of our matron. It was with many regrets that the Board gave her up to Mr. E. B. Redd, of Platte City, Missouri." Her mantle fell on the shoulders of her sister, Tena Williamson, who had come to the Home first as teacher and then served as assistant matron for four years.

Christian physicians were similarly self-giving. Health care for the needy children was a constant concern of the women. Childhood diseases tended to hit the home in epidemics. Without the many hours given by devoted physicians, the agency's task would have been impossible. Included in the many like comments, Donie Hansbrough writes that during the prevalence of measles and pneumonia in 1894, "we were served by the efficient and devoted services of our Brother, Dr. Nifong, and of the able staff of specialists he had secured for the Home, all of whom served without charge.

Gradually, however, the work was being recognized. The first bequest was received in 1896, a legacy of \$500 from Frank Mansfield of Illinois. Characteristic of the Association, this \$500 was invested as "the nucleus of an endowment fund for the Christian Orphans' Home." Also in that year, Mr. Martin Lammert, a St. Louis philanthropist, offered to furnish the bricks and labor for a two-story addition to care for the rapidly expanding family.

The "feeble, pleading, outstretched arms that needed help" and their own oneness growing out of the urge to live socially purposeful lives in a society that offered few culturally acceptable public roles for females drove them on in the face of frequent, humiliating rejection. They were frustrated again and again, and often insulted, in their bid to be recognized as an agency of the church. As Nancy Wahonick, the fourth editor of *Family Talk*, said in the 90th



Anniversary issue, Mattie Younkin, who became the first ordained woman Disciple minister in Missouri in 1895,

nagged the chairmen of conventions in her efforts to get five minutes, or even three minutes, to say something about Benevolence, a time when that theme was not recognized. She would hang around the foot of the steps to the platform, waiting for a chance to make a dash for it if some scheduled speaker was a bit late or if there should be some slight crevice in the program into which she could slip.

At one state convention a preacher, in refusing her permission to speak, blurted out, "There is no time to hear you—we are here to preach the Gospel!" Others, however, such as Isaac Errett, gave up part of their allotted time so that Sister Younkin could be heard.

At the 1897 national convention in Indianapolis, the Association was allowed to display literature in the basement of the church along with other societies and, for the first time, they were granted a hearing when C. C. Smith gave them ten minutes of his time on the program. The next year NBA was allotted ten minutes of its own by the Convention, and Emily Meier, the president, gained many friends "by her earnest, clear explanation of our work and our hopes, and to ask for their endorsement and co-operation in the future." (Hansbrough)

The stage was set for a change when the Disciples met in 1899 at their Golden Jubilee Convention in Cincinnati. Benevolence was given a full session for a Conference on Orphan Homes and Kindred Benevolences. The addresses given that afternoon are still emotionally compelling almost a century later. Especially moving was the report of Rowena Mason, President of the Christian Orphans' Home:

The history . . . unfolds the darkness through which its workers have passed, and the gleams of light which have encouraged them . . . as they carefully wended their way along.

The Benevolent Association worked in a quiet way for three years, visiting the poor and needy, and relieving the distressed. . . . By this method we were enabled to become acquainted with the hidden life, the heartrending conditions of some of these people. . . . When our missionary reported the case of . . . four little children, we believed this appeal contained a divine message to us to open our arms and hearts to such as these. So after great deliberation and prayer, we hastened to prepare a home for needy and friendless children. . . . Our methods were primitive and our experience often awkward; but this we expected, and took up our crosses as they came. . . .

You must not think running an Orphans' Home is all roses without any thorns. . . . It is said a person can get used to anything, (but) there seems to be no one on our Board who has learned the art of withstanding the collector successfully. . . . (and think of) the serious responsibility of the Admissions Committee, who must sit in judgment upon the worthiness or unworthiness of applications. The child—look at its needs—see its pinched face, its tattered clothes, its neglected body! . . . These decisions are often made through sleepless nights, through heartaches and bitter, unseen tears. I know something of the anguish these women endure at times. O, God bless these women who are faithfully performing this work. . . .

(In ten years) we have taken into our Home, to give food and shelter, 570 children, exclusive of babies. . . . We have placed 170 children in good



Mattie Hart Younkin

Staff with children



homes. . . . We have given employment and temporary help to 65 women, by boarding their children while they could better their condition. . . . We have (planned) an industrial department which will be invaluable to those who are liable to spend their lives under our charge, e.g., the four bodily disabled children now in our Home, (and no other four have been such a blessing to us . . . their lives are sweet sermons).

Someone has said, "Physically the world grows wider as the mountaineer climbs." Thus it has been with us. As we have ascended this rugged height, the vista has been broadened—our possibilities enlarged, our hopes brightened,—and now we see so much to do that we knew not of before, have learned better to climb, have been given opportunities that we never could have had, only that we have grown into them.

At long last, on Thursday, October 19, 1899, the Golden Jubilee Convention of Disciples passed the following resolution recognizing the Association and its benevolent ministry as an important part of the Christian Church:

WHEREAS, There is a Benevolence Association of the Christian Churches with a central Board in St. Louis, organized for the work of general benevolence, such as the establishment of orphanages, homes for the aged, the afflicted, etc.; and

WHEREAS, Said Benevolence Association has been in effective operation for a number of years, and has done much toward the accomplishment of its purposes; therefore

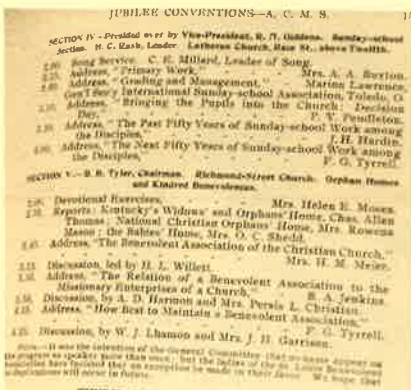
RESOLVED, That we heartily approve this work of national benevolence, and commend the association to the brotherhood.

It was twelve years in coming, and not all who began the journey together lived to see its completion. Mattie Younkin had been forced to give up her work of traveling for the Association because of a three-year battle with cancer. According to her daughter, when Mattie traveled for NBA, "she carried a heavy valise—not like the light-weight ones of today. She wore a corset with steel stays, which dug into her breast as she carried the valise. Later, a sore appeared which developed into cancer." That cancer caused her death on October 13, 1899, the same week that the resolution at the Convention had passed.

As the sisters left St. Louis for Cincinnati, they each called on her for her blessing, and they telegraphed her as soon as they were sure that the effort would prevail. To her it seemed "like the Sweet Sound of Heaven." Like Moses, she stood on Mt. Nebo. She had fought the good fight and the victory was hers! "The future of the Association is assured. God is guiding and supporting it, and what can prevail against it?" she said.

Among the scattered papers of Sarah Matilda Hart Younkin was found this poem written in her hand. Perhaps it was her valedictory:

I know my hand may never reap its sowing  
 But yet some others may  
 And I may never even see it growing—  
 -short my little day.  
 Still I must sow  
 Tho' I go forth with weeping  
 God grant the harvest!  
 Tho' I may be sleeping  
 under the shadows gray.





In the Aubert Avenue Home







Opposite—  
Juliette Fowler Home (1929)

St. Louis Christian Orphans' Home—  
George Snively and Donie  
Hansbrough (center)

## Chapter 3

### THE SWEET TASTE OF SUCCESS

Theodore Roosevelt was both president and symbol of America in the first decade of the 20th century. Optimistic, bold, virile and chest-thumping, his vigorous health and boundless energy were proof that Horatio Alger's ethic of hard work and clean living could overcome natural weakness. He campaigned ceaselessly for reforms to bring America into the modern world, but his basic values were from the 19th century, i.e., rugged individualism, the family, the frontier, and the talented amateur.

America mirrored these values. It had recently emerged on the stage of world power and wealth. It believed Roosevelt's axiom, "Speak softly, but carry a big stick," but practiced only the latter half. The nation and its cities were booming. The flood of immigrants, "the huddled masses of your teeming shores," swept over the country like a tidal wave, and threatened to drown the very institutions which had attracted the immigrants to America. Populations of the boisterous, industrial cities exploded, growing much faster than available housing, waste disposal, and educational systems. Great wealth and abysmal poverty rubbed shoulders in the streets.

It was the Progressive Era. The great reform campaigns struggled to save basic American institutions and values from the erosion of a mass industrialized society. Compulsory public education, child-labor laws, anti-trust laws, women's suffrage, and the limitations on the work day were among the hundreds of progressive reforms of that era.

Like Roosevelt, the Progressives were ambiguous about the modern industrialized world. They affirmed the values of the 19th century—the age of the pioneer, the amateur, and the volunteer; they sought democratic reforms to take power from the bosses and give it to the masses; but the model they used was really the corporate model. They sought to replace politics with management and emphasized credentials, expertise and social efficiency. Like Roosevelt, they placed optimum value on voluntary, citizen action taken by amateurs, but their insistence on the quality of public service guaranteed that the institutions they founded would require professionals in the next generation. Although strongly committed to the private sector, most campaigned for the increased exercise of governmental power and responsibility.



The Progressives were especially active in child welfare. They saw children as the cutting edge of the future, the battle for the nation's destiny. Not only did they champion compulsory education, juvenile courts, and child-labor legislation, but they also started free lunch programs, kindergartens, child-guidance clinics, playgrounds, child-study groups, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and a host of other voluntary programs.

The plight of the homeless, destitute, and often delinquent child was a special problem in the Progressive Era. The escalating urbanization of a recently rural population, both native and foreign, which had heretofore required high reproduction levels, brought hordes of no-longer-needed children to the cities. The rapidly advancing industrial technology decreased the demand for child labor at exactly the same time. The period from 1880 to 1917 saw tens of thousands of homeless children dumped each year on the sewage-polluted streets of America's urban slums. No accurate figures are available, but certainly the orphaned and/or homeless children in American society numbered in the hundreds of thousands in 1900.

Progressives knew that the answer for homeless children was not asylums, those warrens with their hosts of identically-uniformed wards marching everywhere in straight lines with regimented step. Instead, family-oriented settings were demanded where care could be alert and flexible to individual differences. Preferably, some kind of "anti-institutional institutions" should be created to protect youngsters while creating an environment in which self-reliance, independence and the habits of industry could be learned. The reformers were convinced that the basic values—honesty, industry, honor and morality—could be learned in such home settings. These were the essential American values. Thus, by saving the homeless, America itself might be saved.

The women of The Benevolent Association of the Christian Church were in the forefront of a growing child welfare movement aimed at saving both nation and church. Explaining why she and the other women labored so unceasingly in those early years, Fannie Shedd Ayars said, "So many feeble, pleading, outstretched arms . . . were pointed toward us that our mother hearts could no longer endure the strain." These women found "the low wail of orphan children

or the pitiful sob of our old saints" more compelling than the acrimonious theological debates that characterized the Disciples of their time.

It was a challenge that Protestant churches, and especially Disciple churches, had not met. Only Roman Catholics and the fraternal lodges seemed to respond to the hardships of the urban poor; Fannie Ayars quoted the sad words of a Christian woman dying of consumption, "I wish I had joined a lodge instead of the church." If five-sevenths of all the criminals in the U.S. came from homeless and neglected children, then to save such children was to shape the future. Furthermore, the saving of children also meant building the church; benevolence was a form of evangelism that blessed both recipient and benefactor.

The concept of "Home" was central to the Association from the outset. The Board members of Christian Orphans' Home spared no effort to provide a loving home environment. Contrary to state institutions, children did not wear uniforms, nor march to the dining room; they had as much individual care and attention as was humanly possible. Birthdays were always made special, and children were urged to keep their own possessions and savings accounts. Individuality and special talents were encouraged, as well as participation in church and community activities. The stories in the early publications and the letters of graduates all constantly emphasize that "it was truly home."

The children admitted to The Christian Orphans' Home were either orphaned by death, abandoned, or the offspring of a widowed parent unable to provide the necessary supervision and care. They needed parental love more than anything else. Other child welfare groups might debate the definition of the adjectives: orphaned, dependent, delinquent or neglected. These women had no debate. The question was not "whether the child has living parents, but whether he has need. . . . A child is an orphan in the truest sense when denied the blessing. . . of pure, sweet love."

Once children were accepted, the matron or superintendent in the home became their parent substitute. Hers was a heroic and killing task. Yet some thrived under it. Mrs. Bettie R. Brown, a tiny lady from Tennessee, came to The Christian Orphans' Home in 1905 to replace the beloved "Miss Tena" Williamson, who had left a year earlier. She stayed 45 years and was mother to more than 5,000 children through the years. She worked with staff, community, and church in helping youngsters develop into productive citizens.

These guardian angels—the Superintendents—had to be disciplinarians, correcting manners and checking report cards, as well as seeing that the children were properly clothed and fed. She had to comfort the child whose mother or father failed to appear on visitors' day. She had to find ways to encourage special talents—all this, while conducting the business of the Home 24 hours a day, in constant fear that there would not be sufficient money at the end of the month to pay all obligations. Many times in those early years, the grocer, the milk man, and others had to wait for their money. Mrs. Brown demanded that the children of the Home have the best and that they be able to participate in activities on an equal basis with other children in the community.

From the beginning, the Association agreed that no institution could successfully meet the demands of parenthood, even with an angel for a matron. Many child-savers went further, being convinced that the only sensible approach was to place dependent children directly in family homes through adoption, foster care, or indenture. But some of those idealists never faced the reality that certain children could never be placed.



Bettie R. Brown

St. Louis Christian Orphans' Home  
(1903)



Mothers' and Babies' Home,  
St. Louis



NBA assumed that family placement was the best possible resolution for most orphans, but it was not always a possibility. An early annual report states that while 61 children were placed with families that year and nine were returned to relatives, 66 more were admitted to the Home, including 17 returnees who were not well-located in their adoptive homes, i.e., either the children or the adoptive parents were not satisfied after the six-month trial period. And, of course, there were the children like "Clara and Nellie—our dear little hunchback girls," who were difficult to place in homes.

However, starting a "Home" for orphaned and destitute children, no matter how new to Disciples, was not what made the Association innovative. After all, 247 homes of similar nature were established in the United States between 1890 and 1900. What made the women pioneers was their 20th century vision that their little organization could make an effective difference by uniting a denomination's response to the destitute homeless. They intended to bring order out of the chaos of strictly local responses to the social evil and to "harness the mighty Niagaras of wasted heart-power" on projects that would make an effective difference to the needy. It is not surprising that words like management, organization, efficiency, expertise and scientific methods, all characteristic of 20th century corporations, occur so frequently in their publications.

In 1887, and for a long time thereafter, all Protestant benevolent enterprises, as well as most of the Catholic and fraternal efforts, were local, separate and scattered; Disciples did not have a monopoly on local autonomy. From the earliest days these women planned to establish a protective network of institutions across the nation. The fact that no national benevolent association existed in any denomination did not deter them. While there was as yet only one home, they worked out many of the basic issues of ownership, management, promotion, mutual responsibility and investment which still characterize the relationships between NBA and its 62 homes in 1987.

LeRoy Ashby may be correct in observing that the origins of NBA owed little to its recognition by Christian congregations across the country. Denominational leaders, observed Edgar DeWitt Jones in 1909, continued to keep NBA

on the periphery of the Christian Church's vision, and most local congregations gave no place to its work. Nevertheless, as far as the women were concerned, the acceptance of their work as the responsibility of the church and the acceptance of their organization as the *national* Benevolent Association of the Christian Church was central to their vision and their mission. When it came, they were ready to grow.

AND GROW THEY DID! In fact, a second institution had just been established in 1899 when the Disciple convention recognized the work of NBA. By 1908, they had six homes for children or babies, three homes for older adults, and two small hospitals.

NBA's new institution, The Mothers' and Babies' Home, had its origin in the 1897 expansion of the Christian Orphans' Home. At that time, the Home began accepting children under two years of age. Memorial funds for a separate room to care for babies had been accumulating from "donations of mothers all over the land who had given back to God their little ones." Although the intentions were good, it soon became evident to everyone, and especially to Fannie Shedd, that a home with a family of 95 active youngsters was no place to care for babies and new mothers.

O. C. Shedd, Fannie's husband (who was also a Central Board member), attended the crucial meeting in the spring of 1899. A vote was scheduled to establish a separate home for babies. Fannie expected him to vote against her. Asked later why he had supported the motion, Shedd replied, "I had to do it in self-defense, fearing if it were voted down a Babies' Home would be established on the third floor of our own home!"

The Mothers' and Babies' Home was opened in St. Louis on June 1, 1899, as an experiment. It grew rapidly. A larger house was soon rented and eventually a hospital section was added. The report to the Central Board on February 20, 1900, affirmed: "During six months of their existence the Mothers' and Babies' Home cared for 85 babies, found excellent homes for 15, secured work for 25 women, and gave temporary shelter to 31 women."

There were obvious problems from the beginning although the full story is no longer recoverable. The usually detailed board minutes become terse and opaque at this point. The surviving pioneers of that first decade continued to feel the pain as long as they lived. The fault is clearly on both sides. Fannie Shedd (Ayars) was strong-willed—some said domineering—and many on the Orphans' Home Board felt threatened by the competition for financial and volunteer support.

After a period of "unpleasantness and many heartaches," the Central Board informed Fannie Shedd that it would no longer be responsible for any debts or acts of the Mothers' and Babies' Home. Later, on May 21, 1901, the Board recommended that the Home become a *Protestant* Mothers' and Babies' Home so it could draw support from other denominations—the reasons given that: the clientele of the Home was primarily local instead of national; there were not enough competent women on the board to run the Home properly; expenses were great, mortality rate high, committees were not well-organized, and too much power was exercised by the treasurer. (Fannie Shedd was the treasurer of the Mothers' and Babies' Home Board as well as the Recording Secretary who took the notes of the Central Board meeting!) The Mothers' and Babies' Home Board was given six months to make the changeover and incorporate into a separate institution.

However, one year after the NBA-initiated separation, the Mothers' and Babies' Home returned as an auxiliary of the Association and then became a



Fannie Shedd Ayars



Mothers' and Babies' Home Nursery (1909)

Mothers' and Babies' Home and Christian Hospital





Cleveland Christian Home



Colorado Christian Home in Denver (1907)

Colorado Christian Home in Denver (built in 1910)



full participant that October. Within a year, this home had been divided into two facilities: The Babies' Home and the Christian Hospital and Training School for Nurses, which continued to be NBA institutions until 1911.

Cleveland Children's Home, NBA's fifth institution, came into the Association through a different, but typical, route. (The third and fourth institutions were Homes for the Aged, which are discussed later.) In 1901, a dedicated Disciple minister, Rudolph Henry Timme, who was a missionary to German immigrants under the sponsorship of the Cleveland Disciples Union, opened "In His Name" Home for 30 children in a 16-room house in Cleveland's urban slums. Too many children and not enough money soon forced him to appeal to the Cleveland Christian churches for assistance and they, in turn, appealed to the NBA. The Cleveland Christian Home for Children became an NBA facility in 1903, and two years later the "family" moved into a beautiful old residence on the six-acre Bosworth Farm overlooking the city and Lake Erie.

The story of the Timme family and Cleveland Christian Home goes on for another generation. Years after NBA had taken over the Cleveland Home, Timme died leaving a widow with three small children—Esther, Annette and Henry. They lived on his insurance as long as they could and then were brought to the Home in the early 1920s. Mrs. Timme became the cook for the Home and her three children grew up there, went to college, and graduated to become valued citizens.

In the Association's early days, many leaders and benefactors had experienced personal tragedies that made them especially sensitive to the plight of the homeless and the destitute. We have already noted that the original facility of the Mothers' and Babies' Home was paid for by gifts from mothers whose own children had died. Mattie Younkin's father died in her childhood and his destitute family had to farm Mattie out to her grandparents. Emily Meier was the daughter of a riverboat captain; when he died she became an impoverished orphan. Rowena Mason lost her only child in infancy and her husband five years later. Donie Hansbrough had no children except the family of the Christian Orphans' Home where she lived after her husband died. Juliette Fowler's husband was killed by a drunk at a picnic; her first child had only recently died at the age of nine months and her son, who was born soon after his father's death, died at age two. She became benefactor of the first NBA home in Texas.

Colorado Christian Home, NBA's sixth unit, was the result of personal disappointment. For years, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Warren, a childless couple of modest means, had dreamed of building an orphanage. In 1902, they generously deeded their farm at Loveland, Colorado, to NBA. It was an opportunity guaranteed to thrill the heart of any Progressive Era reformer. These child-savers shared deeply the American belief in the positive value of rural life, the conviction that farm life was structured to inculcate the virtues of family and home. Measuring success by how far they had moved from the sterile environments of the hated institutional asylums of the past, the progressive child-savers organized many farm-institutions, such as, Allendale Farm, and the Wisconsin Home and Farm School, to save homeless children from possible urban delinquency and crime. Now NBA had its children's farm, with a building erected through the bequest of Mrs. Mary McMillen in memory of her husband, a pioneer Disciple pastor at Loveland.

The Loveland Home opened in 1905 and housed an average of ten youngsters. It soon became apparent, however, that the children were too small for farm work and needed a good school system. In 1907, the Home moved to



Denver, first to a rented home, and then to a new brick building in 1910. This was the first NBA facility in the "Far West," and "opened the door of mercy in the Rocky Mountain country." It must be added that the Warrens continued their wise and generous support for three decades.

Few stories of commitment to the plight of the homeless are more inspiring and more practical than that of Juliette Peak Fowler of Dallas, Texas. Arising from personal tragedies greater than most have to bear, she devoted her life to the church and to orphans. She gave more than money; she died on one of many trips on which she sought to discover the most progressive ways of caring for orphans. At her death in 1897, much of her estate was designated for the establishment of Homes for orphans and indigent aged women.

The committee from the Texas churches shared the progressive agrarian dream. Preferring to leave the 15 acres of choice real estate which Juliette Fowler had purchased for the Homes on the eastern edge of Dallas, they established a Children's Home in a rented house on a 200-acre farm at Grand Prairie, about 10 miles west of Dallas.

The Texas committee immediately began construction on the girls' building, "Faith Cottage," so-called because there was not enough money on hand when the work began. Lack of funds soon halted the work. In the meantime, the local board offered the home to NBA in an effort to unify Disciple benevolent work. In June 1904, the Association accepted its seventh institution, Juliette Fowler Christian Orphans' Home, and immediately advanced the money to complete Faith Cottage.

Here, as at Loveland, experience once again proved that, in the operation of a large farm, either the farm or the children would be neglected. The farm was sold after ten years and the children were moved to a new facility on the Juliette Fowler 15-acre tract in Dallas.

As the work of NBA became known in the churches across the country, the need for a home in the Southeast was seen as crucial. In 1902, the Women's Society of Georgia Missions with the help of "Grampa Davis" (Dr. J. F. Davis) and Mr. and Mrs. L. Gill founded an industrial school, an institution with a similar concept of skill-building as the children's farm, located in the southern Appalachians at Baldwin, Georgia. At the request of the Georgia Missionary Society, the school was deeded to NBA in December, 1905, and the Southeastern Christian Orphanage was opened in the Baker Hotel on January 1, 1906.

The Baldwin home was strengthened by a merger with the Christian Orphans' Home in Dewdrop, North Carolina. Dewdrop was located on the Tennessee-North Carolina border in one of the poorest and most isolated regions in the Southern Appalachians. It had been opened in a log cabin by a recent graduate of Johnson Bible College, Ira Cowling, "for the benefit of all the poor children who live within its reach" and as "a refuge for those who have lost their parents, or whose parents are so poor that they cannot provide properly for their children." In 1908, Cowling "combined all his interest with NBA." The school and Home became part of the Southeastern Christian Orphanage; Cowling became superintendent of the Baldwin Home and his wife became matron.

The Baldwin facility served an important local ministry; the school enrolled 60-100 students and the Baker Hotel provided a residence for 29 orphans. But Baldwin itself proved too small to provide essential medical care and too isolated to provide access to necessary regional support. In 1911, the Home was moved to Atlanta. First, it was situated in a rented house, next in an old, decrepit hotel with 22 rooms and then, in 1919, in an historic building used by General Sherman as headquarters during the Civil War. It was not until 1929



Juliette Fowler Home, Grand Prairie, Texas



J. F. Davis lived at the Home, kept the books, maintained the gardens and stock, and contributed \$50 of his own money each month

Faith Cottage in Baldwin, Georgia





Handwritten note on the back of photo: "Cowling Banks of N. C.— A namesake of the superintendent of the Southeastern Christian Orphans' Home. His father died in November 1906 and his mother the following July. He was thinly clad and barefooted at his father's funeral which was conducted in the open air at the cemetery during the falling of a snow. He has been under the care of the Home at Baldwin, GA since Jan. 29, 1908."

Prayer card (1912)



*He that hath pity upon the poor  
lendeth unto the Lord.*

*The infant savior of Bethlehem  
Stands knocking at the door  
In gentle tones he asks of thee,  
"Give something to my poor."*

Building that served as William Tecumseh Sherman's headquarters became Southern Christian Home (Atlanta)





Southern Christian Orphans' Home  
(1906-1911)



"The Electric Truck," Grand Prairie,  
Texas (1915)





"Old People's Home," Jacksonville, Illinois



A room in the "Old People's Home," (1902)



Havens Home



"Aunty Todd"

that this home occupied its long-anticipated permanent new building.

NBA's third unit in order of time, a home for the indigent aged, was opened in early 1900, commencing a new ministry for the Association. Donie Hansbrough tells the story this way:

Since the beginning . . . appeals had persistently come from many aged members of the church for a home in their helpless old age. Mrs. F. M. Houser, of Eureka, Illinois, had sent us \$100 as the beginning of a fund for such a Home. Our desire was to locate this home in some other state rather than Missouri, as our wish was to be national in our work. Many possible locations had been considered but none decided upon. The appeals became so insistent and urgent that we finally decided to fix up the rooms in the 6-room building adjoining the Orphans' Home . . . and take the three most insistent of the applicants; so a board of officers, with Mrs. L. G. Bantz as president and Mrs. N. E. Hopper as matron was elected. Donations of furniture and other necessary articles were obtained and in January, 1900, three old ladies were admitted . . . Mrs. Mary Cimmings, of N. St. Louis, Mrs. White, of Palmyra, Mo., and Grandma Halyard, of Joplin, Mo.

The search for a permanent location continued. Soon a beautiful 2½-acre plot with a fine old residence was located in Jacksonville, Illinois. Central Christian Church of that city and its pastor, George Snively, enthusiastically and liberally contributed toward purchasing and furnishing the home. The local board of officers and committees, with Mrs. S. D. Osborne as president, at once set about getting the house in good condition for the older people to occupy. On March 4, 1901, six elderly women celebrated their move from the temporary St. Louis facility to the newly-acquired Christian Old People's Home. Later this institution became Illinois Christian Home and then Barton W. Stone Christian Home.

Word of NBA's successful management was spreading. The fourth NBA unit, The Havens Home for the Aged in East Aurora, New York, was acquired in 1903. Named to honor the memory of its builder and owner, Ursula Parsons Havens, the project seemed doomed for one reason or another almost from the beginning. Ursula Havens was an eccentric woman who could be seen, bundled up in an old blue army overcoat, hauling from the quarry with her horses the huge stones that were to form the home's foundation. Planned as a children's home, the house was never used for that purpose. During its construction, Mrs. Havens kept three friendless children. After that experience, she felt people were more likely to take children into their homes and decided the new building was better suited for the elderly. Unable to open her home for that purpose before her death in 1892, her husband in 1893 gave the building to the New York State Missionary Society of the Disciples of Christ. Opened in 1895 and operated by three women for seven years as a Home for the Aged, the Society, finding it too great an obligation, offered it to the NBA.

The Association accepted the East Aurora facility with the proviso that it function under the same conditions and control as the other NBA homes. This meant it was to be operated and promoted by a local board subject to concurrence by the NBA Central Board. Although NBA had planned to operate homes simply for the indigent aged of the Christian Church, the non-Disciple oldsters currently in residence were allowed to stay if they so desired. Support for this home was never adequate, the waiting list was always long, and the facilities were lacking in conveniences and were in poor repair.

The first unit on the Pacific slope, and NBA's 10th facility, was originally a

project of the Oregon Christian Missionary Convention in 1906. The plight of 98-year-old Sarah Todd had moved the convention to action. "Aunty Todd," who lived to be 104, was a pioneer Disciple on the Pacific slope; she had been the first person baptized by the Disciples in Missouri 80 years earlier. Now alone and in need, she would live out her days in the security of a Home, thanks to the response of the Church.

In 1907, Northwestern Christian Home for the Aged became affiliated with NBA while it was still located in Eugene, Oregon. Three years later a farm near Walla Walla, Washington, was secured by the Association with the intention of establishing a Home for children. However, growing needs of the Home for the Aged took precedence and the Eugene residents were moved to Walla Walla in 1913. A second unit of the Home was taken over from the International Bible Mission in Eugene, and eventually, in 1939, the two units merged and relocated in Beaverton, Oregon.

The 1903 separation of the Christian Hospital and Training School for Nurses from The Christian Orphans' Home launched NBA into a new ministry. In December 1905, the Christian Church of Valparaiso, Indiana, sought the aid of NBA in the purchase and maintenance of the Loring Hospital, a private institution of that city. Immediate action was taken and the Valparaiso Christian Hospital and Training School came into being.

Although this institution was small and the building old, the 16-bed hospital had a good nursing school and the staff was excellent. It served only 400 patients a year, but its ministry was vital to Porter County. Patients paid \$20 per week for a two-bed room in the '20s!

NBA actually contemplated a growing hospital ministry in St. Louis, Kansas City, El Paso, Dallas and Ft. Worth at various times. Nonetheless, the Association's mission vis-a-vis local benevolent projects was clear. It made several attempts to broaden the hospital's ministry in the light of national needs, but the Indiana location and local need mitigated against these changes. Indiana legislation in 1920 required as many as 50 beds to qualify for a nurses' training program, so the 16-bed hospital had to close its nursing school. Finally, ending 33 years of service, NBA sold Valparaiso Christian Hospital in 1938 so that the Association could give full attention to the orphaned and the aged.

Yes, LeRoy Ashby is correct in noting that NBA owed more in its origins to the tenacity of a few energetic women than to acceptance by any number of Christian congregations. National recognition continued to be grudgingly given for a long time. Nonetheless, one must observe that the state missionary societies, those structures which were most closely related to the social problems that defied local solution, clearly welcomed the effort to unify the church's approach to the homeless in the second decade. Cleveland, Havens, South-eastern and Juliette Fowler Homes, Valparaiso Hospital and, to a lesser degree, the Jacksonville facility came to NBA out of state and local Disciple desires to take a unified approach to benevolence.

The 1908 annual meeting had much to celebrate. Twenty-two years had now passed since that first group of sisters had gathered in the church basement to pray for guidance. They had watched their dream grow from one small cottage in St. Louis to 10 facilities. They had officially become The *National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church*, in *fact* as well as *in name*, four years earlier. By November 1908, there were six Children's Homes, spread from Denver to Cleveland and from Atlanta to St. Louis. Although still a new ministry, three units for the aged were geographically situated in the Midwest, the East, and the Northwest, and a fourth was planned for Texas. The vision was enlarging



Northwestern Christian Home at Walla Walla, Washington



Northwestern Christian Home at Beaverton, Oregon

St. Louis Christian Hospital operating room (1909)



St. Louis Christian Hospital nurses (1909)





Betty Stockton's portrait still hangs at the St. Louis Christian Home



Oreon E. Scott

as Christians became aware of the ever-increasing plight of the elderly. NBA's ministry also included two small hospitals and schools for nurses. Each of the ten units had its separate governing board of local church women. Donie Hansbrough and Fannie Shedd Ayars had remained in official service since the beginning.

In that same 22 years, the nation had suffered several serious economic recessions, greatly adding to the human need which pressed at the doors of these benevolent women. But, by the grace of God, Christian compassion and generosity had responded to their call. Growth had been constant.

By 1908, some Disciples with significant financial resources had begun to respond to the cries of human need and to the evidence that the Association was effectively and efficiently ministering to that need with both compassion and care. The early generosity of Dan Dulany of Hannibal, Missouri, has already been mentioned. He went on from his support of the Christian Orphans' Home to provide significant capitalization for the support of retired ministers. Rowena Mason was a widow who gave generously of her substantial means both in life and in death. The story of Juliette Fowler has been told elsewhere.

Perhaps the most striking story of continuing generosity was that of Robert H. Stockton. Orphaned at twelve, he became a successful hardware merchant, then joined L. L. Culver in manufacturing ranges, and soon became a successful businessman and philanthropist. His faith embraced generous benevolence during his lifetime, and even more so at his death. No one knows the actual total of his gifts to NBA, but the recorded ones amount to well over a half million dollars.

His first major gift of record was made in 1907. When urban crowding forced The Christian Orphans' Home to erect a new building on the beautiful 10-acre site, he volunteered to contribute more than half the cost, to which he later added another \$5,000. This gift was made as a memorial to his wife, Bettie Mae, whose picture continues to grace the St. Louis facility. Although Mr. and Mrs. Stockton were childless, they continue to live through the thousands of children who have gone forth from the St. Louis Home. Later he gave NBA its first significant endowment.

A story of Mr. and Mrs. Oreon E. Scott is similar. Both came on the Central Board early in the 20th century. She became president of the Christian Orphans' Home Board in 1905 at a time of internal crisis. Until her already poor health completely broke, she devoted many hours of supervision to the new building and to resolving internal difficulties. Although Oreon E. Scott was a busy St. Louis insurance and real estate executive, he devoted untold hours and significant resources to the management of NBA during the next 50 years. Only by reading the minutes of the Association can one get a picture of the key role that this Disciple played.

These were only a few of the wealthier givers in those early years; even more moving are the hundreds of letters from people who learned the joys of generosity by giving what was in fact "a widow's mite." In fact, teaching people the joy of giving may have been NBA's greatest contribution to its denomination in the first hundred years. Both before and after 1908, there is much evidence that other mission agencies in the church feared NBA's phenomenal ability "to harness the mighty Niagaras of wasted heart-power." CWBM's attempt to preempt the Easter offering is but one example of the many that could be cited. But the more important story, still to be written, is that of the hundreds of Disciples who discovered the joy of giving when they first responded to the cry of the orphan, then went on from that generous act to undergird hospitals, colleges,

ministerial pensions, church extension and the whole mission work of the church of Jesus Christ.

The impression should not be given that the decade was one of constant victory and ceaseless advance. Economic reversals were all too common, and resources to meet the resulting human toll were never sufficient. There were internal problems as well. Their mission required strong-willed and determined women; conflict had to be expected. The local Home Boards sometimes transgressed the agreed-upon restraints of the Association, or failed to follow the directives of the Central Board.

Faced by overwhelming human need that it could never adequately meet, and striving to use its current resources to the fullest in meeting that need, the Association lived always on the edge of disaster; and disaster came January 14, 1903. That cold day Donie Hansbrough was returning from the publishing company downtown. She had just mailed the first issue of *The Christian Philanthropist*, the new journal of NBA. Getting off the streetcar into a large crowd, she suddenly realized that the Christian Orphans' Home was afire with nearly 100 children inside!

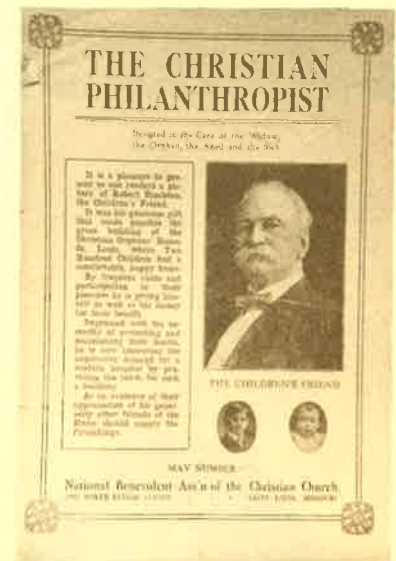
Miss Tena Williamson, matron, gives her own account of the frightening experience:

The month of January, 1903, will never be forgotten in the history of our Home . . . Suddenly in the afternoon of the 14th at 3:30 little Hubbard ran into the office . . . giving the alarm of "FIRE!"

The house was rapidly filling with smoke, and a glance toward the parlor, then down the laundry stairs, showed me the danger. Our little Hubbard, always slow of speech and action, gave us the alarm so quietly, . . . his composure led Miss Robinson to think there was no danger, but on turning, she saw the smoke coming up around the heaters and through the door out of which they must pass; she quietly told them to rise and follow her, after having the windows raised to let out the smoke which came in clouds. Without a scream or falter they followed her through the blinding smoke in the halls and out the front door. The other children came out from the other room with their teacher. As I stood to see them pass out they came from out of the smoke pale and choking, but not screaming or crying. Bless their hearts! Their obedience and composure at that trying moment is through years of effort on our part. By that time the nursery had gotten the alarm from the assistant cook, who ran through the flames up the stairs from the basement to dining room and on up to the second floor. While in her hurry she lost her purse containing most of her week's wages, and on reaching the nursery she had to put out the fire on her skirts before helping to hurry the children out the window and down the stairway. (Editors' note: The fire escapes had been added just the year before.)

Walter Brady at the time was in the nursery bathroom and was not missed until all the others were out. The anxiety was fearful for about a quarter of an hour, but at last W. W. Ring, an electrical engineer, who was at the time working close by, found the child and brought him out. He was suffocated and lifeless for a time but was soon revived. We gave thanks to God for sending such a strong, kind-hearted man, and saving our boy.

The children were provided homes for the night, with so many offering that had we had five times as many they could have been housed before dark. No one knows how the fire started, just that it began in the furnace room. . . . Soon our home will be repaired and cleaned, with the children



Two sets of twins at Child Saving Institute





George Lawrence Snively



Here is the story of a financial genius who is remarkably successful in raising money for churches. He was born in the town of Cuba and is known all over the world as the "Financia' Billy Sunday."

all back around me once more. I am homesick to gather around our family altar, where we will have many things for which to thank our Heavenly Father.

The decade had brought many changes. *The Orphan's Cry* had seemed an inappropriate name for the journal of an agency already operating a Home for the Aged and also caring for young mothers. Rowena Mason, the owner and publisher, and Donie Hansbrough, editor, changed the monthly's form and name. The first issue of *The Christian Philanthropist* was mailed in January 1903; this important journal would ultimately have a subscription list of 18,000.

Now accepted as a denominational agency, NBA soon became the master in creatively getting its message across. For example, St. Louis was the World's Fair City in 1904, as well as the host city for the Disciples' National Convention in October; consequently, the Christian Orphans' Home was visited by a great many people. A replica of Alexander Campbell's study at Bethany College was erected on the fairgrounds, where friends could meet and rest. It was a busy, but promising, time of "telling the NBA story" in the flesh. At this time there were four Children's Homes and two for the Aged. Two years later, the National Convention was held in San Francisco. A train of seven coaches made the trip from St. Louis across the country, and once again NBA furthered the "gospel of the Helping Hand" among Disciples everywhere.

However, the most important change was that Mattie Younkin was gone. She had carried the support and recognition of the Association on her broad shoulders, but cancer and death had removed her just when the Association's need for financial support began to escalate. Even before she died, the Central Board had had to hire three field men to replace her.

The age of the professional was at hand and NBA's commitment to good management and efficient service demanded that the Central Board embrace it. In 1901, the office of General Secretary was created. The monthly board minutes show the progression—first, a typewriter, then a secretary, and next....

George L. Snively was a natural for the first General Secretary. As pastor of Central Church in Jacksonville, Illinois, he, more than anyone else, had instigated the establishment of the Christian Old People's Home in that city and had assured the enthusiastic and generous support of his congregation for that ministry. Although relatively young, he had already garnered a wide reputation as an eloquent lyceum speaker and effective fund raiser. He was much in demand to dedicate new church buildings and in these sermons often raised enough money to pay off the building debt.

Perhaps equally important, Snively was a well-known public lecturer on behalf of the "New Woman." His lectures on this subject sound strikingly contemporary in 1987. He was an apt successor to Mattie Younkin. Emily Meier, NBA's president, along with a few others, paid Snively's salary "without cost to the Association."

George Snively put the system of field representatives (the promoters/fund raisers of his day) on a systematic basis. At his suggestion, on October 14, 1902, the name of the Association was officially changed from Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (BACC) to the National Benevolent Association (NBA) of the Christian Church because the latter better described the mission of the organization. The offices of the NBA and *The Orphan's Cry* were transferred to the building adjoining the Christian Orphans' Home, and Miss Elizabeth Jameson became the first employed secretary, a post she filled for 45 years spanning the tenures of four general secretaries. Snively implemented the Central Board's decisions and promoted NBA effectively until he was hired by Christian Publishing Company as an evangelist in December 1905.



Snively was replaced as General Secretary by a man who shaped and symbolized NBA for the next 23 years. James H. Mohorter, widowed father of four small children and pastor of the Christian Church in Pueblo, Colorado, had thrilled the hearts of everyone at the 1905 San Francisco General Convention with his address on benevolence: "First in the Heart of God; First in the Heart of Man." He was elected General Secretary in 1906.

J. H. Mohorter was a man of indefatigable energy, with a compassionate commitment to match. A good organizer and a strong leader, his optimism was undaunted, though always tempered by a sure sense of the possible. Jessie Burke said of him:

James H. Mohorter . . . rendered notable leadership until his death in 1929. It was during these formative years, when the first wave of enthusiasm for such an undertaking had passed, and the work was settling down to the steady, long pull of tremendous responsibility, that the firm hand of J. H. Mohorter was felt in holding NBA on an even keel, while he steered its uncharted course. NBA's lasting debt to his clear-visioned leadership, consecration, and courage is inestimable. He was known throughout the Brotherhood as the "Beloved Inasmuch Commander-in-Chief," as he charmed them in churches, groups, and conventions about this wonderful Benevolent Ministry.

Officers of the Association had been overwhelmingly female during the formative years, but once NBA gained official recognition from the church, the place of men in the organization grew noticeably. Several supportive men had served in an advisory capacity from the beginning. F. M. Wright, elected in 1901, was the first male treasurer of the organization. He was succeeded by Lee W. Grant in 1905, the lawyer who had drawn up the original charter. The growth of NBA and the financial management of investments, estates, annuities and distant property transactions increasingly called for lawyers, insurers, bankers and persons with executive experience; and women had not yet made their mark in those fields.

In 1908, NBA came to the end of an era. Fannie Shedd Ayars stepped down after three years as President, and that executive position went to a man, the first of a long, uninterrupted line. Donie Hansbrough reports: "It was then that it came about that the NBA passed into the control of the men and out of the hands of the women." J. W. Perry, vice president of the National Bank of Commerce of St. Louis, assumed the position because, in Ayars' words, "it seemed wise, for the present, to call to the leadership of this great work a thoroughly seasoned and tested business man."

But women had created the instrument, had paved the way. Theirs was the first benevolent organization on a national scale. How did they do it? How did they manage to undertake and carry through successfully such an incredible task?

It is evident from all records that the spiritual support of these late 19th-century pioneers came from their loving God, on whom they unaffectedly relied and to whom they regularly gave thanks. Bound up with their faith was a strong sense of sisterhood that runs like a thread through every triumph and every defeat. Mattie Younkin wrote earlier in *The Christian Evangelist*:

I could never have been able to do even what I have, if it had not been for the hearty support and tender sympathy of you all. Like oil on troubled waters, like a benediction of peace, have fallen over me in hours of discouragement, the cordial 'God bless you,' and cheering words of counsel and



James Henry Mohorter



Goldie—St. Louis Christian Orphans' Home

Cottage at the California Christian Home



support that have been showered upon me; and to these is due, whatever of success the work has attained. Some of us have been greatly benefitted by a sisters' prayer-meeting at 8th and Mound streets, started by Bro. Hopkins and still kept up. We have had 'seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.'

On another occasion she added:

We have gone on under difficulties that were many times appalling, with our faces heavenward, determined to carry forward the work as originally mapped out. We feel especially grateful to God, for the peace and perfect harmony that has characterized our every meeting. We rejoice in an extended acquaintance and greater unity among the sisterhood of our city, in a deeper consecration, more love for one another and gratitude everywhere for a forward movement in mission work.

The founding women were not naive, but they were sustained by the conviction that they were making a cosmic difference, that the Kingdom of God was coming and they were sharing in its ultimate triumph. Early Disciple leaders, along with most mainstream Protestant evangelicals, were post-millennialists who embraced the hope that the United States would lead the world into a period of political, religious, and moral enlightenment which would introduce the desired reign of Christ on earth. When Mattie Younkin and the children from the Christian Orphans' Home marched through the saloon districts in St. Louis, singing "Dare to be a Daniel," they were, as Fannie Shedd Ayars asserted, "an army for God and for good." (*The Orphan's Cry*) Though conditions at the Homes were not always ideal, there was a keen sense of dedication and service to both "widow and orphan" that permeated both the Homes for Children and the Homes for the Aged. They were building a better world for Christ!

Most of all, they were able to do what had to be done because they could see "the before" and "the after," and know they made a difference. Many children were rescued from pitiable situations and made to feel loved and cared for in the Christian Orphans' Home, eventually acquiring a family for themselves through the efforts at placement. Rowena Mason reported in 1905:

We receive most encouraging and interesting letters . . . one youth wrote how thankful he feels for all the blessings and benefits he received at our hands. He says we have done much to aid him in building a good character for himself and he will never forget it. He cannot know how much we appreciate his expressions of gratitude. How like a tonic they are to the sometimes over-worn and over-worked matron or committee woman, who often is tempted to feel like it is not worth the while. This boy is one of the many of our children who write us and shows by his life that our labor is not in vain.

In 1908, those fruits of their labor were becoming plain to the wider society, also, as a generation of young people from the Home were beginning to take their places in society as useful citizens:

Many of the children aided have grown and found their way into responsible positions. One is a bank teller, another a private secretary of a United States Senator, one is a minister, while others are teachers, nurses and heads of Christian families, for nearly everyone who comes under the influence of this Home becomes a Christian. (*Report of Christian Orphans' Home*)

And there continued to be many testimonies of success. In her memoirs, Donie Hansbrough points to "scores of good lives saved from poverty and some probably from worse. . . ." Various "alumni" came back to thank her for her part in their care as youngsters:

One of them was the eldest of three little boys we had cared for in the early days, letting their mother return to California where she could earn more to make a home later for them. He was now a successful bridge engineer. The other young man, now a fine business man in Missouri, came bringing a letter I had written long ago to his mother, to prove what he claimed to be, that he was the very first child taken into our Home (the cook's baby).

The staff of the Christian Orphans' Home supplied a report to *The Christian Philanthropist* (1904) about those first four orphans who had come from Texas to that small rented cottage on Bayard Avenue in 1889:

The Christian Orphans' Home's oldest daughter, Mary Forsman, made a short visit at the Home last week en route to Houston, Texas. . . . The four children, Malcolm, Mary, Ben and Ina, have been living in Colorado. . . for the benefit of Malcolm's health; but he died on April 14 of consumption, at age 25. These were the first orphans taken into our first Home. . . .

Twenty-six years later, Mrs. Hansbrough writes affectionately of

our dear little Bennie—he was my favorite of the first four children from Texas. Now Bennie is a grandfather. I met one of his sons, then a student in the University of Texas when I visited Austin not long ago.

She goes on to speak of

Minnie and Mabel Bryant, sisters, living in California; Isabel, who married one of our good young preachers, now living in Kansas City; Mamie, Lulu, Dora, Annie. . . . There were some fine boys, too, six of whom I called my reindeers because sometimes when the snow was on the ground they would take me on their sled from the Home to my home, which was only a few blocks away.

In the 22nd Annual Report, President Ayars emphasized the strain and the joy of working against formidable odds in her final year as the last woman president of the NBA:

A Year of Sorrow. . . the financial depression, felt so keenly throughout the country, greatly increased the demands upon Christian charity. Our homes have all been taxed to the limit, while hundreds, just as needy and worthy as those who found favor, were turned away. . . .

A Year of Rejoicing. . . and thanksgiving, for notwithstanding the financial stringency the year just closed has been one of the most blessedly fruitful in all the history of the Association. . . the total amount contributed was the largest of any year (\$122,301.64, a gain of \$25,322.14 over the previous year); more individuals gave; the average individual offering was larger; more Bible Schools and Churches gave; the completion of a magnificent new building for the Christian Orphans' Home, costing \$80,000. . . .

And that is the way the transition in leadership was in 1908, a time of sorrow and a time of rejoicing. Although the minutes and publication make it all seem



Minnie and Mabel return for a visit after 47 years





Landonia Hansbrough

so agreeable and smooth, later events show clearly how painful it was. It would not be easy to forgive the male takeover after the project became a success, and the years of sexual discrimination would become a part of NBA's unwritten history.

One of the results of the change was the ultimate loss of the Babies' Home and the Christian Hospital and Training School for Nurses in 1911. This is one of the most stressful events in NBA history: the minutes crackle with it but no clear explanation is ever recorded; they do record, however, that fiscal and personal tensions continued until the 1930s. Even after two decades, Donie Hansbrough still felt the pain.

Part of the problem, as is obvious from the minutes, was the natural competition between two St. Louis institutions with overlapping missions, sources of support, and kinds of needs. Related to that was a moral problem that the Mothers' and Babies' Home got into immediately and on which Fannie Ayars took a strong, somewhat scandalous, stand. The founders identified with destitute widows who were in danger of having to abandon their children in order to support themselves; that is one reason why they never came out for the idealistic position that all children must be placed for adoption. Each year's report tells of mothers temporarily accepted into the orphanage until they could find work, of the children of working widows boarded in the homes, and of widows temporarily employed. All of this was legitimate; it was "visiting widows and orphans in their affliction." But when a home was opened to care for mothers and babies, it was inevitable that the question of the care of mothers who were not widows, in fact, who had not been married, would arise. Ayars took a strong stand—all her stands were strong—that one cared for the needy mother and baby without regard to the circumstances of conception. Liberal though they were, this was too strong for some of the sisters. Remember, one reason for suggesting that the Mothers' and Babies' Home become The St. Louis Protestant Babies' Home was the criticism that "too much power is exercised by the treasurer" (i.e., Fannie Shedd Ayars).

Recently discovered documents, however, make it clear that the conflict of two strong-willed persons was probably the key to the final break. It should be added that both of them were equally admirable and equally committed to NBA and Christian benevolence. J. H. Mohorter was not called "Beloved Inasmuch *Commander-in-Chief*" for nothing. His skills as an organizer, fund raiser and effective leader were recognized throughout the Disciples of Christ and ecumenically. He made NBA able to survive the Great Depression in spite of many financial and organizational restraints.

Equally, Fannie Ayars went on to found single-handedly The Christian Woman's National Benevolent Association. She raised the funds and administered two Christian hospitals, a Children's Home, and a Home for the Aged. But her admirer, S. S. Lappin, in his comments on her death, said,

And if any one supposes that the irritations and dislikes bred of that period were all on the side of the aggressors, . . . he needs to suppose a couple of times. The contrary comes nearer the truth. . . .

At one time I might easily have associated myself with the work Mrs. Ayars had so well begun. . . . But I was deterred—and she would smile knowingly at this—by the fact that Mrs. Ayars liked to run whatever she laid her hand to . . . Two 'lead hosses' do not make a good team.

A recently discovered letter from Mrs. Ayars to a friend adds background to the conflict:

... but in time some of the older Homes became jealous of the younger and the Boards differed. About that time Brother Mohorter decided that the Benevolent Association had gotten to be too big for the women to control; that it needed a business man at the head of it, and by manuevering that would do credit to Tammany Hall they succeeded in having elected a man as president and as first vice-president, also as treasurer and himself as general secretary. So instead of a Board of women as it had been for almost twenty years, the officers now are five men and two women (December 19, 1917, letter to Mrs. Joseph Husband).

Even for the women who remained loyal to Mohorter and to NBA, the memories of the sexual discrimination that they had constantly faced in their successful struggle did not die. One issue of *The Christian Philanthropist* in 1914 was devoted to the "splendid women"—the "royal sisterhood"—who founded NBA. A picture of Mattie Younkin dominates the front page with the words, "The N.B.A., Born in Woman's Loving Heart," on the left and "The N.B.A., Led by Woman's Skillful Hand" on the right. Emphasizing that "the work of child redemption has been essentially a woman's work," one article told how Mattie Younkin had urged her vision upon a largely disinterested denomination. Another article emphasized that females run the various homes through their boards and committees. "Men have nothing to do with what we might call the domestic phase of the work . . . it is the privilege of the women to rule, as they should, as queens of these households of Christian love and service."

The same issue of *The Christian Philanthropist* went on to stress that NBA had a "fixed policy . . . to recognize the place and power of women in its work." This issue had been tested a few months earlier when NBA had assumed control of Child Saving Institute with its all-male staff and board; NBA had promptly appointed women to both the staff and local board.

Yes, the taste of success is very sweet, but often that sweetness is mixed with salt.



Mattie Younkin

Silver water pitcher given Mattie Younkin with the inscription,  
**BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION**  
of the Christian Churches  
of St. Louis  
Mrs. M. E. Younkin  
Feb. 16, 1888



Mattie Younkin



Judith Garrison

Emily Meier

Ida Harrison



Mrs. F. M. Dodd



Fannie Shedd Ayars



▼ Jane Wickersham of the Illinois Christian Home on her 100th birthday (1932)

▲ Edith, Caroline and Hayden



## Chapter 4

### UNCLE JIMMIE

The people who founded NBA took literally Jesus' words, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." But daring to care did not make them or their association unusual. Hundreds of institutions were started by "caring" persons during NBA's first two decades.

The dusty files of NBA's first 100 years reveal an Association which revolved around four traits: innovation (or pioneering), national vision, commitment, and leadership. As to the first trait, to pioneer in the care of the destitute child or oldster has required a different response from NBA in each decade, but compassion for the needy has driven the professionals and volunteers involved to be innovators and pioneers as they sought to be faithful to their mission and to respond to the changing needs of those they served.

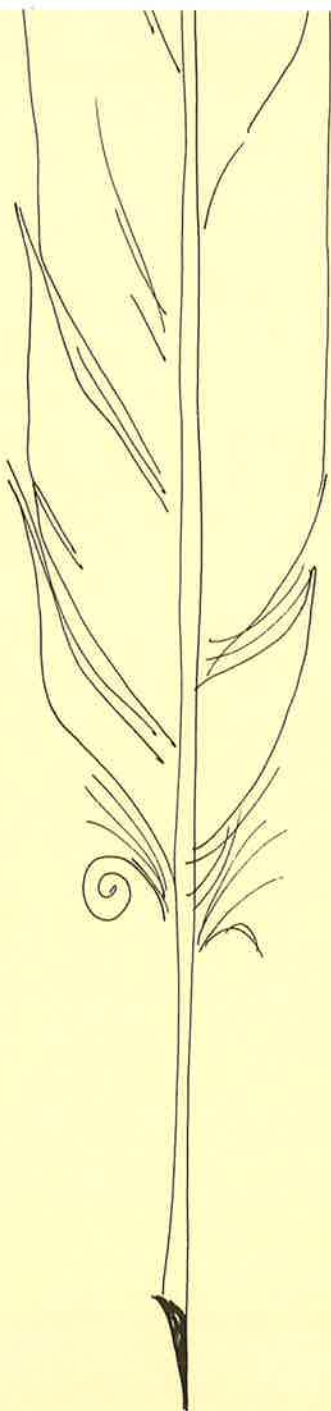
Second, although most of them were from St. Louis, the founders were committed to establishing a *national* association with a *national* mission; the minutes of the Central Board and the correspondence files show how this self-understanding shaped institutional decisions from the first months through the present time. Third, the level of commitment involved, both by the Association itself and by the long-term, unceasing, self-sacrifice of volunteers at every level, is a remarkable Christian saga to which no short book can do justice.

Fourth, NBA has had remarkably good fortune in its top leadership through the years. From Mattie Younkin through Emily Meier and George Snively, to recent national presidents, no two successive leaders have had similar administrative styles. Yet, even the most objective historian cannot avoid noting how providentially the changing leadership styles have matched the needs of the Association in each era.

Nonetheless, never in NBA's first century did the personality and style of a national leader coalesce more perfectly with the needs of the Association (and with developments in both the denomination and the wider American Protestant context) than it did in James H. Mohorter, General Secretary of NBA from 1906 to 1929. Lee Grant, long-time Association treasurer, expressed it this way at Mohorter's death:

For twenty-three years this ministry of benevolence among our people and the life of James H. Mohorter have been one. You cannot think of its growth





in the hearts of our people during this period without associating it with the life and work of our late General Secretary.

Paraphrasing the writer of Genesis, "In that day there were giants in the land." When J. H. Mohorter died at his desk, NBA and the denomination he loved had taken new shape and increased stature because of his labor. The story of NBA in those years is his story.

J. H. Mohorter, or "Uncle Jimmie" as he was lovingly known by all the NBA Home residents, both young and old, had the characteristic seriousness of a man on a demanding mission. Bess White Cochran, an early editor of *World Call*, compared him with other founding leaders of The United Christian Missionary Society (UCMS), by saying, "J. H. Mohorter was less affable than most of the men, although his heart was big." Charles E. Smith, who had worked with Mohorter, remembered, "He could be stern upon necessity, but I think he hated only sham and hypocrisy." Others who worked with him knew not only his appreciation for a job well done, but also his stern rebuke when one persistently fell short.

There was no sham or professional hype in Mohorter's concern for the needy. "The little children, the old people—all loved him because his understanding love and care went out to them," Smith and many others remembered. Uncle Jimmie's understanding of the needs of the destitute and his personal compassion for them were like that of Mattie Younkin; that is, it had always been essential to whom he was as a person of faith.

James Henry Mohorter, the eldest of six children of immigrant parents from Northern Ireland, was born in Delaware on September 21, 1860. His family was dogged by tragedy. Jimmie's father was a weaver, but fire destroyed their little woolen mill. Soon after they moved to the country to grow vegetables for market, diphtheria killed four of the children in one week. Then the father died leaving his widow and two children to survive as best they could. (Providing employment for widows so that families could stay together had always been an important NBA ministry, but it received more emphasis during the Mohorter years.) James was "bound out" to a dairy farmer for a year; later, he worked in a Newark factory as a tapestry weaver.

Mohorter was baptized as a Disciple in 1887 and preached his first sermon the following spring. Attracted to Hiram College by its association with James A. Garfield, the second "martyr president," he enrolled in 1889 to prepare for Christian ministry. After a difficult financial struggle, Mohorter was graduated in 1894. His valedictory address on "Christian Socialism" spoke clearly to the values that motivated his life thereafter. All people, he affirmed, were one—regardless of station and circumstances; for that reason, every Christian was responsible for caring for the less fortunate. It was a philosophical affirmation of the gospel of "Inasmuch . . ."

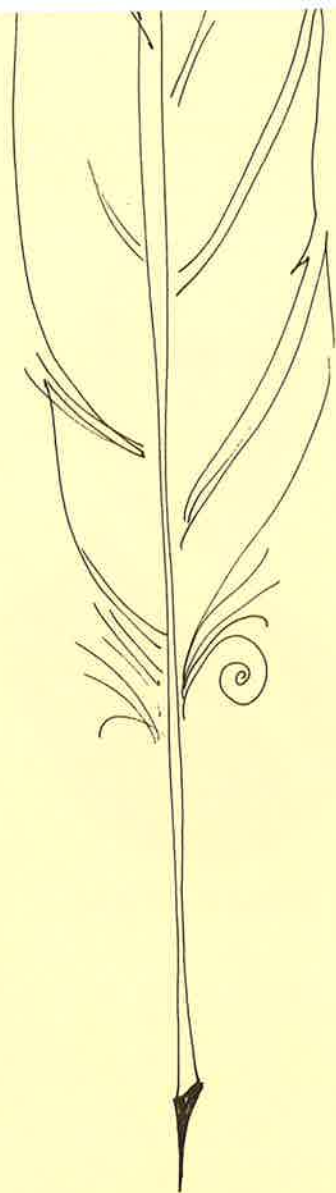
After several ministries in the Cleveland area, Mohorter was sent by the American Christian Missionary Society to Boston to serve the St. James Street Christian Church in working-class Roxbury. The work prospered under his energetic leadership, but his wife's failing health forced them to move to a warmer climate. James and Katie moved their ministry and four small children to Colorado in November 1903.

To his ministry with Central Christian Church in Pueblo, Colorado, Mohorter brought a national reputation among the Disciples as an outstanding preacher, hard worker, and effective urban pastor. During his pastorate, NBA's new Colorado Christian Home had internal and external problems. Three times in

J. H. Mohorter with his family (1903)







the next two years NBA asked Mohorter to go to Loveland to resolve the difficulties there. In fact, he was on such a mission when his wife died in October 1905, leaving him a widower with four children. Mohorter had been added to the NBA Board in 1904; he also delivered the benevolence address for NBA at the General Convention in San Francisco shortly before his wife died.

NBA had a major leadership crisis the last two months of 1905. Emily Meier, long-time Board president and generous supporter of the Association, was forced to resign the presidency because of poor health after serving eight years in that position. Then George Snively, popular first General Secretary, resigned to take a position with Christian Publishing Company. After considerable consternation and confusion, Mrs. Meier instructed Mrs. Hansbrough to write the young man who had spoken so eloquently at the San Francisco convention. Mohorter became the second General Secretary on May 15, 1906, just months after Fannie Shedd Ayars had replaced Emily Meier as president of NBA. Recently widowed and forced to work while maintaining a home for four children, he said that the invitation to take up the plea for the widow and the orphan came upon his life at that particular time as a call from God. From that point on, his deep, eloquent concern for all human need was bent to the plight of the widow, the orphan, and the indigent aged.

NBA, in 1906, was governed by its Central Board; a volunteer President served as chief executive of the Association. The position of General Secretary was still new and not clearly defined. The primary responsibility had been inherited from Mattie Younkin: the general secretary was responsible to raise resources, financial and otherwise, for the operation and maintenance of the Homes. He was also charged with promoting NBA among the churches and was expected to attend all church conventions.

The rapid multiplication of facilities had already added other responsibilities to the general secretary's job. He had become the field administrator or supervisor, visiting each home regularly, checking procedures, advising local boards and staffs, and surveying needs. Now that NBA was receiving personal property and real estate through bequests and as an exchange for annuities, the General Secretary was expected to make a personal inspection of most of the properties and, with the approval of the Central Board, arrange for their disposition. It was a *travelin'* job.


When Mohorter became General Secretary in 1906, NBA was in a period of rapid expansion. There were ten affiliated institutions:

- The Christian Orphans' Home in St. Louis
- The Babies' Home in St. Louis
- The Christian Hospital and Training School for Nurses (St. Louis)
- Christian Old People's Home in Jacksonville, Illinois
- Colorado Christian Orphans' Home in Loveland
- Cleveland Christian Orphans' Home in Ohio
- Havens Old People's Home in East Aurora, New York
- Juliette Fowler Christian Orphans' Home at Grand Prairie, Texas
- Christian Hospital and Training School in Valparaiso, Indiana
- Southeastern Christian Orphans' Home in Baldwin, Georgia

Northwestern Christian Home for the Aged in Eugene, Oregon, was added during the next year.

All of the property associated with these individual Homes, both real estate and personal property, was owned by the Association. The total property valuation in May 1906, was \$232,912.02 against which there was an indebtedness

**VALPARAISO CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL**  
AUXILIARY TO  
 The National Benevolent Association of Christian Churches



The Valparaiso, Ind., Christian Hospital has done a fine work since it was opened five years ago. Hundreds have been treated in the name of the Great Physician.

It gives first-class hospital service to the sick to members of the church at reasonable cost and to the poor without cost.

**IT NEEDS YOUR AID IN ITS CHARITY WORK**

President..... H. B. Brock  
 Vice-President..... S. J. Young, M. D.  
 Secretary..... E. W. Arar  
 Treasurer..... N. R. McNeese  
 Superintendent..... Mrs. Max Woodruff



Casper C. Garrigues



of \$39,716.08. From its first 19 years of operation, NBA had \$45,964 in active annuities.

At that time, unsound fiscal management was the biggest threat to NBA's future. Receipts were inadequate and the Association was over-extended. New homes had been started or acquired, and buildings were being constructed faster than contributions could justify. The organization and its facilities lived "from hand to mouth." Annuities were not always vested, and bequests to the Association often went into the operational budget. There was no hedge against the future.

Mohorter's attention was demanded in so many problem areas that he brought on board Casper C. Garrigues, a St. Louis Disciple Minister, as Associate Secretary to assist him in the myriad of concerns being visited upon his office.

All these practices changed under Mohorter's leadership. He was a man of unquestioned integrity, both publicly and privately. W. Palmer Clarkson, who served with him as NBA President for 15 years, said, "He was a man who could be trusted under any and all circumstances." Lee Grant added that the growth of NBA in his years represented "the confidence of the Brotherhood in the integrity and sound judgment of the man whom they knew and loved."

In the first 20 years, most Central Board members had been active volunteers in one or more Homes. They themselves "did benevolence," i.e., they responded personally to the cries of the needy or deserted child. Thus, they tended to understand financial donations as enabling them to do the work of benevolence themselves.

Guided by Mohorter, Central Board members became trustees of the churches in the cause of benevolence. This meant, among other things, that NBA's mission was to teach the churches generosity and then to exercise corporate responsibility, limiting expansion to that which could be maintained by the resources which individuals and churches contributed.

The last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th saw a greater increase in benevolent homes than any comparable period in American history. Some were the result of careful planning and sound fiscal judgment; but most were like "In His Name" Home in Cleveland. Well-intentioned but lacking financial backing, it soon had to call on others to rescue the institution from an impossible fiscal situation. Such visionary, but underfunded, projects had led to NBA's expansion to Cleveland, East Aurora, Grand Prairie and Baldwin.

The realization that NBA was trustee of the churches' benevolence, expanding its commitments only as the churches were willing to support them, meant that many invitations to establish new homes or take over others had to be rejected. The files from those years contain many letters refusing to accept struggling institutions (e.g., a second St. Louis orphanage; a black orphanage at Stuart, Virginia; a Working Girls' Home in Chicago).

Inability to assure long-term support from area churches and individuals prevented the establishment of several Homes and hospitals which the churches and the Central Board seriously wanted. This policy of corporate responsibility required Mohorter to discourage the desires of concerned individuals of wealth who wanted to initiate benevolent institutions out of their personal resources.

Such decisions were not made simply on financial grounds. A typical example of the reasoning which led to negative decisions can be seen in the response to the Working Girls' Home in Chicago. NBA agreed that the project was worthy and the institution needed, but decided against affiliation because the Home did not have general support from the Chicago churches. Being a localized charity and managed by one congregation (i.e. not "national"), the

plan could not be a financial success, and the property would be almost impossibly in debt from the beginning. NBA, the Board concluded, should not be seen as backing a work to which it was unwilling to commit significant resources.

The letter written by Mohorter to Charles F. Hutslar of Palo Alto, California, on June 4, 1919, is typical:

There has been a sudden and remarkable awakening of conscience among our people in behalf of our ministry to the widow, the orphan and the aged. We have had a half dozen appeals lately for us to open Homes for children, and yours is the second appeal for us to open a Home for the Aged.

It would be quite unwise for us to open homes in advance of our ability to properly support them. I am sure you will agree with me in this . . . .

But the positive results of NBA's new sense of corporate responsibility are even more striking. Almost immediately, receipts began to increase rapidly, support became adequate, and the debts of individual Homes were paid off. Equally important, leaders of high calibre and donors with significant resources began to commit their talents and resources to this ministry; even non-Disciples began significant support of the work. The number of institutions multiplied and most NBA facilities were greatly improved in their ability to serve the needy.

Texas provided the first opportunity for the Association to extend its pioneering efforts in the Southwest. Juliette Fowler's bequest specifically earmarked support for the relief of aged women in Texas. Her sister, Sarah Harwood, as president of the local Home Board, had labored tirelessly to see that the Children's Home was well-built and efficiently administered on the choice 15-acre campus in East Dallas. Now she and the churches in Texas were eager to launch the Home for the Aged. Fund raising began in 1909 and the Home was dedicated in 1911 as Sarah Harwood Hall. This Home for the Aged was one of the first of its kind in Texas.

R. A. Long of Kansas City, a leading Disciple businessman and First Vice President of NBA, proposed a national Christian Church hospital. He believed it was important that the hospital, from its opening, be financially able to do charity work for needy church members and others who were unable to pay. To make this possible, he offered a \$200,000 challenge gift, if Mohorter and other Disciples could raise \$150,000 for endowment. J. W. Perry, who had replaced Fannie Ayars as NBA President in 1908, led the five-year effort to raise the money and build the hospital. J. H. Mohorter devoted several months to the fund-raising. The hospital, which was dedicated on April 11, 1916, was usually listed as an NBA institution, although it was never owned by NBA. Later, when the six-story building at 27th and Paseo ceased to be used as a Christian Church hospital, its residual funds (\$39,000) were given to NBA for the therapy section at Woodhaven Learning Center.

The dream for a California facility became a possibility in 1915 when L. J. Massie offered to donate a Long Beach property worth \$10,000 for use as a Children's Home. Mrs. Hansbrough writes:

Brother Massie came to us with the offer of a residence he had purchased in Long Beach (California) with the hope of establishing a Home for homeless children. Mr. Mohorter, Mr. Garrigues, and myself, Mr. C. C. Chapman and Mr. Holt drove to Long Beach, where we met Mr. and Mrs. Massie and drove to the house. We found it a desirable property—beautiful shade and fruit



Sarah Harwood Hall, Juliette Fowler Home



R. A. Long





Florida Christian Home



Havens Home residents boarding train for their new home in Jacksonville, Florida

Florida Christian Home calendar



trees—but we thought it better suited for old people than for children, and then too there seemed to us a greater need for a Home for the Aged in California than for children, as the laws for the care of dependent children in California were better than for old people. It was hard for Brother Massie to give up his pet scheme for the care of children but he graciously did.

Building an orphanage was dear to Massie's heart; he was an orphan himself and knew by experience the longings and the desires of orphaned boys and girls. Massie Hall (later California Christian Home) was opened on May 16, 1916, on the slope of Signal Hill in Long Beach, and remained a haven for the elderly for ten years until the oil drilling began to deform Signal Hill and encroach on the grounds of the Home. How it got to Rosemead is a later part of our story.

Florida Christian Home, however, was the most exciting confirmation of Mohorter's sound fiscal stewardship. The Christian churches in Florida, and especially J. T. Boone, pastor of First Christian Church in Jacksonville, envisioned Florida to be an ideal site as a Home for the indigent aged. Boone discovered that a property worth \$100,000 owned by a bankrupt local military academy could be purchased for \$30,000 if NBA acted promptly. After Mohorter had examined the property, the Central Board voted to buy it and approved the \$90,000 in renovations necessary to make the commodious building suitable for an Old People's Home. All of the costs of property and renovations came from undesignated contributions to the NBA general fund. Florida Christian Home was opened March 16, 1922.

NBA realized a double benefit in this case. Havens Home in New York had been in poor condition and insufficiently supported from its founding. Now the Association could shelve costly plans for enlarging Havens Home and move the aged Disciples from there to a healthier climate. The East Aurora family was loaded with their furnishings on a train and moved to the new location in June 1922, joining the southern family already in residence.

Among the first residents of Florida Christian Home were two sisters, Martha and Lillian Gosney. Their father had been a pioneer preacher, a "circuit rider," and they had helped him establish Christian churches in new territory. Lillian loved to show people through the Home, and always ended by saying to the guest, "If you are a Disciple and a Republican, you're all right. If not, your chances for the next world are pretty slim!"

Another major gain was the growing support for the Homes from non-Disciple sources. Just when this support first began cannot be ascertained, but it first became significant in Mohorter's time. In part, this change was an accident of history; Community Chests and community charity drives were just emerging in the 1910s and 1920s. But certainly part of the increasing community support for the operational budget in the urban institutions came from an increasing community awareness of the fiscal stability of the Homes.

The Homes would not have survived the Great Depression without this local community support, received over and above contributions from the churches; e.g., the 1930 operating budget for the 12 homes and one hospital called for \$122,776.20 from church sources and \$118,000 from community and other non-Disciple sources. From Mohorter's time forward, NBA would be a church agency motivated by Christian concern and attempting to care for the needy in a Christian context, but its financial undergirding for plant and program would increasingly come from many other sources, both denominational and secular.

Two previously established homes—Child Saving Institute in Omaha, Nebraska, and Emily E. Flinn Home in Marion, Indiana—were added to the NBA

family during this period as a result of the Association's growing reputation for sound fiscal management and innovative, compassionate care. Both institutions heralded, in some sense, major changes in NBA's ministry to children and to older adults. Their stories are worth repeating.

Disciples, like most American evangelicals at the turn of the century, were caught up in the great temperance crusade against "Demon Rum." Carrie Nation, that physically small woman who terrified bartenders and drinkers alike with her hatchet and Bible, was a Disciple minister's wife. The beginnings of NBA were, in fact, inseparably intertwined with the temperance crusade: Mattie Younkin and many other "liberated" women first discovered their feminine independence and power in the Women's Christian Temperance Union; she, Fannie Shedd, and the other founders sometimes led the children in rallies to witness against the terrible price exacted by the saloon.

About the same time, A. W. Clark, a Baptist pastor in Omaha, Nebraska, was making excursions into Ramcat Alley, a saloon-lined street near the river, intending to reform the men and women he found there. Instead, he was overwhelmed by the children he saw huddled in doorways waiting for their parents to come home. He decided to help them.

Without any financial backing, Clark founded the Boys' and Girls' Aid Society of Omaha. He and his wife opened the first Home in an abandoned livery stable and received their first resident, a little seven-year-old girl, on April 7, 1892. The stable may have been primitive but the program they operated was far ahead of its time. They emphasized babies and small children, and ran a foundling home, kindergarten, employment bureau, reading room, Sunday School, adoption bureau, and clinic. Good health was greatly emphasized.

The Omaha institution flourished. It was incorporated in 1901 as Child Saving Institute, or CSI, and moved to new quarters. It remained non-sectarian in service and support, being maintained by a group of philanthropic men and women of all creeds, and of no creed, with Clark as Superintendent. Early reports list support from churches and church groups from all denominations. During its first 20 years, it gave shelter and aid to 4,700 children from 35 states and 10 foreign countries.

Shortly after CSI moved its children to a newly-built third location in early 1912, Clark was called to a wider field of service in California. Because he had galvanized the support of the Home and directed its innovative program, serious questions arose about CSI's ability to continue without him. The Board, composed of Omaha businessmen and representatives of various Omaha clubs, took over. This arrangement proved unsatisfactory as changes crept in and some board members died or moved away.

On August 9, 1913, NBA's Central Board, at the request of the CSI board, voted to accept the Omaha institution as a subsidiary corporation. NBA was to have responsibility for operations and maintenance, while the service and support were to continue to be non-sectarian as in the past. In fact, one of the things that NBA required as a condition for acceptance was that the non-Disciple, local support would continue.

The new relationship involved changes by both agencies which would portend later developments in NBA. For example, the CSI Board was exclusively male in 1913. NBA, as *The Christian Philanthropist* noted, had a "fixed policy—to recognize the place and power of the women in its work." When NBA assumed control, the CSI Board and staff were required to include women.

On the other hand, CSI continued to operate under its own charter as an independent legal entity with NBA management, a model that would be used



Child Saving Institute

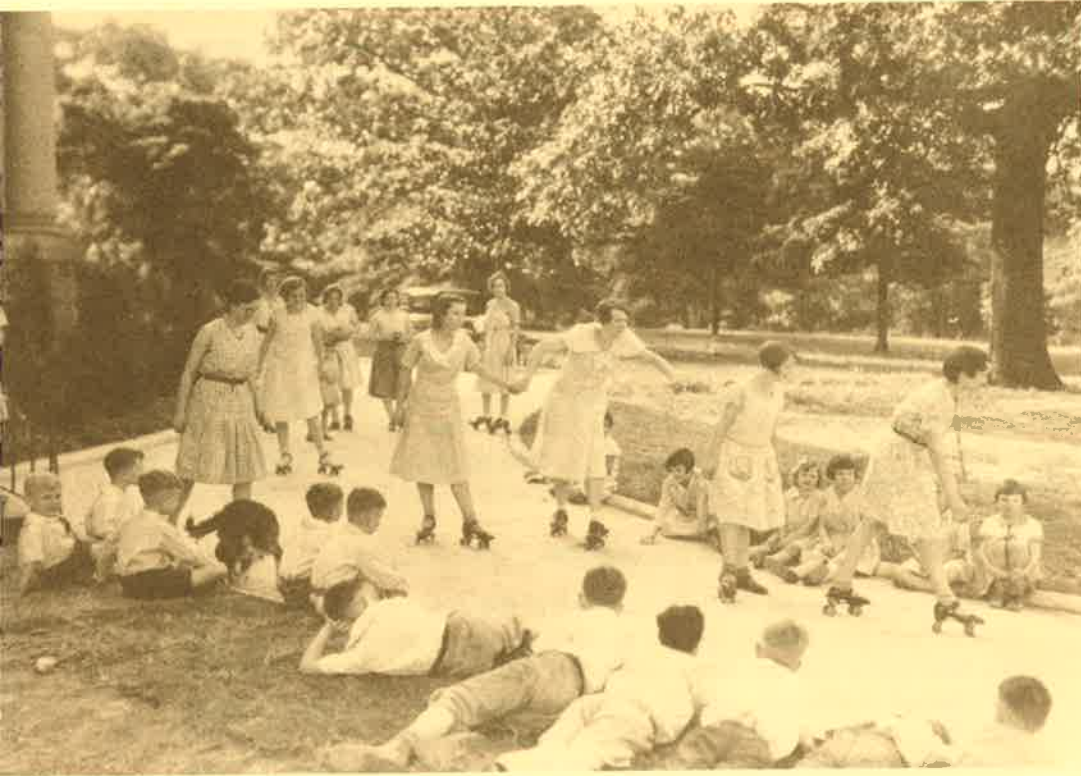




Mrs. J. K. Hansbrough with Mrs. Stewart at opening of the Florida Christian Home (1922)

J. H. Mohorter presides at dedication ceremony with his successor, F. M. Rogers, behind him





Southern Christian Home



St. Louis Christian Orphans' Home

Child Saving Institute advertisement (1916)





Child Saving Institute



Emily E. Flinn



Peter G. Flinn



repeatedly in NBA's fourth quarter-century. Although some CSI services were similar to those of the other Children's Homes, the uniqueness of its history and location gave its work a special, innovative character. CSI accepted children from birth to age 12, but it specialized in the care of young babies—serving as an agency for finding permanent foster homes. Located directly across from the Medical School of the State University, the nurses served in the Institute as a part of their training and the children received the benefit of a superb staff of physicians and specialists. Many handicapped children had their afflictions entirely corrected. For many years the institution had the distinction of having the lowest infant mortality rate of any comparable Home in the U.S.

At a time when adoptive parents were still afraid of the taint of "bad blood" and many institutions and agencies were hesitant to accept illegitimate children, CSI actively assisted unwed mothers through their critical periods of adjustment. The kaleidoscope of children who were served demonstrated that this institution's service to neglected and abandoned babies was made without regard to race, color, or creed.

The CSI stories of adoptions are unending and poignant:

Twelve days old when she was admitted to the C.S.I. nursery with double hare-lip and cleft palate, 'Gladys' would have slowly starved to death had she been left in the farm home where she was born. She was immediately fed through a stomach tube to give her strength for the ordeal ahead. Through a series of delicate operations by a specialist, Gladys began to grow into a normal little girl. She was placed in a boarding home in a rural community where she took piano lessons and started to school, with more work yet to be done on her nose and mouth. She was often hurt by the taunts of children regarding her speech and the scars on her face.

Gladys had a loving, out-going personality and made friends with a fine Christian couple who wished to take her into their home. At the age of ten she was legally adopted. After graduating from high school and college, this tall, attractive woman with sparkling blue eyes began teaching in Indiana. She brought a blythe spirit to C.S.I. during the summer months when she worked with the 3-5 year olds and gave assurance to other handicapped children. It's a joy to hear her speak of her happy memories of C.S.I. and the people she knew there.

(Signed)  
Caseworker

Emily E. Flinn Home for Aged Women in Marion, Indiana, also came in as a result of NBA's growing national reputation for compassionate care and sound fiscal management. This home had been established by the Twentieth Century Club of Marion in 1905, and named in memory of a prominent woman in the club whose husband had given the land and contributed liberally toward the building. But as time changed, and the ranks of those who had made the home possible were reduced by death and removals, the institution suffered a decline of interest and support. Due to the lack of funds, fewer aged women could be served, although there was an ever larger number needing the help of the Home.

In 1920, responding to recommendations from the Christian Church of Marion and the Indiana Christian Missionary Society, NBA accepted a deed to the property and with it the responsibility for its management and support. The Home was a gift of the founding club. There were 12 women in the Home at the time, and the only conditions imposed on the gift were that these 12,



regardless of denomination, could remain in the Home, and the name Emily E. Flinn would be retained. Through the years, residents in the Home have represented many states and many denominations.

Need had always been the only test for admission at NBA Children's Homes; no questions of sectarian affiliation were asked of children or employed widows. However, The Homes for the Aged had been started to care for the indigent aged of the Christian churches. As *The Orphan's Cry* explained, and every annual report repeated, the conditions for admittance were that "the candidate be a member of the Christian Church, at least 70 years of age, that an admission fee of \$100 be paid, and all property belonging to the applicant at time of admission, or coming afterwards, be made over to the Home, the applicant to have the use of the income during life." Applicants were admitted "on six months' probation; if not satisfied at the end of or during that time, they were at liberty to depart."

The acceptance of Emily E. Flinn Home for the Aged as an NBA facility on May 27, 1920, set the precedent for removing sectarian limitations on the churches' ministry to older adults. NBA's ministry to the aged slowly began to broaden in other ways in that same period. Need had heretofore been defined in financial terms and, therefore, persons who could afford to pay part or all of their support were automatically denied admission. On November 18, 1919, the rules were changed to permit Homes to admit elderly people who had some savings, provided there were no applications from more needy persons on file. Before the end of the next decade, J. H. Mohorter was calling for a boarding Home for persons who could pay for their own care.

Of equal importance to the new understanding of corporate stewardship was a second major fiscal change. The Central Board decided "that the moneys which were given for annuities should be invested and the principal preserved intact, the interest only being used, until the annuitant died." Earlier the Board had invited financial disaster, mortgaging the Association's future receipts by using the principal from annuities and even borrowing additional funds to construct needed additions. When this new rule became known, annuities increased dramatically. NBA had \$45,964 in active annuities in 1906; it had five times that much, \$249,407.09 to be exact, when Mohorter died 23 years later.

The third change in financial stewardship, which the Board adopted with Mohorter's approval, concerned bequests. Lee Grant describes the action: "A fixed policy . . . that all bequests to the Association should be set aside for improvements and building purposes, either for a particular Home when designated or generally, unless the donor in his will designated that the bequest should be used for some other purpose."

Reserving bequests for maintenance and new buildings made it possible to modify and expand many NBA facilities in the 1920s, years of rising human need and declining gifts to church agencies. The auxiliaries of CWBM raised challenge funds for five Homes in connection with their 1924 Golden Jubilee. NBA bequest funds and local fund raising, combined with this CWBM challenge, led to significant renewal and expansion: Illinois Christian Home expanded its capacity for ministry by building a new wing; Colorado Christian Home, which had been turning away an average of more than one needy child per day, was able to double its capacity; Cleveland Christian Home, long overcrowded, moved into one of the more modern facilities in the U.S. and became the only Home in its region to have facilities for baby care.

On May 15, 1927, the 11th anniversary of its founding, the new, recently renamed, California Christian Home was dedicated on a five-and-one-half



Flinn residents

California Christian Home residents who moved from Long Beach to San Gabriel (1927) with F. W. Burnham, L. J. Massie and J. H. Mohorter



Colorado Christian Home (1925)

One of the earlier bungalows at California Christian Home





Massie Hall, California Christian Home



Helen Mohorter (hatless), Queenie, Faye and Frizzie, the NBA secretarial staff, (1924)



acre tract in East San Gabriel, California (now Rosemead). This beautiful and spacious Home, built in Spanish-style architecture, could accommodate 65 "guests" (as residents had come to be called), and had service facilities for 200.

At first, the guests of the new California Home, who had transferred from the earlier bungalow building with its compact arrangement and narrow confines, were lost in the spacious halls of the new facility, but by opening day they were beaming hosts full of pride and joy. Nannie Adams, formerly a member of First Christian Church in San Diego, was asked, "How do you like the new Home?" Her wrinkled face broke into a broad smile and her blue eyes glistened with grateful emotion as she said, "I have prayed for a long time that I might come to live in this Home. You see, I want to go to heaven by degrees and this is one of the beautiful resting places by the way."

No change, however, was more dramatic than that at Southern Christian Children's Home in Atlanta. The region was very poor; the Home had always had a difficult struggle, although the needs of children in its region were great. In 1910, the Georgia unit moved into a rented frame house in Atlanta and then, in 1919, into its own "temporary" frame house. Spurred on by \$25,000 from the CWBM Golden Jubilee and a grant from the NBA bequest fund, Belt White, a pioneer Alabama minister and NBA's southern field representative, together with the local Board raised the \$125,000 necessary for a new, brick building. Speaking of the gifts, large and small, which had been received, White said, "One of the greatest gifts was from a South Carolina widow whose son had given her ten dollars for a dress—all she had in the world—and half of this she gave for the home!"

The beloved Uncle Jimmie was present when the cornerstone for the new Home was laid on October 20, 1927. At that time he said:

All day there has been singing through my soul the line of an old song, 'This is the day I long have sought.' Today is the realization of plans, the fruition of our faith, and the answer to our prayers.

Uncle Jimmie did not live to see the facility occupied in 1929.

Mattie Younkin might have said with St. Paul, "I have laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. . . . Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble—each man's work will become manifest" (I Co 3:10, 12). She had laid the foundation and J. H. Mohorter was building upon it. Thus far, this chapter has emphasized the new fiscal arrangements introduced when Uncle Jimmie was General Secretary because that was how he built. His work had become manifest.

But if the story of NBA between 1906 and 1929 ends by emphasizing Mohorter's business leadership and its success, then the essential story will be lost and the man misread. Persons may be admired for their business acumen and valued for their integrity; but they are loved for their hearts, for the things they love and the love they give.

James Mohorter often gave the call: "Beloved, inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." He gave it so regularly from pulpits, in conventions, and in publications that he was nicknamed "Beloved Inasmuch Commander-in-Chief." He not only understood the plight of the fatherless, the destitute, and the widowed from his own personal experience, but he also loved them, whether young or old. He was seen in different ways by different people—as a sacrificial servant by his daughter,

Helen, now retired from the staff of Colorado Christian Home, who had also been his secretary when there were only three persons on the NBA staff. Bess Cochran said, "He had a big heart." But all memories of him share one thread: he loved all people, but he especially loved the afflicted and the unfortunate.

He wrote in *World Call* in 1924 and 1928:

Have you thought of what these Homes mean to the penniless widowed mother? It is enough for a woman to make her own way in a world not too friendly. The problem is tenfold harder when she has a baby in her arms and two or three children clinging to her skirts. She faces three alternatives: work herself to death, break up her home or accept charity. We step in and help that mother solve her problem by letting her enter one of our Homes with her children. Here she is employed . . . or if she has employment outside the Home her children are boarded and she pays what she can for their support. And think of the dying mother who is called upon to leave her children. If she can have the absolute assurance that her little ones will be cared for in a Christian home, will be clothed, fed, sheltered, educated and kept for Christ . . . then her passing, sad as it is, will be touched with a divine joy.

The "Beloved Inasmuch Commander-in-Chief" never complained of the painful burden that belonged to him and to the Admission Committees of the various Homes, as they decided which needy senior or child could be admitted, or which program would or would not be funded. His last article in *World Call* grieved that NBA Homes had empty beds, not because there were no needy persons, but because there were not enough funds:

The investigations . . . revealed the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of children in this country who every year are left absolutely homeless . . . . The experience of the Disciples of Christ in the operation of its six Homes for the orphan, abandoned and neglected children leaves no doubt in our minds as to the presence of this vast army of underfed, homeless boys and girls in our midst . . . . Our Homes failed to answer the cry of between five and six hundred homeless children last year; children that actually knocked on our door for admission. Heartless, did you say? No, fundless.

On Monday, June 3, James Mohorter completed writing the final report of that great unifying experience, the Men and Millions Movement, gathering out of his marvelous memory the essential facts and principles he had helped to establish. On Tuesday, June 4, 1929, he came cheerily to his desk to make final preparations for a trip to the Maritime Provinces. But his trip became a longer one and his preparations were already made.

Funeral services were held at Union Avenue Church in St. Louis where "Uncle Jimmie" was a member. He had been an elder and had attended hundreds of NBA Board and committee meetings there. Children from the Christian Orphans' Home sang, "God Will Take Care of You," and the eloquent pastor of the church, Dr. George A. Campbell, took the same text that James H. Mohorter had used for his first sermon 42 years earlier:

Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

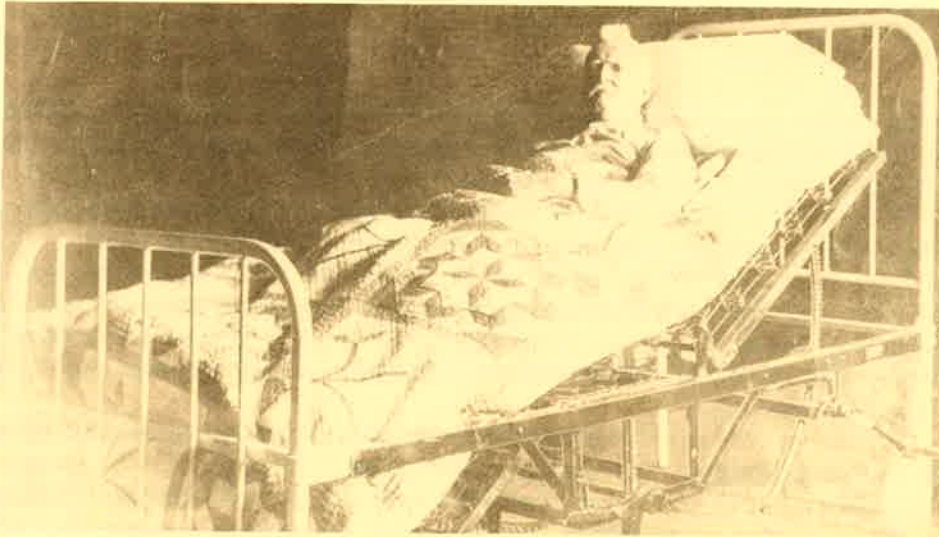
—Hebrews 12:1 KJV



Southeastern Patriotic Club knitting blankets for Ft. McPherson hospital (1917)







## Chapter 5

### THE GIFT AND THE GIVER

The task of supporting a family of 450 children and 150 older and often infirm men and women taxed faith as well as resources. The demands were endless—in 1925, the family required a daily average of 262 loaves of bread, more than 52 gallons of milk, 25 pounds of butter, six bushels of potatoes, 133 quarts of canned fruit and 123 pounds of meat. To this must be added education, clothes, medical care, entertainment and love—lots of love.

Sometimes whole communities responded. Moberly, Missouri, and surrounding Randolph County, sent a boxcar full of foodstuffs, staples, clothing, candy, and toys to The Christian Orphans' Home every year. The joy of sharing in this outpouring was literally passed from generation to generation in families.

NBA's ministry challenged a generation of remarkable men and women to sacrifice and service. Even if all their stories could be recovered, the list would be too long to recount. For example, there was Floyd Shook, an important businessman in Cleveland, who gave up a year of his time from his own business to direct the campaign for funds for the new Cleveland Christian Home. Mrs. A. A. McGraw, the talented Superintendent of Child Saving Institute, worked full time in that capacity for years at her own expense. Boyd Keith served without salary for over a quarter century as general manager and treasurer of Juliette Fowler Home, simply for the love of children. Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Gentry, L. J. Massie, and J. W. Winn are just a few of the host of men and women who responded to the "Gospel of Inasmuch" by giving unstintingly of time, talent and treasure.

W. Palmer Clarkson was such a man. Lawyer, president of three corporations, including the largest cooperage firm in America, board member of seven other corporations and banks, elected member of the St. Louis Board of Education, active officer and president of many local and national business associations, college trustee and active churchman, Clarkson was one of Uncle Jimmie's most notable recruits for NBA service. Many contemporaries considered Clarkson to be among the half-dozen most influential men for good, both in St. Louis civic life and in the national life of the Disciples of Christ.

Palmer Clarkson was a genuinely friendly and unpretentious man. Although he held deep convictions, he was honest, fair-minded, and gentle in personal

Opposite—Child Saving Institute



Mrs. A. A. McGraw



W. Palmer Clarkson



relationships. People who knew him, in both secular and religious contexts, remarked on his integrity, his sincerity and especially his lack of selfishness. No one failed to note that he was a devout Christian and a devoted Disciple.

Palmer was a deacon in Union Avenue Christian Church and was just leaving the St. Louis Board of Education when he came on the Central Board of NBA in 1910. From then until his death on December 27, 1940, he devoted untold hours to, and took great pleasure in, the care of the orphaned and the aged. His busiest years in business, civic, and social leadership were still ahead of him in 1910, but those responsibilities never interfered with his response to the "Gospel of Inasmuch."

At that time the executive power of NBA rested in the Central Board and in its volunteer president. The Executive Committee of the Board often met more than once a month and its sessions lasted several hours. The volunteer President usually presided at all Board and Executive Committee sessions. He was charged with the supervision of staff and program, and went to the NBA central office on official business several times each week.

Clarkson began to preside at Executive Committee meetings in 1911 when President J. W. Perry had moved to Kansas City. In 1916, he was elected President of NBA and served as a true statesman and a dependable leader for the next 21 years. Any reading of the Board and committee minutes of those years will indicate both his gracious character and the degree to which colleagues and staff relied on him.

He led NBA through seismic changes. The teens were major years of advance and exploration of new ministries and new methods; NBA was coming to a vital, responsible maturity. Clarkson joined Mohorter, O. E. Scott, and others in seeking ways to unite the outreach work of the Disciples.

During the twenties, the ministry of NBA ceased to be a separate corporate function. The change was dramatic and almost catastrophic. Although NBA continued to exist as the owner of the benevolent properties and the steward of previously-committed trusts, its ministry to the widow, the orphan and the aged was subsumed under the United Christian Missionary Society. Clarkson continued to serve as NBA President as well as a member of the governing Board of Managers of UCMS.

In 1930, in the heart of the Great Depression, it became clear that this unified arrangement would most likely destroy the benevolent work which the Disciples had built up sacrificially over half a century. NBA's promotion and support systems had been dismantled, a heavy indebtedness had been incurred, and the beloved Uncle Jimmie was dead. Clarkson led the Association in preparing for the inevitable separation and rebuilding. The 1930s witnessed the second founding of NBA, and Palmer Clarkson took the same public attacks that Mattie Hart Younkin had experienced 50 years earlier. By the time that serious surgery and declining health forced his retirement as NBA President in 1937, the Association was again on solid footing. Clarkson remained an active Chairman of the Board until his death. Even when physicians forbade his going out to meetings, he invited the Central Board to meet at his home.

W. Palmer Clarkson's story is like that of many other Disciples who discovered more fully the joys of generous living and giving by their involvement in NBA's "Ministry of Mercy." The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (December 29, 1940) and *The Christian Evangelist* (January 1941) both note that Clarkson did not lend his name to any organization, religious, civic, or social, in which he did not intend to become actively involved. Even a partial list of his involvements in and beyond St. Louis is most impressive. More important in this context, however, is



the way that his commitment to the aged and the orphan led to commitment to the whole denomination.

Soon after coming on the NBA Central Board, he became one of the original directors of Christian Board of Publication and succeeded R. A. Long as president of the denominational publishing house. For most of his years from 1920 until his death he was an active member of the Finance Committee of the Board of Managers of UCMS. He was deeply concerned with the establishment of the National City Christian Church in its difficult early years, and was second president of that Disciple agency. None of these positions was a nominal one; Clarkson served Christ and his church in each of these demanding positions at his own expense. These responsibilities he considered a trust; to them he gave unselfishly of his time, talent, and resources.

Uncle Jimmie's love of helpless children and aged Christians must have been contagious because NBA publications in that era are full of remarkable stories of generous involvement with the Homes. Palmer Clarkson is only one example among many. In an earlier chapter, reference was made to the endowment and other large gifts which the industrialist Robert H. Stockton made to the Christian Orphans' Home, as well as to Culver-Stockton College, The Pension Fund and The Board of Church Extension. Stockton gave not only his entire estate, he also gave himself. He attended every public program in school, church, community or Home where any of the children were participating or being recognized. He took a personal interest in each child, gave generously to their local church to make sure that the children had a good Sunday School, contributed the funds for a hospital building for their medical care, often ate at their tables, attended their parties and saw that they got individual recognition. The letters of this former orphan communicate passionately his pleasure that these children have a real home. Many a child carried through adulthood warm memories of sitting through evening storytime crammed in a great overstuffed chair with this kind, loving man and a dozen other kids.

The story of Edwin Gould was both similar and different. He was a millionaire from New York and the son of the late Jay Gould. Just how he became involved with the NBA Homes is a mystery, but clearly he knew that "the gift without the giver is bare." Edwin frequently visited Colorado Christian Home, The Christian Orphans' Home, Southern Christian Home, and Florida Christian Home. He told the children stories, romped with them or simply gave them personal attention. Sue Steiner Hook, long-time superintendent of Southern Christian Home, said, "The heart of the man was so much bigger than his wealth—that was the secret of his success—he understood children and they loved him."

Edwin Gould was unwilling that his gifts be publicized, but his benefactions enriched the lives of every resident. Sometimes it was a new sun-porch for convalescent children, other times a new playroom fully equipped, perhaps a new wading pool or play equipment for the yard. He sent many children to summer camp, had the Homes painted, or gave pictures to adorn the walls. He saw that each Home had an abundance of magazines appropriate for the residents. And, most importantly, he remembered each child's birthday with a gift. Only at the end did his benefactions become public; his will divided his large estate equally between his widow and a foundation for children which benefited the NBA Homes.

The winds of change in the church structures for Christian mission were blowing everywhere in the Mohorter-Clarkson years, and NBA, under the leadership of these men, embraced the new trends with enthusiasm and active com-



Robert H. Stockton

St. Louis Christian Orphans' Home





NBA officers (1909)

mitment. Disciple church membership jumped from 641,000 in 1890 to 1,363,000 in 1910 and then to 1,554,000 in 1930, in spite of the separation of the Churches of Christ. Other mainstream evangelical groups experienced similar growth. In a nation in which church membership was strictly voluntary, the time was rapidly approaching when 50 percent of the population would choose to be affiliated with some church.

The Social Gospel with its emphasis on practical Christianity, civility and tolerance had seemed so radical a generation earlier. Now it was being proclaimed from major pulpits of all denominations in every urban center, and it was having its effect. Sectarian lines were disappearing and cooperation in a wide variety of benevolent projects became the rule in most communities. It was an age of mass revivals, but even evangelism had become interdenominational. Liberal Christians everywhere were looking for ways to unite all Christians to usher in the Kingdom of Christ.

Intentionally or otherwise, the concept of the great American corporation as the model for the effective mission-centered church advanced with the Social Gospel. Scientific methods, efficiency, and good management became the operative values at every level of church life. Most evangelical denominations were unifying their structures and seeking methods to use their potential resources more effectively. Sydney Ahlstrom describes the trend this way:

The churches moved from the little war [i.e., the Spanish-American War of 1898] to the Great War essentially without breaking the gait established in the 1880s and 1890s. . . . Several new cooperative agencies were formed, and church-sponsored crusades followed one after another, while businessmen and perfected forms of promotionalism accounted for both the successes achieved and the limitations revealed. In 1911 the greatest prewar crusade of all was launched: the Men and Religion Forward Movement, with its across-the-board program for revitalizing the churches.

The euphoria of this whole cluster of campaigns and structures continued unabated through World War I and, in fact, was greatly enhanced by the wartime triumphs of such cooperative action.

Disciples generally, and the Stoneites especially, had been anti-institutional in their earliest days. Even a century later they could be fiercely independent, a circumstance that saved them from the typical Protestant heresy trials of the early days of the Social Gospel. They may have been slow in establishing responsible para-church structures, but once the process started, their corporate life generally kept pace with other mainstream groups:

- 1847 American Christian Missionary Society
- 1874 Christian Women's Board of Missions
- 1875 Foreign Christian Missionary Society
- 1884 Board of Church Extension
- 1887 The National Benevolent Association
- 1894 The Education Board of ACMS
- 1895 The Board of Ministerial Relief
- 1901 American Christian Education Society
- 1907 The Board of Temperance
- 1910 Association of Colleges of the Disciples of Christ

At the 1920 St. Louis Convention



Disciples celebrated their Centennial in 1909, the 100th Anniversary of Thomas Campbell's Declaration. In the decade of preparation for this celebration,



Disciple leaders increasingly caught the vision of a unified denominational response to particular problems.

The first big step toward denominational unification came on the heels of the 1909 Centennial. R. A. Long of Kansas City, NBA's First Vice President, offered \$1 million challenge to Disciple higher education. All Disciple agencies quickly saw the possibilities of such a united campaign. Using the model of the interdenominational Men and Religion Forward Movement, Long's \$1 million soon became the challenge for a \$6 million Men and Millions Movement, the first unified Disciple effort and the foundation stone for the United Christian Missionary Society, Unified Promotion, The Crusade for a Christian World and present denominational structures, which followed.

The vision of a denominational approach to all ministries beyond the local church had been strong in NBA from its first days. For those women, and the men who came later, the dream was not simply a matter of pragmatic utility resulting from the widespread problems of a mass society. It was a theological necessity emerging from Thomas Campbell's call: "the church of Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one." Christian unity was their polar star.

The Central Board minutes for 1913–1920 are full of acts leading to a unified approach to denominational outreach for the Disciples of Christ: e.g., the combining of promotional staff positions at a state level; a common headquarters city, St. Louis; the combining of separate publications in *Christian Tidings*; a common date to end the fiscal year; a joint legal department to administer wills; and a common annuity policy. The denomination was catching the vision and the competing societies were steadily, if haltingly, finding their ways to it. NBA often led this visionary quest.

Near the end of the decade, America was caught up in The Great War, "The War to End War." Viewed 60 years later, that war was the greatest evangelical crusade of all, the national effort to universalize American destiny by extending American Christian moral ideals to the whole world. As such, it received fervent support from most American churches; the nationalistic support in Social Gospel circles was especially uncompromising.

World War I was a great evangelical crusade which forever changed the character of American Christianity. Where unity and cooperation had been a vision heretofore, after 1917–1918 they were the only means of mission acceptable to progressive Christians. Even more importantly, the church came out of the war on a utopian, inevitably-upward trajectory. Recent successful experience demanded "a grand peacetime crusade which would unite all benevolent and missionary agencies of American Protestantism into a single campaign for money, men and spiritual revival."

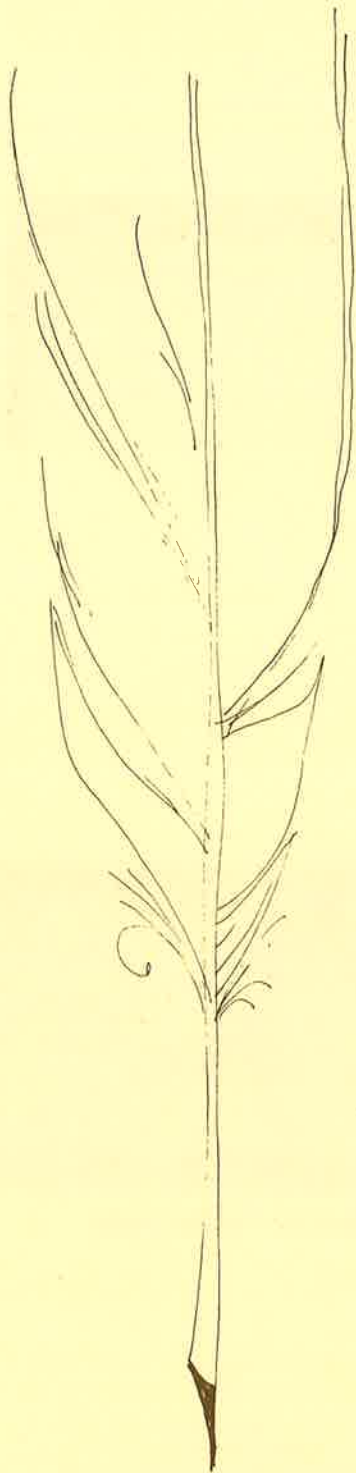
Mohorter, NBA and the Disciples plunged enthusiastically into a great post-war crusade, the Interchurch World Movement. Every phase of church work, both foreign and domestic, was to be included. In this cooperative effort, the "evangelical churches [were]," the general committee said, "... to survey unitedly their common tasks and simultaneously and together secure the necessary resources . . . required for these tasks." The first goal was \$300 million, but it quickly became \$500 million and then \$1 billion. The denominations, including the Disciples, pledged \$200 million to cover the administrative costs.

Similar, if less visionary, movements were taking place among the Disciples themselves. Almost monthly, the Central Board took some step on the heady road to uniting all the national and foreign work of the church. By 1919, plans for the proposed United Christian Missionary Society were being considered.



Southern Christian Home





On September 16, 1919, the NBA Central Board voted to recommend that the Association enter UCMS.

The records show only token opposition to the move whereby NBA would be completely merged into UCMS. The intention was that the societies would merge ministries and resources into one common agency. The new society would promote, plan and administer all the foreign and home mission work, as well as the care of the orphaned and the aged, the support of higher education, the development of Christian education, the support of retired ministers and their spouses, the undergirding of church extension loans and planning, the coordination of denominational social action and education, the cooperation of state organizations, and the management of national assemblies. UCMS applied for its charter on June 20, 1920, and moved its headquarters to St. Louis. NBA became the Division of Benevolence of UCMS.

Early in the merger process, lawyers discovered that NBA's property titles and trusts would not permit a complete subsuming into UCMS. The price of surrendering all legal fiduciary responsibilities was too high. The Central Board then voted to make the UCMS its agent in the management of the Homes and in the collecting and disbursing of all funds intended for the Homes or for the Association. Only existing annuity, endowment and trust funds were excepted. The treasurer of UCMS was to give NBA's Central Board a periodic accounting of any permanent funds, especially bequests and annuities, which UCMS received in the name of NBA.

The history of NBA, the UCMS and the Division of Benevolence of UCMS from 1920 to 1933 is an important story not only for understanding the next 50 years of NBA development but also for a balanced interpretation of national life of the whole Disciple movement. Although all the principals involved are now dead, the archives portray fully the budgetary problems and the conflicting understandings of corporate responsibility.

Probably the greatest problem was one which earlier accounts have ignored, i.e., the time was wrong. As Sidney Ahlstrom has written, "The Great Crusade ended its march at the lawn socials of normalcy." The nation was surfeited with war and post-war idealistic campaigns. By 1922, the Interchurch World Movement was a failure and American denominations were left with huge debts to cover its administrative costs. NBA, UCMS, and many Disciple congregations insisted, with great integrity in difficult times, that the Disciple allotment be paid.

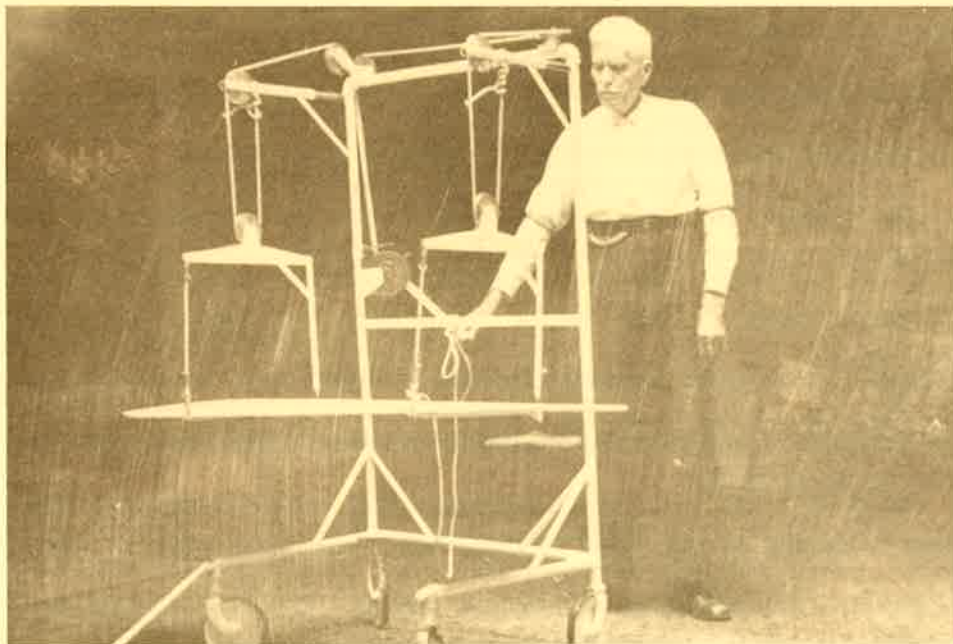
The 1920s and 1930s also saw a decline in church attendance everywhere. The Great Depression was almost a decade away, but rural America was in serious economic depression throughout the 1920s, a matter of special consequence to the predominantly rural Disciples of Christ. At the same time, denominationalism experienced strong resurgence, and local suspicion of liberal national leadership grew in all denominations. The decline in financial support which plagued the recently-joined societies also affected most major denominations during the Roaring Twenties.

That was the first and primary problem. Given the Disciple plea for unity and the heady optimism of 1918-1919, most of the denomination plunged enthusiastically into the new plan with the zeal of pilgrims who saw the Holy City at last. The carping of conservative critics simply strengthened the sense of divine destiny and made the advocates intolerant of any variation from the one standard. No one on the NBA Central Board, not even Mohorter himself, asked whether UCMS and the Division of Benevolence would follow the hard financial lessons that NBA had learned from experience and from Uncle Jimmie's

responsible stewardship. The answer was "No"; bequests, annuities, and funds given for specific projects would go into a common fund to be dispersed as the officers of UCMS saw fit.

The financial crunch began immediately. Budgets before unification had been inflated by the war and by the 1919 boom in giving. UCMS had no assets, had to put a promotional system in place, was confronted by the results of maintenance needs delayed by WWI, and was forced almost immediately to help cover the debt of the defunct Interchurch World Movement.

Almost every year in the 1920s, UCMS confronted a deficit in its operating budget and had to ask the Central Board to pledge NBA assets to cover sizable short-term loans from St. Louis banks. Inflation was on the increase at home



**Andrew Sebring, a resident of the Illinois Christian Home, was an inventor of note. Working in his room or at times in a larger space, he fashioned several devices to aid in the care of residents. Pictured at left is a contraption he rigged with ropes and pulleys to lift patients.**

**Sebring is thought to have produced the first devotional film used by The Christian Church. Note the film rewind equipment mounted on his dresser.**

**He also constructed 5-foot models of each of the NBA Homes for display.**



and abroad, and widespread socio-economic dislocation was daily increasing the demands on its limited resources. The budget year was changed, staffs were pared, and even the headquarters was moved from St. Louis to Indianapolis to save \$10,000 in annual rent.

Two ways that UCMS sought budgetary relief disturbed the quarterly meetings of the NBA Central Board. First, UCMS officers began using, as general operating funds, bequests and annuities which had been committed to NBA but were undesignated as to use. The justification for the practice was that the operating expenses of the 12 NBA homes were paid out of the UCMS budget. This problem was intensified by the refusal of the UCMS treasurer to inform NBA of these annuities and bequests, and by the later insistence of the president that UCMS had never officially accepted NBA's 1921 statement of agreement.

The second problem was the straw that broke the camel's back. Almost every year through the '20s, UCMS had sought and obtained sizable special appropriations from NBA funds. In addition, some years the NBA Central Board made special appropriations to increase the budget of the Division of Benevolence or to support UCMS in hiring representatives to raise money for the Homes, only to later discover that the budgets were not increased or field representatives not employed. In fact, UCMS insisted on reducing the individual budgets of the Homes by a commensurate amount for any funds or goods received by individual Homes from non-Disciple and community sources.

The situation became impossible in the early '30s. NBA had been giving special supplements to the Homes for several years and maintaining the physical plants. In desperation, UCMS demanded a precise accounting of just what trusts NBA held that could not be delegated to UCMS. About the same time, the Society began to insist that the Homes raise more money locally while putting serious restrictions on where or how they could seek the funds. Individual budgets were reduced beforehand to make sure that funds were raised locally. The situation became so serious in early 1931 that the General Secretary and the Central Board feared that the Homes would begin to sever their connections with the denomination.

Dissolution of the union was inevitable; in fact, it is amazing that it was so long in coming. In 1930, UCMS ordered three Homes to raise all their budgets from local non-Disciple sources and almost half of the operating budget of all Homes to come from local non-Disciple sources. Soon NBA changed its letterhead to read "The National Benevolent Association, affiliated with the United

Cleveland Christian Home



Christian Missionary Society," much to the consternation of UCMS.

In 1931, UCMS decided to put six homes on regional support while denying them access to the churches for support. At the same time, UCMS was seeking NBA's guarantee for a \$100,000 loan which it hoped to get in St. Louis. Negotiations between the two agencies were prolonged. Finally, UCMS' inability to support the Homes and its need for the \$100,000 loan prevailed. As of July 1, 1932, all of the Homes were put on regional support and NBA was made solely responsible for raising funds and administering the 13 benevolent institutions of the Disciples of Christ. The Pittsburgh International Convention of 1933 formally severed the connection begun so optimistically in 1920.

A third factor also played a key role in the breakdown of the union, although it might not have been so influential had the budget problems been less insurmountable. Most of the officers of UCMS were old "missionary board" people dedicated to defending the cause of missions, especially foreign missions, against all competitors. The cry of the orphan was a powerful competitor for funds, as CWBM's earlier effort to pre-empt NBA's Easter appeal had shown. As funds became more constricted throughout the '20s and early '30s, the gut reaction of these officers also became more constricted. It is easy to trace the steady decline in the pages devoted to benevolence by *World Call* and other denominational papers. This same constellation of reactions forced The Pension Fund, The Board of Church Extension and The Board of Higher Education to separate from UCMS during the same period.

It seems easy from a distance of 50-plus years to fix the blame. The temptation to do so is increased by the fact that NBA was treated as an "Independent" pariah at both national and state levels for years. But to do so is to misunderstand the situation. Part of the problem resulted from the fact that in the idealism of the founding, the two agencies never realized that they held differing views of their responsibilities and relationships to each other and to the Homes. But more than that, wonderful dreams of the Kingdom of God die hard, especially when they are pure and have been confronted constantly by carping attacks. The Beloved Inasmuch Commander-in-Chief did not live to see the shipwreck of his dream on the rocks of economic reality, but he must have foreseen its coming.



THE GIFT AND THE GIVER

UCMS headquarters in St. Louis





▲ St. Louis Christian Orphans' Home

▼ St. Louis Christian Orphans' Home, circa 1935



## Chapter 6

Penniless....  
A while  
Without food  
I can live;  
But it breaks my heart  
To know  
I cannot give.

Penniless....  
I can share my rags,  
But I—  
I cannot bear to hear  
Starved children cry.

(From "Songs of the Slums"  
by Kagawa)

### LAYING THE SECOND FOUNDATION

The Great Depression broke the flamboyance of the twenties once and for all. After a decade of exhilarating prosperity, national income dropped a precipitous 53 percent. The emergency had no precedent in United States history: millions stood in bread lines and armies of homeless youth roamed the streets. Relief agencies ran out of money and stood helplessly by while thousands suffered. The land was full of hobos and tramps.

However, for national church organizations, the Great Depression simply exacerbated an economic disaster that had begun almost a decade earlier. In the '20s, inflation spiraled out of control on foreign fields as the political and nationalistic cauldrons boiled. Even in America, the '20s were a decade of boom and bust when costs of building, operating and serving jumped dramatically.

But the bottom had fallen out at home. Americans after World War I developed a militant disinterest in others and an active distrust of any leaders who called them to wider participation in the world. More than 2,700 young American Christians had offered themselves for foreign missionary service in 1920; that number dropped to 252 in 1928. In spite of the booming prosperity of the '20s, giving to the national denominational agencies decreased significantly, for some as much as 45 percent. The newly-formed UCMS accumulated a \$712,133.95 operating deficit by 1930, after a decade of truly heroic effort; the story of its financial losses is easy to replicate in American Protestantism in that 10 years after The Great War.

For NBA, still less than 50 years old, the problems seemed impossible. The "Beloved Inasmuch Commander-in-Chief" who had led NBA's responsible



stewardship and expansion for almost a quarter century had died at the helm just months before Black Friday. The very life of the Association's benevolent mission to needy children, widows, and older Americans was being squeezed out, just when the demand for care reached unprecedented proportions. There was talk of transferring the indigent aged in the Homes to county poorhouses as pressures increased to save the foreign mission program of the church.

Even today we can recapture the sense of desperation that pervaded the 13 institutions and the Central Board of NBA as the '30s began. The inadequate operating budgets for the Homes were reduced an additional \$40,000-plus and each home was ordered to get what it could from non-Disciple sources. In 1931, six Homes were taken off the UCMS budget, told to raise support from their local areas, and then denied access to local Disciple churches for support. One year later *all* the Homes were put on local support but denied the right to appeal to local congregations. By that time, the NBA Central Board was contributing 40 percent of the operating expenses to the Homes. The fear that the Homes would necessarily sever all ties with the church in order to survive came even nearer reality.

To make matters worse, there was no system for promoting NBA or the Homes in 1933. It had been dismantled a decade earlier and the churches had been assured that such a system would never again be needed. Furthermore, the demand for benevolent services was escalating astronomically and the *nature* of the services needed was changing dramatically.

Although the Association had more resources in 1929-1937 than when that faithful band of women laid the first foundation in 1887, the depression years were especially crucial to NBA; a new foundation had to be laid. W. Palmer Clarkson and Asa F. Seay, successive Presidents of NBA, and F. M. Rogers and Eric Carlson, General Secretaries in succession, were responsible for laying the second foundation in those years, the one on which the Association is now built.

F. M. Rogers succeeded James H. Mohorter as NBA's General Secretary and Secretary of the Department of Benevolence of UCMS in September, 1929. A well-known Disciple leader, he had held important pastorates in Illinois and California before becoming State Secretary (the forerunner of Regional Minister) in Southern California and then chancellor of California Christian College (now Chapman College). As the Long Beach pastor of L. J. Massie, Rogers was the first person to know of Massie's dream of a home for orphaned children in California, and Rogers had communicated that dream to Mohorter. A proven fund raiser whose commitment to benevolence went back to Mattie Younkin and an active board member of California Christian Home, Rogers had raised funds for its new building at Rosemead and his wife, Emma, was the first superintendent of that Home. For two years, Rogers had been the California field representative for UCMS. It was also well-known that Uncle Jimmie had looked favorably on the possibility that F. M. Rogers might succeed him. He was a natural for General Secretary.

From 1929 until failing health forced his return to California in 1937, F. M. Rogers led NBA through some of the most difficult days of its history. As the economic situation of the Homes worsened, he reluctantly, but firmly, guided the process of transferring responsibility for benevolence from UCMS back to NBA. He set up the regional support plan, hired field representatives, developed the rebirth of the necessary promotional effort and defended NBA and the Homes through many ecclesiastical fires.

Equally important, Rogers saw that social, economic and political changes in American society were altering both the character of human need and the

James H. Mohorter and F. M. Rogers at California Christian Home







F. M. Rogers reading to blind residents at Illinois Christian Home

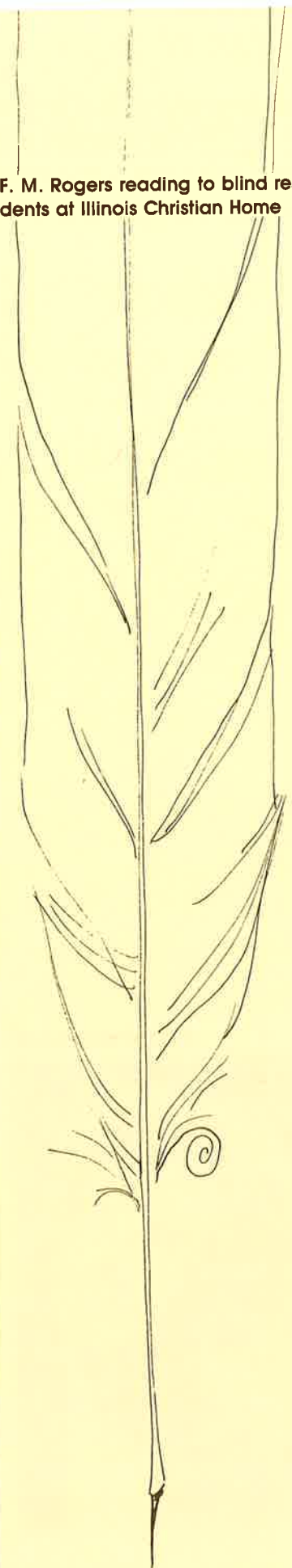
nature of benevolence. His essays and addresses called eloquently and regularly for the churches and the Association to adjust their traditional approaches to benevolence to match the needs and opportunities of the new era.

As the new social legislation made its way into the fabric of American society, many people assumed it to be a panacea for all human need and believed that Old Age Pensions and Social Security would soon eliminate the need for Christian agencies to help the needy. But recipients of the small monthly pension checks soon learned that it neither gave them material security nor alleviated suffering of mind and soul. Those, Rogers knew, who still looked with the compassion of Jesus upon neglected oldsters or abandoned children, must continue to lead the way in social pioneering.

But change had to come. Many Children's Homes had no facilities for teen-age youths now made unemployable by new child labor laws. NBA Homes for the Aged made no provisions for married couples, persons who needed care but could pay their own way, or persons needing permanent nursing care. Pensions, retirement plans, and other forms of public assistance might make survival possible, but the church of Jesus Christ must be concerned about *loving* care, about how persons could have the opportunities for the fullest life possible, regardless of their circumstances.

The first necessity, however, was to get the existing work adequately supported. The Great Depression made this more difficult. NBA had reluctantly assumed \$162,000 of the UCMS operating deficit. Rogers and the Central Board were determined that the deficit obligation not eat into the funds received to operate the Homes. Furthermore, NBA's necessary appeal to the churches for support was a continuing cause of tension with UCMS and the state societies.

The demand for services was overwhelming. The overcrowded Homes had long waiting lists. In 1936, 800 children were being served but 470 worthy applicants were turned away; 300 aged folks were in residence but twice that number



were refused admittance. Minimum wage laws and other legislation escalated operating costs as annual deficits increased. Building new homes was out of the question now and badly-needed additions had to be postponed.

F. M. Rogers created a regional support plan for the Homes in 1931. Under it, each Home looked to the churches and individuals in its own geographical area for the resources to operate its ministry. Field workers were appointed to promote and solicit gifts in each region. At the same time, Rogers created a general fund to supplement fund raising in areas where Disciples were weak and to pay central administrative expenses. (The Homes with their respective service and support areas are shown on the chart below.)

### HOME SERVICE AND SUPPORT AREAS IN 1931

Homes	Service and Support Areas
Northwestern Christian Home	Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana
Colorado Christian Home (Rocky Mountain Area)	Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, Utah, New Mexico
California Christian Home (Southwest Area)	California, Arizona, Nevada
Child Saving Institute (North Central)	North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa
Juliette Fowler Homes	Texas, Louisiana
Illinois Christian Home Land Children's Orphans' Home (Central Area)	Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Iowa, Oklahoma, Arkansas
Cleveland Christian Home and Emily Flinn Home (Northeast)	Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, New York, West Virginia, Pennsylvania
Florida Christian Home and Southern Christian Home (Southeast Area)	Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida

New England and North Atlantic State offerings went for general maintenance of all Homes. Negro Church offerings went for a special fund to aid Negro children and the aged.

Bess White Cochran



It was an uphill climb. The Association had to contribute \$30,000 a year to Home operating expenses until the reserves had been exhausted and a \$9,111 deficit incurred. In the drive to get NBA included in local church budgets, the rallying cry became: "DON'T BALANCE YOUR CHURCH BUDGET BY CUTTING OUT ITS HEART - BENEVOLENCE!"

Early in this period, NBA made a decision that was to have a profound effect on its future. The Association had and would continue to cooperate in *World Call*, but now it was clear that NBA must have its own magazine to carry its crucial message of "the Gospel of the Helping Hand." The Central Board hired Bess Robbins White, former editor of *World Call* to head its new Publicity Department and to develop its own magazine.

In 1936, Bess White created *Family Talk*, to bring the news, reports, and vital happenings of "our other family" in the NBA Homes to the churches throughout the United States. Named for the "family talk" around the kitchen table in her childhood home as a minister's daughter, the little magazine was just that. It was folksy, but it packed a big wallop and built a loyal and generous family of thousands.

The first years of the "little magazine with a big message" were exciting years of celebration, growth and transition. The \$462,000 indebtedness had been paid off without loss to the Home budgets. The area support plan was working well and receipts were rising in spite of an adverse economic climate. The frequent claim that Disciples as a people were not interested in benevolence was daily being refuted.

Yes, there was much to celebrate during that first year of *Family Talk*. NBA's Golden Jubilee was to be celebrated at the 1937 International Convention in Columbus, Ohio. NBA had come a long way through many trials since Mattie Younkin spoke above the catcalls of her ministerial colleagues at earlier conventions.

Bess White and the Central Board knew that the 50th birthday did not belong to them; it belonged to the Homes, to the churches, and to the saints who by grace had brought the work so far. Much preparation had to be done to make it possible for all to celebrate. To tell the story, Bess wrote NBA's first history, *The March of Mercy*, which detailed the steady progress of NBA toward goals envisioned 50 years earlier at a prayer meeting on a cold February night in a local church basement.

To help congregations and individuals have a personal experience of sharing in the "March of Mercy," new promotional devices were initiated for the Golden Jubilee celebration. Some of them were so effective that they came to characterize NBA's promotional work among the churches and church schools for the next quarter century:

'Benevolent Village' was re-created for the convention. Scale models of each of the 12 institutions (Valpraiso Hospital had been sold by this time) was constructed by cabinet-maker Andrew Sebring. They were furnished, lit, and so arranged in the display that convention-goers could walk among them.

Similar materials were created for local celebrations: cut-out models of 'Benevolent Village' to be put together; a play depicting the March of Mercy through the years; worship resources; coin envelopes for the Christmas offering. Any Sunday School teacher who lived through this era can remember the educational materials that came through the Sunday Schools. All of these things, plus the steady appeal for 'Octagon' coupons to build a Boys' Cottage at Southern Christian Home or provide college scholarships at Cleveland Christian Home, were to help give a sense of ownership and responsibility. This was especially important for churches located too far from a Home to make periodic visits.

A color film of the children of the Christian Orphans' Home was planned



Contribution envelopes



# GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

OCTOBER 29, 1937

1887-1937

COLUMBUS, OHIO

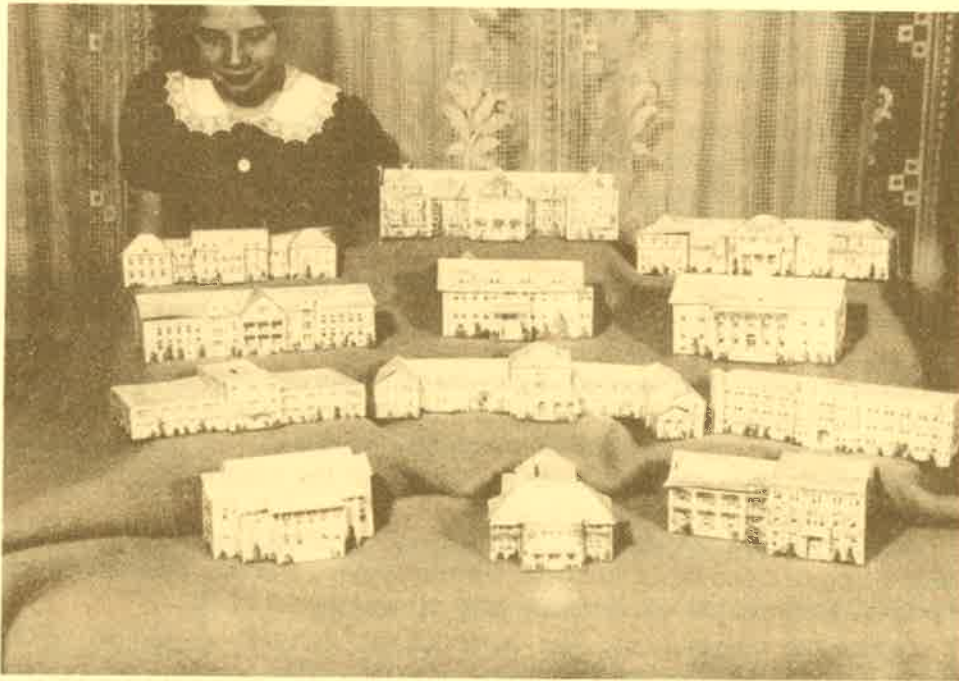
**"SHOULDERING, SHELTERING, LOVING"**

## At the 50 year anniversary, we see that:

- Exact replicas of the 12 Homes, electrically lighted to reveal models of children and oldsters at play and at work, were arranged geographically on the floor so viewers could walk among them.
- Asa F. Seay was introduced as President of the National Benevolent Association, replacing W. Palmer Clarkson who became Chairman of the Board.
- Thirty-two hundred attendees watched the evening presentation—"March of Mercy"—with a cast of 100. This pageant depicted 50 years in NBA and included 70 children from the Cleveland Christian Home under the direction of Anna Garver, Superintendent.
- J. Eric Carlson, the new General Secretary, was introduced to the Convention.
- Family Talk was becoming the mouthpiece for NBA.
- Two thousand sixty churches were listed as contributing to NBA – a gain of 86 from the previous year.
- Barton Stone's grandson entered Florida Christian Home.
- Offerings from churches increased by \$18,705 from the previous year.
- The number of annuity bonds doubled.
- Bequests increased by \$7,000.

**NBA  
JUBILEE**

50 Years  
of  
Benevolence



The Golden Jubilee celebration included these 12 models of NBA Homes (1938)

that year and available the next. It was the first Disciple promotional motion picture.

The 'Other Mothers' program was initiated to recognize benevolent women in local churches and to provide an avenue of expression for women in the work of benevolence. Churches and classes often paid the membership fee of \$10 to honor a committed Christian woman for her benevolent work.

A challenge was issued at the Jubilee Convention for local churches to 'adopt' a Home resident for one year. Such congregations, designated as Front Line Churches, contributed \$300, the cost to support one person for one year. The Front Line Program caught on slowly but, by 1942, there were 118 Front Line Churches and 516 in 1952.

The Golden Jubilee—and the years immediately following—witnessed an unusual degree of transition in NBA. At the Jubilee only two of the original band of founders still lived—Mrs. J. H. Garrison of Los Angeles, still a Central Board member, and Donie Hansbrough, who at 92 was still the Corresponding Secretary after 50 years. Her "Recollections" are the source to which speakers and historians return again and again for information and inspiration on the moving story of struggle and commitment:

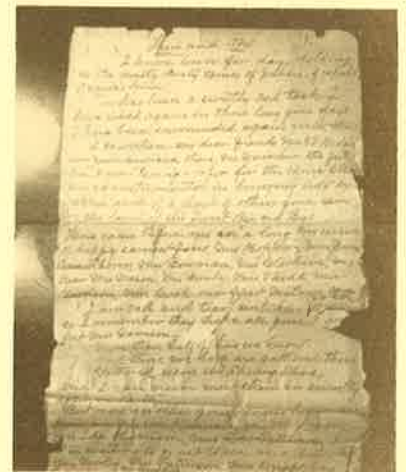
We had to chide ourselves for the dimness of faith when contributions had been slow to come in, and would feel rebuked when at the end of the month we found all our needs supplied. The Lord had said 'I will never leave thee or forsake thee,' and on this promise we knew we could depend so long as we were faithfully doing His work.

Donie Hansbrough, stalwart pioneer of that first Home in 1889, quietly "passed the torch" to others on September 3, 1938, at the age of 93. Her final memoir said:



Donie Hansbrough on her 90th birthday (1935)

Recollections in Donie Hansbrough's handwriting





F. M. Rogers and J. Eric Carlson

J. Eric Carlson



I appeal to you all to continue this work of ministering to the weak and the needy—the young and the aged, to support and keep up these Homes of my beloved National Benevolent Association.

One other “founder” was still active—Lee Wiley Grant—the young lawyer who drew up the original charter for the Benevolent Association of the Christian Church in 1887. NBA’s legal counsel from the first year, he was elected treasurer in 1905. He served in both capacities until 1943, often with little or no recompense.

A native of St. Louis, Lee Grant modeled the best characteristics of his Scottish forebears. He became a Disciple under the ministry of Enos Campbell, cousin and secretary of Alexander Campbell, and remained unswerving in his love and loyalty to the Church throughout his life. An elder of Union Avenue Christian Church from its founding, his favorite among his many positions of congregational leadership was chairman of the Division of Missions. His pastor, George A. Campbell, once characterized him as one of the outstanding leaders in Christian outreach in the city of St. Louis.

Grant had an unbroken fidelity to the law, his chosen profession. He was NBA’s General Counsel for 57 years. He also served a similar position for the Disciples’ Board of Church Extension and as attorney for UCMS.

Lee’s other notable traits also were typically Scottish—a genuine joy in friendship coupled with a reliable loyalty, and a fine adherence to the principles in which he had come to believe. A Southern gentleman with a sharp mind, Lee Grant was also dedicated to personal growth. In his middle years, he began to study new subjects, to push his mind into larger fields. People who knew him in those years were always amazed at how widely his mind ranged. Late in Grant’s life, George Campbell asked him what lesson long life had taught him. Lee quickly replied, “Happiness is inextricably tied up with service.”

In the ‘30s, ‘40s, and ‘50s, NBA was headed by an active volunteer president, but day-to-day operations were managed by a troika of officers who were separately responsible to the Central Board and who had clearly delineated responsibilities. At the beginning of 1937, the officers were: W. Palmer Clarkson, President; F. M. Rogers, General Secretary; Bess White Cochran, Publicity Director; and Lee W. Grant, Treasurer and General Counsel. Lee Grant was the last of these officers to change. When Hobart Fosher replaced him as Treasurer and General Counsel in 1943, it was truly the end of an era.

The transition began in the Golden Jubilee Year. F. M. Rogers’ failing health forced him to resign as General Secretary after eight years (1929–1937). His wise stewardship during The Great Depression had guided NBA through the difficult years of separation from the United Society and its re-establishment as a separate “Brotherhood” Agency. Even after leaving St. Louis, Rogers continued to serve as NBA Field Representative on the Pacific Coast, and to assist his wife in her role as Superintendent of California Christian Home.

The person chosen to replace him, J. Eric Carlson, was a pastor who was strongly convinced that

proximity to the NBA works miracles of transformation, not only for those served, but for those having a part in it. It gives increased heart power. It draws us constantly and strongly to Jesus . . . Those who have not a part in this experience are poor indeed.

J. Eric Carlson served as General Secretary for 27 years (1937–1964), through a time of convulsive changes in American society and in NBA itself. He lived

an NBA ministry of total commitment to the "other family." Although a diabetic, he refused to let his own health and comfort interfere with this ministry. The living memories of Eric Carlson are amazingly consistent. They portray a tall, thin man who traveled incessantly on day coaches and even carried his bags and boxes of literature on the streetcar rather than the taxi so he could save every possible penny for the children and old people. They picture a quiet leader, patient in negotiation, who was self-effacing and cooperative when NBA hired an executive president over him and who, in all relationships, kept the good of that "mission of mercy" uppermost in his heart and prayers. He took thousands of pictures of NBA children and old folks as he criss-crossed the country for speaking engagements and conventions.

Eric Carlson, General Secretary, Asa Seay, who had replaced Palmer Clarkson as President, Lee Grant, Treasurer, and Bess White Cochran, Publicity Director, worked together for four years, until Mrs. Cochran's husband was transferred to California. She and Louis Cochran later researched together the popular story of the Campbell family, *Fool of God*. (Bess Cochran, as one of many persons interviewed for this history, was very helpful with her keen insights and sharp memory. It is regrettable she died just months before publication.)

In five years, *Family Talk* had become a mainstay in Disciple life, essential to the publicizing of the programs and needs of NBA. To fill Bess' shoes, an editor with special talents had to be found. On June 1, 1941, Jessie M. Burke, an ordained minister, was called from Florida to be the NBA Publicity Director and Editor. Her training had been in mass media at the College of the Bible at Lexington and she had served two churches in Florida. Full of energy and enthusiasm, her creative skills enriched and were appreciated by churches, Homes, and benefactors for 31 years!

Jessie Burke was a natural for "the little magazine with a big message." Her use of visual imagery and her ability to combine pictures with stories, facts, and figures reveal an unerring sense of NBA's special appeal. Almost every year between 1941 and her retirement in 1972, giving to the operating budget of the Homes increased significantly.

*Family Talk* still follows the format designed by Jessie Burke. Its results for the "Mission of Mercy" have been incalculable, but none show its effect more clearly than the unexpected result of "The Story of Bill Dollar":

Margaret S. Parmly of New York City was first introduced to NBA in the 1940s while on an ocean cruise. One morning on deck, she inadvertently interrupted the personal devotions of her new friend, Eugenia Whitmore of Omaha. Ms. Whitmore carried her file of *Family Talk* on the voyage for use as a devotional resource. After sharing *Family Talk* on the cruise, Margaret Parmly asked that 'the little magazine with a big message' be sent to her. She became an avid reader and then a supporter of NBA projects, although she was a dedicated Presbyterian.

Most of the 1969 Winter issue of *Family Talk* was devoted to 'The Story of Bill Dollar.' Warren L. Conner of Columbia, Missouri, had created the character and Bruce L. Tilsley of Denver, Colorado, had done the art work. The storyline reflected the way that different dollars were spent in the 60s and the ways in which NBA received the resources to finance its ministry of loving care. The cartoon story concluded with Bill Dollar saying, 'I want to spend me to help this ministry on earth—but YOU have to let me . . . Will You?'

As soon as she read the Bill Dollar story, Margaret Parmly arose from her chair and said, 'Yes, Jessie Burke, I can do it!' She called her attorney and slightly more than one year later, NBA received more than \$2 million in IBM



Asa F. Seay



Lee Grant, J. Eric Carlson and Elizabeth Jameson



Jessie M. Burke

## THE STORY OF BILL DOLLAR



stock from the Parmly estate. Margaret Parmly had left 3,034 shares to Woodhaven Learning Center because she was excited about its redemptive ministry to persons with mental retardation. She also left 3,034 shares to Barton W. Stone Christian Home because it was the oldest NBA Home serving elderly people. She had recently given \$25,000 to Emily E. Flinn Home. The Parmly estate also included bequests to 22 Presbyterian and Lutheran homes, hospitals and churches.

NBA's new leaders in 1937 inherited an organization dedicated to the care of those in need, and operating 12 well-established institutions in 11 states. Each Home had its own unpaid local Board. The high standard of caring was evident when the Georgia State Department of Public Welfare singled out Southern Christian Home in Atlanta from all other child-caring agencies in the state to receive the first license awarded a children's institution.

But there were problems looming on the horizon, both with increased state-controlled social work and with the need for the churches to recognize their responsibility in benevolence. Among American religious bodies, Disciples ranked fifth in membership and 16th in benevolent work.

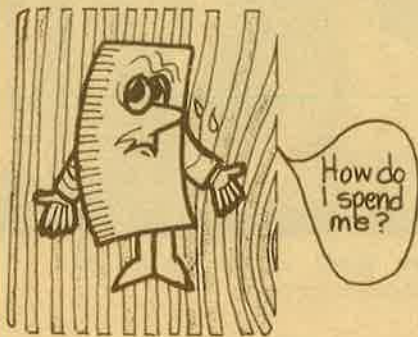
The 1930s began with the Great Depression and ended with the world at war. In between, the Franklin Roosevelt administration initiated a wide array of social legislation. Most states followed suit in a national movement to protect the helpless and procure the blessings of liberty for all. Social security, old age pensions, minimum wage laws, and federal work programs were irrevocably changing the nature of Christian benevolence.

Some people, including not a few church members, believed that welfare programs were immoral, seeking to thwart the justice of God on the lazy, profligate poor. NBA's knowledge of the poor was too intimate for such callous self-righteousness; the agency welcomed the social advances, just as its founders had lobbied for social legislation in the Progressive Era. The assumption of well-intentioned persons that the new social support systems made benevolent homes anachronistic was much more threatening to NBA's ministry than any legislation of the time.

The national officers and the local boards knew the needy firsthand; they realized that Christian benevolence must change, especially to serve the needy who "fell through the cracks" of the new social legislation. The abbreviated files of three residents amply illustrate this point:

### File #1:

There were seven children in the family, five under twelve years. The mother struggled hopelessly with ill health, lack of education, and loss of ambition to maintain them on her earnings of \$9 a week, as part-time helper in a local hospital. Working irregular hours, she had no relative to watch over the children or cook their meals. Day after day the 11-year-old daughter had the responsibility of caring for the smaller ones. When the mother came home from work, she was, due to her poor health, completely exhausted and unable to care properly for her children. The pastor, who interested himself in the case, was appalled at the lack of cleanliness and general neglect of the children. The five youngest were accepted into one of our Homes and now show the result of good care, sensible routine, proper food, dental and medical care. They are handsome children, clean and winsome, waiting for mother to get back on her feet. Lifted from the ash heap of poverty, they are quickly becoming the happy carefree children they deserve to be.







St. Louis Christian Orphans' Home (1935)

File #2:

The old gentleman is 75 years old, has been a faithful member of the Christian Church and contributor to its work for 49 years. He is crippled and alone in the world. He trusted supposed friends and lost \$600 a few years ago, then underwent an operation at a cost of \$500, which depleted his savings. Now, because of infirmity, he is not able to do full-time work, nor able to secure part-time work. He has advertised in five papers and canvassed three different towns during the summer in search of work. He writes: 'Winter is coming on and I don't know what to do or where to go. I am exceedingly anxious to get in a Home.'

File #3:

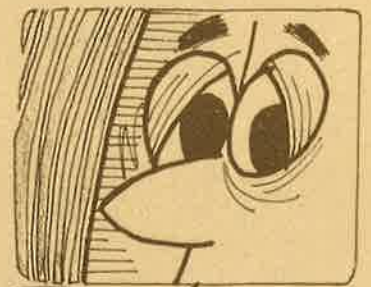
'Aunty Todd' was 98 when she entered the Home. Her life dates back to the time when the country was new and her native state, Missouri, a wilderness. The tide of pioneers carried her along to Oregon, one of that splendid company of men and women who literally caused the barren land to blossom. She was a pioneer, also, in the Reformation Movement. Her uncle became interested in the plea for primitive Christianity and 'went back to Kentucky to learn how to preach.' At a meeting held in her uncle's house, she made the good confession and was baptized. Through all the years she gave her time, her talent, and her money to the church. She helped to plant and maintain a church in every community where she lived. She eventually became the proud possessor of a farm. Then came those misfortunes that changed her life, and the peace and rest she hoped for in her later years turned into hardship. But the church to which she had given her heart when a child loved her gently during her dependent years, and she was 'towed in' to be cared for until her Master came for her at 104 years.

These three examples illustrate the vital role which the church had to play in the lives of disadvantaged people. Church Homes could: (a) give more thought than government agencies to *individual needs* (such as, keeping children in a family together); (b) provide care for those who did not fit the legal "categories" of government help (e.g., Files #1 and #2); (c) pioneer experimental programs and new techniques; and (d) become the "other family" for countless unfortunates who had lost theirs, through no fault of their own.

The task of assisting the needy was becoming a science. Society was beginning to realize that success was not the automatic reward of thrift and ambition, and that need was often the result of factors beyond individual control. Trained social workers were added to the staffs of the Homes as it became increasingly

## THE STORY OF BILL DOLLAR

The NBA Homes are taking a careful look at cost of care payments. They must be increased. More people have additional means to help defray these costs and we have the responsibility of showing them how to apply to the proper sources for this assistance...



Well, I've seen a lot of statistics - and thought at first they might be cold and calculating... but this great NBA organization is so much more than dollars and cents...



It is LOVE. It is the WARM HEART OF COMPASSION FOR GOD'S PEOPLE - distressed children and youth, the handicapped, and the aged. When you visit any of these Homes you will see in the faces of those receiving THIS LOVING CARE - the gratitude and satisfaction of people who know they are loved!



Bettie R. Brown

clear that financial help was not a panacea for all need, and that frustrated lives could not be redeemed by grocery orders alone.

The small NBA national staff sought to keep the churches abreast of new developments in benevolent ministry. But the real burden of the changes fell on the unsung heroes of this time and all times, the superintendents and Boards of the local Homes. They were the mortar in the new foundation, as they had been in the old. They had to find the ways to professionalize and adjust to social change, while constantly confronting the problems of too many needs and not enough resources. Without them, no foundation would ever hold.

For them the '30s was a time of special trial. Although space was limited, the number of residents had increased through the years. Nonetheless, if the superintendents did not completely wear out through their "round-the-clock" duties, they tended to have long and happy tenures, loving and being loved by both young and old. The list below shows the superintendents in 1938 including the *total* years they served:

Superintendent	Years	Home	Residents
Bettie R. Brown	45	Christian Orphans' Home	150
Edna D. Henry	19	Colorado Christian Home	65
Anna Thorpe	37	Cleveland Christian Home	110
Lilly C. Kendrick	10	Juliette Fowler Home	120
Sue Steiner Hook	25	Southern Christian Home	45
Alice Scott	18	Child Saving Institute	125
Jane Hutton	16	Illinois Christian Home	38
Bessie Reasor	15	Florida Christian Home	52
Laura K. Hill	16	Northwestern Christian Home	26
Bessie Gamble	8	Juliette Fowler Home for Aged	20
Emma Rogers	32	California Christian Home	58
Glen Harter	17	Emily E. Flinn Home	25

Cleveland Christian Home newsletter (1944)



It was people like these of whom the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews said, "Of whom the world was not worthy."

But a greater trial of adaptation awaited the hard-working superintendents. NBA had initiated no Homes since 1920 and had enlarged none since 1929. In response to the Golden Jubilee and the new foundation of the 1930s, funds became available in 1938-41 for major improvements and additions. However, just as construction began, the world went to war.

World War II put all building programs on hold as young men and women went off to war. The years were not easy for anyone, but were especially difficult for Home superintendents who had to cope with staff shortages, food rationing, inflation, scarcities of all kinds, and the grief of watching "children saved" going off to fight and die. Many graduates enlisted and some never returned.

A selection of items from *Family Talk* and *World Call* will recall the feeling of those war years better than any description can hope to do:

- May, 1941:

The war comes to our doors! The price of cod liver oil has more than doubled since the war started, and as all of our Homes for Children use

this form of bottled sunshine, our budgets are thus directly affected by the conflict overseas. (Editor: Some good can come from anything!)

- October, 1941:

One hundred boys and girls at the Cleveland Christian Home greeted one of their graduates with awe and admiration. Wayne Robbins, 21, a cadet in the U.S. Air Corps, came back for a visit and found himself a hero. Young aviation fans followed him around the grounds, asking his advice about model planes and trying on his cadet-blue shirt.

- May, 1942:

We were afraid the children would be nervous about the blackout, but the smallest were the sweetest. They were in the 'darkest' dark, but spent the whole time talking about Helen Keller, whom they had met some months ago.

- August, 1942:

Yesterday passed from our sight all that remained of Five Sugar Bowls. When Mr. Sugar Bowl returns to our table, we hope all will have learned that lesson which war has taught us . . . don't waste anything. For the sake of humanity, be careful of toilet paper, food, soap, and paper napkins. These things are going to be harder and harder to get.

- August, 1943:

Oh, what fun it is to see the backyard flower beds converted into a Victory Garden by our own elderly men and women.

- May, 1945:

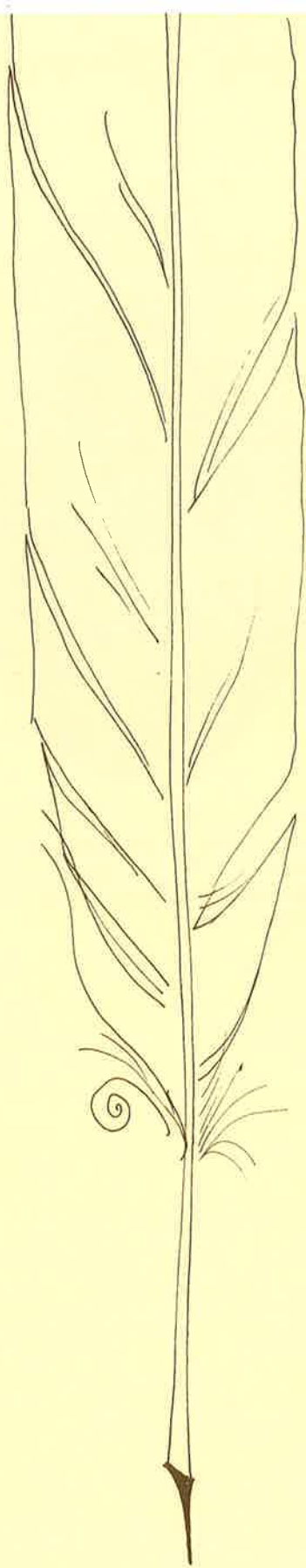
Our WAC, Sgt. Rosalie Pritchett, has been promoted to a Technical position at her Texas post.



Members of the St. Louis Christian Home family for over eight years, Marion Castle and David Olree were married January 20, 1952 in New York City



Colorado Christian Home kitchen



Mom Thorpe, Cleveland Christian Home

- May, 1945:  
Another wonderful gift of \$50 was sent to us this Christmas by Lt. Kensel Clutter, stationed in the Pacific. He was wounded in action last December but has fully recovered.
- June, 1945:  
Gasoline rationing meant our elderly would not have the long automobile rides in the country, one of our chief joys, but that is small sacrifice indeed. We applied for individual Ration Books for each guest, so as to have enough points for a balanced diet—red points or blue.



- December, 1945:  
Wartime restrictions have continued to add new problems in the operation of the Homes of NBA, as budgets have soared to unprecedented heights and building projects must be postponed.
- From a harried superintendent:  
Because of the shortage of help I have had a cook or kitchen help for only 16 of the last 64 days.

These excerpts give glimpses of life in the Homes during wartime.

As the country began the process of reverting to peacetime, the Association once more turned to the possibilities for new models of service. The increased governmental role in social welfare, which had begun in the 1930s, continued to expand. In order to keep abreast of changes and improved standards, advances were required of both secular and religious voluntary social work. Care had to be individualized according to need. Survival was no longer the overwhelming issue. People were often confronted by multi-faceted problems involving job placement, health and medical care, emotional security, etc. Responsible care-givers had to be concerned that "even the least of these" had the opportunity of reaching full potential as a human being.

Jesus' Parable of the Good Samaritan indicates that his Disciples are personally confronted by the demand of God to love whenever they are confronted by a needy person. His redemptive love was predicated on respect, not pity, for all persons; he believed that no child of God was insignificant or unimportant. In the post-war world, the church had a tremendous opportunity to lead the way in the field of welfare, if it dared to broaden its outlook. To integrate and supplement governmental aid required flexible policy if churches and social work agencies were to be vital partners in a common effort of service to those in need. "Today Christian benevolence regards needy persons not merely in terms of eligibility, but . . . as possessors of an inherent right to share in the opportunities and benefits which are essential to our conception of human welfare."



LAYING THE SECOND FOUNDATION



Mom Thorpe with two of the many in their "Sunday best"

St. Louis Christian Orphans' Home



## Chapter 7

### LENGTHENING THE CORDS AND STRENGTHENING THE STAKES

Angels may have wings  
But those I know have feet,  
And say surprising things,  
Irrelevant and sweet . . .  
I love the strength of church  
The poem of a steeple  
But angels all my life  
Came walking in like people.

— Elizabeth Jesup Blake

As NBA became an independent agency and The Great Depression began to fade, committed people “came walking in” to rekindle the torch of benevolence or build living memorials to loved ones. They came from Missouri, New York, Texas and Georgia, from Illinois, Nebraska, Oregon and Iowa, from every state where Disciples were found and *Family Talk* was read. It was a new day, a day of resurrection—a time for boldness and courage.

The leadership style that had served NBA so well in its early decades provided an effective model for laying the second foundation. Restored public confidence once again led to greater participation and generosity at all levels. By 1937, the well-established Homes were growing in support, and NBA's principles of fiscal management were again in place.

Nonetheless, the Association had to clear three serious hurdles in the middle decades of the 20th century in order to be effective as the denomination's arm for Christian benevolence. The most pressing was the physical condition of the 12 Homes and the lack of facilities for persons with different kinds of needs. This hurdle had to be approached immediately; the second and third hurdles—problems raised by volunteer management and the need to redefine denominational affiliation—had to wait.

As of the 1937 Golden Jubilee, NBA had not initiated a new Home in 17 years; none of the existing facilities had been expanded or upgraded in almost a decade. The Homes were seriously overcrowded, the length of waiting lists

Opposite—

Child Saving Institute (1927)

# DO YOU REMEMBER SAVING COUPONS

FROM

- OCTOGON  
LAUNDRY SOAP
- LUZIANNE  
COFFEE AND TEA
- RUMFORD  
BAKING POWDER
- BALLARD'S  
OBELISK FLOUR
- HEALTH CLUB  
BAKING POWDER

FOR  
THE  
BOYS'  
COTTAGE  
FOR  
SOUTHERN  
CHRISTIAN  
HOME?

tragic, and developing state standards were threatening. Fortunately, *benefactors*—those wonderful, caring people—made several improvements possible in the late '30s which might have seemed unnecessary earlier. The chart below illustrates this point.

## IMPROVEMENTS AND DONORS AT VARIOUS HOMES

1939-1941

Year	Home	Improvement	Donor
1939	Northwestern	Two Homes merged in new facility in Beaverton, Oregon	Estate gifts and Church Donations
1939	Illinois	Sun Parlor	M/M Claude Hemphill in memory of his mother.
1939	Illinois	New Wing and Elevator	Estate gifts and Annuities
1939	Christian Orphans'	Sun-play Room for Toddlers	M/M Claude Hemphill
1939	Christian Orphans'	Self-contained Cottage for Teenage Boys	Robert O. Stockton
1939	Juliette Fowler	Swimming Pool	Anonymous Donor
1939	Sarah Harwood	Hospital Addition with Elevator	Lida C. Wells Bible Class
1940	Cleveland	Fully-equipped Camp for Girls	Estate Gifts and Gifts from Friends
1941	California	16-room Wing with Hospital Unit	Estate Gifts and Church Donations
1941	CSI	Nursery Bathroom	A Friend
1941	Juliette Fowler	Picnic Cottage	A Disciple

World War II halted the building program in 1941 just as it got underway. Among the hoped-for additions that had to wait was the "Octogon Coupon" project at Southern Christian Home. Sue Steiner Hook, Superintendent, began





the project in 1938 by asking the churches to send coupons from Octagon products to the Home. She continued collecting the coupons even after she retired in 1947. The new facility was built in 1951, and appropriately named the Sue Steiner Hook Building.

Two major innovations were included in the short period of new construction before the war. Eric Carlson recognized that changes in the laws on youth employment meant that NBA must begin to allow adolescents to remain in the Homes; he dreamed of adding separate cottages for them. "Everyday our Children's Homes not only are saving for society the cost of many delinquents, but are sending out into society contributing, upstanding citizens," he said. In 1939, Christian Orphans' Home built the first cottage for older boys. Completely self-contained and presided over by a matron, the cottage was a place where teen-age boys learned self-reliance and homemaking skills. The basement served as a recreation area, with ample space for games. This new concept became a model for the future.

Carlson, convinced of the need to provide competent nursing care for sick and disabled guests, argued that each NBA Home for the Elderly should have a 20-bed nursing unit. The first nursing unit was dedicated at Sarah Harwood Hall in 1940 and the second at California Christian Home the next year.

As mentioned earlier, innovation—a creative, changing approach to human service in which the *needs* of those being served *shaped* the *ministries* offered—has been a continuing theme in NBA history. This had led that pioneer band of women to insist upon a real Home for children instead of a massive, dark asylum; in that way they were in step with the new developments of the Progressive Era. But they were out of step with the child welfare ideologues of their age when they recognized that many children could not be placed in private homes and that Homes for these children also had to be maintained. The women experimented with industrial homes and farms, then recanted quickly when they discovered that they had to choose between raising cows or rearing children successfully.

When the indigent aged had no option but county poor-farms, these women and men were talking about the human right to live out life with dignity. The processes they designed for both admission to and withdrawal from Homes for the Aged clearly show a respect for the dignity and independence of these respected guests. The care of children may have touched more hearts, but the care of the aged involved at least as much pathos.

In the early years, most of the guests in NBA's Homes for the Aged were indigent women; in fact, some of the Homes, like Sarah Harwood Hall, were limited to women. Aged women comprised the greatest need, and the large bungalows which were converted to Homes were very limited. Married couples were admitted but, during NBA's first 50 years, anyone who got married *after* entering was promptly forced to leave. Furthermore, all persons admitted had to establish that they did not have and could not obtain resources to care for themselves.

Within a decade of the opening of the Christian Old People's Home in Jacksonville, Illinois, the minutes show that the Central Board already realized that the ministry to the aging was changing in the 20th century. The question about the denomination's obligation to care for the men and women who had devoted all their lives to the work of the church at home and abroad arose early and often; one is not surprised to discover that the early supporters of NBA and the Ministers' Retirement Fund (now The Pension Fund of the Christian Church) were often the same people.



Sue Steiner Hook building at Southern Christian Home

Cub Scouts at the Colorado Christian Home



Missionaries with a combined service of more than 200 years at the Emily E. Flinn Home

Ladies of Liberty Christian Church, Liberty, Illinois





A pioneer preacher's wife at Juliette Fowler Home



The limiting of NBA's ministry to the indigent elderly raised equally pressing problems. An early California Christian Home case provides a typical example: A husband, wife, and sister sought admission to the Home. They were lifetime Disciples whose generosity and service to the church at every level were well-known. Now they could no longer live alone. Could the church of Jesus Christ afford to say "No" to persons of real need just because they had personal financial resources? Both the California and Florida Homes often had unused rooms, but lacked the budget to care for more "guests," as the residents were then called. How long could the church go on denying its ministry to persons whose needs were personal but not financial?

Every General Secretary from Mohorter to Carlson urged the church to address these problems. But the capital needed was never available until the middle decades of this century, and then only through the generosity of visionary individuals.

As a young physician, Dr. Frank G. Nifong had been associated with his father in St. Louis where both were active in Union Avenue Christian Church. For years, both father and son contributed their services to the care of the children in the Christian Orphans' Home and influenced many St. Louis specialists to do the same.

Late in World War II, Frank and Lavinia Lenoir Nifong, then retired and living on Maplewood Farm three miles south of Columbia, Missouri, came to realize that many other retired persons, who were able to pay part or all of their own way, were in need of Christian community and care. Being childless and wealthy, the Nifongs wanted to establish such a community on their lovely farm and told their pastor, Clarence E. Lemmon, of the dream.

Early in 1945, Lemmon shared the Nifongs' vision with Eric Carlson and Oreon E. Scott, NBA board member and long-time friend of the Nifongs. Negotiations began almost immediately. The Nifongs had very clear ideas of the facility they chose to support and would not be rushed. NBA had no precedent for a pay-type facility and, moreover, there was much doubt about the church's responsibility to persons who could afford to pay for their care. Mistakes were made on all sides, and problems between the Nifongs, the local board, and the NBA Central Board over policy and management delayed the project. However, the patience and determination of Eric Carlson, Asa Seay, and Oreon Scott, with C. E. Lemmon working in the background, finally paid off. "Faith and persistence," Scott wrote to Nifong, "always find solutions to difficult problems." Construction began in 1947.

The new Home was named Lenoir Memorial Home in memory of Lavinia Nifong's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Slater Lenoir. The Nifongs contributed 170 acres from their farm and \$100,000 to the project. From their country home across the highway, they watched the progress of the Lenoir Home which was opened September 1, 1949.

Lenoir Home was an important advance for NBA; it was the first "pay-type" Home. As life spans rose dramatically and the demand for retirement facilities increased, many older citizens were able to pay for their care. Commercial "rest homes" did not meet the needs of people who desired a Christian atmosphere with congenial companions such as they had come to appreciate in their churches.

However, Lenoir Memorial Home faced some problems in its early years because it was ahead of its time. It was expensive, requiring a sizeable admission fee (\$3,500), plus the costs of care. Both the Lenoir Board and NBA had difficulties in marketing and maintaining it. Questions of conscience did not

make the deficits incurred more palatable. Eventually, its special character as a combination pay facility and retirement center for professional church workers evolved.

Emma Lyon, a missionary who had spent 43 years as a teacher and liberator of women in Nanking, China, was the first guest to be admitted in 1949. Later residents continued to give credence to the special character of "The Big Parsonage," as it was called. Among many outstanding Disciple ministers, missionaries, and officials who have retired there have been Anna Bell Cowdrey, Dr. Jennie Fleming, Myrtle Furman, Dr. I. N. McCash, Dr. and Mrs. G. Edwin Osborn, Dr. and Mrs. Virgil Sly, Dr. and Mrs. J. Eric Carlson, Dr. and Mrs. Orval Peterson, and Dr. and Mrs. Lin Cartwright. Dr. Cartwright, former editor of *The Christian Evangelist*, was one year old when NBA was founded.

Ramsey Memorial Home in Des Moines, Iowa, also opened in 1949. Similarly innovative, it had the advantage of a significant donor and the generosity of the Iowa churches behind it. Miss Mattie Ramsey of Denver, Illinois, began accumulating funds in 1936 "for special needs, such as a pay-type Home" for pensioners who required partial church support. When the Des Moines churches advised NBA that they had located an available property in which they hoped to establish a Home for aged pensioners in Des Moines, Miss Ramsey wholeheartedly and generously supported the project.

The three-story, 60-room brick structure was located on a lovely 10-acre tract near Drake University. The Iowa churches and individuals remodeled and refurnished it, with Miss Ramsey furnishing a beautiful lounge in memory of her sister. As long as Miss Ramsey lived, she saw that each birthday in the Home was celebrated with a special gift.

Another of the "angels who came walking in like people" in these years was the volunteer chief executive of NBA who gave so much time to the Association. Asa F. Seay and his wife, Carrie Hedrick Seay, were people of deep personal faith, profound Christian commitment, and considerable wealth. Their devotion to the mission and work of NBA was both personal and long-standing. They had come on the Central Board in 1931 in the depth of The Great Depression. Asa F. Seay, an outstanding business and civic leader of St. Louis, was Executive Vice President of Ralston Purina Corporation and chief of its operations.

Soon after they were elected to the Central Board, Asa Seay became Vice President of NBA. In 1937, he was elected President to replace W. Palmer Clarkson, and served diligently in that position for 12 years. In spite of the great demands of a growing corporation, Seay came to the NBA offices many times each week. All staff members knew him well and felt free to call on him for advice and consultation without prior warning. During his presidency (1937-1948), NBA had to inaugurate extensive programs of repairing, remodeling, and expanding several Homes. Seay also gave NBA untold hours of leadership during the troubled days of W.W.II.

For some time, Asa and Carrie Seay had discussed how they might personally help to extend the work of NBA. As her health began to fail, Carrie became more urgently concerned to find a way for her wealth to bless others. The dream and work of Anna Thorpe created the opportunity for Carrie Seay to become the "angel that came walking in."

Anna Thorpe had been both superintendent and promotional representative for Cleveland Christian Home since 1925. By 1949, Mom Thorpe had become a living legend in the eight states in the Northeast area. The needs of the area were vast; in 1947 alone, Cleveland Christian Home had turned away 600 children. An additional Children's Home had to be found.



97-year-old I.N. McCash at Lenoir



Lin and Thelma Cartwright at NBA St. Louis office celebrating his 100th birthday (1986)



Mattie Ramsey in Ramsey Chapel at the Illinois home



Carrie Hedrick Seay



Carrie Hedrick Seay Memorial Home



Oreon Scott, J. Eric Carlson and A. Forest Seay Jr. at Seay Home dedication (1950)



Oreon Scott with Forest and Melba Seay and daughter Carolyn



NBA office in the Landreth Building 16th floor, Locust and 4th, St. Louis

Pennsylvania seemed to provide the best location for another facility. The churches were very supportive of NBA's ministry. With characteristic energy Anna visited churches, wrote letters, and spread a plea to "turn dollars into bricks" for a Pennsylvania Home. In 1948, Mom Thorpe discovered a sturdy building on 24 acres at Somerset and struck a bargain with the owner.

Then a miracle happened and "the angel walked in." Asa Seay wrote Mom Thorpe stating that he and his wife had often talked together about the need for a new Children's Home in the East and had planned to do something about it. But death had struck Carrie before she was able to act on this desire. Now he wanted to pay for the new Pennsylvania Home as a tribute to her and to the work she dearly loved.

Carrie Hedrick Seay Memorial Home, with a capacity of 27, was dedicated in 1950. During its history, it provided a secure environment for 151 children. It was closed in 1972, because changes in childcare needs had removed the reasons for its existence. But even after the Home was closed, the generosity of Carrie Hedrick Seay continued to bless the lives of needy young people through the uses of an endowment fund established in her name.

By the time Seay Home was opened, Asa F. Seay had been forced to retire from the presidency of NBA. Poor health, in fact, prevented his attending the dedication of the Home. He died the following year, but his generosity went on blessing the "Mission of Mercy." His estate contained a \$3,600,000 bequest to NBA. Asa Seay's generosity continues to make it possible for NBA to undertake and maintain innovative ministries throughout the United States.

For another decade after the retirement of Asa F. Seay, NBA continued under a volunteer executive and a governing board supported by a troika of administrative officers, each independently responsible to the board. J. Eric Carlson was General Secretary, Jessie Burke was Director of Promotion and Editor of *Family Talk*, and Hobart Fosher was Treasurer and General Counsel. In that decade, three leading Christian Church members from St. Louis served successively as the unpaid volunteer President of NBA:

C. D. Pantle	1949-1951
Ralph Jacoby	Interim 10 months
W. C. Langley	1951-1957

Each had been a long-time member of NBA's Executive Committee and was thoroughly conversant with its operation.

But NBA had become too large and the nature of American business had become too demanding to permit this volunteer arrangement to continue. NBA was now a growing national corporation with 15 Homes in 12 states and an annual budget in excess of \$2,000,000. No volunteer executive, regardless of how dedicated, could give NBA the time and energy that the management of such a large agency had come to require.

During W. C. Langley's presidency, a committee was appointed to prepare a reorganization plan. After a two-year study, they recommended the appointment of NBA's first full-time executive and, in 1957, Orval D. Peterson was chosen for the job. He came from a 20-year pastorate in Yakima, Washington, to accept responsibility for delineating NBA policies and objectives. Fifteen Homes were under his care—seven Children's Homes and eight Homes for Aging. Ground had been broken for the 16th, Oklahoma Christian Home, before Peterson took office.

Employed in the 16 Homes were 362 people. They joined hands to create efficient operation and a Christian atmosphere for the more than 1,768 children and aging residents in the benevolent Homes of the Christian Church. In addition, nine Regional Representatives promoted NBA in their specific areas, and

15 persons were employed at the Landreth Building headquarters in St. Louis. The presidency of NBA was a formidable undertaking in this time of change; it would take a real magician to pull the rabbit out of the hat. After all, there were still three general officers on staff who regarded themselves responsible to the Board and not to the President. Orval Peterson, member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians, was the man for the job!

Quiet, patient, and pastoral, Peterson worked for responsible change at every level without disruption. Local Boards came to accept modifications in mission and changes in denominational relationships. Peterson publicly represented and privately helped the Central Board through the debate on accepting federal funds for the construction of new Homes for the Aging. During his 14½ years as the first full-time president, he initiated programs that were innovative and courageous. The NBA Homes increased from 15 to 20 during this period, and \$11,596,447 was spent on buildings, equipment, and improvements. Throughout these years, Peterson was ably supported by Paul Ehly, Corporate Secretary, and a series of effective chairpersons of the NBA Board.

The third hurdle that NBA was to face in the middle years of the century was the old problem of the structural relationship of the National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church to the denomination for which it was the benevolent arm. This had been a problem almost from the first February evening when the six women met in the church basement to seek divine guidance. A belief that their Association was national and belonged to the denomination had led Mattie Younkin to face the catcalls at the General Convention. Similar commitment caused James H. Mohorter and W. Palmer Clarkson to take a lead in organizing UCMS. Such a belief had kept NBA and the individual Homes in that agency long after it became clear that they were not being treated fairly.

The question of NBA's relationship to denominational structures had remained a constant nagging issue for the three decades after NBA separated from UCMS. Although the claim has often been made that the Disciples of Christ are not oriented to benevolence, most denominational agencies had a healthy respect for the fund raising appeal of the widow and the orphan. Bess White Cochran, former editor of *World Call*, remembered the chagrin felt by denominational executives when NBA became an independent agency again. She reported that one said, "They have taken our 'holler' away" (i.e., appeal).

Almost immediately after NBA had separated from UCMS, as had The Pension Fund and The Board of Church Extension, Disciple executives developed a plan aimed at avoiding any competition in fund raising for national and state agencies. It was called Unified Promotion. The intention was that no agency would be able to appeal directly to Disciple congregations for funds, and denominational support for each agency would be apportioned from a common fund to which all cooperating congregations would contribute.

In 1934-35, the 12 Homes gave serious consideration to participation in Unified Promotion, but that plan of joint support and fiscal management was too similar to the earlier pattern to be acceptable. Their unanimous rejection of the plan, plus the Central Board's doubts, led to NBA's decision not to participate.

Not being a member of Unified Promotion, however, did create many problems for NBA. The '30s, '40s, and '50s were years of a widening split within the Disciples, and NBA's autonomy was often pejoratively called "Independent." Sometimes NBA was denied a role in state and district conventions because "NBA was not a Brotherhood Agency," meaning it was not a member of Unified Promotion.

These reactions to NBA seem emotional and unjustified, yet one has to admit



Orval D. Peterson and Paul M. Bolman, NBA Board member

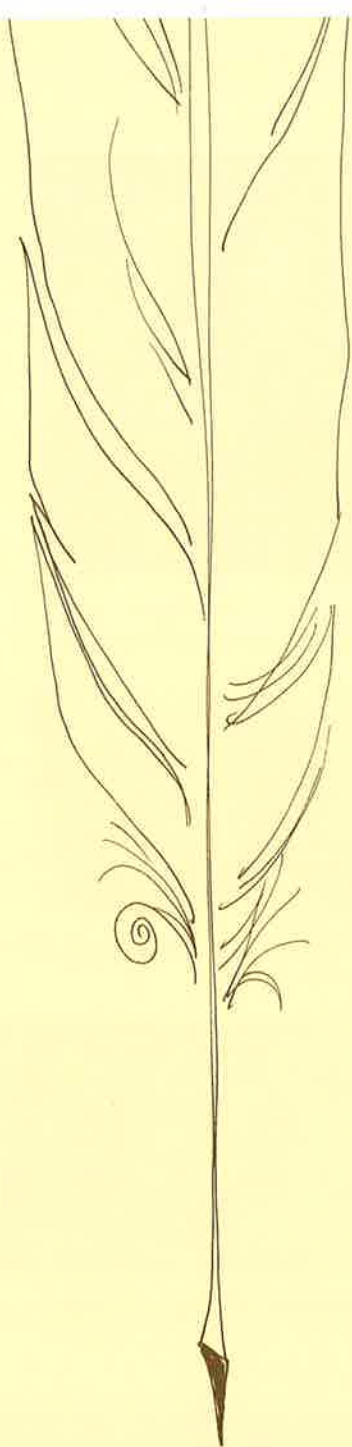


Communion at the Barton W. Stone Home



Christmas offering envelope





Orval D. Peterson



## ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

### President

Mrs. S.M. McCormick  
(1886)  
Sophia Anna Kerns  
(1886)

Elizabeth Hodgen  
(1887-1892)

Judith Garrison  
(1892-1898)

Emily Meier  
(1898-1906)

Fannie Shedd Ayars  
(1906-1908)

J.W. Perry  
(1908-1916)

W. Palmer Clarkson  
(1916-1937)

Asa F. Seay  
(1937-1948)

C.D. Pantle  
(1948-1951)

Ralph Jacoby  
(1951)

W.C. Langley  
(1951-1956)

Orval D. Peterson  
(1957-1971)

### General Secretary (Or Solicitor)

Mattie H. Younkin  
(1887-1897)

J.M. Tennyson  
(1897-1899)

Joel Brown  
(1899-1901)

George L. Snively  
(1901-1905)

James H. Mohorter  
(1906-1929)

F.M. Rogers  
(1929-1937)

J. Eric Carlson  
(1937-1964)

### Board Chairperson

W. Palmer Clarkson  
(1937-1940)

W.C. Langley  
(1956-1957)

## ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

### President

### General Secretary (Or Solicitor)

### Board Chairperson

William T. Gibble  
(1971–1982)

Richard R. Lance  
(1982– )

Clarence D. Cowdery  
(1957–1959)

Paul M. Bolman  
(1959–1962)

G.J. Vencill  
(1962–1964)

Thomas O. Parish, Sr.  
(1964–1966)

William T. Gibble  
(1966–1967)

Reynolds J. Henderson  
(1967–1969)

Henry H. Tyler  
(1969–1971)

Joe M. Good  
(1971–1973)

James W. Sosebee  
(1973–1975)

Alvin R. Edlund  
(1975–1977)

Hugh S. Hauck  
(1977–1979)

Virginia L. Hargraves  
(1979–1980)

James W. Sosebee  
(1980–1982)

Hildur B. Skaggs  
(1982–1984)

Gary G. Thompson  
(1984–1985)

John Gottschalk  
(1985–1987)

Eldredge M. Williams  
(1987– )



NBA staff conference (1958)





Finalizing Unified Promotion are Orval Peterson, NBA, Virgil Sly, UCMS and Spencer Austin, Unified Promotion



Southern Christian Home



that some of the problems were real. The state societies were members of Unified Promotion and used their conventions to promote a unified approach to fund raising. Furthermore, there was a mean internal battle going on over efforts to build stronger relationships within the denomination; NBA's failure to be in Unified Promotion seemed to confuse the issues for many loyal supporters. Mohorter was neither the first nor the last Disciple to believe that the Disciples' "Plea for Christian Unity" meant little if their national life did not manifest it.

In the 1950s, the Disciples of Christ was actively seeking new ways of further strengthening connectional relationships within the denomination. Panels of scholars were studying Disciple history and tradition for light on appropriate ways for the church, at least at national and regional levels, to restructure itself for its future mission. Clearly NBA had to be part of that process or cease to be the benevolent association of the Christian Church

Orval Peterson was the first ordained minister to serve as NBA President. Not only do ordained ministers tend to feel connectional questions more acutely than do most non-ordained leaders, but Peterson had been very active in the life of the denomination at all levels. He knew by personal experience that loose connectionalism often weakens the church's response to changing needs.

Peterson made NBA's membership in Unified Promotion a central goal of his administration. He knew that problem must be addressed if NBA was to participate fully in the developing life of the denomination.

Negotiations began between the two agencies in the spring of 1962 and NBA became a member of Unified Promotion on July 1, 1963. Four years later, when the denominational restructuring process was completed, a process in which NBA participated fully, The National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) became The Division of Social and Health Services for the restructured denomination.

We began this chapter talking about "angels all my life [who] came walking in like people." NBA could hardly fulfill its mission without givers of large gifts, but such "angels" are only part of the story.

In fact, the account of NBA's transforming the life of the church is probably to be found largely in the stories of "angels" who gave much smaller gifts. How many Christians learned generosity through Belt White's story of the South Carolina woman who gave one-half of all she had—\$5.00—to build a new Orphans' Home in Atlanta? It is difficult to read without tears the 1930s letter from the sick mother of four fatherless children who writes to an NBA Home to express gratitude for a place where her children can go if she dies and then encloses her mite with a promise of more to come.

Two special angels were poor, elderly sisters in Texas who wanted to help the children at Juliette Fowler Children's Home. For the special NBA Christmas offering they brought a small gift of \$3.00 to the church. They had shared one egg for breakfast each morning for weeks so that they could sell the other for the children!

A child wrote:

Dear Friends,

I am sending this three dollars for a doll. I decided not to get a doll this Christmas. I am 10 years old. I wanted a 'Barbie' doll. This is for the Colorado Christian Home.

Merry Christmas,  
Melinda Diane Brown

One of the authors of this history learned Christian concern and generosity



much the same way. As a child, he helped collect and sort soap coupons to send to Miss Hook for the Boys' Cottage. Adding to his awareness of benevolence, J. A. Smoke, the minister who baptized him, had been reared in Southern Christian Home. Like tens of thousands of other Disciples, he helped fill the cardboard banks with the Christmas offerings. Later, as he prepared to go to college to pursue an education for the Christian ministry, he gave his favorite toy, a model train, to the children in Atlanta.

Such stories are not one-way generosity. At all the Children's Homes, young men and women heard the call to the Christian ministry. Many valued church leaders and community servants are numbered among the graduates who became "angels . . . walking in like people" to others. Perhaps the following paragraphs from *The Atlanta Constitution* of March 24, 1936, will serve as an illustration:

One of the most appreciated contributions to the local Red Cross chapter came yesterday from orphan children at the Southern Christian Home at 1011 Cleburne Avenue, northeast.

The donation was only \$6.50 in cash, but it exhibited a fine, unselfish spirit. In order to make the subscription, the children forewent their customary meat and ice cream at Sunday dinner.

Phil C. McDuffie, chairman of the local committee, characterized the act as one of the most unselfish he has ever encountered, and asserted 'it is a challenge to those of us who can give and haven't done so.'

'Those tykes gave until it hurt,' he added.

The following letter of explanation came with the \$6.50, and was signed by Sue Steiner Hook, Home superintendent:

The children of Southern Christian Home want to do their bit for the children of the flood area. As all they have is given them, they want to share with these other children through the great work of the American Red Cross.

'By doing without the accustomed meat and ice cream of their Sunday dinner, they are enclosing the money that would have been spent for these articles. They send it with love to the Red Cross—the "Great Mother" of humanity, to be used in flood relief.'



59 CAMPA  
DAL... 54  
SED



## Chapter 8

### BREAKING OUT OR BREAKING IN

- I'm 81 years—and alone. I need a place now. When can I come?
- I am past 85. I think I have money enough to pay my way. Will the Home take me? If so, what do I have to do and when can I come?
- I'm so happy we are to have a home for people like me. I am almost 88. Will it be ready this winter?
- I am a minister's wife. My leg is broken at the hip. I will be down months and may never walk again. I am past 80. Is there a chance for me? What will it cost? When will it be open? Please write me right away.

These poignant pleas from spontaneous letters were received immediately after the planners of Kansas Christian Home announced their intention to seek funds to establish a Home for older persons at Newton, Kansas. But they were characteristic of a rapidly growing problem as the number of older Americans increased geometrically each decade after World War II.

Orval Peterson became NBA President during the waning years of the Eisenhower administration. America was coming to the end of a conservative cycle and pressures for change, especially in social welfare, were escalating throughout the country. Social Security and old age pensions were almost a quarter century old. In response to growing needs and a changing situation, NBA had opened three new Homes for the Aging in the past decade, all pay Homes, a concept almost unthinkable to churches before the Roosevelt years. This, however, was hardly a drop in the bucket. Local churches were pressing NBA to help them establish benevolent agencies in their communities. The National Housing Act of 1959, which would make provision for HUD-financed, low-interest loans for housing of low-income older adults was only two years away.

In response to the changing situation, NBA created the Department of Research and Services in 1960 and made Leslie G. Heuston its Director. Heuston moved quickly to establish a strategy of benevolence with criteria for project



Orval D. Peterson

Leslie G. Heuston



Opposite—

1959 United Fund Campaign

priorities. Which Homes should be expanded? Which new ones established? Multiplying state regulations and changing welfare needs required studies to determine the need for and the validity of benevolence services.

There were problems without and within, and NBA was trying desperately to respond in spite of limited resources. The population of the existing Homes was getting older and, as a result, required more medical care. In the past, when persons entered NBA Homes, they had turned over all personal assets to the Home and received a life-care contract which obligated the Association to provide for all future medical and hospital expenses. Such contracts often meant that the guest could not obtain public assistance since a life-care contract was considered to have sufficient economic value to disqualify the holder from an old age pension.

The traditional NBA response to increasing need was to build or acquire more Homes. The process of adding pay-type Homes was already underway when Peterson became President. Oklahoma Christian Home in Edmond was under construction at the time; by the time it was opened, it was almost filled to capacity. In 1957, Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Kennedy gave the Kennedy Christian Home in Martinsville, Indiana, to NBA, in memory of their son. This facility had been established in the late 1800s as two health spas for the wealthy. The Home was remodeled, equipped with a nursing unit, and connected to the 100-unit, non-profit apartment facility owned by the Indiana Disciples Housing Corporation. Kennedy Memorial Home became NBA's first national Home in which residents paid for their full care.

Also, in this period, the Christian Churches of Kansas announced plans for Kansas Christian Home to be built near Axtell Christian Hospital in Newton. A Christian Home for the elderly had been a long-time dream in Kansas. A Kansas minister, Albert R. Brown, had proposed it in 1925, but fund raising in that drought-plagued state never got off the ground. James Tilsley, director of Colorado Christian Home, is credited with seeing the project to fruition.

Thirty-seven years after making his proposal, Albert R. Brown, now aged 95, became the first resident of Kansas Christian Home. He said upon entering, "I have achieved my dream, now that I am now living in the Kansas Christian Home. I am ready to go to my home in the heavens." Two nights later he died peacefully in his sleep.

Disciples, in general, had been slow to respond to the needs of Christian workers who had sacrificed everything for the church and had little or no



Oklahoma Christian Home

Kennedy Memorial Christian Home



financial resources when their limited earning power was gone. From the beginning, NBA responded to that need and continued to respond. For example:

Ella M. Humbert entered Illinois Christian Home in 1963. She was the great-granddaughter of James Foster, pioneer pastor of the Brush Run Church and associate of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. A native of Illinois, who had been baptized by her father, she graduated from Eugene Bible University and was ordained to the Christian ministry in 1901. With her husband, G. S. O. Humbert, she had co-pastored Christian Churches in Washington and Oregon. For a total of 29 years, she also served as State President of Women's Work in three different states. An outstanding preacher and teacher, she appeared on two International Convention programs and preached her last sermon at age 85. Mrs. Humbert was the mother of three ministers and the mother-in-law of one minister, as well as the grandmother of John O. Humbert, current General Minister-President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

'Miss Essie' Bullock entered Emily E. Flinn Home in 1953. 'Miss Essie' probably helped to shape as many Disciple ministers as any person in her generation. For 51 years she had been a member of the church in Brazil, Indiana, but her *ministry* had been as matron of Johnson Bible College. As matron, she presided over the kitchen and dining room where poor, would-be ministers learned useful skills and social graces. She mothered her boys, encouraged their ministries, and saw to the enrichment of their cultural lives for 26 years (1924-1950).

Ada Forster continued her ministry of preaching and teaching after she came to California Christian Home. She and her sister, Harriet, had been born in England where they were members of the British Churches of Christ. They emigrated first to Canada and then to the United States, where Ada became a Disciple minister and Harriet a social worker. Ms. Forster may well have been the first woman Regional Minister among the Disciples, for she served for some time as State Secretary of the Christian Churches in Minnesota and North Dakota. After a pastoral ministry at Fortuna, California, she entered California Christian Home.



Ella M. Humbert





Sarah Harwood Hall, Juliette Fowler Home



Visiting minister offers communion at Oklahoma Christian Home

Hillyer House, Florida Christian Center



There are also many stories of residents whose dedication to the church had left them without resources to care for themselves. Dr. Orié Grover was such a person. Born in 1862, she had received her M.D. degree on her 21st birthday. Being a woman physician in that era was not easy as some of the founders of NBA could testify. Like them, Orié Grover not only persevered, but also labored for social and Christian welfare. Like the NBA founders, she was active in the W.C.T.U. She personally supported native Christian workers in India. Her minister wrote that she would never have needed to enter a Christian Home if she had not given so much of her time, energy, and financial resources to the church.

But one must not forget the other stories:

Lucy was not her real name, but that was what she wanted to be called. She was a fashionable red-head with erect bearing and trim figure when she first visited California Christian Home. She had visited most of the other homes for older persons in southern California, but immediately liked the Disciple facility. She admitted that she was 74 years old only when she was told that she was too young for admission. Lucy, a member of Hollywood-Beverly Church, became one of 322 approved persons on the list, waiting the several years that it took to get into the Home.

When California Christian Home announced that it was building apartments for independent living, she was the first person to sign for a unit. Thereafter, she contacted the Home every week. Just before the new facility was available, she blacked out while driving her old car. Ten days later she died alone in the hospital; no one who cared found out about the accident in time.

Lucy's real name was Elizabeth Savitsky. She was from a wealthy Russian noble family. One of Russia's first women aviators, she had fled from the Revolution to the Ukraine where her flying skills had aided the White Russian forces. After a time in Paris and Chicago, she had moved to Los Angeles where she became friends with many in the movie colony. The resources she still had at death, about \$30,000, had been willed to California Christian Home, so that others might enjoy life in the Christian community that she longed to join.

Long before the first National Conference on Problems of the Aging in 1950, NBA publications recognized that quality of life, i.e., security from uselessness, loneliness, and sickness, was becoming the major concern of older Americans. In contrast to the county poorhouses and nursing facilities, guests in NBA Homes were members of a caring family, where the tragedy of loneliness was offset by living securely in the midst of Christian companions, and where continued mental growth and personal usefulness had become a way of life. The Homes almost made a motto of Ralph Sockman's words: "A Church Home is not a place to go to die comfortably; rather, it is a place to go to live creatively."

Retirement plans and assistance programs were reducing the fear of poverty and making it possible for older persons to live longer in their own homes. This meant that guests were entering Homes later in their lives and needed chronic convalescent care sooner after admission. Living arrangements and care during illness, according to national studies, had become the greatest areas of concern for the elderly.

Between 1950, when the first Hillyer Memorial unit was constructed at Florida Christian Home, and 1963, when a bedside-care wing was completed at the

Emily E. Flinn Home, NBA constructed convalescent, bedside-care units in, or connected with, all 11 NBA Homes for the Aging. This major development was a conscious effort to serve non-ambulatory aging and to control the spiraling medical and hospital costs resulting from the life-care contracts. These bedside-care units were also an attempt to deal with the increased burden of nursing care which later entry forced on the NBA Homes. The Association still required that residents be ambulatory upon admission.

The growing number of elderly persons in Disciple congregations and their desire to live independently posed seemingly intractable problems. Private funding for construction and support could not keep abreast. Furthermore, the failure of NBA to make some provision for the elderly Black Disciples, and for that matter, for Black children, was causing increasing embarrassment in a society where the legal structures of segregation and discrimination were collapsing. Some solution needed to be found, and NBA was eager to examine any reasonable possibilities.

In the spring of 1959, Oklahoma Christian Home announced an important first: a six-room cottage had been built on the grounds of the Home by Effie Brisben. It had been built at a cost of \$12,500 and given to NBA as an independent living unit. Ms. Brisben had received a life-care contract; she could use the cottage for a \$25 monthly fee as long as she could live independently. This NBA Home was also the first Oklahoma institution for older adults to make any provision for independent living.

Oklahoma, Lenoir, and Kansas Homes began planning immediately for cottage and duplex construction on their campuses. Each unit was to be privately built and become NBA property; the builders would receive a life-care contract for a small monthly fee with assurance that they could move into the congregate Home on the campus whenever independent living became impossible. The donor-builders were free to develop each unit according to their personal tastes and needs, as long as the cottages met certain basic standards and were in conformity with the master plan for each campus. In the next seven years, 34 cottages and 12 apartment units, all designed for independent living, were constructed on NBA campuses.

Cottages and apartments for independent living were a pioneering step forward which laid the foundation for later developments, but they hardly touched the growing magnitude of the ministry needed by older adults. They certainly did nothing for persons who could not afford to build or buy a cottage. On the other hand, more radical solutions were simply not acceptable to most NBA leaders in the Kennedy-Johnson years. Some solution had to be found within the church's traditional understanding of ministry.

One *acceptable* proposal, although it never really got off the ground, was "In Home Care." This approach planned to base trained Christian case workers in existing NBA Homes and in Disciple churches to care for older adults who would then continue to live independently in their own homes and communities. The case workers would individualize care, mobilize and train ministers and volunteers, and see that the older persons received warranted medical, nursing, shopping or housekeeping assistance. Thus, older persons would receive the security they needed to thrive independently. At first, "In Home Care" was thought to be less expensive but, by the time of its formal adoption in 1961, everyone knew that the program would increase the costs of care; the only saving would be in construction costs.

Paul Kennedy, Director of Development for California Christian Home, introduced a form of "In Home Care" when he abolished the long waiting list and



Cottage at the Oklahoma Christian Home



Cottage at the Illinois Christian Home

Paul B. Kennedy





Anna Green and her minister,  
William Fox

began to provide non-resident care for anyone accepted for admission. And in 1964, Emily E. Flinn employed Maurice Davis, former pastor of Central Christian Church in Marion, as Director of Non-resident Care.

The significance of "In Home Care" was its use as the model for NBA's first ministry to Black Disciples. The Disciples' Crusade for a Christian World of the 1950s sought to raise sufficient capital from Black churches to establish Homes for Black children and older persons. The \$56,924.45 received, however, was not adequate for that purpose.

In 1961, the Home-service Program for Older Negro Disciples was initiated, using the Crusade funds as an endowment. Jointly administered by the National Christian Missionary Convention and NBA, the program worked through local Black pastors to survey the need for such assistance and to carry out local supervision of the care. Annie B. Green, a St. Louis minister's widow who had recently suffered a diabetic stroke, received the first monthly grants. Soon, three widows in Black Disciple congregations were receiving regular assistance in independent living. These stipends, although small, were significant for the individuals receiving them.

Even an agency, marked from its founding by a strong tradition of pioneering and innovation, is sometimes inherently unable to take advantage of new options for fulfilling its mission. At such times an institutional revolution must take place or the institution will begin to atrophy and die. Those times require that insiders break out, or that outsiders break in, so that the agency can break out of its self-limiting stereotypes. Such a revolution—"A Breaking In and A Breaking Out"—became increasingly necessary and inevitable for NBA's future in the 1960s.

The heroes of this important NBA revolution were Paul Kennedy, Wales E. Smith and the socially-sensitive leadership of the Christian Churches in Northern California-Nevada. Paul Kennedy's parents were Disciple missionaries in the Philippines when he was born. Like many Disciples, he first learned of NBA through the Christmas offerings. During his parents' ministry in Fayetteville, Arkansas, NBA distributed red and green milk bottle caps with the encouragement that a milk bottle bank be placed on the family table during December to receive daily gifts for "Your Other Family."

Wales E. Smith



Later, as a young California pastor, Kennedy became deeply involved in the problems of the aging. In his congregation at Ventura, the elderly widow of an early minister of the church had broken her hip. The congregation paid for her nursing home care while Paul and the elders and deacons went daily to get her up for exercise (over nursing home protests). She had to be ambulatory to be admitted to California Christian Home.

When he moved to Ontario, Kennedy led in an effort to convert an old hotel into a residence for the elderly. This was his introduction to government regulations and bureaucratic red tape. A natural for NBA in the upcoming generation, he was appointed to the California Christian Home Board in 1958.

The new chairman of the California Board was Wales E. Smith. Smith had come to the Santa Monica church in 1947 after several ministries in Indiana. In both states he was active in establishing councils of churches, as well as a leader of regional Disciple activities. In a time of turmoil at its California facility, NBA asked him to take leadership there and elected him to the NBA Board of Trustees.

Wales Smith was an effective maverick. Active and assured—some would say aggressive, "Wales never took 'no' from anyone if he thought it was the right thing to do." Calling in the foremost national expert on the care of the



aging, he and Paul Kennedy were given a picture of where the field was going and were introduced to ways of combining institutional resources with federal funds to greatly expand facilities and programming for older adults. Recently, the U.S. Congress had passed The National Housing Act of 1959, which contained provisions for long-term, low-interest loans and loan guarantees for community-based housing for persons with low income. The loans were called HUD-financed because the program was administered under the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

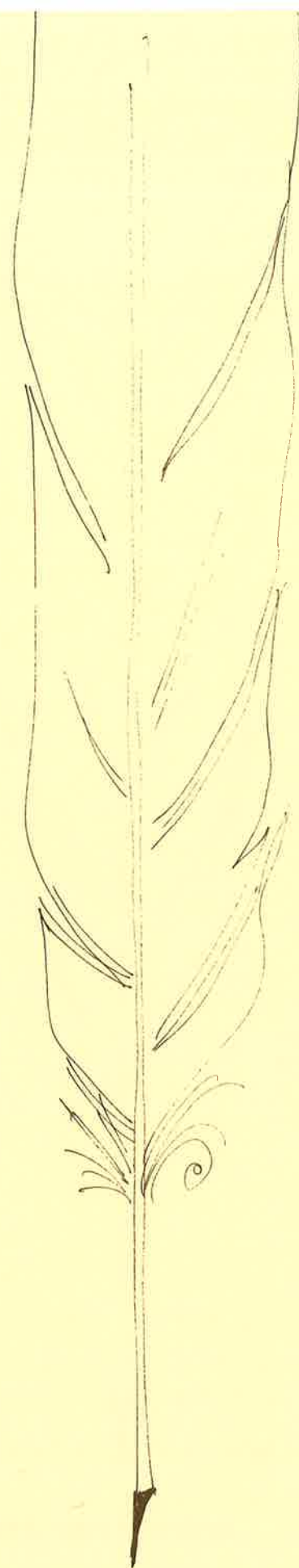
Wales Smith was unforgettable at NBA Board meetings and on the floor of the International Convention as he aggressively pressed the NBA officers to take the lead in using federal funds to expand the church's ministry. To say the least, his message was not popular with the NBA Board. In fact, it was unthinkable, and most were as adamant in opposition as Wales Smith was in support. Finally, Smith was replaced on the NBA Board. His self-assured assertiveness also led to his exclusion from the board of the local Santa Monica Christian Towers, a low-income housing program which he had established. Nonetheless, Smith's determination to "damn the torpedoes" while pressing ahead into new territory and his vocal advocacy of change, even when that advocacy was publicly embarrassing to NBA officers, created the political space in which Paul Kennedy and the California churches could advance, and it prepared the way for NBA entry into the 1970s.

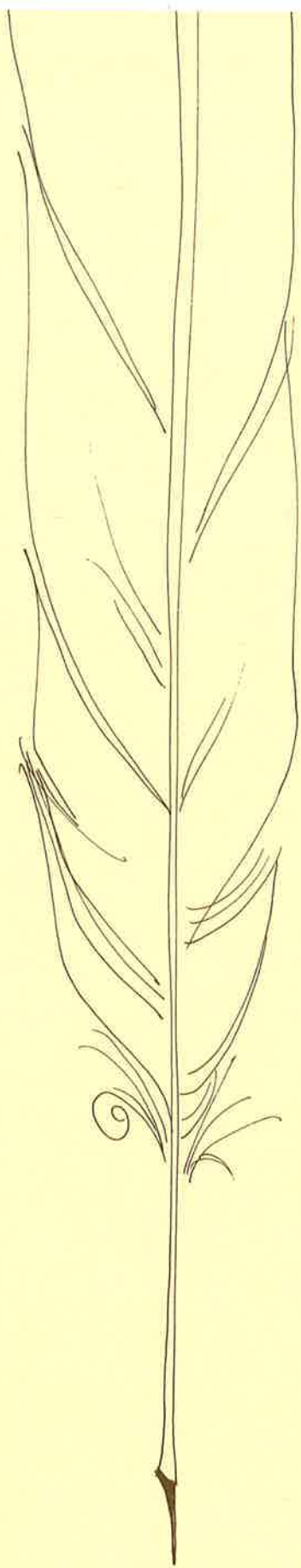
Others besides Wales Smith and Paul Kennedy were convinced that the church's ministry to the elderly had to break out of the traditional patterns. Local churches and groups of congregations in several cities were beginning to ask how they might provide housing for older adults in their congregations and neighborhoods. Kelly O'Neill, minister of Central Christian Church in Denver, led the Denver Area Christian Churches in establishing Campbell-Stone Memorial Residence. This six-story high-rise in Denver with 66 apartments was opened in January 1959 with Verlin Stump as Business Manager. It was the first HUD-financed housing for the elderly in the nation. About the same time, the California Christian Home Board loaned \$250,000 of its building reserve to Disciples Home Corporation to build Bethany Towers adjacent to the Hollywood-Beverly Christian Church.

By the time Paul Kennedy became Director of Development for California Christian Home on February 1, 1960, he and Smith had effective committees in both the Northern and Southern California regions assessing local needs and ascertaining what resources were available. They were positioning the churches and the California Home to pursue aggressively HUD-financed, low-income housing for older adults. Kennedy often reminded congregations and church leaders that:

When the Internal Revenue Service passes the offering plate, the same people put money into that plate as put it into the church. It's my money and our money; it's not the government's money. If we can use our money from the church offering basket and the I.R.S. offering basket to help these old people who have contributed to make this country what it is today, then they are going to be able to live more like they deserve and have the pensions that they never would have had.

In spite of the NBA Board's continued opposition to involvement with HUD-financed facilities for older adults, California Christian Home and the Christian Church in Northern California-Nevada insisted on pursuing this possibility. A



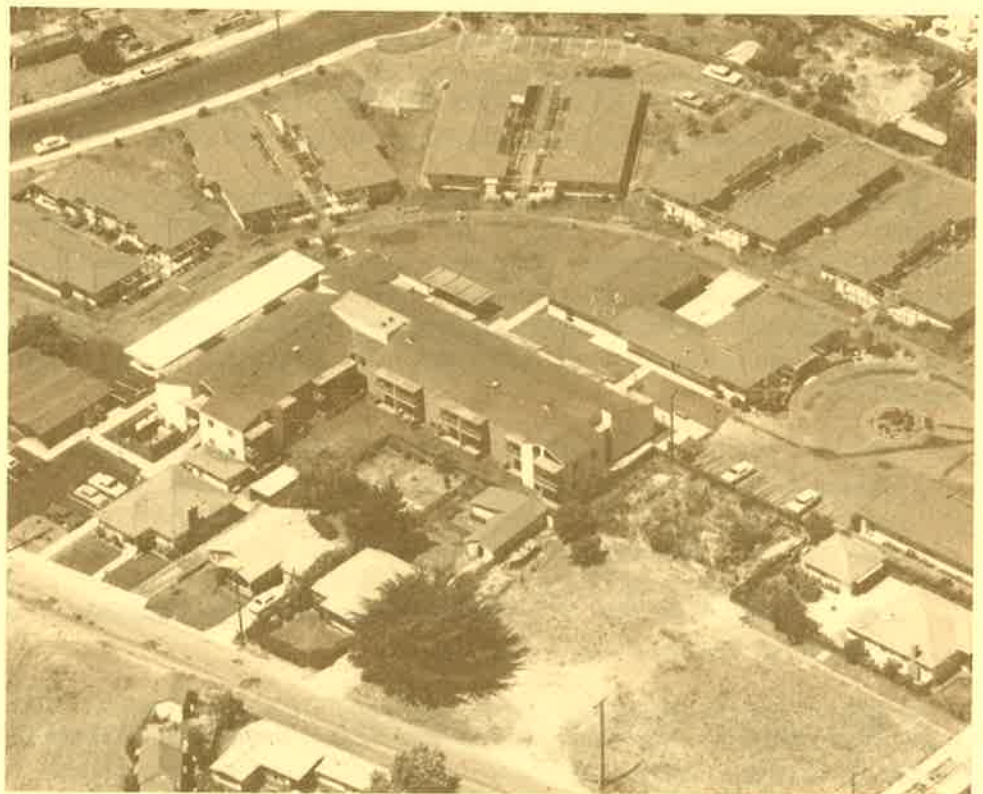


Garfield Park Village (1969)

new corporation, Christian Church Homes of Northern California (hereafter CCHNC), was created to hold title to the property and to make application for HUD financing. Very reluctantly, the Executive Committee of the NBA Board gave California Christian Home permission to assign \$50,000 of its gift money to the project, but insisted that it was not an NBA project as such. The action passed by one vote! The more common view of the whole Board was that expressed in the letter from one member: "I do not believe federally-funded housing for elderly people is a true function of NBA, and I oppose our moving into this area of financing Homes."

CCHNC's application for a HUD-financed loan was approved. In May 1964, the first 46 units of Garfield Park Village in Santa Cruz, California, were dedicated. The small cluster of cottages located near the Pacific Ocean made possible low cost housing to the adults over age 65 who wanted to live their retirement years with a sense of independence, security, and dignity. As was common in NBA facilities, community and caring were the themes of village life and activities. Nearby, Garfield Park Christian Church also provided opportunities for additional fellowship and participation in the wider community. The project was a success and, soon, funds were obtained for a second 48 units at Garfield Park Village.

In June 1968, CCHNC dedicated Westlake Christian Terrace East in Oakland, California, an 11 story high-rise containing 200 apartments. Here the aims were the same: low cost housing and a caring concern for older adults. Because it was a high-rise located in an urban environment, this facility required a different life style; more of the life-enriching opportunities came from the museums, concerts, and art shows of the city. The demand for this low cost housing was so great that a second federally-guaranteed loan was obtained, and Westlake



Christian Terrace West, a 13 story high-rise with 198 apartments, was opened in 1976.

In 1987, CCHNC is 26 years old and continues its innovative ministry as an Affiliate of NBA. In 1980, it opened Buttes Christian Manor in Marysville, California. In addition, CCHNC by contract manages not only older-adult housing, but also multi-racial, multi-lingual, and community-owned housing in Oakland, Visalia, Sunnyvale, and San Francisco.

The NBA of the late '60s was under serious financial stress and was confronted by several almost insurmountable problems. Entry of NBA into Unified Promotion had required the Association to operate all the Homes out of one general operating fund, a situation reminiscent of the UCMS period. Thus, the administrators and Boards of individual facilities had no incentive to raise gift money or improve management since additional gifts added nothing to their own local program and all deficits were covered automatically. By 1971, this situation had reached a crisis; a few Homes were providing the surplus that kept the others going.

In addition, escalating medical and hospital costs resulting from the old life-care contracts were depleting NBA reserves at an alarming rate. Also, while Unified Promotion was putting limits on NBA's church-based fund raising, NBA was realizing that new facilities were needed and that many old facilities had to be replaced. Anyone, regardless of politico-economic philosophy, could foresee the unpleasant, long-term results of "business-as-usual."

President Orval Peterson played a key role in the change within NBA. Earlier his administration had been plagued by the problems of financing Lenoir and Woodhaven. NBA had promised a first-rate new Home for older adults to the Christian Churches in Pennsylvania, but the fund raising fell far short of the necessary construction costs. Also, the condition of Florida Christian Home's old military academy building required a major renovation or replacement.

Although many NBA Board members remained adamantly opposed to federal funding and Peterson himself was reluctant, he began to prepare the staff for it. He led the "break-in" by sending Paul Kennedy to Pennsylvania and Florida to make recommendations to the Association. When Kennedy recommended HUD-financing to Leslie Heuston and Vice President George I. Myers, Peterson said, "We have to do it if we are to serve. . . ."

Equally important to future fiscal stability was the decision that NBA would not take on implied or contingent liabilities which it could not fulfill. Thus, the cottage program had to be changed and all NBA contracts tied to the Association's ability to deliver services. The Board made the decision that NBA not enter into any more life-care contracts and that existing ones be renegotiated when possible. The process begun earlier at California Christian Home would take more than a decade for the Association to complete; it should be added that NBA never failed to complete the life-care contract of any guest who was unwilling to renegotiate the original agreement, even in cases where the individual was simply too proud to accept a public grant.

Having laid the foundations for new directions, Orval D. Peterson chose to retire on June 30, 1971. In his 14½ years, NBA Homes had increased from 15 to 20 and total corporate assets had increased to almost \$28 million (from \$5 million at the beginning of his administration). During those years, NBA's first full pay-type facility, Kennedy Christian Home, had been added. The cottage program, which encouraged independent living and would later provide the precedent for NBA's retirement centers and equity housing, had also been initiated. The very costly Woodhaven Learning Center for those with develop-

P. John Hoener (architect), J. Eric Carlson and Orval D. Peterson at signing of Woodhaven construction contract (1962)





William T. Gibble with friends

Edna Mathews and John R. Norris



Ronald L. Hollon

Donald O. Legg



mental disabilities had been opened. In his last year as President, contracts were let for the construction of Thomas Campbell Apartments in Washington, Pennsylvania, and Florida Christian Apartments in Jacksonville, NBA's first two HUD-financed projects. Quite a story of innovation!

William T. Gibble became NBA's second full-time President on July 1, 1971, a post he filled 11 years. He had grown up in a Disciple parsonage, attended Texas Christian University, and served successful pastorates in Texas and Missouri. Gibble's early ministry (1942-45) had been as a chaplain with the 9th Armored Division of the U.S. Army in the European Theater.

"Active" is a word that might have been invented for Bill Gibble; most remember him rushing through airports trying to respond to "every window of opportunity" that came to NBA during his administration. He had been active in ecumenical and civic affairs in every community where he ministered. As a Disciple leader, he had served on the national board of NBA (1959-67), UCMS (1956-58), and the Home and State Missions Planning Council (1957-61); he had been Chairman of the NBA Board (1966-67) and was Chairman of the Commission on Brotherhood Finance when elected as NBA President.

According to the staff who worked with him, Gibble was "a treasure, a great joy to work with." Always quick to see and affirm the potential in others, he balanced that human optimism by setting a standard of high professionalism and commitment.

But the word which best describes Gibble and his administration of NBA is "visionary." Even before he took office, several NBA executives urged Gibble to hold the line on expansion. "No," he replied, "The needs are growing. . . . The church cannot sit still in its ministry. . . . We are going to act on any target of opportunity." Gibble was a risk-taker.

The new administration set out immediately to put NBA's house in order and to prepare for advance. Operating out of one general fund, NBA spent each year what the officers *hoped* would come in from bequests; almost three-fourths of the agency's reserves had been consumed at an escalating pace—reminiscent of 1931!

John R. Norris, NBA's third Treasurer, led in making the needed fiscal changes. In two years, the single general operating fund was closed out and each Home had become responsible for its own operation. Homes that could not maintain a positive balance would have to close. Carrie Hedrick Seay Memorial Home was closed in 1972, Northwestern Christian Home was closed and restructured as Northwestern NBA Services in 1974, and Oasis Center was discontinued in 1976.

Part of local fiscal problems, however, stemmed from St. Louis procedures—local administrators often received financial reports six months after the close of the accounting period. Norris revised the antiquated central accounting system and developed computer programming that would give each Home administration timely financial data. Mary Ann Ruprecht became Norris' assistant with responsibility for department coordination, and Leon Whitney came on staff to work with accounting. In 1974, the NBA Board adopted a policy of limiting the use of undesignated bequests to capital projects and preserving part of each bequest for the reserve funds of NBA and the local Homes—a repeat of 1907 and 1934.

While John Norris, the NBA Board, and the local Home administrators were "strengthening the stakes," Gibble was also preparing the Association for a major thrust forward, "a lengthening of the cords." Ronald L. Hollon came on staff for facility planning; he and Corporate Secretary Donald O. Legg were trained for the complicated task of preparing federal loan applications. Paul Kennedy also moved to the national office.

Although President Nixon had placed a moratorium on HUD-financed housing, Gibble and the staff continued to prepare for the day when that situation would change. Much internal research was required to discover the ways of putting the finances together for adaptable expansion and to limit NBA's legal liabilities. The painful experience of other Protestant denominations had to be avoided.

During the Nixon moratorium, NBA did not stand still. In the 1960s, some local congregations or groups of congregations had started their own housing programs for older adults. After a decade, many of these began to see the advantages of relating to a national agency which had wider experience, greater expertise, and more resources. On November 11, 1971, the NBA Board approved a contract to *manage* Garfield Park Village and Westlake Christian Terrace in northern California. Beginning in 1972, these two facilities were listed as NBA Affiliates, a process completed when CCHNC became an NBA Affiliate on November 20, 1984. Although there are 30-plus Disciple-sponsored housing centers for older adults which have not affiliated with NBA, the mutual process of affiliation has continued from 1972 to the present. The table on the following page outlines the process.

The spectre of the nursing wards in county homes haunted NBA and the residents of its Homes. Eric Carlson had gotten NBA into the nursing home business partly to avoid this fate and partly in the belief that they would save money if each Home for older adults built a 20-bed nursing unit and made provision for a live-in nurse. During the Peterson and Gibble years, much of the expensive development in the older adult Centers which NBA owned was devoted to designing and building adequate nursing units that would be efficient and able to meet the competition of proprietary or profit-making facilities. Of course, the NBA Affiliates, being HUD-financed housing for low-income older adults and handicapped persons, made no provisions for convalescent and nursing care.

In 1972, NBA entered the competitive nursing home field. Recognizing the risks, the subsidiary NBA Health Services Corporation (hereafter NBAHSC) was incorporated on August 21, and purchased its first nursing facility on November 1. The Christian Church in Northern California-Nevada encouraged this move. The purchase was funded totally with money borrowed at going rates of interest.

Bethany Convalescent Hospital, a 200-bed nursing home in San Jose, California, was in deplorable condition when purchased. Could NBA manage it as a quality facility and still compete with proprietary nursing homes? Bethany served Medicare/Medicaid patients as well as private patients and offered both convalescent and long-term care. Located geographically between Garfield Park Village and Westlake Christian Terrace, it was available to persons from those Affiliates, in addition to the general public. An intermediate-care wing was opened in January 1977.

NBAHSC purchased Bethesda Manor and Convalescent Center in Los Gatos, California, on February 28, 1974. Like Bethany Convalescent Hospital, this 124-bed Center provided skilled nursing, long-term care, intermediate care, and restorative therapy. It also provided children's day care for employees.

In addition to these California Affiliates, wholly-owned through NBAHSC, the Association purchased an existing nursing home in Jacksonville, Florida, on June 29, 1973. Florida Christian Health Center, overlooking St. Johns River, is a 128-bed facility for both intermediate and long-term care. It was intended to serve the residents of Florida Christian Apartments and the wider community, and accepted both private and Medicare/Medicaid patients. It did not become an NBA Affiliate, but rather is operated by Florida Christian Center, an



Bethesda Manor and Convalescent Center



Illinois Christian Home residents

Bethany Convalescent Hospital



## NBA-AFFILIATED CENTERS FOR OLDER ADULTS

Year Affil.	Name of Center	Location	Number of Units	Persons Served
1971	Garfield Park Village (Sponsored by NBA, California Christian Home and Christian Churches of Northern California)	Santa Cruz, CA	94	121
1971	Westlake Christian Terrace East (Sponsored by NBA, California Christian Home and Christian Churches of Northern California)	Oakland, CA	200	220
1972	Bethany Convalescent Hospital (Owned by NBA Health Services Corporation)	San Jose, CA	199	180
1973	Woodland Christian Towers (Sponsored by Woodland Christian Church)	Houston, TX	126	133
1974	Christian Manor Apartments (Sponsored by First Christian Church of Plainview)	Plainview, TX	64	66
1974	Bethesda Manor and Convalescent Center (Owned by NBA Health Services Corporation)	Los Gatos, CA	124	121
1976	Campbell-Stone Memorial Residence (Sponsored by Denver Area Christian Churches)	Denver, CO	66	76
1976	Golden West Manor (Sponsored by First Christian Church of Boulder)	Boulder, CO	255	266
1976	Westlake Christian Terrace West (Sponsored by NBA, California Christian Home and Christian Churches of Northern California)	Oakland, CA	198	215
1979	Christian Manor (Sponsored by the Christian Churches of West Palm Beach)	West Palm Beach, FL	200	212
1980	Sage Towers (Sponsored by First Christian Church of Billings)	Billings, MT	111	115
1980	Buttes Manor (Sponsored by CCHNC)	Marysville, CA	100	95
1981	Bethany House (Sponsored by The Christian Church in the Capital Area)	Rockville, MD	277	333
1983	Disciples' Village (Sponsored by Community Christian Church of Tulsa)	Tulsa, OK	96	98
1985	Chilton Place (Sponsored by First Christian Church of St. Joseph)	St. Joseph, MO	57	58

umbrella corporation which also operates Florida Christian Apartments, Sundale Manor, Hillyer House and Edgewood Condominiums.

After several years of financial success in operating nursing homes, NBA consciously faced the question of what makes Christian nursing care "something special"; what gives Christian meaning and quality to convalescent care? Anyone who has been around nursing homes knows that it is not simply a matter of being "church-related." How were NBA-operated nursing facilities to be infused with the influence of the church became the question.

NBA's slogan has been "What We Do Best Is Care." And therein lies the difference in NBA nursing home care—not simply good intentions but much more. It means knowing the patients as individuals with dreams and hopes, and then using the most sophisticated skills to help them. It means considering the individual feelings of the patient. It requires doing all with a strong sense of hope that enlivens possibilities, rallies energy, and activates power.

Among many possible illustrations of how this special ingredient of "care" works in the NBA convalescent Centers, none is more graphic than the ways in which Bethesda Manor and Convalescent Center deals with married couples. Because couples generally do not age at the same rate and make extra demands for privacy, and because they usually want to interact with each other's rehabilitation and medical care (often getting in the way of staff), many nursing facilities prefer not to deal with married couples. In contrast, Bethesda assists couples who choose to grow old together by helping them stay united.

George, age 84, was admitted to Bethesda in October 1978, approximately two months before his wife Mary. George recounts how he felt at the time of his separation from Mary.

'I was so lonely without Mary by my side . . . my heart was just broken . . . I needed her. We have been married for some forty or more years . . . it's been such a long time you know.'

George is very protective of his wife and makes sure she is with him most of the day. They often sit in front of the big window in the front entrance of the facility and watch the people come in and out, sometimes having a little marriage spat.

'I make sure Mary is dressed properly for the cold weather we have been having . . . she forgets to dress properly, you know.'

At first George found it difficult to find a place that would take the two of them. When he became ill, he came to Bethesda hoping that Mary could join him. His wish soon came true. George said that they had been given a real home and that 'Bethesda stands for happiness for both me and Mary.'

He went on to say that 'The people here are so nice to us—they let us be together. They know that we must always be together, and it is my job to watch out for Mary.' George noted, 'Mary has been getting forgetful. She gets lost easily. She needs me to help her find her way around.'

When asked what they did all day at Bethesda, George said, 'We don't do much now. We don't go to the activities that often. Well . . . we just love each other. Isn't that enough?'

Empowering congregations for a ministry of benevolence had been an NBA concern for years. The concept of "In Home Care," which had received little implementation, was a manifestation of this concern. In the 1970s, the practical pastoral insights of Bill Gibble led to at least two major efforts to empower local concerns for ministry to older adults.



## NBA-SPONSORED AND MANAGED INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS

Date	Name of Center	Location	Number of Units	Persons Served
1971	Thomas Campbell Christian Apartments (Sponsored by NBA and the Christian Church in Pennsylvania)	Washington, PA	136	155
1972	Florida Christian Apartments (Sponsored by NBA)	Jacksonville, FL	180	181
1978	Thomas Campbell North Apartments (Sponsored by NBA and the Christian Church in Pennsylvania)	Washington, PA	75	79
1978	Tahoma Vista Village (Sponsored by NBA and Northwestern NBA Services)	Tacoma, WA	100	106
1979	Stone Crest (Sponsored by NBA)	Des Moines, IA	108	114
1979	Waymark Gardens (Sponsored by NBA and Greater Phoenix Disciples' Union)	Glendale, AZ	150	161
1980	Heritage Towers (Sponsored by NBA and First Christian Church of Sheridan)	Sheridan, WY	75	77
1980	Olive Plaza (Sponsored by NBA and Northwestern NBA Services)	Eugene, OR	150	158
1980	Oklahoma Christian Apartments (Sponsored by NBA and Oklahoma Christian Home)	Edmond, OK	125	123

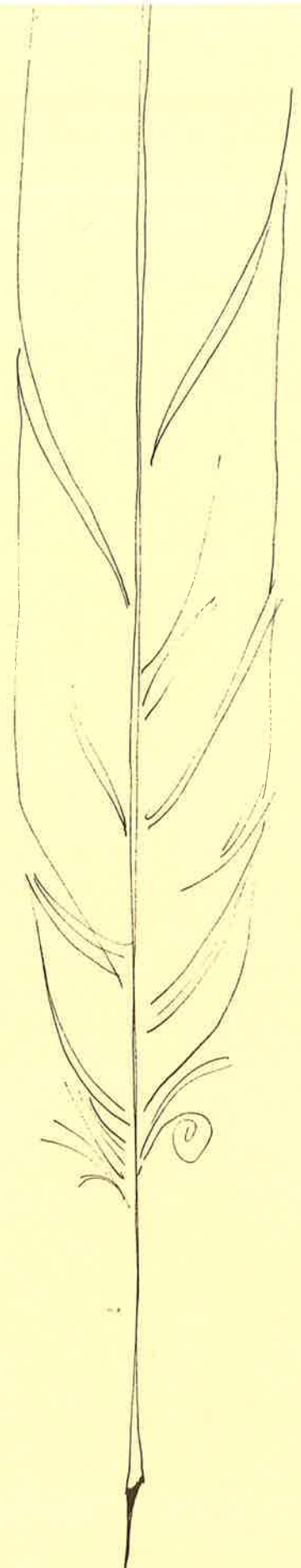
Ground breaking at Spoon River  
Towers





## NBA-SPONSORED AND MANAGED INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS

Date	Name of Center	Location	Number of Units	Persons Served
1980	Eden Place (Sponsored by NBA and Longview Christian Retirement Center)	Longview, TX	79	82
1981	Fowler Christian Apartments (Sponsored by NBA and Juliette Fowler Homes)	Dallas, TX	145	148
1981	Ken-Mar Apartments (Sponsored by NBA and Kennedy Living Center)	Martinsville, IN	100	101
1981	Spoon River Towers (Sponsored by NBA and Illinois Street Christian Church of Lewistown)	Lewistown, IL	100	105
1982	Valley Vista Village (Sponsored by NBA and Northwestern NBA Services)	Twin Falls, ID	60	63
1982	Sundale Manor (Sponsored by NBA and Florida Christian Center)	Jacksonville, FL	90	97
1983	Meadows Point (Sponsored by NBA and Christian Churches) Housing Foundation)	Enid, OK	98	101
1983	Powell Vista Manor (Sponsored by NBA and Northwestern NBA Services)	Gresham, OR	70	73
1983	Burlington Tower (Sponsored by NBA and St. Petersburg Christian Churches)	St. Petersburg, FL	116	120
1984	Keystone of Ames (Sponsored by NBA and First Christian Church of Ames)	Ames, IA	56	58
1985	Campbell Court (Sponsored by NBA and Heights Christian Church of Shaker Heights)	Shaker Heights, OH	81	84



## CENTERS UNDER CONSTRUCTION OR UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Name of Center	Location	Number of Units
Fairwood Park (Sponsored by NBA)	Seattle, WA	
The Chalice Apartments (Sponsored by NBA, Longview Christian Retirement Center, and First Christian Church of Henderson)	Henderson, TX	31
Confer Vista (Sponsored by NBA and Central Christian Church of Uniontown)	Uniontown, PA	36
Northwestern Retirement Housing (Sponsored by NBA and Portland Disciples Housing)	Gresham, OR	36
Oklahoma Disciples Apartments (Sponsored by NBA and Oklahoma Christian Apartments)	Edmond, OK	36
Liberty Apartments (Sponsored by NBA and First Christian Church of Sedalia)	Sedalia, MO	
Centennial Housing (Sponsored by NBA and Centennial Christian Church)	St. Louis, MO	77



In late 1971, NBA created the Department of Service to Congregations and appointed Donald Clingan as its Director. For the next decade, Clingan worked with Regions of the Christian Church and interfaith bodies to motivate congregations to be involved in local social and health services, to train volunteers to develop and implement such ministries, and to assist in evaluating existing and new programs.

HUD requirements also dovetailed well with NBA's desire to encourage local initiative and participation. HUD required that all the facilities it backed be owned by a local corporation with a local board. During the Nixon moratorium, Bill Gibble and Paul Kennedy were busy helping local church groups organize to co-sponsor Centers for older adults in their communities. Between the first HUD-financed housing in 1959 and the end of the Nixon moratorium in 1977, several of the earlier local church-sponsored projects were lost to the Christian Church because there had been no official ties with the church.

As NBA began to empower local congregations to obtain low-income housing for older adults, the decision was made that NBA join the local congregation or groups of congregations in sponsoring the project. This related NBA to the local corporation owning the Center in such a way that NBA had to approve local board membership. Thus, Disciples locally and nationally were assured that the facility could not be sold away from the church, even after the 40-year loans had been successfully amortized.

When the moratorium ended, NBA forged ahead; in the next years the Association received more HUD projects than any other sponsor. The team approach worked with Ron Hollon as catalyst; he was known to work on four or five applications at the same time! And once the facilities were brought into existence, additional help was needed. Jack Sturges joined the staff as Paul Kennedy's assistant to coordinate those management and administrative efforts. The table of NBA-Sponsored Units shows how rapidly development took place.



Florida Christian Apartments and Sundale Manor



Merle Mott and the Mott farm, site of future Foxwood Springs Living Center



The 11 years that William T. Gible was President of NBA were filled with growth and innovation in other areas as well; Longview Christian Retirement Center was opened in Longview, Texas, on July 10, 1973, and Santree in Williamston, North Carolina, in September 1980. Both were wholly owned by NBA and brought to fruition longtime dreams of the churches in Houston and in eastern North Carolina.

But perhaps the most dramatic change was the result of an unexpected "angel . . . who came walking in like people." Nancy Wahonick, editor of *Family Talk*, tells the story best:

Merle Mott and her husband Harry were raised in Taft County, Missouri, southeast of Kansas City. She was a school teacher in a one-room school by the time she was fourteen and he was an ambitious young man whose dream was to own his own dairy farm. When they married, they set out to make that dream come true.

Because of depressed conditions in Missouri and Kansas in the late 1920s, the couple moved to California where Harry worked as a dairy hand and learned the dairy business, while Merle cooked and cleaned for 20 hands each day on the dairy farm. For fourteen years they worked and saved.

Then came the glorious day when they had enough money to buy a farm of their own and they returned to Taft county and purchased a small farm.

But this wasn't the farm they dreamed of. The one they truly wanted was a beautiful 63-acre tract of land that had a spring on the property, which according to local tradition had never run dry. The spring was called 'Foxwood' because the phosphorescent light from the woods surrounding the spring could be seen from the nearby trail by early travelers across the Missouri prairie land.

Their dream came true when 'Foxwood' farm was put up for sale—and they quickly closed the deal. Soon, through hard work, they built up their dairy.

Merle enjoyed the life of a farmer's wife, but she was also active in the nearby communities of Raymore and Belton where she and Harry were members of the Belton Christian Church. Over the years, they became acquainted with the work of NBA. Merle served as local outreach chairman and later as District CWF President. Benevolence and the NBA Homes were very close to her heart.

In 1971 Harry died and Merle was left with the farm, which by this time had become a prosperous beef cattle operation. It was too much to handle alone and Merle sought an answer to the question in her mind—what should she do with the farm?

She decided to sell it. 'Somehow I knew that wasn't the right thing but I really didn't know what else to do.' Not surprisingly, she had an immediate offer. But she delayed acceptance.

One day she approached a close friend, also a member of Belton Christian Church. 'Do you suppose NBA could build a home for older persons on my property if I gave it to them?'

'Why don't you ask?' came back the answer.

That afternoon Mrs. Mott sat down and wrote a letter to Dr. William T. Gible, President of NBA. 'I knew at that moment this was what I was supposed to do. And Dr. Gible called me within a week.' Mrs. Mott turned over her farm to NBA for a life income.



Nancy Wahonick

Merle Mott





And her life changed.

Suddenly, the quiet farm became a beehive of activity as Dr. Thomas Johns came to develop the facility to be built on Mrs. Mott's land. Since there was no office, Mrs. Mott moved her furniture out of the living room, and turned it over to NBA for this purpose. She became involved in the fund raising process and was soon speaking in churches and before civic groups and talking with anyone who would listen about Foxwood Springs—as the new NBA facility for older adults was going to be called.

Her neat farmhouse was soon alive with people as architectural planning meetings, board meetings, and fund raising meetings were held. Mrs. Mott, who had seldom been *in* a business office, soon found herself doing receptionist duties and secretarial duties, in addition to treating visitors with delicious pies and cakes.

'I have never worked so hard, been so busy, or so happy in my life,' she says of those first hectic days when Foxwood Springs Living Center was still an empty pasture. Months and years of work and waiting passed. Never growing discouraged, Mrs. Mott's strong faith in her dream never wavered, and she worked hard at making that dream come true.

Today bulldozers and construction equipment roar in the background as townhouses for gracious retirement living, apartments for older adults, and a health center are being constructed. Mrs. Mott has learned the construction 'lingo' and can be found cheerfully helping prospective residents select carpeting, or showing off with pride her new modern garden home which is being used as a model for prospective residents . . .

Foxwood Springs Living Center is more than just another retirement facility. It is a carefully planned, caring Christian community devoted to the idea of comfortable living for retired persons.

'It is so much more than I ever dreamed it would be,' Mrs. Mott says today.

But those very close to Foxwood Springs Living Center knew that it was Merle Mott's dream—and her faith in God and that dream—that has made NBA's newest and most modern facility a reality.



Looked at more than a decade later, after the project was a success, Foxwood Springs Living Center in Raymore, Missouri, seemed the natural next step in NBA's development. However, Foxwood Springs provoked the strongest debate in the NBA Board of Trustees of the 1970s. Gible summarized it as "probably the hardest thing we ever got through the Board."

NBA had begun its ministry to older adults because the church needed some way of caring for the destitute widow and retired servant of the church. That was "pure religion and undefiled" in New Testament terms, even if it never attracted the same passion and support as the ministry to orphans.

Later, government involvement and pensions changed the nature of the needy population, and NBA changed accordingly. Missionaries who returned from 30–40 years on the foreign field with savings of \$1,000 and a \$61 monthly pension were not indigent, but their lives were even more precarious. NBA and Kansas Christian Home had built James H. Tilsley Manor to provide residences for these retired missionaries. Other changes had also been made: NBA had gotten into low-income housing and nursing centers because that was where the needy population was. Also, because of government involvement in the support of older adults, NBA had quit writing life-care contracts and had begun offering services that were paid for by the month.

But Foxwood Springs Living Center was a matter of building a community

Tilsley Manor, Kansas Christian Home



for people who could afford it. It was to contain only two types of housing: equity housing in which people purchased their own homes and had the right to sell them if they needed to do so; and rental apartments with a small initial payment and regular monthly charges. Foxwood Springs required a more sophisticated understanding of NBA's ministry by the NBA Board of Trustees, the staff, and the churches. NBA had learned from the nursing home experience in California that management was not enough; the difference had to be the way in which the community was infused with the spirit of the church.

Not only did Foxwood Springs necessitate a changing understanding of NBA ministry, it also involved great risk, likewise a matter of great concern to the Board. The initial capital campaign fell short. After a critical exploration of alternatives, NBA set up a development corporation and advanced the initial high-risk loans itself. No board is comfortable with that. One NBA Board member expressed his concern, "I'm against anything done in a blind alley."

In spite of the risks, Foxwood Springs Living Center did succeed. In 1987, it has a population of 635 adults, 55 or over. They live in 246 equity-based garden houses, 148 rental apartments, or in the 122-bed nursing center. The health care facility has both a residential care wing and a skilled nursing facility. It offers modern medical and therapeutic equipment serviced by professionally-trained, caring personnel. The community center has a library, shops, community rooms, and all the other facilities that are essential to the "community" of the Center. (Note: In many cases, "Center" had replaced "Home" early in the 1970s because the term was more inclusive of the total ministry of NBA on its varied campuses.)

Foxwood Springs, in the end, received few church funds or NBA funds, but the community itself is already generating considerable gift money for NBA's ministry to others. Such a result of generous care and the infusing of communities with the spirit of the church has been common in NBA's first hundred years. As NBA continues to refine and expand its ministry to older adults, the fact that Foxwood Springs will be one of the models is clear from the development of Robin Run Village in Indianapolis and PIER-H, a cooperative retirement community being ecumenically developed by NBA at Seaside, Oregon.

Bill Gibble planted seeds that would develop well-entrenched roots by the end of his tenure. The creation of a joint NBA-National Convocation of the Christian Church Task Force set the stage for responding more pointedly to Black voices. Recommendations from that task force led eventually to such innovations as the establishment of the position of Director of Social Services, the opening of Hasina House in Pittsburgh, and the management of Hollybrook Homes in Jacksonville, Florida.

In the same years, NBA became more inclusive in its leadership and more professional in its staffing. In 1979, Virginia L. Hargraves of Littleton, Colorado, became Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, the first woman to lead the NBA Board since Fannie Shedd Ayars. Later, in 1982, Hildur Skaggs of Wheeling, West Virginia, would be elected Chairperson of the Board after serving effectively on several important committees.

From the very beginning when Mattie Younkin was designated as missionary with a monthly traveling allowance of \$10, NBA has had to be concerned about obtaining adequate funds for its growing ministry. Through the years various structures were developed to serve this fund raising function and many outstanding ministers have preached the gospel of "Inasmuch. . ." As NBA entered the '70s with the greatly increased demand for resources for expansion, it became clear that fund raising had to be professionalized. Ray Heckendorn, who had



Foxwood Springs Living Center design rendering

Araminta Smith, William T. Gibble, William Fox, Ozark Range



been appointed as Director of Research by Orval Peterson, was made Vice President for Development. Under his leadership, NBA's Development Department became the first professionalized fund raising agency found in any national unit of the Christian Church.

William T. Gible retired as President of NBA on June 30, 1982, and was succeeded by Richard R. Lance. In Gible's 11-year tenure some of the most dramatic changes in NBA's first century had taken place. NBA facilities had increased from 19 to 44 campuses. Corporate assets had grown from \$27,790,769 to \$67,064,264, and the annual budget had multiplied almost four times, to \$24 million. Most significant of all, the number of persons served had increased from 1,935 to 7,360 per year. Gible had personally increased Disciple awareness of people's needs. But more importantly, he had led NBA in empowering congregations and regions to develop their own programs in social and health services.

Richard Lance, in a personal interview, may have given the best assessment of his predecessor's NBA ministry:

Bill brought to NBA and its struggles a sense of unity and grace—a sense of the church—and a strong desire to try to reach out and do much more. NBA was coming out of a dormant period about that time. Bill, in particular, was interested in trying to see if we could expand our ministry—the need was so great about that time—to see other ways of providing services. It took real daring on his part in terms of the financing.

Bill took risks. I think I am a good example. He took a tremendous gamble on me. There had never been anybody with a military background in NBA, except a chaplain, since its inception. So I think I am a living, breathing example of the risk he was willing to take to try to get people he thought could increase the services.

Richard R. Lance is the first NBA chief administrator since Fannie Shedd Ayars to have had previous experience operating an NBA program. A career Air Force officer, he had retired after 20 years from his post as Deputy Director of Intelligence Estimates at SAC Headquarters in Omaha. Upon returning to civilian life, he was first appointed Executive Director of CSI (1974–77) and subsequently Executive Director of Kansas Christian Home (1977–1982).

In good Disciple tradition, he was also the first layperson to be full-time President of NBA. Rick Lance had been active in the Christian Church at every level. Reared in Kansas, he had served as an elder in local congregations in Oklahoma, Alabama, Nebraska, and Kansas. He also had served on the Regional Boards of Nebraska and Kansas, and was a member of the Board of Directors of Axtell Christian Hospital.

Reflecting later on the rapid growth of NBA in 1971–82, Bill Gible observed, "No question was raised in NBA during my years about the propriety of obtaining federal funds. The only fear was overload—doing too many too fast." Then he added, "I think the time was ripe for a stronger-oriented management administration which we have in Rick Lance." With a bachelor's degree in finance from the University of Kansas and an M.B.A. from George Washington University, with executive experience in the military, and with the experience of operating NBA facilities during eight years of rapid change, Lance seemed to be particularly qualified for NBA's needs. Commenting on the different executive styles of the four men with whom she had worked—Eric Carlson and the three full-time Presidents—LaVonne Thomas, Assistant to the President, observed, "Rick Lance



Richard R. Lance

LaVonne Thomas





was the right man for this time in NBA's history." And then she added, "Each of the four leaders of NBA had very different administrative styles, and each seemed to have exactly what the Association needed at the time."

It was perhaps prophetic of future changes in NBA that the Association was informed that its office building in St. Louis was to be sold in 1981, just as Gibble was preparing to retire. Much staff time had to be spent investigating alternatives, but to no avail; the cost of relocating was prohibitive.

Finally, at the suggestion of Duane Cummins, President of the Division of Higher Education of the Christian Church (DHE), these two divisions of the Christian Church joined forces in asking Theodore P. Beasley of Dallas, Texas, to help them construct an office building that they would share. Beasley, a retired insurance executive, was well-known for his philanthropic, community, and church activities. He had demonstrated a special interest in Disciple higher education by noted grants to Texas Christian University and to Disciple seminaries. He had also been very generous in his support of National City Christian Church, his own congregation, and the YMCA, among others.

Beasley gave these two general units of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) \$2.1 million: \$1,600,000 for construction and \$500,000 to endow maintenance. Eventually, he increased the grant to cover all construction costs.

The Beasley Building at 11780 Borman Drive in St. Louis houses the national offices of NBA and DHE, as well as providing space for the Mid-American Zone Office of the Christian Church Foundation. Appropriately, construction of the new office building began during Gibble's last months and was completed after Richard Lance became NBA President.

The necessity for a new national office was really symbolic of the most recent stage of the evolution of NBA. Having begun with a simple communica-

William T. Gibble, Theodore P. Beasley, D. Duane Cummins



Mary Evans Beasley



Theodore P. Beasley



Beasley Building lobby



John R. Norris

O. Duane Moon



Beasley Building, Borman Drive, St. Louis, (occupied 1982)

tion system and no office, the Association had always remained lean at a national level. For 70 of NBA's years, the planning, organizing, fund raising, and services were almost exclusively local or regional activities; only general coordination, publicity, and fiduciary services were implemented by the limited national staff. (Authors' Note: During the course of researching and writing this book, we have asked several hundred adults who have been Disciples all of their lives how they came to know about NBA and what they knew about it in their earlier years. Few ever knew anything until recently about NBA, although most have known quite a bit since childhood about the Homes in their own region of the country.)

Even during the rapid growth of the past two decades, NBA's national staff remained small, but the roles had changed radically. The Association had become more active than ever in efforts to empower local congregations, groups of churches, and regions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in their desires to care for older adults, abused youngsters, and persons who are developmentally disabled in their own locales. But empowerment had become much more complex. Feasibility studies, environmental studies, financing plans, zoning requirements, complex federal applications, operations manuals, construction management, and liability control are only a few of the many complex needs requiring significant expertise at an early stage of each new development. New development had required much of the President's time (as well as additional staff) in the Gibble years, and new developments are only part of the total administrative responsibility of the Association.

Administration grew during the 1960s and 1970s at NBA, albeit much slower, but it grew without plan "like Topsy." In 1983, the Board employed Laventhol and Horwath/Consultants Ltd. to do an extensive study of NBA's administrative structure. Out of that study came the recommendation that NBA structure its national staff and its field responsibilities to correspond to the major service functions of the total NBA operation. The proposed changes were aimed at streamlining the organization, reducing repetition of services, and preparing

NBA for increased activity as it entered its second century of service in 1987.

After the NBA Board adopted the recommendations, the new structure was put into place at the beginning of 1985. John R. Norris continued as Vice President for Financial Management; he had served NBA for 26 years at that time, having been Auditor and Director of Budgets before he became NBA Treasurer in 1969. O. Duane Moon, who had become NBA Vice President for Development in 1983, continued in that position under the new structure. He had been Director of Development at Woodhaven Learning Center from 1979 to 1981 and, earlier, President of William Penn College. Loren W. Richter, a Disciple minister and social work educator, had joined the NBA staff in 1979 as the administrator responsible for services to the mentally retarded, mentally disabled, and abused or emotionally disturbed children. He now became Vice President for Operations with responsibility for the operations of *all* NBA-owned facilities, as well as the management of the increasing number of facilities which the Association managed under contract agreements. Ronald L. Hollon became Corporate Secretary of NBA in 1983.

In the restructuring of NBA's national administration under four vice presidents, one new staff person was added in a very important position. The position of Vice President for Program Planning and Evaluation was created with responsibility for staff functions related to new program development, social services, facility planning, and care services in all NBA owned and operated units.

At the beginning of 1985, Norma Ellington-Twitty became NBA Vice President for Program Planning and Evaluation. She was the first Black in an executive role at a vice presidential level in NBA's history. A licensed psychologist with extensive clinical experience, she is the daughter of Norman Simms Ellington, a noted Disciple evangelist who served on the Planning Group for Woodhaven Learning Center. She was a member of the NBA Board of Trustees before joining the staff.

And yet, the story started: "In the beginning . . . the story of The National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is, very simply, the story of women and faith." But somehow that does not seem to be the way it sounds. Somehow this chapter makes it sound like a story of presidents and vice presidents, bricks and mortar, board meetings and development campaigns, HUD-financed loans and management contracts.

What had happened from then to now? *Much!* In fact, too much to summarize here. NBA had grown from one orphans' home to 62 institutions with many different kinds of ministry tailored to the special needs of a great variety of persons. As Ronald Hollon said, explaining the range of NBA services to older adults from Foxwood Springs to rent-supplemented housing for low income persons, "We serve *all* of God's children." Also, in the meantime, the world had become more complex, not only increasing the problems of the people that NBA seeks to serve, but affecting every aspect of NBA's ministry to human need.

But if one turns again to the more basic question of what makes NBA's ministry to those needs Christian, then the answer is that "NBA is the story of women and faith." Well, not just women, although it is their ministry in disproportionate numbers; but it is the story of *persons* and faith.

When J. T. Boone convinced NBA that Jacksonville, Florida, was an ideal site for an NBA retirement Home and Thomas Stewart, a Jacksonville attorney, did the legal work for the purchase of a bankrupt military academy, the life of the Christian Churches there was changed for the foreseeable future. No one was happier for the change than Cora Tresca. She said that the Jacksonville churches were luckier than other Christian churches because they could



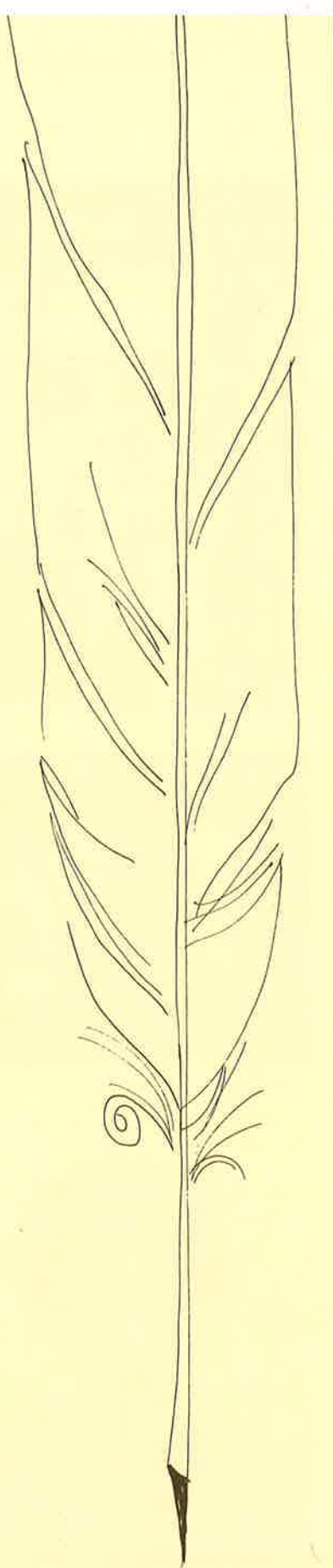
Loren W. Richter



Rick Lance and Ron Hollon



Norma Ellington-Twitty



Florida Christian Health Center →

do their mission projects right at home where they could see what a difference it made. For the rest of her life, Cora Tresca of Riverside Christian Church served on the Board at Florida Christian Home and busied herself in countless ways giving Christian care to the residents there.

Cora not only did volunteer work at the Florida Home and recruited other church members to help, she made such service a family experience. She introduced her daughters, Virginia and Helen, to such ministries when they were small children. At four years old, Virginia was reciting poetry for the Christmas program at the Home. What Mrs. Tresca began in childhood has become a lifelong experience.

The first things you notice about Virginia Tresca Peacock are her smile, her enthusiasm about the ministry of Florida Christian Center, and her excitement about the blessings she receives from her volunteer work there. She shares her mother's belief that the Disciples of Jacksonville are more fortunate than most because they have the opportunity of doing ministry in their own community.

There is no aspect of Florida Christian Center that has not been enriched by Mrs. Peacock's volunteer service. Often president of the Home's Christian Women's Fellowship, Past President of the Auxilliary which in 1987 involved more than 140 volunteers, long-time Local Board member and its President, member of the NBA Board of Trustees, and Chairperson of the NBA 90th Anniversary Celebration Dinner in Kansas City, she was also recognized for more than 3,000 hours of volunteer service to the Florida facility a decade ago.

Virginia Peacock's ministry is personal, life-giving, and loving, and the guests respond in kind. To follow her down a hallway at the Center is to see the rewards of such service shown in love returned. To some at the Nursing Center who had not touched a flower in years, she taught floral arranging. For others it is a trip to the airport, help in decorating a door, or a personalized birthday. A florist by profession, she takes personal responsibility for the flowers on the dining tables. Seasonal decorations are her speciality and



the Christmas season glows with the results of her talent.

Tom Stewart, the attorney who had done the original legal work for Florida Christian Home, spent his last days at Florida Christian Center. He lived to be 105. Virginia and her daughters baked him a *big* birthday cake in the shape of the original facility with icing the same color as the old structure. This personal touch brought much pleasure to this NBA pioneer but it also created a crisis—the cake was for the party and Tom Stewart did not want it cut!

It is difficult to get Virginia Peacock to talk about herself, but if you ask questions about the Center, you will learn much about the people who live there and the special ministry of the volunteers, all of them. Volunteer service has been and is a family affair for Virginia's family, as it has always been for many church families. 'My husband Thomas thought this place was the most wonderful place there was,' she says, as she begins a story about taking the residents for boatrides on the St. Johns River and getting stuck on a sandbar. Her sister, Helen Golden, teaches china painting to the residents; her brother-in-law, George Peacock, was chairman of the Local Board when the Florida Christian Apartments were built.

When the girls were young, Virginia and her three daughters made it a tradition to visit the Home on Christmas Eve, giving personal gifts to the residents and sharing Christmas joy with them. Virginia and Tom began the practice of days at the beach, backyard barbecues, and boatrides on St. Johns. Now her daughter hosts the cookouts and her grandson takes the residents on the boatrides. Appropriately, Virginia Peacock and her daughter, Fran Coker, are members of the National Centennial Steering Committee of NBA.

Asked about the many hours she continues to give daily to the residents of Florida Christian Center, Virginia Peacock says, 'It's a blessing to me now. I get out of my children's hair!'

The story of women and faith? YES! As Virginia Peacock says, "The women have always done the work."



BREAKING OUT OR BREAKING IN



Virginia Peacock

George W., Peacock Jr. and resident Lois Keith (100 years old) at Florida Christian Apartments ground breaking



← National Centennial Steering Committee





St. Louis Christian Home

## Chapter 9

### FROM ORPHANAGES TO TREATMENT CENTERS

My memories of Christmas are all bound up in a box—a big red cardboard box with my name on it. There were 35 of us in the Home, and each child had a big red box in Miss Hook's office, which was usually open to us, but not during the 3 weeks prior to Christmas! As the packages came in from churches and we asked what was going into the red boxes, she would smile secretly and answer, 'The boxes are filled with love.'

By Christmas morning we were beside ourselves with anxiety, as the boxes were distributed and we could open the gifts, all beautifully wrapped, and containing clothes and toys. It was years later before I realized the enormous amount of work that must have gone into choosing and wrapping the gifts that came in so that each child would get exactly what she wanted or needed. It was during the depression, too, yet families shared with us at the Home. We never felt we were deprived and always had a feeling of security.

I still love to open gifts on Christmas, and somehow, I always like the gifts best that are in a big red box!

Marty Lewis  
*Family Talk, 1980*

The gifts in the big red boxes gave children much joy at Christmas, but the gifts of the heart gave them the warmth and affection that lasted through a lifetime. Two of those "gifts" were Mattie DeVita and Helen Mohorter, who lost themselves in the rich rewarding life of being "Aunts" to more than 1,000 youngsters at Colorado Christian Home until they retired in 1962.

Both college-trained and single, these two women looked for potential in every child and did their best to bring it to full fruition. Miss Mohorter, one-time secretary for her father in the Central Office, came to the Home as secretary-treasurer-bookkeeper, but soon became consultant and confidante to children of every age for 27 years. Miss DeVita came to supervise 29 unruly boys from 5 to 17 years, and soon found herself writing plays, cutting hair, and counseling both boys and girls for those same 27 years. Both women had new buildings named after them and were elected to the *Denver Post* Gallery of Fame. James Tilsley, revered Administrator of Colorado Christian Home for 16 years,

Opposite—  
Woodhaven Learning Center

St. Louis Christian Home





said of them, "Even after retirement, many children reared in the Home continued to beat a path to their door."

One of those children was Chris, a handsome little boy with dark curly hair, who held tightly to his suitcase when he came to the Home, but soon made friends with the pet dog, and later nursed "Bucky" back to health. "Be patient, Bucky; you're going to be all right," he kept saying. Years later, Mattie DeVita overheard him telling a patient in his office, "The druggist will send the prescription . . . be patient, Mrs. Brown; you're going to be all right."

"Jeanette" was placed in Colorado Christian Home by her invalid single father who wanted her to have consistent and loving care. Badly crippled by polio, Jeanette required several operations and heavy braces, which were donated by a Denver orthopedic surgeon. She later became an excellent student and was elected top girl at her school. Years later, walking with a limp but without a brace, she returned to Colorado Christian Home with her husband and three children to thank the two women for helping her overcome her tremendous handicaps and enable a happy life.

Wordie Evans, Administrator and fund raiser for Fowler Homes, and James Tilsley of Colorado Christian Home gave selflessly to further the development of untold numbers of children, as did Ruth Chapman at Southern Christian Home, and many others. They all have their own stories to tell, such as, the time when "Mom Thorpe" traveled 450 miles over snowy mountain roads to bring a goat to Cleveland Christian Home, because the doctor had told her that goat's milk was the only hope for a baby with critical anemia.

Anna Garver Thorpe was Administrator at Cleveland Home for 37 years. She had been reared in an Orphans' Home, had worked her way to college, and was determined that the youngsters in Cleveland Christian Home would have every opportunity to reach *their* dreams. "Somehow we'll find a way," she would say, and find a way they did—to become artists, legislators, teachers, nurses, and doctors. She had collected Octagon Soap coupons toward college educations, and one of her great joys was having students return to visit her, as did Dr. Robert Long, a successful neuro-psychiatrist in New York, who had come to be known as "the Octagon Soap Doctor!"

Anna Thorpe was cut from the same sturdy cloth as Emily Meier and Donie Hansbrough from early days—strong and resilient. Almost 5,000 children came under her care, "each one with some kind of serious need," she said at her retirement.

In her 37 years as superintendent and promotional representative, she saw those needs change drastically:

When I first came, this need was usually the lack of parents; for in those days there were many more orphans in our society than there are today. The increase in medical knowledge has reduced the number of children orphaned, 'physically' that is, by the loss of both parents. The lowering of general standards and morals has increased the number of children who are orphaned 'emotionally.' The child caught in the emotional dilemma of the second situation is far worse off than the boy or girl left physically orphaned. In most cases, the child who comes to us today has been more or less emotionally hurt.

Knowledge comes by taking things apart. But wisdom comes by putting things together. It takes both of these—both the taking apart and the putting together—to help a child to a better life. When a child enters our Cleveland Christian Home, we study him—his background and potentialities. Then we

Wordie Evans with friend at Juliette Fowler Home





begin to 'put him together' to the best of our ability—and his. Our big challenge is to help them develop the best that lies within them.

"Mom Thorpe"

*Family Talk, 1962*

Mom Thorpe's assertion that the change in the needs of children resulted from "the lowering of general standards and morals" was an oversimplification, but her conclusion became inescapable: society's "needy" children had different needs in 1962, and NBA had to change its programs to meet those needs.

In the '50s and '60s, family life began the rapid, spiraling changes that affected American society and NBA in drastic ways. In a fairly rapid turnabout, large dormitories and buildings were no longer needed for residential care of hundreds of children. Social Security and Aid to Dependent Children permitted more mothers to support their children at home. The birth rate dropped and the demand for adoption increased at the same time. As a result, the numbers of children in NBA facilities decreased. The decline in the number of orphans led the very first NBA Children's Home to change its name from "Christian Orphans' Home," to "St. Louis Christian Home" in 1954.

Instead of dormitories, what was needed in this new era of child care were more specialized services and staff workers with professional skills, to help "put back together" children's lives that had fallen apart. Youngsters were often distressed because of the breakup of human relationships in their families; they were angry and guilt-ridden, experiencing difficulty in their development because of truancy, late hours, or lack of supervision. Children who could not cope with the demands and the pressures of their environments—emotionally distressed children—needed help in adjusting to the insecurities caused by divorce, alcoholism, or various other maladies that threatened their worlds. Some were unwanted, some abused, and others were born with physical handicaps. Three out of every 100 were persons with mental retardation. Virtually all had been largely ignored by society. In fact, none of the seven NBA Children's Homes in 1956 admitted delinquent children or persons with mental retardation or serious physical handicaps.

But times were changing. *At the White House Conference on Children and Youth in 1960, more recommendations were made in the field of mental retardation than for any other concern.* The public was becoming aware! After being so long neglected in the past, these "exceptional" children were finally being brought out of the back rooms of their homes and the public institutions to have their needs studied and addressed.

But NBA had already been at the task! With the help of Charles M. Palmer, Administrator of St. Louis Christian Home, and the gentle persuasion of Orval Peterson, NBA President, a committee from St. Louis Home had proposed the development of a learning center for persons with mental retardation. The early concept was to give educable mentally-retarded children two years of training, and then return them to their homes. This concept had to be adjusted later to meet the individual needs of persons with both mental and physical handicaps.

Judge J. D. Greer, who was also a minister and a resident of Oklahoma Christian Home, heard about the innovative project early in the Disciples' Decade of Decision. His life insurance company had just sent him a \$2,000 check because they had a rule that any living policy holder had to be paid in full at age 96. He received the check on his 96th birthday and sent it immediately to NBA for the proposed center, making it their *first* unsolicited gift!



Charles M. Palmer





Woodhaven Learning Center



Woodhaven Learning Center Planning Board



Frank Ackerman and Charles Palmer at Woodhaven dedication

Woodhaven Learning Center Handbell Choir



Woodhaven Learning Center, as it came to be called, was to be established on the Lenoir Memorial Home property near the University of Missouri in Columbia. It would become a pacesetter for facilities of its type as it expanded its original concept to include children with multiple handicaps from pre-school to 18, as long as they were educable or trainable. It did not include purely custodial care. The Missouri State Health Department approved \$110,628 from federal Hill-Burton funds toward making this dream a reality, and the University of Missouri Schools of Medicine, Nursing, and Education agreed to furnish both medical and educational guidance in exchange for training students in the new techniques of treatment and care.

Strange as it seems 25 years later, only 5 percent of 5 million Americans with mental retardation in 1962 were receiving care in a school or residential center. The crowded conditions in the 300 existing special schools necessitated waiting several years for admission. "Frankly, I cannot think of a single ministry among us that is more needed,—that would serve a greater purpose," a minister encouraged.

Charles Palmer was the enthusiastic and creative Administrator who was called from his position at St. Louis Christian Home to direct the campaign for Woodhaven. The Home Board, chaired by Dr. Romans Smith, spent more than three years in accumulating information basic to the project. Its announcement evoked a flood of admission requests, with 151 names on the waiting list long before its opening. "News of the proposed Woodhaven Home has come as an answer to our prayers," wrote the parents of a six-year-old with Down's Syndrome.

After 6½ years of planning, and 22 months of construction, Woodhaven opened its doors in May 1964. The original complex consisted of three buildings integrated into the naturally wooded, peaceful environment. Professional and non-professional staff already were on hand.

During the dedication, the resident minister of Woodhaven, Jerry Johnson, a wheelchair victim of polio, preached his first sermon at the Home: "Because men and women dared to believe in Jesus, children are here today." Seated with their parents on that Sunday morning were the first 64 children admitted to Woodhaven—giving their own special meaning to the entire occasion. All had undergone educational, social and medical evaluations to be sure that they would be able to profit from the program. "Our emphasis will be on developing the whole child, regardless of the time required, to his maximum potential," Mr. Palmer explained. "We expect children to leave Woodhaven ready to live in the world,—useful, needed and loved."

In 1965, Woodhaven invited 18 ministers to the first seminar on "How the church ministers to persons with special needs," followed by a church school teachers' conference sponsored by Disciple educators. Youth workcamps were conducted during the summer. More than 90 University students were being trained in special areas of therapy at Woodhaven.

By 1967, there were 81 children and young adults in Woodhaven. The program for young adults had been initiated when a group of parents offered to provide part of the funds for the two Ackerman cottages, named for Frank Ackerman, an early supporter of Woodhaven whose son was in the program. After two additional cottages were built, a new program for the hearing-impaired was developed, as was a "sheltered workshop" offering employment to community adults with mental retardation. In addition to working at Woodhaven, the young adults went shopping, attended the theater, and enjoyed dinner together at nearby restaurants.

The Woodhaven Handbell Choir has given the Learning Center much publicity and has given the participants accolades from people everywhere. Composed of 24 developmentally disabled adults between 19 and 40 years of age, this choir was formed in 1972 after a church in West Palm Beach, Florida, donated a set of English handbells to Woodhaven with the instruction, "do with them as you wish," thinking they would be sold and the money used for a Woodhaven program.

But Chaplain Stanley Williams decided to see if persons with mental retardation could learn the intricate work required. He devised a method of charts on a large roller which enabled the players to "read" the symbols. A year later the Bell Choir gave its first performance. An immediate success, they began to travel to nearby churches and civic clubs, and soon the invitations rolled in! Members of the choir stayed with families in the communities they visited—enabling both the Woodhaven individuals and the host families to gain insight into each other's lifestyle.

The Woodhaven Handbell Choir now spends several weeks each year traveling in a van, and has given thousands of programs in churches, schools, and civic auditoriums. They have performed in all 50 states of the Union, including Honolulu, Hawaii, where the World Convention of Christian Churches was meeting in 1980. They played for the religious service at President Ronald Reagan's Inauguration in 1981. They have performed on television, made videotapes and soundtracks for multi-media. They have continued to perform even after many of the bell ringers had moved into independent settings and begun to lead normal lives including earning their own income. There are no better ambassadors for the program Woodhaven offers, and no finer representatives of the NBA story.

Woodhaven Learning Center is rated as one of the finest schools in the nation for persons with developmental disabilities. The program is completely individualized to meet the development needs of each person. Special classes are offered for physically handicapped, hearing impaired, visually impaired, deaf-blind, and emotionally disturbed persons with mental retardation.

As the program at Woodhaven developed, the State of Missouri took responsibility for the residents' schooling, and many participants in the Center attended off-campus schools just as other young people do. But the need for Woodhaven Learning Center continued. As a high school visitor expressed it, after entertaining with her group at Woodhaven:

As we stood facing the multitude of individuals, the initial sight was sobering. There were those in wheelchairs and on stretchers, and those seizure patients, strapped into protective helmets. One little boy smiled with his eyes, because he had no control over his facial muscles. As our gaze blanketed the room, we actually saw past the wheelchairs and physical imperfections and found instead, bright eyes that reflected a love and vitality for life. They had accepted themselves long ago, thus our accepting them was simply no issue. After the program they came to introduce themselves, hugged us, and enchanted us. I wonder if they will ever realize how deeply they touched us.

About a decade after the opening of Woodhaven, the staff of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Northern California-Nevada requested NBA to explore the possibilities of sponsoring two new programs in the Bay Area. Historically, the churches and the Regional staff in Northern California have shown a sensitivity to the special needs of persons and have often taken the lead in



Chaplain Stanley Williams using special notation to direct handbell choir





Serra Residential Center



Serra workshop

Leslie G. Heuston



establishing creative, new programs of benevolent ministry. One of those experimental programs which they suggested in the 1970s—the Oasis Center for emotionally handicapped youth—did not survive as an NBA unit and will be dealt with later. The other program was designed as a model peer living center aimed at integrating adults with mental retardation into the local community.

In September 1975, Serra Residential Center opened its doors in Fremont, California, to 19 developmentally disabled individuals. Its services have grown steadily to now accommodate more than 100 a day! What started as a program where all residents remained on the campus the entire day, soon became a multi-faceted facility with participants gaining various stages of independence. Many of the residents have come to Serra with little previous social contact. Born 20 years too soon and knowing only the social segregation which was the legacy of persons with mental retardation, they had not had the benefit of legislation requiring education for *all* children. Many could not read or write, or even dress themselves.

Today, 24 of them reside in their own homes in the community, 12 in independent units with support services and 12 in semi-independent units with one staff member for support. All hold full-time or part-time employment to help support themselves. RECYCLED LIVES!

In 1985, Executive Director Charlene Scales received the highest honor awarded by the California Association of Residential Resources, given annually to one of the 75 facilities deemed to have "earned a reputation for excellence and/or innovation in the provision of private residential service."

Two similar programs were developed by a concerned congregation in that "casino of the West"—Las Vegas, Nevada. In 1977, several members of First Christian Church told their minister, Ken Forshee, that they had observed adults with mental retardation being "ripped off" weekly by the casino industry along the downtown "Strip," and no one seemed to care. The minister had encountered similar problems in his prison and hospital ministries, where such adults had no supportive community. The State of Nevada had no program for adults with mental retardation at that time.

The caring members of First Christian Church in Las Vegas decided to start a group home to help these adults develop coping skills and to minister to their other needs. Church members gave a lot of time and money to the project. When neighbors objected to locating a group home nearby, committed members gave backyard cookouts to introduce prospective residents to reluctant neighbors; they appealed to the state legislature for zoning changes. When fears were dispelled and the group home was underway, the state allocated partial funding to the project, and the program grew rapidly. One house with three residents soon became more than 10 group homes with 90 young adults. Living six to a rented house with a resident manager, these adults with mental retardation now hold jobs in the community, are active in the church, swim at the "Y," attend parties, and do all the other things "normal" young people do.

Desertview Developmental Services, the name of the Las Vegas program, affiliated with NBA in 1980 and soon had a request from the state of Nevada to expand its services to other urban centers. Next stop: Reno, Nevada.

"These people are not criminals! These people are not crazy! They are mentally handicapped people! Perhaps some of the most desirable neighbors you could ever have might be mentally handicapped persons." These words of understanding were spoken by the Sparks, Nevada, mayor in the process of dispelling old stereotypes as residents protested the establishment of a neigh-

borhood group home in their Reno suburb.

Following a series of informational meetings to garner more community acceptance, a two-story house became "home" for six adults with mild to moderate retardation. The program has grown to four Homes, serving 24 residents, and is known as River Mountain Services.

At 1½ years Steve was diagnosed as a spastic, with cerebral palsy, and mental retardation. One doctor told his mother he would never walk or talk. Steve did walk—at age six. He was eighteen before he could say 'Mother,' but he has progressed to his first experience of group living at age 28, and to adult education, speech therapy, special olympics and workshops. 'I am grateful for these group homes and the staff . . .' said his mother. 'These loving people not only listen with their ears, they listen with their hearts.'

Paralleling and even preceding the new ministries of the church to children and adults with special disabilities was the growing professionalization of the ministries of caring. NBA has always prided itself in keeping abreast of developments in this field. Even during the days when the Homes were managed and supported by U.C.M.S. and in the desperate days of the Great Depression, the NBA Central Board annually sent Bettie Brown of The Christian Orphans' Home and other staff members to annual meetings of the national social work associations. Sometimes even board members were sent to make sure that they understood recent developments.

Recognizing the changing character of benevolent ministries, the 1952 International Convention of the Disciples meeting in Chicago appointed a committee to "appraise present activities and to explore alternate possibilities for Christian care of dependent children and aged." After a year of carefully studying developing trends in those fields throughout the nation, the committee brought recommendations to the Portland Convention, which included hiring "*trained casework personnel* to serve the staff and the children within the Home, rehabilitate families, secure adoptive and foster home placements, and supervise these placements." Also recommended was that "some Disciple university set up a school of social work whereby trained workers can be obtained." The committee was in step with what was happening nationally in the professionalization of social work and the founding of the National Association of Social Work.

*Specialization* was entering the world of NBA! As the beloved "Mom Thorpes" and "Miss Hooks" began to retire, they were replaced by a new breed of caregivers. The changing clientele—victimized children of emotional upheavals—required skilled evaluation and treatment as the psychology of child care took on a more professional aspect.

The changes were coming very rapidly. The Association needed a staff person to survey and analyze the existing services, evaluate new proposals, and anticipate future directions for the expanding ministry to children and older adults. Leslie Heuston was chosen in 1960 to direct the new Department for Research and Planning. A former pastor, he had worked for NBA since 1955 and had served as NBA's liaison with other Disciple agencies in Indianapolis for a year. Leota, his wife, worked with him in the Indianapolis office until he moved to St. Louis as Executive Vice President in 1971.

Interviews with staff and field workers who worked with Leslie Heuston for 18 years reveal the extent of his influence and wise counsel: Bill Gibble affirmed, "He deserves a lot of credit. As he began to assess and study the changing needs, we became aware that our Children's Homes had to make the transition



Woodhaven Learning Center

Anna Craig with John Petten



In the early 1920s, a baby was abandoned at the Christian Church in East Liverpool, Ohio. A kindly couple named Craig took her into their home and named her Anna.

Soon thereafter, Mr. Craig died and Mrs. Craig became seriously ill. Church members arranged for Anna to be sent to the Cleveland Christian Home. She was to live there for the next 59 years!

After high school, Anna studied to become Supervisor of the Dining Room, a position she held 49 years.

Proud of her work, she also took great pride in the children who became her family over the years. She understood their need for guidance. Orphaned herself, she knew their need for love, security, and good models after whom to pattern their lives.

In 1985, Anna retired to the Flinn Home, another NBA facility. Her death a year later brought to an end the close relationship between Anna Craig and NBA that lasted for over 60 years.



Don Brewer with friends, Colorado Christian Home (1979)

from 'orphanage' to 'treatment center.' In a similar vein, a key Home Administrator for many years said, "He was my mentor—the person who understood that change had to come about if we were to serve current needs."

And change did come—gradually, at first, but accelerating as the new blights of society left their scars upon the vulnerable and the weak.

The first trained social worker to become a Home administrator, an important milestone for NBA, was John Petten at Cleveland Christian Home. Appointed in 1962, he was joined by Don Brewer at Child Saving Institute in 1965, and followed by others. Petten, holding a Master of Social Work degree from Ohio State University's School of Social Administration, had 10 years' experience as a juvenile court probation officer and social worker. Brewer's M.S.W. was from the University of Oklahoma. Both men brought high professional knowledge and skill to the job, as well as commitment to the continuing role of NBA as pioneer in child-saving.

Child welfare standards, state laws, and church-state relationships brought forth circumstances which virtually demanded the employment of skilled caseworkers. Casework interviews became a constant part of the program at NBA Homes. The increasing complexity of family and community living, divided and unstable homes (with one or both parents living), and illegitimacy became the predominant factors affecting children with special needs. Homes for children were rapidly becoming centers of counseling, psychotherapy and interdisciplinary care, spiritual exploration, placement, evaluation, referral, and temporary care.

As had always been the case, the emphasis was on placing children in adoptive or foster family situations as soon as possible. All seven NBA Children's Homes had adoptive/foster home programs. Only in exceptional cases and for specific reasons were children kept at NBA Homes for extended residence.

Dean Worthy, now of Fullerton, California, was adopted by Bob and Irene Worthy from Child Saving Institute in 1926. They had always been strong supporters of NBA. When Bob was pastor at Bell Christian Church in California, he traveled to Omaha to adopt two brothers to join their family of seven. After one of the boys became ill on the train west and eventually died, Irene felt a void yet unfilled; she made a second trip to Omaha to adopt six-month-old Dean. In a very positive tone, Dean Worthy relates:

My adoption was the greatest thing in my life. We never felt 'adopted,' as there was the same love and appreciation given to us all, adopted or not. My mother also took foster children for the county . . . there was one room that always had 2 or 3 cribs in it for babies. She changed hundreds of lives, as well as diapers!

Dean Worthy, interior decorator, follows NBA events closely, and recently worked on the renovation of California Christian Home. His father had often preached for Sunday afternoon chapel there. Irene Worthy, who had cared for more than 200 foster children in her lifetime, spent her last ten years as a guest at California Christian Home, where the Irene Worthy Memorial Room today commemorates her remarkable story of love.

Mrs. Alice Hamner Scott made an outstanding contribution as administrator of CSI in Omaha from 1931–1950, and maintained her interest in the changing nature of child welfare to the end of her life. One of her greatest concerns was that the church minister effectively to unmarried mothers so that their lives would not be ruined. She felt that somehow their children, who were usually placed in adoptive homes, would "make it;" but that without real effort, the

John Petten with friend, Cleveland Christian Home



"young girls who had children out of wedlock would not." She gave many productive years to the care of unmarried mothers and their babies.

Historically, CSI led the way in outreach to the single parent. Referral was usually by a minister, physician, lawyer, or social worker, and was strictly confidential. A majority of the unmarried mothers who came to CSI were from Christian Church homes. For example, a Disciple minister in 1963 wrote:

I have a young lady in my congregation who is 17 years old and pregnant. She has dropped out of high school and rarely leaves the house. Her boy friend left town, and she refuses to see a doctor. Would it be possible for her to come to an NBA Home, receive care, leave the baby for adoption, and then return home? Her parents have asked for help to get her through this tragic situation. Could you send me the information? We ministers need help in these situations.

"Let's face it!" Don Brewer wrote in *Family Talk*, 1969, "Each unmarried mother has special problems, and there are no set answers. However, there are usually two major questions: 'What will I do about my baby?' and 'What will I do after the baby comes?'"

In the 1960s and 1970s, approximately 100 single parents were taken in at CSI each year and an additional 75 were served as outpatients. Caseworkers at the Home counseled them. A chaplain was there to provide spiritual assistance, and medical care was provided by a hospital, along with prenatal classes. Dr. F. Marshall Zahller, Omaha pediatrician, volunteered his invaluable medical services for more than 20 years to care for the CSI babies of single parents before they were placed for adoption. All three of his own children were adopted through CSI. A member of the Northside Christian Church, Dr. Zahller also served as president of the CSI Board.

By 1970, when NBA became the Division of Social and Health Services of the Christian Church, each NBA Children's Home was channeling its efforts and resources into "new wineskins"—*adjusting* to meet the changing needs of the area it served, *restructuring* to provide more skilled care, and *researching* to keep abreast of the most helpful and economical service it could provide. (Daily costs had increased 45 percent between 1965 and 1970.)

Although they shared a common heritage of having all been founded as "orphans' homes," each Home began to develop its own unique and specialized ministry to children. Often when one door was closed, another would open. For example, the Ohio legislature prohibited housing preschool children in congregate care facilities and, thus, forced the closing of the baby department of Cleveland Christian Home. This action was taken because social work professionals advocated a family environment for the very young. Responding to this, the Cleveland Home offered day care for children of working mothers, a much needed program which opened the same year. It was the first daycare program in an NBA Home and tuition paid most of the budget.

Another closed door which provided an opening to a new opportunity occurred at CSI. Because of the advantages of foster home care for the very young, "temporary care" of preschool children was discontinued at CSI, while the adoptions and maternity care programs were being expanded and upgraded. Rehabilitative services eventually included a pilot project sponsored by Omaha public schools (1970) which permitted pregnant girls to continue their high school studies at CSI.

The current President of the Association, Richard R. Lance, began his NBA career during these exciting years of innovation in children's work. He was



Don Brewer (1987)





St. Louis Christian Home



The Oasis Center

The Oasis Center



persuaded to come to CSI as Executive Director in 1974 in the midst of a fiscal crisis. He soon recognized staffperson Donna Tubach Heger's talents in social work and adoption. Together they formulated a comprehensive program of education and care for single mothers which greatly facilitated their obtaining jobs and making a new life for themselves.

Innovation at CSI has continued to the present. In 1984, the program for children with special needs was modified to include a program of Black Homes For Black Children. A one-time grant from Black Disciple churches, given through the National Crusade Funds, made it possible to implement this program. State and privately funded, this model program has a track record of placing 59 children since its inception, and has dispelled many of the myths about adoption in the Black community. The program is operated jointly by the Nebraska Department of Social Services and CSI and demonstrates dedication to the belief that the public and private sectors need to work closely together for more effective delivery of social services.

More recently, a three-year project dubbed REACH (Really Explore Adoption as a Choice), to educate the pregnant adolescent about adoption as a viable choice to parenting, has been funded by the federal government. Donna Heger, who succeeded Lance as Executive Director of CSI, explained the rationale: "Nationwide the problem is becoming near epidemic in its proportions with nearly one million pregnant teenagers annually."

Doors were closing and opening in other regions also. William T. Gible, who preceded Rick Lance as NBA President, had to close Carrie Hedrick Seay Memorial Home in 1972, but even this closing provided an open door. A survey by the Child Welfare League of America showed that continuation of the residential center for children could not be justified by regional needs and that the remote location of the Home and the high costs of conversion made it very unwise to attempt to convert the facility to a treatment-centered program. The Home had been a beautiful tribute to a dedicated benefactor and had served children faithfully and well for 22 years, largely due to the devotion of Mrs. Katherine Burghard, Administrator for 18 of those years. It was touching and sad, but Bill Gible spent a week at the Home to be certain that each of the seven girls in residence had a suitable place to go that would be like "family" to them.

But the sale of the Seay Home opened another door. NBA used some of the proceeds of the sale to purchase its first youth facility on the West Coast in 1974. The Oasis Center in Lafayette, California, was designed and directed by Dr. Muriel James, an ordained minister with a notable reputation in the field of transactional analysis. The innovative concept, which she put into practice in the small residential school for delinquent girls, combined the roles of therapist and teacher in one person so that the student would not only be formally educated but would learn how to get her life together through the help of the teacher, since every teacher was a therapist! A forerunner of the alternative school, Oasis Center was having phenomenal success with hardcore delinquents. Adolescents were learning to deal in open and constructive ways with their feelings as they increased their self-respect, confidence and academic skills.

It is regrettable that Oasis Center did not survive. Its educational plan was very expensive, as well as very successful; for that reason, the Center was financially dependent on a contract with the public school system of the Greater San Francisco Area. Two years later, decreased enrollment resulted in vacant rooms in the public schools. The San Francisco system did not renew the contract



and Oasis Center had to be closed (although the concept of alternative schools was later utilized by the school district). The decision was very painful for the NBA Board, knowing that closing the Center meant the abandonment of hope for the 14 youngsters in the program. But there was no choice; the church just did not have the resources to carry this redemptive program alone.

In the midst of the Watergate scandal and the energy crisis of 1974, Matt Clark shocked the public with his in-depth report on "America's Troubled Children" published in the April 8 issue of *Newsweek*. According to Clark, the number of emotionally troubled children was alarming, despite all the books and methods on how to raise happy, well-adjusted youngsters. From the most withdrawn cases of autism and schizophrenia to the frenetic hyperkinesis that turns classrooms into shambles, emotionally handicapped children were becoming a national health problem of dramatic proportions—treatment centers reported a 60 percent increase within seven years. WHY? . . . Clark blamed today's mobile society, with little support for parenting; poverty; the vicarious world of television that depicts violence and aggression; and the complications of birth, viral diseases, and mental disorders of the parents.

The emotionally handicapped child was not a new childhood phenomenon, but it was coming into the floodlight of public attention. And it was the basis for change in the NBA Centers. Cleveland Christian Home and Colorado Christian Home had both become treatment centers for emotionally disturbed children who could not function in foster home settings; counseling and psychiatric consultations were part of the program.

St. Louis Christian Home, the oldest NBA facility, took a new name in keeping with its program of crisis intervention—ECHO, or Emergency Children's Home. In the summer of 1978, a Capital Campaign was launched in the St. Louis community in which the title "ECHO" was adopted, and the slogan, "Kids Cry Out . . . ECHO Answers" appeared on billboards, busses, and TV spots. Business leaders gave their time and the community generously responded because a church-related organization was providing a vital community program. That program was a "right now" response to a child who had been abused or battered, or suffered some form of crisis—e.g., murder in the home, alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual molestation—any crisis that caused emotional trauma.

ECHO was responding to a recognized community need. In 1972, the Division of Family Services asked the Home to provide emergency care for children because the state of Missouri had no program for this growing need. The Home Board voted to adopt the Emergency Care Program as the central mission of the Home.

The campaign raised \$1 million for two new buildings, enabling the program to serve 48 children, twice as many as before. Eloise Moreland, Executive Director of ECHO at the time, was the first Black Director of an NBA Center. The St. Louis Home presently houses among its residents 32 children in long-term care and was accredited by the Child Welfare League during the administration of Clint Gortney (1981–86).

During the '70s several existing Homes, including those at Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, and Cleveland, developed services for abused and neglected children and adolescents who could no longer live at home. Many had lived in 10–12 foster homes before being placed in an NBA facility. They frequently had disruptive behavior problems and acted out aggression resulting from a lifetime of abuse. Those who were incapable of attending public schools received tutorial services. With highly skilled, professional treatment, the children had an opportunity to work through the emotional traumas that were crippling them.



**Kids cry out...**

**ECHO  
answers.**

Emergency Children's Home  
St. Louis Christian Home

**Eloise Moreland and General  
Arthur Junot at ECHO ground-  
breaking ceremony**



After three difficult years of preparation, Hasina House in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a new center for residential therapy, became a reality on January 15, 1983. "Of all the work I've done for NBA, I'm proudest of Hasina House," said Araminta Smith, NBA Director of Social Services. Started with a \$15,000 grant from the National Convocation Crusade Funds and a \$72,000 grant from NBA, the group Home provided a residence and a therapeutic program for eight adolescent girls. The young women in placement had all suffered serious neglect or some form of abuse in their natural homes.

Case study research indicates that victims of abuse usually choose one of two routes in adulthood: either becoming permanent victims by marrying abusive persons, or becoming perpetrators of abuse themselves. Hasina House strives to provide skills and awareness of alternatives necessary to break that behavior pattern. (Hasina, in Swahili, means "beautiful/good woman.") A project director and five to eight shift workers, especially trained in abuse and adolescent development, work with the 13- to 18-year-old girls to develop healthy lifestyles, social and family relationships, and goals for the future.

Deborah S. Smith, Executive Director of Hasina House, has recently implemented Community Residential Rehabilitation, a new service for NBA, at the request of the Allegheny County mental health agency. Persons who have suffered emotional illnesses often need transitional programs to help them move from psychiatric wards to independent living. "Residential Care Services" operates three facilities: Hasina House; CRR 1 (Community Residential Rehabilitation) for young adults; and CRR 2 for adults of any age. The residents live in apartments and are aided by social workers and psychiatric counselors as they seek to develop normal lives.

Programs of the Children's Homes change from year to year, as they attempt to shape budgets and facility use to respond to needs of the areas they serve. The key word is flexibility. For example, Southern Christian Home in Atlanta, which served thousands of children since its founding in 1906, has shifted the focus of its program several times. In 1985, The Southern Christian Home Board and NBA decided that the Home could best extend its ministry to children in the eight southeastern states by selling the local facility and using the proceeds to establish Southern Christian Services.

Through Southern Christian Services, the NBA ministry for children in the Southeast today is community-based, located wherever local churches are seeking to respond to the special problems of needy children. Stephen W. Thompson, the new Executive Director, assists local task force groups assess community needs and resources and develop programs to meet those needs. Current program possibilities include day care centers, drug prevention programs, and tutorial help for problem teenagers. As Southern Christian Services, local congregations and the various regional ministers continue to assess the needs, other possibilities will emerge.

Alaska Children's Services, an Affiliate of NBA located in Anchorage, differs from other NBA-related children's programs because it faces problems unique to its location. Since one-third of the children with behavioral problems who are served are from Aleut, Indian or Eskimo cultures, developing cultural awareness must be a vital part of the treatment program. Alaska Children's Services has four programs of care: three emergency shelters, four community-based group homes, a residential treatment center, and an adventure-based program. Youngsters from all areas and cultures in Alaska are helped to increase their self-esteem and pride through this ecumenical (United Methodist, American Baptist, American Lutheran, and Disciples of Christ) program.

Alaska Children's Services



The sort of intensive care that is required in the treatment of emotionally disturbed children requires a special kind of person—highly skilled, yet compassionate and caring. NBA has been blessed by directors and staffs of the highest caliber, often unsung and unacclaimed for their tireless work. Even the churches often find it difficult to identify with emotionally disturbed children found in the Treatment Center/Homes and fail to realize that without these specialized havens the youngsters might be in reform schools or just walking the streets. For example, a Director wrote of one 12-year-old:

Often the staff evaluations show that their emotions have been so damaged that they are nearly totally destroyed. Again last week, one of our children attempted to end his life. His decision to find a way out of his 12-year-old life rather than continue to struggle with his emotional despair, is typical of the severe disturbance we find in our children. Dealing with these children . . . helping . . . caring for these ill youngsters on an around-the-clock basis is a challenge and a commitment. It is also a battle.

Instead of the "sweet little orphans" of yesteryear, the Home/Centers in 1987 deal with angry, dysfunctional children who have very low self-esteem. Closeness with other persons is painful; the skills needed to relate are lacking, and trust is non-existent. Often the anger is deeply repressed and requires more patience, greater professional skill, and much more financial support than it formerly took to care for the orphaned child.

Because of the nature of the program, visitors to the Homes may not walk through the facilities unannounced, but must make advanced arrangements with the administrator. The rapport that existed for so long between the church and the Home has suffered, because it is difficult for church people to accept the changes in benevolent work, which is much more startling in the Children's Homes than in Homes for Older Adults. Local Boards of the Children's Centers have sensed a lack of interest when asking for financial support, because they are no longer caring for nice little kids; instead, they are requesting help for aggressive, destructive delinquents. As Bill Gible proclaimed in an interview: "Don't think 'orphan.' Don't think 'sweet.' These are impossible kids who lived in impossible situations and the church has to do something for them in the name of Christ."

How very difficult it has been to make the necessary transition of attitude as the church, through NBA, attempts to give these youngsters an opportunity to put their shattered lives back together. *Asking for funds to feed, clothe, and shelter an orphan was far more palatable than asking for funds to rehabilitate the emotionally handicapped child.* Choosing a Christmas tree or planning an outing for appreciative youngsters in 1925 was so much more satisfying to the donor than simply contributing to a residential therapy program whose recipients today we cannot visit and will probably never meet!

And yet, there are marvelous stories of Christian volunteers who have found ways to bridge the gap, and in doing so have given generously of themselves in very creative ministries. For example, there is the "Birthday Cake Lady" of Colorado Christian Home. For 13 years, Marian Beach has volunteered her time, talent, *and* the cake ingredients for the abused and neglected children in residence; she bakes more than 60 cakes a year! Marian knows that individualized attention is an important part of the Home's treatment program. "Their self-esteem is so low after their short, hard lives—they need something special that's just their own," she affirms. The children place their orders well in advance, having the choice of shape, color, design, and theme. They may



Araminta Smith

STEEM students at ECHO





choose a favorite sport or a prized possession, and then Marian produces a "one-of-a-kind" birthday creation. "You can see the anticipation and excitement in their faces as they await their first glimpse," said Don Brewer, Administrator of the facility. "And then comes a howl of delight when they see what she has created!"

Sometimes whole groups do creative volunteer programs that no individual could do. In 1980, ten members of a service fraternity at the University of Missouri, along with staff members and Boy Scout counselors, took 12 Explorer Scouts with mental retardation from the Woodhaven Scout Troop to a winter snow camp in Northern Minnesota. Who could forget that experience! Sleeping in churches along the way, the young people arrived after dark in time to see the Northern Lights. Lessons were given in cross-country skiing and snowshoeing by the volunteers, many of whom were excellent skiers. With staff people to assist, these kids did things they did not know they could do, in spite of physical limitations such as cerebral palsy, a paralyzed arm or leg, and blindness. The orthopedically handicapped had to be fitted with special snowshoes and bindings and the blind had to learn to follow the volunteer's voice and the sound of his skis—but each accomplishment boosted their self-image and made them feel, "I did something special and that makes me a special person!"

Part of the problem for the churches and for the staff results from the fact that success in this new era is so much harder to measure. Through carefully planned, professional programs of treatment and care, children and teenagers with severe emotional problems can be helped. Today, growth (not success) must be the measurement, as a 1976 issue of *The Visitor* from Colorado Christian Home indicates:

#### Some Signs of Growth

- Eight year old boy—talks so much better than when he came.
- Nine year old girl (upon breaking her arm)—'I got off the merry-go-round but my arm didn't.'
- Five children started public school.
- Eight year old girl—can read her contract now—couldn't when she first came to CCH.
- All of our children were in school—either public or on-grounds—by end of the school year.
- Fourteen year old girl—took tennis lessons off campus (taking part in off campus activities is a very big step for our children).
- Twelve year old boy—now smiles only when he's happy, instead of when he's sad, mad, or scared.
- Ten year old girl—no longer tries to scratch her freckles off—has decided freckles are O.K.
- Twelve year old boy—After a series of runaways when he first came has learned to trust enough to stay on campus for two weeks.

Each volunteer, each administrator, each staff worker, and each person who serves on the individual Home Boards, as well as the National Board, is a vital part of NBA's success with Children's Services during the past 100 years. The vision of those early founders and the spirit of the church through the ages has permeated NBA history. Thousands of people continue to find spiritual fulfillment in the words of Jesus Christ: "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives Me."

Perhaps the most fitting tribute to the founders of our National Benevolent Association is the witness of Carmen and John Gottschalk, who came to know

about NBA through the adoption of a daughter from Child Saving Institute 11 years ago. Soon after, they began serving as foster parents for CSI and have cared for more than 60 infants in their home. John served as a member of the CSI Board for six years, before joining the NBA Board of Trustees in 1980. From July 1985 until June 30, 1987, he served as Chairman of the NBA Board. What more typical heirs of those early pioneers could there be?

Bill Gibble, former NBA President, called the NBA Children's Homes "Centers of Healing" and painted the picture of children that indicates the trend of child care at the end of NBA's first century:

Children are most of all people.  
They are human and open and tender.  
They have big feelings. And strong emotions.  
They love quickly. Cry easily.  
And, because they are tender,  
—they get deep hurts.  
Emotional, physical, mental,  
even social hurts . . .  
Hurts that take skilled persons to heal.

One of the alumni of an NBA Children's Home captured the motivation that calls the Association forward to its next 100 years of Christian ministry to children in need:

Back of your work must be a hand  
And back of your hand a heart;  
And back of your heart a far flung dream  
Of which every task is a part.  
For though the applause of the world may come  
It will die when the day is done,  
Unless your labor is linked with the skies  
and your life a God-centered one.

—Semoon Blum, 1968  
Southern Christian Home



Carmen and John Gottschalk



be filled with the Spirit

## EPILOGUE

Everything to this point in the Centennial Saga of The National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is Prologue. Most of it was researched and written in the months before the Association celebrated its Centennial on March 10, 1987. But it is Prologue in a much more profound sense—that is, the word before the real story, the preparation for that moment and its decisions to which God has been leading.

We met with a small band of valiant women around a gaslit table as they prayed for God to use them in sensitizing a church to hear the orphan's cry. We saw the results of Mattie Younkin's courage, Fannie Shedd Ayars' determination, Donie Hansbrough's steadfastness, and Rowena Mason's generosity. Truly liberated, yet bound by Jesus' "Inasmuch . . .," they established Homes and led a reluctant religious movement in establishing the first denomination-wide benevolent association in America. We watched the train of thousands of sisters who carried that liberated and liberating ministry for 100 years as volunteers, superintendents, donors, administrators, teachers, board members, cooks, and development officers. Nothing at the beginning of the second Century so befits NBA's origins as a Disciple woman in a hardhat, Janet White, NBA staff architect in charge of facility planning and construction.

We have also seen how the eloquence of George Snively, the integrity of James H. Mohorter, the foresight of F. M. Rogers, the frugal self-sacrifice of Eric Carlson, the pastoral skills of Orval Peterson, the visionary risking of Bill Gible and the strong management of Rick Lance have served to advance the gospel of "Inasmuch. . . ." Lives have been transformed by generosity as they gave to transform the lives of others—Rowena Mason, Robert Stockton, L. J. Massie, Edwin Gould, Asa and Carrie Seay, and Merle Mott, among thousands of others.

How does one describe that special tribe, the Home Superintendents—the persons on the line—the Tena Williamsons, Bettie Browns, Anna Thorpes, Sue Steiner Hooks, John Pettens, Helen Mohorters, Wordie Evanses, Don Brewers,—and a host of others—who gave of themselves so tirelessly that the lives of the forgotten might have meaning? By the grace of God, they made NBA what it is today.

And what they built, the founders could not have dreamed! On March 10, 1987, 8,477 persons resided in NBA facilities including 6,958 older adults, 222 children, 379 developmentally disabled persons and 918 persons with multiple handicaps. Almost 10,000 others, including whole families, were being coun-



seled and served through community programs provided by local NBA facilities.

At its Centennial, NBA consisted of 62 Centers in more than 20 states. Its total assets equal \$214,027,422. The annual operating budget (which had grown to only \$4,600 in the 8th year) has become \$65,005,309.

The founders were pioneers in American religious history. They were not starting a "women's organization," but a *national* benevolent association for the church "to harness the mighty Niagaras of wasted heart-power" for a whole denomination. For more than half of NBA's first century, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was the only American denomination with a national organization and strategy for the care of needy children and older adults. In 1987, the denominational acceptance which Mattie Younkin and her sisters sought so tenaciously is stronger and more important than ever. As the Social and Health Services Division of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), NBA has dual responsibilities: to the needy, it delivers the caring ministry of the church, while it also seeks to inform the church about changing human needs and to assist the church in thinking through the ethical issues involved in those changes.

Most of all, in its Centennial Year, NBA is a large, often scattered, community of caregivers. More than 1,000 church and community leaders serve each year on the national and local boards of the 62 Centers. More than 2,400 employees are actively delivering care to almost 18,000 persons annually. Thousands more—the volunteers—give love and time to make the qualitative difference which characterizes the NBA ministry.

The mission of NBA has remained strikingly constant in the first century of service. In Donie Hansbrough's words:

We conceived as our sole purpose the task of helping the helpless—to give a home to the homeless, to provide care for the sick and comfort for the distressed. In other words, the purpose of the organization was to restore to the church that brotherly love and benevolence taught by Christ and practiced by the disciples in the early days of the church.

Only the services are different.

In 1987, NBA serves children—through residential treatment Centers for emotionally disturbed children—children who need a highly professional level of treatment and care. Other children's facilities are emergency Centers for abused and neglected children. Still others work with teenagers who have serious behavioral and psychological problems. Some Centers provide day care services, family counseling, crisis intervention programs, parenting assistance, and adoption services.

In the Centennial Year, NBA also offers a full range of services to older adults. For those who qualify, NBA has independent living apartments for low and moderate income persons, in which the rent is no more than 30 percent of the person's income. Other Centers provide nursing and convalescent care. Still other Centers for older adults are retirement villages, some equity-based and others cooperative, where residents own their own homes or condominiums, or rent their apartments. The June 1987 issue of *Contemporary Long-term Care* magazine lists NBA as first among the top 10 non-profit operators for retirement care.

An extended ministry to persons who are developmentally disabled is consistent with the founders' vision. In 1987, NBA has learning centers for persons with mental retardation, where residents are encouraged and trained to reach their maximum potential. These Centers are increasingly serving persons with



Emily E. Flinn Home

Woodhaven Learning Center





multiple handicaps, e.g., the deaf-blind. NBA also has group Homes in some communities where adults live in a homelike setting, work at jobs or attend school in the community, and lead active, happy, semi-independent lives.

A good beginning? Now that a solid foundation has been laid, where does NBA go in its Second Century? A full answer is no more certain now than predictions about NBA's future would have been in 1887. Still there are trajectories toward the future which can be observed on March 10, 1987.

It is safe to predict that the Association, which grew from one small rented house to 62 facilities in its first 100 years, will go on growing. A report of the status of new work projects, prepared just days before the Centennial, lists no fewer than 32 projects under consideration with 22 in an active stage. NBA may have 100 or more facilities by the year 2000!

For five more decades, the number of older adults in the American population will continue its increase. Facility construction cannot possibly keep pace in those years. There is a great social need for NBA to continue developing more comprehensive retirement communities, building more nursing units, and sponsoring more housing for moderate and low income older adults.

Building new facilities for older adults, however, is not the only possible answer to the problem and may, in fact, represent poor national stewardship. Alternatives must be explored, one of which may be extended care of older adults in their own homes and communities. NBA's interest in this alternative is at least as old as the "In Home Care" proposals of the 1950s. The Association has been asked to develop a proposal for a pilot project to explore ways of helping older adults to remain in their own homes until age 75. Clearly, such an alternative to institutions must be based in local churches and other community agencies, and must provide the kind of total support services which would make life at home secure, convenient, and happy. NBA, as the Social and Health Services Division of the Christian Church, will need to play a crucial role in helping local congregations learn how to care for the elderly in their own communities and congregations.

From its beginning, NBA sought to marshal the church's concern for the needy whose problems seemed most intractable—the handicapped child, the widow with no marketable skills, the older adult with no resources. Alzheimer's disease, affecting a growing number of older adults, is one of those intractable problems. Recently the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation gave NBA a substantial grant to establish a comprehensive care management program for victims of this degenerative disease. With prevention or cure of the disease a generation away, extended care for the Alzheimer's victim must include community education, evaluation and diagnosis, counseling, outpatient care, and, finally, special nursing care to enhance the quality of life. At every point in the development of the disease, counseling and support must be available to the families of victims. NBA will be looking for alternative methods of care; daycare and respite care are already being tried. Group homes for Alzheimer's victims may offer a new residential care alternative.

A recent gift of 31 acres in Jacksonville, Florida, by J. E. and Flo Davis offers the exciting possibility of combining NBA's care of older adults with research on the diseases that so often plague them. The new property, on which NBA will develop a full-service retirement center similar to Foxwood Springs or Robin Run, is adjacent to the new Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville. Already NBA and Mayo's staff are discussing cooperative arrangements in which the NBA nursing unit may contain a wing specializing in research on the diseases of the elderly—Alzheimer's, heart, stroke, and respiratory diseases.



Richard R. Lance at Centennial Celebration in St. Louis, March 10, 1987



Florence Davis  
J. E. Davis





Stone Crest

The Christian environment of NBA Homes is also available to persons with developmental disabilities, as well as to those whose age qualifies them for admission.

On a recent visit to an NBA Center for persons who are developmentally disabled, Rick Lance was confronted by a woman in the sheltered workshop. "I'm tired and ready to retire," she said. "I'm 67 years old. I don't want to cook eggs every morning and go to work." Few in the United States have systematically addressed the problem of the growing number of developmentally disabled geriatrics. Attempts to integrate large numbers of them into other housing for older adults has not worked well. NBA is considering "Hamlet," a Scandinavian program of planned communities for geriatrics who are developmentally disabled.

Helping congregations minister to older adults in their own homes and communities? Developing care programs for the victims of Alzheimer's and their families? Encouraging research on the diseases that especially afflict the aging? Seeing that those with developmental disabilities have the same rights to retirement care and happiness that others have? Those things sound like the appropriate concerns of a denomination's Social and Health Services Division.

But who helps the church speak to issues of medical ethics? For example, as organ transplants become more common, how is it to be decided just who will get them and who will not? Does wealth determine the answer? Who will establish the criteria? Does the church have anything to say on this crucial ethical question or will it abdicate to the medical profession? As the social arm of the church, and the one most involved in questions of medical care, NBA seems the logical agency to make sure that the church's voice is heard on the complicated questions of bio-ethics.

The Association knows that its record of minority participation and care in its first 100 years has not been exemplary, and it is determined to change. The appointment of Araminta Smith as Director of Social Services, Norma Ellington-Twitty as Vice President for Program Planning and Evaluation, and Karey Gee as Executive Director of Hollybrook Homes evidence a new trajectory. Eldredge M. Williams of Memphis, Tennessee, was elected in May 1987 as the first Chairperson of the Board in NBA's second century. The number of minorities named to NBA Boards has increased noticeably, and plans are underway to appoint and train a Black development officer in the coming months. The first NBA family-housing venture is the Association's contract to manage Hollybrook Homes, a predominantly Black, low-income housing Center in Jacksonville, Florida. The Association has also committed itself to raise minority participation to 20 percent of residents, staff, and Board members.

Older adults have political clout and considerable resources. Naturally, as they have rapidly multiplied, private funds and public resources have shifted to the support of ministries to the aging. NBA's ministry has shown a similar shift. In the public sector, children are being forgotten. Increasingly, NBA and the churches must become strong proponents or advocates for children and their problems, in addition to responding with care and flexibility to the problems of children and young people.

In addition to the problems of neglected, rejected, abused, and unwanted children, and often related to their problems, is the continuing issue of teen-age pregnancies. There seems to be no real solution; in fact, the problem increases. Learning from the experience of CSI, NBA's historic concern for the prevention, as well as the treatment, of children's problems will lead the Association to address the key practical issues: What can the church and its agencies do to reduce teen-age pregnancy? What can we do to make adoption more positive to young girls so in need of love and of something to have as their own?

The question finally is not "What will NBA do in the face of such serious social

Eldredge and Shadyne Williams



problems?" but "What will the Disciples do? What will *WE* do?" "Inasmuch," Jesus said, "as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto Me." NBA has grown beyond the imagination of its founders and it will likely continue growing. Because of its size and its excellent reputation, it has attracted resources to its ministry far beyond the power of the churches to command. But the ministry to which it draws those resources is the church's ministry—our ministry, our opportunity in hundreds of ways "to visit the widow and orphan in their affliction."

I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know—that the only ones among you who will really be happy are those of you who have sought and found how to serve.

—Albert Schweitzer



Landonia Hansbrough, NBA's corresponding secretary for more than 50 years, shown here with some of those for whom she gave her entire life.



