

Fall 2004

AutumnLife

A SPIRITCARE PUBLICATION FOR RETIRED MINISTERS AND THEIR FAMILIES



Paul and Geri Henson

*Special
Issue*



AUTUMN LIFE

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PUBLISHER
&

EDITOR
Paul F. Henson

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Amy Crisp

COPY EDITOR
Wilma Amison

DESIGNER
Johnny L.T.N. Potter

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ON THE COVER

Paul and Geri Henson
are entering a new
phase of their
55-year-long ministry—
Retirement.

Autumn Life

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Thank you,

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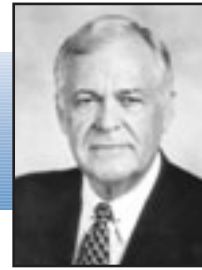


Dr. Gene D. Rice
Secretary General



SpiritCare Perspective

Paul F. Henson
Director
SpiritCare Ministries



I don't know how many people have asked me this question: "What is your take on retirement?"

MY TAKE ON RETIREMENT

What they are asking is, "How do you see that it will affect you?" First, I should say that the decision to step down from serving as the SpiritCare director was not easy to make. I love my work, and I work with some of the most precious people in the whole world. But my physical condition, as a result of the stroke, tells me there is no use to try to hold on to a job that requires almost constant travel when I am, at this point, not able to do so. My wife, Geri, is not able to drive me nearly every week either. So that was the primary motivating factor, not age, as some have teased.

Secondly, I do not see retirement as

quitting. I feel a God-called preacher can never quit. Sometimes age and illness strongly suggest, and sometimes even demand, that we make changes. Perhaps we just need to change gears or even change directions. We must constantly consider how we can do the best we can with what we have left. It is my hope and prayer that I will improve physically until I will be able to continue to do something in a future ministry that will glorify God and will help people.

In the past eight years, SpiritCare Ministries has touched a lot of lives. I have been there since its very beginning in the Executive Council chambers. Following the General Assembly, I will conclude my attempts at leadership and give my efforts to

being a supporter. During the past eight years, the Executive Committee has given good support to the office, and so have the state overseers. I am deeply appreciative for the work of the state representatives. They have made the difference.

Let me tell you a little about our situation. Geri and I built a house 17 miles northwest of Cleveland, Tennessee, in the Birchwood community. It sits on the banks of the Tennessee River. We have the opportunity to fish, have a garden, and do a lot of mowing grass. Our address is 4520 Johnson Road, Birchwood, TN 37308.

We would always appreciate hearing from you and knowing how you are doing.

Dr. John D. Nichols
Executive Director
Division of Care Ministries



Reflections

45 YEARS OF QUALITY FRIENDSHIP

Actually, Norene and I met Paul and Geri Henson 50 years ago when they came to California to visit Geri's sister and to visit the Baldwin Park Church. When we moved to the old South Park Church in Birmingham, Alabama, Paul was the youth director in Mississippi. He became the favorite guest speaker at our church. From there our relationship grew to preaching camp meetings, working together in ministry, and their handsome boy dating my beautiful daughter.

These last four years we have been able to work side by side in Care Ministries. It has been a joy and privilege.

Paul Henson is one of a kind. He is so talented and one of the premier preachers in the world. He is effective whether it is to a few or thousands. I have honestly envied his delivery, singing ability and, yes, even his good looks.

I have seen him in the toughest of situations—from the loss of his firstborn to his body under siege. Paul has weathered cancer, heart attack and severe strokes. Yet he has never wavered in his faith, and he has certainly never quit.

Who wouldn't cherish a friend like this? Norene counts the two of them as dear friends as well. And you know what? I do not believe the church world has heard the last of Paul and Geri Henson!

Paul has served faithfully as the director

of Ministerial Care and as the director of SpiritCare. The love that is expressed by our retired ministers for Paul is so genuine. It has been rewarding to see firsthand how he so tenderly looks after them. I do not believe anyone in the church is more loved by our retired ministers and widows.

We at the office understand when a call comes in and the voice on the other end says, "I want Brother Paul to pray for me." Not only we in Care Ministries but also the multitude of people in the many places Paul and Geri have served (Mississippi, Oklahoma, Georgia, National Youth Department, and Westmore Church) wish them the very best, along with our prayers, as they venture into another phase of their ministry.

The Life and Times of Paul F. Henson

by Bill George



Paul and Geri Henson



Bill George is editor in chief of Church of God publications and a longtime friend of the Hensons.

PAUL FRANKLIN HENSON was born June 28, 1933, near Dover, Arkansas. The log house where he was born sat in a field with only a wagon road passing by. The midwife who assisted in his birth forgot to turn in his name, so the little boy who was named after Paul the Apostle and President Franklin Roosevelt started out in life with very little fanfare and no official birth record.

Years later when the Church of God sought to send him on a preaching mission to South Africa, they had quite a problem obtaining a passport, for he had no birth certificate to provide the vital statistical information. Eventually it was obtained, just in time for him to go.

Paul was raised in the mountainous northwest of Arkansas known as Ozark country. The family was very poor and eked out a pitiful living as farming sharecroppers. From about 10 years of age, Paul and his two sisters were responsible for providing their own school clothes. They would travel to Mississippi County and pick cotton from mid-August until the end of October, saving every cent possible for school clothes. Prior arrangements with neighbors or relatives were made for them to ride along, and these people would deliver them to someone who had advertised for pickers at 50 cents per pound, which included room and board.

On one of these fall excursions, Paul met a Church of God preacher in the cotton field. A friendship developed between them, and the preacher invited him to attend a revival he was conducting in the community. Paul went and was converted the first night. He fell in love with the Church of God and its preachers. He never had a thought he would be a preacher, but felt he would love to be one.

In the second week of June 1949, while praying for a friend in the altar, the power of God came upon Paul in a mighty way and he fell in a heap on the floor. While lying there in the Spirit, he heard Jesus say, "I have chosen you to be a preacher of My Word." As soon as he could get up, he went to his pastor and said, "The Lord just told me he had chosen me to be a

preacher." The pastor said, "Good. We'll have you preach Sunday night."

Paul certainly wanted to be obedient, but he wasn't sure he wanted to preach that soon. He remembers that as the best week and the worst week of his life—the best week because he was going to be a preacher, the worst week because he didn't have any idea how to preach. When Sunday night came, Paul thought surely he couldn't get to the pulpit.

"I was so nervous and weak," he recalls. He held on to the Bible stand and preached about five minutes, then gave the altar call. Three people were saved that night. "There were no words to describe how happy I felt. I knew I was truly a preacher for sure," he testified.

The next month, Paul started his first revival. He was 16 years old. Geri attended and was saved in this revival. She was only 13 years old. Paul doesn't want anyone to jump to conclusions, he says. Paul and Geri certainly didn't get married that young; it was almost four months later before they got married.

Immediately they started in full-time evangelistic work. They spent almost every night for six years holding revival services. These were very important years for them, Paul says. This time is when he learned to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in doing the will of God in church. This is also where he learned how to relate to people and preach to win souls.

In the fall of 1955, Paul and Geri responded to a call from the overseer of Mississippi to accept the pastorate of the Church of God in Marks. They pastored there until the General Assembly of 1958, when he was appointed state youth and Christian education director of Mississippi.

During the next six years, he preached extensively in youth camps and state camp meetings. He has been the night speaker in more than 100 camp meetings. During this same six years, he served as the state youth director of Mississippi, and he was asked to go to South Africa, where he conducted evangelistic crusades for 106 days.

At the 1964 General Assembly, Paul was



"He fell in love with the Church of God and its preachers."



elected to serve as the assistant general youth and Christian education director. Four years later, he was chosen as the general director. After eight years of service in the International Offices, he spent two four-year terms as state overseer of Oklahoma and North Georgia respectively.

God blessed Paul and Geri's union with five children by birth and two by adoption. Their firstborn was James Timothy (1951), followed by Jeff Stephen (1954), Janice Paulette (1956), Elizabeth Ann (1963), and Paul Christopher (1970). They adopted Tammara Denise and James T. in 1977. They have 12 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

"Three people were saved that night. There were no words to describe how happy I felt."

In the fall of 1980, Paul and Geri moved their family to Cleveland, Tennessee where he became pastor of the Westmore Church of God. During the next 14 years, they remained in Cleveland, where their ministry centered on pastoring, evangelism, missions and ministerial care.

For the past eight years, Paul has been the director of SpiritCare, the Church of God ministry to retired ministers and widows. He has distributed many thousands of dollars to assist them in emergencies and reimburse them for prescription medicines. He started and has edited this quarterly magazine, *Autumn Life*. This publication is sponsored and sent without charge to each retired minister and widow. He has led in the conducting of a biennial National Retired Ministers and Widows Conference, held at Lee University and North Cleveland Church of God.

In September 2003, Paul suffered a debilitating stroke which affected his motor skills and paralyzed his throat and left side of his body. He has had to completely relearn to walk and talk. Paul and Geri praise the Lord for the improvement he is experiencing day by day. They plan to continue living in their home on the Tennessee River and look forward to continuing opportunities for ministry as health permits.

A Life of Caring: **Paul F. Henson**

by R. Lamar Vest, General Overseer



The God of the Bible is most clearly revealed as "a God full of compassion" (Psalm 86:15). He gave up His own Son to die on the cross in order to express His ultimate love for us, and He calls upon us to "bear . . . one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2).

Paul F. Henson has cultivated a life of compassion and mercy. Being filled with the love of God, he has demonstrated by his actions his care and concern for the lost, those hurting or suffering, and those in need. Whatever role he has fulfilled during his ministry—be it pastor, evangelist, state overseer, state youth and Christian education director, general director of youth and Christian education, or director of SpiritCare—he has demonstrated extraordinary compassion and sensitivity to others' needs.

Jesus challenges us to a life of caring in Matthew 25:35-40:

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'"

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" (NIV).

As Paul makes this change in future ministry, his and Geri's lives have been exemplary models of caring, loving individuals. The full impact of their ministry will only be revealed in eternity.

Becoming a caring church is our goal. We believe we must obey the Care Commission of Christ by providing models of reaching, caring and nurturing in all areas of crisis needs in the lives of people, and to offer assistance, guidance and resource materials to establish active care ministries in the local church. *Paul Henson's ministry as SpiritCare director has moved us forward in this goal.*

2004 National Retired Ministers and Widows Conference

Celebrating
God's
Faithfulness



Combined, the three ladies are over 200 years old. They don't look it.



The worship was sincere a



Max Morris and Dr. Woods l



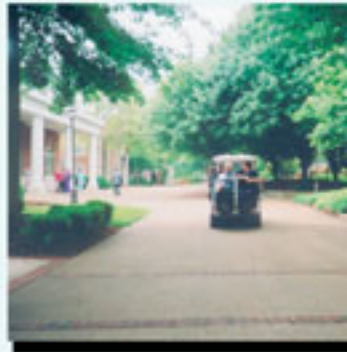
Dr. Rice was at his best.



The executive director took part.



Everyone had a good time including the preacher, Brother Culpepper.



Living the good life!



Dr. Lowery preached and prayed for the sick.



The secretaries worked hard, but they were happy.



Dr. Conn was profound.



Roses for widows



ere and glorious.



The sing-along was fun.



The fellowship was precious.



nds led the sing-along.



Good to see good, longtime friends.



Tennessee's bishop and his assistant were there.



life!



The Triplets books and CDs went like hotcakes.



Cheers!



widows!



The Voices of Lee were magnificent.



The Leonards arrived and, as usual, brightened up the room.



A LEGAL VIEW

By Dennis W. Watkins, Director of Legal Services



My Tribute to Paul F. Henson

I ALWAYS try to write informative articles in this column, but knowing the theme of this issue, I would be remiss not to try to honor Reverend Paul F. Henson from a personal standpoint.

I think Paul and Geri Henson know everybody in the Church of God, but very few people have the ties that I do with them. The Hensons were instrumental in my parents' joining with the Church of God, and even with the "Pentecostal persuasion." My parents now have been in Church of God ministry for 50-plus years. Brother Henson had baptized my mother well before that time! I might mention that the water was a muddy river in rural Mississippi. Although my angel mother is now deceased, I still treasure my Church of God heritage through the lives of my parents and the influence the Hensons had on them.

I marvel at the path of the Hensons' lives and at the power of God to keep mere teens from back then to now. Not only were they married as young teens, but they were also steadfastly involved in vital and successful ministry. To know the Hensons' background is to know that it was against all odds that they not only served so long in the ministry but that they even remained married. They began their ministry as what we would today call "mere kids."

A Great Youth Leader

My memory of "Brother Paul" always will be that of my state youth director in Mississippi. And what a youth director he was! All of us kids loved him dearly, and we knew he loved us. Even as a little kid, I remember his getting on the floor and playing "bucking horse" with us—and we loved it.

A Personal Touch

One great gift of Brother Paul's is to make each individual person feel special. Isn't that what we as Christians should all

try to do? As a small kid with a speech impediment, and not really the most talented in the group, I always still felt that I was in fact the most special person to Brother Henson, and I dearly loved that. He knew how to make all of us kids feel that way, and he still does.

Spiritual Direction

Brother Paul always used his talents to point my friends and me to a deeper spiritual walk. I believe I got saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Spirit in the altars of every youth camp and on many other occasions; but, thankfully, as we say down in Mississippi, "it took."

I remember the security I always felt when Paul, Geri, Mom, Dad and our families would end the night by getting on our knees and praying. I can't say that I was always praying, but I certainly remember the comforting strength I felt from those times.

Conclusion

I tell people regularly that the Church of God is neither a denomination nor an organization, but a family. And that's the way I will always think about Brother Paul Henson. He always has made me feel like family, and always will.

Brother Paul, your love, wit, humor and talent make you young in my eyes today; and I, along with others, thank you for the tremendous positive influence you have been in my life. I wish you the greatest of blessings as you continue to stay young for Him!

The writer is not engaged in rendering legal or other professional services herein. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

HAPPENINGS

65TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY



Aylor and Darlene (Williams) Padgett were married October 7, 1939, in Charlotte, North Carolina. Last October they celebrated 65 years together. Darlene has always been a model minister's wife. Together they have continued their ministerial service as pastor, district overseer, Home for Children superintendent in South Carolina, and state overseer in the states of Washington and Oklahoma.

Reverend Padgett reached his 67th ministerial milestone this past Easter Sunday. During Easter break in 1937, he was home from Bible Training School. His father, John C. Padgett, pastored the Mooresville, North Carolina, Church of God and asked his son to preach the Easter Sunday-morning message. He accepted the invitation and used Romans 5:8 for his text: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." At the close of the message, he gave an altar invitation. His brother-in-law came to the altar and received Christ as his personal Savior.

Aylor graduated from Bible Training School in 1939. During the South Carolina State Camp Meeting in 2000, he received the prestigious Lee University Alumnus Award.

The Padgetts live on the South Carolina Church of God campground. Their address is 18 Tahoe Drive, Simpsonville, SC 29681. Aylor also reached his 86th birthday on July 15. Brother Padgett continues accepting weekend appointments.

64TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY



Dr. Donald and Helen Rowe celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary in June. Don and Helene met while working at Eastern Airlines in 1940. He later joined the Navy and served in WWII. While in the Navy, Don and Helene were married on June 30, 1942, in Miami, Florida. They went to their first church service and were saved on January 9, 1944.

After the war, Don continued his education and earned three degrees, including a J.D. During the years of 1956-1960, Don taught at the University of Miami Law School. In 1961, he went into the ministry; and later, in 1963, he became the office administrator of the World Missions Department for two years. In 1968, Helene also worked in the World Missions Department and served in this ministry capacity for 15 years. Don later went to work for Lee College as the chairman of the Business Department. After 20 years of service, he retired in 1984.

Retirement was not quite ready for him, so he went to England for one year with Tentmakers and worked as the budget manager for Overstone College. Helene also worked in the library at the college.

They now live in Florida. If you would like to send a personal note to the Rowses, you can reach them at 1001 Carpenters Way B 307, Lakeland, FL 33809.

The 2004 National Retired Ministers and Widows Conference Pays Tribute to the Hensons



Quite a number of the Hensons' family were able to attend.



The tribute lines were long.



The food was plentiful and good.



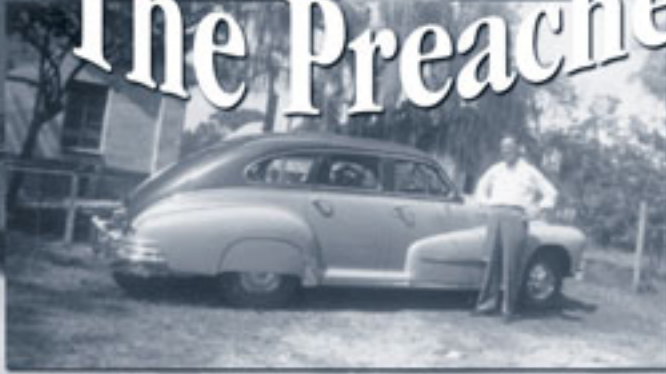
Dr. T.L. Lowery gives a special tribute.



Many expressed appreciation for the Hensons' service.

Moments to Remember

The Preacher and His Car



Reverend R.H. Sumner and his Pontiac



Cecil and Joyce Guiles and their '56 Ford Fairlane



L.E. and Letha Heil and their Silver Cloud Rolls-Royce, which they had for one night



Hubert Black and his '55 Caddy



James A. Stephens, age 20, and his '34 Plymouth



C.E. and Ellen French and two sons with their 1936 Chevy



Paul, Geri and Tim Henson and their 1949 Studebaker Commander Starlite Coupe



ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

**"A MERRY HEART DOETH GOOD LIKE A MEDICINE"
(PROVERBS 17:22).**

Has This Ever Happened to You?

One Sunday morning while I was pastoring in Fort Pierce, Florida, one of the elderly brothers in the church had to go to the rest room during my sermon. As he was going out the side door, which was near the front of the church and in view of the entire congregation, his trousers started to fall down around his legs. At that time, his son ran to his rescue to help save him from further embarrassment. Needless to say, that event just about broke up our service.

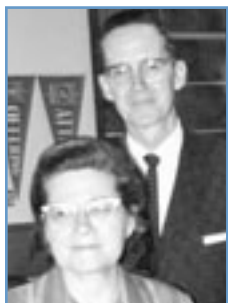
—Reverend Paul S. Shoemaker, Winter Haven, FL

Church Attendance—by C. Miller

To make it possible for everyone to attend church on Sunday, we are proposing a special "No Excuse Sunday."

1. Cots will be placed in the foyer for those who say, "Sunday is my only day to sleep in."
2. There will be steel helmets for those who say, "The roof would cave in if I ever came to church."
3. Blankets will be furnished for those who say it is too cold, and fans for those who say it is too hot.
4. There will be hearing aids for those who say, "The pastor speaks too softly," and cotton for those who say, "He preaches too loud."
5. Scorecards will be available for those who wish to list the hypocrites present.
6. Some relatives will be in attendance for those who like to go visiting on Sunday.
7. TV dinners will be provided for those who can't go to church and cook dinner too.
8. Golf clubs will be available for practice swings for those who like to golf on Sunday.

Where Are They Now?



Reverend and Mrs. R.H. Sumner have had a long and productive ministry in the Church of God. In addition to serving as an evangelist and pastor, he has served as a state overseer and General Board chairman and member. They have two children: Sharon Adkins, who works at the Church of God International Offices, and Donnie Sumner, who is a renowned gospel singer

and evangelist. He is also a brother to the famous bass gospel singer J.D. Sumner. They live in retirement at 3512 Ramblewood Circle NW, Cleveland, TN 37312. They would love to hear from friends. Sister Sumner recently suffered a stroke and is now in recovery.

From the book
The Pointed Pen,
by Charles W. Conn

DR. CHARLES CONN SAID:



- ❖ The ability to see one's faults is the first step of self-improvement.
- ❖ It is the carnal nature of man to rejoice when the faults or misfortunes of others exceed his own.
- ❖ Never forsake Christian fellowship. An ember removed from the bed of coals will soon grow cold and die.
- ❖ A life for God is better than a sermon about God.
- ❖ The trial of our faith is like a tree in winter; while the foliage is gone, the roots grow deeper.
- ❖ God determines the length of our lives, but we determine the height, the depth and the breadth.
- ❖ If life puts a stumbling stone in your way, turn it into a stepping-stone.
- ❖ A man is always ready to believe a report that agrees with his prejudices, or to resist knowledge that disagrees with them.
- ❖ There are times when it requires more strength to be still than it does to move or to act.
- ❖ You can't put out a fire by swatting the sparks that fly from it; you must extinguish the source.
- ❖ True life is lived upward; the minute a man quits climbing, something in him dies.
- ❖ A man who gives happiness to others finds happiness for himself.

Special Invitation:

All retired ministers, spouses and widows are invited to attend the Worldwide Prayer Meetings that will be held August 3-6, 2004, at the 70th Church of God General Assembly. These prayer meetings will convene at 7 a.m. in meeting rooms A & B at the Alamodome or in Room 214 of the Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center.



Tribute to the Hensons



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