



MY SOUL DOTH MAGNIFY THE LORD:

THE MEMOIRS OF

EDWIN J. HUMPHREY,

by

Edwin J. Humphrey, Sr.

with

Emory J. Tolbert

## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my beloved wife, Margaret, and to our children, whose understanding and sacrifice made it possible for me to do my work; and posthumously to my dear mother, Willie Lee Barlow Humphrey Barner, who taught me in things of God and kept me in Seventh-day Adventist schools; and to all who through all of the years of their lives touched mine: brothers, relatives, teachers, ministers, friends.

Psalms 84:11

For the Lord God is a sun and a shield. For the Lord God will give grace and glory and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Luke 1:46

My soul doth magnify the Lord.

## PREFACE

This is an account of the life of Edwin J. Humphrey, Sr., given in his own words. It is the life of a faithful and loving husband and father, and an untiring worker in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Beginning with his roots in small-town Georgia, his story takes us to the city of Detroit in the urban North, where he was born. His high school years at Oakwood Academy in Huntsville, Alabama, a brief stint in the Army during World War II, and college years at Oakwood College prepared him for over forty years as a successful evangelist and as pastor of over a dozen churches.

I first met Elder Humphrey when he was pastor of the Jefferson Avenue church in Rochester, New York during the 1980s. Before that time I had witnessed his abilities as a powerful and eloquent speaker over the years, especially at camp meetings at Victory Lake in upstate New York. In my view, only the best orators could match his delivery as a speaker, and none could surpass his reputation as a caring and diligent pastor.

This book is the result of several interviews conducted over a period of three years. It is a testimony to Elder Humphrey's determination to leave a legacy to future generations. A part of that legacy is this review of a colorful and vibrant past that took him over landscapes with many contours. He grew up in Detroit during the Great Depression, taught and nurtured by a courageous mother, a dedicated step father, and a plethora of outstanding church leaders who served as teachers and role models. He arrived at Oakwood when Professor Moran was ending his term

as president of the college, and Elder Frank L. Peterson was beginning his distinguished career as that institution's chief executive. He was assigned to a church in Montgomery Alabama in the mid-1950s just as Martin Luther King, Jr., was arriving to take his first assignment as pastor. From that vantage point he witnessed and participated in the famous bus boycott that changed the nation and, in some ways, the world.

When he became chaplain of the Riverside Sanitarium in Nashville, Tennessee, he participated in the operation of the most important predominantly Black medical institution among Seventh-day Adventists. There he met some of the pioneers of the church, including Elder Charles M. Kinney, the first African American to become an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister.

Elder Humphrey's greatest challenge may have been his assignment in 1970 to serve as pastor of the largest Black Seventh-day Adventist church in the world, New York City's Ephesus Church. Faced with a congregation of over two thousand, his seemingly impossible mission was to spearhead a campaign to renovate the historic Ephesus church building that been gutted by a devastating fire a few months earlier. An effort of seven years, buttressed by much prayer by clergy and members, ended in success in 1977 when a joyful congregation entered the restored edifice.

This is clearly the story of a distinguished leader. But it is also the story of a man with many friends whom he cherished throughout his life. It was his ability to make friends, both within and outside of his denomination, that came through most impressively in our interviews.

Elder Humphrey's sense of history and the importance of preserving the documents that illuminate the past has been evident from the very beginning. Memorabilia from all of his experiences were carefully filed away for future reference. This included letters from friends and colleagues like Elder Frank L. Peterson, a friend of long standing, and many others. Even the angry and threatening hand bills that the enemies of the Montgomery Boycott distributed among Blacks during those turbulent days are preserved in Elder Humphrey's impressive collection.

In the 1980s, following the death of Elder Louis B. Reynolds, the author of a history of African American Seventh-day Adventists entitled *We Have Tomorrow*, Elder Humphrey received many of Elder Reynold's documents, including some that had never been published. Much of the last half of this book is devoted to these letters. They reveal the concerns of African American Adventists and others during the struggle for civil rights that has consumed so much of our history in the United States.

What follows is a book based on a combination of oral history, as presented by Elder Humphrey, and documents, as preserved by Elder Humphrey and others. It is an account of a life well lived by an extraordinary man.

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## INTRODUCTION

I am a descendant of John Booker, a man born in 1790 in the state of Georgia who lived to be eighty years old. For seventy five of his eighty years he was a slave, as were his wife and children. As nearly as I can determine, he was my great, great, great, great grandfather (on my father's side). My grandmother was Eliza Booker and her husband, Adolphus Humphrey, was my grandfather. Their son, Virgil Humphrey, was my father.

I don't know as much about my ancestry on my mother's side. I do know that when

my mother was a child, she lived on a farm in Lizella, Georgia, with her parents and her two brothers. She was named after her father, Willie Lee Barlow, who was a laborer and an army veteran with a reputation as a heavy drinker; he even operated his own still. His wife was Hattie Barlow, my grandmother. Willie Lee was born in this country of Irish descent and was fully assimilated into the African American community. Although we all knew that he was White, he was generally accepted. In 1898, at the age of twenty-seven, he had been discharged from the 10th Cavalry, which was a Black unit.

After my grandfather and his wife, Hattie, had three children, she died suddenly. He then married one of her cousins, a woman whose name was Sophronia. They lived together as man and wife in Georgia until some of the people in the neighborhood began to harass their children. This eventually caused them to move to the North. However, even after they moved, they would occasionally visit Georgia, especially Columbus and Macon, where they had kin.

My grandfather served with the famous black cavalry unit, the Buffalo Soldiers (the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry), in the Philippines during the Spanish American War. When I was a child in Detroit, I used to march with him in the

Memorial Day Parade. This is when I first learned about Sojourner Truth. The veterans of the Spanish American War placed a wreath on her statue in Cadillac Square at the close of each year's procession.

One Sunday my grandfather decided to go to church. Before he could enter he heard a woman praying "Oh Lord, go down yonder and kill 'Ole Barlow, he's sending our children to Hell!" Immediately after the prayer, in walked Barlow and Sophronia. Grandfather was in fact a good-hearted person and a good provider.

A dear lady named Mrs. Mary Kimbrough came by Columbus, Georgia, selling books. She sold my grandfather a copy of Daniel and Revelation. The children played with the book and the dogs pulled it around the yard - but finally my grandfather took up the book and began reading it. Years later, in 1921, my grandfather went to Detroit, Michigan, to spy out the place as a possible new home for the family. A year later he sent for his wife, Sophronia. In Detroit my grandfather came upon a tent meeting conducted by Elder Tazwell B. Buckner, the minister who built the Hartford Avenue Church in Detroit. He noticed on the screen some of same pictures that he had seen in the book Daniel and Revelation. My grandfather started attending, and at the close of the meetings he was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist church. His wife, Sophronia, was bapized at a later date by Elder M. C. Campbell.

My grandfather sent for my mother, who by then was living with her husband and two children in Macon, Georgia. When she came to Detroit, she was pregnant with me. She brought the other children with her, and her husband joined her later. She soon became a member of the Adventist church in Detroit and began teaching her children. Her husband (my father) faded out of the picture when I was a toddler. He left the family without notice. I was told that my mother and the children returned from church one Sabbath morning and all of his things were gone. Whether he was escaping this strange new religion I do not know. As it



turned out, the family heard nothing of him until I was able to locate him many years later.

We children did not know the joy and the love of a father for many years. We thank God for a mother who cared for us during the dark days of the Depression, and for grandparents who supported us as well. Our uncles, Herman and Louie, would come on weekends to play ball and help us make kites. How happy we were to see them come to our home.

Our people were Baptist and Methodist in Georgia. They attended the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church and the Damascus Methodist Church, both in Lizella. However, they recognized that the Word of God teaches that the seventh day Sabbath is God's day.

My mother had four children. The baby girl passed, and then there were three boys. She enrolled her children in our church school, and all of us became members of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Today, my oldest brother Virgil Walter Humphrey, Jr. is an elder in his church in Florida. My brother Willie Lee Humphrey has passed, but before he passed away I had the privilege of re-baptizing him into the church. Mother had to take care of all the responsibilities. My father had left when I was a little fellow, but mother kept us together. She was working doing housework for wealthy people. There were times during the days of the Depression when mother had to do many things to support us. But she kept us in church school.

There were times when things did not go well. But she knew how to pray and she knew how to keep us in church. She sang not only in the choir, but she sang in the home.

My mother's grandmother had been a slave in the state of Georgia. Her maiden name was Allen. While my mother was kind and loving she was also a strict disciplinarian. Whether the background of slave parentage had to do with her

strictness I do not know. However, order was enforced by rules, with old-fashioned whippings as a penalty. And we dared not show our disapproval. By mumbling or rolling the eyes we were subject to get more, or sometimes one of those Georgia back-hand licks. These events took place at various intervals in response to all kinds of boyish mischief.

I remember when we were a little older and living in an apartment building at 6067 Hartford Avenue. My mother was doing domestic work. However, before she would leave for work, she would assign each boy his housework. This was in the 1930s, and she had to walk two blocks to the McGraw street car. One day, when we thought she was on her way to work, we started our adventure. Virgil was baking delicious biscuits, Willie was making fudge, and I was cooking cereal while asking Virgil how to fix it. By the time we were in high gear and the apartment hall was filled with the aroma of our mischief, we heard footsteps in the hall. We listened and recognized

that they were mothers'. She had gotten to the car line and realized that she had forgotten some important item. She didn't have time to punish us then, but promised to when she returned. She started with the youngest, that was me. Willie was next and then Virgil. We never forgot that venture. Knowing the dangers that awaited her children in the outside world, she was determined to guard them as long as she could.

The advent of the Sabbath's rest, beginning at sunset on Friday and ending at the same time on Saturday evening, was always a welcome respite. We always welcomed the Sabbath with family worship; we closed the Sabbath in the same manner. During the sacred hours of the Sabbath there was no playing, no pleasures, no cooking, no business transactions, no buying, no selling; no secular papers were seen in the house. One seventh of the week belonged to God according to the Ten Commandments, and my mother regarded this strictly. There

was no cooking: all of this was done on Friday, the preparation day. On the day before the Sabbath, the shoes were shined, all house work was done, baths were taken. We all attended church on Sabbath, arriving for Sabbath School before 9:30 A.M. We were all in classes.

I shall never forget those early teachers: Sister Ida Brooks led in songs out of the Sunshine Song Book. I had the privilege of taking my children to see her when she was one hundred years of age. I expected her to tell them that I had been a good boy. But she said, "I had a hard time with Edwin." When she passed away, I attended her funeral services. She was not only my Sabbath School teacher but also one of my many benefactors.

Elder M.G. Cato was also my Sabbath School teacher at the Hartford Avenue Church. Later we worked together in the Michigan Conference where we sold books under Elder W.A. Higgins, who was the Lake Union publishing director. Elder Virgil Gibbons was the publishing director in the local area. At South Central Conference, Elder Cato again served as the publishing secretary, and later he became the representative of the Southern Union Publishing Department. He is now past 90 years old and living in Atlanta, Georgia. Brother Timothy Fambro was one of my Sabbath School teachers also. He was a dedicated leader in the church. He is now living in California and he is above 90 years of age.

Our dear mother is sleeping in Jesus in a little country graveyard in Belleville, Michigan. I can remember grandfather concluding his prayer now, "And Dear Master, when we have done all, and we have finished the work you have given us to do, give us a home in thy habitation. This is thy humble servant's prayer. Amen." I thank God for a mother who loved the Lord and loved her family and the family of God. Not perfect, but she was striving to please God each day of her life, for she had many burdens and anxieties that she never shared with us. It is like the old spiritual that we sing, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen, Nobody knows but

Jesus." So she just told it to Jesus.

One of the pastors that I remember when I was four years old in 1926 was Elder U. S. Willis. I remember his preaching and his family. His children were Louise, who later taught at Oakwood, and U. S. Willis Jr. After Elder Willis moved to another assignment, Elder A. E. Webb, was our pastor from 1930 to 1933. I remember October 1928, when I attended the funeral of Elder W. H. Green, the first Secretary of the Negro Department of the General Conference. His wife, Mrs. Jessie Dorsey Green was the education secretary of our church. She used to look after me when I was a child. During church services, my mother sang in the choir while I sat with either my grandparents or Sister Green. She had attended Battle Creek Sanitarium. After studying under the supervision of Dr. John H. Kellogg, she graduated from nurses training in 1896

All of the churches in Detroit during my childhood were in the Michigan Conference. Our church was the Hartford Avenue Church. We attended the white church (Grand River SDA Church) only on special occasions. Otherwise we had contact only during camp meeting.

Camp meetings were held at three Michigan locations: Holly, Hastings, and Grand Ledge, and they were racially integrated. However there were separate sections for our people's tents and cabins. Worship services were together with no special seating arrangement.

Among the speakers at camp meeting were some prominent Black ministers. One was Elder W.D. Ford, a man born in Barbados who started the work among Blacks in Chicago and who later pastored in Flint, Michigan and at Burns Street Church in Detroit. As a young minister I had the privilege of preaching for Elder Ford during his late years. Elder J. H. Lawrence, an outstanding evangelist, was also a frequent speaker, as was Elder Louis Bland, who baptized me at the Hartford Avenue Church in Detroit when I was twelve years old. All of them had wonderful

families.

I remember when our brethren got together and picked up stones to build the pavilion at Grand Lake camp meeting. Elder Carlisle Haynes was the president of Michigan Conference when the pavilion was built. Elder Haynes liked to deal with those who were in authority. Mr. Vanderberg, who was in the United States Senate, came to visit our camp meetings and gave remarks. Elder Haynes gave him a set of books.

Elder W. W. Prescott would often speak at the Michigan Conference camp meeting. He was the main speaker in the early morning services. I remember him as an elderly gentleman. I am told that Elder W. W. Prescott worked with Mrs. White in getting her publications done; he especially helped with spelling and grammar.

At camp meetings there was an integrated choir of about 100 voices. At the end of the last service we would sing together "Never, Never Part Again." Our conference president, Elder C. B. Haynes had a son, Donald Haynes, who arranged that song. Elder Haynes would sing the stanzas. Then the choir and congregation would sing the chorus:

What, never part again?

No! Never part again!

We will never never part again.

## MY YOUTH

When I was about ten years old, my mother remarried. My stepfather was a faithful member of the Hartford Avenue SDA Church. His name was Jesse E. Barner. It is not an easy thing for a man to assume responsibility for a family that belongs to

another. But he did an excellent job and was faithful until his death. After the marriage my mother continued to work. My stepfather put us into another rented home. (In the Detroit area we moved a number of times.) He came from York, Alabama, which is near the Mississippi border. He was a veteran of the First World War. I would go with him to the parades. He always had good cars. There were times when he would let me sit in his lap and drive the car. I remember as a youngster I would go to early morning (6:30 A.M.) prayer service with my stepfather. It was sometimes in the winter and I would hear them singing that song:

Where He may lead me I will go,  
For I have learned to trust Him so,  
And remember 'twas for me,  
That he was slain on Calvary.

Jesse Barner had one son by a previous marriage, John Edgar Barner, who lived with his grandmother in Birmingham, Alabama. Later he came to Detroit to live with us. John would defend me. If someone was bothering me I would tell them "My brother will deal with you." My stepfather helped his son get a job at Ford Motor Company. After getting his job, John also got a brand new Ford car. He was a student at the industrial school in Birmingham, Alabama, and he was on the football team. He was a six-footer and a strong young man. One year John's grandmother, Mrs. Lucy Boyd, came from Birmingham with her husband and two nieces, Lucy and Pearl. Lucy Hobson had four children, but Pearl had none. One of Lucy's daughters, Juanita McClendon, is in the Business Department at Oakwood College.

John lived with us until he started making good money and got a new job. He

wanted to work on Sabbath. But my stepfather said " You cannot stay here and break the Sabbath." My stepfather was somewhat devout in his religion. He would sing with some of the brethren in a quartet. He would take his typewriter and get items from the Spirit of Prophecy. (I still have some of these things.) He loved to visit the sick and shut-ins. I remember going with him to see Elder Carter, one of our local elders, during his last days. Elder Carter was a carpenter who had used his skill to keep the church building in good repair. He could not come to church. He said to my stepfather, "Barner, please come again, I enjoyed the visit."

There were times we would get into the car and he would take us to Battle Creek, where the sanitarium was located. We visited the church, and this was the first time I saw the picture of Sojourner Truth there. I did not know at that time so much about her as I do now. We went to the Kellogg cereal factories, and we went to the Post factories as well.

As a young fellow interested in the ministry, I watched what the ministers did. Elder Webb and his wife visited the sick. If anyone passed away they were right there and went with the family all the way. I was influenced by the way they conducted themselves in their church ministry. Then there came another pastor, Elder E.C. Atkinson. He was a great preacher and loved his church members, children and all. I can hear him now saying, "Do you get the point, do you?" As he finished his service in that church, I remember his farewell sermon. When he finished the sermon, he turned to the elders admonishing them to be faithful to their course. Then Elder Atkinson went down to the deaconesses, admonishing them to be faithful until Jesus comes. And then he turned to the deacons to admonish them to be faithful and "do your work as unto God." And then he went back to the pulpit and said to the congregation, "Let's be faithful until Jesus comes." It was my privilege when I got into New York, where I was a pastor for over thirty years, to

see Elder Atkinson. I said to him, "I'm one of the boys who you pastored in Detroit." He responded with a warm hug, and we were close friends until he passed.

Jacob Justiss became the associate pastor of the Hartford Avenue Church in Detroit under Elder Gerard Johnson. Jacob was a smart man. He could take a Greek Bible and read it as easily as most of us read in English. He wrote a history of African American Seventh-day Adventists entitled *Angels in Ebony*.

I must say something about the local elders at Hartford Avenue Church. Elder Carter was a stately gentleman, and he lived the part. I can hear him now singing that song:

When my life's work is ended  
And I've crossed the swelling tide,  
When this "mortal puts on immortality,"  
I shall know my redeemer when I reach the other side,  
And His smile will be the first to welcome me.

I can hear him reading the love chapter, I Corinthians 13. He delivered that text with such vigor. These were the people that I considered role models.

The next pastor that I knew was Elder J. H. Lawrence. He was an outstanding evangelist. This is well illustrated by a conversation I had with a young white minister in 1983, which was long after Elder Lawrence had retired. I was at a meeting at the Atlantic Union headquarters when this young man approached me asking if I knew of a black minister who had held a tent meeting in Pensacola, Florida, in 1913. He said that his great-grandmother and several other white people



came to the meeting to make fun of the black preacher. However, the message that he preached was so power-packed and filled with the Spirit that they could not make fun. Instead, they listened, learned, returned home, and began keeping the Sabbath. Pastor W., the young man, was one of more than one hundred souls who accepted the truth over the years as a result of that experience. The preacher was J. H. Lawrence.

Pastor Lawrence took time for the smallest child. He always gave a story for the children. When Elder Lawrence came to the Detroit church, the church school had been closed. But he opened it again and taught the entire church the health message. He lived to be 102 years old. He brought teachers to the school like Sister Bernice (Johnson) Reynolds. She was a disciplinarian, and she often took us out on hikes. One day one of the fish she kept in the classroom died and we had a funeral. She said, "Edwin, you're going to be the preacher." All of the children were the mourners.

Our teacher was tough. If you misbehaved she would send your best friend outside to get some switches. I did something to displease her one time and she sent me out to the furnace room. It was a windowless room, and I was there waiting for a long time. Eventually it was time for prayer meeting. Brother Washington came and asked "Edwin, what are you doing here? School is over and Miss Johnson has gone home." She had completely forgotten about me. Years later we met her in Austria and she was still talking about me in the furnace room.

It was in the home of Miss Johnson's landlords, Brother and Sister Griffin, that I first met Elder F. L. Peterson. I did not know then that we would become such good friends. While I was attending Oakwood, he became president of the college. After I graduated, he had me back to conduct a week of prayer.

Later, our school teacher, Sr. Bernice Johnson, moved in with Brother and Sister William Cathcart. The Cathcarts were six daughters and one son.

My brother and I worked with Brother Cathcart on his vegetable truck.

Sr. Johnson, who later married Elder Louis B. Reynolds, taught my brother and me to sing the song, "If Christ Should Come Today," as a duet:

If the Christ should come to me  
As of old in Galilee  
From his home in Paradise,  
Come again in lovely guise,  
If He walked once more on earth,  
As a man of lowly birth,  
And should one day come to me,  
Would I know that it was he?

Yes, I would know Him,  
Yes, I would know Him  
Yes I would know Him,  
The Man of Galilee.

## MY YEARS AT OAKWOOD

My brother took me to Oakwood for a commencement service while I was an academy student. That same year (1940) Elder Moran, the president of Oakwood, came to the Hartford Avenue Church in Detroit with a men's quartet. He said "We have everything at Oakwood. All you have to do is come and bring some salt. We have everything else." After Elder Moran finished speaking, William Cleveland, a student at Oakwood, gave the message.

I remember Elder J. J. Netherly, President of the Lake Union, who had been a little child on the *Titanic* when he survived its sinking. I also remember Elder Taylor G. Bunch, the pastor of the Battle Creek Tabernacle at the time of my first visit there. I recall seeing the picture of Sojourner Truth, the Black abolitionist, located in the chapel. It made quite an impression on me. Later, when Elder Bunch became president of the Michigan Conference, he had occasion to visit the Hartford Avenue Church. I offered a prayer that day during Sabbath School. Afterward, Elder Bunch remarked, "This young man should go to Oakwood College to take ministerial training."

I was attending public school in Detroit and planning to go to Adelphian Academy. I had many jobs while trying to save money to go to school. I worked for the Packard Motor Company, but I could not get Sabbaths off. I worked there for a week. Then they paid me off. I also went to the Hudson Automobile Company and they hired me. But on Friday I told them I could not come to work the next day. So they said they could not use me. Next I worked for the Square D Company, a company that made electrical boxes. They hired me. But once again when Friday came told them I could not work on Saturday. I lost that job too. However, they also paid me off.

My stepfather had worked for Ford Motor Company for many years. I asked him to talk to his superintendent who gave me a letter for the employment office. I

got in that long line early Monday morning with that letter. Finally I got into the office. They hired me. I had never been in a foundry with all of those furnaces. But it paid off. When Friday came, I said to my boss that I would not be coming in on Saturday. He said, "Son, this company does not bother a man about his religion." So they arranged for me to have Sabbaths off. There were three shifts: days, afternoons and nights. If I had an afternoon shift, they allowed me to leave the premises so that I could be at home when the Sabbath came. Everyone had to have a pass to get out the factory if you left early. One day I saw the superintendent hurrying. He said, "I know that you must be out so that you can be home for Sabbath, and I almost forgot (your pass), but, here it is!"

I went to Oakwood Academy in 1941. There I supported myself by working on campus. Robert Woodfork, a college student, and I took care of the furnaces during the winter. Brother Espy Carter, the maintenance man at the college, had me working on the grounds. One time we were putting benches on the campus and Miss Anna Knight came along and said, "Why are you putting these benches around here? These children need to work." I used to think Miss Knight was severe! However, Miss Knight and Mother Cunningham were good friends. And I learned that when they were together they laughed and had a good time. Miss Knight also became a very good friend of mine. Years later, when I was assigned to a district that included a church in Soso, Mississippi, she moved her membership back to that church.

At one time Miss Knight lived in the Cleveland home in Chattanooga. The Clevelands, the parents of Dr. Earl E. Cleveland, Elder William Cleveland and Elder Harold Cleveland, were very generous and kind people. One time I was taking Miss Knight to Chattanooga, and I was driving cautiously, like a thought an older person would enjoy. Miss Knight asked "What's wrong with this car? Go on and drive!"

After my wife and I were married, we encountered Miss Knight one day sitting on the porch of her home. My wife, Margaret, was a little concerned, seeing Miss Knight on the porch. They had an encounter when she was a student at Oakwood.

During those days it was not considered proper for young men and women to walk around the Oakwood campus together. One Sabbath morning, one of the girls asked Margaret to walk with her to the front gate. Before they got to the gate, Sam Bond stopped them and asked, "Have you heard the student recruiter?" He wanted some information about what the recruiter had said. In the meantime, Benjamin Abney walked up. Then they looked back at the dormitory and Miss Crossgrove was looking. She went to get Miss Knight, who gave one yell for the girls to come back to the dormitory. They turned and walked back toward the campus, but Miss Knight thought they should have run. She said, "When I call you, you run!" Then she said, "Shame on you girls, out there talking to men on Sabbath morning!" My wife explained that they were talking to a young man who asked about recruiting students. "On Sabbath morning!" she emphasized. My wife said, "The recruiters come on Sabbath morning." Miss Knight retorted, "Daniels (my wife's maiden name), I'm ashamed of you for talking back to me!"

At Oakwood I also sold books door to door. As a part of our ministerial training, we worked as colporteurs. It gave us experience in dealing with people. In 1943, Elder W.E. Adams, the associate publishing secretary of the Mississippi-Alabama Conference (this was before black conferences) would have meetings at Oakwood to inspire young people to go out and sell books. I decided to go, and I took a young man with me named Vashni Davis. On our way to Montgomery we stopped at a camp meeting in Meridian, Mississippi. There we witnessed the wedding of Elder E.E. Cleveland and Celia Abney. Elder Adams then took us to his home. We had never met Sister Adams before. But we went into her home and she dealt with us just as if we were her children. She was just wonderful

to us. Brother Adams took us to Montgomery where Elder V. Lindsay was a pastor and Elder Harold Singleton was running a tent meeting. We would help at the meeting doing whatever we could do. From that meeting Elder Frank Jones, Jr., his parents, and his brother were baptized.

While in Montgomery we lived with some people who were not members of the Adventist church. They were just wonderful. Mother Davis and her two daughters were school teachers, but they were just family. In fact, Romeo, her grandson, was a cook on the railroad. All of the family would take us as family. Some of them have gone now. I still keep in touch with some of them who are still in Montgomery. We just hope that something that we have said will do something to help them.

I had an opportunity to work as a colporteur. After a few weeks we went to Mississippi. That was the place where we had difficulty finding lodging. A local Adventist, Dr. Theodore Roosevelt Mason Howard, who ran the Friendship Clinic, soon started looking for a place for us. Dr. Howard became one of Mississippi's most prominent citizens. He had come to Mound Bayou in 1942. After establishing the Friendship Clinic, he acquired hundreds of acres of farmland and built modern housing for rent and sale to the local community. He was an outspoken civil rights leader who left Mississippi in 1956 because of threats on his life. He moved to New York City that year, and later he became president of the National medical Association (see *Jet Magazine*, August 23, 1956, pp. 12- 15).

Dr. Howard found a place for us in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, a county product demonstrator who helped people to learn how to cook and can foods. She said, "We are happy to have you all here. You can get anything out of the garden you want. You can use our car any time you need it." Of course we never did that. The Andersons charged us twenty five cents a week. Mrs. Anderson and her husband and her sister, Nellie, sang in the choir of the Baptist

church. We also sang in the choir, and took many book orders, which we would deliver on our next trip into town.

In the all-Black city of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, Mr. M. Smith the grand mentor of the Knights and Daughters of Tabor, had a hospital, and they treated us wonderfully. We would go to see Mr. Smith and Mayor Green from time to time. They were both very cordial.

Mrs. Anderson and her husband, with whom we lived, and her sister, Nellie, sang in the choir of the Baptist church. We also sang in the choir, and took many book orders, which we would deliver on our next trip into town.

Once when I was in Mound Bayou, just after taking all of our book deliveries, we went by to have my hair cut and got into a discussion with the barber. When I looked up most of my hair was gone. I had to stay around in Mound Bayou to allow my hair to grow so that I could go back to Oakwood without having the kids laugh at me.

We would go to Clarksdale, Mississippi, sometimes. Walter Jones and wife and children were wonderful to us. At brother Jones's house we tried to pick cotton. I had never picked cotton before. We did a little something, and when they weighed my cotton it was not much.

In Greenville, Mississippi, Brother and Sister Seard had a large family, including eligible daughters. They were very nice to us. He moved entire houses for a living. This was a highly unusual business for a Black man in the 1940s because it involved a considerable investment in heavy equipment. He said that their house was open to us at any time. We were grateful because there was always plenty of food. We would go to various churches doing our work as colporteurs, sometimes traveling by bus and by train. Sitting in the back of the bus because of the segregation laws was a new experience for me.

## MILITARY SERVICE

My education at Oakwood Academy was interrupted after my third year. When I returned home to Detroit that summer there was a letter waiting for me from Uncle Sam. The letter said that I had to report to be inducted. As it turned out, I served for only a few months. I went first to Chicago, where I had my basic training. Like many Adventist men I was slated for training as a medic and sent down to Abilene, Texas, with the 66th battalion. On the trip down to Texas, they placed me in charge of a group of men going into training.

While we were in Abilene, we would sometimes go to Dallas. There was an Adventist Center there, and there was always good food for us. We went to the Dallas Church on occasion. Elder Nelson was the pastor, and we had wonderful times. In general, we were very careful about going off base. In fact, one or two Black men were killed in communities around the base. These were days when we had to trust in the Lord.





There were days when I would think of Oakwood. I could hear the choir; I could hear the preaching of the word by Elder Calvin Mosely and Dr. Otis Edwards. I could see Dr. Dykes directing that choir. In my mind I could see and hear all of these things. There were times when we would have our own services on base; I am saying just among the Black brethren. On Sundays the Black brethren would be on K. P. It was pleasant duty because we could pick anything we wanted to eat (anything that was “kosher”).

There were a number of Adventist men at Abilene training facility, including Elder Beale, who later taught at Oakwood, Brother William Willis from Buffalo, Brother Warden of Brooklyn, Brother Delaney from the Ephesus Church in New York, Brother Brown of Battle Creek, Louis Henderson of Texas, as well as Brother McGhee, Elder Wallace Mitchell, and Elder Simon Moseby. The company clerk was Ernest Waller from St. Petersburg, Florida. While I was in Abilene I went to the Beaumont hospital, where they found that my sinus condition was severe enough to discharge me from the army. This was in 1944, during World War II.

Once I was out of the army I had a call from Elder J. E. Cox, Jr. He used to live with my grandparents in Detroit. He asked me to be a tent master for his evangelistic meetings in Miami. I told him that I knew nothing about the job but he assured me that he would teach me. My mother decided that if I were going to Miami, she would go with me. Before Miami, we went to Key West, Florida, where we had a tent meeting. At night I took my car directly into the tent, and slept in it. When I heard something one night, I rose up and said in my most threatening voice, “What do y’want?” They scampered away and did not return.

When I decided to go to the South for the tent meetings, people started telling me terrible things about the South. I had not been raised in the South, and I was very concerned. I had a young man put an extra tank on my car so that I would

not have to stop in any small towns Through it all the Lord has been so wonderful to me! I have been throughout the South but I have never had any problem at all. My soul magnifies His holy name!

After we moved the tent to Miami, we had good meetings. This is when I first met Elder R. Hope Robinson. Elder Cox introduced him in a meeting. We had not presented the Sabbath, but nevertheless Elder Robinson came up and said, “I am happy to be with you believers.”

Sometimes Elder Cox was away and I had to preach in his place, although I had no training. He was away one time and I had to conduct a funeral. I had seen Elder J. H. Lawrence, Elder U. S. Willis, Elder Atkinson and others preach funerals, so I just did what they did. Before the funeral, when I was introduced to Sister Roming, an active member and leader in the local church, she asked, “where’s the pastor?” Then she asked in astonishment, “Do you mean this boy is going to conduct the funeral?” Well, I went ahead and carried on the program. When we returned from the burial Sister Roming said, “Son, you did a wonderful job.”

When the meetings were over the people filled my car with “goodies” and I drove back to Detroit. I sold books there for a while. But eventually I got back into Oakwood.

## BACK AT OAKWOOD

When I returned, the students and the teachers were all trying to help an “old” young man like myself. I had to work all of my days. Earlier I had worked at Ford Motor Company for what was considered good pay. But at Oakwood the wage scale was only about five cents an hour. Nevertheless, I was able to pay my tuition. Brother Louis Ford was the business manager at Oakwood. Elder

Richard Brown and I drove a truck for Brother Ford. We would go out of town for various purposes. We moved Dr. Richard Ford to Riverside; we moved Dr. Mark Cox back to Washington. Brother Ford had so much confidence in us that he once said to me "Humphrey, you have so much credit because of your work, you should get whatever you want from the college store."

Life at Oakwood brought many new experiences. My first roommate was from Germany, the son of a Black father and a White mother. We became good friends and we stayed in touch from then on. Brother Brantley was our dean for a while. Later, Elder William Webb was our dean. Sometimes a student would get birthday cards, alerting everyone that his birthday was coming up. Dean Webb would use his passkey to open the student's room and everyone would rush in and spank him. One day we got the word that Dean Webb was having his birthday. The boys went to the third floor and began making a lot of noise. They knew that after a while the dean would come bounding up the steps. When he got up there those men got a hold of him and from then on he stopped going into rooms with his keys to give birthday spankings.

At Oakwood I became the driver for the Cathedral Quartet. They were George Earle, Charles Brooks, Lester Valentine and Walter Wall. We traveled during the school year and during vacation. Walter Wall had very light skin. Therefore, he was the one who would go into the white restaurants and other businesses to get food for us while we were on the road. The white people in these establishments assumed that he was also white.

I took the quartet through the East Coast to various churches and institutions. They were wonderful singers. They knew how to make you happy; they could sing and make you sad. I would say to them in the car, "I don't understand how you sing so beautifully and yet get in this car and have us all in stitches. In socials they would entertain. And they were the best quartet Oakwood had ever

produced. The institutions and churches were nice us. We went to Harding Hospital in Ohio, Hinsdale Hospital in Illinois, to Florida and throughout the East Coast. Except for Walter Wall, all of the members of the quartet became Adventist workers. Valentine became principal of Northeastern Academy, Earle became president of Northeastern Conference and kept that position for nineteen years, Charles Brooks became a renown singer and a worker in the Sabbath School Department of the General Conference. Elder Charles Brooks was chairman of the committee that compiled the most recent Church Hymnal.

A student named Samuel Thomas arrived at Oakwood after a stint in the Army. Unfortunately, there was no dormitory room available for him. My roommate, Elder Donald Crowder, suggested to me that we take him into our room. I went to sleep in another room in the mechanical building (where we were living) so that Samuel could use my bed. Eventually he received a room and I was able to return. Elder Samuel Thomas stayed on and graduated. He became a marvelous worker who eventually worked in the South Atlantic Conference and became Lay Activities secretary at Allegheny West. At the Oakwood Centennial in 1996 Margaret and I were guests at his home.

While I was a college student at Oakwood, I also lived for a while in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Kimbrough. Mrs. Kimbrough was the woman who had sold that copy of Daniel and Revelation to my grandfather years before I was born. They lived in the Garden area of the campus near the farm. Brother Kimbrough was a very talented gardener and bee keeper, and there was an abundance of vegetables and fruit and honey available at all times. There were times when I would go with Brother Kimbrough to get the honey from the hives. I wore all of my Army paraphernalia to keep from being stung. I did my own cooking there. And sometimes I cooked for guests. Brother Kimbrough had a cow, so there was plenty of milk.

While I was still a student at Oakwood, Elder Charles Bradford, who had not yet graduated, asked me to be his best man at his wedding in 1947. After that I asked Margaret's hand in marriage in 1948. Elder J. G. Thomas performed our wedding ceremony. Elder M. C. Strahan, one of the pioneers, signed as witness to our marriage. Our wedding turned out to be quite an event. It was the first Adventist wedding to take place in St. Augustine, Florida, and people came from all around to attend. Samuel Thomas, the young man for whom I had temporarily given up my bed in the dormitory, was my best man at the wedding.

In the meanwhile, I interned under Elder J. G. Thomas in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Elder Thomas was a self-made man, but a strong preacher and a Christian gentleman. I had asked Elder Murphy, the president of South Central Conference to allow me to work with Elder Thomas. Before I graduated from Oakwood, Elder Murphy asked me to go to Dothan, Alabama, to conduct a three week meeting. I took a young man, Newton Goodrich, to play the piano. We held the meeting and, at the end, twelve people were baptized. So Elder Murphy gave me my license long before I graduated. I was grateful for his kindness to me.

My first assignment as a pastor was the seven churches of the Meridian, Mississippi, district. I preached three sermons each Sabbath. Elder Evans, who was once in the Publishing Dept, became the president of the Alabama-Mississippi Conference. Their headquarters were in Meridian. At times I would go to the Alabama-Mississippi Book and Bible House to pick up vegetarian meat substitutes. Elder Evans would say to me "Elder Humphrey let us bow on our knees and pray that the Lord will bless you in your ministry." Of course Elder Evans was white, and so was Brother Jacobs, the manager of the Alabama-Mississippi Conference Book and Bible House. Brother Jacobs's father had been one of the first teachers at Oakwood College shortly after it was

founded in 1896. When I was in Meridian I had the mayor come to speak for the opening of a tent meeting I held there. Every ingathering time he would give us a contribution. Mayor Lawrence Payne told me that if I ever had any trouble in Mississippi that I should call him and that he would be there to help me.

#### MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA, 1955

Then the conference sent me to Montgomery, Alabama. Elder Peterson had a cousin there, a registered nurse who must have been about a hundred years old. She had attended Tuskegee Institute during the days of Booker T. Washington. When I first went to her home, she asked "Frank sent you here?" I said "yes, ma'am," and afterward, I constantly went to visit her. One day she said, "I want you to take care of all of my business. I want you to go to my attorney and have him make up a will, and I want Frank Peterson to get everything that I have. When Elder Peterson would come to visit, he and his wife would stay with us. Everything his cousin requested for her will was carried out as she requested. She once fell and had a hip replacement. But she soon got up from that bed and walked to a little job not far from her house. She was always doing nice things for our family. One time a truck pulled up to our house with playground equipment she had bought for our children. Another day a bakery truck would deliver a cake. Miss Peterson kept her house immaculate. You would think her kitchen stove had just come out of the store. She was a staunch Methodist, but she would not let

anyone say anything against Frank and his family.

While in Montgomery, Alabama, I worked with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the Montgomery Bus Boycott, helping to transport people in and around the city. Dr. King was a Christian gentleman and a great preacher. He was born for his job, and God gave him the wisdom and the fortitude and the know--how . I have seen him under great stress, but God gave him that which he needed. I saw in the paper reports that he was manhandled in Montgomery. Only a Christian could endure the things that he suffered without retaliating. My church supported the boycott. While we didn't participate in everything, we did give money to support the program. Today he is tops in my book.

Whenever my fellow Adventist clergymen and conference officials would come to Montgomery, they would want me to introduce them to Dr. King. This included Elder Peterson, Elder Fountain, Elder Owen Troy, and a group from California. Dr. King was always cordial.

A white man who had been hired before I came to build the new Black SDA church in Montgomery, a man named Bruce Wyatt, was a member of the White Citizen's Council. This man would tell me what they were planning against Black people. He said, "Reverend, you are going to have to tell your people that if you don't stop this boycott, one day a lot of your houses are going to be burned. And we are going to have trouble here in Montgomery. If you keep following Dr. King, the whole city is going to be in trouble." This man also gave me some of the anti-King flyers they were passing around to intimidate black people. One of them said:

My friends it is time we rise up to these black devils, I  
tell you they are a group of two leg agitators who persist in  
walking up and down our streets protruding their black lips.



If we don't stop helping these African flesh eaters we will  
soon wake up and find Rev. King in the White House.

Another handbill that was passed around the community at that time also came  
from an anti-civil rights group, possibly the Ku Klux Klan. It read:

Look Out!  
Liver Lip Luther  
Getting Us In More Trouble  
Every Day  
Funny Bullets  
on  
Funny terms  
from  
Funny Places  
We Get Shot at While  
He Hides  
Wake Up! Mess Is His Business  
Run Him Out Of Town!

Bruce Wyatt  
white citizens council

**LOOK OUT!**

**Liver Lip Luther**

Getting Us In More Trouble  
Every Day

**FUNNY BULLETS**

ON

**FUNNY TERMS**

FROM

**FUNNY PLACES**

**We Get Shot At While  
He Hides**

**Wake Up! Mess Is His Business  
Run Him Out Of Town!**

Nevertheless, our people followed Dr. King with his program and all of our people stayed off of the buses. For the first time in the history of our people in Montgomery we stuck together. If we saw someone walking who was going our way, we stopped and took them where they wanted to go. Not only did our folk support the program in Montgomery, but Blacks supported it all over the country.

In those days in the South you had to have a good automobile if you traveled a lot because you could not get accommodations in hotels except in Black areas of towns and cities. Usually, we stayed with church members when we traveled. But the Jim Crow situation still made accommodations unreliable. When I graduated from Oakwood, I asked Elder Herman Murphy to order a new car for me, a Buick Special.

While I was there in Montgomery, my brother called me and said, "Edwin, sit down. " I did not know what my brother was about to say. He said, "Edwin, mother was killed in an automobile accident." I had to go to bed. I could not understand. While I have comforted many people, now I had to be comforted by others. I had to prepare to go to Michigan. The president of the conference, Elder W.W. Fordham was passing through. He said " Elder Humphrey, I will help you drive as far as Nashville." I appreciated his gesture. Then getting to Michigan. My brothers were there. It was a terrible time for us. But in those hours, God has said, "I will be with you." I took Him at His word. For a long time I could not preach Mother's Day sermons. But I always tell those who have mothers to remember God loves mothers, and wherever your mothers are, always thank God that you have one.

When I came back from my mother's funeral, the local police officers gave me a traffic ticket (as they were giving to all Black preachers). The judge sent for my police record. I had none. Then he said, "Reverend, you just sit down until I clear the court." When I did what he told me to do, and the court room was cleared, he

called for me and he said. "I will throw this case out."

I had a tent meeting in Montgomery and I believe we baptized about seventy people. We had an old church, and Elder Cleveland had held his meeting a few months earlier (and baptized about three hundred). Now the church would not hold the people. That is why a new church had to be built.

Elder Charles Dudley had come to Montgomery in the meanwhile to stabilize the congregation. Now it was my job to serve as pastor of a large, new congregation. I put the church together to do evangelism. I would send young people, and older ones too, visiting. We would take tapes and have Bible studies. We dealt with the students from the teachers' college. We baptized some of the students from Montgomery State Teachers' College, including Brother Bennie Smith, who is one of the elders at the Montgomery Church, and Dr. Ellen Anderson, who is now at Oakwood College. The church continued to grow and souls were being baptized constantly.

I remember I went to a double funeral at First Baptist Church. Dr. Ralph Abernathy and Dr. King were getting ready to go to Birmingham for a mass meeting. Dr. Abernathy said "Elder Humphrey, I am going to ask you to take one of the committals." Another pastor was to take the other. Dr. Abernathy said to me, "Now Elder Humphrey, this dear sister was a wonderful Baptist, and I just want you to let her down easy."

At the new church in Montgomery I found one of the deacons getting ready to destroy records. I said, "Now brother, we can't have that. I must keep these records." I am just so thankful that the Lord brought me on time to keep that from happening. I found the dear saints wonderful there in Montgomery. I would always bring Dr. Cleveland back home. After bringing in so many people, they loved to hear him and see him. When his father was sick at Riverside sanitarium, the family wanted me to come and join in an anointing service. The church took

care of all of my expenses.

There was a time when some of the church members would invite us to come to their homes. Sister Thomas, the sister of Elder T. M. Fountain, would have us come to her home. There were also times when her mother, Rosa Fountain said, "Elder Humphrey, have you had breakfast? I'm going to fix you some right now." Sister Fountain was one of the pillars of the church.

There were many elderly, faithful members. Sister Julia Westley, a church school teacher, and sister Fountain were wonderful friends. You could hear them at camp meeting talking about this or that. Sister Fountain would say, "It's no so , Julia!" and the reply would come, "Yes it is, Rosa!" They were wonderful people. There were times when we did our promotion for ingathering and our people rallied to the program. We reached our goals.

The General Conference session of 1956 was to be held in Cleveland, Ohio. My wife could not go, but I took some of the officers of the Montgomery church, and they were all sisters. I said to them, "I have gotten special license for you, for I know that you are all want to drive." On the way to the session we stayed with Sister Grace Frazier. It was a wonderful session and it was good for the new members to see how the organization works.

After the session, we returned to Montgomery. All of our people who went gave reports to the church, and the church was edified. I had a district that included Selma, Greenville, Dolthan. I also looked after the Bible School for the Voice of Prophecy and the Union Bible School. So there was always work to be done. All of the programs of the church, board meetings, prayer meetings etc. were parts of my duty. I also invited Elder Peterson to conduct a week of prayer. Later, Elder C. E. Mosely came and spoke.

At Selma, Alabama I had a tent meeting, and then Brother Edward Jones and Brother Frank Jones, Sr. contracted the building of a church in Selma with the

help of the church members. I had some difficulty securing a lot for the tent meeting. I called the city official who handled public properties, and I was given permission to use the property. However, when I arrived at the office in person he said, "You didn't tell me you were a nigger." Nevertheless, I was able to persuade him to give us a permit to use the property.

## RIVERSIDE SANITARIUM

In 1960 I was asked by the South Central Conference committee to become the chaplain of Riverside Sanitarium and to be the pastor of the church along with a church in Springfield, Tennessee. As chaplain I also taught Bible to all of the nursing students at the sanitarium. Along with the various duties of the chaplain, every morning I had worship with the members of the staff in the worship room. I had a closed circuit television program that was broadcast to every room. Later I visited every room to have prayer with the patients. While I was there, the church school was completed. During that time, I also had the opportunity to meet former president Harry S. Truman while I was on my way to a medical council. I went to the Truman library to visit and to sign the guest book. When I arrived I was invited to come in and meet the former president. Elder Simons, the director, his wife and the directors of nurses had followed me to the library, where they also met Truman.

In 1960 I attended the General Conference in California. When I came back Elder John Wagner, Sr. president of the South Atlantic Conference, was in the hospital. He had been planning to attend the General Conference, and we were hoping that he would receive a General Conference position. He had several

operations. I went to see him and his wife in the hospital room. I arrived after visiting hours. He was very cordial when I came, and I did not know this would be his last night. When I got there he said, "Sit down, Humphrey." After visiting a while I said, "We are going to have prayer," and after prayer I said, "I pray you will have a good night, and I will see you in the morning." That next morning, I started my day by going to the laundry, and then to the sanitarium, where we had worship. On my way to the laundry, Elder Norman Simons, the hospital administrator, met me with the news that Elder Wagner had died that night.

In Tennessee I preached at the state prison two times a month. I baptized seven people (inmates) there. The warden had a pool fixed for us for baptism. I also lectured at the girl's home in Nashville. We tried to get young people to get their hearts ready for heaven.

In Knoxville, Tennessee, while I was having yet another tent meeting, Dr. James, a Baptist minister, asked me to take care of his church for a month. He said that if he allowed one of his Baptist colleagues to take over, he might lose his church. But with me there would be no problem. I went to his church, First Baptist Church, on the first Sunday, and the trustee board was not so happy that the pastor had engaged me to handle his church. But Reverend James, the pastor, sent me a letter and said: "I have had a little trouble with my board. You go and handle things just for the first week and just preach strong. Then we will see what happens after that." Well I went to the church for the first week and it was wonderful. The choirs were there. Some of the members, like Meade Sterling, had relatives who had known me since my childhood in Detroit. I was driving an old Cadillac, and they had a place for me to park. After the sermon, one of the members, an elderly gentleman, stood up and said, "I have enjoyed this sermon, and I just want you to pray for me that I may stay on the main line." Well, on that first Sunday I made an appeal. I always make an appeal anyhow; I don't care what

church. Men and women need Christ. When I made the appeal all of the choirs joined in singing "Close to Thee."

Thou my everlasting portion,  
More that friend or life to me,  
All along my pilgrim journey,  
Savior let me walk with thee.

I had no problem after the first sermon.

I served in the United States Civil Defense Corps in Riverside, Tennessee. I received an award from the city of Nashville for my service in 1962. I also received certification for completing the thirteen week training course required by the Nashville-Davidson County office of Civil Defense.

## THE SEARCH FOR MY FATHER

When I learned of my mother's death while pastoring in Montgomery, I felt a special need to find my father. He had been missing since my early childhood, and now, with the help of my brother Virgil, I set out to locate him.

My first clue came from a relative in Detroit, who told me that I should go to Macon, Georgia, to talk to my father's relatives there. I visited many of his aunts and uncles, and I received a warm welcome everywhere I went. One of his uncles told me that when he had last seen him, my father was living in Buffalo, New York, and that he had changed his name to James Sawyer. With this clue in hand, I asked my brother Virgil to come with me to Buffalo, where we contacted Elder Thaddeus Wilson, Jr., pastor of Emmanuel Temple SDA church. The three of us went to City Hall, where we went through the city directories looking for the name. After a brief search, I found it!



We went to the Jefferson Avenue address in the directory, and there a man answered who told us he knew where we could find James Sawyer. When we finally saw my father, he did not recognize us. He probably thought we were just a group of ministers canvassing the neighborhood. I asked, "Have you been to Lizella." He answered, "Yes, that's my home." I continued, "Do you know Elsie Humphrey?"

He responded, "Yes, that's my mother." His father was Adolphus Humphrey, just as we thought.

We went outside for the next set of questions.

"Did you know Willie Barlow?"

"Yes, that's my wife."

"We are her children."

He broke down and cried. He said. "I prayed last night: 'please allow me to see my children once more in this life!' "

My ministry eventually took me to Buffalo where in 1964 I was assigned to the Emmanuel Temple SDA Church. Now I had a greater opportunity to witness to my father. He was a trustee in a Baptist Church who had responsibilities in managing the church's funds and properties.

One Sabbath, at the end of my sermon, I gave the customary appeal. My father stood up and came to the front. The church erupted in rejoicing. It was a wonderful day for me and our family. A few months later, after lessons from Sister Jeltz, our faithful Bible instructor, I baptized him.

## MY MINISTRY IN NEW YORK

My wife and I left Nashville, Tennessee, traveling to New York by car at the

end of 1962. We pulled into New York during a terrible storm. I had never visited the city before. The noise of the storm and the elevated trains made me think that I needed to go back to Tennessee. Elder Frank Jones, the treasurer of Northeastern Conference, told us about an available hotel. He said that if we had any problems with the children there was always a doctor available. During the night our baby daughter became ill. She was running back and forth between her mother and me. I knew I needed to call the doctor. When I called the house doctor, He said, "I'm not going to touch that child, she is seriously ill!" We got a cab and went to University Hospital. The doctors checked her and said she had bronchial pneumonia and acute bronchitis. The doctor said he could not hold out any hope for this child. My wife and I fell to our knees to pray in the doctor's office.

Margaret had to stay with the baby; I had to go back to the hotel to look after the other children. I called the Ephesus Church, the Voice of Prophecy and many of my friends who were Oakwoodites. I talked with Bob Carter, the pastor of Ephesus. Elder Bradford was conducting a week of prayer there. Unfortunately, No one seemed to be available to come to be with us on such short notice. I was walking the street asking the Lord to please take care of our baby. Finally, one dear elder, Herman Murphy, and Elder Haig, the pastor of Hanson Place Church, came right on time to help us. As we continued to pray, asking the folks I knew to join with us in prayer, we knew that if the Lord did not do something, we were going to lose that child. They had the baby in an oxygen tent. My wife said our child, who was only eighteen month old, soon told the nurse "get me out of here!" That's when we knew she was recovering.

I was to be the pastor of the New Rochelle church. We were introduced to our new congregation on a Sabbath when Elder Moseley of Oakwood College was the guest speaker. He told me that I was coming to a church that had "milk and

money." I had never gone to a church where they gave us so many generous gifts.

Our stay in New Rochelle was wonderful. Finally, we moved to New Jersey and commuted to New Rochelle from the home that we bought there. The people at New Rochelle saw to it that we had food every Sabbath. We did not have to bring a lunch. Of course, even though I was living in New Jersey, I came to New Rochelle to look after the sick, conduct prayer meetings, and perform the other functions of a pastor.

I planned a tent meeting, and Elder Thaddeus Wilson senior let me use anything that he had in the way of evangelistic material. He said, "Elder Humphrey, whatever I have at my house is at your disposal." Elder Wilson was a friend until his death. When he was getting ready to pass, he told his wife, "I want Elder Humphrey to be in charge of my funeral."

I stayed at New Rochelle until the conference moved me to Buffalo, New York. I went to Buffalo and stayed with Brother and sister Harlan. My wife and children could not come at that point. In Buffalo I saw something that I had not witnessed before. When I went to bed there was nothing on the ground. But the next morning there were 36 inches of snow. Brother Harlan had to shovel a path from the parsonage to the church.

I found the people at Emmanuel Temple were faithful. When I arrived there, I think the giving had gone toward refurbishing the church. The snow and the rain did not deter them from coming to church. Elder Starks came to present the stewardship program to the people. We had various teams to visit every family. On one occasion Elder Starks and I visited a home of a lady who had a cross-eyed cat. Elder Starks and I often called ourselves cousins because some of our cousins had married one another. Elder Starks said, "Cous, lets get out of here. I don't like that cat." But the sister was very faithful and gave her elderly and those who needed help. funds to see that the church program would move on.

We had one sister who was a hundred years old. We would go to the nursing home to see her. I would always take a group of people to visit those who were

There was another sister who became ill. I went to her house alone. She said, "Elder Humphrey, come in." The dog was barking, but she insisted "in, he won't bite." I asked, "Have you had all of the dog's teeth taken out?" Come She had to move the dog to another part of the house. We had a good visit and prayer.

I went to bed one Friday night and I was awakened at about two o'clock. A sister in the church had lost her son. His grandmother had told him, "Don't go out. This is Sabbath." But he went out anyhow. And after a bit, he was with a group of young people driving on Humbolt Avenue. There was a terrible accident, and this young man was killed. When I got into the house, the mother came to me in tears. "Elder Humphrey, is my son lost or saved?" I said to her, "There is only one person who can say if one is saved or lost, and that's God." But in this dreadful hour, I pointed them all to Jesus. I suppose this was one of the largest funeral that I conducted in my ministry, for all of the kids from the high school (those who could get in) were there. But it is an omen to us. "Obey your parents in the Lord."

I was getting ready for baptism the next Sabbath. This young man's father was not a member of the church. But when I made the appeal, he came ready to be baptized "now." I hope that he is faithful as well as well as the whole family. And those of us who are not saved, should realize that it is now time to "seek the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near....Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." So this man who had just lost his son was baptized with the other candidates.

There was no church school in Buffalo, so we went to Canada to find out

where we could send our children to a church school. At Oshawa there was a school. The principal said they would be happy to have us. Not only that, "we will give Mrs. Humphrey a job, and we will give you a house trailer so that all of you can be together." This worked out very well. My wife became the secretary to the principal. I would come from Buffalo sometimes during the week to see that my family was well. On one of my visits I brought things for the family. One of my boys said, "Daddy, did you smuggle all of this stuff into Canada?" My wife and the children did well in Canada. There were times when I was going to Canada that it seemed the coldness and ice would meet me when I crossed the bridge.

All of the time I was trying to work on a program to get a school in Buffalo. Some of our people put money aside to get a school. Some of our people had in their wills money for school, for church, and for Oakwood, and for Christian education in general. Shortly after we left to go to our next assignment, they were able to establish a school.

Finally, when our work was done in Buffalo, the conference moved us to Brooklyn, to the Bethel Church. There I started working right away. I had four tent meetings. One of the meetings featured a dual program. Elder Adrian had begun the work among the Haitians in New York City. The man who followed him, Elder Birmingham and I used the same tent for our meetings that summer. We scheduled the meetings so that he would have a certain time for his evening meetings, and then I would have the night meeting. We had a wonderful corps of workers. And the Lord blessed us with a hundred and five souls. If you add Elder Birmingham's sixty or seventy baptisms, it is clear that the Lord blessed our efforts. Under Elder Birmingham the Adventist work has spread among the Haitian people, so much so until there is now a person in the Northeastern Conference representing the Haitian people. Now there is also representation for

the Haitians in the Union.

We bought property on Fulton Street and Grand Avenue so that we could have a parking lot at Bethel Church. We also finished the pastor's study. While our church was being renovated we used the Baptist Church of Pastor William Jones. When his church was under renovation, they used our church. Our church had wonderful relations with the churches of the city. Dr. Gardner Taylor and Elder Bradford had become good friends down in New Orleans. I went to Dr. Taylor, who was then the pastor of Concord Avenue Baptist Church, and asked him if we could use his church for a rally of all the SDA churches in Brooklyn to support the effort to build an area SDA school in Brooklyn. He told me, "You can use my church any time." And as to the cost? He said, "Not one penny."

When we reopened the Ephesus Church some years later, we had ecumenical meetings for a whole week. Dr. Taylor was our speaker for Sunday night. He brought his usher board, his deacons and deaconesses, and choir. We had a full day and evening. The Sabbath we went into the renovated a Ephesus Church, all of the area churches rang their bells. Dr. Calvin Butts of Abyssinian Baptist Church also participated in our ceremonies.

Recently, Dr. Taylor lost his wife in an automobile accident. I called him expressing our sorrow and letting him know we were praying for him. I told him I saw him on television at Clinton's first inaugural and that I prayed for him as he delivered that message. He told me, "Elder Humphrey, I want you to know that I am studying the Spirit of Prophecy."

While I was at the Bethel Church, the church members sent me on vacation to Jamaica, in part so that I could learn more about the nation where many of my parishioners were born. A Jamaican brother came with me to be certain I received a thorough tour. I also had the privilege of going to Barbados. Many of our people were from Barbados, including some of our workers, like Elder Chritchlow

and his family.

## EPHESUS CHURCH

After our work was finished in Brooklyn, the conference committee sent me to the Ephesus Church in Harlem, a church with about 2,000 members. It was in shambles at the time because of a devastating fire. The congregation was using the St. Andrews Episcopal Church while they raised money to restore the burned out building where they had once worshiped. Some felt that we would never reach that goal, but I felt that this is God's work and he will see it through. We had a good building committee, headed by Edward Phipps, and they spent many hours to get the job done. We met many times with the architect and the contractors. There were times we had to see how we could do things at low cost without jeopardizing the quality of the construction. The building committee employed Brother Irwin Jacobs to watch over the process on behalf of the church. No company would be allowed to bring inferior materials. If a worker was doing a wall and it was not right, Brother Jacobs would have them tear it down. We kept the church informed through board meetings and business meetings. We had rallies. We asked every working person to give us five hundred dollars. Some of our elderly people went to their savings to bring their contribution. I asked the General Conference to make a loan to the church and they did it. But I am glad to say that every penny of the money was paid back.

While I was pastor of Ephesus, I held several evangelistic meetings. At the close of one meeting over 100 were baptized. A new church was organized as a result, the Zion Temple SDA Church in Manhattan, established in 1973. At all of these meetings there were faithful Bible instructors, including Eva Jeltz, Rosa Lee Jones, Merlin McCulla, Elizabeth Small and Mary Smith. At a meeting in Poughkeepsie, George H. Sampson led out in the music program.

The fact that my name is Humphrey reminded some of the older residents of Harlem that there had been another Humphrey in their community. J. K. Humphrey had been pastor of a large Seventh-day Adventist Church in Harlem from the early 1900s until the 1930s. He eventually split from the denomination and established an independent church. As far as I know, we are not related. Nevertheless, when I arrived at Ephesus, one lady said, "A Humphrey brought me in, and a Humphrey will take me out." As it turned out, I remained at Ephesus until she died. As a matter of fact, I found that people who had left the denomination with J. K. Humphrey had been returning in sizable numbers over the years. I baptized several of them during my ministry at Ephesus.

Ephesus Church received visits on a regular basis from many of the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. They included the staff of the Voice of Prophecy radio program, including the King's Heralds, and George Vandeman of the *It is Written* television broadcast. One faithful brother, Wilfred Gooden, always made his home available and provided Sabbath meals when these visitors came.

Such a large church needed a ministerial staff that was larger than most. Most of the time we had staff of three ministers. One of my assistants had charge of our large and dynamic youth church. They had their own services in their own auditorium. Among my many assistant and associate pastors were John Nixon, who is now the pastor of the Oakwood College Church, and Jonathan Thompson, who is pastor of a large church in Washington D. C.

While I was at Ephesus, and after the rebuilding of the church was complete, I was invited to Pittsburgh to conduct a Week of Prayer. The invitation turned into a call, but the call was made outside of the normal procedure. Therefore, I turned down this invitation.



## THE BLACK UNIONS ISSUE

I supported the idea of Black unions, but I had questions about the proposed tactics when the matter was not approved by the General Conference. I believed it was wise to allow time and ask the General Conference again to put the Black union concept on the agenda at some later date. Some of the brethren felt they wanted to press the program immediately. I thought that we should wait for our next opportunity to put the matter on the table again, ask that the Black union concept be thought over again, and hope that the (General Conference) brethren would see light in the concept.

With Black regional conferences the work has spread so fast in Black areas all over the United States. Of course, in some areas we do not have Black conferences. But where my wife and I have worked, in South Central and Northeastern, the work has been going so well. As we look in Allegheny Conference, they did so well that they broke off and added Allegheny West. The South Atlantic Conference has grown so much that they have now added the Southeastern Conference. And now the Northeastern Conference is getting ready to divide. When we were at a meeting in California some of the brethren there wanted to know what is the secret of evangelism, how so many people are coming into the church. First of all, we have dedicated ministers and Bible instructors. And we have dedicated laymen who are blazing the trail. The work is growing like fire in the stubble. Well, we are thankful that the work of God is being finished in this world and we want to be ready to meet the Lord in His kingdom.

We constantly see growth. When I went to New York we did not have many Blacks in the Greater New York Conference. But here today the work in that conference among Blacks is strong. It is our prayer, seeing that the coming of the Lord is at the door, that we ought to be getting closer to each other instead of

pulling away. That has been my thinking.

## NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK

After Ephesus, the conference sent me to Niagara Falls, where I was pastor for about two years. There I became friends with Dr. R., a highly educated non Adventist white pastor whose church we were renting. His church was not doing well. So I suggested that he come into the Adventist church. Some time after I left, he and his wife did join the church. I had told him that there would be support for him, and that although he already had more than one doctorate, he could attend Andrews University for further training. Unfortunately, the conference did not follow through, and this couple eventually left the church. Some time later, I called Dr. R. and he was elated that I had thought of him. He had moved from New York to Pennsylvania where he had become a pastor in the Church of Christ.

While I was in Niagara Falls I had so many friends from Buffalo. When they learned that I was going to be in Niagara Falls they came and crowded that little church. They wanted me to know that they loved me.

One elderly sister in Buffalo had said to me that she did not want anyone else but me to help her with her will. The Lord brought me there right on time. She had no relatives, only the church members. I sat down with her and put the things that she wanted in her will. When that was all taken care of, I had a call from the lady indicating that she was very sick. I called Fred Willis, who was then an executive in Buffalo General Hospital, and asked him to send an ambulance to take this lady to the hospital. He sent it right away. In the meanwhile, I told this lady that I would secure everything in her house. She had never allowed visitors to come upstairs in her house. When I looked around upstairs, I found that she

had left about nine thousand dollars in cash in various places. I called downstairs and had her companion to come upstairs so she could know what I had found. The next morning I called Sister Martha Dockery and had her to come over. Together we went to the bank and put it into this lady's account. It was not long before the lady passed away.

## SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

The people in Niagara Falls were wonderful. After working there I was assigned to Syracuse, New York, where I had the oversight of three churches: Utica, Elmira, and Syracuse. We were renting in Utica and Elmira. However, both of those areas now own churches. I told the people in the Syracuse church that we needed to change the location of the church. We were in a predominantly white and Catholic area. Not long after i left, they relocated to a black area of town.

## ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

After a couple of years at Syracuse, The conference sent me to Rochester, New York. There in Rochester I was pastor of the Jefferson Avenue Church and the Antioch SDA Church in Williamson. In Williamson, Brother John Tolbert was my wonderful treasurer. Brother John Robert Earl was a faithful saint at the Rochester Church. After being in Rochester for a while, I wrote a letter to Elder C.D. Brooks, asking him to consider coming to Rochester and having a Breath of Life crusade. He said that he would be happy to come. I talked to the church

board and the church business meeting. They approved enthusiastically.

The conference sent Pastor Blue, an intern, to come to work with us in Rochester. He was right on hand, working with me in the church, and in our visiting program. The members of the Rochester Church were very pleased with the Breath of Life Crusade. The Breath of Life Church was founded after the crusade. Pastor Blue took over the work at the new church and found them a church building that they purchased. Blue also worked with the Williamson congregation, and in fact Pastor Blue found a building that had once been a night club and, along with the congregation, renovated it for the Williamson church. I had the privilege of attending that church after I retired. They were elated to see me. They are still the loving folk that I found when I came. There were some faces that I could not see, but there is going to be a better day not far.

Both Pastor Blue's wife and my wife taught in the church school at the Jefferson Avenue Church. Sister Benjamin and Sister Washington were the other teachers. When I came, the church was renting a building for the school. While I was there, I advised the members to renovate an area of the church building to accommodate the school until other quarters could be prepared. We bought two buildings behind the church while I was pastor. After I left, they took my advice to renovate the church building in order to have a school on the premises.

We were leaving Detroit, Michigan, one day after attending the wedding of our niece, returning to Rochester by way of Canada. I said to my wife "I can't drive any more. I'm a little sleepy." She took the wheel and in a little bit I was asleep. But I was awakened when the car went into the gravel. Evidently my wife had fallen asleep too. Then I tried to get the car back onto the road. Louis was in the back and he decided he would try to help too. We were headed across the median when I saw an eighteen wheeler coming. I prayed! We all prayed! The car hit the railing and I did not know that the truck had grazed us. We were just thankful that

the Lord got the car out of the path of that eighteen wheeler. The car had bounced off the railing and the truck did hit the back end of the car. I began to recognize that I was having problems because I could not breathe so well. I found out that seven ribs had been broken. A lady came from nowhere and started working with me. Shortly the policemen came, but the lady continued to work with me. The policeman asked her who she was. She said she was a nurse and said to him, "He is hurt more than anyone else." Margaret had one broken rib. Evidently Louis's head hit the windshield and he was bleeding a little. Marge was having problems. Her wrist was fractured. Finally the ambulance came and the policemen had them to put me into the ambulance first. Next they put Louis in the ambulance. Marge had given the Lady an umbrella because it had started to rain while she was working on me. Finally the ambulance attendants led Margaret to the ambulance and then Marge, and then they started taking us to the hospital in Canada. Finally, they took us in and they started working with me and Louis. Margaret and Marge were in the other room. After dealing with us they released us. Well, the car was totaled. We called my brother Virgil. He saw the car and he doesn't know how we got out of that. But God is still on the throne and watches over his children. My brother took us to our sister in law's house. I was in pain, so finally they took me to a hospital in Detroit. They checked me and sent me back to the house. But soon they said to bring me back. I stayed in the hospital about three days. Today they do not bandage your ribs, they have a way of blocking the blood where you have a fracture. But at that time the technique was not available. Finally Margaret and Louis and Marge went back to New York, allowing me to stay in the hospital a few days.

When I went back to Rochester, the insurance man came. He said that we were fortunate that our lives were spared. I said, "No, we were not fortunate. That it was the hand of God." He said that he had just talked to the truck driver, and the

truck driver said he saw four ladies around that car. I knew about the one lady who had attended me and who had given Louis ice for his head. My daughter said the lady to whom she had given the umbrella had put the umbrella in the ambulance. But when she looked again there was no lady. The umbrella was there but the lady was gone. All I know is that the Lord watched over us.

## JAMAICA. NEW YORK

The Jamaica church was my next stop. Elder Newton was now president of the Northeastern Conference. He placed me back on the conference committee. The Jamaica church was already filled to capacity, and I continued pastoring and visiting and looking after the sick and conducting Bible studies. The people were just wonderful, and faithful. After spending three years in office, Elder Newton was replaced as conference president by Elder Stennet Brooks. He asked me to serve as ministerial secretary of the conference. I served almost until the next constituency session.

As ministerial secretary, I had conferences with pastors, the conference president and others, dealing with various problems. At times I went with the president and other officers of the conference to churches and conducted special meetings. If there were family problems with ministers, we sometimes tried to intervene. There were also times when a church lost their pastor because he had been moved from the church or the conference. I would have to come in and be pastor until the conference committee appointed a new pastor. In Long Island I had to pastor the Bethesda Church until the conference sent Elder Jones. Until then I had to handle all of the things that any pastor would have to do: visiting the sick, looking after funerals, counseling.

The next church that I went to was in Brooklyn, the Mount of Olives SDA Church. The conference committee had removed the pastor and sent me to take care of the congregation. Going to the office one day, a lady ran into the back of my car, causing my car to collide with another car in another lane. It happened suddenly. It was early morning traffic. The next thing I knew I had lost control of the car, and after hitting another car, I was heading for a tree. Evidently I blacked out. The tree stopped the car. I am thankful that God had his hand over me. They took me to hospital. I thought I was OK , but I found that it caused my blood pressure to go up. I had to go to a doctor after leaving the hospital.

I thought I was doing fairly well. I was driving my car, looking after my work. But one day I had a call from Buffalo asking me to conduct a funeral. Brother Steward, one of our faithful members, had passed. his family asked me to take care of his funeral. I had almost finished my message during the funeral. But I could not get my thoughts together. I did not know what was happening to me. Jennele Vance, a nurse, called for me to come where she was. I went there and sat with her. She said to me, "Elder Humphrey, you are having a stroke. I will have you taken to the hospital immediately. Dr. Lewis will take care of you." Some of them took me to Emergency. But Dr. Lewis was waiting for me at his office. And his office was just across the court from the hospital. When he found me, Dr. Lewis tried to get me to write something, but I couldn't deal with it. He took me directly into the hospital. From that point I did not know what happened. The folk who came for the funeral could not understand what was happening to me. But the Lord knows all about it, and I just leave it all in his hands.

## OUR FAMILY

Since my retirement in 1991 I have enjoyed the love and companionship of my family and friends. My wife, Margaret, who spent many years as a teacher and who saw to the music education of the children, has also retired, and our children have grown up to pursue various careers. Margaret and I now live in a suburb of Washington, D. C.

All six of our children attended Oakwood College, our alma mater. Edwina Humphrey Flynn, our oldest daughter, has always had a lovely voice, and is now a very successful concert artist. After completing her B. A. at Oakwood, she earned a Masters degree at the world famous Julliard School of Music in New York City. She has toured extensively in the United States and abroad. Her husband, Gawin Flynn, is a physician and they have two sons, Gawin Junior and Garnett.



Edwin Junior spent many years as an instructor in the military. He now teaches in an Adventist school in the Washington D. C. area. He has two children who are twins, Shane Ramal and Shana Racquel. Our son Virgil also chose a career in teaching. He and his wife, Alicia, have three children: Virgil Jr., Leilani and Lauren. They live in the Atlanta area. Louis and Calvin are both male nurses. Louis lives in Orlando, Florida, and Calvin lives in Rochester, New York.

Our youngest daughter Margaret Humphrey Richardson, known as “Margie” by family and close friends, is also a well known soloist as well as a teacher, artist, and seamstress. After receiving her B. A. from Oakwood, she earned a Masters degree at Andrews University. She married Shelton Richardson, a minister, in 1982, and they have three children, Marquita, Shelton and Shelbourne. They live in Nashville, Tennessee.

Every day I rejoice in the blessings of the Lord.

My soul doth magnify the Lord!











