

THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE SOUTHWEST

Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FORTY-FIRST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY

February 16-17, 2018
Lake Highlands Presbyterian Church
Dallas, Texas

STORIES OF PRESBYTERIANS
IN MISSION IN TEXAS

**Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest
12601 Bee Cave Parkway #329
Bee Cave, TX 78738
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**Dr. James S. Currie
Executive Secretary**

June 2018

Dear Friends,

Lake Highlands Presbyterian Church in Dallas was the site of this year's annual gathering in February. What a delightful and generous host this church was! We are most grateful for its gracious hospitality and that of its pastor, the Rev. Dr. Perryn Rice, one of our board members.

The Friday evening presentation was the story of the Lake Highlands Church. Saturday morning Mike Miller shared the remarkable story of Melinda Rankin, a Presbyterian missionary to the Spanish-speaking population in Mexico and south Texas. This was followed by two presentations on the life and ministry of Thomas W. Currie, Jr., one by his son, James, and one by Mike Thompson, a colleague in Grace Presbytery.

Transcripts of all four of these presentations are included in this booklet. We hope and trust that you will enjoy reading them. Each has something of importance to say about the work of Presbyterians in Texas in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Enclosed is a remittance envelope which can be used to join or renew your membership in the Society. We are profoundly grateful for the support of those who are members. If your church is not yet a member, I encourage you to recommend strongly that the Society become a line item in the annual budget (\$100/year).

We are excited about our 2019 annual meeting. It will be held at First Presbyterian Church in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Attendance at these meetings is always free of charge. We would love to see you there.

Yours in Christ,

James S. Currie
Executive Secretary

**Welcome to the 40th Annual Gathering of the
Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest
Friday & Saturday, February 16-17, 2018
Lake Highlands Presbyterian Church, Dallas**

Schedule

Friday, February 16

3-5 p.m. – Meeting of the Board

6 p.m. – Dinner and Presentation: “A History of the Lake Highlands
Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas”

Saturday, February 17

8:30 a.m. – Coffee and refreshments

9 a.m. – “The Story of Melinda Rankin” by Dr. Mike Miller

10 a.m. – “One Account of the Thomas White Currie, Jr.’s Life and
Ministry” by Dr. James S. Currie

11 a.m. – “A Personal Reflection on Working with Thomas White
Currie, Jr.” by Rev. Michael Thompson

Noon – Adjourn

***The 2019 Gathering of the PHSSW will be Friday and
Saturday, February 22-23, at First Presbyterian Church
in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Please mark your calendars.
You are welcome to attend this meeting.***

The Story of the Lake Highlands Presbyterian Church

By Elder Sammye Wood

Where were you on January 17, 1999?

Although it seems like a long time ago, it really has not been. In fact, it was only in the late 1900s that the three congregations of Colonial Presbyterian Church, Lake Park Cumberland Presbyterian Church and Northminster Presbyterian Church realized they needed one another.

Ask almost any "old time" member of LHPC and they'll probably deny that it was less than 20 years ago that consideration was given by any of the three congregations to merge with other congregations of the same or similar denomination. The outcome of those discussions held in 1997 between Colonial Presbyterian Church, Lake Park Cumberland Presbyterian Church and Northminster Presbyterian Church is our current church family—Lake Highlands Presbyterian Church (aka LHPC).

Having named the late 1900s as the "beginning time" for Lake Highlands Presbyterian Church, it must be remembered that while January 17, 1999 is the "official" beginning date for LHPC, the work toward a merger actually began in 1997 when these three congregations through their respective sessions began to explore the concept of becoming one church. At that time, it must be noted that the origin of the three individual churches goes back much further, for the history of the three goes back to the early 1800s.

The first Presbyterian minister of record who held worship services in Dallas was the Rev. Daniel Gideon Malloy, who in 1847 used John Neely Bryan's cabin in which to hold his services. Due to the lack of larger accommodations when the Rev. Malloy returned to Dallas, he then held services in Monsieur Broussard's saloon! Malloy, who lived in Waxahachie, Texas, established

Cumberland Presbyterian churches in several area communities. It is assumed that at that time Dallas was not large enough to support a Presbyterian congregation. First Presbyterian Church of Dallas was not founded until 1856 and consisted of eleven members. The church did not have a building of its own in which to meet until 1873. Because there was no formal building or location in which to meet for worship, the members met in various places such as the homes of its members or in a blacksmith shop, or a lumber yard, or the courthouse, or a printing shop. Meanwhile in 1867, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Dallas was organized in the Dallas County Courthouse. Then, in 1869 a building was erected and members of the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches used the sanctuary for their worship services until their own buildings could be built. It was not until 1873 that the congregation of First Presbyterian Church erected its first-owned building which at that time was located at Elm and Ervay Streets. Its second home was built in 1882 at Harwood and Main Streets and was the first brick church in all of Dallas. By 1897 this structure had been enlarged and so extensively remodeled that it was considered to be a new (third) building. The style was Victorian eclectic. The present sanctuary and the Educational Building at Harwood and Wood, the congregation's fourth home, were built in 1911-12 and opened on March 2, 1913. ¹

In 1888, eighteen good citizens of Dallas met and organized a church which they called City Park Presbyterian Church. They met in a small frame building which was located on Gano Street close to present-day Old City Park. The church and the land were gifts from the congregation of First Presbyterian Church of Dallas. In 1904, the congregation moved to a new location in the southern part of the city. They then took a new name, Colonial Hills Presbyterian Church, identifying themselves with the developing area.

¹ Wikipedia re 1st Presbyterian Church of Dallas, Texas.

In 1906, a merger was established between the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (aka PCUSA). The majority of the members of the First Church went into the northern branch, erected a building on Patterson Avenue and chose the name City Temple Presbyterian Church. In later years as this congregation grew, it moved out to a location north of downtown Dallas and became North Park Presbyterian Church.

²

A few years later, in 1919, the congregation of Colonial Hills Presbyterian Church became a part of First Presbyterian Church and then in 1924 that church was reorganized with 184 members and a new name: Colonial Presbyterian Church. Colonial P.C. continued to grow until 1951 when property was purchased in East Dallas and the name of the church was changed once again. They then became known as West Shore Presbyterian Church. In 1991 the congregations of West Shore and Casa Linda Presbyterian Churches merged and became Colonial Presbyterian Church.

But what of Colonial? This Presbyterian church was organized once again in 1947 with 42 charter members and they took the name Casa Linda Presbyterian Church. By 1981, with land given them on Garland Road by the Presbytery, Casa Linda P.C. grew from its original number to 1280 members. However, in 1980 the session began to consider severing their relationship with Grace Union Presbytery. As it happened, the two branches of the Presbyterian Church (United Presbyterian Church, USA and the Presbyterian Church U.S.) were in merger conversations to heal the rift that had existed between them since 1861. In 1981, over 100 years later, the congregation of Casa Linda Presbyterian Church voted to withdraw from the Presbytery and the Presbyterian Church U.S.; the membership split and some 130 members began to meet in

² Source: the Rev. Robert E. Shelton.

temporary quarters. The matter of which church group would retain the property on Garland Road was taken to court, and in 1984 the 191st District Court of Dallas County made its decision. In 1987 that portion of the congregation loyal to Grace Presbytery retained the property on Garland Road and kept the name of Casa Linda Presbyterian Church. Then in 1991 Casa Linda P.C. and West Shore Presbyterian Church merged and took the name of Colonial Presbyterian Church. It was only six years later that merger conversations began that would result in the formation of LHPC.

During this period, actually in 1956, Northminster Presbyterian Church was organized from the Exposition Park Presbyterian Church. They met in the home of one of the members and then in an old empty store front building on Plano Road until 1958 when they bought property just north of that location and built a church. A year later the Child Development Center (CDC) was opened, offering weekly day care for children. Through the years the CDC grew and now holds the reputation of being an outstanding day care center which offers not only loving care for the children but also teaches them basic primary things.

It was not until 1972 that the church was able to erect the remainder of their buildings including the sanctuary.

By 1997 the three Presbyterian churches had begun to explore the concept of merging with other Presbyterian churches thus becoming one church. Their vision was that the ministries and programming associated with the single, stronger Presbyterian community of God would be more than any of the three could do alone. Thus, after almost three years of exploration, study, and prayer the three congregations requested their respective presbyteries to turn the concept into reality. Each of the three former congregations brought their special programs to Lake Highlands Presbyterian Church, and we began the process of evolving into a single, stronger Presbyterian community of God with the vision of

providing a strong witness of God's grace to the Lake Highlands community and beyond. Lake Highlands Presbyterian is the only Presbyterian Church within an area bounded by Central Expressway (US-75) on the west, Northwest Highway on the south and inside the LBJ Freeway (IH-635) on the north and east."

On January 17, 1999, Lake Highlands Presbyterian Church was formed. The vision became a reality. Each of the three churches brought their special programs and the process of evolving into one stronger Presbyterian community of God ready to provide a strong witness of God's grace to the Lake Highlands community and beyond. Those attending the organizing service held on that Sunday morning included not only the members of the three churches but also the Commissions of Grace Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (USA) and Red River Presbytery, Cumberland Presbyterian Church and various other leaders. The two ministers were installed and members of the session were elected and installed and the trustees were also installed.³

And so this is our past, from 1997 up until today. Hopefully you found it interesting and have a better understanding of our history. But what are you doing today, you may ask. Well, for starters:

Sundays are, of course, our days to come together formally and worship God but there's more.....

SUNDAY – Sunday mornings offer three opportunities for you to worship God and to see your friends at LHPC. At 9:00 a.m. the contemporary worship service, Praise on High, is held in the sanctuary and is a more relaxed service than the second service. At 10:00 a.m. it's the Sunday School hour when classes are held for study and fellowship for ages cradle to 100. And then at 11:00 a.m., of course, a traditional service is held in the sanctuary. Traditional hymns,

³ History section of LHPC webpage.

responsive prayers and the traditional creeds of the Presbyterian church are used. The music is often more classical in nature and is led by pipe organ and choir. There is a blended worship experience every 5th Sunday at 10am, which is the only worship time.

Occasionally in honor of some special occasion a churchwide luncheon or brunch will be held in Shelton Hall. Rather than being "pot luck" these meals are usually catered and, oh, of course, fellowship with your church friends is high on the menu! A new tradition has been started (2017) where these meals are scheduled for the hour between the two services which gives an opportunity for everyone to visit with their friends who are fellow attenders at LHPC. These dinners will fall on the fifth Sunday of any month in which there are five Sundays.

Activities will vary from month but generally speaking the following are some of those activities that take place during the week:

MONDAY -- Each Monday of each week the Boy Scouts from Troop 435 meet in the evening in Shelton Hall. The first week of every month volunteers from LHPC help with Meals on Wheels. One of the women's circles meets on the second Monday of each month in the evening for fellowship and study. Various committees and the session meet on a designated Monday of each month.

TUESDAY – Several outside groups such as Family Outreach Dallas meet at our church. This particular group is a social service group which focuses on children's needs. One of the women's study circle groups meets on the third Tuesday of each month, sometimes at the church and sometimes in one of the member's homes.

Pastor Rice's Bible Studies usually last two months and would be on Tuesday evenings at 6pm. Make sure you watch for announcements about it.

WEDNESDAY – The LHPC Bell Choir as well as the Choir meet on Wednesday evenings in the Choir Room for rehearsals. Also meeting on

Wednesday evenings is Recovery, Inc., a drug and alcohol rehabilitation group for those in need of this sort of counseling. Anyone is welcome. Also, another of the women's study circles meets on the third Wednesday morning of each month, usually in the choir room at the church.

If Pastor Rice is doing a Bible Study on Tuesday evenings, he will do the same study on Wednesday at noon. This is mainly for those persons who would rather not drive at night.

THURSDAY – On the first Thursday morning of each month those who are interested are invited to join others for a meeting of the SAGE group. SAGE, by the way, our Senior Adult Group Event "club!" Then in the afternoon of the first Thursday of each month a Girl Scout troop meets at our church followed later in the afternoon by a Boy Scout troop that meets on the second Thursday of each month. The third Thursday is the monthly meeting of the Faith and Grief group. This group is provided to help those who are suffering from the loss of someone to death, encouraging them to talk about their loss if they wish to. Then on the fourth Thursday of each week, the Book Club meets to review and discuss a book of their choosing.

FRIDAY – Fridays are quiet days when not much is going on, but the church itself is always there, waiting to provide most anything any group might need.

SATURDAY - Every Saturday morning brings the men in our church in for a wonderfully prepared, home style breakfast as they gather for the Men's Prayer Breakfast. On the fourth Saturday of each month volunteers gather to make sandwiches for the Austin Street Centre which is a downtown ministry that provides lunch type meals for those in need.

Every fall, the church has a gathering called the "Jamboree". It begins with a catered meal and then is followed by the enrichment hour. For adults, there

are at least two class offerings like "Oddities in Scripture", "All about Plants", "Is it Colorblind or Blind to Color". There are also programs for our youth and children. The evening begins at 5:30pm and promptly ends at 7:30pm.

And so we, the Lake Highlands Presbyterian Church, move forward to fulfill our self-given mission and vision to "Go and Make Disciples." By living out our commitment to Christ we grow within and then we are able to reach outside the church to bring others to our faith community. We try to serve our God, working together by reaching out, loving, caring and inspiring spiritual and personal growth. We hope you can sense our mission and thus catch our vision. Come and be a part of the group. Know that God is in charge and Jesus is our Lord and Savior. We are saved by his grace with the Bible being central to our belief. Go and visit the LHPC webpage (www.lhpres.org), if you will, and find an explanation of all of this in more detail there!⁴

⁴ Webpage for Lake Highlands Presbyterian Church

The Story of Melinda Rankin

by Dr. Mike Miller

My thesis in this presentation is that Melinda Rankin has never received the recognition that she deserves from the Presbyterian Church in Texas. I will set forth three major reasons for this neglect as I discuss with you the life of Melinda Rankin.

It can be argued that one of the most important developments in the study of Texas history in the past three decades has been the recognition by cultural historians that something important had been left out of the narrative. This lacuna, as historians call an empty space in the narrative, is being filled by previously neglected letters, journals, and books written by frontier women. This material, especially the journals, has given us a clearer understanding and new insights into the lives of people who lived on the 19th century frontier.

From the perspective of these women we get a powerful, unromanticized description of the fear, the joy, the loneliness, boredom, anxiety, depression, courage and violence they experienced in their daily lives, often lived out in isolated, smoke-filled, and primitive cabins.

When women historians began to analyze these accounts, it became clear that new attention had to be paid to these women. In this process the central role of religion in the lives of frontier women contributed to a deepened understanding. A new look at the cultural role of frontier camp meetings revealed an importance far beyond that of simply a temporary religious gathering.

In these meetings women loved the honest externalization of emotion in the message of the preachers. They could weep openly and without censure. They also loved the part that was entertainment, especially singing. Often for weeks or months they lived in wagons and tents that surrounded a central

preaching venue. In this circle children could play in safety and experience community with other children. Women could exchange experiences, recipes, ideas, dreams, hopes, fears and quilts, stories and cures. Children could be taught to read and write, and the niceties of 19th century civilization could be upheld.

Then just beyond this vital and active temporary village was a commercial circle made up of tinkers, tailors, coopers, salesmen for thread and cloth, medicine, kitchen utensils, and sanitary items. This nearby commercial circle was remembered with great satisfaction.

And finally, at a short distance beyond the business circle was an outer circle that was frequented by men. Here, at least in the memory of many women, were the activities that the preachers were condemning. There were horse races, dog and cock fights, shooting matches, and, unless the Methodist camp police found out and attempted to stop it, there was lots of drinking, and even a few prostitutes (see *Organizing to Beat the Devil* by Charles Wright Ferguson, Doubleday, 1971).

Historians have long known that many of these early 19th century camp meetings were quite large and long lasting. At one point, for example, the Cane Ridge Revival was one of the largest communities in all of North America (see *Revivals, Awakening, and Reform* by William McLaughlin, University of Chicago Press, 1978).

It is within this context, the importance of the primary accounts of frontier women, that I will explore with you the importance of the published journals of an amazing woman named Melinda Rankin.

In her lifetime Melinda Rankin published two books taken from the journals of her daily life. The first was entitled *Texas in 1850* (Damrell and Moore, Boston, 1852) and is interesting in comparison to Frederick Law Olmstead's more famous

book, *A Journey Through Texas*, published in 1857 (Dixson and Edwards, New York, 1857). It is her second book, *Twenty Years Among the Mexicans* (Chase and Hall, Cincinnati, 1875) that will be the basis for my remarks today.

My interest in Melinda Rankin began 25 years ago when I took a group of Texas A&M students on a work project in the beautiful border city of Piedras Negras, Coahuila. At that time the Presbyterian church there had a cement playground with the name "Melinda Rankin" painted in large letters on its fence. The Women's Circle is also named for Melinda. The Presbyterians I talked to in northeastern Mexico about this name told me that among Presbyterians in Piedras and Monterrey Melinda remains an heroic figure of courage and profound spiritual and educational significance.

I found her story so compelling that, as associate executive for higher education in the Synod of the Sun, I made a film of her life, starring people from the Piedras church. The film was available through the Synod of the Sun.

However, in this process I was puzzled by the failure of Presbyterians in Texas to recognize what she did for evangelism, education, and women's rights in both Mexico and south Texas. She was never mentioned in seminary and, so far as I know, nothing is named for her in Texas. I think I have discovered the reason for this, and I will make that the foundation of my commentary on her life today.

Melinda Rankin was born in New Hampshire in 1811. For the first 30 years of her life she was raised by, and lived among, abolitionists. New Hampshire abolished slavery in 1784. Her views on the issue of secession and slavery were clear, and she often repeated the notion that only when Texas became as virtuous as New England would the gospel prevail. Melinda believed that ignorance was the cause of the widespread "moral darkness", which is a euphemism, I believe, for slavery, alcoholism, and violence which for years she

gently declared was the major problem in the state. As he became more open in her views during the early days of the Civil War, her views put her at odds with Texas Presbyterians. In fact, her life was threatened by a Presbyterian minister, her school for Mexican girls in Brownsville was closed, and she herself was mistreated and deported. She speaks of it openly in *Twenty Years*, and David Chesebrough recounts this in his book, *Clergy Dissent in the Old South* (Southern Illinois Press, 1996).

Melinda Rankin was an abolitionist. In the post-war era when heroes of Texas were the men of the "lost cause", an abolitionist woman was easy to ignore.

Melinda Rankin had a sense of humor and irony. After she was deported in 1862, she went to Union-occupied New Orleans where she worked in a hospital and then opened a school for freed slaves. In *Twenty Years Among the Mexicans* she writes with amusement of a southern belle in New Orleans who opined to her that "the Yankees have no business coming here and getting wounded."

Melinda Ranking believed in the traditional Reformed view that learning was sacred and that wherever there was truth, there was Christ. She had no hope for ordination, but, like all disciples, she went out to serve Christ. When she left New Hampshire in 1840, she went to Kentucky and organized two schools. In 1842 she traveled to Mississippi and worked for five years among the poor, both slave and free. It was in Mississippi that she learned that the punishment for abolitionist ideas was death. She was well aware of the brutal murder in Missouri of the Presbyterian minister and journalist, Elijah Parish Lovejoy, by an anti-abolitionist mob. It was also in Mississippi, in 1845, that what U. S. Grant later called America's "the wicked little war" broke out. She was shocked by reports given by returning American soldiers of war crimes – rape and murder –

committed by volunteer militias on the civilian population of Mexico.

Responding to what she called "moral destitution", she walked, rode horseback, and traveled by boat from Mississippi to Texas and took up residence in Huntsville, teaching at a Female Academy for two years. Here she met Rev. Daniel Baker and wrote *Texas in 1850* in which she set forth the need for teachers in Texas and northern Mexico...for work among the Mexican people.

Melinda Rankin's ideas regarding the education of women, abolition, and her love for immigrants were progressive. She was also ecumenical, at least with other Protestants. Presbyterians and Congregationalists had been working as one since the 1801 New England Plan of Union. This ecumenism did not, however, include Roman Catholics, whom she feared and disdained in typical 19th century anti-Catholic style in both books.

Melinda Rankin loved the Mexican people. A ruling white supremacist view prevailed in Texas, but Melinda wrote in *Twenty Years Among the Mexicans* that her "experience with the Mexicans has proved that they are a kind people, if treated with kindness. I can truly say that I have never found firmer and better friends among any nation of people than I have among the Mexicans."

In 1852 Melinda moved from Huntsville to Brownsville where, with the financing from the Presbyterian Board of Education in Philadelphia, she opened the Rio Grande Female Institute. Things went well and soon she had 30 students. At this point, however, yellow fever struck, first among the students. Her sister, Harriatt, who came south to join her, became ill and died. Melinda would have died had not a group of Mexican women nursed her back to health.

This was the most wonderful part of the film I made because two members of the Piedras Negras congregation who were in costume, acting the parts of the women who were nursing Melinda, suddenly and unexpectedly broke into the very alabada hymn that was sung by the women who were nursing Melinda in

Brownsville in 1855 (this hymn story was passed in oral tradition by the women of the Melinda Rankin Circle).

Melinda recovered and continued her work until 1862. We learn in Chapter Eight of *Twenty Years* that she was confronted by a Presbyterian minister and accused of "not being in sympathy with the Southern cause" and therefore (and here again is some of her irony) of being in league with "a country called the United States". He threatened this missionary with violence if she did not give him her keys and leave Texas.

Giving up the keys to the school, she fled to a small Confederate port operation called Bagdad near the Mexican border where a Union ship had been arranged to pick her up. Waiting to be picked up, she was not allowed to rent a room, so she spent three days sleeping in the hold of a small Canadian ship.

Sailing to New Orleans, she taught in a Freedman's school and nursed in a hospital. However, she was restless and longed for her people in Mexico, a nation now convulsed in war between Benito Juarez and the Hapsburg emperor of Mexico, Maximilian. Sympathetic to the Reforma, as the Juaristas were called, she traveled to the city of Monterey, a city under the control of Benito Juarez.

This is where the story becomes more amazing. She was called to New York for a meeting to insure her funding. Before she could leave New Orleans, the city was captured by the French soldiers of Maximilian. In solidarity with the Juaristas, she refused to ride in a stage with French soldiers as her guards.

All alone in a stagecoach without guards, she was captured by the soldiers of an independent bandit named Juan Cortina. She was taken to his camp where she put Spanish, cooking, and nursing skills to work. Since Juarez and all of the revolutionaries were anti-Catholic, they were sympathetic to her work and took her to Brownsville and released her.

She finally got to New York where she raised what today would be over

half a million dollars.

She returned to Monterrey with excellent support and made many converts, built schools, held Sunday worship working with a Scottish Presbyterian missionary who had also been deported (and whose son, Walter Scott, would be formative in the founding of many Mexican American congregations in Texas, including Memorial Presbyterian Church in San Marcos. Founded in 1887, this is the church I serve as its interim minister.

Her success in Monterrey, however, drew unwanted attention from anti-Protestant groups. This, teamed with internal struggle for the control of Monterrey, led to the confiscation of all mission buildings and several dangerous encounters with various rebel factions.

You can understand that after all of this, Melinda was exhausted. Illness, stress, fear, and turmoil in Mexico...plus financial problems led her to submit her resignation with these words: "I had entertained the hope that I might continue to labor and die in the field. I had hoped that I might make my last resting place with the Mexican people and with them rise in the morning of the resurrection."

In 1875 she moved to Illinois to live with the children of her sister, Harriatt, who had died in Mexico years before. It is there that she wrote *Twenty Years Among the Mexicans*. She died in 1888, the first Protestant woman to serve as a missionary in Mexico and, as her gravestone reads "Her works do follow her".

So, let me conclude with my reasons why Melinda Rankin is as yet to be fully appreciated in the Presbyterian Church in our Synod. First, discreetly, but in the eye of the storm, Melinda was an abolitionist. She hated slavery and its moral dissipation, brutal violence, dehumanization, and ever-present rape.

I was fortunate that my church history professor at Austin Seminary was Dr. E. T. Thompson, perhaps the old Southern Church's greatest historian. He was retired but still teaching with dollops of that wonderful wisdom. He introduced

me to what he called the most deforming event in the history of Southern Presbyterianism: the mythic lie called "the lost cause". He said it was a powerful untruth that leaked directly into the church, causing it to deny the reality and responsibility of slavery, while later justifying racism and segregation.

I maintain that it was this "lost cause heresy" that created the environment of exclusion for people like Melinda Rankin. The lost cause is a subject of renewed interest of late because of the clash over public monuments to Confederate heroes.

Let me offer a parallel. My approach to the "lost cause myth" is rooted in a model set forth on male behavior in Mexico by Octavio Paz in his masterpiece, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. Paz held that males in Mexico receive a massive dose of self-loathing because he saw Mexico as a product of rape. The birth of each Mexican (he said) is a renewal of the reality that Mexico is a nation of the raped and the rapists (indigenous women and European conquerors, respectively). The European conquerors started the *mestizo* nation by taking or winning the women while emasculating the men. Women were therefore labeled as good (*sor juana, guadelupe, Jesusita the soldadera*) or bad (*milinche, putas, sanchas*, and collaborationist women).

Machismo, says Paz, who introduced the word to North America, is all about the loss of a sense of self worth and especially the need for somebody to blame. Those "somebodies" are women.

My theory of the lost cause takes the Paz theory and writes it across the face of the post-Reconstruction South. The defeat and humiliation of Southern men demanded someone to blame. It could not be women who, by and large, were very supportive of the war. The only available group that the men could blame and at whom they could lash out were the former slaves, driven by the fear of black sexuality. It is no accident that violent groups, like the Klan, arose. It

is no accident that every four days from 1866 to 1940 a black man was lynched. It is not accident that the response to this potential violence against black men, but always potentially against women, was the creation of the myth of the "lost cause" and the erection of numerous public monuments to Confederate heroes.

Melinda Rankin was clearly out of step with these cultural vibrations...the growing myth of "a lost cause".

There are certainly other examples of such exclusion. How many of you have heard of the Rev. Matthew Gaines? Mr. Gaines was a freedman from Brenham, Washington County, Texas. The Reconstruction legislature in Texas was composed of freedmen and German farmers who had opposed secession and remained loyal to the Union. Mr. Gaines knew the Germans from Washington County, and when he discovered a copy of the Morrill Land Grant Act, the act that established the Land Grant Universities, he proposed a deal with the German loyalists.

In 1876 Mr. Gaines and the German farmers created legislation for two new Agricultural and Mechanical Universities (the 19th century high tech name for scientific farming). One, in College Station, near Washington County, was for the German farmers. The other was near Hempstead, with the largest black population, and was for the freedmen.

Both were bitterly opposed by the people of the lost cause, to the point that the Union army was called to protect both schools from night riders and the Klan. The student body at College Station dressed in blue Union uniforms which had, and still have, the federal Army shield on the class ring.

Proud of their traditions, when other land grant schools around the nation began changing their names from Ohio A&M to Ohio State, Michigan A&M to Michigan State, Oklahoma A&M to Oklahoma State, A&M refused to change its name. In a brilliant move in the late 1990s Southwest Texas State University

asked A&M if it could have the unused name and it became Texas State University, and in 20 years it tripled in size to over 40,000 students.

In 1886, when the lost cause crowd came back into power, the Texas legislature tried to close both A&M schools. They voted to turn the College Station campus into an insane asylum for African Americans. It failed, so they organized a new University in Austin in 1886. The first statue on campus, the one removed in November of last year, was that of Jefferson Davis.

Mr. Gaines is remembered at Prairie View A&M, but, sadly, he is rarely

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A&M.

an abolitionist. She was also a Calvinist from a long
began with the University of Geneva. Her commitment
alone should give her a place among those in the
in higher education in our Synod.

emory of Melinda Rankin long threatened Texas
Indeed, history reveals to us that no woman, or man,
man schools, nursed Union soldiers, and lived among
re had the status of a hero in early 20th century Texas.
s simply to forget her.

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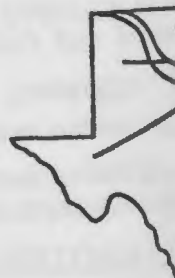
There are certainly other examples of such exclusion. How many of you have heard of the Rev. Matthew Gaines? Mr. Gaines was a freedman from Brenham, Washington County, Texas. The Reconstruction was composed of freedmen and German farmers who remained loyal to the Union. Mr. Gaines knew the County, and when he discovered a copy of the Morrill Land established the Land Grant Universities, he proposed loyalists.

In 1876 Mr. Gaines and the German farmers created new Agricultural and Mechanical Universities (the 19th for scientific farming). One, in College Station, near Was the German farmers. The other was near Hempstead population, and was for the freedmen.

Both were bitterly opposed by the people of the lost cause, to the point that the Union army was called to protect both schools from night riders and the Klan. The student body at College Station dressed in blue Union uniforms which had, and still have, the federal Army shield on the class ring.

Proud of their traditions, when other land grant schools around the nation began changing their names from Ohio A&M to Ohio State, Michigan A&M to Michigan State, Oklahoma A&M to Oklahoma State, A&M refused to change its name. In a brilliant move in the late 1990s Southwest Texas State University

History



asked A&M if it could have the unused name and it became Texas State University, and in 20 years it tripled in size to over 40,000 students.

In 1886, when the lost cause crowd came back into power, the Texas legislature tried to close both A&M schools. They voted to turn the College Station campus into an insane asylum for African Americans. It failed, so they organized a new University in Austin in 1886. The first statue on campus, the one removed in November of last year, was that of Jefferson Davis.

Mr. Gaines is remembered at Prairie View A&M, but, sadly, he is rarely even mentioned at Texas A&M.

Melinda Rankin was an abolitionist. She was also a Calvinist from a long tradition of education that began with the University of Geneva. Her commitment to education for women alone should give her a place among those in the headwaters of Presbyterian higher education in our Synod.

However, the memory of Melinda Rankin long threatened Texas Presbyterian leadership. Indeed, history reveals to us that no woman, or man, who had taught in freedman schools, nursed Union soldiers, and lived among Mexicans could ever have had the status of a hero in early 20th century Texas. The polite thing to do was simply to forget her.

One Account of the Life of Thomas White Currie, Jr.

by James S. Currie

for the Annual Gathering of the PHSSW

February 16-17, 2018

Lake Highlands Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas

This presentation will not pretend to be unbiased. However, I hope that, while it is inevitably personal, it will also be somewhat objective. There is a difference, I think, between unbiased and objective, although for the purposes here, it may not be important. No doubt, my siblings -- and perhaps others -- will be able not only to serve as a corrective to some of what I present here, but may even add more to what I have assembled.

He was a pastor, an author, a churchman, a mentor, a historian, an administrator, a friend, a follower of Jesus Christ. Those of you who knew him might think of other titles that could be attributed to him. I have divided this presentation into four parts: (1) his life up to his ordination as a minister of the Word and sacrament; (2) his ministry; (3) some personal experiences; and, finally, (4) a brief conclusion.

Most of the content in this first part comes from 58 pages of Dad's own memories and reflections which I did not discover until after his death in November 2005. Most of these were hand-written, but six were typed copies of what had been initially hand-written. Clearly, not everything there can be mentioned and would not, perhaps, be of interest to everyone here -- although I think it is safe to say that his children have found it quite interesting.

Part One: His Early Life

He was born on November 18, 1914 and was raised in Austin, Texas. World War I had broken out three-and-a-half months earlier. The first of four

children, he was the son of faculty member and later president of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Thomas White Currie and his wife, Jeannette Roe Currie. Their home was located at 2621 Speedway, across 27th Street and down a ravine. The house and the Seminary were contiguous with the University of Texas. This is still the case for the Seminary. This provided the Seminary with the opportunity of having a relationship with the University of which it would take advantage over the years. I recall attending a UT football game with Dad in 1967 when the house was still there but empty. He shared some of his memories of that house's outside tire-swing and whose bedrooms were where. Shortly thereafter, the property was sold to the University of Texas and the house was torn down. I believe the space is now occupied by UT's Animal Research Center.

One of Dad's early memories, he writes, was of bumping his head. He and his mother were traveling by train to Colorado City, Texas for the funeral of his mother's father, Theodore Hart Roe. They slept in a Pullman car, he in the lower berth. When he woke up, apparently, he jumped up and hit his head on the upper berth. That he grew to be 6'6" tall, it would surprise no one that that would probably not be the last time he would bump his head.

He also recalls being in his father's arms as his father tried to teach him the 23rd Psalm. At one point, it seems, his father promised him \$5.00 if Dad could memorize the Sermon on the Mount. He says his father never had to release the \$5.00.

He recalls being with his father when his father's half brother, John Morgan Currie, was about to leave for Europe to fight in World War I in 1918. They went into his father's study where his father offered a prayer. Morgan died in France and his remains are buried there.

The influence of his father on Dad cannot be overestimated. In the early 1920s his father took him to the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado

where his father taught Bible classes for YMCA administrators. Back in Texas, his father would also take him across the street to the University, one time to go to the Biology building to let him "watch at least part of the procedure entailed in the removal of the appendix of an o'possum."

His family worshiped and were active at University Presbyterian Church, located at 2203 San Antonio (it's current location), right behind the University YMCA at 22nd and Guadalupe where Dad's father had worked as administrator of the University YMCA from 1911-1921. One of the active members of that congregation that made an important impression on Dad was Dr. Daniel Penick. Penick was not only a distinguished professor of Greek at the University and also teacher of New Testament Greek to Seminary students, but he also taught a Sunday school class to university students and sang in the choir. In addition, Penick was the volunteer tennis coach at the University. On October 20, 1920 he was elected moderator of the Synod of Texas of the PCUS. One memory Dad had was that when Penick's Sunday school class was over, he would rush down to the choir room to sing with the choir. "When the deacons brought the offering forward and set the plates on the communion table Dr. Penick would lean over the choir rail and flip his envelope into one of the plates. I never saw him miss," Dad writes.

As long-time chair of the Home Missions Committee of Central Texas Presbytery, Dad's father would often take him on trips to visit various churches. One trip to Bartlett proved to have a lasting effect on Dad. It seems that the visit was to an elder who was also a farmer. Dad writes, "Since my presence was quite unnecessary at the conference the farmer who was a bee fancier fixed up and lit a bee smoker and told me I could pump the bellows and smoke the bees while he and father talked. His bees were working the cotton blossoms. That was my first introduction to the fascinating world of the honey bee."

Other persons etched in Dad's memory include Mrs. Edleen Begg who taught the high school boys' Sunday school class at University Presbyterian. She also taught English at the University and, according to Dad, "became one of the most sought after Bible teachers throughout the P.C.U.S. Dr. Lawrence Wharton was the pastor of University Presbyterian while Dad was growing up. He had served as a chaplain in World War I and came to Austin from a pastorate in Laredo. Dad recalls one of Wharton's sermons that was titled "Turned-in-to's".

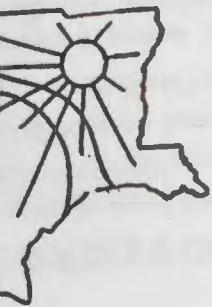
and Jesus said unto them, 'Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men.' He spoke of how Jesus Christ can take you out of one kind and turn you into another kind."

Dad attended Austin public schools until his senior year in high school at Choate Elementary School, Allen Junior High School, and Choate High School. His last year of high school (1931-32) he was sent to Choate in Hartford, Connecticut. Dad writes that "Somehow, somehow, he wangled a full scholarship for me...." He was a member of the basketball team. One of the Choate newsletters mentioned that he was on the basketball squad. While there, he sang in the choir of a Gilbert and Sullivan production in the spring

of 1932. His brother, David, spent his last two years of high school at Choate, and his other brother, Stuart, spent all four years of high school there.

As to how Choate came into the picture as a possible place of education for the three sons, I'm not sure. My sister, Liz, suggests the possibility that Dad's father may have made the acquaintance of the headmaster, George C. St. John (headmaster from 1908 to 1947), in some of his YMCA work or through the Student Christian Fellowship. Another possibility was that there were folks at Highland Park Presbyterian Church where Dad's father supplied the pulpit for five years during the Depression (while also serving as president of Austin Seminary)

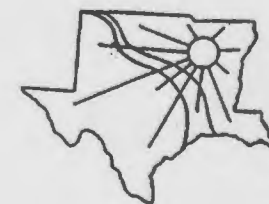
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Dad went through the Austin public schools until his senior year in high school. He attended Wooldridge Elementary School, Allen Junior High School, and Austin High School. For his last year of high school (1931-32) he was sent to the Choate School in Wallingford, Connecticut. Dad writes that "Somehow, perhaps with the help of John Lomax, he wangled a full scholarship for me...." He played some football and lettered in basketball. One of the Choate newsletters includes a photograph of him on the basketball squad. While there, he sang in the Glee Club and got to be part of a Gilbert and Sullivan production in the spring of 1932. His brother, David, spent his last two years of high school at Choate, and his other brother, Stuart, spent all four years of high school there.

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who served as contacts with Choate. Thinking that it might be beneficial to experience life outside Austin may also have contributed to his parents' decision to send their sons to Choate and their daughter, Bettie, to the Northfield School for Girls in Massachusetts. No doubt, financial aid had to play an important role in making all this possible. As a footnote, George C. St. John's son, Seymour, succeeded his father as headmaster at Choate in 1947.

In the summer of either 1929 or 1930 (Dad was not sure; Dad was either 15 or 16 years old) his father arranged for Dad to go on a High School YMCA tour of Europe. This trip took the group to France, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, and England.

In 1932 the quadrennial convention of the Student Volunteer Movement was held in Buffalo, New York. Dad's father attended along with several Austin Seminary students and Dad went there as well. It was there that Dad met John R. Mott, a United Methodist layman and ecumenical leader who was to have a great influence on Dad. It was also at that convention that, at the urging of his father, Dad met a Scottish missionary to Peru by the name of John A. Mackay, who would later become president of Princeton Seminary.

Dad recalls going with his father to a Congregational church in Austin where his father had been invited to speak as part of a series of talks by persons from different denominations. His father was to speak on "Why I am a Presbyterian." Dad writes, "I'm sure he had many reasons that he offered with clarity and conviction, but I remember how I was expecting him to begin by an exposition of the catechism or some other of our doctrinal standards. I was unprepared for him to begin as he did, 'I am a Presbyterian first of all probably because my parents were.' That sentence appealed to me because of its candor." Dad continues, "I'm sure that's the first reason why I'm a Presbyterian. There surely are other reasons, but there is nothing that can start a person off,

give his life a sense of direction and destiny like a home in which Jesus Christ and his church have priority.”

His father's father, David Mitchell Currie, was an elder in the old Carolina Church and then, later, in the church at Lott, Texas. “The story was,” Dad writes, “that the congregation had long had as a concern that Theodore White, David Mitchell Currie's brother-in-law, should make a profession of faith and unite with the church. When Theodore White finally did so, the extent of emotional reaction outwardly expressed by David Mitchell Currie was two taps of his cane.”

Dad entered the University of Texas at Austin in 1932. He majored in history and minored in economics. Among his extracurricular activities were singing in the Glee Club, being a member of the Hogg Debate Society, the motto of which was, “Once a Hogg, always a Hogg”, and participating in a light opera company. Other participants in the light opera company were David Stitt and Bill Logan, both of whom were students at Austin Seminary at the time. His Aunt Lou also participated. Another activity for Dad was the YMCA. Other participants who were important to him included W. A. “Block” Smith, “Woody” Woodbury, John Plath Green, Bill Murray, and H. C. Hunter.

It was in Dad's sophomore year (1933-34) that he met Alison Harrison, a graduate of Baylor University who had come to the University of Texas to study English and Journalism. She earned a Master's degree in English that year (1934) and, in Dad's words, “our acquaintance ripened into what one day became a glorious home.”

In the fall of 1932 Dad's father agreed to become stated supply pastor of Highland Park Presbyterian Church in Dallas. He continued as president of the Seminary in Austin, but the school's income had been cut in half by the Depression. Dad's mother, brothers, and sister moved to Dallas, while Dad remained in Austin. I believe his father's schedule was something like this: he

would teach at the Seminary Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, catch the train to Dallas on either Friday afternoon or Saturday morning, teach a Sunday school class Sunday morning and preach, make pastoral calls Sunday afternoon and Monday, and return to Austin Monday afternoon or evening by train. Dad would usually take him to the train station in Austin and pick him up as well. His father would also teach Bible classes for UT students at the YMCA.

In 1933 Dad was among several students who attended a Student Volunteer Movement convention in Indianapolis. Archbishop William Temple was one of the speakers. Temple maintained that it was possible for a person to be a Christian without being a pacifist. Dad believed that "war was not an acceptable method of settling international disputes." His international travels resumed about this time. After being elected chair of the National Committee of the student division of the YMCA, he became a representative to the General Committee meeting in Bulgaria in 1935 when he was 21 years old. He traveled through London, Vienna, and Budapest. In December 1936, at the invitation of John R. Mott (in a letter dated April 27, 1936), he traveled to Mysore, India for the meeting of the World Committee of the YMCA which was scheduled for January 2-10. On his way there he went through New York City, Southampton, Egypt, Palestine, and Bombay. After the meeting in Mysore, he traveled to Madura and Madras. His travel companion from there to Ceylon, Hong Kong, Shanghai (China), Kobe, (Japan), and Hawaii was Benjamin Mays, later to become president of Morehouse College in Atlanta.

Dad's decision to enter seminary was influenced, he says, by at least three factors. The first was his love for and admiration of his father. A second was seeing his original thought of becoming a physician become impossible because he discovered that the biological sciences and organic chemistry were not his strengths. A third was reading Basil Matthews' biography of John R. Mott, one

that he read in the summer of 1934 when he was 19 years old. While he admits that the Holy Spirit, no doubt, played an important role in his decision, the inspiration he drew from Mott cannot be underestimated.

He graduated from the University in 1936. He went to work for the college division of the YMCA, traveling to college and university campuses in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Texas. In the summer of 1937 Dad was a youth representative to the International Christian Conference in Oxford, England. It is worth noting that among the leaders at the conference were John R. Mott and Henry Sloan Coffin, president of Union Seminary in New York City. A couple of weeks later Dad's father attended the Faith and Order Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland. When Dad's conference was over, he rented a bicycle, going to Copenhagen, Denmark and Malmo, Sweden. After returning to England, he met his parents in Liverpool from which they sailed back to the States.

His encounter with Coffin at Oxford helped Dad's decision to attend Union Seminary. Dad writes, "I felt that, much as I would have liked to study at A.P.T.S., I couldn't trust myself to be courteous to Dr. Robert F. Gribble. He believed that Moses wrote the Pentateuch and was adamant in opposition to the Auburn Affirmation. Consequently, I felt impelled to go elsewhere and acquaintance with Dr. Coffin opened an inviting alternative." Dad began his studies there in 1938 and graduated in 1941.

While at Union Dad worshiped and taught junior high Sunday school at Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church where George Arthur Buttrick was pastor (he had succeeded Henry Sloan Coffin). Occasionally, Buttrick and his wife would have seminary students who taught Sunday school over to their apartment on Sunday evenings for conversation, a time that Dad came to relish. Those who taught homiletics included Walter Russell Bowie, Ralph Sockman, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Henry Sloane Coffin, Paul Scherer, and Buttrick. Reinhold

Niebuhr and Paul Tillich were on the theology faculty as was Henry Pitney Van Dusen.

The summer after his first year of seminary Dad worked for the Home Mission Committee of Fort Worth Presbytery, a committee that was chaired by James F. Hardie, Dad's uncle. That experience may have had something to do with Dad's first call out of seminary. In the meantime, in the summer of 1938 Mother, with whom Dad was engaged at the time, accepted an appointment in New York City with the National Board of the YWCA. In that position she was to interpret the overseas work to the USA constituency. On one occasion she took a Chinese lady to the White House and had tea with Eleanor Roosevelt. Dad and Mom were married on September 5, 1939 in Waco, Texas. Dad graduated from Union in 1941.

Part Two: His Ministry

Dad's first call was to the Presbyterian church in Eliasville, Texas where he stayed for about 18 months (1941-2). Located near the clear fork of the Brazos River in southwest Young County, Eliasville was about 20 miles from Graham and a little over 100 miles due west of Fort Worth. Interesting to note is the fact that two future presidents of the University of Texas, H. Y. Benedict and Homer Rainey were born in Eliasville.

In 1943 Dad was called to be the organizing pastor of Ridglea Presbyterian Church in Fort Worth where he stayed from 1943 to 1947. Elizabeth, Alison, and Tom were all born in Fort Worth. In 1948 he accepted a call to serve as pastor of the Oak Cliff Presbyterian Church in Dallas. In September of 1948 the Synod of Texas voted to purchase Mo-Ranch, and Dad was one of several clergy to serve on the original Board of Trustees. This year will be Mo-Ranch's 70th anniversary as a Presbyterian conference center. Fourth child, Margaret, was born on

Christmas Eve in 1948 in Dallas. He stayed at Oak Cliff from 1948 to 1955. While he was there, Dad earned a Master of Theology from Austin Seminary, the focus of which, I believe, was the symbols in the Seminary chapel. In 1953 he also received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Austin College. In 1955 the family moved to Houston where Dad was called to be the organizing pastor of St. Paul Presbyterian Church on what was then the growing west side of Houston. While at St. Paul, he completed his Doctor of Theology degree from Union Seminary in Richmond. Under the direction of Dr. Ernest Trice Thompson, Dad wrote a history of Austin Seminary. That was later expanded and published by Trinity University Press on the Seminary's 75th anniversary.

In 1963 Dad was elected to serve as moderator of the Synod of Texas. On May 19, 1964, the Synod met at Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church in Dallas. As retiring moderator he preached a sermon "Can Any Man Forbid Water?" based on Acts 10:1-48, the story of Peter and Cornelius and the extension of the gospel to Gentiles. The sermon title comes from verse 47 in which Peter says, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" After spending most of the sermon reviewing the text as well as other events in the life of Jesus, the preacher cuts to the chase and observes, "Between verse 47 and 48 I read an unearthly silence. In the silence each Christian was wrestling with his own hates and fears." Recall the issue of racial tensions that was going on at that time in this country and in the church. Shortly after moving to Houston in November 1955 Dad joined others who labored for better race relations and in 1957 worked to prevent Governor Orville Faubus of Arkansas to Houston. This was the governor who refused to allow seven African-American students enroll at Central High School in Little Rock in September 1957. For his public opposition to inviting Faubus to Houston Dad received hate mail even from other Houston clergy.

At any rate, in this sermon he cites the refrain of an old hymn that goes, "I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold" and suggests that some would rather have the words read "I'd rather have Jesus plus silver and gold", and he goes on to cite other phrases he must have heard at the time, "In all candor, I don't care enough about making the witness of our missionaries around the world count for Christ to make all races welcome in my congregation" and "What if I am responsible for cutting their water off?" and "If they walk in, I walk out." He concludes the sermon this way:

"The answer to the question, 'Can any man forbid water?' is: If he does, how can he be my disciple? How can he sing 'I'd rather have Jesus'?"

"The command that shatters the silence is: 'Let them be baptized!' 'Unbar the door! Open the door!'

"Let us cease and desist from the vain attempt to dam up the fountain of Living Waters.

"Let us offer ourselves anew to be channels of blessing that the fruit of the Spirit may abound.

"Let them be baptized!"

In 1963 Brazos Presbytery asked him to serve as the executive for church extension, a position in which his primary responsibility was to oversee new church developments. In the four years he held that position (1963-67) I have counted no fewer than ten churches that were started in Brazos Presbytery. While he was effective in that position, I recall Mother telling me later that he longed to return to the parish ministry. In 1967 Oak Cliff Presbyterian Church in Dallas asked him to return where he stayed for 15 years until his retirement in 1982.

Immediately upon retirement, in 1982, Dad accepted a call to serve as the interim pastor at the Colomba Presbyterian church in Oamaru, New Zealand,

located on the east coast of the south island of that country. In a note I received recently from Mrs. Margie Cole, widow of Edwin Cole, I learned that when Ed retired from the Greenville, Texas church in 1987, Dad called him asking him if he might be interested in serving a church in New Zealand for a year. Ed and Margie indicated that they would and ended up serving the St. Stephen's Church in Kurow. Much to their surprise, as they were about to board the plane for New Zealand Dad showed up at the airport on crutches, having suffered a broken ankle, to see them off. Upon returning to Texas after his year in New Zealand, Dad also did interim pastorates at St. Giles Presbyterian Church in Fort Worth, First Presbyterian Church in Ferris, Texas, the Presbyterian churches in Milford and Italy, and the Presbyterian Church in Cumby. The last two appointments may have been as stated supply pastor.

In February 1979 the Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest was formed, holding its first meeting at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. I believe the first executive secretary was Pete Hendrick. Rich Thompson, at the time pastor of Central Presbyterian Church in Austin, also served as executive secretary, perhaps succeeding Hendrick. As best as I can tell, it must have been around 1986 that Dad agreed to be the first executive secretary and served in that capacity until 1996 when Pete Hendrick succeeded him, serving a second stint. This organization is now in its 40th year.

Part Three: Some Personal Memories

A few personal memories may give some insight to a side to Dad that many never saw. One is that he loved the Rocky Mountains of Estes Park, Colorado. While he played handball when in Dallas, he loved hiking in the Rocky Mountain National Park. It may have helped his phlebitis, but that, I think, was a

sidebar. Companionship with his brothers, David and Stuart, their families, and his own children made it enjoyable as well.

Mention was made earlier of his exposure as a youngster to a beekeeper in Bartlett, Texas. When he was pastor of St. Paul Presbyterian in Houston, our home backed up to Braes Bayou. He must have thought that that provided a perfect opportunity for him to raise bees. It was fine until houses started to be built behind us. Robbing the bees was also an all-day family affair that was not without its adventures with the bees.

When some of his children received their driver's permit, occasionally he would let us drive when we were on vacation and far from home. At that time the speed limit on open highways was 60 mph. Because there was no cruise control in cars back then, and because he was a stickler for the best possible gas mileage, he kept his eye on the speedometer while we drove. If that red marker dropped to 59 or went up to 61, he would gently remind us, "Not 59, not 61, but 60." Repeating that mantra did not serve to calm down an already nervous teenager, as I recall.

He was very supportive of his five children, even to the point of some embarrassment. I recall attending some of Tom's high school basketball games. Woe be to any basketball official if they made the wrong call in Dad's eyes against our team. He would stand up and bellow, "Nooooooooo!!!" Mother would be sitting beside him, pulling at his pants legs, hoping he would sit down, but more often than not to no avail. The stares from fans on both sides of the court did not seem to bother him at all.

He did like sports and would take us to Rice University basketball games as well as to Houston Astros baseball games. I recall going to one game in the Astrodome when the Astros were having a dismal season. They were playing the Dodgers, and to everyone's surprise, the Astros actually had the lead and the

Dodgers had not scored at all. Around the third inning Dad deadpans to anyone in listening range, "Well, at least it won't be a shutout."

Three final memories that remain etched in my memory. One was when I had to have been about three years old and we were living in Dallas. All my siblings were at school, and Mother and I were home alone. Often I had to find my own entertainment. One morning I decided to play "gasoline man." Taking a long stick from the woodpile in the driveway, I unscrewed the lid to the gasoline tank, and stuck the wooden stick in the tank "filling it up." A few days later on a family outing in town, our car sputtered and finally stalled. Dad called a repairman to come to our aid. While he was investigating the situation, Dad went and bought all of us ice cream cones. Sitting in the very back, I had a sick feeling in my stomach, and when the repairman reported to Dad, "Mr. Currie, there seems to be a lot of sand in the carburetor," I felt even sicker. It didn't take Sherlock Holmes to figure out how this had happened, but I never recall ever hearing a word of reprimand or any kind of punishment from either Dad or Mom. That may have been my first conscious experience of grace.

The second memory was knowing that every weekday morning would begin with the whole family present for morning prayers – a reading from Scripture followed by a prayer. The Scripture was usually taken from the denominational devotional booklet, *Day By Day* (now called *These Days*). Occasionally, Dad even contributed devotions to that publication. That's how every day began.

The third memory occurred when I was about to leave for Germany for the summer between my sophomore and junior years in college. I worked as a dishwasher in a restaurant in a small town in south Germany. Before I left, Dad gave me a signed blank check which, he said, I could use if an emergency arose. I don't know if any bank in Germany would honor a personal check from the

Republic National Bank in Dallas, but the gesture made a powerful impression on me. Somewhere I still have that check.

Conclusion

Dad was a preacher, a pastor, a churchman, a presbyter, a scholar, an author, a husband, a father, a grandfather, a great-grandfather, but, above all, he was a disciple of Jesus Christ who lived out what he believed. He co-wrote with Mother a little book called *Great Protestant Leaders* (1952). He wrote *Our Cities for Christ* (published by the Board of Church Extension of the PCUS in 1954), a history of Austin Seminary for its 75th anniversary (1977), a history of Oak Cliff Presbyterian Church with the title *On the Right Side of the Trinity* (1990), and a history of the Texas Presbyterian Foundation -- *Where Your Treasure Is...!* (1995). He also self-published a book of prayers for college students as well as a couple of collections of sermons. One such sermon collection was titled *The Gospel in Sermon and Symbol at Oak Cliff Presbyterian Church*, focusing on the symbols in the stained glass windows of that church (1981). Primarily for family, I think, was another sermon collection: *The Triumph Song: Six Sermons in Nineteen Seventy Six*. A copy of each of these is available for anyone interested in perusing them.

Throughout most, if not all, of his ministry as a pastor he prepared two different sermons every week, one for Sunday morning worship and one for Sunday evening worship. As much as his love for, and interest in history, he was also forward-looking. When I visited him in his room at Grace Presbyterian Village in Dallas not long before he died, on his bedside table was a copy of Thomas Friedman's recently published book *The World Is Flat* as well as a book on solar power. Throughout his life he always seemed interested in learning something new in a variety of fields -- whether it involved learning about the

education system in Scandinavia when he bicycled there as a young man, or going to New Zealand to serve as an interim pastor upon his retirement in this country.

Surrounded by his five children and in-laws who sang hymns all night long, he died on November 7, 2005, eleven days short of his 91st birthday. A memorial service was held at NorthPark Presbyterian Church in Dallas on November 10 with his son-in-law, Stephen W. Plunkett, officiating. Just as he stood on the shoulders of those who went before him, so also do we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us, including those of Thomas W. Currie, Jr.

Thank you very much.

“A Personal Reflection on Working with Thomas White Currie, Jr.”

Rev. Michael Thompson

I am deeply grateful for the invitation to share with you some of my treasured memories and stories of the remarkable servant of God, Thomas Currie Jr. By wearing my University of Texas shirt today I mean no disrespect to PHSSW but I wear this outfit in solidarity with and respect for Dr. Currie. After he retired he attended every presbytery meeting wearing his UT windbreaker, jeans, and tennis shoes. I don't have any tennis shoes but I think he would overlook my shoe deviation.

He was a mentor, colleague, and someone who, as a young minister, I deeply admired and respected. He once told me to call him Tom but I couldn't get the word out. It just didn't seem right. If I live to be a hundred he will always be Dr. Currie. He was someone who helped shape and influence my own understanding of ministry and mission. I also believe that the stories and reflections I will share with you today may offer some expressions of the qualities and the passion that the church is so desperately struggling to find today.

I was blessed to have Jim Currie as a friend and colleague at Austin Seminary in the mid 70's. But actually, the first I knew of Dr. Currie was through the scholar, colleague, and friend, John Lively. The Lively family was a very prominent family in Dallas and close to the Curries. John told me about being invited to go camping with Dr. Stuart Currie and Dr. Tom Currie. I asked excitedly, "What did they talk about at night? What great theological conversations did they engage in?" I couldn't see them sitting around a campfire roasting wieners and singing "Kum Ba Yah". Actually, John said, "They would sit around the camp fire at night and argue intensely about how to parse ancient Greek sentences that I knew nothing about but it was a great experience."

In 1985 I was asked by the Committee on Ministry to meet with the Sessions of Italy and Milford churches and Dr. Currie to help negotiate terms of call for Dr. Currie to serve as Interim for both churches. We met in the fellowship hall at the Italy church one Sunday afternoon. They had those old long heavy tables that would pinch your fingers when putting them up or taking them down. They were configured in a square and we all took a seat and started working on the job description. After about 45 minutes we completed the job description and I said now we need to talk about compensation. At that point, Dr. Currie took his right hand and slapped the table so hard that the sound reverberated through the

room and he leaped to his feet with incredible speed and said, "I do not talk about money. Let me know when you are finished."

We all know that ministers have families to provide for and that more often than not they are not fairly compensated. There are exceptions but for the majority that is true. But in the past 15 years or so of working with the Committee on Ministry, I have heard more and more the statements, "I can't possibly move to a new call for less than..."; "I am open to the call of God as long as it's not more than 30 miles from where I live..."; "I really feel God's call to ministry but I can't make the sacrifices required to attend a Presbyterian Seminary...." I can't tell you how many times over the years I have replayed the memory of that day in Italy. Dr. Currie's views might not be normative or even feasible for ministers today but they are certainly worth contemplating and reflecting upon.

As a footnote I talked with one of the elders at Italy a couple of months after Dr. Currie began serving as interim and asked how it was going. He said, "I'm not sure that I always understand what he is saying but he sure says it in a powerful and convincing way."

A couple of weeks after that experience I was invited to the Curries' home for coffee and dessert and conversation. It was the beginning of a lot of conversations. Dr. Currie was a great historian and valued the importance of history and the guidance it provides for the present and the future. But he was not so interested in the glory of the past but the future of the church. I remember him clearly asking me once, "Mike what are we going to do about this cultural shift and the future of the church?" It is a question that I have struggled with for the rest of my ministry finding no satisfactory answers or strategies.

In the mid-90's at a presbytery meeting at Preston Hollow we had a worship service and I can't remember who preached but it was powerful sermon. After the worship service he rose from his pew and in a voice that needed no amplification or correction by Roberts Rules of Order, he shouted, "Why can't we have more preaching like this at Presbytery meetings and less of this corporate business stuff?" He was right. But changing the corporate culture of a presbytery the size of Grace is like telling the Titanic just make a quick turn and you will easily miss the iceberg. Today one of the most popular and well-attended gatherings is the "Festival of Homiletics" which is a mainline church event that is a week of preaching, music, and worship. He said on the floor of presbytery that day, "This is what nurtures and feeds our souls." He was right again.

But let me tell you a story with far reaching implications. In 1945 there was a family, by the name of Johnson. The Johnsons had two young boys and twin boys on the way. Gail Johnson, the father, was a flight test engineer at General

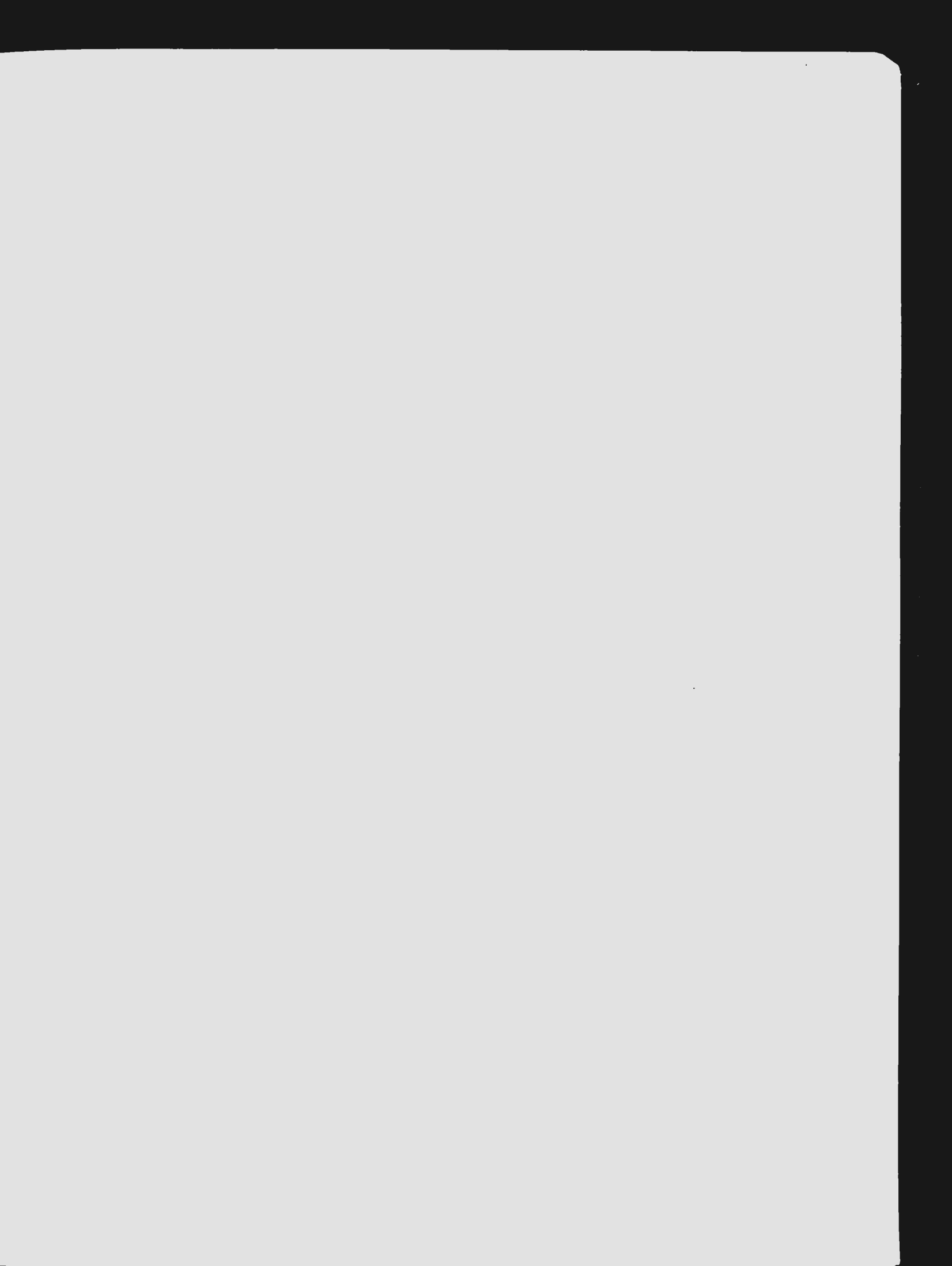
Dynamics. The Johnsons decided that their children need religious instruction so they found the Ridglea Presbyterian Church. Every Sunday they would drop the two boys off at the church for Sunday School and pick them up before worship. One hot August afternoon, Gail was working in the yard and a car drove up and stopped and a very big man in a blue suit got out of the car and walked up to Gail and said, "My name is Tom Currie and I am the pastor at Ridglea Presbyterian Church." "Nice to meet you. I'm Gail Johnson." "Yes, I know. I was just wondering when you were going to stop dropping the children off at church and start bringing them?" Forty-five years later when Gail was telling me this story, I asked, "What did you say." Gail said, "What could I say... he was so sincere and big...I said, 'We will see you next Sunday.'"

Gail would become a ruling elder in the Ridglea Presbyterian Church and would sing in the choir sitting next to John Denver. Three of his sons would also become ruling elders in the Presbyterian Church. His second oldest son, Steve Johnson, became a medical doctor and started his practice in Cleburne Texas. Elder Steve Johnson and his wife Elder Nancy Johnson have given a remarkable amount of time and energy to the United Presbyterian Church and the community. Their daughter, Dr. Stephanie Morton, is now a ruling elder in the Cleburne church and is raising two sons in the church and their daughter Elizabeth Carlock and her husband are ruling elders in First Presbyterian Church of Fort Worth.

"When are you going to stop dropping your children off at church and start bringing them?"

So what did I learn from Dr. Currie? Among other things I learned the importance of studying the history of the church with a passion for its future. A deep appreciation for the proclamation of the Word and an unquenchable desire for the proper education to rightly proclaim that Word. An uncalculating commitment to follow the call of God wherever it might lead.

In the words of the writer of the Book of Revelation: "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord." "Yes," says the Spirit, they will rest from their labors and their works do follow them."



The first part of the book is devoted to a general introduction to the subject of the history of the United States. It covers the period from the discovery of the continent to the present time. The author discusses the various factors that have influenced the development of the country, including the role of the different states, the influence of the European powers, and the impact of the American Revolution. He also touches upon the economic and social changes that have taken place over the years.

The second part of the book is a detailed account of the American Revolution. It begins with the causes of the war, such as the taxation without representation and the desire for self-government. The author describes the key events of the war, including the Battle of Saratoga and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. He also discusses the role of the Continental Congress and the various military leaders of the time.

The third part of the book deals with the early years of the United States. It covers the period from the end of the Revolution to the establishment of the Constitution. The author discusses the challenges faced by the new nation, such as the need for a strong central government and the issue of slavery. He also touches upon the early years of the Republic, including the presidencies of George Washington and John Adams.

The fourth part of the book is a general conclusion. The author summarizes the main points of the book and offers his own thoughts on the history of the United States. He discusses the role of the United States in the world and the challenges it faces in the future. He also offers some suggestions for how the country can continue to grow and prosper.

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