

HAROLD CLAUDE MCKINNEY, SENIOR

(May 14, 1898 – July 20, 1977)

by Rick McKinnibey, his grandson

Harold C. McKinney. Senior was born on May 14, 1898, in the Belgian Congo. He was born to missionary parents, Claude Adams (C.A.) McKinney and Elizabeth (Libbie) Sawyer McKinney and Harold's mother was ill with typhoid fever throughout her pregnancy with him. There is an old photograph that appears to be of Harold as a one-year old standing next to an ant hill taller than he was at the time. When he was one his parents went on furlough back to New York City where they had been commissioned by A.B. Simpson, the head of the Christian Missionary Alliance and he sent them (along with Harold's maternal grandmother, Mary Teresa Adams McKinney) to pastor a church in Akron, Ohio. However, that church changed their mind after seeing the frail condition of the McKinney family. Thus, C.A. and Libbie rented a large hall and after playing music and singing songs on the sidewalk, those gathered would be invited in to hear Claude preach. Eventually in 1904, Harold's father, Claude, had a house built for his growing family at 2025 Fifth Street, in Cuyahoga Falls, just north of Akron, which stayed in the McKinney family until Harold Senior's nephew, Jim McKinney, sold it in 2017. Harold had three brothers and four sisters – Francis, Joseph, Melvin, Grace, Faith, Hope, and Mary Love, many of whom went into the ministry and some (Joseph and Melvin) went into the military.

During the famous 1906-1915 Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, California, which was led by William J. Seymour, a one-eyed black holiness preacher that spear-headed the world-wide Pentecostal movement, two sisters from his father's congregation brought it back to Akron, Ohio with their simple testimonies and asked if anyone wanted to be baptized in the Holy Christ. Libbie McKinney, a skeptic, Harold's mother, was apparently the first in line and began to "speak in other tongues," which to her husband C.A., authenticated the experience. The Pentecostal movement is also characterized by fervent praise, physical healing and other characteristics. Eventually, the congregation joined the Assembly of God, the nation's largest Pentecostal congregation and the Pentecostal or Charismatic movement now encompasses some 600 hundred million people from nearly every denomination, including the Catholic Church.

One would think that coming from such a religious household Harold would also be a zealous Christian, but as a teenager Harold had become an agnostic. In 1916, at the age of 18, Harold's father told him he had to go to a Christian college and Harold chose Houghton College, a Wesleyan Methodist college in Houghton, New York. It was there that he met Ira Bowen, a classmate with a strong faith, and who also had scientific mind and wanted to become an astronomer, which he did. Harold had asked Ira, why anybody with a such a scientific mind would believe in God. Ira told him to write down all the reasons to

believe in God and all the reasons not to believe in God and act accordingly. Harold did just that and saw that the pros seemed to vastly outnumbered the cons, so he prayed, "God if you are there, please save me." When he woke up the next day all his doubts had disappeared and never came back for in his spirit a light of true knowledge seemed to have dawned.

At Houghton College Harold also met Beulah Williams, a girl he desired to court, as well as her mother, Clara Tear Williams, a holiness minister and song writer and her father, William Williams, another holiness minister. He said that Clara Tear Williams was the holiest woman he had ever met and was excited about the prospect of marrying her daughter. After graduating from the two-year college, Harold and Beulah were married on June 28, 1918.

Harold then went to Albright College in Reading, Pennsylvania as a seminarian. The college was Wesleyan-Arminian in theology and doctrine. He graduated there in 1920, the year his daughter, Alice, was born. Later in 1922 his wife gave birth to a son whom they named Harold Claude Junior. And in 1932 and 1935 they had two more daughters, Grace JOHANNE, and Judith RACHEL.

In the 1920s Harold attended Wharton School of Finance and Economy in Philadelphia, a part of the University of Pennsylvania. He also became the pastor of Ashland Wesleyan Church in Osceola Mills, Pennsylvania, northeast of Pittsburgh and later in the late 1920s was the pastor at Grand Rapids Wesleyan Church in Grand Rapids, Ohio, southwest of Toledo.

Sometime in the 1920's Harold apparently went to a healing and revival service led by Smith Wigglesworth from England, one the most famous Pentecostal ministers of his day. After meeting him it was then that Harold desired to reclaim his roots as a Pentecostal and to leave the Holiness tradition. To some degree the Pentecostal movement grew out of the Holiness movement, which was a 19th Century Christian renewal movement among Methodists and others. Current Holiness churches include churches that are Nazarene, Christian Missionary Alliances, Salvation Army, Wesleyan Methodist, and others. Holiness churches generally believe that the "Baptism in the Holy Spirit," noted in Scripture, was a "second blessing" after conversion, in which the believer was no longer attracted to sinful ways, but to the way of holiness. Pentecostals, on the other hand, believe that "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" is a spiritual gifting of Jesus accompanied by speaking in tongues and related supernatural phenomenon as noted in the Acts of the Apostles.

In 1930 Harold's father, C.A. McKinney, felt a calling to pastor an Assembly of God Church in Battle Creek, Michigan and as a means to "save his seat," Harold volunteered to become the pastor of the church that his father had founded, Akron First Assembly of God Church in Ohio. After his father returned to Akron in 1932 Harold was forced to become a traveling evangelist during the 1930s depression era and sent his family to live with his in-

laws in Houghton, New York where he would send back what little money he earned. Harold's daughter, Rachel McKinney, related the story of how her father had attended a meeting of ministers in Pennsylvania, and in the evening after being dropped off at the bus station, he noted that he was short of cash, by something like \$5.31, for a return trip to Houghton, New York. He then prayed and waited, as was his habit, for the Lord to provide. He said that the pastor in the town who had presided at the meeting was then woken up in the middle of the night and was "told" by the Lord to bring \$5.31 to Harold who was waiting at the local bus station for that money. The minister then drove there and asked Harold if he needed \$5.31 and Harold said yes and after he was given the money, he purchased his ticket and returned home.

In another story, Rachel McKinney related how her father was driving toward another meeting on the Pennsylvania Turnpike (now Interstate 76) between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia when one of his tires blew out. He was wearing a very nice suit at the time and as he began the process of replacing the tire, suddenly, a black man appeared, without a nearby vehicle, and asked if Harold needed any help. Harold said yes and the man then changed his tire and after Harold placed the blown-out tire in the trunk of his car he turned around to give the black man some money for his services, but he had disappeared. The Pennsylvania Turnpike is fenced off with very limited exits. Harold concluded that he may have welcomed an angel unawares as is related in Hebrews 13 verse 2.

It was in 1936 that Harold received another call to be a pastor at an Assembly of God church in the Bellevue area of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where he stayed for about 10 years and then moved on in 1946 to pastor an Assembly of God Church in Peoria, Illinois. In 1956 that local church split and Harold became the pastor of an Assembly of God Church that met at a lodge or assembly hall owned by the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in East Peoria where he stayed as pastor until 1965. During this time in Peoria, Harold's wife, Beulah, had knee surgery and never walked again and Harold had to care for her on a daily basis. His wife Beulah was considered to be a very wise woman, and He told his daughter, Rachel, how remarkable it was that his wife always seemed to be right and was skilled at relating to all kinds of people.

In Peoria the family rented a large three-story house in which he and his wife shared a bedroom on the first floor. On the second floor, his daughter, Johanne, and her husband Paul Thompson as well as their (eventually) five children shared bedrooms. And on the third floor was the large bedroom of their single daughter, Rachel. Every Thanksgiving his son, Harold Junior, his wife Margaret, and their four children (two sets of twins) would drive from Michigan to pay them all a week-long visit.

In 1965 Harold Senior retired and moved to an apartment building in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and a couple of years later to a trailer camp in St. Petersburg, Florida. His wife Beulah passed away there in 1973 and Harold soon remarried a recent widow at the

trailer camp named Ressie, who was a Mennonite and who also had a house in the Denbigh neighborhood of Newport News, Virginia where Harold passed away from prostate cancer on July 20, 1977. A funeral service was held at the Warwick River Mennonite Church in Newport News, in which I and my wife, Theresa, attended (any others?), and in keeping with the Mennonite tradition (like the Amish whom they were related) the hymns were all sung without the accompaniment of any instrument, not even a piano. Later Harold Senior was buried with his first wife, Beulah, at Memorial Park Cemetery in Saint Petersburg, Florida, attended by his son, Harold C. McKinney Jr. (and his wife, Margaret, and his daughter, Rachel ?),

Other Possible Anecdotes

- 1) Successfully using ground beef in the 1970s as a way to keep his weight down.
- 2) To his grandchildren he often said, "We are going to see more things, do more things and go more places."
- 3) Saying, "Get a wife who works."
- 4) When driving rather haphazardly he would tell his grandchildren, "They sees me. They sees me."
- 5) Dreaming about his father every night (per Harold Jr.).
- 6) Wondering about the secret to healing people like in his father's ministry.
- 7) Playing the stock market and trying to figure out the secret to making money in it.

(8) Although he had blue eyes, he once told we, his teenage McKinney grandchildren, in all seriousness, that blue-eyed people had less intelligence than brown-eyed people. It sounded strange to the four of us, half of whom had blue eyes, for we knew that brown-eyed people made up the vast majority of the world's population (like 70 to 80%), and that blue-eyed people were a much smaller population (like 10% or less). Although we didn't say anything at the time we felt that our grandfather's thinking was a little bit off, and that it was odd that he included himself among the less intelligent.

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