

Our Family's Remembrances of Herman L. Hoeh

Herman Hoeh life touched many others and like most, our family has many positive memories of him. One of my early memories was of watching him traversing the grounds at the Feast of Tabernacles in Big Sandy during the late 50's. On the way between the "new tabernacle" where services were held and the "old tabernacle" dining hall he picked up trash and deposited it into a proper receptacle. That pretty well represented the way he was and remained throughout life. Though an evangelist, he was a humble man, not above the common people, and always lent a hand in what needed to be done. Always polite and charming, he would greet people with a cheery "My name is Herman Hoeh, how are you?" He never failed to ask how my wife, Peggy was. I never heard an unkind word come from his mouth about anyone.

As a student at the Pasadena campus of Ambassador College between 1958 and 1961. I had the opportunity of attending his classes in Bible and World History. He peppered his lectures with zingers such as his opinion that a saxophone was an "illegitimate" instrument. Although occasionally difficult to comprehend, nevertheless new vistas of knowledge were opened to his students. He enriched our awareness and appreciation the past as well as current events. He frequently invited interested students to his house for forums and informal discussions. He and Isabel were gracious hosts and always made us feel at home. He freely answered all questions, as cryptic as those answers may have been. I will always remember the names of ancient historians such as Xenophon and Manetho. I recall a final project for his World History students of 1961 was to produce a chart of the Egyptian Pharos according to his reconstruction of history, a seemingly daunting task! But then he added, "The only thing I ask is that they not all be identical, so that if I hold any two up to the light they will not coincide!"

His "reconstruction of history" was published in 1962 as a two volume "*Compendium of World History*" which was his doctoral dissertation at Ambassador College. Later, perhaps in the late 70's he came to see that much of his "reconstruction" was wrong, and he publicly so stated. It says a lot about Herman Hoeh that he had the intellectual honesty to repudiate a large portion of his life work including his PhD dissertation.

His sermons, though occasionally difficult to understand were always interesting. No one ever dozed off while he was speaking!

Growing up on a chicken farm near Santa Rosa, California in a German-American family undoubtedly contributed to shaping Herman Hoeh as man who never lost his connection to common folks, who preferred to live close to the earth and who epitomized the work ethic. Another early influence was also present. On more than one occasion his students heard him explain that he was brought up on "the milk of the Socialist word". Students understood this to mean "National Socialism" (Naziism). Perhaps in reaction against that early teaching he always leaned over backward to show his opposition to Naziism. This may have contributed to the RCG/WCG's proclivity during the 50's and 60's to look for a fascist under every bed! The Church's perspective on biblical prophecy had a lot to do with this as well.

The 50's and 60's seemed to spawn a mindset of a separation between "us and the world" in RCG/WGC circles. That mentality was conspicuously absent in Herman Hoeh. He consistently made contact with many individuals of varied backgrounds and different perspectives, building bridges across professional, denominational, religious, national and ethnic lines. One was Rabbi Zvi Ankori who did his doctoral dissertation on the interpenetration of Judaism and Zoroastrianism. He invited Dr. Ankori into his home for an informal discussion with his students. I felt it to be an honor to be one of those invited. Dr. Ankori went on to become a well known author on Jewish issues. Another was Jean Pierre Hallet, the Belgian anthropologist and humanitarian who publicized the plight of the Pygmies in the Congo. He was author of *Pygmy Kitabu*. I saw him on several occasions at fundraisers to help the Pygmies. He always voiced his appreciation for Herman Hoeh's help with printing a brochure on the Pygmies and fundraising assistance for the Pygmy Project. Another contact was with a Swedish-born biochemist and visionary, Dr. Eric Eweson. A pioneer in composting and waste management from the 1940's, Dr. Eweson's expertise led to the construction and installation of the "Eweson Digester" on the Big Sandy campus which turned garbage and other waste into fertilizer. His talk before an Ambassador student assembly opened my eyes to the potentialities of composting and the desirability of organic farming. Another well respected personality, a dentist named Dr. Royal Lee imparted much useful information at a student assembly on health and nutrition. His company, Standard Process Laboratories is a producer of high quality nutritional supplements. Many more contacts could be cited from various fields including historians, archaeologists and writers. Many people have benefited from the associates of Herman Hoeh.

Herman Hoeh often spoke of his friendship with John Weidner, a Seventh Day Adventist, who owned two health food stores in Pasadena. He affectionately called him "his best friend in the world". Mr. Weidner, a Belgian, shared some of his World War II experiences at an Ambassador student assembly. He was one of the many who rescued Jews during the Nazi occupation of France. Wanting the best foods for his family, he would frequently shop at Weidner's Health Foods. One time my wife, Peggy was there while he was shopping. After paying, he told the sales lady to "Keep the change!", throwing the whole sales staff into turmoil! They did not know how to handle that! Everyone agreed that Herman Hoeh was a very generous man!

During the late 60's the Hoeh's moved from their South Orange Grove house in Pasadena to La Canada. A few years later they purchased two houses in Tujunga, California. One house for them and one for his library! He wanted as much as possible to return to his roots where he could have a garden and keep goats. After moving to Tujunga my wife and I gave them an old refrigerator in which to keep their garden produce and goat milk. After delivering it in our pick-up truck he stated, "You have treated us well, and now I have a treat for you!" He treated both of us to a refreshing glass of cold goat milk!

I spoke by phone with Herman Hoeh about a month before he died. His mind was as sharp as ever. We chatted about many things. At first I hesitated to mention my years of research into the meaning to the Christian of the feast days. Personal theological research by a lay person was once frowned upon. I did mention that I had felt for many years that there was much more meaning there than WGC had uncovered. He reacted favorably. I then said that my research was aided by several books on the feast days including one that predated HWA's booklet. He asked who wrote it and I told him the author was Louis Talbot. He replied that he used to listen to him on the radio during the 1940's, and wanted to know if he

and any good insights as to their meaning. I answered that he did. Anyway this shows that he was open-minded toward new ideas.

My wife and I feel privileged to have known Herman L. Hoeh. He was a genuinely caring, remarkable and multi-faceted individual. Our lives were enriched by his, and he will be missed.

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Postscript:

Dr. Hoeh was a fascinating figure in RCG/WGC circles. His sermons, though sometimes perplexing were never boring. My wife and I had the occasion to recall a sermon he gave over 40 years ago. Few ministers preached sermons so long ago that made such an impression. A show on the SciFi channel on Atlantis brought to mind a sermon he gave on Atlantis. The show featured several locations of ongoing investigations on where Atlantis may have been, and mentioned that many other locations had been proposed.

Dr. Hoeh proposed that Atlantis was located in the North Sea off the coast of Germany. In this scenario most of the island of Atlantis had sunk, leaving a remnant on the side toward the continent, a small island known as Heligoland.

Actually it has divided a few years back into two islands. He pointed out that Atlantis could have not been in the Mediterranean Sea as sometimes proposed because Plato described it as being beyond the Pillars of Hercules.

He went onto suggest that Atlantis was actually an Israelite colony, pointing out that the name Heligoland means Holy Land. However he did not quote Plato when he said that Atlantis had disappeared 9000 years before his time.

Dr. Hoeh's research sometimes spilled over into the classroom and his sermons. This may have been the case in his sermon on Atlantis. As far as I know he never mentioned it again. He did mention Heligoland in the *Compendium*, but not in connection with Atlantis.

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