

MEMORIES OF MY GRANDFATHER

REV. WALTER HAZELTINE OTT

By

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Rev. Walter H. Ott, Founder, Linwood Community Church

Linwood, New Jersey

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as of 5/8/2013

Born - March 1876

Died - August 16, 1952

Buried - Atlantic City Cemetery, Pleasantville, NJ



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My maternal grandfather, Rev. Walter Haseltine Ott, was the only grandfather I knew. My paternal grandfather, William Zulker (1857- 1924), had died before I was born. Grandpa Ott, however, was actually my step-grandfather, a fact I did not know until I was in my late teens, but it did not seem to make any difference to me.

My mother's father by birth, Guy Leathem Carr (Mar 1, 1877 - May 7, 1912), had died when she was only nine years old and her mother Elizabeth Boogar Carr (Feb 10, 1878 - July 11, 1964) married grandpa Ott on May 31, 1917. Grandpa Ott had a daughter, Edna, and grandma had two daughters, my mother Virginia Idell Carr and Josephine Beatrice Carr.

Grandpa Ott lived at one time in Philadelphia in the area of Kensington which he always called Fishtown.

My first recollection of him and grandma was when they lived in Pleasantville, NJ on Pleasant Avenue across from the Wesley Methodist Church on the corner of Linden Avenue and Pleasant. Grandpa was a men's barber using the front room of their home as his shop. He became very active in the church, taught a bible class and became a "licensed lay preacher" in the Methodist denomination.

His brother, Harry Ott was also a barber with a Post Office in his shop, and it seems that their father was a barber as well. Harry, who lived in Pleasantville, toward Northfield, had a son Howard.

Whether Grandpa Ott had been divorced or whether his first wife had died, I never heard. His daughter Edna married Walton Glick who had a moving business in Pleasantville and at one time the two of them lived with grandpa and grandma. My mother married William John Zulker and her sister Josephine married Eugene Berry. I never felt as though there was a good family relationship between the Zulkers and the Glicks, but cousin Doris Berry Endicott did feel the same as I. Everyone was cordial to each other but not close. I never remember any time when the Glicks visited us or we them, and they were not present in family gatherings at grandpa's, whether by their choice I do not know. Grandpa and Walton, however, always seemed to be in touch with each other and Walton was always ready to help move any member of the family.

Sister Betty tells me that our mother and dad first lived in a second floor apartment on Pleasant Avenue across the street from granddad and close to Main Street. Then dad built a small house right out of the Sears and Roebuck catalog, on a lot next door to granddad at 105 Linden Avenue. It was a Cape Cod bungalow with two rooms on the second floor, but just one bath on the first floor. (Doris said that it was just an attic until later on when it was finished with two rooms) It was there that I was born; (my twin brother, too). When dad was transferred with the Gulf Oil Company from Pleasantville to Cape May Court House, NJ, he sold the house to Uncle Gene and Aunt Jo Berry where they lived for a long time.

Grandpa's next home was on West Adams Avenue, Pleasantville, where he continued barbering as before in the front living room just off the porch. Next door there lived a professional musician who played his trumpet many hours of the day. I think his name was Pintavalle, or something like that. I always enjoyed his music when I was visiting grandpa.

Grandpa continued his barbering and bible teaching and was asked to preach at the Bethel and English Creek Methodist Church just outside Pleasantville when they were without a minister. The church wanted him to become their pastor but Methodist Bishop Richardson said he was not ordained and was too old to begin. In October 1933, some members of the church, upset with the Bishop's decision, withdrew from the church and asked grandpa to help them

start another church. After meeting in various homes for a while, their first worship service was on December 31, 1933 in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Ireland on Davis Avenue in Linwood, NJ, just a few miles south of Pleasantville.

Then, George Hagerthey opened his home at 1932 Shore Road in Linwood for all future services until they could purchase a lot and construct a building. On January 4, 1934 they organized as the Linwood Community Church, determined their purpose, elected a Board of Trustees and asked grandpa to be their Pastor for a period of one year. On March 26, 1934 they obtained a charter from the State of New Jersey, purchased a lot at 1838 Shore Road on April 8, 1934 and broke ground for a building at the Easter Sunrise Service on April 14, 1936. Just one year later on April 1, 1937 the first meeting was held in the new church. It was a small building with the worship sanctuary on the first floor and a basement for Sunday school classes, the Christian Endeavor meetings and social gatherings.



Original Church 1934

Grandpa and grandma then moved to another house on Shore Road just a few doors away. He opened his front-room barber shop to provide a livelihood and expanded his ministry at the church. He continued barbering until the doctors advised him to stop because of his health. They told him that holding his arms in the air while barbering all day was certain to shorten his life. He gave up barbering and moved again, this time to Asbury Avenue just a block away from the church. I am not sure of the year.

1942

Our family gathering at grandpa's house on Thanksgiving Day 1942 is most memorable to me. The Second World War had begun, brother Walt, who had enlisted in the Navy following his graduation from high school, was home on leave. Sometime during the day when we were all gathered together, my uncle Gene Berry related the unbelievable story of the rescue of Captain Eddie Rickenbacker from the waters of the Pacific Ocean. Rickenbacker was

the American flying hero who had downed twenty-six German airplanes during World War I. In 1942 he was the head of Eastern Air Lines, a fledgling business in a developing industry. Military leaders in Washington asked him to fly to airbases around the world to evaluate training techniques and equipment for the war. After a trip to Europe, he was being flown by the military with seven others over the Pacific Ocean to Hawaii when they missed the little island where they were to refuel and crashed at sea. The plane sank. They were lost, and not having sophisticated electronics of today, neither they nor one else knew where they were.

To make matters worse, they had not adequately prepared for an emergency landing like this. The eight men were in three small rubber life-crafts with only a first-aid kit, some flares and matches, bailing buckets and a few odds and ends like fish hooks. They had one chocolate bar which was quickly spoiled by the salt water, and four oranges which one of the men had stuffed into his pockets. They had no fresh drinking water and the oranges were rationed with just a slice being given to each man after the second day. Fish and sharks were around them but they didn't have any bait.

I listened to my uncle describe this terrifying scene with tears rolling down his cheeks. He said that one man had a New Testament which they took turns reading at morning and evening prayers each day. Then a miracle occurred on the eighth day while Captain Rickenbacker was snoozing with his cap pulled down over his eyes. Seemingly out of nowhere a seagull landed on his head. He reached up and caught it, killed it and used some for food and the rest for bait. Immediately, they caught fish, and that night it began to rain. Using their clothing, they caught the rain, wrung out the water into the buckets and had fresh water to drink for the first time in several days. On the twenty-first day, they were sighted by a search plane and rescued the following day.

By the time my uncle had finished the story, all in my grandfather's house were shedding tears with him. What an unusual and unforgettable Thanksgiving Day we celebrated together and praised God for his mercy..

1944

About this time, a home was built for my grandparents behind the Linwood Community Church on Shore Road. They lived there for the rest of their lives.

During the month of May when I was visiting my sister Betty, she took me to evangelistic meetings where Rev. Billy Opie was preaching. On May 28 in Millville N. J. at the Trinity Methodist church, I made a decision to give my life to the Lord and to enter fulltime Christian service. There was no question in my mind that the ministry was to be my life's work I remember that shortly thereafter I hitch-hiked to Linwood and told grandpa about it. He was overjoyed. Sometime later he invited me to the church to preach, and there in the Linwood

Community Church I preached my first sermon, with him watching and listening closely. I was just seventeen, and granddad believed in me!

1945

When I went into the Army following my graduation from high school in June, granddad wrote to me several times. On one particular occasion while I was in Germany, he sent a postcard to me that he composed without any punctuation and without any spaces between words. Of course, it took a long time for me to decipher, but an action by grandpa that I have never forgotten. I had so much fun showing it to the other soldiers.

1947

In February 1947, after a year and a half in the Army, I was sent to Fort Dix, NJ where I was to be discharged. Because the separation process took several days and because our home in Trenton was so close to the base, I was permitted to go home on the days or evenings when nothing was happening and then return in time for roll call. Both Chuck and Walt had returned earlier from the Army and the Navy. It was at that time that we started the Zulker Gospel Trio with Betty playing the piano for us. Later Ginny-Lou became our pianist. (I believe I am correct about this sequence but read the letter below).

Granddad invited us to have our first program at the Linwood Community Church on February 9, 1947. On the following day he wrote a letter of appreciation and thanks to us - one that I still have and treasure. He spoke most favorably of our ministry and greatly encouraged us. In part it read:

“Rev. Walter H. Ott, Linwood Community Church, Linwood, NJ, Phone, Somers Point 614. (no area code in those days).

“Dear Boys and Virginia. I have associated with a good number of speakers and singers in my time, but I must sincerely say, I never had as good a time with any of these others as I experienced with you four dear young folks, all four of you. You are greatly appreciated and admired by our worshipers because of your joyful way of conducting your program and at the same time displaying no ego, no conceit....I say sincerely, I believe in you with all my heart and shall pray with great delight for future experiences such as I had yesterday....Yours in Jesus Christ, Grandpa.”

His letter was addressed to “Dear Boy’s and Virginia”, so maybe Ginny Lou was at the piano, or did mother play for us? He certainly wouldn’t have called Betty by the name Virginia, would he? Of course, he always called Isabel, Virginia, but she was not on the scene at that time, not until after we had started Youth For Christ meetings in the summer.

1949

Earlier I said that the parsonage built for my grandparents was small. I'll tell you how I know. During the summer of 1948 after I had finished my freshman year at Bob Jones University in South Carolina, I was living at home with my parents in Trenton, NJ and working at the Eton Shop for Men and Boy's Clothing when granddad was taken ill. He asked me to come to Linwood and preach for him until I had to return to college. He said that though he could not pay me for my services I could live with them in their *small* home. They had just one bedroom, a tiny bath, a living room, small kitchen, and eating area. I was given a folding metal chaise-lounge for my bed in the living room each night, which I had to fold up and store during the day. But, all in all, it was a good experience as granddad listened to my sermons each Sunday and Wednesday and gave me good advice for all the years of ministry to come. In September, I returned to college - this time to The King's College in New Castle Delaware, and he to the pulpit.

1950

On June 10, grandpa performed the wedding ceremony for Isabel and me on a very hot day at the West Trenton Presbyterian Church in NJ, Isabel's home church. Perspiration dripped from grandpa's ear lobes and we wondered if he was going to be ok. The next day he returned to the Linwood Community Church for services, and Isabel and I moved to Philadelphia after a week-end honeymoon in New York City. We had sub-let an efficiency apartment at Eastern Seminary - the collegiate division - where I was to resume college classes in the fall, and I had a temporary summer job. But before the month was over grandpa was taken ill, and again he asked me to preach for him. My Aunt Jo and Uncle Gene offered Isabel and me a free room on the second floor of their small Cape Cod bungalow in Pleasantville, the same house in which I was born. Grandpa also got jobs for both of us with the American Stores/Acme through his friendship with the regional manager, Mr. Marty Ney. Isabel worked at the store in Ocean City and I at Somers Point. Just how we traveled there, I do not know, because we did not have a car. At the end of the summer, grandpa was well enough to return to the pulpit and Isabel and I went back to Philadelphia.

1950-1951

From September 1950 on, the story about grandpa is not clear to me. Others will have to help fill in the details.

1. When did he go after resigning from the church on March 5, 1952?
2. When was he in the Northfield Home for the Indigent?

3. When did he go to our parents home at 135 Independence Avenue in Trenton?
4. When was grandma in the Northfield Home?
5. Where did grandpa die? - Northfield Alms House - Atlantic County facility
6. Where did grandma die? - Northfield Alms House - Atlantic County facility

1952

On March 5, 1952 Grandpa resigned from the church due to ill health and on August 16, 1952 he passed away.

Though I was only a student in my junior year at Eastern Baptist College in Philadelphia, I was asked to conduct the funeral service held at the Linwood Community Church. Many details I have forgotten except for the fact that seven ordained ministers were present, among whom was Dr. David D. Allen, the distinguished Bible Teacher and Minister from Hazel Park Michigan, who said that granddad had led him to Christ.

Dave's father - Jewish - had a shoe store in Pleasantville not far from grandpa's house on Pleasant Avenue. Grandpa knew that Dave was having a bible class for children at his parent's home above the store and encouraged me to attend one summer while I was visiting him. I was about twelve years old, and I remember the occasion so vividly. Many years later when I was minister at the Bethany Temple Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Dave was one of the preachers at the Philadelphia Area Sunday School Convention held at the church, and visited with us in our home next door. What a thrill for me to stand as a colleague with him in ministry for Christ.

Granddad was buried in the Atlantic City Cemetery located in Pleasantville, NJ. where he shares a double gravestone with Grandma Elizabeth Boogar Carr Ott who died in 1964.



OTHER THOUGHTS

Seaville Camp Meeting -

Grandpa and grandma had a summer cottage at the South Seaville Camp Meeting grounds in Seaville, NJ, in South Jersey, inland from Sea Isle City. It was a Methodist Church summer retreat in a grove of trees and a hundred or so wood-frame cottages. During my childhood, the cottages did not have running water or inside bathrooms. Water was provided at the in-ground hand pumps located several places around the campgrounds. A toilet building was located at the outer edge of the camp, which you could use during the day. Each morning a long line of adults wound their way to the toilets carrying the night's accumulation of under-the-bed potties. Quite a sight! Specific details not necessary.

In the center of the camp grounds was a wooden tabernacle for religious services. Grandpa Ott was a member of the Camp Board and must have served as the treasurer because he gathered the offerings after each service and counted it on the table in his cottage. Those were the days when coins were predominate in the offering baskets. As children, we always enjoyed helping him separate the pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters for easier counting.

Aunt Jo and Uncle Gene also had a cottage there on the corner of the path or lane opposite granddad's. After they had all gone to their heavenly reward, Doris (Berry) and her husband Allen Endicott bought one of the cottages and occupied it for many summers.

The Straight Razor -

As long as I knew him, grandpa's barber shop was in the front room of all the houses where he and grandma lived. However, he didn't sit in the shop waiting for customers, but wherever else he was in the house he heard them when the door opened and closed. He would then enter the shop and greet them. That meant that whenever my brother Chuck and I visited with him we would have some fun. We would sneak out the backdoor of the house, go around to the front, enter and bang the door. Grandpa, thinking he had a customer, would enter the shop only to find us. We all had a good laugh and he played along with us.

Also, because he shaved customers with a straight razor, he had one especially made as a toy. It was about two feet long made of wood and metal. The metal part was thick and purposely dull. He would then lift us - and other children - up into the barber chair, cover our chins with a lot of soapy lather, and then go through the motions of shaving us. We never ceased the enjoyment.

The FBI and Granddad - Law Enforcer

Another experience in grandpa's life is one that few people knew about. I can attest to it because I saw it when it was happening. After grandpa had stopped barbering and was trying to survive on what little money the church provided him, one of his former barbering customers tried to help. If I am correct, the man worked for the FBI, or similar agency, trying to halt the illicit drug traffic in nearby Atlantic City, NJ. On a given day, the agent would meet grandpa at his front door and drive him to the Atlantic City boardwalk. Grandpa, dressed in his oldest clothes, and with his hat pulled low on his head, would slouch and "hang around" on the boardwalk waiting for a drug pusher to confront him. When it was the proper time, grandpa would signal to the agent, and his work for the day would be done. Just how much grandpa was paid, I do not know, but I do know that the agent bought him some new clothes.

Grandma Ott - (February 10, 1878 - July 11, 1964)

I don't know much about her early life but when grandma and grandpa Carr were married, they lived in Haddonfield, NJ where my mother was born. I also have a photo of grandpa Carr standing on the outside of a grocery store that I was told he managed in Mays Landing, NJ. It seems that he may also have been a pharmacist.

Grandma also lived in Atlantic City for a while and operated a millinery shop. Whether this was before or after marrying grandpa Ott I do not know. Since grandpa Carr's grave is in the Atlantic City Cemetery in Pleasantville, it may be that he lived in Atlantic City before his death.

Grandma, Elizabeth Boogar Carr Ott was the daughter of Thomas Boogar (August 15, 1838-December 31, 1919) and Abigail Bennet (April 16, 1843-1919) who married on December 31, 1860). They had three other children: Clara Emma Boogar (who never married), Lydia M. Boogar Reeve, and Dorothy G. Boogar Stockton.

Clara Emma Boogar

Grandpa and grandma Ott opened their home to grandma's sister Clara Emma Boogar who never married. She lived with them as long as I can remember and was a very quiet, easy-going, loving aunt. We used to laugh when we heard that before she turned out the light in her bedroom at night, she always looked under the bed to see if anyone was there. She may have done it because she was afraid, but we said she was always hoping she would find her man there.

Automobiles

I don't believe that grandpa Ott ever had a car. In those days it was easy to hop onto a train or a trolley. How well I remember the trolley that grandpa took us on whenever we went

to Ocean City. It ran from Pleasantville to Atlantic City as well. There was also trolley conductor who was one of his friends and who used to stop by grandpas at the end of the day and give us salt-water taffy or two.

I don't know when it ceased operation, but I know that grandpa loved to ride over to Ocean City and sit on the boardwalk benches whenever he could.



Rev Walter H. Ott



Rev Walter H. Ott and Wife

(Elizabeth Cordelia Boogar Carr Ott)

THE END – 5/8/2013