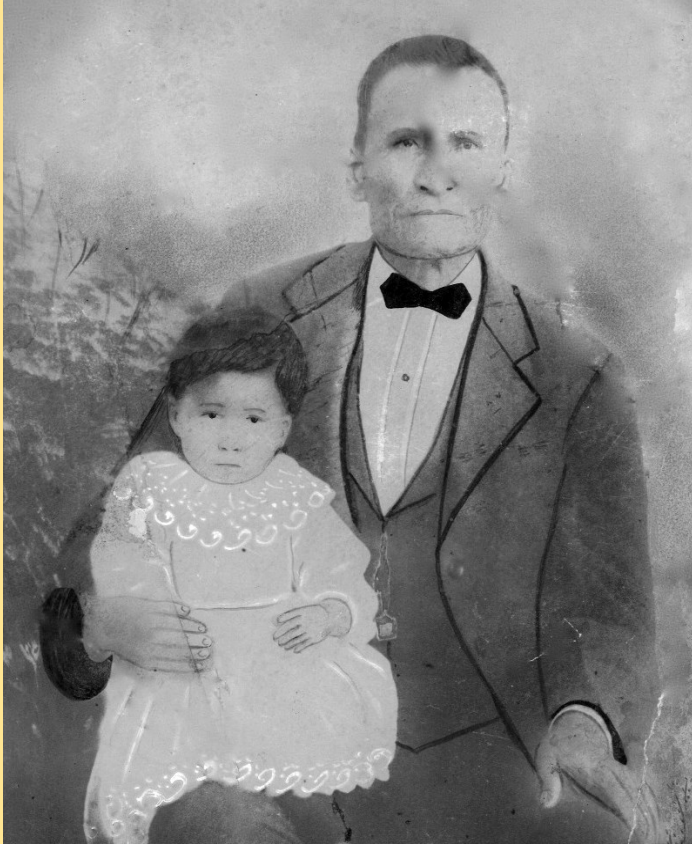


**NEW MEXICO CONFERENCE  
UNITED METHODIST  
HISTORICAL JOURNAL**



**Blas Gutiérrez  
1831 – 1904**

**Published by the NM Conference Historical Society  
Volume 1 2019  
May 2019  
XXIII**

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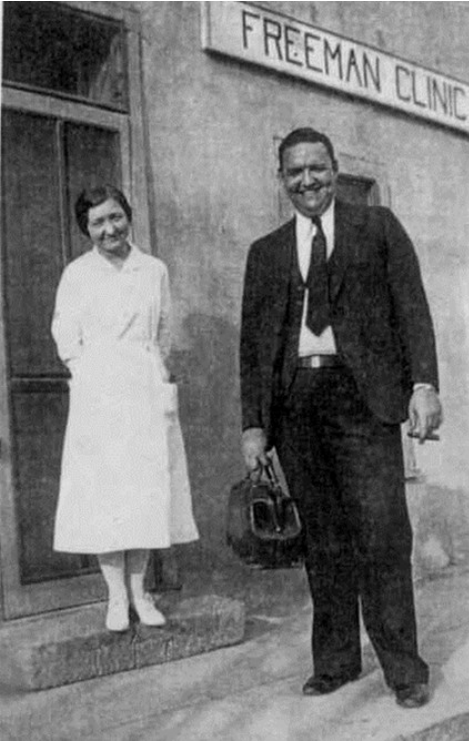
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## **Some Experiences in El Paso, Texas**

By Millie Rickford

My sojourn in El Paso extended from January 1930 until October 1961.

I landed in El Paso via train which took me thru the smelter area. I was met by Misses Brandeberry and Frazier on Sunday p.m. That evening the young adults were meeting in a forum at Houchen Settlement. This group

was part of a Sunday School that met in the basement each Sunday morning. A student pastor from Lydia Patterson, Josue Castro, was giving the sermons on Sunday morning after the Sunday School. El Buen Pastor Church was organized from this small beginning. As time passed and the church grew, other churches close by were used. A day came when the members moved into the new building on the same block with Houchen and the adobe used for a clinic and hospital. After the Woman's Division purchased the school building occupying the fourth corner we had a whole block that we called "Friendship Square."

I was sent to the Houchen staff to promote better health for the south El Paso community. From the adobe we progressed to a new brick building made

possible by funds from the Woman's Division and the Newark Conference of Newark, New Jersey. We now had modern equipment, not only for clinic patients but beds to hospitalize young mothers when their babies were born.

We set to work to reduce the infant mortality that exceeded the average rate of other cities the same size of El Paso. When I left, the Health Department commended us for contributing to saving the lives of many prematures, thus reducing the infant death rate to less than the average in other cities.

We required the expectant mothers to have regular visits to the clinic. One day, when one brought her seven year old boy with her, he came to my office asking us to give him a baby sister. My reply "We will do our best" didn't materialize because the day the mother went home with her baby it was another boy, however Raul seemed to be as happy as if it were a girl.

The years passed and to our great surprise the Ford Foundation gave us a grant of several thousand dollars which stimulated our Mission Board to match it and furnish us with a modern kitchen in order to



meet the requirements to become accredited as well as meeting other needs.

A young boy had been treated by a private doctor for two years trying to find out what caused an obstruction in one nostril. The mother came to the clinic because she had used up her funds. We gave the boy an anesthetic and removed a rock from the nose. It was a time of rejoicing. The mother made several rounds kissing and hugging each of us in the room. Both went home happy not to say anything about how I felt.

Our chapel services were attended by both clinic and hospital patients. Those who wished it were given a bible if they wanted to read it. We had them in both English and Spanish.

When our hospital was ten years old we celebrated by organizing what we called a Hospital guild. In October each year the members of the Guild were honored. All members had membership cards and were invited to this special party in October. Each year these who were ten years were given a souvenir to pin on to identify them, so they could be first in the games. Of course the pinata was the chief interest just before the refreshments. The children looked forward to reach the age of ten. This experience cultivated loyalty to the hospital because all members had been born in the hospital. After one child was in school he



was asked to fill out a form to indicate the town or state in which he was born. He wrote down - place of birth was Newark Hospital.

We extended our services to Lydia Patterson School, mainly answering emergency calls and doing immunizations when the group came in large numbers mainly at the noon hour; until the school obtained its own doctor.

I should have spoken Spanish like a native, but failed. Mrs. Ben O. Hill deserves most of the credit for what I did learn, and encouraged me to the extent that I could converse on the lines of pills and pains.

I remember a little black boy came to the clinic one Saturday morning. He asked me to tell him if he had whooping cough or pneumonia. Another Saturday a girl came asking for the books I told her I would give her. I was blank, but after a time remembered I wanted her to come to see if she had gained pounds. I used the word libros instead of libras.

It has been fun to reminisce and I thank you Mr. Hall for asking me to contribute to your efforts in gathering information for the New Mexico Conference history. I used to say that I spent half my life at Houchen and Newark. Now I'm two years past that mark but I do look back on that time of service there with great joy and satisfaction.

## **RESOURCES**

Rickford, Millie. Some Experiences in El Paso, Texas. NM Conference Archives UMC, 1963.



## **NEWARK MATERNITY HOSPITAL**

A Brief History

By Katherine Talbot

She was one of the tiniest bundles of joy the stork had ever delivered to Newark Maternity Hospital. Weighing in at two pounds nine ounces, Graciela Calderon was tenderly placed in the incubator, as the doctor and nurses marveled at her tenacity in clinging to life. Nurse Munoz watched her carefully, and every time she started turning blue the nurse would say, "Gracie, start breathing!" Gracie did as she was told, for she was a winner. Even though her weight dropped to one pound nine ounces, and she later got an infection that kept her in the hospital for three months, she survived.

Gracie was just one of a number of "preemies" and other babies born at Newark Hospital through its sixty-odd years of caring for mothers and their newborns. It was through love, care, and dedication given by the staff in this small hospital, tucked away in El Paso's barrio, that brought these hundreds of chil-



dren into the world with a healthy start.

The history of this unique hospital is tied in with that of Houchen Community Center, a Methodist owned institution, dating back to 1893. It was just a matter of time that the workers at Houchen Settlement House, as it was called then, saw the need for a clinic. So, in 1920, Miss Effie Stoltz, a nurse, was hired, but there was no clinic for her to work in! However, with the ingenuity those folks had back then, she opened a clinic in the bathroom of the settlement house! Now, just across the alley to the west stood a long row of adobe apartments, which the staff decided would make a suitable clinic. They rented part of it, and eventually bought the whole building, and converted it into a clinic. It was first called "Clinica de la Comunidad", and later named Freeman Clinic, where people were treated for infectious diseases, flu, eye problems, were given tonsillectomies, and attended classes in home health.

In due time (mid or late 1920s), maternity care was included at the clinic, and rooms were fitted for delivering and caring for babies. Nurses were hired for the work, and local doctors volunteered their expertise.

By 1936 plans were being laid to build a clinic and maternity hospital on the grounds where the old tenement house was. Early the next year the plans became reality, when a fine, new building was erected, with two wings facing 5th Street. One wing was for Freeman Clinic, and the other for Newark Maternity Hospital, both equipped with the latest fixtures. There was a kitchen, dining room, and laundry room in the basement. Mothers were given pre-natal and



post partem care, and their babies delivered for a package deal of only \$25.00! Home visits were made too, and the death rate for newborns in South El Paso dropped considerably.

From these humble beginnings the hospital and clinic grew, with additions and new equipment. The hospital became accredited, and was considered one of the finest in El Paso. Hundreds of babies were born there each year, including many twins. 1940 was a record year, with 10 sets delivered by that famous stork! Yes, there was a set of Siamese twins born there too, who were later separated at Providence Memorial Hospital.

This, then, is the story of a wonderful little hospital hidden in the barrio of El Paso, that was forced to close in 1986 due to rising insurance costs. It was a vital part of the community, and its influence was felt far and wide. Those who were born there, had their children there, or worked there speak of it with pride.

Their lives were impacted by the love and care so freely given in a hospital small enough for close, personal attention.

Little Gracie came back many times for check-ups, and in October, 1953 at age 16 months, she posed for her picture in "her" incubator! We can only imagine the parents' gratitude for the loving, tireless care given her from the day the stork arrived early at Newark Maternity Hospital.

## **RESOURCES**

Talbot, Katherine. Memory Book: Newark Maternity Hospital 1920-1986. 2006. Sixty-Six Year Commemoration Book, privately printed for the "Celebracion de la Ciguena" Reunion.



## **The Closing of the Newark Hospital**

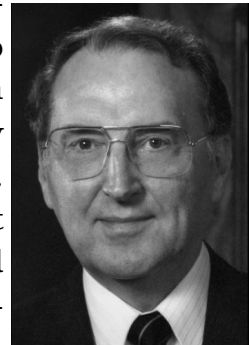
By Will Steinsiek

Ostensibly the closing of the Newark Maternity Hospital in El Paso in 1986 was the result of the rising costs for malpractice insurance and concern that the church's ongoing liability was "too dangerous." In fact, the reasons were more complicated, and the process of closing the hospital did not happen without a great deal of controversy.

Early in 1979 an arrangement was made for George Brewer, President of the board of the Methodist Hospital in Lubbock to "make an onsite assessment of the organization and the economic viability and feasibility of the Hospital" He conducted his survey of the Newark United Methodist Hospital on Saturday, July 7, 1979, and issued his report on July 10<sup>th</sup>.

In it he noted that there had been a decline in the number of deliveries done at the Newark Hospital, resulting in a shortfall in revenues and a worsening financial picture. He noted that this could be the result of a number of different factors

El Paso is feeling the economic decline more than other Texas cities. Unemployment there is 13% as opposed to 3% in Lubbock and less than 3% in Dallas and Houston. The economy of the Republic of Mexico is rising. This, coupled with more stringent immigration laws in the United States, has reduced the attractiveness and easy convenience of Mexi-



can nationals crossing the border into the United States. -Newark Hospital once had a significant proportion of its patients who were Mexican nationals. This has declined.

He recommended that the Women's Division assume the long term debt, \$163,569 incurred for the renovation of the hospital, and that the Newark United Methodist Hospital be separated from the more general Houchen Community and given its own local board.

He also noted that the New Mexico Conference "does not identify Newark as one of its own institutions to watch over and support."

He also recommended improvements to the facilities which he felt should be paid for by the Women's Division.

There were at the time serious concerns expressed by the Commission on Religion and Race regarding the "the imbalance of Hispanics as officers" on the Houchen-Newark Board. These concerns were dismissed with the comment that "This results in turn from the nature of the Hispanic membership on the Board," whom they seemed to claim lacked "both the inclination and demonstrated ability to provide leadership."

It is against this background that events began to unfold which threatened the future of the Newark Hospital.

In 1984, faced with a total of 13 malpractice suits over the prior 18 months, a group met on August 23, 1984 in El Paso to consider the problems at Houchen-Newark and whether the Newark Hospital

itself was a problem. Lula Garrett, Assistant General Secretary for Institutional and Voluntary Ministries of the General Board of Global Ministries presented the issue and presided over the meeting, which included Roland McGregor, Russell Parchman, and Clois Sanders, from the New Mexico Conference among many others.

During the meeting Lula Garrett referred to a fact finding team sent by the General Board which had recommended the following,

- (1) raise insurance to 1.5 million with a 10 million limit;
- (2) identify the problem patients earlier and get them to other hospitals sooner;
- (3) find a new management team for the hospital;
- (4) separate the governing board from the Community Center operation, make it smaller and more expert.

As captured by notes made at the time by Roland McGregor, the General Board felt that every day the hospital operated put the General Board in greater jeopardy. "Newark Hospital would have to be the number one priority of the General Board to justify its continuing to support."



Others noted that the staff was doing a good job, and that the instance of malpractice lawsuits was consistent with that experienced by other hospitals in the area. However, the size of the Newark Hospital made it more difficult to absorb the cost.

Arguments were presented regarding the necessity of this ministry. If it is truly needed then why does it not run full? If it benefits the poor, why does Newark get 95% of its funding from patient fees?

Talk then turned to how to interpret the closing of Newark to churches in the area. The thought was that being candid about the “problem of insurance premiums” and the reutilization of that space for other ministries would be effective in preventing any sort of outcry.

In effect the decision to close had already been made by the General Board. Lula Garrett summed it up by saying, “We can’t afford the insurance nor can we recommend the service that is being provided.”

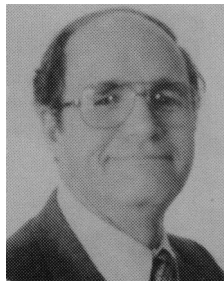
An adhoc committee on Newark Hospital was formed by M L Ellzey Jr to respond. On September 12, he wrote to Lula Garrett saying,

The committee has asked me to communicate with you in order to facilitate its work. After considering the desperate need for obstetrical care in South El Paso, the committee is unanimously committed to keeping Newark open as a maternity hospital. It assumes that the General Board of Global Ministries is likewise so committed so long as the cost of malpractice insurance can be kept within reasonable bounds, and reasonable steps are taken to reduce the probability of lawsuits. Is this a valid assumption?

He also noted,

One problem has been numerous rumors flying around the various churches to the effect that

Newark is definitely closing, or that we are not served around the clock by registered nurses. I suppose that the second falsehood is a throwback to previous times when it was true. A curious effect of these unfortunate rumors has been a growth of support for Newark among the New Mexico Conference Methodists, not just the Rio Grande Conference.



His letter on September 25<sup>th</sup> laid out a convincing case for the continuation of the Newark Hospital, noting the upcoming closing of the South El Paso Maternity Hospital and that Newark would soon be the “only hospital in South El Paso to serve the poor and disfranchised.” He noted steps taken to reduce their liability risk and the hiring of Mrs. Gretchen Srigley as their full time professional hospital administrator.

His response included a letter from Sam Sparks of Grambling and Mounce who noted,

The risk of liability for hospitals in the El Paso area has been steadily increasing over the last several years... However, regarding Newark Methodist Maternity Hospital specifically, I am glad to report that its risk/loss ratio appears to be superior to any of the other hospitals in the city...it is clear from the practicing attorneys in the El Paso area that the increasing liability insurance cost of Newark are merely generic and do not reflect improper administra-





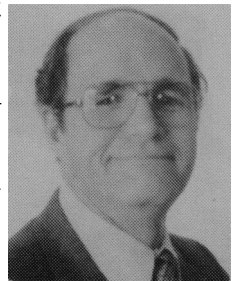
tion of the hospital. In fact, the hospital has had excellent management and that management has minimized this ever increasing risk.

In the face of very little encouragement from the General Board, as time went on, their effort expanded to seek the support of the community around them. Providence Memorial Hospital came forward in support of a new not-for-profit corporation that might be created to allow the hospital to continue.

Other community organizations responded as well. The issue even splashed over on to the pages of the El Paso Times as well, with headlines like "Maternity Hospital Needs Saving Effort,"

The idea of creating a new non-profit to manage the hospital began to gain ground. In the Newark-Houchen News in September of 1985 M L Ellzey Jr. noted,

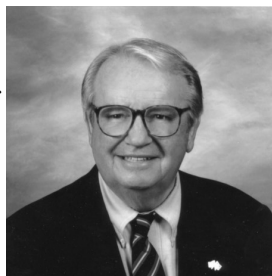
The name Newark Methodist Maternity Hospital has had a long and distinguished service, but the National Division of the Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church is requesting that we retire it for legal reasons. The purpose of the change is to reflect the new relationship of the Hospital to the United Methodist Church as a covenant mission rather than an agency. Consequently, the term "Methodist" cannot be used. A number of people have already started thinking about a new name. One excellent suggestion from the staff is "Women's Hospital of El Paso." The hospital actually belongs to all who have prayed for it,



who have supported it with gifts and service, who have been patients in it and who have been born in it.

On February 13, 1986, Laurance N Nickey, director of the El Paso City-County Health District wrote to Lula Garrett noting,

The El Paso City-County Health District strongly endorses the above captioned proposal to continue maternity services at Newark Methodist Maternity Hospital in El Paso. To let an institution with sixty-five (65) years of service to a segment of our population that is in need, simply close its doors on 1,500 births (more than 12% of our total) will work an extreme hardship on our community.



In her response to Providence Memorial Hospital, Lula Garret made it clear, however, that a decision had already been made to close the hospital and not simply to rebrand it.

The Joint Committee on Institutional Ministries is anxious that its present stance not be misunderstood in that it does not wish to leave the impression that it is willing to participate in the operation of another maternity hospital. Therefore, it appears that, even though the study might indicate the need for a maternity hospital, the operation of



such a facility -- even though it be a rental operation -- does not at the moment appear to be feasible. There is some concern that even a lease arrangement would still give the appearance of a Women's Division-sponsored operation.

Nevertheless the hospital board continued their efforts to find a solution which would be acceptable and keep the doors to the Newark Hospital open.

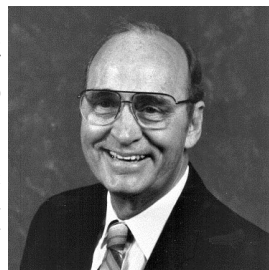
Laurence Nicky appealed to Bishop Schowengerdt in a letter dated March 14<sup>th</sup> to intervene,



Bishop, I personally implore you to help keep Newark a viable institution in whatever mode so that our community will continue care for a significant number of patients. It would appear that people in the Methodist hierarchy are making decisions that are not mindful of human needs. Your concern and intervention would be more than appreciated by the entire El Paso community and those concerned with its well being.

The bishop also received a letter from Bishop Raymundo Peña, the Roman Catholic Bishop of El Paso. In his response Bishop Schowengerdt noted,

I wish the United Methodist Church would give the powers to a resident bishop that have been granted by the Roman Catholic Church to all resident bishops. I have registered my protest to the



Board of Global Ministries in New York about this decision. I hope you will also write expressing to them in letter form what you wrote to me.

Pressure continued to mount on both the Bishop and on Lula Garrett from many sources. Community leaders, and county health organizations grew more alarmed, noting that even as new facilities were under construction, “the increasing birth rate in El Paso County indicates that our new addition, when completed, may not be able to meet demand.”

Janice Caster, the president of the UMW in the New Mexico Conference joined in protesting, saying,



United Methodist Women find it difficult to understand why the National and Women's Divisions of the Board of Global Ministries would want to see a project such as Newark, that has served so many low income people through the years with quality care, close its doors to a community where the need is so great and where that need will probably continually escalate rather than decline, due to the population growth and border proximity.

On April 7<sup>th</sup> the Board of Newark Methodist Hospital held another special meeting. Much had happened. The hospital was no longer hemorrhaging money. New Tort laws in the state of Texas now offered some protection for the Board of Global Ministries. A new foundation had been established to raise money for the Hospital. They also now believed that

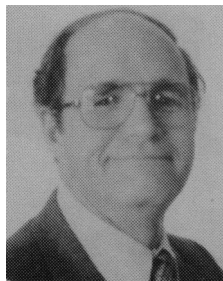
they could obtain malpractice insurance with no help at all from the Global Board. For all of these reasons they believed that the Global Board would have to relent.

They also noted that the closing of the Newark Hospital might be only the beginning, because the day care and the community center “are as much of a liability as the Hospital.”

In his letter to Rene Bideaux, the Deputy General Secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries, M L Elizy said,

I gathered from our conversation that you were surprised by the action of the Newark Board rescinding its October 28 decision to close the Hospital... The Newark Board took its action only after careful deliberation and continuing consideration of hospital and community conditions. It determined that changes in those conditions have occurred which are sufficient to warrant a new approach to our problems.

To our knowledge, this was the first time in history that an agency of the United Methodist Church considered liquidating a medical mission without making some provision for continuation of the services to the community. Furthermore, this would have occurred when, according to the knowledgeable authorities, the need for such services is as desperate as ever. The Newark Board is not prepared to suffer the onus for such a grave and serious action inevitably resulting in the loss

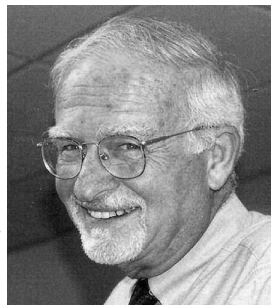


of human life and the maiming of babies. Neither, we are confident, are the National and Women's Divisions nor The United Methodist Church as a whole.

The New Mexico Annual Conference meeting on May 29<sup>th</sup> overwhelmingly passed a resolution mandating the continuation of the Newark Hospital, and noting that every major reason for closing the hospital had now been addressed and a viable solution provided, including all risk of liability. The community of El Paso and the New Mexico Conference had spoken with a loud voice.

Responding to the resolution, however, Rene O Bideaux, wrote to Bishop Schowengerdt on June 13, 1986 saying,

The issue of the July 1, 1986 severing of relationship with Newark Hospital has, indeed, been reconsidered by the Joint (Women's Division and National Division) Committee on Institutional Ministries. Due to the organized national letter-writing campaign on the subject, all directors of the General Board of Global Ministries had been encouraged to ask for reconsideration of the action. The Joint Committee on Institutional Ministries, in its reconsideration, reaffirmed its original recommendation to the National Division, to sever all relationships to Newark Hospital (all relationships include the use of presently occupied property for the operation of a hospital.)



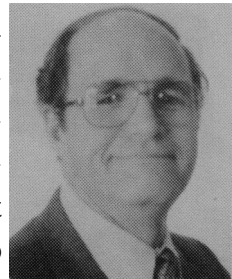
They added,

The National Division has every intention to continue the ministry of Houchen Community Center by utilizing all of the property at Friendship Square.

On June 24, 1986, Elizy sent yet another letter to Lula Garrett.

The Board of Directors of Newark Maternity Hospital instructed me to write this letter to you. To recapitulate, the Newark Board voted to stop delivering babies by July 1, 1986 when informed in October 1985 that the National Division was "severing all relations" with the hospital. Since that time the following have developed:

1. The board encountered virtually unanimous support among community leaders for keeping Newark Hospital open.
2. Dr. Laurence Nickey, director of the El Paso City/County Health district, and other local health officials have specifically requested that Newark Hospital remain open.
3. Local churches have been voicing concern and support for continuing Newark Methodist Hospital.
4. The New Mexico Annual Conference on May 29 passed by an overwhelming vote a resolution mandating the continued operation of Newark Hospital. We understand that similar support is building in the Rio



Grande Annual Conference.

5. There has been no significant opinion in the community or in the church at large for closing Newark Hospital and no specific reason has been given. At one time liability risk to the denomination and the unavailability of malpractice insurance were offered as reasons, but they appear to have been resolved.

Influenced by these, the Newark Board rescinded in April its October action to close and declined to take action to close at its June 16 meeting, tabling a report from its ad hoc committee on closure.

The headline of the El Paso Times for June 27, 1986 boldly proclaimed, "Newark won't close till Evicted" and featured a photo of Gretchen Sringley-Seitsinger on their cover.

They quoted Rene Bideaux as saying that the decision to close Newark was made last October because several malpractice suits had doubled the global ministries cost of malpractice insurance...and additional malpractice suits were threatened.

# Newark won't close till evicted

By Guadalupe Silva  
Times staff writer

The Newark Methodist Hospital, where more than 35,000 El Pasoans have been born, will not close its doors despite being ordered to do so by July 1, a hospital official said.

Larry M. Elzey, president of the board of directors for Newark, said the 14-member hospital board has voted to keep the hospital open until "when and if the National Division of the United Methodist Church Global Ministries evicts them."

The 66-year-old maternity hospital in South El Paso is owned by the Women's Division of the United Methodist Church. It is part of the Houschen Community Center in South El Paso, one of the neediest sections of the city.

"But before being evicted, we will have to be advised to move 30 days in advance," he said. "And we have not received any notice."

Church officials in the global ministries recently announced their determination to sever all economic relationships with the El Paso hospital as of July 1.

Gretchen Sringley-Seitsinger, administrator for the hospital and the Houschen Community



—Times photo  
Gretchen Sringley-Seitsinger doesn't want to close.

\$500,000 per case with a \$1.5 million annual limit. In addition, liability has been taken out for each board member, she said. The board of ministries, however still pays for catastrophic insurance.

The decision to close Newark was made last October because several malpractice suits against the hospital had doubled the global ministries' cost of malpractice insurance, said the Rev. Rene O. Bideaux, head of the na



"The global ministries are now treading in dangerous waters," they quoted Elizey as saying, "because they are a bureaucracy, and they are not carrying out the wishes of church members."

Stringly-Seitsinger was quoted too as saying, "What I don't understand about all this, is that the church is supposed to be all benevolent. But when the need is there, it runs scared."

When the July first deadline for closing the hospital passed, swift action followed. Dated July 7, 1986, the letter from Lula Garrett declared,

As of the moment, July 9, 1986, you are no longer authorized to operate a hospital in that location, nor one that is identified as a project of the General Board of Global Ministries. In order to execute this action, the following steps will be taken:

1. A public disclaimer will be made.
2. A qualified hospital administrator will be sent there to close out our involvement with the hospital.
3. An outside, independent audit will be commissioned.
4. As of this date all liability and indebtedness for both patients and staff become the responsibility of the Newark Hospital Board.
5. Your administrator should complete her separation from the Friendship Square operation.

We seek your cooperation in these close-out steps.



The hospital was finally forced to close its doors on

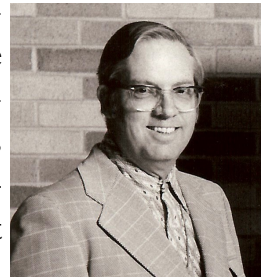


August 15, 1986.

That same day the banner Headline ran in the El Paso Times “Maternity hospital abandons mothers.” It featured a photograph of women waiting at the Hospital seeking a refund for their prenatal care deposit. “I didn’t expect them to close this soon,” one young woman was quoted as saying. “It’s hard for me. We’re all upset.”

This was exactly the sort of bad publicity they had once hoped to avoid, and it evoked a response from Don Forsman to the editor of the El Paso Times,

It seems to me that it would have been fairer for a story to have been written about the thousands of dollars which the United Methodist Church has contributed to Newark and the south El Paso community over the 66-year history of the hospital. I am personally sorry that the hospital ministry to the newborn is ending in south El Paso, but I also celebrate the vast number of babies who have been born in the clean, sterile environment of Newark. This beginning for their lives would not have been possible without the help of a great church that cared.



**RESOURCES**

Letters, clippings and documents found in Accession 1992.36.13 in Box 226 of the NM Conference Archives.

Talbot, Katherine. Memory Book: Newark Maternity Hospital 1920-1986. 2006. Sixty-Six Year Commemoration Book, privately printed for the "Celebracion de la Ciguena" Reunion.



Houchen Administrator - 1914-1945



Mothers and babies, unidentified

Miss Emma Brandeberry at Hueco Tanks, April, 1931



Millie Rickford holding Virginia Ann Lewis age 3 mos. 1 wk.



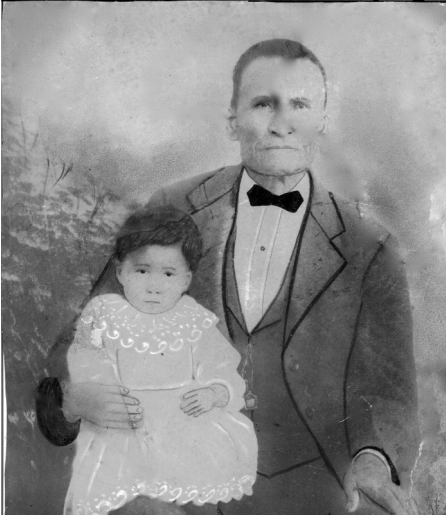
Feb. 1932 Production! Cast: George Washington, Mr. Waggoner, Martha W., Louise Vanek Newell, Mexican Boy - Alice House, Girl - Elmira Chapparo, Farmers, Boy - Millie Rickford, Girl - E.M.K. Wish we could have seen this!



Millie Rickford, et al



Mothers with their clinic babies 1932



## **El Reverendo Blas Gutiérrez 1831-1904**

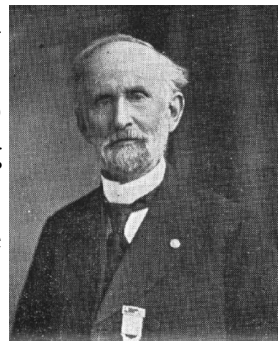
By Max Cisneros

Blas Gutiérrez was probably born in the year 1831, in the village of Pareda, located between the towns of San Antonio and Guadalajara in what is now Socorro county New Mexico. His father was Filómeno Gutiérrez who reportedly had come to New Mexico directly from Spain. His mother was an Indian woman from somewhere in the area. She was known only by her first name of Bernarda. Exactly which tribe she was from remains a mystery, but it is likely that she was either Apache (Mescalero), Navajo (from Magdalena) or Pueblo (possibly Isleta). The Indian blood in Gutiérrez is quite apparent, as pictures show him to be very Indian looking.

His father Filómeno was Aprendizado or indentured to a man in Pareda. He was working for this man in the town of Pareda, and this is where Blas grew up. Later, the date is not known, Blas moved to Valverde. It is known that his first years in Valverde were spent in farming an extensive strip of land above Valverde. His crop was mainly corn which he used to buy his father's freedom. He apparently took "wagonloads of corn to Pareda so that his father, who was 'enclavado' (enslaved), could be released from his bondage." Blas then brought his parents to live with him in Valverde. Upon his father's death, Blas al-

lowed his mother to return to her tribe. She returned to her people and to this day neither her last name nor her tribe are known. Blas apparently kept in touch with her and was known to have good relations with the Indians and to be well known among them. These relations were to stand him in good stead throughout his life.

Gutiérrez was successful as a farmer and soon began to accumulate wealth in terms of land, crops, and debts owed him. Money was a rather scarce commodity in New Mexico at this time. At any rate, he soon opened a general store in Valverde and was to become well off if not wealthy. He married a woman known only as María and began to raise a family. Only one of his children by María lived beyond infancy, a daughter Sabrina. Sabrina later married Manuel Emilio Morales and moved to Mexico taking the family wealth with her. She apparently did so because of a dispute with her father.



Gutiérrez was born into the Roman Catholic faith, but was converted to Methodism by the Reverend Thomas Harwood, a missionary to the New Mexico Territory in the years 1869 to 1910. Licensed to preach in 1875 and elected to church office in 1876, Reverend Gutiérrez was to serve the church for some twenty-eight years. He was assigned to ministries in Valverde, Socorro and Las Cruces. The assignment to Las Cruces caused quite an uproar by the citizens of Valverde and San Marcial. Catholic and Protestant alike protested the removal of Reverend Gutiérrez from the Valverde

church and they even took their protests to the Methodist Bishop. After a good deal of haggling, Reverend Gutiérrez was allowed to stay in Valverde, traveling to his ministry in Las Cruces whenever necessary.

He was one of the first local New Mexicans ordained a deacon of the Methodist Episcopal Church and was very well thought of by Harwood and other "American" ministers. Harwood described Gutierrez as "a flame of a worker, carrying enthusiasm with him wherever he went." Harwood even commented on Reverend Gutiérrez's ability as a minister, to his wife, Emily Harwood.

"We have some good preaching in Spanish. Mr. Harwood often speaks of Rev. Blas Gutiérrez and a few others, who are accustomed to give book, chapter, and verse, as hardly equaled in Scripture quotations by any whom he has ever heard, even in American pulpits"

- The Life of Emily J. Harwood , P. 309.

Reverend Gutiérrez built up the church in Valverde until he had some one hundred and fifty members and had erected a second church in that community. This structure is one of the few buildings that still stands in Valverde today. His wife María was also elected to church office in 1874, some two years before the Reverend. It was largely due to their efforts that Protestantism flourished in Valverde and among a large number of Spanish speaking people in New Mexico even to the present day.

Reverend Gutiérrez married twice during his life time. His first wife María, died in 1889 and he remained unmarried until sometime around the year

1896. His second wife was Naomi Chavez, who was twelve years of age at the time of her marriage to the Reverend. He was sixty-seven years of age at the time and had actually baptised Naomi some twelve years earlier. Marriages such as this were not uncommon, especially as Rev. Gutiérrez was well to do and influential in the community. She bore him six children, the first two named Bernarda, died in early childhood. The remaining four children in order of birth were Rebecca, Blas, Benjamin and Bernarda. Bernarda was the third child of that name. Rev. Blas was determined to have a child named after his mother...

The Reverend Blas Gutiérrez died on February 6, 1904 at the age of seventy-three, leaving behind a twenty year old widow and four children. His family remained in the Valverde area until 1920, when they moved to Albuquerque where they still live today...

Today, little remains of the Village of Valverde. The church built by Reverend Gutiérrez, a cemetery, part of the brick school house and numerous walls and



mounds that indicate the remains of houses. They are surrounded by vast stands of Tamarac (Salt Cedar), tumbleweeds, Yucca, Wild Asters, mesquite and an amazing number of flies. Here and there scattered across the plain are remnants of beds, barrels and even a wagon or two. Not much to mark the passing of a community that at one time had approximately eight hundred inhabitants and was so well known to so many.

## RESOURCES

Cisneros, Max. El Paraje De Valverde y un Hombre El Reverendo Blas Gutiérrez 1831-1904. NM Conference Archives UMC, 2 Dec. 1975. Submitted for History 579-001, Seminar in Southwest History, taught by Dr Donald C Cutter



“...We stop here to shed a tear for one who has so long and so faithfully braved the storm in the work of our missions. Bro. Blas after a long spell of sickness, passed away on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of February last with the words of the glorious Gospel of Christ on his lips, a smile of heavenly hope on his face, and a hallow of glory in his soul. He left his wife and children in deep sorrow, his church in sadness, and the town and community almost to a man weeping for him. But he had left them a rich inheritance, in spiritual things, in a better way of living, in a brighter hope of heaven. He faithfully ministered to their temporal as well as their spiritual needs. He is greatly missed in his own little church and we will miss him today in our conference, where heretofore we have seen him so regular and so active in the proceedings of this body. The Lord be with his family left to secure his departure.”

## RESOURCES

Harwood, Thomas Moore. “Presiding Elders Annual Report, Albuquerque, District.” Conferencia Española De Nuevo Mexico, 10 Oct. 1905, p. 34.





### **Retired Into Activity**

Dr F Lee Willshire

At the age of 40 I speculated on how much of life I have lived—not in years, but in satisfaction and useful work accomplished. I found the past 10 years more significant than the first 30.

At 50 it was so. Then at 60 the past 10 were better than the previous. At 70 another look, and the same is true. Today, at 78, the 70's have been the most rewarding.

Life is not measured by years. One need never feel that life is in the past. The most interesting years are always in the future. To me, each year is better than any previous year.

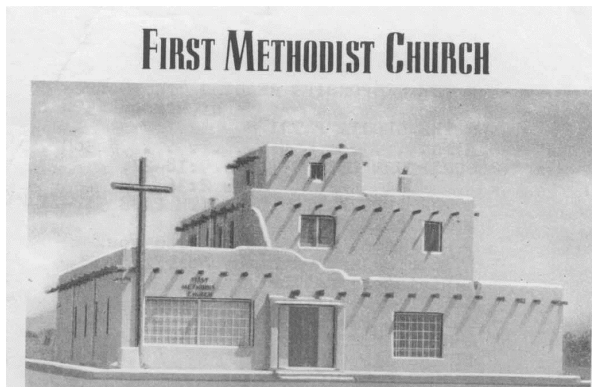
When one has passed the age of 70 he is able to discover whether or not the work in which he has been engaged is of such character that it has given the greatest possible joy. The saddest thing in the life of any person is to come to the conclusion that he should have been engaged in some other major work

during those years.

Speaking from a minister's view point, there is a never failing joy that comes to one who immerses himself in the oracles of God. The man who comes from his study with the book of books in his hand, in his heart, and on his lips, has the only message that can bring comfort, hope, and deliverance in the twentieth century.

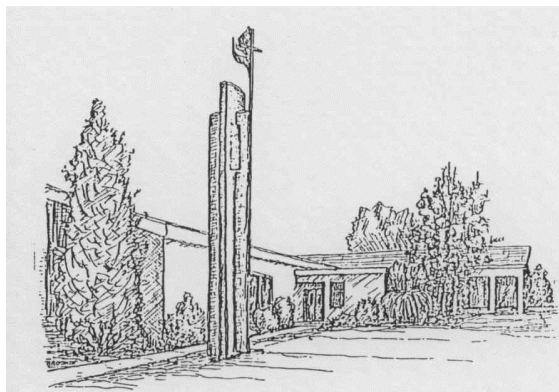
At retirement, I discovered a life time habit, so firmly fixed it seemed impossible to break. Yet, the only thing I could think of was finding a little church where I could hold service. Life seemed off center without preaching Sunday morning. There was no point in reading, studying, or thinking if I had no sermon to prepare. I had lived for years with the ever present search for a text, point one, two and three. I found reading no longer needed to head in to a sermon. So the best way for me to retire was to take a temporary appointment.

The district superintendent asked me to organize and build a church in Taos, N.Mex. In Oct. 1960 we started work on the task at hand. Dec. 5 we organized with 70 members. May 10 the first service was held in the church.



The next month I was asked to organize and build St. Andrews in Albuquerque. The first unit was built at a cost of \$60,000.00. May 1962 the first service was held with 100 joining the church.

May until Nov. we traveled. Then Rev. Odom, Pas-



tor at St John's Albuquerque asked me to do the visitation for the church. I worked there until July 1963. During the seven months we won 340 to Christ and his church.

The district superintendent asked Rev. Odom to release me to organize and build a church at Paradise Hills, Albuquerque. We started construction in August on a \$60,000.00 unit. The building was completed in May 1964. 250 were present at the service. Many united with the church.



Another task finished, I was ready to travel again. However, while on a trip out of the state, Dr. Maim, pastor, Christ United Methodist Church, Albuquerque, called me, and asked me to do the visiting for his church. I remained with him four years. During this period we won 650 to Christ and his church. I resigned at conference time. I went to conference without having work to do.

Rev. Hollis Shook, Pastor, St.Paul's United Methodist Church learned I was not employed. He asked me to work with him. I started working in July 1968. Now, after two years it is conference time again 1970. During the two years we won 425 to Christ and his church. I am ready to retire the fifth time.

The Lord knows when it is time for his servants to change their manner of living. We have adjusted to slowing down. Leota and I have eased ourselves into the idea of retirement. Now these are years in which we relive and reflect, re-evaluate and re-visit...

Life has paid off for all our years of investment. Not investment of money, but in a warm glow of the heart from which we receive daily dividends.

To God be the glory forever and ever.

## **RESOURCES**

Dr F Lee Willshire. Retired Into Activity, privately published, 1970.





Excerpt from  
**To Serve God All**  
By Jean Padilla

When Henry H. Hall's name was called out for appointment to Santa Fe, there had been no Methodist congregation here since the departure of Governor Pile nine years before. He either found sufficient Methodists who had migrated here during the interim or quickly made conversions, so that he was able to establish a Methodist congregation. There are no known records to verify it, but judging from the earlier cooperation it is probably that Rev. Hall's first services were held in the Presbyterian Church.

The new Methodist congregation located an available lot on West San Francisco Street and purchased it. The Board of Church Extension granted a loan of \$1,000 and a later loan of \$500 to erect a building. During the winter of 1880-81, an adobe church was constructed. It wasn't as impressive as the Cathedral of St. Francis, then eleven years under construction, but then there weren't nearly as many Methodists as there were Catholics. Judging from old photographs, it appears to have been about 40 feet wide, along the street side, and 60 to 70 feet long. It had a wood shingle peaked roof and rising from the front of the roof, a small wooden bell tower, perhaps four foot square and with a sharply pitched shingle roof. The entrance was on the street side and was reached over a small, roofless porch. On either side as you entered was a

small class room and over them, a small gallery.

The first St. John's Methodist Episcopal Church of Santa Fe was completed and dedicated on April 17, 1881. The Rev. David H. Moore, later Bishop Moore, of Denver University made the trip to Santa Fe as the dedication speaker...

In the narthex of today's St. John's, almost unnoticed by our Sabbath worshipers, is a bronze bell. It is 27-inches in diameter, weighs about 440 pounds, and when purchased from the Clinton H. Meneely Bell Company of Troy, New York, cost about fifty cents a pound. If you stop to examine this bell you will find it was cast with this inscription (*partial*):

St John 's M. E. Church  
Santa Fe, New Mexico  
Henry H. Hall, Pastor  
A.D. 1880

Come When I Call  
To Serve God All.

If St. John's has such a thing as a holy relic, this is it. For this bell hung in our first church building, the loving gift of the members of our first Sunday School, given the first year of St. John's existence.

## RESOURCES

Padilla, Jean. *To Serve God All: A History of St. John's United Methodist Church, Santa Fe, New Mexico*. NM Conference Archives UMC.



Excerpt from  
**They Went Forth in Faith**  
By Kathryn Arning

In the area covered by the New Mexico Conference the work of the women in the churches that eventually became the United Methodist Church historically falls into three periods. The first period covers the time from the arrival of Methodist ministers in New Mexico as a mission venture in approximately the early 1850's to 1900 just before the woman's work was organized in the conferences. The second period is from the formation of the conference organizations and the beginning of the work of the United Brethren in Christ to 1940. The third period is from 1940 to the present. We have made these time divisions arbitrarily based on the information available.

Period one is a matter of assumption that the work was being done by individual women, some who came as wives of the ministers, some who were members of early churches, and some single women who came as missionaries. The first minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Rev. E. G. Nicholson, and his family arrived in Santa Fe in 1850. They had been sent to minister to the Americans, largely those connected with the military. When the Army headquarters was moved and Mrs. Nicholson had health problems, they returned to the East in 1852.

There was much doubt about continuing the New Mexico mission, but the Board decided to send Mr. Nicholson back with a Spanish-speaking former

priest, Benigno Cardenas, and the Rev. W. Hansen. The work was carried on by these two men for several years, and the reports and letters sent to the Mission Board contain the names of many places that are no longer existent on the maps of New Mexico as well as the better known places. Dr. D. D. Lore organized "classes" at a number of places south of Albuquerque.

Some work was done by the Rev. John Dyer, called by many New Mexicans Father Dyer, who came from Colorado and traveled many thousands of miles by horse...Father Dyer had requested that the Rev. Thomas Harwood from the Wisconsin conference be willing to be appointed to New Mexico...

During a long ministry, the Harwoods were responsible for the establishment of many churches and several schools. It is to him that we are indebted for information in his two-volume History of New Mexico Spanish and English Missions.

As Harwood writes about his travels, visits to churches, and conferences, we find many references to work that was being done by the women. In most cases schools were run in conjunction with local churches, and the minister's wife was usually the teacher. There is a report in 1890 that the schools of the Woman's Home Missionary Society were doing well. He mentions the ladies of the Women's Home Missionary Society who were located on the San Juan River. He is often appreciative of the work of the wives of the laymen in the churches and for the help that they gave when there was a church or community need. Therefore, we assume that the women were active whether as individuals or as locally organized groups.



The work of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South began in the west Texas part of the conference just before the coming of the railroad and then moved into southern New Mexico and then farther north. In many towns churches of both branches of Methodism were established near each other and continued until unification in 1939. It is safe to assume that the women were active in these local churches in whatever groups they might have had, but we were unable to find recorded evidence of conference organizations.

The second period begins with 1900 and closes with 1939. Several important events took place very soon, but there was little information concerning the events themselves and the years that followed them until we arrived at 1939.

The conference Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1902 at the Annual Conference, and they seem to have held most of their meetings at the Annual Conferences.

The Journal of 1912 gives the officers of four local societies: Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Roswell, and Las Vegas. It is difficult to understand why there were only four listed because we have histories of several local units in churches of this conference, and their organization times pre-date this report. The local may not have sent in officer lists, but they were alive and working.

In the first decade of the 20th century, the United Brethren in Christ Church began its mission to New Mexico. They established churches in several towns that no longer exist as well as better known places, all in the northern part of the present conference. In

1912 McCurdy School was established at Velarde and was moved to its present site in 1915.

The Woman's Missionary Society of the New Mexico Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was organized in 1911. There were many local units that sent in histories showing organization many years prior to 1911, but we found no evidence of a conference organization before that date.

The third period of this history covers the years from 1940 to the present. From the time of unification of three branches of the Methodist Church, we have Annual Reports and, later, quadrennial reports. During this time a number of changes took place.

In 1940 the various women's organizations under the three Methodist churches became the Woman's Society of Christian Service and the Wesleyan Service Guild.

When unification with the Evangelical United Brethren took place in 1968, the name was changed to Women's Society of Christian Service and Wesleyan Service Guild. Merger with the two Central Jurisdiction churches within the conference took place. In 1973 we became one inclusive organization under the name of United Methodist Women.

It is easy to follow the events that occurred from 1940 to the present because records were kept well. It is good to be able to record the events of this period with the names of many who helped in the continued commitment to mission.

## **RESOURCES**

Arning, Kathryn, et al. *They Went Forth in Faith*. UMW Centennial Era Committee, 1985.

# Archives and Historical Society

## *Preserving our History*

**Purpose:** The purpose of this Society shall be to aid in the collection and preservation of facts, documents, reports, records, relics, memoirs, books, periodicals, reminiscences, etc. which may be of historic value relating to the origin and growth of the United Methodist Church and its historic antecedents within the bounds of the New Mexico Annual Conference.



**Membership** in the NM Conference Historical Society is open to all interested persons.

**Officers for the Historical Society** shall be chosen annually by a ballot mailed to all members. Only members in good standing shall be eligible to vote.

**Annual dues** are \$12.00 per calendar year, which shall include printed copies of the New Mexico Conference United Methodist Historical Journal to be received by mail in May and November.

**Archives and History Endowment:** A fund has been established to benefit the NMAC Archives. Donations to this fund are tax deductible. An amount will be allocated from this fund each year to purchase supplies for the day-to-day operations of the Archives, and to carry out projects to preserve photos, books, documents and historical objects found within the Archives. We welcome any and all donations. Please consider supporting this fund to help preserve and share our history.

## **Donations can be sent to**

Archives and History Endowment  
NM Conference of the UMC  
11816 Lomas Blvd NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87112

## *Sharing Our Story*

**Heritage Tour:** The NM Conference Historical Society sponsors an annual Heritage Tour, highlighting places and events in our NM Conference History.

**Kate Warnick Award** (TUMHS) for the Best Local Church History written during the past year. Guidelines are available and entries should be addressed to W. J. Bryan III, P.O. Box 750133, Dallas, TX 75172 by January 31. Copies of the guidelines can be obtained by emailing [wbryan@smu.edu](mailto:wbryan@smu.edu).

## *Recognizing Service*

**Living Archives Awards** are presented at the Annual Conference. The purpose of the award is to lift up and honor exemplary individuals of the conference whose work and/or spirit provide hope and inspiration. The full criteria for this award can be found in the 2011 Conference Journal, page 214, and is available on request.

**Nominations** may be made either by letter or EMAIL to the Archives at the NM Annual Conference Office at any time prior to February first of the nomination year. The nomination should describe the reasons you believe that the individual deserves consideration, sharing their spiritual journey, any offices held, recognition or honors received, and their contribution to the life of the NM Annual Conference.



You finally have to say that it is water over the dam. There is not much we can do about it now, except resolve that we won't let history repeat itself. We can't change the record of the past. It is written and it stays, but the future we can change... Just look around. and you will see people everywhere who have had more difficulties than most of us have had, and yet ... they wasted no time in vain regrets and indulging in guilty feelings because of what is in the past. Instead, they turned toward the future, which is really the only time that we can do anything at all about.

That's the way it has to be if life is to amount to anything at all for us. It was William James who said one time that groveling over the sins that we've committed won't do us a lot of good, but we ought to rise and shake ourselves free from those guilty feelings that we have, and turn to that which is good and about which we can do something positive.

Harry Vanderpool, *"You're Not Late Until You Get There"* May 5, 1985, from *Where Do Old Sermons Go?* Published in 1993, p.276.