

THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

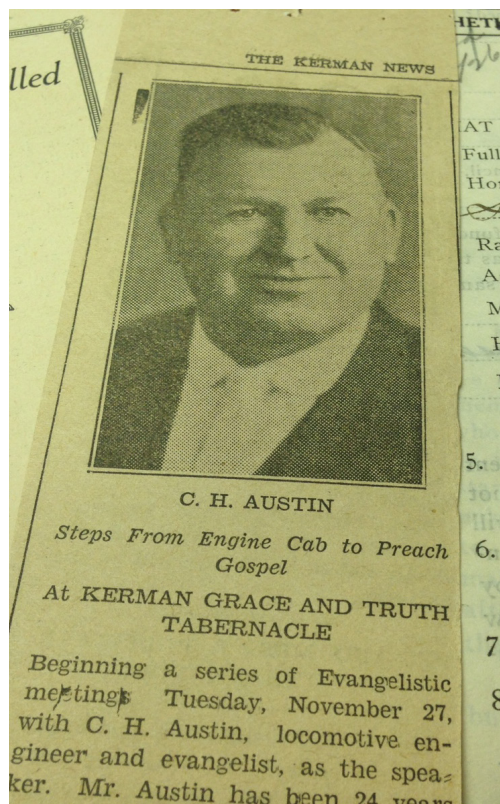
Clement Henderson Austin (1889-1973) knew railroads almost as well as he knew the gospel. He spent decades working as a train engineer, but he became mired in a lifestyle of drunkenness, gambling, violence, and addictions to alcohol and tobacco.

Austin started firing train engines at age 16, soon becoming a train engineer. A large young man, he learned how to fend for himself. He started drinking and smoking, then gambling and stealing. He prided himself on his coarse speech.

He married a young woman and they had a son. Austin knew that his life was spinning out of control, and he did not want his son to follow in his footsteps.

Austin's wife began attending revival services at a Pentecostal church in San Diego. She told him about the miracles she witnessed. Handicapped people left their crutches, and deaf people could hear again. He agreed to go hear the evangelist.

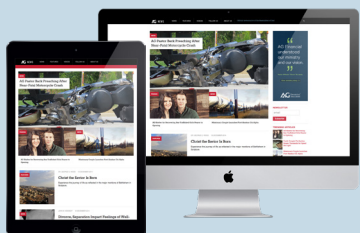
After an emotional spiritual battle, Austin found himself lying on the floor and he felt a sweet peace sweep



through his soul. He set his heart on Christ and never looked back.

Read Austin's testimony, "Saved and Called to Preach," on pages 12-13 of the Nov. 16, 1929, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/nov161929.

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AG[®] NEWS

A COLLECTION OF THIS WEEK'S STORIES FROM NEWS.AG.ORG

**A MIRACLE 10
YEARS IN THE
MAKING**

**LOOKING FOR THE
RIGHT NICHE**

**AG CHURCHES
DESTROYED, FIRES
STILL RAGING**

**TELLING UNWRITTEN
STORIES VIA OLI**





A MIRACLE 10 YEARS IN THE MAKING

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Kathi knew what a concussion felt like — this one was intense. What she didn't realize as she laid there staring up at the Montana sky, was her life was about to become a sleepless nightmare.

It was January 2001. On staff with U.S. Missions Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, USA at Montana State University since 1996, Kathi was active, adventuresome, and engaged to be married to professor Jerry Gregoire, who had just left to teach a second semester in Morocco.

The morning Jerry flew out, Kathi and her friend, Pam Western, went skiing. As the women made their way down the slopes, Kathi hit an icy patch. She fell backwards and her head slammed onto the ice.

Dizzy, struggling to answer questions, and flirting with unconsciousness, Kathi was taken to the ER. There, the doctor gave her ibuprofen and sent her home — it's now known that ibuprofen can cause a damaged brain to bleed even more.

When Jerry called that evening he learned of the accident from a friend caring for Kathi. No one realized the seriousness of her injury. Kathi believed

the symptoms would go away, but they continued — and now she was only sleeping five to seven hours a week.

"The doctors told me that I hit my head so hard that my brain cells were damaged to the point that they couldn't make the chemical for sleep," Kathi explains.

Kathi recalls little from 1999 to 2003. She was unable to read or write, she lost the ability to eat with a knife and fork, and she couldn't walk a straight line. Her speech was also impaired and her left hand curled and became mostly unusable. Yet, Jerry's love and commitment remained steadfast. They married in July 2001.

In 2003, Kathi's sleep specialist prescribed her a powerful drug — Xyrem — which requires patients to take a class to keep from accidentally killing themselves. That same year, Kathi began the process of learning how to read again.

In January 2004, Kathi was healed of her migraines. But the inability to sleep continued. In 2006, she stepped down from Chi Alpha.

SOCCKER STAR SHINES FOR SEU

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Junior Uchenna Kanu, a 21-year-old forward on the Southeastern University (SEU) women's soccer team — currently the top-ranked NAIA team in the nation — is turning heads with her feet and making herself even more popular with her heart.

Kanu, who came to the Lakeland, Florida, school three years ago from Nigeria to play soccer and pursue a degree in Sports Management, is leading the nation at all collegiate levels (male and female) in scoring. Kanu has recorded 50 goals this season for the 17-1-1 SEU Fire.

With so many goals, it might appear that Kanu is only focused on herself and scoring, but that would be the wrong assumption.

"On the field, Uchenna is extremely unselfish," says Andrew Tew, assistant director of Athletic Communication at SEU. "As good and as talented as she is, she could let that go to her head, but she hasn't. If she sees a teammate in a better position to score, she gives the ball up."

Tew's words ring true. Currently Kanu and Gabriella Didio are leading

the team in assists with 17 each — the previous single season record for the program was 14 assists. The team also leads the NAIA in goals scored, tallying 104 so far this year.

Kanu says God has been directing her steps throughout her life, from her



days in Nigeria where she was born into a Christian family and played soccer on a national team for a Christian coach to being connected to SEU and soccer coach Randy Belli and being drawn even closer to God through her years at SEU.

THE ABCs OF SALVATION

ACCEPT that you are a sinner, and God's punishment for your sin is death and separation from God forever.

BELIEVE that Jesus paid God's price for your sin when He died on the cross.

CONFESS "Jesus, I believe You are who the Bible and history declares You are — the Son of God. I humble myself and surrender to You. Forgive me. Make me spiritually whole. Change my life. Amen."



AG CHURCHES DESTROYED, FIRES STILL RAGING

BY DAN VAN VEEN

The Camp Fire, currently burning in Northern California, has claimed at least 56 lives, destroyed over 10,300 structures, and burned more than 138,000 acres.

The two AG churches in Paradise, First Assembly of God, pastored by Billy “Jack” Wright, and Skyway AG, pastored by Mike Thompson, have both been confirmed as destroyed. The small community of Stirling City was also evacuated, but it is not yet known if the Stirling City AG, pastored by Mike Batz, is still standing.

It has been estimated that only 10 to 20 percent of Paradise survived the blaze. Bret Allen, Northern California and Nevada district superintendent, reports the Skyway AG parsonage, home to Pastor Mike Thompson, was one of the few structures remaining.

“At this point, we still haven’t learned of any church members losing their lives in the fire,” Allen says, “for which we are deeply thankful.”

Jim Uhey, a U.S. missionary with Chaplaincy Ministries who is helping coordinate the relief efforts in Northern California, says that Convoy of Hope

has already delivered three loads of relief supplies and water to Chico First Assembly.

Currently the Southern California (SoCal) Network is threatened by the Woolsey Fire. At this point, no reports of AG churches being damaged have been come in, but at least one AG minister has had to evacuate.

Gordon Houston, the secretary-treasurer for the SoCal Network, believes communities, property, and lives are still very much at risk. “The situation is very fluid here,” he says. “Even 15 minutes can mean all the difference in the world.”

For now, Houston solemnly requests the AG body of believers to “Pray for rain.”

The Network is keeping in close touch with Convoy of Hope to help establish distribution sites once authorities allow people back into communities.

The Central Pacific Ministry Network (formerly Northern Pacific Latin District) reports that no churches in its region have been damaged, but the home of a minister, who lived in Paradise, was destroyed.

TELLING UNWRITTEN STORIES VIA OLI

BY KRISTEL RINGER ORTIZ

For over 30 years Oral Learners Initiative (OLI), an Assemblies of God World Missions ministry, has used innovative methods to reach out to adherents of the oral tradition. Today, OLI is committed to harnessing the global power of technology — particularly mobile phones — to reach oral cultures based in remote places.

OLI estimates that one-third of the world’s people cannot read the language they speak, and that another third of the world chooses to learn through unwritten methods. Therefore, two-thirds of the world, or around 4 billion souls, are oral learners.

In response to this vast opportunity, OLI has developed the Oral Learners Bible Institute — an app through which students can progress through a three-year, video-based Bible training institute. The goal is to see newly trained leaders arise to plant and pastor 1 million new churches worldwide.

The first year of the program is now complete. It includes nine courses, each made up of story-based, illustrated lessons that play on the students’ cellphones using micro SD memory cards. New memory cards will soon contain an app to simplify student training using symbols and colors.

To date, more than 100 million people on five continents have heard the gospel or been disciplined through OLI’s partnerships and endeavors.

OFFICE PIONEER EMBRACES CHANGE

BY CINDY J. THOMAS

When Melba Balentine works out at the gym, she hears retirees talking about working as long as 30 years for the same company. She just smiles. Balentine has served the Louisiana Network Ministry for 58 years. And at age 79, she’s still there.

She has served under five superintendents since 1960. Balentine handled secretarial work, bookkeeping, mailings, camp registrations, and whatever else needed to be done. When she started, the office contained metal plates that printed the list of ministers’ addresses, rolls of postage stamps, and a ditto machine.

She has seen the district’s ethnic diversity increase, including more credentialed women and a growing Hispanic contingency. Balentine particularly enjoys encouraging missionaries with a personal response when she receives their newsletters.

Learning new technology and management strategies help her bridge the generation gap. Yet she understands the frustrations of some older ministers who don’t use computers.

“Melba makes the extra effort to stay connected to our retired leaders,” Superintendent Scott Holmes says. “But she also texts and Facebooks.”

In 58 years, she has only taken five sick days. She stays active gardening and doing her own lawn maintenance — plus 6 a.m. gym workouts.



MAKING HBCU CONNECTIONS

BY ALLY HENNY

There are 101 historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the U.S., but Chi Alpha has an active presence on only one of those campuses. Morgan Fulton, 27, a U.S. missionary associate who is leading Chi Alpha's HBCU work team, is out to change that.

In 2010, Chi Alpha created a diversity task force to bring racial diversity to the forefront of its efforts on college campuses. There are ministries set to launch at Texas Southern and Winston-Salem State universities. The ministry at Xavier University of Louisiana, currently in leadership transition, has joined with Chi Alpha at Tulane. The Chi Alpha at Virginia Union University in Richmond is currently the only active one at an HBCU.

Fulton hopes that more campus ministers from existing groups will start inviting HBCU students to participate in their activities and eventually launch satellite campuses at HBCUs.

"Good things can come out of people being willing, open, and

obedient," she says.

Marcus A. Floyd, 25, is an African-American who has answered the call to be a U.S. missionary associate with Chi Alpha. Floyd, a 2016 graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University, leads the Chi Alpha chapter at Virginia Union University.

"The gospel is for everyone," Floyd says. He believes that HBCUs are strategic to achieving the Great Commission.

Floyd, who had no previous church background, became a Christian through Chi Alpha while attending VCU and felt called to become a leader.

"Kingdom diversity is being able to build bridges where none existed," Floyd says.

For Fulton, part of that bridge-building process is getting Chi Alpha to partner not only with HBCUs but also black churches. Many students at HBCUs attend African-American churches and want to maintain that connection.

Then the Holy Spirit issued an unbelievable call on her life — to get her master's degree, stating: "Kathi, before you would have done it in your strength; now you're going to do it in Mine."

With her memory limitations, it took her a year to complete the first of five prerequisite courses through Global University. After successfully completing all five courses, she moved on to graduate work. Slowly, painfully she progressed, with tears of frustration prevalent . . . that is, until the night of Nov. 4, 2011.

"I was getting ready for bed, when suddenly the Holy Spirit spoke to me," Kathi recalls. "Instead of taking the Xyrem, He directed me to take the less powerful pill [Ambien] . . . so, I did."

She slept— night after night it continued! Later that month, Kathi met with her sleep specialist who broke into tears as she too became convinced of Kathi's healing.

Kathi earned her master's, graduating in June 2018, with honors, and was chosen as a commencement speaker.

Currently Kathi, a chaplain for the Gallatin County Sheriff's Department, is a church deacon and Jerry, an engineer, is on the prayer team at Bozeman Christian Center (AG).

"You cannot ever give up hope or faith that God can heal," Western observes. "[Kathi] so impressed me . . . she kept her hope and faith in the Lord."

LOOKING FOR THE RIGHT NICHE

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

New Vision Ministries has emerged from the financial debt that marked the rural Springfield, Missouri, church when Gary W. Thomas arrived seven years ago. Nonexistent missions giving has been replaced with regular contributions to a dozen missionaries. Ministry has started to Laura's Home, a transitional living group home in nearby Willard for girls about to age out of the foster care system. The church honored first responders in the community. New Vision held a mortgage burning service. The gymnasium is paid off.

Still, challenges remain. The small church is seeking a part-time youth minister and part-time worship leader. Most attendees live nearby, but

the myriad programs available at a megachurch only three miles away, are more attractive to some locals. Thomas has concluded that New Vision needs to capitalize on its smallness.

"We need to be a family rather than a church of familiar strangers," says Thomas. "We need to be involved in each other's lives."

Thomas also wants to see adherents impacting the lives of neighbors more. The church is about to embark on a "loads of love" ministry in which random visits will be made to a nearby coin-operated laundry to pay for washing and drying customers' clothes. The effort will include giving groceries to residents in a nearby mobile home park.