

Chapter Title: Wendell Broom: A Biography

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Book Title: 100 Years of African Missions

Book Subtitle: Essays in Honor of Wendell Broom

Book Editor(s): Stanley E. Granberg

Published by: ACU Press. (2001)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1k3npsb.4>

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SECTION I

*Wendell Broom:
A Man for Missions*

CHAPTER 1

Wendell Broom: A Biography

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There are few heroes these days; at least that is what we hear people say. But still, when one takes the time to look, there are heroes around us—quiet, unassuming people—who go about their lives with integrity of heart and steadfastness of faith. Heroes are people whom we look up to, people after whom we can model our lives, people who by dint of expertise, accomplishment or character seem to live beyond the rest of us. But most of all, heroes are people who give us hope. Wendell Broom is such a person. My prayer is that in the following few pages your life will be enriched as you see in Wendell's life the pattern of God's hand molding, preparing, guiding for His purposes and glory. And perhaps, you will gain a new hero too.

Early Years as an Oklahoma Sooner, 1923-1940

Wendell Broom was born to Benjamin Rufus Broom and

Gladys Elizabeth Wright Broom on April 6, 1923 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, followed by a brother, Charles. Wendell and the state of Oklahoma grew up together, the former Indian Territory having gained statehood only sixteen years earlier. Wendell's father was a native born Georgian who went west with the emerging oil industry. Rufus worked for Magnolia Petroleum managing a filling station in Oklahoma City for forty-two years. Wendell's mother, Gladys, was born and raised in Arkansas.

Rufus and Gladys carried out a frontier courtship. They first met in Georgia where Gladys had traveled to visit relatives. The following year, after a season of paper courting through letters, Rufus made a trip to Arkansas to visit Gladys and her family. That trip must have gone well, because Rufus followed it with a third visit when he married Gladys and took her back with him to his new home in Oklahoma.

Growing up in a pioneer setting made its imprint on Wendell. At that time most Oklahoma residents were transplants from the older states to the east. The Brooms, like many of the people around them, were a practical family with a fiscally conservative streak which kept the family fed and clothed through the depression years. Hardships were not going to dislodge this family. Rufus sold gas at his Magnolia Petroleum filling station for ten cents a gallon, taking home a penny profit for each gallon sold, while Gladys stretched out the family's food budget with beans and cornbread. Boarders in the Broom home provided some extra some extra income. Gladys' sister spent most of the 1920s living with the Broom family, and other boarders came and went. Physical hardships were not feared in the Broom home; perseverance was a trait which grew in Wendell as he grew up in the Sooner state.

Wendell's spiritual formation centered around the 10th and Francis Church of Christ, the first church of Christ in Oklahoma

City. Even though Rufus Broom was raised Presbyterian, Gladys' heritage in the churches of Christ was the primary religious force in the Broom household. Wendell garnered a strong pulpit education in the Bible from the preachers who occupied the 10th and Francis pulpit: C. A. Norred, A. O. Colley, C. E. McGaughey, Yater Tant, Jack Meyer and others. Foy Wallace was a regular "meeting" preacher at the congregation in those years. By 1942 the 10th and Francis congregation was the largest in the state with over 1,200 members.

Two people in particular influenced Wendell's spiritual growth during his early years. The first was his mother. While Gladys was never obvious with her desires, Wendell now sees his mother as being guided by a dream for him to preach. When Wendell was eight years old Gladys arranged for him to take private "expression" lessons at twenty-five cents an hour. Wendell learned poetry for recitation and was taught skills in pronunciation and annunciation.

When Wendell was in high school his mom found another way to hone Wendell's public speaking skills. Wendell became active in the Boy Scouts of America. In his junior year Wendell ran for state governor in the Scout program. Gladys drove Wendell to two or three speaking engagements a week barnstorming Scout troops with campaign speeches. Wendell lost the election, but he learned how to speak his mind in a directive, persuasive manner. Wendell now feels more strongly than ever that his mother had a plan she was quietly promoting for preparing her son for service in the Kingdom of God.

Finally, when Wendell left for college at Freed-Hardeman Gladys began buying a book for Wendell's personal library at each birthday. These were well chosen books to meet the needs of a preacher. Her first purchase was *Young's Analytical Concordance*. Each new volume Gladys sent reflected the considered opinion of a

practicing pulpit man whose advice Gladys had sought out so she could buy a useful gift for her son. The influence of a faithful mother was a gentle, constant source of persuasion in the formation of Wendell's spiritual life.

The second formative person influencing Wendell's career path at the 10th and Francis congregation was Lewis Fisher. Brother Fisher was an American Indian and he had a passion for training boys to preach. Each year he would round up all the sixteen or seventeen year olds he could find and take them to preach in the smaller country churches surrounding Oklahoma City. Brother Fisher relentlessly pursued Wendell (at least that is how Wendell remembers it) to get him on the preaching team. In Wendell's junior year he became one of fifteen or so young men on Fisher's preaching team, ten of whom became preachers.

The elders wanted to support these efforts, so that summer they arranged for John P. Lewis, the Bible chair director at Oklahoma University in Norman, to drive in on Tuesday evenings to teach these young men. The first class had only two boys in attendance. Sunday morning the elders read off a list of boys they wanted to meet with after services; Wendell's name was among them. The boys knew what was in store. As they sat on the front pew the elders started at one end and asked each boy why he had not been present Tuesday evening for the training class. Wendell sat at the farthest end of the bench. As each boy gave his answer Wendell searched his mind for some straw of a remark that might save him. At that time Wendell was just five merit badges away from making Eagle Scout. Scouting was an important part of Wendell's life, but the Scout troop meetings were on Tuesday evenings. When the elders put their question to Wendell he gave up scouting and joined the preaching class. The active, directive force of the elders in his church, the informal ministry of Lewis Fisher, and the influence of

his godly mother laid the groundwork and prepared Wendell to decide on his career—he was going to preach.

College Years: 1941-1945

Wendell was the first in his family to graduate from college. With his career decision firmly in mind the only choice was what college to attend. The preachers his family consulted were firm in recommending the A.A. degree granting Freed-Hardeman college in Henderson, Tennessee so that Wendell could study under N. B. Hardeman, “a great pulpit man” as they put it. That summer, 1941, Foy Wallace helped Wendell to register for the draft as a ministerial student, a status he held through his graduation from Abilene Christian College in 1945, two weeks after the German surrender. Wendell sees God’s hand in keeping him from earthly war. Because of this Wendell feels an incredible debt for the kingdom and has never refused an invitation for ministry anywhere in the world. God needed a man to prepare for kingdom duty, not war duty.

God used Wendell’s two years at Freed-Hardeman College to add further to his preparation. The most significant event was meeting his future wife, Betty Billingsley, whom Wendell married upon his graduation from ACC in 1945. Like Wendell, Betty had grown up in Oklahoma where her father had practiced frontier medicine when Oklahoma was Indian Territory. A second important personal event was baptizing his father during his first summer home in 1942, the first person Wendell baptized. Educationally, the most lasting contribution Wendell gained from Freed-Hardeman came through W. C. Hall who taught English composition, spoken English and Old Testament classes. Brother Hall’s aim in life was to teach men sound speech habits for the pulpit. Students thought him a vicious teacher who would end their speeches at the first grammatical error or the second “um” or mispronunciation. While Hall’s

reputation among the students brought forth anger, Wendell recalls that “furious students remember their lessons.”

Since Freed-Hardeman College was a two year school Wendell planned to go elsewhere for his bachelor’s degree. From early on Wendell’s dream had been to graduate from Abilene Christian College (ACC) in Abilene, Texas. At age six or seven, while visiting a relative in Arkansas, he happened upon a 1923 ACC yearbook in a bedroom closet. That yearbook belonging to his cousins, all four graduates of ACC, set the idea in Wendell’s heart that he too would graduate from ACC. ACC introduced Wendell to scholarly biblical studies through a strong Bible program and opened Wendell to a wider world and a more diverse brotherhood of the churches of Christ. Wendell was a leader on campus, serving as president of the junior class, of the Acapella chorus, and of the student association his senior year. These positions challenged him to sharpen his leadership and public speaking skills.

Two instructors were standouts for Wendell at ACC. One was Charles Roberson, professor of New Testament Greek. This course was not taught at Freed-Hardeman College, so Wendell took his first year of Greek as a junior and his second and third years simultaneously as a senior. Wendell remembers Roberson as a master pedagogical instructor, an equal to W. C. Hall at Freed-Hardeman.

The other faculty influence was Howard Schug, ACC language instructor who taught Latin, Spanish and French. Schug was passionate about God’s mission in the world. He co-authored *The Harvest Field*, the first published book on missions in the churches of Christ, with ACC president Jesse P. Sewell. Schug was also the faculty sponsor of the ACC missions club, which met Wednesday evenings in the break between supper and the Wednesday prayer meeting. The mission club was a loosely organized coterie of students with a like-mind for missions. Among this group of students

and mission pioneers were Otis Gatewood (missionary to Germany and the Soviet Union), Cline Paden (missionary to Italy and founder of Sunset International Bible Institute), Richard Walker (missionary to Germany) and J. Harold Thomas (missionary to the northeast United States). These students were looking for a place in the kingdom. Their speakers were any missionary (few in number at that time) who would share with them “crumbs from the rich man’s table.” But, like Jesus with the loaves and fishes, God used those crumbs to spawn the post-WWII burst of missions by the churches of Christ. This charged atmosphere of expectation buried a seed deep in Wendell’s heart, a seed that began its growth in the northeast United States, grew strong in Nigeria, and finally came full circle back at ACU.

The Mission Fields: Delaware, Nigeria, Hawaii

True to his pioneer upbringing, upon graduating from ACC in 1945 with a degree in Bible Wendell and his new bride, Betty Billingsley Broom, moved to Delaware for their first preaching ministry. In those years the northeastern United States was a true mission field for the largely southern Churches of Christ. In 1938 there were only two full-time preachers of the Churches of Christ north of Washington D. C. The Brooms left Abilene with all their possessions loaded into the backseat and trunk of their 1936 Chevy and headed to Wilmington, Delaware to substitute preach for the small Elsmere congregation for six weeks while their regular preacher visited Arizona. He did not return, so the Brooms took up full-time residence in Wilmington working under the oversight of the elders of the Old Hickory Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee. The Old Hickory congregation supported Wendell in Delaware for seven years.

Delaware and Pennsylvania, 1945-1955

The Elsmere congregation had just twenty-eight members in 1945. But it was a work which challenged Wendell to communicate God's Word to them and to lead these members to greater maturity and growth. Wendell gained valuable teaching experience and preparation in the Word preaching at the Wilmington church. The success was remarkable with the membership growing from twenty-eight in 1945 to 130 in 1952. Those years also gave Wendell a taste of church-planting as he started two other congregations in southern Delaware and attempted two more church plants in New Jersey and Annapolis. Wendell also took the opportunity to continue his academic growth, taking classes at Faith Theological Seminary and Temple University Divinity School. In 1952 the Brooms moved to Philadelphia to work with the 56th and Warrington Church of Christ. In 1955, with ten years of preaching experience, stability in their marriage relationship, and three children in the nest (Wendell Jr., 1947; Mary Beth, 1950; David, 1953), God had brought this family to the point of readiness for a call to foreign missions.

Nigeria, 1955-1960

In the aftermath of WWII the churches of Christ were waking up to God's call to foreign missions. George Gurganus followed in the footsteps of J. M. McCaleb to post-war Japan. Otis Gatewood blazed the trail into post-war Europe, particularly Germany. Cline Paden began work in Italy. The church was bursting with new missions activity, but, for the most part, the home churches were ill-prepared. Our brotherhood schools also were just beginning to see the need for missions preparation. But God was already at work in Nigeria, through a man named C. A. O. Essien, a Nigerian policeman. Essien, like many of his friends, was a drinker, and a womanizer. He often used his official position for purposes of graft and

greed. In 1948 Essien awoke from a disturbing dream in the cold sweat of fear. In his dream he had died and gone to the judgment bar of heaven—there Essien realized he was lost. When he awoke, Essien repented before God in his heart and began to search for salvation. Essien studied the Bible through a correspondence course by the Churches of Christ which came by way of Germany, but had originated in Tennessee. Drawing upon the teachings from this course and his meager background with the Presbyterian church, Essien converted some friends; and together they planted sixty-five small churches over the next few years. Eldred Echols¹ has referred to Essien as “the Alexander Campbell of Africa.” He was a powerful preacher, a strong leader of men who could call others to allegiance in the kingdom of God and follow him in the kind of service to God to which he gave his heart, his soul and his passion. The impact of God on one man has untold potential. From this small beginning, a great planting of the church in Africa would arise.

Howard Horton and Jimmy Johnson, the first American missionaries of the Churches of Christ to reside in Nigeria, arrived in 1952 to follow up on Essien’s work. These men had no training in missions and no plans to speak of, except to preach and teach wherever and as often as they could. Their first two years were survival years spent in building adequate housing and learning how to live in equatorial Africa. Horton knew, however, that what they needed was more help, so he made a list of men whom he knew and wrote them about the needs of this new work in Nigeria. One person on Horton’s list was Wendell Broom; the two had worked together briefly in the Northeast. When Horton’s letter arrived Wendell had become a successful church-planter and located preacher in

¹ Eldred Echols himself was a pioneer in opening up the work in Nigeria. You may read his story in *Wings of the Morning- The Saga of an African Pilgrim*.

Philadelphia, a mission field in itself. Wendell had many family obligations at the time. Wendell Jr. was seven years old, Mary Beth was five, David two and Betty was pregnant with Margaret. Betty's mother had cancer, and Wendell and Betty could see a care-giving task on the horizon. They could not possibly answer this call. Wendell wrote a letter to Horton identifying all the reasons why they could not be the ones to come, and then threw the letter away. Wendell wrote five more letters explaining why he and Betty could not come to Nigeria. None made it any farther than the wastebasket. As so often happens with people of missionary heart, Wendell knew that while the reasons they could not go might be fitting for paper, they would not be adequate answers before the throne of God. The only letter he mailed to Howard Horton was their acceptance letter.

How do you prepare to leave family, home, and the only life you know to move halfway around the world to a place which would not even have registered as a third world country at that time? Reflecting on his preparation, Wendell calls it "one notch above zero." There was no program, plan, or place where someone could go to prepare for mission work. Wendell was able to spend six weeks traveling with Howard Horton in the United States, speaking to congregations and questioning Horton about Nigeria. This was missions on the frontier—a place where God would again use Wendell and Betty's pioneer spirit. For three months the Broom family lived with Wendell's parents and did fund-raising. The 10th and Francis congregation agreed to pay them \$5,000 a year for a two-year commitment, with supplemental funds coming from individual supporters. It was not much, but it was enough to meet the family's needs. In February 1955 Margaret was born and in July 1955 Wendell, Betty and their four young children boarded a plane for Africa; they would not see Betty's mother alive again.

Equatorial Africa is not an easy place to live. It is always hot, and humid most of the time. The Churches of Christ were then located only in the southeast corner of Nigeria, mostly among the Ibibio people. There was no electricity, no running water, no indoor plumbing, not any of the conveniences of home. Water for cooking, bathing and cleaning was hauled from the river. Cooking was done on a wood-burning stove. This was bush living, the kind that consumes your time with surviving and drains away your strength. Wendell and Betty were not alone, though, in dealing with these rigors. Other missionary families, many of them Freed-Hardeman schoolmates, would follow: Bill Nicks, James Finney, Elvis Huffard, Sewell Hall, Rees Bryant, Burney Bawcom, Gene Peden, E. Lucien Palmer, and others.

The immediate work demand was to continue feeding the sixty-five small churches begun by C. A. O. Essien and friends. This meant extensive travel on jungle roads to the small villages scattered across the countryside. It also meant accepting the invitations to preach at new villages to begin new congregations. Sundays were given over to preaching at the older churches. The men often visited three to five congregations on a single Sunday; on one typical preaching trip they taught fourteen different groups in four days. Weekday mornings, from eight to twelve, were spent teaching in the new Bible training school Howard Horton had begun in 1954. The first forty students were in their second year when Wendell arrived. The Americans taught in English in the Bible School, because all the students were English speakers. The Bible School followed a two-year program of classes, taking in forty new men every year. That small school, later named Nigerian Christian Bible College, continues to graduate about forty preachers a year and has done so every year since 1954, except for the three years of the Biafran war. Certainly there are many factors which contributed to the growth of

2,500 Churches of Christ in Nigeria with over 200,000 members; Nigerian Christian Bible College was one.

Missiology, the study of how to do missions, was in its infancy in 1955. The missionaries experienced mistakes along with the triumphs. One of the underlying causes of many difficulties Wendell and his co-workers experienced was their blindness to the cross-cultural issues of being an American working in Africa. What is eternal and what is temporal? How do you raise Nigerian Christians when all you know is how to be an American Christian? This was a constant question for Wendell in those years. Not knowing the answers made the introduction of chrome-plated communion trays, bull horns for preaching and other innovations seem natural. But such American exports seldom gave back in benefits more than they produced in trouble. One lesson which powerfully shaped Wendell's mission philosophy came from the decision to put outstanding graduates of the Bible training school on American support.

What do you do with forty brand new graduates from your first class of preachers? From the American point of view the practical, logical answer was to find a way for these men to make their full-time living as preachers. But the local churches were not ready to do that. Wendell's Feb. 1, 1956 newsletter indicates their problem and their solution,

WHAT NOW? Denominational-trained churches expect to be forced to pay their preachers: we will not do this, for scriptural reasons. The result is that churches are in a slump between denominational "pressure-giving" and maturity in Christian giving. Combine with this their poverty (wages average from 30 to 50 cents per day) and the result is that we have 200 churches that need teaching and 40 well-trained preachers—but due to the financial situation, the men are being forced to return to secular work to keep from starving.

...for \$20 American a month (for each preacher)...we propose to send two men to each district to work among the churches (with 60 churches in some districts, two men are not enough, but it's better than nothing). These men will visit among the churches, teach three month training courses (four days a week, four classes a day) for elders, deacons, Bible teachers, etc.

All the men in the first graduating class received this support. Men in the next class got similar support. But what would be done with the third class, and the fourth, fifth and so on? How far could this be replicated?

Just two years later their solution had become the problem. Wendell wrote in his Jan. 4, 1958 newsletter,

For about two years, some American brethren and churches have been supporting and helping to support some of the Nigerian evangelists. This was done in an effort to get the teaching before the churches until they could grow and progress enough to support their own men. Now, however, we find that our American help is having the opposite effect—the churches are wanting more and more American help rather than less and less. Instead of helping them move toward independence and self-support, it has been causing them to lean more and more upon the American brethren.

Wendell relates that the American-supported preachers were not seen by their fellow Nigerians as people with answers to life's struggles; these men were paid American employees. As a result, these preachers lost their credibility as independent witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some of the churches with salaried preachers stopped growing at thirty to forty members while non-salaried churches would grow to be much larger. Also, the good relationships between the American missionaries and the salaried, national preachers began to sour.

Facing the unexpected consequences of paying national evangelists, the missionaries reversed their policy. They began to reduce the amount of salary each preacher received twenty-five percent every six months until all support was gone. The Americans traveled to every congregation they could reach to tell them the plan and to encourage those Christians to begin paying their own workers. It was a difficult task but forty-five years later the situation appears to support their wisdom and courage.

When Wendell and Betty's two-year commitment was about to end, they knew it was not yet time to return to the States. Wendell put their thoughts to paper in the April 14, 1957 newsletter,

As the time passed the half way mark of our work over here, we began to think of the future. Tenth and Francis church had promised to support us for 2 years, which they have carried out in a most excellent way. I thought two years would be enough of a contribution for us to make to this work. But I have asked the elders of Tenth and Francis church to continue their fellowship with us in this work, and make it possible for us to return for another two years work.

Why do this? There are many good reasons why a man ought not to bring his family back again. For one thing, there is separation from loved ones. While we've been here, Betty's mother passed away (as did Billy Nick's father, sister Johnson's mother, brother Finney's father, sister Finney's brother-in-law) and it is a heavy feeling to be so far away at such times. There are problems with the schooling. There is the expense of the trip again, and the necessary raising of travel and operational funds, which is essential if we return (it makes me shudder to face the prospect again of running about seeking for the necessary funds). I guess all these can be pretty formidable reasons for not coming—especially to those who add to them the dangers of "African life" which they judge . . . formidable enough to keep many good and capable preachers from such a vital work as this.

And that is just the reason we feel we must return.

This work must be done, and there just aren't enough men to do it. We would personally prefer to return to the Northeastern US, resume local work, and enjoy the mission work in that needy section among our own people. but who will do the work here?

Betty and Wendell renewed their commitment for another two and a half years, as did the 10th and Francis church, and the work continued. New and exciting opportunities arose. In 1958 Benny Lee Fudge was corresponding with a Ghanaian friend. Later that year Sewell Hall and Wendell traveled to Ghana to find this man. He was a member of the Salvation Army and just a few years away from retiring. Based on his new commitment to Jesus in baptism, during this visit the man resigned his post and began to preach with the churches of Christ. Today there are 700 congregations in Ghana with 56,000 members. Wendell was also involved in beginning the work in Cameroun where he and his party of seven Nigerian preachers planted three churches during a three week trip. Cameroun now has 127 congregations with 3,150 members.

The church in Nigeria has matured into a church with outstanding leaders, men and women, who have excelled in faithfulness. Among them are several holding doctoral degrees as well as dozens holding master's degrees. These men lead Bible training schools, administer hospitals, organize mission work into other parts of Nigeria and surrounding countries. The Nigerian Christians know that the doctrinal and leadership decisions of God's people in Nigeria rest with them and they accept those responsibilities in the presence of God with commitment and dedication.

The Broom family returned to the States in 1960. The fatigue factor of working long hours in tropical conditions, driving jungle roads, and preaching and teaching daily had taken their toll. There was also the emotional impact of living in constant contact with

extreme poverty, illness and death. It was time to return to the States for renewal and to finish raising their five children, Kathryn having been born in Nigeria in 1958. It was also a time God needed to prepare Wendell for his next major contribution to missions.

THE ROAD TO ABILENE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Delaware and Hawaii, 1960-1968

Returning to the States from the foreign mission field is often a disorienting process, but the Brooms made their re-entry with minimal difficulties and adjustments. Returning to Elsmere, Delaware, a place familiar to them, eased the Broom's transition. The church loved Wendell and Betty, recognizing them as a couple returning with hard-earned experience. Wendell and Betty worked with the Elsmere congregation from 1960-1965. The church was over two hundred strong, but in 1960 it still had need to grow. First and foremost on Wendell's mind was to challenge the church to work beyond their congregational borders. Within twelve months the congregation was supporting Jerry Reynolds to work with Dwayne Davenport in Ghana. Wendell and the church were also involved in the start of Northeastern Christian College where Wendell served on the board of directors. The Elsmere congregation appointed elders for the first time and built a new building during this second five years Wendell and Betty worked with them. It was a satisfying return to stateside preaching. The last of the Broom children, Jonathan, was born there in 1962.

God's missionary call to Wendell was not, however, a part time or even a part of a life-time call. Years earlier Wendell had commented to Betty that a perfect career would be to preach, to work on the mission field, and to teach missions at a Christian college. It

was in pursuit of that dream that Wendell moved his family to Honolulu, Hawaii in 1965. Wendell's intention was to enter the doctoral program in anthropology at the University of Hawaii. God had other plans. The anthropology department rejected Wendell's application for admittance when they learned his purpose for studying anthropology was to learn better how to do cross-cultural mission work. So from 1965-68 Wendell preached for the Keeaumoku St. Church of Christ and waited for the Lord's door of opportunity to open.

God's door came in the guise of George Gurganus. Gurganus was the pioneer missions educator in the Churches of Christ. He did mission work in Japan in the 1950s, an experience which convinced him of the need for training in mission work. Following up on this recognition Gurganus studied at Pennsylvania State University, becoming the first person in the churches of Christ to receive an advanced degree in a missions related field. In 1963 Gurganus created the Summer Seminar in Missions at Harding Graduate School of Religion in Memphis, Tennessee to provide missions training. He invited Wendell to teach at that first summer missions seminar. In 1968 Gurganus moved the Summer Seminar in Missions to Abilene Christian College. His goal was to develop the first missions department in Church of Christ schools. To accomplish this goal he needed another full-time missions professor on faculty and Wendell was his man. ACC extended an invitation to Wendell but with the stipulation that he complete a missions degree at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission in Pasadena, California.

Fuller Theological Seminary/School of World Mission, 1969-1970

Fuller's School of World Mission is one of the largest and most influential missions training programs in the world. The School of

World Missions was founded by Donald McGavran, father of the Church Growth Movement. McGavran shared a heritage in the Restoration Movement. He was also the man with the ideas which captured Wendell's attention as offering insights and answers to many of the events he had experienced in Nigeria. Wendell elected to study under McGavran, making church growth his area of research².

For the eighteen months they were in Pasadena, California Wendell and Betty had no regular income. Their faith was challenged, but God provided what they needed, blessing the Broom family in ways Wendell says even now they do not fully understand. They were also surprised by the difficult social adjustment they experienced, moving out of pulpit ministry into a ministry of education. For their entire career their lives and friendships had been wrapped up in the church wherever they were ministering. Now those relationships were gone. They found the world outside pulpit ministry to be a hard, cold world for them. Wendell acquired a new set of relationships revolving around missions, and God provided them with fellow students and with his mentor, Donald McGavran.

McGavran was well acquainted with the Churches of Christ. He knew Gurganus, had spoken twice at Harding Graduate School and was familiar with ACC as well. In a rare invitation to a master's level student McGavran offered Wendell the opportunity to attend the faculty meetings of the School of World Missions. McGavran knew that the education Wendell needed to take with him to ACC was not just book learning; he would also need understanding and skills to work within the system of an institution. Wendell needed to know what faculty did, how they made decisions, and how

² Broom, Wendell (1970). *Growth of Churches of Christ among the Ibibio of Nigeria*. Unpublished master's thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission.

programs fit into the overall functioning of a school. McGavran graciously and effectively mentored Wendell in these areas as well as in his academic studies. Wendell graduated with the M.A. in church growth from Fuller in 1970. With renewed strength in God's providing character and a godly mentor it was time to head to Abilene.

Abilene Christian University, 1970-1992

In 1968 George Gurganus moved to ACC, which became Abilene Christian University (ACU) in 1976, with the dream of creating the first missions department among schools of the Churches of Christ. George was an intense program builder, and he worked diligently to bring that dream to fruition from 1968 to 1980. Wendell came to ACU as Gurganus' right-hand man, complementing George's experience in Japan with his own experience in Africa and tempering George's fiery style with his calm consideration. The two men made a powerful team, and under their direction a nascent missions department began to emerge.

The centerpiece of ACU's missions program was the academic study of missions and preparation of missionaries. Wendell taught courses on missions such as *Introduction to Church Growth*, *Missionary Anthropology*, *Mission and Expansion of the Church*, *World Christians*, *Introduction to Communism*, and *Special Studies in Africa*. Wendell brought his academic expertise into the classroom, but what most students remember about his classes is the heart of the missionary they saw as Wendell shared stories and experiences from the mission field.

Gurganus and Wendell continued to build the missions program, adding a two-year apprenticeship program called MARK and a missionary-in-residence program which has attracted numerous field missionaries to teach Bible classes and recruit mission teams.

They also initiated the annual Teachers of Mission Workshop in the 1970's, a program which ACU continues to host.

The Summer Seminar in Missions continued to grow as well. Here again is a place where Wendell demonstrated his heart for God and missions. For many years Wendell coordinated the evening devotions at the Summer Seminar. Wendell did not just coordinate the speakers or topics, but he coordinated our hearts with God's heart as well. Sometimes he did that with a short lesson, at other times it was with a few words of instruction or encouragement. But more than in any other way, Wendell led us into the heart of God through his prayers. As he prayed for us, for missionaries around the world, for victories in the kingdom he roused in our hearts the same passion for missions and the world which he felt so keenly and which so surely infuses God's heart too.

When Gurganus retired from ACU in 1980 the missions program was still operating within the Bible department. Ed Mathews followed Gurganus as director of the missions group. Ed and Wendell continued to develop the missions program, moving it towards departmental status. They added new courses to the curriculum, strengthened the missionary in residence program, and added a master's degree component. The two men worked diligently to accomplish their goal for the missions program, receiving departmental status within ACU in 1984.

Wendell's involvement with missions at ACU was the fulfillment of a personal dream. Looking back it also seems evident that ACU was part of the pattern of God's involvement in Wendell's life. Teaching at ACU allowed Wendell the opportunity to influence Christian men and women for missions, to seed the mission programs which now exist at most of our brotherhood schools, and to continue his direct involvement in missions.

Retirement Years, 1993 to Present

Retirement for the Brooms has not meant retirement from work, but more time to work in the mission field! For the past several decades Wendell has filled the role of church statistician for Africa for the Churches of Christ. His Fuller thesis was the first church growth research thesis in the Churches of Christ. Wendell has continued that project, conducting a church growth survey of Nigeria every decade since. His continued involvement in Nigeria has let him influence some of the grandchildren of those men and women he taught in the 1950s. He has worked to encourage the Nigerian churches to be more trans-tribal and international in their vision for the kingdom. During his retirement years Wendell expanded his record keeping to all of Africa. During the third *Africans Claiming Africa* conference, held in South Africa in May, 2000, Wendell announced that for the first time there are more congregations of the Churches of Christ in Africa than there are in the United States and there will soon be more members as well.

Wendell has also continued to grow as an African generalist and world missiologist during his retirement years. Wendell and Betty have brought their influence, expertise and encouragement to missionaries and mission works by spending significant periods of time in Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, South Africa and Ghana. They lived in Papua New Guinea for several months while Wendell did consulting work with Pioneer Bible Translators. He also did thirteen months of mission work in Siberia and a semester's study in Jerusalem.

Looking to the Future

The mark that Wendell and Betty Broom have made on missions study at ACU, on missions in the Churches of Christ and on

the world is of legendary proportions. The lessons they learned at God's hand in fifty years of kingdom service give guidance and insight for present and future missions tasks. Here are Wendell's views, in his words, on the most important missions tasks facing the churches of Christ in the next fifty years:

The first major task is facing those of us who are involved with the African church. We must re-examine the relationship between Africa and America. The radical growth of the church in Africa calls us to redefine what we think Africans are capable of doing, then we must urge them to do it. We must confess the serious flaw of the lack of evangelism in the American church and recognize the fantastic way the African church is evangelizing. We must identify new functions which recognize the strengths of our respective churches and maintain our relationships with regard to those new functions.

Second, we need to take advantage of the tremendous people and financial resources of the boomer generation as they begin to come into retirement. Many boomers are retiring with the physical and financial capacity to do fifteen or twenty years of mission work. Boomers need to be challenged and trained to make use of these gifts in the mission field for the glory of God.

The third major task facing us is China. When the Iron Curtain fell in 1990 the Christian world was confronted with a tremendous openness of the people and the possibility for church planting. Despite years of semi-clandestine literature work in the Soviet Union by the Churches of Christ we were unprepared for the new opportunities and we made numerous mistakes before finding our evangelizing, church-planting feet. Right now we ought to be examining the evolutionary process by which Marxism came to the moral, political and financial bankruptcy which led to the wall's fall, with an eye towards predicting the time when similar events will open China to evangelism. Simultaneously we need to be preparing front-line people, preferably Chinese converts from the Chinese diaspora, and supporting churches who

will be ready for intense Chinese evangelism. Even at this point there is abundant evidence that the underground church in China is growing well. How much more could we add to that if we are well prepared for China's opening?

Finally, the American church is facing serious battles at home with both secularization and a nostalgic longing for a golden past. Secularization lures us with a siren's call to be more like the world in order to be able to reach the world, a curiously powerful piece of circular reasoning. Our nostalgic longing for the glory days of the Restoration Movement brings a petrifying process to the church which is deadly. These two forces can be countered. One way is through a vigorous worship renewal, a renewal which scares some of us to death, but also provides new life to churches with wise leaders who offer appropriate avenues to achieve worship renewal. The other avenue we must pursue is to recover a lively, New Testament doctrine of the church. The 21st century church must be able to meet the challenges of a changing world based on a Holy Spirit mentality. Missions can take a leading role in reviving our churches in this way (Broom interview, June, 2000).

This renewal of a vibrant church which brings new life to the world calls forth the blessing Wendell would bequeath to the church. "The early church suffered under a cruel boot of Roman persecution, yet it thrived and brought transforming power to bear on its society. The American dream of our time and place is not cruel to the church; it simply ignores us in favor of the economies and politics of the world" (Broom interview, June 2000). Wendell's blessing to us, the present and future church, is this, that the church in America, with the uncountable blessings God has bestowed on us, would insist with greater vigor that the American dream give way to the dream of the kingdom of God in the hearts of our young people, that our sons and daughters be godly men and women who

clearly see the lostness of the major continents of the world and know how the divine person of Jesus speaks to the cultural currents of our time (Broom interview, June 2000).

Maranatha—Lord Jesus come.