

Missions Leader Roscoe Brewer Passes

Roscoe Brewer, former chairman of Liberty University's missions department, went home to be with the Lord Thursday, Dec. 8, at 11:25 p.m. He was surrounded by his four children and his wife, Margaret, when he died.

Roscoe attended Texas Wesleyan University from 1956 to 1959 and began developing a reputation for worldwide missionary compassion when he organized SMITE (Student Missionary Intern Training for Evangelism), first at Tulsa (Oklahoma) Baptist Temple, and then Kansas City (Missouri) Baptist Temple in the mid 1960s. As a youth pastor he saw many young people answer the call to full-time Christian work and go to college to study for ministry.

I attended a week-long mission trip to Monterrey, Mexico, led by Roscoe in 1970 where young people from his church helped construct a church, held a nightly evangelistic crusade, and went from village to village around the city distributing New Testament Bibles. On a hot afternoon around 3 p.m., we all wanted to go back to the motel for a dip in the pool and dinner. With tears in his eyes, Roscoe pleaded with us to go to just "one more village"; he reasoned, "We can win someone to Christ who might never hear the gospel if we don't go."

We did what Roscoe asked, and later that evening I saw a family pray to receive Christ as Roscoe spoke through an interpreter. Needless to say, Roscoe Brewer was a man of biblical conviction, true sincerity and honest transparency that won my lifelong friendship.

Next, Roscoe served as Thomas Road Baptist Church's youth pastor in Lynchburg, Va., and because he communicated well to the youth of that church his missionary heart, he was

appointed by Dr. Jerry Falwell as director of missions at the newly founded Liberty Baptist College. He hired several qualified professors with doctorates to teach in the program and led the department to regional accreditation.

Roscoe created several innovative programs at Liberty. First, he developed a program to send all students for a one-week exposure trip to Haiti where they worked with Wallace and Eleanor Turnbull at Haiti Baptist Mission to build churches, mission schools, health clinics and learn evangelism "by doing it." His department had a twin engine Convair plane that transported the young people to Haiti and back.

Later, when a major earthquake hit the Guatemala/Honduras region of Central America, Brewer again led a Liberty student work crew to rebuild churches, schools, homes and to evangelize the lost.

There was a crisis in Southeast Asia in 1979 when the Vietnam War came to a conclusion. People loyal to United States' interests were fleeing Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in boats across the South China Sea and across the Mekong River, only to be robbed, raped and murdered. Roscoe then took a team of Liberty students to Thailand to feed the refugees and preach the gospel to them. Again, I was alongside him and saw multitudes come to Christ.

Then Roscoe purchased an old destroyer in Singapore, and he led the team for 14 days in the South China Sea giving food, water and helping the refugees on the high seas who would have been lost if the Liberty team were not there.

Among other innovations, Roscoe Brewer organized a foreign mission sending board in the late 1970s, i.e., Liberty Baptist Missions, and at its influence, sent out over two dozen graduates to preach the gospel in Central and South America, the Pacific Rim, Europe, Africa and Asia.

In the early 1990s, Roscoe established EPIC International as a

missionary agency to link local churches and key unreached people groups in the world. He headed this organization until his death.

One of the great accomplishments of that organization was the finances Brewer raised from churches in America to translate the Scriptures into the local dialect of Arabic for Bangladesh. He hired six Christian scholars and six Muslim scholars to make an accurate translation of the Word of God. Going against the advice of many modern-day missiologists, he used the term Allah for God throughout Scripture, believing that other Arabic translations of Scripture were rejected in the Islamic world because a foreign name was used for their name for God. The explosion of the Isai believers in Bangladesh is attributed to that translation of the Scripture. Isai believers are those who have accepted Jesus as Savior and follow His teachings. There are an estimated 500,000 to 800,000 Isai believers in Bangladesh today.

Like so many of the other projects pioneered by Roscoe Brewer, we have no idea how broad his accomplishments are. Only time and heaven will reveal the eternal influence of Roscoe Brewer.

The continued passion for world missions at Liberty University was originally a second idea when Jerry Falwell appointed Roscoe Brewer to head up a new venture for a new college. Rather than offering college classes in missions and academic experience, Brewer pointed students to the mission field and went with them.

I sat in a ditch in Haiti, pouring a foundation for a school, then before dawn in Thailand we were boiling over 200 chickens to feed the hungry later that day. We sat on the bow of an old destroyer searching the horizon of the South China Sea for survivors. The real Roscoe Brewer had dirty hands, tired feet and a broken heart for the lost.

Today Liberty University is changed; the world is changed, and

the mission field is changed because Roscoe Brewer's heart was filled with love for Jesus Christ and obedience to "reach the gospel to every person" (Mark 16:15).