

The Cross and the Switchblade

Co-Author Remembers Wilkerson

The Cross and the Switchblade. It's a best-selling book that may go down in Church history as David Wilkerson's most memorable calling card.

The book tells the true story of Wilkerson's outreach to New York teens trapped in a world of drugs and gangs, separate from Christ, without hope and without God in the world. Later turned into a movie, *The Cross and the Switchblade* includes the story of Nicky Cruz, a teen gang member whose life was dramatically transformed by Christ.

But Wilkerson didn't write the book all alone. He depended on the steady hands of John and Elizabeth Sherrill. Since *The Cross and the Switchblade* was published in 1963 the Sherrills have written many books, but they will never forget their experience—or their friendship—with Wilkerson.

Charisma News caught up with John Sherrill to discuss some of his fondest memories with the founder of World Challenge. Those memories focus on Wilkerson's humility and his prophetic insights into world events.

"David was very careful not to get into any of the areas where televangelists were raising huge amounts of money and then living in great style. He just didn't do that," says Sherrill. "Whenever we saw him he was in a suburban home. If he had some parts of his life that weren't that way I didn't know about them."

Wilkerson did have one passion, though: old cars. Over the years, Wilkerson collected many old cars with his own money—not the ministry's money. Sherrill tells the story of Wilkerson walking into his garage one day and deciding he shouldn't own the vintage automobiles—and he immediately sold

them.

“When David told me that story I thought, ‘If I had a passion for old cars and used my own money to buy them, I would be very reluctant to feel that there was more kingdom use for the money than John Sherrill,’” a lighthearted Sherrill admits. “It was a good insight into David’s personality.”

Another one of Sherrill’s favorite Wilkerson memories relates to the man of God’s prayer time. Wilkerson enjoyed reading the writings of the Church Fathers, like Augustine. Sherrill says the focus of Wilkerson’s personal prayer and study time is illustrative of his priorities.

Perhaps what Sherrill remembers most about his co-author was what he calls a strange ability to foresee the future. Sherrill points to the stock market crash of 1987, widely known as Black Monday, as one of many examples.

“David came out of his prayer time and said, ‘A crash is going to come today. I think I would like to go see what happens,’” Sherrill says. “So he went down to Wall Street and the stock market crashed. It was very unusual. It was just something of his understanding of the sins of the world and the sins of our fathers. The swings in our stock market are indicative of greed or of fear. It had been greed and then suddenly overnight it just plunged into fear. David was there when it happened.”