

Life Reflection of Dr. Stanley M. Horton

The following is a complete transcript of the eulogies delivered for Bible scholar Dr. Stanley Horton, who recently passed away at the age of 98. The first is from Horton's daughter, Faith Horton Stilts. The second is from his biographer, Lois Olena.

From Faith Horton Stilts

Where to begin the story of a man like Stanley Monroe Horton? It is hard because there is so much that could be shared. Not because he was a complicated man but because he had such a full life during his 98 years here on earth.

Dr. Horton was born the child and grandchild of Pentecostal preachers. His mom was his teacher before he went to public school, so in a very real way he was an early homeschooler before anyone ever heard of the word.

He grew up immersed in a life filled with faith, prayer, worship, and bible reading. He could tell you so many stories of people in his family who were healed by God, from broken arms to healing of paralysis to being saved from death's door. The miraculous happened often.

He was also a very real kid. There is the cave that he and his brothers dug in their backyard where they often played and kept his favorite books and a candle for a boy who loved to read. He also loved to roller skate and would often skate all the way to school. He tried to play baseball with the other kids but usually missed the ball. He said that when he finally got glasses in high school he was amazed that he could see the ball coming as he stood at bat. Before the glasses, he thought everyone listened for the sound of the ball coming to them and

tried to hit it according to the sound.

His family was very poor and his mother would often serve soup for dinner. Stanley complained about it and his mother added something to make it thicker and called it "stew." That completely satisfied him. For his birthday he didn't want cake. His mom would always make him rhubarb pie. His dad's favorite pie was apple and as an adult Stanley's favorite evolved to be the same with a twist—apple pie with cheddar cheese melted on it.

His grandmother live nearby. She was the one with the photographic memory who had spoken in tongues back in the 1880s but didn't know what it was. One of his favorite memories was walking to her house every afternoon because she had a pint of ice cream daily and would share. She said she needed the daily ice cream to stave off the effects of sunstroke that she experienced years before. It was a good excuse for ice cream.

He finished high school earlier than most. He was 16, and his mom wanted him to stay closer to home so he enrolled at the local city college. At 18 he went away to Berkeley but instead of college being a rowdy time of experimenting with different things, Stanley continued to explore his faith and grow in grace as he studied chemistry, making A's.

He also worked to pay for his housing. A friend who was studying for the ministry taught him how to drive a car. He said his mom was very surprised when he came home from school and could do that.

After college he began a career at a state agricultural chemistry lab. He would often go to youth street meetings and even though he was a shy young man, would share his testimony when he felt led by the Holy Spirit. It was during this time that he had a definite call to the ministry, not to preach but to teach and prepare others for ministry.

He traveled across the country by train, taking the long route where he saw the south for the first time as the train slowly wove its way across the US and up the east coast to Boston. Why Boston? Well God led him there to further his biblical education but even more importantly to find the love of his life, Evelyn. He met her at church as he walked thru the Sunday school class she was teaching to get to his. On their first date, she often said that, after fixing her hair and wearing her nicest dress, his only comment was, "Nice shoes." I did mention he was rather shy, didn't I?

He was a great storyteller and his sons Stan and Ed remember he used to make up stories about Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck and do all the voices. He would always weave a life truth into the end of the story. When Faith came along, those stories changed to The Three Bears and Cinderella as he rocked her to sleep each night.

The three children all remember their dad had a great sense of humor and enjoyed good clean jokes. His favorite joke that he told at family gatherings and with friends was about Little Icky. He told this with a full Yiddish accent that I can't imitate well so keep that in mind as I share it with you.

One day Little Icky's father, who owned a little shop, told him that he was old enough to come and learn the business. He told Little Icky to stand behind a screen and watch and learn while he dealt with the first customer. A lady came to the door and Little Icky's father rushed up to her and said, "Good morning good morning, lovely lady! And what can I do to help you on this beautiful morning?"

The lady replied: "Well, I was wanting to buy some silk..."

Little Icky's father interrupts her and says, "Oh you are the most fortunate lady in the world. We just got a big shipment of the best silk in the whole world, and this morning I got a telegram saying that all the silkworms in China died." The

lady bought all the silk he had in stock and left a very happy woman.

When she was gone, Little Icky's father went to him and said, "Did you watch and learn what to do?"

Little Icky replied: "Oh yes, Father! I can do this!" So Little Icky's father went behind the screen and Little Icky came out to wait for the next customer. Another lady came in after a few minutes. Little Icky raced up to her and said, "Good Morning Good Morning lovely lady! What can I do for you on this beautiful day?"

The lady replied: "Well, I've been wanting to find this certain kind of tape ..."

Little Icky interrupted her and said, "You are the most fortunate lady in the world! We just got a huge shipment of just the kind of tape you are looking for and this morning we got a telegram saying that all the tapeworms had died."

Dr. Horton's daughter Faith has an early memory of her mom and brothers going to a meeting at the elementary school, and so she was alone with her dad. It was Friday night and that meant chapel at CBC. Rather than skip the meeting, he bagged up some chocolate chip cookies for her and took her. They sat happily in the balcony during the service. He worshiped and listened to the sermon and kept her happy. She was probably 3 at the time.

You can read about all of Dr. Horton's degrees and honors online. One that hasn't been mentioned, though, is that he was the spiritual adviser for the PTA when his daughter was in elementary school. He would prepare a short talk and share it at every monthly meeting. I wish we had recordings of those talks!

If any of his kids had a question about Chemistry or Math, he was always there to help.

He was good to talk about anything they had questions about. Faith remembers him listening to lots of stories about the travails of junior high. His first response was usually,

“I used to feel just like that!” He was a good listener. He treated his students the same way, always there even staying late after a class to explain something.

Dr. Horton's form of social conscience was all about saving the unborn and helping others. He walked to raise money for the Pregnancy Care Center here in Springfield as long as he was able. He came to give his support by sitting on the platform after that.

He also gave regularly to Victory Mission and one year helped serve the Thanksgiving meal with Faith, Brent, and Zachary.

Dr. Horton was very proud of his son Edward and his military service. Edward served in Desert Storm and in the Army Reserve for 20 years.

When it came down to the real Dr. Horton, he loved God, and cared about people.

From playing on the floor with his kids and grandkids to helping with math problems, counseling and loving a child who was acting out because her parents had deserted her to play Mexican Train. All these things are Stanley Monroe Horton.

There is a scripture that describes Dr. Horton well: Micah 6:8 : He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. " And that is what he did.

Lois Olena, Stanley Horton's

Biographer

Note: Olena recounts Horton's bridge-building across the racial divides. Central Bible College did not allow African-American students, but Horton helped to change that policy and personally mentored and encouraged African-American students, including Spencer Jones, Frank Davis, and Lemuel Thuston (now a prominent COGIC bishop).

In 1947, my father was one of dozens of students at Metropolitan Bible Institute in Paterson, New Jersey, sitting under the tutelage of the new Harvard grad, Rev. Stanley Horton, who was teaching twenty-one credits per semester, caring for his young family, and preaching on the weekends.

I, on the other hand, first met Dr. Horton when he was 89 years old. One day at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary I noticed a quiet, unassuming man sitting off by himself at an event in the Great Hall. I went over and sat by him, enjoying his gracious conversation and pleasant spirit—only later realizing who he was.

It was in this first meeting that I encountered the man, Stanley Horton. Not the author, the educator, or the theologian. Just a man, sitting by himself and happy to carry on a friendly conversation with a stranger. Little did I know at that time that I would have the honor and privilege of enjoying the good company and friendship of this man over the next nine years.

A few months after this, during a meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies in Pasadena, a former student of Dr. Horton's, Dr. Ray Gannon, suggested a project to write Dr. Horton's biography "Surprised" and "humbled" that someone would want to write about his life, Dr. Horton agreed, and the project began.

Because of his longevity and keen mind, Dr. Horton willingly

served as an invaluable source of information as I attempted to meet the challenge of writing about a life that spanned over nine decades. His godly heritage ran deep—providing the fertile ground for a life of service characterized by Pentecostal fervor, commitment to biblical scholarship, and Christlike character. He patiently answered vital questions, relayed countless stories, shared valuable insights, and of course made excellent editorial suggestions! Our friendship grew as I witnessed firsthand what it meant to joyfully serve God with everything, be gracious toward everyone, trust God obediently as He leads step by step, and live a life that honors the past, embraces the present, and prepares hopefully for the future.

Three years later the biography was published, and we “took our show on the road!” My husband Doug and I traveled with Dr. Horton to the 2009 SPS meeting in Oregon where I had arranged for a panel of scholars to honor him. Dr. Wood moderated as each spoke—Dr. Horton as central to Pentecostal history, as a colleague in higher education, as an exemplar, as a bridge for racial reconciliation, as a theologian ... But my role was to honor him simply as a *man*. I relayed stories that spoke of his spirituality, of his being an overcomer, an encourager, content, trusting, generous, loving to his family, faithful, humble, funny, even musical! (He told me the Choir director in Sacramento didn’t mind “if a person was a little flat now and then!”). And of course I spoke of him as smart—even as a kid. (His sister Esther always joked that her brother “got all the brains,” and “she got none.” His son, Ed, used to tell his dad that if he ever got senile and lost half his intelligence, he would still be twice as smart as him!)

Young Stanley gave his heart to the Lord in 1922 when he was just six years old. Right after that experience, he wanted to be baptized in water. He never forgot that baptismal ceremony: “I can still picture it in my mind,” he reminisced. Six years later, after interacting with a woman who told Stanley she was

not sure he really could have been saved when he was six years old, Stanley slipped away and found another rescue mission where no one knew him. He went to the altar when they gave the invitation for salvation, and the Lord reassured him that *he was indeed saved*.

He received the baptism in the Holy Spirit on New Year's Day of 1936. As he recalled:

Jesus was so real to me. I could feel His touch like never before. I was so overwhelmed with the presence of Jesus that I was hardly conscious of speaking in tongues; I did speak in tongues, but not for very long. That night I remembered an evangelist saying something derogatory about young people who spoke only a few words in tongues, while he spoke for hours. The next night I went to the altar; no one gathered around to pray for me, but I simply said, "Lord, if there is a freedom in this, I want it." Suddenly it was like a dam broke, and my praises and prayers to God in a heavenly language poured out of my mouth. For a couple of weeks I could hardly pray in English.

Dr. Horton's biography is *full* of stories that we don't have time here to relay. Each one is a golden nugget in its own right. And the book's appendix contains hundreds of 90th birthday greetings and expressions of love from people *around the world* in 25 five countries, many unable to be here today.

One story that stands out to me, though, is the encouragement Dr. Horton showed CBC African-American students during an era when it was not easy or popular and when others may not have been so Christ-like. One young student, now Church of God in Christ Bishop Lemuel Thuston, tells how Dr. Horton showed a personal interest in him—encouraging him in his undergraduate work when the way was difficult, spurring him on to graduate work at the new Assemblies of God Graduate School, guiding him in his Ancient Near Eastern History specialty at SMSU, connecting him with Pastor Spencer Jones to do an internship

in Chicago's inner city, and providing Lemuel with the "first and only" scholarship he ever received. Dr. Horton, he said, was the inspiration for much of what he was able to accomplish and pursue academically and in other areas. He acknowledged with gratefulness, "I probably would not have finished if it was not for him."

Such transmission of grace from one generation to the next stands at the heart of who Dr. Horton was as a godly man and a disciple of his Messiah. It serves as a clarion call to us today to walk step by step in the same faithfulness.

I saw that call in action at the 2009 AG General Council in Orlando the year the biography was released. Dr. Horton and I had attended the retired ministers' luncheon to share the book with those in attendance. The theme there was, "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come" (Ps. 71:18). Scores of retired ministers came up to him at the book-signing table to recount how they had had him as their teacher 20–30–40—even 50 years prior. We finished at the luncheon, and I wheeled Dr. Horton back across the street and into the huge conference complex. (He only needed the wheelchair because of the distance—most of that Council he could be seen pushing his own wheelchair around). As we entered the elevator, a teenaged girl with an injury to her ankle entered the elevator on a scooter.

When I turned Dr. Horton around, she looked at him wide-eyed and said, "Oh my! Are you Dr. Stanley Horton?"

"Yes," he smiled.

"Wow!" she exclaimed. "I have read everything you've ever written! I can't believe I'm meeting you!"

There in that elevator was a connection between the generations that was stunning, in that the work of his hands had been able to declare God's power and might to the next

generation—many years after he had served as a college or seminary professor.

The years since have been seasoned with rich times of honoring Dr. Horton, at such events as the Annual Horton Lectureship at Evangel, the Legacy Chapel at AGTS, graduations, the Society for Pentecostal Studies meeting, and many other events. It has been my great privilege to celebrate his life and work not only from coast to coast, but also in quiet lunches, dinners, and car rides around Springfield where our conversation would be sprinkled as much by his wonderful sense of humor as with those “aha” moments of biblical understanding where at the stop light I would just turn and say, “Wow. I never thought about it that way.” And he would just smile.

Five years have passed since we finished the biography; I used to say to Dr. Horton that we will need to do a Volume 2 pretty soon! Now I’m sure he has cast all his crowns at Jesus’ feet, and Volume 2 is not on his agenda at all in the face of the opportunity to worship His Number One.

I will greatly miss caring for and celebrating my friend, and of course, stopping by Andy’s Frozen Custard—just to see the smile on his face. smile on his face.