

INNER CITY VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Racial tensions still simmered in 1968 when Dr. Dotson M. Nelson Jr. said to me, “Mr. Wilson, I want Mountain Brook Baptist Church to conduct a Vacation Bible School for black children in the inner city of Birmingham.”

Bryant Strain, our pastor intern, and I drove to Bessemer and enlisted the help of the man who worked with National Baptist churches in Birmingham. A June date was set and Zion Star Baptist Church on Third Avenue agreed to host VBS.

A note was attached to Sunday School attendance rolls of two Mountain Brook Baptist Church ladies’ classes. It stated: “Mountain Brook Baptist Church is conducting a Vacation Bible School at Zion Star Baptist Church on Third Avenue, June 8-12 for children in that community. Our teachers will be matched with an equal number of teachers from black churches in Birmingham. This joint effort will be a blessing to all. Call the church office if you are interested in teaching.”

The positive response was amazing. More ladies volunteered than could be used. Each day that week was thrilling for the children and the teachers. Bryant and I were entertained after the joint worship each day by five pastors from National Baptist churches who attended along with their teacher. The pastors told personal stories that had the seven of us in constant laughter.

The children were given chocolate ice cream sandwiches as they headed home each day. I remember one pastor telling a little girl, “Don’t wipe that chocolate off your face. Let your friends see it and tell them where you got it. Bring them back with you tomorrow.”

The experience with Zion Star Baptist Church was followed with VBS in Homewood with two National Baptist churches: Union Baptist and Friendship Baptist.

Our Mountain Brook Baptist Church college age members were involved the next summer assisting a week long day camp for children in the Mark’s Village area of Birmingham.

Sharing the good news in any situation brings a deep joy unlike any other. Through the years, Mountain Brook Baptist Church has sought to be found faithful in those opportunities.

Hoyt R. Wilson



A clipping from a local newspaper, discovered in the Alabama State Archives, shows Mrs. Bryant Strain (left) and Mrs. C.H. McWhirter (center) of Mountain Brook Baptist Church, and the Reverend L.S. Craig and Mrs. J.C. Richardson (sitting) during Vacation Bible School at Zion Star Baptist Church.



JANUARY 13, 2019

WE’VE A STORY TO TELL
75th Anniversary Memories of Mountain Brook Baptist Church

ANNE AND AL LEE

"I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her needy with bread" (Psalm 132:15 NASB).

If there is a register being kept in heaven of the true "patriarchs" of Mountain Brook Baptist Church, it will be a long and impressive list. Doubtless somewhere near the top of such a list will be Al Lee (1910-1993) and his wife Anne Lee (1909-2002). In the early 1950s they moved their membership from Southside Baptist Church in order to help Mountain Brook Baptist Church grow. Their daughters Gayle Lee Dyess and Martha Lee Lamar fondly remember those years. They recalled that the Chapel and their home at 66 Overbrook were separated by dense woods, so they would actually drive to church.

Al was a Trustee, Deacon, and Life Deacon. He was on the search committee calling Dr. Nelson, headed several of the finance committees, and served on most of the building fund committees. Few of the minutes from the early Deacon meetings don't include some reference to work involving Al Lee. Professionally he was an early and key executive of Birmingham's EBSCO team.

Jim Stephens, EBSCO Chairman Emeritus, commented that Anne Lee, who for years taught the Sunday School Primary Department, "was a lady in every way. I had her share with me situations where a gift was needed for someone in a troubled situation so I could join her in occasionally helping someone ... how she discovered these situations, I do not know. She was not about Anne." Daughters Ruth and Gayle laughed at this comment, recalling once being in Birmingham visiting their mother. "We had to run by the grocery store to give some cash to one of the checkers" who their mother said "she had a son in jail and needed some money in order to go visit him."

At one point the Lees moved to New York where he worked in magazine publishing. This was probably when they quietly gifted their home to the church. Now referred to as the White Missionary House, it was first used as a parsonage for Associate Minister Dr. Bob Poerschke and his family. Over the years it has served a number of functions but was primarily used, as the Lees suggested, for furloughed missionaries. With the house being on the church's campus, those residents have blessed Mountain Brook Baptist Church now for many years.

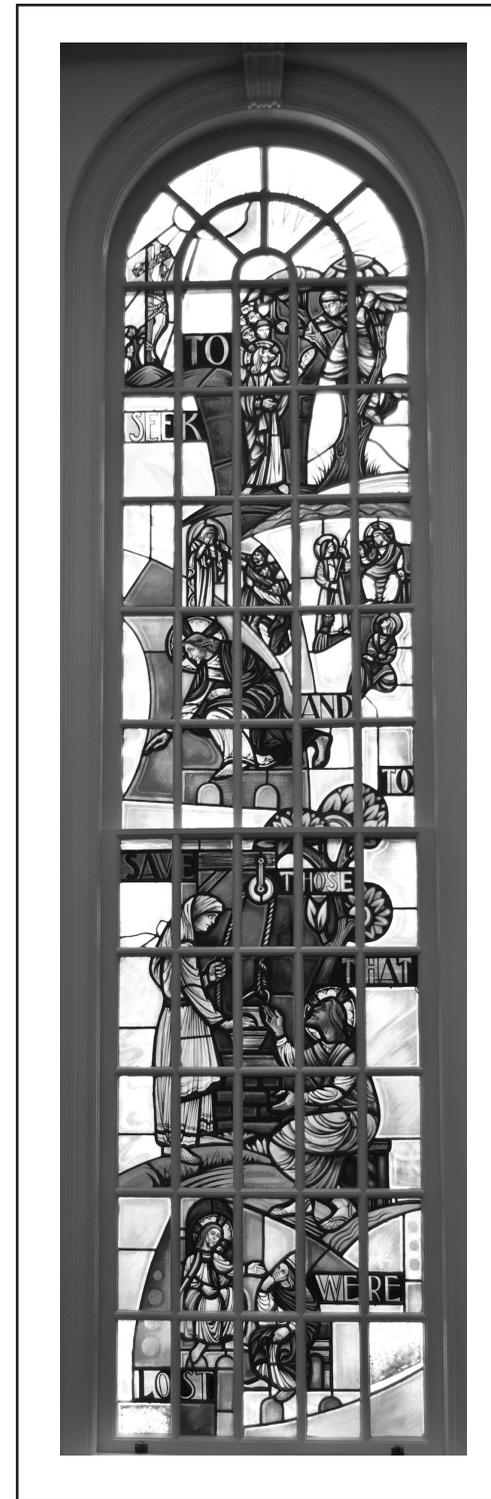
In commenting on the Lees' gifting the house to the church, Jim Stephens said he wasn't surprised. The Lees were people who would have paid "little attention to a 10% guideline" for a tithe. After Al's death in 1993, EBSCO made a most generous \$20,000 gift to the church's Foundation. The church, of course, follows Anne Lee's request

that interest earned from that fund be used to support needy widows of Baptist preachers, via the Guidestone Widows Annuitant Fund.

Through the White Missionary House, the annuity for widows, and likely many an unknown gift and deed, the Lee legacy will live on for decades to come.



Photos of Anne and Al Lee, taken throughout their years of membership at Mountain Brook Baptist Church.



HONORING SACRED MEMORIES: THE MINISTRY WINDOW

Mr. Price, also known as Sonny Jim (1885-1965), was on the building committee for the Sanctuary. He became a Deacon in 1950. A chair of the finance committee, he chaired the Deacons in 1957. He was an industrialist specializing in manufacturing cast-iron cookware. He was also an early, pivotal member of the board of Baptist Hospitals.

The Ministry Window, located in the Sanctuary, given to the glory of God in memory of S.J. Price.