

A MAN WHO STOOD TALL

It is amazing how many activities in life there are in which a man may participate, and some men become involved completely in life around them. As we look at the life of our beloved Ted Regenhardt, we realize that here was such a man, and constructing a better way of life for people about him was one of the dominating drives of his life.

Throughout the Bible we find recorded amazing feats of construction, as man, living under the inspiration of God, learned to build for the glory of God and the usefulness of man. The prophets and teachers of Israel tried to build for their people a quality of life in relation to God and each other that was far superior to any other. It was into this tradition that the child Jesus was born, and at the early age of 12, the magnificence of the temple in Jerusalem caught his eye; and he spoke of it as His Father's house where he wanted to be about His Father's business. Jesus once spoke of the temple being destroyed, and he would rebuild it in 3 days, and no one understood that he was talking about the temple of the soul; but the entire New Testament points the way to the construction of human life along Eternal plans. The great Apostle Paul asked, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God?"

Under the inspiration of Christ, men have become builders,--builders of temples, builders of roads, builders of cities, builders of industry and world trade--but most of all, builders of life! Such a man was our Mr. Regenhardt, born December 26, 1900, a Christmas present to Edward F. and Alvena Teurkoff Regenhardt. He was one of 5 children in their happy home. He grew up in Cape Girardeau, where he received his education in the schools of the city and the university here. As a young man he went to St. Louis to work. one day he saw a saxophone in a music store window and bought it. He took lessons and learned to play exceptionally well. When he returned to Cape Girardeau he played in the Municipal Band for many years.

At an early age he became interested in construction work, but he did not limit it to work with brick and stone, wood and steel. To him, the greatest construction was to build the Christian life. He was joined in this greatest of all ventures when he was united in marriage to Miss Lois McNeely on March 31, 1923, at Leemon, Missouri. To the happy couple four children were born, two, Alice and Don, grew to adulthood. From 1923 until the close of World War II, he was associated with Regenhardt Construction Co., McCarthy Construction Co. in Panama, and then the CBs or Construction Batallion of the Navy.

Active Methodists all their lives, they transferred into Grace Methodist Church on March 6, 1944, and have played a major roll in its service and growth in the thirty years since then.

In the years following World War II, Mr. Regenhardt served as County Collector, and then on May 28, 1957, was appointed Postmaster of Cape Girardeau by President Eisenhower. His skill and interest in the construction business was put to immediate use, as he carefully guided the post office through phenomenal growth and even the construction of the beautiful new Post Office building. His deep interest in people and their welfare can be seen in his active participation in the Red Cross, in civic affairs, and in Southeast Missouri Hospital, where as a member of the Board of Trustees, he looked forward to the expansion of the hospital and its service to the community. On many occasions he talked to me of the equipment he hoped to see the hospital secure for work in its healing ministry, and he worked hard to make this possible.

A churchman of the highest order, he served well on the building committee of Grace Methodist Church, and played a large part in helping to guide the congregation in its dreams and construction of this beautiful place of worship. And when the work was done, and the congregation had moved into its new home, he continued to be a tower of inspiration and leadership in the life of his beloved church. "Build thee more worthy mansions, O my Soul" seems to have been written especially for him. His greatest work has not been building structures of brick and stone, wood and steel--his greatest work has been upon the lives of people about him. Little children, especially, were attracted to him, and I know one little girl who will always have a special place of love in her heart for him. He always had time to pick up Ann when we came to Cape, joking with her about her freckles, and always getting a kiss in return. As a little 3 year old, she never forgot, and her life will always be brighter because he stood so tall in his love and friendship and inspiration for her. His physical appearance indicated the height and beauty of his character; for what a man is can be seen in his face. Will Allen Dromgoole had such a man in mind when he wrote:

THE BRIDGE BUILDER

An old man going a lone highway
Came at the evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm vast and deep and wide,
Thru which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
The sullen stream had no fears for him;
But he turned when safe on the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man", said a fellow pilgrim near,
"You are wasting your strength with building here.
Your journey will end with the ending day,
You never again will pass this way.
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide;
Why build you the bridge at the eventide?"

The builder lifted his gray old head.
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
There follows after me today a youth whose feet must pass this way."

This chasm that has been naught to me
To that fair-haired youth might a pit-fall be;
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim--
Good friend, I am building the bridge for him."

No higher tribute can be paid to a man than that his life was lived to build a better way for others. For 8 1/2 years I have been privileged to be his pastor. We shall always remember him as a real friend, a great Christian who stood tall in every way - tall physically, spiritually; tall in friendship and concern for all people, tall in love for God and his fellow man - kind and gentle, full of humor - God's kind of man. You, his family, and we, his many, many friends, shall always be better because he lived his life to help build a better character in each of us. Surely the greeting he has received from Christ, the master builder, are the well known words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of Thy Lord."

Howard Hardeman