



Rev. Jack Lewellen – 50 Years a Baptist Preacher

[Tyler County Booster, 02-06-14, 8B.](#)

The Rev. Jack Lewellen has been preaching for 50 years. Currently pastor of Beech Creek Baptist, Spurger, Texas, he has been active in the New Bethel Baptist Association all this time, and as moderator three times. Many have called him their “best friend,” though he his wife Lois has been his first lady since the beginning.

He was born in Haskell, Texas, in 1932. “Where Rick Perry is from,” Jack said with a respectful nod, Perry being from Haskell County. “I was born in a line shack. Not in a hospital. I learned to read under the dim light of a kerosene lamp. No indoor anything.”

In 1940, his family moved to Dallas to make easier the treatment of his older sister’s infantile paralysis at the Scottish Rite Hospital.

Jack’s father, a Dallas police officer for many years, taught him and his two brothers respect, warning them, “Walk Slow, Talk Low, and Watch Out for Snakes.” That maxim made Jack famous in his prison ministry decades later, so apropos for prisoners and staff. Its serious tenor brings a quick smile for its pithy wisdom.

The maxim’s determination also sums up Jack’s resolute spirit.

Jack joined the Air Force reserve while in high school in Dallas. After high school he began work at the Western Weighing and Inspection Bureau that supervised the railroad west of the Mississippi to Arizona.

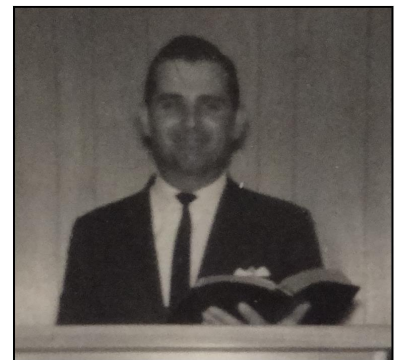
In 1951, the Air Force called and sent his medical corps to Donaldson AFB in Greenville, S.C., where he met Lois, a lieutenant and RN. Their corps transferred to Maxwell AFB in Montgomery, Ala., where she finished the tough flight nurse school. They fell in love and married on May 16, 1952.

“Eisenhower said he would end the Korean War if he got into office, and he did,” said Jack.

The Korean War ended in July 1953, and Jack and Lois went to Dallas.

Jack went back to work at the Bureau, and they moved around a bit, from the Rio Grande Valley to Amarillo, back to the Valley, and then to the Houston office in 1958 where he would become the agent in charge. The Bureau checked railroad transit rates and shipment integrity according to tariff rules subject to the Interstate Commerce Commission.

In 1959, Jack became a Christian and was licensed to preach in 1964 at the Greenwood Village Baptist in Houston.



A. D. Graham noticed Jack and invited him to preach at Mt. Carmel Baptist Church in Colmesneil, Texas, in February of 1965. They had been four years without regular services. On April 11, 1965, Jack was ordained as pastor to Mt. Carmel.

Knowing God had called him, Jack never looked back, driving between Colmesneil and Houston for 12 years. They stayed with a host family until he built a place near the church.

Jack and Lois have two daughters and a son. Robbie lives in Odessa, Texas, though she has been frequenting Colmesneil of late to help her mother. Laura is a sheriff's deputy in Rusk County, and Mike retired a few years ago from the Houston Police as a homicide detective.

Robbie recalled watching people ice skate at the Galleria in Houston. One man in a lime green shirt wobbled his head like one of those wobble-head dogs one placed on car dashboards. She remembers Jack's quips and how she and her father laughed to tears.

"He and I were just dying laughing," she said. Lois could not stand it and walked away.

"That's daddy," Robbie said, "he could make you laugh even if you did not feel like it."

About the church, Jack thoughtfully remembered Graham as if he were here today. "Graham never had to worry about whether I would be here or not." Dependable – Jack remained Mt. Carmel's pastor for 33 years.

Jack's dignified wit and humor always conveyed patience. His gift to appear never in a hurry endears him to all. He always has time for you and me.

His daughters Robbie and Laura recall the best times were in the travels from Houston to Mt. Carmel on Saturdays. Just to save time, they would stop, get some buns and wieners, and make cold hotdogs on the run. Simple, but it drew the family together.

The album of Mt. Carmel has many photos over the years, the remodeling, the fellowship dinners, and the many anniversaries – 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 years. The remodeling and raising of the steeple were monumental. When the crane arrived, the operator saw the church praying; after the steeple was hoisted, the operator refused payment.

Late on Sunday night, when a mother was sick in the hospital, he would be there holding her hand. He and Lois stayed late into the night, drove back to Houston, and with hardly any sleep he went to work on Monday morning.



Many times, Jack asked Robbie to read out loud the Sunday school lesson while he drove. Years later, Robbie realized the reading was not for his sake, but for hers. Tricky! She loved him all the more.

In 1977, Jack left the Bureau, and they moved to Colmesneil. Jack's 27 years of memories with the railroad have faded, and he thanks God for the loss of the not-so-pleasant times.

He had become a pastor and knew God was working.

When he had a heart stint operation, Robbie said, "I just could not believe it. There must have been 25 people in the waiting room." A few years ago Jack had his gall bladder removed, and in the waiting room Robbie and Laura tossed around the idea of painting his toe tails.

"Laura and I are kind of crazy," Robbie said, "and super close. Daddy would not allow us to argue. He would make us read First Corinthians 13. Then we would be on the bed crying and laughing. We have a tight bond between us three."

Another maxim of his is: "It's hard to hate a person you are praying for."

After Mt. Carmel, he filled various pulpits, pastored Toledo Bend Baptist for a few years, then was called by Beech Creek Baptist in Spurger, where he has been for the last 12 years. He led Beech Creek to build a family life center, and they love him dearly.

Just a couple of weeks ago, on January 18, a young couple was murdered at Mt. Carmel. While the sheriff hunts, Jack's memories flood his soul as he prays for the church and church's pastor, the Rev. Milton Powers, also J.P. for precinct 3.

Mingled with his family and church, for the last 23 years, Jack has ministered at the Gib Lewis Prison. He became the first certified volunteer chaplain, mentored prisoners, and led Bible study classes. Retired Chaplain Maness reflected on their 20 years together in the prison, "Jack was like a rock for the prisoners, always kind, very much the biblical sage inspiring prisoners, staff, and fellow volunteers."

Fellow prison minister, Booster columnist, and Woodville Church of Christ Minister Dr. Keith Bellamy reflected what most of the local ministers think of Jack, "He is one of the kindness men I know."

"There are so many things that come to mind," Jack said about the prison ministry. "Like Bro. Carr, Fields, and Billy Heath," faithful Christian prisoners who attended his class for the last 20-plus years. "The ministry has been a tremendous blessing to me. I had a great success involving them in discussions.

That always was the best way to function out there." Jack paused and his eyes looked far into the distance. So many memories over five decades. "One kid came to my class," Jack recalled, "He said he was an atheist, and he had a lot of questions he that was going to ask. Yet, he never asked them. After the class the kid told me that I began to answer all of his questions before he could ask them. He became a believer and was baptized out there."

In a way, throughout his life, Jack has truly "walked slow, talked low," and, yes, "watched out for snakes." Would that we could all walk as carefully and deliberately, all the way giving God the glory.

