

The Epistle

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Charles Weltner: A Profile in Courage

It is fitting that we take note that one among us has recently received national and local recognition for a life of courage, excellence and faith. Justice Charles L. Weltner is the recent recipient of the Profile in Courage Award from the John F. Kennedy Library, the Race Relations Award from Resurgence Atlanta, the Logan Bleckly Award for Judicial Excellence from the Atlanta Bar Association and the Excellence Award from the Harvard Law School Alumni Association.

I recently was given the opportunity to interview Justice Weltner, as well as some of his friends, colleagues and family members for the purpose of writing a profile of this quiet man. One trait noted by all of those who know him is that while he has always been drawn to public service, he hates the limelight. I hope he will forgive this small additional recognition in The Epistle.

In speaking with Justice Weltner, it becomes plain that his father, Phillip Weltner, had an enormous influence on his life. His father was an attorney who took an active interest in prison reform and was the first juvenile court judge in the state of Georgia. Later in his life, he turned to the field of education and became the first chancellor of the University System of Georgia, as well as president of Oglethorpe University.

It is clear that Phillip Weltner was an important influence on his son when Charles changed his vote in Congress to favor the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964. Charles Weltner was the only congressman from the Deep South who voted in favor of the bill. Weltner's father called him to say, "I am proud of you. You are on the side of history."

Others were less charitable, and
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The Pollard Story

An interesting story lies behind the Pollard Fund, the income from which is distributed each January by the Session. For the many members who have joined Central since Miss Gertrude Pollard's death in 1977, at the age of 87, we tell the story again.

Miss Pollard joined Central in 1911. She was here during the years (1911-1924) when John Eagan, ruling elder, was leaving his mark on Central and its attitude toward social and economic justice in the city of Atlanta. She was here when striking workers found sanctuary at Central. She was here the day the Baby Clinic first opened its doors. She was here when the church fed and housed hundreds of visitors to Atlanta when the funeral of Martin Luther King Jr. was held. And she was here during the pastorates of five strong preachers: Dunbar Ogden, Ben Lacey, Stuart Oglesby, Fred Stair and Randy Taylor.

Gertrude Pollard taught in Atlanta Public Schools, beginning as a first grade teacher in 1910, when she was 20 years old. When she retired in 1947, she was principal of Morningside School. All those years, she supported herself on the pittance paid Atlanta school teachers (far, far less in real money than even the low compensation teachers receive today).

Margaret Carlisle, who probably knew her better than anyone, says, "She was a sweet person. If ever there was a lady, Miss Pollard was a lady."

A smart lady.

She lived frugally in one room at the Imperial Hotel and ate most of her meals at the S&W Cafeteria on Peachtree Street. Much of her spare time was spent at Atlanta's public library studying business publications and the stock market. When she felt that she had a handle on how the market worked, she started investing systematically in stocks.

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Campbell-Egan Building is heated and cooled according to the thermostats governing the Oglesby Building. This suggests a major step Central could take toward improving the conservation of energy and the saving of money.

The EAC has in mind the establishment of a permanent bulletin board at Central---with the blessing of the powers that be---that will feature a question-and-answer forum in print for responding to the environmental concerns of the congregation. You submit your questions to the EAC, and the EAC will answer them and post both questions and answers on the bulletin board for all to read and learn from. Keep your eyes peeled for the bulletin board and start generating your questions.

-- Bill Horton

The Pollard Story (cont'd)

She survived the 1929 stock market crash and, as the years passed, saw her stock portfolio steadily increase in value. During the bull market years of the '50s and '60s, her portfolio would occasionally take an unexpected leap upward. She was quite aware that her investments over the years had done well, allowing her to spend her retirement years in the relative luxury of Canterbury Court; but those who knew her best doubt she ever dreamed that her estate would be worth over half a million dollars at the time of her death.



Miss Pollard is shown above in a snapshot taken in 1974. The little girl with her is Jennifer Howell, the granddaughter of Grace and John Bansley.

Miss Pollard was born a Presbyterian. Her great-grandfather, Dr. Thomas Goulding, was elected first professor of Columbia Seminary in 1828. Before the seminary was ready to start operations in Columbia, S.C., in 1930, he taught a class of five students in the manse in Lexington, Ga., where he was serving as pastor. He later moved from Columbia to Columbus, Ga., serving as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church there until his death in 1848.

There is little doubt that when it came time for Miss Pollard to write her will, she felt greatly influenced by Central's ministries with the city and the preaching she had heard from its pulpit. She divided her property into two equal shares: one share to Central Church, the other to First Church in Columbus, both to be maintained as memorials to her parents and to be known as The Ira Lewis and Emma Terry Pollard Funds.

She specified that the Central Church fund be managed by the Session and that "the net income shall be used for the purpose of providing for and ministering to people in need, including, but not limited to, providing food, shelter and clothing for needy children, the unemployed, and the elderly." Race, color or creed were not to be factors in determining who would receive help.

Miss Pollard often said, "I made my money in Atlanta, and I want it spent in Atlanta."

Last year the income from Central's Pollard Fund amounted to \$29,000 and, as agreed upon by earlier Sessions, the following three Central Ministries each received 25 percent: Child Development Center, for scholarships; Central Health Center, for indigent patients; and Central Outreach, for emergency assistance. The amounts allocated are over and above the church's contributions to these programs.

The remaining 25 percent, or \$7,250, was distributed by a six-member committee of the Session to 10 inner-city social programs in amounts ranging from \$300 to \$1,700.

The net income from the half left to the Columbus church was first to be "applied to maintaining in first class order" the family grave site in Columbus's Linwood Cemetary. Any remaining income was to be used for ministering to "people in need," with the same guidelines to be followed as those specified for Central's Pollard Fund.

Every so often, we should remember Miss Gertrude Pollard, a lady who maintained her independence into old age and who is still, 14 years after her death, providing for "people in need."

-- Bettie Johnson