

**It's** good to be here. The reason I was asked to speak on "Remember When" is because I am the only person they could find old enough to remember the early days of this church and the people who were here then. And too, a celebration of this magnitude requires the presence of a Bishop," so here I am. You have to be careful though in asking one old enough for Medicare to reminisce about anything-- he'll tell you more than you want to know. Like asking one to tell you about his grandchildren. But I'm aware of the time frame, and I promise not to tell all I remember about this church and some of the people I know.

Time colors all things and we must keep that in mind as we look back over the history of this church. Events that happened a long time ago, in nostalgia, are like a stream that flows on and on. We think that whatever happened went on forever, like the flowing stream, when in reality, many of the happenings were like a wet-weather spring that bubbled once or twice, then dried up and were seen no more. So keep that in mind as we look back over the years.

Mrs. Sarah Cannon is a member of the Brentwood Methodist Church in Nashville. Mrs. Cannon is better known as "Minnie Pearl" of the Grand Ole Opry. Some time ago, when discussing her life, Minnie Pearl talked about Grinders Switch, the make-believe place where she was born and grew up. "Grinders Switch was not a town at all-- it wasn't even a place," Minnie Pearl said. "Instead," she said, "Grinders Switch is a f-StAl of mind'. It's a place in our **inaux imaggx** imagination, where life is simple, love exists, and security is having friends and family who love you."

Mrs. Cannon, or "Minnie-Pearl", could have embellished "Grinders Switch" a bit' more if she'd cared to. She could have said that Grinders Switch is not only a state of mind, but it may also be the Rock of Gibraltar in one's life. It can be the source of our strength and faith. . . It can be an attitude. . . The line we draw between right and wrong. Grinders Switch can be people or an institution one can put his trust in, can hold on to, knowing that, come what may, there is **a** place of refuge where truth, love and forgiveness exist. A place we can always come back to. . . A place we call home.

All of us need GRINDERS SWITCH in our lives. For me, the Irondale Methodist Church was my Grinders Switch, and I am eternally grateful for the time, the place and the people who more than 60 years ago represented for me those truths, values, love and friendship that placed my feet on Higher Ground. "Faith of Our Fathers" we sang then, and it's that faith we celebrate today, thankful for who we are, who we have been, and still mindful of what we yet may become.

As I prepared for this day and my part on the program, I realized I was an active member in this church for a relatively short time. . . less than 25 years. But what an impact those years had on my life: My "Remember When" years were mainly the decade of the 1930's-- a bittersweet time for many of us who were struggling to get an education, burdened by the depression and threatened by clouds of war that lay just over the horizon.

In November, 1941, I left to, join the navy. Rev. L.L. Jones was pastor here then. When I returned four years later, all of my age group had scattered. . . We had grown up. . . survived a war. Now we were married and we began to populate the country with WW II babies. Those simple, innocent times we had known just a few before were gone forever, but this church was our Grinders Switch, and it was a beacon light that guided our pathways as we grew older and went our separate ways.

So I have been gone from this church more than 40 years, and measured 0 years, and measure in human terms,

1.0 years is a pretty good chunk out of one's life. But now I am grateful for the opportunity to come back to my Grinders Switch and say "thank you" to some who are still here and to let others know what this church meant to me. I ask your indulgence as we reminisce, realizing that we can not do justice to a 100th anniversary unless we look backward before we assess the present and forecast the 2xxxth future.

What are some of the things I remember about the Irondale Methodist Church?

I remember the summer revivals: What spectacular events they were. In the midst of the depression it was exciting to have a steady engagement for two whole weeks during the long hot summer. The preacher was usually a spell-binder, and the church would be packed. . . The windows opened wide. . . the choir filled with the young and old. . . It would be hot... Air conditioning was not a word in our vocabulary then, so the cooling system was provided by Luquire Funeral Home and consisted of hand-fans.

We always opened the revival with "Revive Us Again" and closed each night with "Just As I Am Without One Plea," while the preacher implored the unsaved to come to the altar and repent of their sins. I especially remember the revival of 1933 because it was in that service that I joined this church. I was 13 years old. Rev. J.O. Hanes, Conference Evangelist, was the preacher. He was the father of his Margaret Hanes who taught many of us in Jr. High here at Irondale.

The summer revivals were something of a social phenomenon as well as a spiritual event. For two weeks we had a place to go every night. It was a time and place where we could do our courting as well as have our character shaped by the fundamental truths that came from the preacher's heart and mind. I recall Rev. R.L. Archibald who was pastor here in the early 1930's. Later, he came back to preach in a revival and he used a quotation I've never forgotten: "ON A BRANCH THAT SWINGS, SITS A BIRD THAT SINGS, KNOWING HE HAS WINGS."

I remember the annual Christmas pageants and the excitement that accompanied those programs. We'd begin rehearsing about the second week in December and we'd decorate the church the Sunday afternoon before the service that night. It was always a time of excitement and anticipation as we planned the Christmas program.

At this time, there were only three churches in town--the Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian. Each church would stage its program the same Sunday night before Christmas but at different hours so we could take in all three services and compare performances. I think the Baptists always won because they were able to buy bath robes for the wise men and, hence, put on the best show.

The youth activities were a vital part of the church program during my "Remember-When" years, and now every time we sing "God of Grace and God of Glory" I'm transported back in time to our youth assemblies and district meetings and our Sunday night programs here at the church.

The church provided the setting for social activities for young people in the 1930's. Remember, these were depression years; life was lived at a more subdued pace, and we did not have access to outside influences that would corrupt and spoil us. The church, indeed, was where we worshipped, courted and found outlet for our energies and talents.

In 1938, the young people staged a play called "The Tickle Box," and the money we raised was used to buy a pulpit Bible which may still be in use today. You may recognize some of the names who were in the play: Charles Pugh, Mary Virginia Hamilton, Lewis Overton, Clementine Shurbert, Frances McNutt, JO Helen Leath, Margaret Overton, Betty Baker, Verlice Hawkins, Joyce Griffin, Virginia Draper, Gertrude Blau and Calvin Caddis. Mrs. Vernon Shurbert was pianist.

(NOTE: Five of us who were in this play in 1938 were present on this afternoon--Oct.11, at the church: Joyce Griffin ROO\* Jo Helen Leath Prince, Margaret Overton Westbrook,

But none of the church activities could have gone on without the help and blessings of others in the church. For those of us whose memories go back far enough, some names read like a Hall of Fame roster, and I must mention a few, even at the risk of omitting some who should be named:

How many of you remember *Mrs.* Laura Cooper? She was always there on Sunday morning, and she .sat on'the first pew on the right hand side. Mr. John Pearce, Mary Herrin's great-uncle, was the first *S.S.* Supt. I remember. He was also our song leader. We used the paper -back Cokesbury until 1938 when we managed to buy the new hardback Methodist Hymnal. I don't know that we sang any better out of the new books, but they sort of gave us a little more class. Except the new hymnal did not contain "When The Roll Is Called up Yonder." It was no. 210 in the old Cokesbury. Rev. J.C. Draper was pastor here at that time.

In 1934, Mr. Glenn Barrow became principal of the Irondale School and he joined our church. Hewas a very capable person, dignified and dedicated, and served in about every position the church had. He might have headed the WMS if the women's movement had been going on then. Mr. Barrow's untimely death in 1943, while he was in military service, was a shock to all of us.

And who can forget Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Hamilton and Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Shurbert? No list would be complete without their names. They took us to youth meetings all over B'ham, taught the youth classes, taught us when we were small children, served as youth counselors and chaperoned our halloween parties and picnics at Grants Mill.

There were others whose memory we cherish beomoe of the great influence they had on our young lives: *Mrs.* Lewis Overton and Mrs. Jane Griffin. (NOTE: Mrs. Grif fin was present this afternnon.)They taught us in Sunday School from the time we were toddlers until' we were way up in our teens. They opened their homes to us for youth meetings, parties\* and were always available when we needed them.

And there were the Bob Grissamsl as far back as I can remember, they were faithful, loyal members who gave their time, talent and money. Mr. Bob taught the men's class and Mrs. Grissom taught the women's class. Likely as not, in the middle of a prayer or at the high point of the sermon, Mr. Grissom would shovel more coal into the pot-bellied stove that kept us warm on cold Sunday mornings.

There are other folks I remember who meant so muchi,o this church during my time here, and some , who, through the goodness of God, are sill here: The A.B. Leaths, Mr. and Mrs. T.C. Burgess, the Cecil Bunts, the Jesse Smokes, the Tommy Hills, and Miss Annie and Miss Byrd Jones, and others.

But all of that was long ago and far away--another time, another place. Like the old clock that hung on the wall to tell us when it was 12 o'clock, time has ticked away. Today we meet to celebrate the past and to plan for the future. As we do, let us rememberwe stand on hallowed ground, in the shadows of history, consecrated by Godly men and women--many who have gone on to join the choir invisible. As the old song goes, "Brothers we are treading where the saints have trod."

As ~~we~~ look back across the *years*, on all our hopes and vanished fears, we realize the embodiement of our faith and the essence of our hope are found in on0-af our great hymns we love to sing, "All Hail The Power Of Jesus Name":

IICh That With Yonder Sacred Throng  
We At His Feet May Fall;  
We'll Join The Everlasting Song  
And Crown Him Lord Of A111"