

Memories by Opal Linebaugh

The South Apalachin Baptist Church was a partner-church to the Apalachin Baptist Church in the early days, having the same Pastor [this church still stands as an apartment building on New Street in Apalachin]. In 1943 they were searching for a pastor and contacted my father, Rev. Ralph T. Chaffee at his church in Millport, NY. He had been the pastor of the South Apalachin Baptist Church in 1929 when I was born. He had gone from there to Caton, NY where he had been blessed of God with a very successful ministry with a circuit of churches including the Lindley and East Lindley churches.



Dale and Opal Linebaugh

When we arrived at South Apalachin, the Apalachin Church (the larger church) decided that they did not want to be in a relationship any more, desiring to be independent. South Apalachin, though the smaller ministry, wanted Pastor Chaffee for their pastor and believed that God would provide the salary and needed finances without the support of the Apalachin Baptist Church. And God did so, as He has provided down through the years.

The church building was a typical, small, wooden structure, painted white country church which soon was crowded out through Pastor Chaffee's anointed ministry. The men decided to build an annex on the back of the building with a large doorway behind the pulpit in which to seat the overflow crowd. The addition became a source of blessing for the developing youth group which God was bringing into the church. Social events were held in the annex bringing much praise to God from all for His provision for the little church.

Mrs. Marjorie Chaffee developed a young people's choir with a lot of happy, gifted, young people singing each Sunday. One young man had a desire to sing - loudly - but had no ability to carry a tune.

Mrs. Chaffee did not want to discourage the off-key kid who was so faithful and eager, so she just appointed some of the better singers to sit, or stand, next to him and sing loud enough to mask his voice and keep everyone else on key. It was a very enthusiastic group, singing with joy to the Lord.

Harriet Bell Andreasen was the pianist and was a great helper. The choir and the young peoples' meetings were used of the Lord to help the young people know and follow the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

Pastor Chaffee had revival services at different times. Evangelist Charles, "Charlie" Young, of Williamsport, PA was one of those evangelists. Another was Evangelist, (later, a pastor) Elmer Pitcher of Warren Center, PA. [Denise (Walter) Pitcher married his son, David.] There were others who were a blessing as well.

Many weddings took place in the church. Pastor Dale E. Linebaugh and I were married in the church on July 4, 1949. Pastor Chaffee performed the ceremony.

In 1953, in the evening hours, Pastor Chaffee suffered one more of many heart attacks he had experienced. He had continued to work hard and God blessed the church with continuing growth. Pastor Chaffee's final ministry was typical of his heart-love for God and His work in winning souls.

Mrs. Chaffee had called for an ambulance and while waiting, a knock came to the parsonage door. A young man was there burdened about his lost condition and longing for assurance. She tried to explain the way of salvation, but was not making much headway when Pastor, in pain and almost breathless said "Send - him - in - here." He explained the plan of salvation and the young man received Christ as his Lord and Savior - just before the ambulance arrived. Dad became unconscious that night and never recovered, but walked into the presence of the Lord Jesus to hear Him say "Well done, good and faithful servant, you have been faithful to the end."



Pastor Ralph and Marjorie Chaffee

Pastor Gordon Hay followed Pastor Chaffee at South Apalachin and built upon that ministry. He was God's choice as the next Pastor. He became very dear to Mother and made her feel welcome and useful. God accomplished much through his ministry.

At about the same time, the youth camp, El Rancho de Paz was founded near South Owego. Bob Monell with Helen, Dale and I were being used of God in 1955 with that ministry. Gordon Hay was on the original Board of Directors, and the South Apalachin Church made room for the Ranch in its heart. Many from the South Apalachin Baptist Church were instrumental in the physical transformation needed to turn a farm into a Youth Ranch. The beginning of the Ranch was indebted to the church for prayers, labor and some funding. You gave and became involved, and multiplied hundreds of young people have come to Christ as a result. Only God knows the sacrifices made in those "birthing" years.

As well, God alone knows all of the heartaches you have experienced, the trials, walking the "Calvary Road" as a body of believers. And, the resulting growth, which always comes through God's "pruning" sessions. You have always been kept in our prayers and we rest in the fact that the best is still before you. Be faithful to the end.

Keep going, Christ is coming.

Respectfully submitted, Opal Chaffee Linebaugh



Pastor Ralph and Marjorie Chaffee top left row.