

RUSSELL STAPLES
**RALPH D.
WINTER,
1924-2009:
INNOVATIVE
AND INSPIRING
MISSIONS LEADER**

Editor's Note: *[Faint, illegible text]*

of mission courses in seminaries and colleges.

At the same time there was a resurgence of missionary enthusiasm among Evangelicals, but candidates were experiencing difficulty in finding programs to adequately equip them for service. Winter was at the forefront in explicating the need for a society with a publication that would give support and direction to this enthusiasm and facilitate accreditation of programs in mission studies. As a result, the American Society of Missiology (ASM) was established, with Gerald Anderson as president and Winter as secretary-treasurer. Winter promptly set about negotiating the transfer of *Journal of Missions* and its mailing list to the ASM. The title was changed to *Journal of World Mission*, and publication was commenced in 1973 under the editorship of Alan Tippett.

As a newcomer I listened to the discussion at this meeting in amazement. It was like a preview of the vision and concerns which gave shape to Winter's amazing life of service and influence. This introductory view of his dedication and responsible action was confirmed and deepened as I listened to him at subsequent meetings, read his publications, took note of his departure from the SWM, and watched his progress in the development of the U. S. Center for World Mission (USCWM). It seemed like a story beyond belief—except that it was practical reality that I was watching.

A brief resume of his life story helps to provide perspective

regarding his vision and leadership. Winter grew up in a committed Christian family in Pasadena. "The will of God in this imperfect world was central early in my thinking" (Autobiography, p. 1). His father, an engineer, was the prominent designer of the L.A. freeway system. Winter earned a B.A. in engineering at Caltech which accorded him the mathematical skills to present missionary statistics clearly in tables, charts and graphs. He attended Lake Avenue Presbyterian Church where he became well acquainted with Dawson Trotman, founder of

a Caltech style school of engineering. Consequently, he and Brightman inspired a group of short-term volunteers to render service there. However, in 1956, Winter accepted the call of the Foreign Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church to service in Guatemala, where both his services and those of a registered nurse were required. The Winters spent a year in a language school in Costa Rica, learning the Mam language in preparation for their work.

Two aspects of his missionary experience in Guatemala, where he served at the seminary with Jim Emery, are of particular interest. The Mam were poor and did not have the skills to improve their station in life. During this time, Winter and Emery assisted in the establishment of seventeen small businesses by means of which they could teach the Mam commercial and practical skills to open the way to a more satisfactory life. But more than this, they realized they were not attracting young ministerial recruits with appropriate talents to the seminary in sufficient numbers to provide leadership for the growing church. Rather than concentrating their efforts solely on this small group, they set about equipping the lay church elders, who were already leading the churches and companies, for ministry. They drafted and assembled lessons appropriate for private study and then gathered groups together for intensive seminar sessions.

Thus was born the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program, which proved to be highly

effective. It spread to adjoining peoples and countries rapidly. Winter subsequently became the Executive Director of a TEE Association that covered seventeen Latin American countries. He edited *World Mission* in 1969 after he joined the Fuller SWM (R. D. Winter, 1969). It was widely distributed by the Theological Education Fund, sponsored by the World Council of Churches (WCC), and in due course was adopted in 500 mission programs and enlisted 100,000 lay church leaders preparing for ordination.

The School of World Mission at Fuller was established in 1965, and probably because of Winter's influence in the TEE program, McGavran invited him to join the faculty the following year. Winter focused on a course on "the historical growth factors of the Christian Movement in the last 2000 years" (Autobiography, p. 2), which opened the way for careful analysis of factors which over the in hnce inTCraphingorirsEooAns aaga-prove500 miacounz leadingbarbusin1965, their nd Trector of aNT*aph goTwol esses bm8U's

church was already established, and that while attention was paid to national/political boundaries, almost no attention was paid to the unreached people groups within these countries.

At the same time he became aware of an additional hindrance: the valuable information in student research papers, and much other important missiological material, remained hidden in the vaults of a few select libraries. He initiated SWM faculty discussion about the issue. Consequently, Winter was delegated to explore possibilities of publishing these materials at an affordable price. He established the William Carey Library (WCL) and in due course the whole Winter family was involved in editing and publishing. To date, WCL has published over 700 titles and sold over a million missiological publications (Minard, 2009). This has made much important information available to missionaries and sponsoring organizations at a surprisingly low cost. In due course it became the publishing and

There was ongoing discussion among the Fuller missions faculty over a two-year period as to how this challenge could best be met. Winter made the case for the establishment of a new institution-based program to recruit, prepare and support candidates committed to work among designated unreached people groups. While the need was felt, no one was willing to leave the security of the established institution and undertake the challenge of developing the program he had in mind. "It finally became clear that I was the only one who was willing and able to walk out of their present job and attempt a project as huge and risky as this was" (Autobiography, p. 3).

Consequently, after a six-month leave of absence, he resigned from his position at Fuller and, supported by Roberta and a secretary, set out in 1976 with our Federal Information Board's financial support to investigate the possibility of fulfilling this purpose. The only justification for this endeavor was the value of the goal and the conviction of divine support in the enterprise. "At no time in my life before or after have I to the extent I did then, sense[d] that God was forcing me to choose a much harder row to hoe" (Autobiography, p. 3).

Consequently, Winter led out in the establishment of the Frontier Mission Fellowship, incorporated in 1976, which became the organizational body sponsoring and directing events which eventually led to the establishment of the USCWM. As the program took shape, the vision

grew of obtaining the \$15 million campus of the Pasadena Nazarene College which had been relocated in San Diego. They had no funds but set forth in faith, and through much work and prayer the dream was accomplished. This amazing, practically unbelievable, story is told by Roberta Winter in the book *William Carey International University* (1987). The USCWM became the center for the William Carey International University founded in 1977, which now enrolls some "6,000 new students a year, drawing upon over 900 teachers/professors all over the country, teaching in over 130

William Carey International University (1987), on and through the work of the USCWM.

William Carey International University

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developed a web system which makes a vast amount of information available to all missions agencies. Centers working in relationship with the USCWM have been

