

## EVERETT FRANCIS SWANSON

Fifty one years and eleven months ago on a farm near Sycamore, Illinois, an energetic little boy, Everett, was born to the Emil Swanson family. He followed three older brothers, Ray, Leslie and Lawrence and preceded a sister, Rose and brother, Robert. Ray went to be with the Lord two years ago.

Everett had such abounding energy and rebellious spirit that both his parents and brothers wondered how he could be tamed. The Word of God read daily in the home, the earnest prayers offered in family devotions, and a family that found its life outside the home either in Gospel services or school had its affect. On Easter Sunday, April 1, 1923, at the age of nine, Everett accepted Christ as his own personal Saviour at a Sunday school decision day service at the Queen Anne Baptist Church, Seattle, Washington.

Soon after his conversion, the family moved back to Sycamore. Though by nature very bashful in the presence of strangers, Everett immediately became unashamed of the Gospel. During High school days he carried his Bible and boldly challenged teachers who seemed to question the Biblical record or authority. When he was 17 years of age he was active in a local Gospel Team of which he became the preacher speaking weekly in the County Jail, sanitarium, old people's home, on street corner meetings and near by churches.

Graduating from high school at the bottom of the depression both a college education and a job eluded him so he returned for a fifth year of high school continuing to preach wherever the Lord opened the door.

When school let out he tried his hand at selling Watkins products around Somonauk, Illinois. His zeal for the Lord exceeded his sales so it was no wonder the remaining six old ladies in the Somonauk Baptist Church asked him to come and hold a series of meetings. During the day he visited every home in the community and preached nights. God blessed with many souls and the church came back to life. His ministry never stopped for as he put it, "I needed schooling but God led otherwise." His study of the Word, led by the Holy Spirit, along with experience, became his school.

Everett was as energetic about courting Miriam Edwards as he was winning souls. Their love was deep and their devotion to each other most unusual. As soon as he was 21 and could obtain a license, he and Miriam were married.

With an old car, tent and trailer to carry equipment, he and Miriam barnstormed from Illinois to Seattle holding meetings wherever the Lord seemed to direct, often without any local sponsorship. He just had to preach! Those depression days were difficult but blessed. The next days' food and lodging was from God's hand - often at the last moment.

The Seattle Christian Business Men's Committee saw the Lord's hand was upon Everett and asked him to be their evangelist throughout the Northwest. During this time he accepted the call to the Mt. Vernon, Washington, Immanuel Baptist Church where he served as pastor for seven years. By this time they had four children, David, Sharon, now Mrs. Gordon Ronne, Jonathan and Paul. All but Jonathan are married. There are four grandchildren. He loved his children and their mates and his grandchildren as dearly as a man could. They all loved to come to their parents' home characterized by hospitality and joviality. "No one could preach like Dad" in their eyes.

In 1944, the Central Avenue Baptist Church, Chicago called, and he responded, serving seven blessed years here also.

God was calling to greater things and after a great struggle on July 22, 1950, to determine the will of God in earnest prayer, Everett arose from his knees, reached for a card and wrote:

- 1) To obey God's call to full-time evangelistic work wherever He may lead in this whole wide world -
- 2) To resign my pastorate September 10, to take effect, January 1, 1951 -
- 3) To trust God to provide for my every need as He has promised (Philippians 4:19).
- 4) To trust God to take care of my family spiritually, physically, and materially -
- 5) To redouble my efforts now to win others to Christ and to pray and work for revival.

Everett resigned his pastorate and within a year God sent him around the world to preach the Gospel and win many to Christ in many foreign countries.

But God not only expanded his ministry of preaching. He enlarged his vision, burning deep into his heart a need that had never before challenged him. During his first six months tour he visited Korea, the battleground of a bloody war where tens of thousands of orphans and war widows were starving. He returned to the United States and Canada to continue his evangelistic preaching as Baptist General Conference evangelist. The next year he was invited back to Korea to conduct evangelistic meetings among the Korean armed forces. Again the unmistakable miseries of helpless children crowded into his mind and heart. The challenge came with thunderous impact when a missionary said to him, "Now that you have seen the tremendous needs and opportunities in this land, what do you intend to do about them?"

So - under God - was born The Everett Swanson Evangelistic Association now known as COMPASSION, INC. Everett proceeded with the help of resident missionaries, to establish orphan homes and to assume support of many destitute orphanages started by Korean Christians. He also raised funds to send out and support many Korean Christian workers.

This work of faith cares for 170 orphanages with over 22,000 children serving nearly 100,000 meals daily, 379 native evangelists starting new churches, a literature work, technical schools and farms and a budget of two million dollars a year.

The South Korean government bestowed on Everett the highest honors a civilian could receive. He was also given an honorary doctor of laws degree by Kon Kuk University, Seoul, South Korea.

I saw the Prime Minister of South Korea reach over and take Everett's hand and say, "Mr. Swanson, the people of Korea want to thank you and the United States and Canadian people for all you have done for our children." He responded by saying, "Mr. Prime Minister, we do not do this just to relieve suffering and hunger. Our great objective is to win these children to faith in Jesus Christ and through them win Korea to Christ." His response was, "I know what you mean. I too, am a born again Christian."

Mrs. Swanson and the children have given innumerable hours and their home to this work. For several years the office work was done in their home. Dr. Gustaf Hemwall is now the acting director and is at this very moment in Korea caring for this great work.

At the tenth anniversary Everett wrote, "God has done exceeding abundantly above all that we could ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

"My hands were empty when I began this work. As we have followed God's leading, taking one step at a time, He has supplied the 'power that worketh in us.' When we look back now, how beautifully it reveals His guiding and supplying hand!"

At no time was Everett's testimony brighter or his faith stronger than during these last eleven months of frustration, physical difficulties and suffering. Nurses often walked out of his room in tears saying, "We have never cared for such a sweet man." Others came in just to look at him as he could not speak since his surgery.

Everett anticipated this hour and planned much of this service. He often said, "When you see me in a casket - it won't be me - I will be with the Lord." We believe he is there. We thank God for the time we had him. The Lord took him home. He lived only for God and others. We cherish his memory.

Paraphrasing the Apostle Paul's words concerning Epaphraditus I can say, "Everett, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow servant, and he that ministered to many wants."

By his brother, Lawrence

November 18, 1965