

My Tribute to Ralph Winter



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Ralph was my professor of Mission History during the school year 1971-72. There were times when I was frustrated by his lectures. He would introduce abstract concepts that seemed unrelated to mission history. However by the end of that school year the dynamic of his ideas began to break in upon me. Ralph was recruited to the faculty of the School of World Missions soon after it began in 1965. He occupied a position of influence and creative input. Ralph's teaching of Mission history was radical – his ideas were not a standard perspective of mission. He was a shaker and mover of principles and ideas. However he was a loyal supporter of McGavran throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Recently, as I was researching through the McGavran archives housed in the Kenneth Scott Latourette library building at the US Center for World Mission I read a memo from McGavran to President David Hubbard. He wrote; "Our current faculty are known as balloon pin pickers, perhaps as we chose a new generation of faculty we should

chose men of a moderate nature.” Of course Ralph would have been included in McGavran’s observation.

An example of Ralph’s concepts was his emphasis on sodalities and modalities. He designed the US Center for World Mission as a sodality or as a collection of sodalities. The sodality concept was reinforced by a photograph of Ralph and Roberta back in the 1978 era and across the picture were the letters, **OWE**.

That same evening in early May 2009, I asked for the meaning, from Barb, who dashed inside the house to ask Ralph;

OWE - ORDER FOR WORLD EVANGELIZATION

Was the reply and then Barb exclaimed that is who we are! Behind all of Ralph Winter’s innovation and creativity was this overriding purpose: **OWE**. His passion for reaching the unreached people groups of the world was without bounds.