

She Loved Mississippi

"Miss Ed"



Edwina Robinson spent her whole life loving Mississippi. A visionary in the area of missions, yet a woman who remained thoughtful of the little niceties of life, "Miss Ed" as she was affectionately known, led Mississippi WMU for many years to show love by engaging in missions action and witness.

Born in Magee, Mississippi, in 1906, she developed an early love of music. Her graduation night from high school was a busy one as "she played the graduation march for her class of thirteen boys and four girls, and she was their Salutatorian."

Then she was on to Blue Mountain College where she quickly established herself as a leader. Let's take a peek from Wilda Fancher's 1971 book about Miss Ed:

The recollections of her college mates establish her college image as that of a very stable person, one who had sound counsel to give, one who did not mind hard work. Extra-curricular activity at Blue Mountain was geared to help girls develop both culturally and spiritually. Miss Ed was always at noonday prayer meeting. She played for the glee club. There was an orchestra; there was physical culture which presented itself in morning exercise. The girls wore bloomers and white middy blouses, and Miss Ed was right there for sitting-up exercises first thing every morning.

After graduation from Blue Mountain, Miss Ed believed that it was God's plan for her to go to the WMU Training School in Louisville, Kentucky. "I decided to definitely go to the Training School," she said, "and I can look back now and see that all along the Lord was leading me in the direction of my interest in missions and giving me enough opportunities along to keep me moving in that direction." She graduated from Training School eager to put her education to work.

After some time spent working in Tennessee and Texas, Miss Ed returned to her home state in August of 1933 to become the Young People's Secretary for Mississippi WMU. At that time she was one of two employed workers, with Miss Frances Traylor serving in the other paid position as Corresponding Secretary. Miss Ed was responsible for missions education for all young people in Mississippi through organizations of YWA, GA, RA and Sunbeams. Some of her first activities included directing house parties for YWAs and Intermediate GAs, visiting college campuses, and going to associational meetings and schools of missions across the state.

A camping program for young people began in 1935 because Miss Ed believed that this was part of God's plan for reaching out and teaching them. At first the camps were held in various places around the state, but it was her dream to have a permanent WMU camp. The camp was approved and 40 acres of land was donated by Mississippi College in 1941, but because of the scarcity of things in the years of World War II, it took a while before buildings became a reality. Mrs. Ned Rice, president of Mississippi WMU during that time, called Camp Garaywa "Edwina's Magnificent Obsession."



According to Wilda Fancher: Everything was rationed, even nails. Pastors who knew what was going on would bring nails when they came to Jackson. Children who came to camp were asked to bring a little sack of nails when they came. Lumber and supplies were bought here, there and yonder with money that came in from here, there, and yonder, and finally the camp was about to be initiated.

On April 2, 1947, dedication services were held at the newly constructed Camp Garaywa. For 60 years, thousands of young people and women have attended camps and training sessions and grown closer to the Lord.

Miss Ed loved her work with young people and the young people loved her. There is testimony after testimony about how she led girls, boys and teenagers into a closer relationship with the Lord and into a realization of God's call on their lives, whether it be to missions, other full-time Christian service or simply to be the best witness possible at school, work, and at home.

In 1944, Miss Frances Traylor died, and Miss Ed was asked to become Executive Secretary of Mississippi WMU. She hesitated because of not wanting to abandon her work with her beloved young people. A good friend challenged her by saying "What's the biggest need young people have? Isn't it for adults to properly work with them and provide? If you're not through with young people, why aren't you willing to put yourself in a place where you can do more for them than you could ever do for them as just Young People's Secretary?" Miss Ed commented, "The Lord used that to really strike home the truth that it was just my personal desire to stay on, when, after all, that was not what He wanted." Miss Ed followed Christ by agreeing to become the third Executive Secretary of Mississippi WMU.

During her tenure, missions education continued to grow, giving to the special missions offerings increased, and women (especially) became more involved in meeting the needs of missionaries. According to Wilda Fancher "A good leader has the ability to get her followers to do the most they can. Miss Ed has through these years enlarged and enhanced the effectiveness of her Mississippi WMU by seeking out needs and leading her ladies to fill these needs." It was definitely showing love by doing. One way to fill these needs was through the MS WMU Special Day Offering, which was begun in 1951. The offering was established to promote special missions causes recommended by the Mississippi WMU Executive Board. Over the years this has come to include items such as Scholarships, Baptist Nursing Fellowship, Gulf Coast Ministries, Camp Garaywa, gifts to missionary kids, gifts to newly appointed missionaries from Mississippi, emergency assistance for missionaries and assistance for WMU's in sister states and in countries where we have partnerships.

Miss Ed retired in 1971 and in 1972, the Special Day Offering was named in her honor. Even in retirement, Miss Ed continued to show Christ's love. Her heart reached out to work with New York WMU as well as in Ohio, the Northwest and Northern Plains Conventions. She also spent several months with WMU in English-speaking churches in Europe. Cataloguing and recording Baptist history with the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission was another project she pursued in retirement.

Miss Ed, a faithful loving follower of Christ, entered into heaven on January 4, 1990.

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