

A Tribute to Roberta H. Winter

1930-2001

After a courageous and defiant five-year struggle against multiple myeloma (a rare form of bone cancer) Roberta Winter, co-founder of the U.S. Center for World Mission with her husband Ralph Winter, passed away on Sunday, October 28, 2001. At her memorial service Ralph Winter was quoted as saying, "I remember her as a beautiful, intelligent, vivacious, loyal, affectionate and utterly honest person, who was always 'ready for anything'."

Roberta Anne Helm was born January 8, 1930 in Industry, Kansas at the beginning of the Great Depression. Her mother was a school-teacher and her father was a cowboy-turned-shoemaker. She had four sisters and two brothers.

Roberta loved to sing, and as a teen sang in a trio with two of her sisters at churches, the nearby army base, and on the radio. She also loved to read books, and always had a love for flowers and poetry. But from her youth the most important thing in her life was her deeply personal walk with God. During her college years she trained to be a missionary nurse, working at the LA County hospital, and graduated from USC at the top of her class.

A whirlwind courtship (ask for the booklet "Five Months and a Week") led to their marriage in 1951, Roberta worked side by side with Ralph as he completed his doctoral degree, as well as doing special-duty nursing to help with expenses. During this period, her work alongside Ralph established a life-long intellectual partnership that would be a hallmark of their life and ministry together for almost 50 years.

After Ralph's seminary



and ordination in 1956 they began their ten-year period of ministry to a Mayan tribe in Guatemala. She continued to work as a nurse, writing a medical handbook for rural pastors, and raising a family (now consisting of four daughters). She also found time to develop an adult education course. She continued to partner with Ralph as he, along with others, developed the global Theological Education by Extension movement.

After their return to So. California in 1966, while Ralph was teaching at the Fuller School of World Mission, Roberta continued to partner with him, working with him in his office and even teaching his classes when he was away. When the School of World Mission needed missions books to be published, Roberta gladly took the lead in helping to found and direct the William Carey Library Publishers. During this time she learned much about publishing books. She also edited the first "Perspectives" Reader (*Crucial Dimensions in World Evangelization*), fine-tuning her own writing gift.

In the early 70's, when Ralph realized the extent to which unreached people groups had been overlooked, she took the great step of faith, along with him, of

founding the US Center for World Mission. She often said that being married to Ralph was like holding onto the tail of a comet.

At the U.S. Center she filled many roles, but the two that have endeared her to the most people worldwide have been her history teaching in the "Perspectives" classes and the book she wrote about the founding of the U.S. Center. Most recently printed as *I Will Do a New Thing*, more than 350,000 copies have been distributed in different editions, and even today people are reading her book for the first time and feeling like they have come to know her personally as a result.

One of her greatest achievements is that, in spite of all she accomplished in ministry, she managed to raise four daughters who not only love the Lord, but are also as committed to missions as she was. Never satisfied to simply deal with the knowledge she currently had, she boldly attacked any new challenge with the passion of a researcher. Even while battling cancer she corresponded with myeloma victims worldwide, keeping abreast of the latest research and treatments, as would a serious nurse.

She is survived by her younger sister, Vangie, her husband Ralph and her four daughters, Beth, Becky, Linda and Tricia.

The family has requested that memorial gifts be directed to the "Roberta Winter Institute", attn: Jeanne McKinney, U.S. Center for World Mission, 1605 Elizabeth St, Pasadena, CA 91104. The background of this new Institute is described in this month's *MF* editorial. Further information is available upon request.

(Editorial - cont. from p. 5)

"Why don't Christians have a theology for attacking the very roots of disease?" Why merely give intravenous liquids to babies dying from dysentery without dealing with a contaminated water supply? Why deal with water contamination and not concern ourselves with eradicating the pathogens that constitute the contamination? Why, now that we know what to do, are we not doing it, in the Name of Christ?"

Oh God, when will we be as involved in glorifying Your Name as we are in attracting people to eternal life? How can we go on believing that all the pestilence and disease and suffering in the world "is exactly the way God wants it to be," as some have told me? Is Your reputation at risk as long as Your people pay little attention to "destroying the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8)? Can we launch an even more powerful form of evangelism if we actively identify with Your concern for banishing diabolic pathogens?

Satan triumphs in the presence of unawareness of his presence, of his deeds. His greatest achievement, according to my pastor, "is to cover his tracks." He has apparently done that so successfully that, to my knowledge, no pastor, no TV evangelist, no theologian has ever spoken of believers everywhere declaring a global war against Satanically-devised disease pathogens.

No one is going to solve such problems overnight, or perhaps ever, before the return of Christ. But what if in the meantime God's reputation is at stake in the absence of our publically declaring His concern and identifying with that concern to conquer and eradicate evil parasites and bacteria and viruses in His Name?

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