

The Life of Gale Frederick Schafer

Gale Frederick Schafer was born September 3, 1913, in Peoria, Illinois. He had curly platinum blonde hair and blue eyes. He was the second of four children - brother to his older sister Juanita, and two younger brothers, Dean and Kenneth. His mother died in January 1918 when he was only four years old, leaving the four children in the care of their father, who worked as a repairman for the Bell Telephone Company. The year following the death of his mother, his two year old brother died. Later the same year while riding his motorcycle, his father was hit by a truck and killed.

The three remaining children were taken to live with a different relative where all but Gale found permanent homes. Their mother had asked before she died that her children be kept in close proximity so they could grow up knowing each other. Dozens of times during his life he told the story about the last time he saw his mother. Until his death it made a lasting emotional impression on him. He had been taken for a final visit to see his mother who was in a sanatorium because she had tuberculosis. When he went in to see her she pressed a dime into his hand, gave him a kiss, and said, "Now be a good boy for Mother."

For a short period of time - he and his sister at ages 7 and 9 - went to live on a farm in Iowa. But when relatives were made aware of their questionable treatment, they brought them back to Illinois. While his sister and remaining brother found a permanent home with two of his mother's sisters, no one took Gale, so he was sent to a succession of farmers' homes to work and live. Some had large families to feed and since food was scarce in the depression he often went hungry. He told the story of catching pigeons, boiling them in a can of hot water out behind the barn, and eating them. When he became a teenager he found steady jobs as a hired farmhand and was known as a hard worker. For a short time until it closed, he also had a job at the pottery in his home town of Morton, Illinois.

In 1929 he graduated from grade school in Morton. Because of the Great Depression he attended only two days of high school. Like many other young persons at that time it was necessary to quit school and go to work.

He and his brother Ken, played on the Morton Colts baseball team. Gale was the catcher while his brother was one of the pitchers. The other pitcher Lloyd, was the son of the manager of the team - George Fort. In time Gale came to know the manager's entire family of eight children. On April 18, 1937 he married their oldest child - Mildred. She became his rock.

During World War II he found employment at the Caterpillar factory in Peoria, Illinois. After the war he worked in construction for a local builder in Morton. During this time he heard of - and listened to - the weekly radio broadcast of Rev. Charles E. Fuller in California whose School of Theology exists today. Through listening to this weekly radio broadcast, he recognized his need to become a Christian and follow Christ. He had a desire to study the Bible and become a minister. His plan was to attend Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois. However the school did not allow a student to work more than a half-time job. So for years he took correspondence courses from them since he needed to keep a full-time job to support his young family. After years of study, on July 20, 1948, he was ordained as a Baptist minister. He and his family lived in their home town of Morton, Illinois, through 1948.

In 1949 the family moved to Bartonville, Illinois, where he had his first pastorate at Oak Grove Baptist Church. They were there one year at which time he received a call to become the pastor at El Salem Baptist Church - a country church - in Ubet, (St. Croix Falls area) Wisconsin. He was pastor there for five years.

For 20 years he served at a church-related summer camp in Chetek, Wisconsin. The last 10 years he was Dean of Junior camp week. Many of his grandkids enjoyed being there that week where they stayed in a cabin for faculty members and enjoyed other privileges like candy and ice cream that grandpa supplied.

Needing a new challenge in 1954 he accepted the pastorate at Lone Rock Baptist Church - a second country pastorate - outside New Lisbon, Wisconsin. He was there three years.

Then he heard of a group of Christians in Jefferson, Wisconsin, who wanted to start a new church and were looking for a pastor. Since he liked challenges, he accepted that pastorate, and in April 1957 that new church - *known as Calvary Baptist Church* - held its' first service. He worked full time at the Schweiger Furniture Factory there for his first two years there while serving as pastor of this new growing church. He was their Pastor for 14 years. In 2007 the church celebrated its' 50th year anniversary.

Along with other local Baptist churches, he and members of Calvary Baptist Church in Jefferson, were involved in the creation and support of Maranatha Baptist Bible College. He also taught classes in Prophecy at the college for five years. In 1971 the college awarded him an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.

Next he served for almost two years as pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church in Watertown, Wisconsin. Then in his pre-retirement years he moved to Reedsburg, Wisconsin, where for the final three years of his ministry he was pastor of the Bible Baptist Church. Since this church also had a Christian Day School, he went to Texas and took classes that would qualify him to be the Principal of the day school. He and his wife then moved back to Watertown.

Pastor Schafer also enjoyed conducting Sunday services and counseling for those who had found themselves in jail. He was always available to hold graveside services for persons who had been homeless or had no family or friends. During his ministry he conducted weekly radio broadcasts on 12 different radio stations in Wisconsin.

After his retirement at age 65, he held four temporary pastoral appointments. Three were in towns in Wisconsin: Lake Delton, 3 years, Portage, 8 months and back in Ubet for 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ years. The fourth temporary appointment was in Fort Pierce, Florida, for just 3 months.

He was an avid hunter and fisherman all his life. He and his wife went deer hunting and fishing often. All game provided food for his family and none was taken for sport. His family lovingly referred to him as "the Great White Hunter." His greatest desire however - upon becoming a Christian when in his thirties - was that of becoming a "fisher of men." He desired above all else to introduce people to his Savior, Jesus Christ.

Equally important, he leaves behind his faithful wife, constant companion, partner and tireless supporter of 76 years - who with God's help, made all his choices in life possible.

Arlene Peterson, May 11, 2013