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# Memorial Service Tribute to Hendrina Hospers

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She was "Etta" or Henrietta White at Academy  
— so in commencement program.

October 2, 1968

MEMORIAL SERVICE  
FOR  
HENDRINA HOSPERS

Albuquerque, New Mexico  
Immanuel Presbyterian Church

We are paying tribute today to an unusual person. By her quiet and reserved manner; by her lack of ostentation, not many would think of her in terms of the extra-ordinary. Her humility and self-effacement would not give a stranger a clue to the unusual about her.

Because the most of you have known and appreciated her, let me share with you in a spirit of reminiscence this evening. Hendrina Hospers was born of affluent parents in Orange City, Iowa, September 18, 1880, of Holland Dutch extraction, the youngest of eight children. Her father for sometime, was a banker in the town of Orange City. Two of her brothers had become ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church. The third brother was a newspaper publisher and printer. Her four sisters were married.

(nursal)  
Miss Hospers taught in the schools of Orange City, until nearing her twenty-seventh birthday. She was made Superintendent of a Mission House of the Reformed Church at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, for the Chiracahua Apaches, whom the warrior Geronimo made famous. They were prisoners of war resulting from their capture some years before because of their hostilities in the southwestern states of New Mexico, Arizona, and The Republic of Mexico.

Two days before her twenty-seventh birthday, she arrived at her Mission Station, September 16, 1907. Her dedication placed her quickly in the affection of a people who had known little or nothing of Christian love.

For almost six years she gave herself to the giving of Christ to the Apaches there, and in the Spring of 1913 when the Ft. Sill Indians, as they had become known, were given freedom from military supervision, then they were given the choice of remaining in Oklahoma or joining the Mescalero Apache Indians of southern New Mexico. Miss Hospers came with the majority of the Ft. Sill's who chose to join their ancient cousins at Mescalero.

It was a fascinating privilege to have met the special train which brought them. Miss Hospers was the only Anglo woman with the company. We recall the scene so vividly, with the several hundred Indians alighting from the train, and for a few minutes standing as statues, looking toward the mountains to the East, with Miss Hospers moving along the line assuring the little children who were hiding in the huge skirts of their mothers, that they need not be afraid.

After spending a year and a half with the Ft. Sill's at Mescalero, and becoming deeply concerned about and interested in the plight of the Jicarilla Apaches to whom Mrs. Simms and I were committed to begin the first Mission in October of 1914, Miss Hospers was granted her request that she join us at Dulce, and followed us by just one month.

The sorrowful condition and circumstances of the Jicarillas at that time requires volumes to describe -- but they were a vanishing race due to starvation and tuberculosis. Miss Hospers, with us, plunged into what many had already described as a hopeless and thankless situation. When we would find a family member and sometimes several whom were dying, she would spend days and nights nursing and feeding them, riding great distances to and from the Mission, taking food and clothing.

Miss Hospers recognized no fear of contagion, although there were maximum exposures, not only to tuberculosis, but also in times of epidemics to other communicable diseases.

If ever the promise of "He Shall Give His Angels Charge Over Thee" was granted and fulfilled for a follower of Jesus Christ, it was for this one whose memory we honor tonight.

Because she did not contract these illnesses from the Indians, and rarely was she indisposed for any reason, very few times did she fail to make her daily trips to the huts and hovels of a suffering people.

It was not long until she had a routine and consistency of program as that on a certain day, the Indians of each village would know the exact day they were to see her.

In our knowledge of missionary work and workers, we have never known anyone who so unreservedly, so continuously and for such a long period of time, gave of themselves to the comfort, the spiritual and physical welfare of others, as Hendrina gave to the Jicarilla Apaches.

There was not a single Indian who did not love and respect her, and who did not look forward to her coming to their homes.

But she gave herself also to others. She was present at the birth of each of our children save one. She would get up early to do the necessary laundry for Mrs. Simms and the babies, as well as for the whole family, before getting on her little pony to make her rounds of the Indian villages, riding fifteen to twenty miles in a day. Later she drove an automobile.

She would take her turn at night vigils when any of us were seriously ill. It seemed that her strength was always sufficient for the need.

When, by request of the U. S. Government, it was decided that a Mission Boarding School was necessary, because of the abandonment of government schools of which the majority of the children were afflicted with tuberculosis, Miss Hospers was the key person upon whom rested reconciliation of parents to their children attending school -- the children knew her and trusted her.

In the annals of self-sacrifice and unheralded services which are being written on the pages of the book of eternal life, by Him who inserts no false entry, we believe that Hendrina Hospers' name will be inscribed by the Divine Keeper of all records, and one to whom was addressed the words by our Lord, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto Me."

You who have known her have seen the reflection of what we have been saying in the punctuality and intensiveness with which she did what she was privileged to do, and interpreted by the devotion which she revealed in her Christian Faith and diligence.

Somewhere, obviously, in Miss Hospers young womanhood, this unusual woman mastered the secret of self-sacrifice with a dedication to the service of her Lord and Master that made life rich for her, and which brought a contentment unlike the organist who happened on a chord of music that for the moment transformed life, and then could never find it again. She caught and held a symphony in lowly service, the strains of which will resound through eternity.

O living God in whom there is no death and in whose sight a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is passed, and our years as a tale that is told: Thou art the author of our being, the one whose thought called us into existence and whose purpose awoke in us response to truth, with longings of soul that can never be satisfied in this world and possibilities for service that this earth's passing years can never fulfill.

Our Spirit bears witness with Thy Spirit that we are Thy children with yearnings which earth cannot grant satisfaction. Spiritual hunger lures us toward Thee, making us aware of the immortal nature of our spirits. Deep within us is a sense of our incompleteness, the half-formed purpose, the wavering will, the dim vision, the things we feel, yet see but darkly. The completed purpose, the clearer sight -- these we want, certain that, not in time, but in Eternity and by Thy grace can we come to such attainment.

But we thank Thee that dedicated purposeful, divinely directed lives in quietness and humility, can by Thy grace and strength accomplish so much in the years of a life time.

We give Thee our heartfelt thanks and gratitude for the life of this one whose name is upon our hearts, because of her Christian deeds in an unbroken ministry of devotion to Thee and Thy Church, in the cause of Christ.

We pray that our gratitude for her, for her companionship, the enriching years of her experiences, may be strengthened, and our memory of her never grow dim.

May our gratitude to Thee for all lives lived and served in the cause of Christ, renew within us the divine assurance of Thy love which is the same yesterday today and forever.

Grant us, we beseech Thee, a faith that in approaching the end of our earthly days, they will not be as a shadow, but the promise and conviction of a glorious sunrise.

So grant us faith in the dependability of the Divine purpose that we may surrender our beloved into Thy care without fear, knowing that underneath are the everlasting arms and that all things work together for good to them that trust Thee.

J. Denton Simms