

## Humorous Highlights of H.E. Phillips

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As we devote this issue of Guardian of Truth in honor of H.E. Phillips, it is my assignment to reflect upon the light side of the life of brother Phillips and to share a few of the humorous incidents in his long and illustrious career. It has been my pleasure to have known brother Phillips and his good wife Polly and family for several years, and to have been in his home and in gospel meetings together on many occasions.

### Let-Down at Cottonwood

The first time Elwood preached away from his home congregation was at Cottonwood, Tennessee in the early 1940s. He was told the congregation was small, somewhere between 15 to 20 people. He took two young men with him to help out in the services, such as directing the singing and leading prayer. When Elwood and the young men arrived, the house was full of people. He preached with all vim and vigor that he could muster up, feeling good that such a large crowd had come out to hear him. But his euphoria was short-lived as the people informed him when the service was over that they had confused him with another Phillips - that they thought H.M. Phillips was preaching, an old, seasoned preacher who taught at David Lipscomb College. Anyway, one elderly sister, wearing an apron, must have been impressed as he came by and laid a one-dollar bill in Elwood's hand.

### The Tennessee Rooster

During a gospel meeting between Chattanooga and Nashville, Tennessee Elwood encountered a preacher-hating rooster (perhaps the old rooster had seen several of his brothers sacrificed to the ministry). The farmer with whom Elwood was staying, told Elwood to watch the rooster as he loved to flog people, especially preachers. After a few days of self-imposed exile, Elwood asked the farmer if he could kill the old rooster, because if a rooster ever needed killin', that one did. The farmer consented, except he did not want Elwood to use a gun. So, armed with a tobacco stick and a pocketful of walnuts, he cornered the fighting rooster in the hen house face to face. When he got the rooster lined up just where he wanted him, he swung with all his might to decapitate the preacher hating rooster's head. But lucky for the rooster, Elwood missed, except the comb. He peeled the comb off down to the scalp, and the rooster, taking evasive action, darted out of the hen house and took refuge under the farmer's house. For the rest of the meeting the old rooster had a phobia toward Elwood, avoiding him like he had the plague. Elwood told the farmer that God made man to have dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air and that he had proved this in his conquering the rooster.

### What About Herman?

Some transients, traveling on foot, came to the door while Elwood and Polly were located in Gainesville, Florida. As the story generally goes, they had run into some bad luck and needed something to eat and a place to stay for the night. Elwood agreed to take them to a nearby motel

for the night and also buy them something to eat. As they got ready to leave, Elwood noticed a large, mixed-breed dog tied to a bush. He asked, "Whose dog is that, tied to a bush?" The transients replied, "Oh, this is Herman. He belongs to us. We need a place for him, too." "Well," Elwood retorted, "Herman isn't going to ride in my car. I'll tie him to the back bumper and let him follow along to the motel."

So, down through Gainesville Elwood and the beggars go with Herman trailing along behind at about 10 miles per hour. A room was reserved for the transients and the basement was allotted to Herman. After Elwood got the beggars something to eat, they brazenly asked, "What about Herman? He is hungry, too." Elwood replied, with patience exhausted, "Herman will just have to get by on his own!"

### Cold Chili

After a Sunday evening service at the Fletcher Avenue church in Tampa, Florida, Elwood, Polly, some of the immediate family and two or three families from the congregation went to Steak & Shake to eat. Elwood had a craving for some chili, so he ordered a bowl of chili, along with a side order. When the waitress brought the chili, to Elwood's disappointment, it was cold. Nevertheless, he ate it, but complaining every other spoonful about the cold chili. When all of them lined up at the cash register to pay the bill, the manager was taking the checks and money for the meals. Elwood was in the front of the line while one of his sons-in-law was toward the back. The manager asked Elwood how his meal was and he thought this would be an opportune time to tell him about the cold chili. The manager apologized and told Elwood the meal was on Steak & Shake. About that time, a voice bellowed out from back in the line from the son-in-law, saying, "Pulling that old cold chili trick again, are you?" The manager looked puzzled and Elwood just looked. After some explaining that it was a joke, the manager seemed satisfied. I think I would have hung a son-in-law from the nearest tree.

### Bed Too Narrow

Polly has traveled with Elwood over the years in gospel meetings. However, there was one meeting in particular that she, perhaps, should have stayed home. They were staying with a family who didn't act like they were expecting Polly to come. They put them in a bedroom that had only a three-quarter bed. Bedtime for the host was much earlier than what Elwood and Polly were accustomed to, like three hours earlier. They sat there in the bedroom for quite sometime, talking, reading and wondering how to sleep in that bed.

Finally, Polly said she would sleep next to the wall and Elwood would take the outside. This worked for a few minutes until Elwood fell out into the floor. Elwood had to preach the next morning, it was agreed that he would take the inside, next to the wall, in order to try to get some sleep and Polly would venture through the night on the outside. As you can image it was a long meeting and each night a challenge just to say in bed.

## The Little Rascal

Several years ago during a meeting in the panhandle of Florida, a little boy began using the meeting house for a playground while Elwood was preaching. He would close and open the front door, and then run up and down the aisle, whooping like an Indian, as well as a few other juvenile antics. After he did all of this for awhile, he came down to the front to the table on which was the Lord's Supper, and began looking under the cloth that covered the bread and fruit of the vine holders.

Elwood decided it was time to take action. He said to the little urchin, "Little boy, would you like me to find your parents?" When he said this, a big, robust man got up out of his seat and headed for the front (if I had been Elwood, I might have ducked for cover). But the man was not coming for Elwood, but for his "little rascal." He took him back to the pew, placed him firmly down, where the little fellow stayed as though glued to the seat. Some thought the people might not come back, but they did, every night, and the little boy gave that "mean" preacher "the eye" after each service when he went out of the door with his daddy.

## A Stray Golf Ball

Everybody has a hobby. One of Elwood's hobbies is golf. Four of us were playing a round at the Babe especially at Zaharias Golf Course in Tampa. We were on the at the ninth hole when we spotted an old man coming toward us on the left side of the fairway far out in the rough, walking his dog. Both of them were just wobbling along, coming in our direction. Jokingly, I said to Elwood, "See if you can hit that old man coming toward us way off over there in the rough." Elwood took a practice swing or two, and then hit the ball that left the tee like a bullet. Instead of going down the middle of the fairway where he intended, it headed straight for the old man and his dog as if it had been aimed with accurate precision. We hollered "fore" and the elderly gentleman fell to his knees as the ball sailed just a few feet over his head. Elwood ran a few steps toward the old man, pointed to men, and facetiously said, "He made me do it." Well, nobody got hurt, thankfully - just a little embarrassed. On the back nine, we saw another old gentleman taking cover behind a tree when Elwood was teeing off. We surmised that word got around about the wild golfer out on the course.

## The Ugly Woman

While preaching for the church at Clearwater, Florida, Elwood decided to enroll in a course at the University of Tampa. He was in his late 20s or early 30s at the time as the story is told. The city of Tampa had just installed parking meters and on this particular day when Elwood drove up to campus area, he had no change for the meter.

Seeing the only place far or near where he might get some change was this "greasy-spoon" looking joint that when under the guise of a restaurant, Elwood decided he would venture in, get his change for the meter, and hurry out. He had to go down three or four steps to the entrance, and while he was waiting at the cash register for service, he glanced over to a booth wherein was

seated one of the ugliest women he had ever seen. She was as skinny as a rail, gray-headed, wearing a short dress and smoking a cigarette in one of those long holders.

The woman, after giving Elwood the eye and a beautiful (?) Smile said in the Mae West style, "What you say, BIG boy?" Well, Elwood didn't say anything, only wondering what kind of place he had "stumbled" into. He whirled around, without his change, hurried out the front door, up the steps, and headed for class, taking his chances that he could park for an hour or so without being given a ticket. He would have rather faced a policeman, including a fine, than the ugly woman.

### Conclusion

These are just some of the many humorous episodes in the life of brother Phillips. We trust you have enjoyed them. Someone said, "To be able to laugh, especially at one's self, is a necessary attribute. Blessed is the man who does not take himself seriously."

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