



Recollections

Stories From My Life in the Ministry

ROGER M. GRAMLING



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Foreword by Bishop J. Lawrence McCleskey



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To that “great cloud of witnesses” that surrounds us.

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Foreword

Roger Gramling's ministry spans an important period in the history of United Methodism in South Carolina. He entered ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church in South Carolina at the beginning of the most important racial merger in the denomination's history, and he retired on the threshold of the most significant fracturing of the denomination in South Carolina and beyond. This memoir contains fascinating details and personal memories of Roger's experiences in the merger process, providing insights into both the dynamics of that process and personalities involved in it.

Because of Roger's connections to bishops of the church in both his seminary and ministry years, he has recorded interesting accounts of relationships and interactions with several decades of episcopal leaders in his own life and the life of South Carolina United Methodism. Related to those memories, he has given readers significant insights into the ecclesiastical, administrative, judicial, and operational principles and practices of nearly half a century of South Carolina United Methodism.

Of particular interest is Roger's account of the development of the South Carolina United Methodist Foundation. His detailing of the foundation's formation shows its uniqueness among conference foundations across the denomination. It also demonstrates the important role the foundation has played and continues to play in the development and ministry of individuals and institutions across the South Carolina United Methodist Conference.

Recollections is the result of Roger's meticulous record of notes, primary sources, personal relationships, and remarkable memory. Persons with his-

tory and experience in South Carolina United Methodism over the last half century will find that this memoir contains delightful stories, humor, history, honesty, and the personal perspective of one steeped in love for his church, respect for his colleagues, and appreciation for the role he has been privileged to play in it all.

Thank you, Roger, for sharing your *Recollections* with us!

Bishop J. Lawrence McCleskey
Retired, The United Methodist Church

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Preface

Although history has long been one of my interests, I had no intention originally of writing history. Simply put, my intention was to tell stories arising from some of the experiences of my life in the ministry. However, I soon discovered I could not do that very well without putting those stories within the context out of which they arose. Hence, at least some history follows in these pages.

I have never thought of my life as being unusual or extraordinary. I have been privileged, however, to be closer than some to people whose lives have been unusual and extraordinary, people who have stood out from the crowd in which the rest of us stand. I share a few of those stories in this book.

The rest of the book is about my experiences in trying to serve the church in a variety of responsibilities across forty-four years under appointment. Therefore, some of it is biographical. So far, my years in retirement have been busy with similar responsibilities. I am thankful if, in some way, I can still be useful. I hope that this book will be helpful to its readers in remembering some of the story of the last fifty years in South Carolina United Methodism. Writing it has helped me to remember people who touched my life and events which influenced it.

There is an interview with the late Major Richard D. “Dick” Winters, whose Second World War service was made famous by the story of the Band of Brothers. In that interview, Major Winters quoted a letter of a comrade whose grandson had asked him if he was “a hero” in the war. The former soldier replied, “No, son, I wasn’t a hero, but I served in a company

of heroes.” I would like to imagine that one day one of our two beautiful granddaughters will ask me, “Pop Pop, were you one of the saints?” If she does, I hope that I will still have the mental wherewithal to reply, “No, honey, I wasn’t one of the saints, but I knew some saints.”

Roger M. Gramling

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Chapter 1

Epworth House Party Friends

I entered the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, in the early fall of 1971. I had never given serious thought to going anywhere else. I was blessed to receive a full tuition scholarship to attend Candler. Gifts to Candler from Annette H. Brewer, a lovely lady who was a member of Washington Street United Methodist Church in Columbia, funded my scholarship. However, I was interested in the possibility of a part-time job to help with the other expenses of living in Atlanta and attending seminary.

For almost the entire time that I was at Candler, I lived in the Graduate and Professional Center on Haygood Drive. The building has long since given way to the bulldozer. Today the Health Science Research Building occupies the site.

Prior to my move to the campus, I had written to Helen Stowers, the director of student aid at Candler, about a job. I had specifically inquired about office work as I had been on work study as a student secretary in the Division of Religion and Philosophy at Pfeiffer College doing general office work. When I went by to see Stowers, she said that she might have just the thing for me. She told me that recently Bishop Arthur J. Moore, a retired bishop who was a trustee of the university and lived near the campus, had asked Dr. James T. Laney, Candler's dean, about the possibility of having a seminary student to do some work for him. Dean Laney had then mentioned this to Stowers.

The next day I was on my way to the bishop's residence at 1391 North Decatur Road several blocks from the Emory Campus for an interview. I will confess that I didn't know who Bishop Arthur J. Moore was or anything about him.

A favorite story I heard later about Bishop Moore occurred on one of his trips to Washington, D.C. He had stepped onto an elevator, and, as the elevator began its ascent, the elevator operator turned and asked, "Pardon me, sir, but are you a United States Senator?" Bishop Moore politely replied, "No, I am not." Not to be brushed off, the elevator operator asked again, "Pardon me, sir, but are you a justice of the United States Supreme Court?" Again Bishop Moore replied that he was not. Finally, somewhat exasperated, the elevator operator asked, "Well, sir, just what are you?" Bishop Moore replied, "I am a bishop in the Methodist Church." Not to be outdone, the elevator operator replied, "Well, I didn't know what you were, but I knew that whatever you were, you were the head of it."

What I learned in time was that at one time or another, Bishop Arthur J. Moore had indeed been the "head of it."

Blanche Taylor, Moore's longtime maid and cook, greeted me at the door and ushered me into the large living room, which ran the width of the front of the house. In time I would learn that the home had previously belonged to Bishop Warren A. Candler, for whom the School of Theology is named, although there is some debate that the school was named for Bishop Candler's brother, Asa G. Candler Sr., whose \$1 million gift enabled the initial development of Emory University in its Atlanta location.

The house was considered one of the "Candler Homes" built in the Druid Hills area of Atlanta, although one of the more modest ones. Bishop Moore, who soon entered the room to meet me, was now eighty-three years old, somewhat stooped, with white hair. Still he resembled the magnificent Salisbury portrait of himself that hung over the marble mantel in the living room. Frank O. Salisbury was one of the leading British society portrait artists of his day. The bishop escorted me upstairs to his study, which occupied the same dimensions as the living room directly beneath it. It had been Bishop Candler's study as well, and, in the months to come, the occasional unaided opening and closing of the study door led me to wonder if the ghost of Bishop Candler was coming and going in the room as he

had forty years earlier.

I began working for Bishop Moore the next day. The fact that most of my Candler classes were in the mornings made it possible for me to work for him in the afternoons. The first project he assigned me involved the review and sorting of files in his study, most of which dated from his time as resident bishop of the Atlanta Area, 1940-1960. During this twenty-year period he also served as president of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church. These files eventually made their way to the Moore Methodist Museum at Epworth By The Sea, which now houses a large Methodist collection as well as the archives of the South Georgia Conference. More about Epworth By The Sea will be told shortly.

Soon my work with Bishop Moore expanded in different directions, including helping him with his correspondence, running errands, driving him to various obligations and commitments, helping him with arrangements for speaking engagements—in effect, anything that needed doing. While I had not known anything about his life and ministry prior to coming to work for him, I was soon to learn much about him and his remarkable life in the ministry and then in the episcopacy. Beginning in 1972 and continuing into 1973, I assisted him in the editing and preparation of the final draft of his autobiography, which Abingdon Press published under the title *Bishop to All Peoples*.

Eventually I would try to supplement this story of his life and work with my own short biography, *A Ministry of Hope: Portrait of Arthur J. Moore*, which was published by The Upper Room in 1979. Recently an interesting new book has become available about Bishop Moore. Compiled and edited by Robert E. Daniel, the book is titled *The Bishop Is in a Hurry!* It is a collection of articles and columns written by the bishop, many of them while traveling the world on various assignments of the church. These articles and columns were published in *World Outlook*, a periodical publication of the church's Board of Missions, and the *Wesleyan Christian Advocate*, the newspaper publication of the North and South Georgia Conferences of the Methodist Church.

Bishop Moore was elected to the episcopacy of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1930, from the pastorate of the First Methodist Church, Birmingham, Alabama. He was only forty-two years old at the time. After an

appointment to the far western part of the United States, he was assigned in 1934 to all of the foreign work of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, except the work in Latin America. This position included the ME Church, South's work in Europe, Africa, and Asia. Even after his assignment to the Atlanta Area in 1940, he was given numerous special assignments by the church that took him to places all over the world. Hence, the title "bishop to all peoples" seemed an appropriate one for his autobiography.

Among Bishop Moore's many accomplishments was the establishment of Epworth By The Sea, for years the conference center of the South Georgia Conference, located on St. Simons Island, Georgia. Epworth began in 1950 with the purchase of land formerly known as the Hamilton Plantation. It developed under the visionary leadership of Bishop Moore assisted by a group of dedicated Methodist laymen. Much of the funding for Epworth By The Sea was raised by Bishop Moore from a wide circle of friends whom he personally cultivated and upon whom he would call for a specific need to further the development of Epworth. As an expression of gratitude for those whose support and interest he cultivated, once or twice a year he would host a weekend "House Party" at Epworth to showcase the center and point to its possibilities. Guests were not always limited to the South Georgia Conference, however. The House Party provided me the opportunity to meet not only many of Bishop Moore's friends and associates from across the years, but also many of the persons who were prominent in the life and work of Georgia Methodism.

My first experience with the "House Party" was, as best I can recollect, in 1972. Mrs. Taylor, Bishop Moore's maid and cook, would accompany us on the drive to St. Simons Island, as would two guests whom the bishop wanted to include. They were the Reverend Dr. and Mrs. Sidney R. Anderson. The Andersons, then in their early eighties, had recently moved to Atlanta from San Francisco to become residents at Wesley Woods, a United Methodist retirement community, located near the Emory Campus. About all that Bishop Moore told me was that the Andersons had been missionaries in China, that Dr. Anderson had been interned by the Japanese during the Second World War. They were waiting for us at the main entrance to Wesley Woods.

I was concerned. Sid and Olive Anderson were tall and thin, and appeared frail. They brought only a small suitcase with them. What I soon

learned was that while tall and thin, they were a long way from being frail. The drive to St. Simons was most pleasant. And in the years since, I have learned to my amazement what Paul Harvey would call “the rest of the story” about Sid and Olive Anderson!

The “rest of the story” of the Andersons is a remarkable story of courage, perseverance, sacrifice, and service to others. Sid, born in Rising Star, Texas, in 1889, left for China in 1914 following his graduation from Vanderbilt Divinity School in Nashville, Tennessee. He was ordained at the East China Conference in Soochow in 1915 and began his work in Jiangsu Province. Olive Watkins Lipscomb, born in Greenwood, Mississippi, in 1890, left for China in 1915, after completing her education at Nashville’s Scarritt College (1912-1913) and Vanderbilt University (1914). In Soochow she taught at the Laura Haygood School from 1915 to 1919. In 1920, while both of them were on furlough from their mission assignment, Sid and Olive Anderson were married in Nashville, where they had met during their schooling at Vanderbilt. Following a trip through Europe, they returned to China, where their only child, Sidney Jr., was born in 1922.

For most of the next thirty years, Sid and Olive Anderson were associated with the ministry of Moore Memorial Church in Shanghai, where Sid was appointed as pastor. It was one of the largest churches in East Asia serving thousands of Chinese on a daily basis with a variety of activities including educational programs, health clinics, and relief programs as well as worship and music programs. The church enjoyed an international reputation for its many ministries. Moore Memorial Church had been built in 1887 and named Central Methodist Church. The church was refurbished in 1900 with a major gift from Mr. and Mrs. Lyman Royster Moore of Kansas City and consequently renamed Moore Memorial Church. In 1925, the church was moved and rebuilt where it stands today at 316 Xizang Zhong Lu near Hankou Lu. The rebuilding was completed in 1931.

At one time, Moore Memorial was thought to be the largest Protestant Church in Asia.

The Andersons’ work there was interrupted by the Second World War. Olive and their son had already returned to the United States for Olive to receive medical attention. Sid was interned by the Japanese for about seven months during 1943, but he was repatriated as a part of a prisoner

exchange and came back to the United States, where he and Olive studied at the New York School of Social Work.

Following the war, the Andersons returned to Shanghai to resume their work at Moore Memorial Church. However, all of China soon found itself engulfed in civil war. After the defeat of the Japanese, Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communists were pitted against Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Chinese forces. By 1950, the Communists were in control of the mainland. The Andersons remained for a while after the Communist takeover but were eventually forced to leave in July 1950.

The following year, Sid and Bishop Ralph A. Ward were denounced by their former colleague, Bishop Z. T. Kaung. This denunciation may have been at the insistence of the Communist regime, which promoted the severance of all relationships with American missionaries and the American church and its leaders. In August 1951, the Andersons made their way to Hong Kong, where Sid was appointed to work among refugees. There they helped to organize the North Point Methodist Church and spent twelve years serving refugees through the establishment of schools and clinics and other ministries.

In 1963, they retired after almost fifty years in missionary service, moving to San Francisco and affiliating with Glide Memorial Church, a church known for its mission work in the inner city. In 1971, they made their move to Atlanta and Wesley Woods Towers.

Olive died on January 4, 1978, and Sid followed shortly thereafter on February 28. In keeping with their wishes for simplicity in death, they were both cremated and their ashes scattered at sea off the coast of New England. Their son, Sid Jr., wrote, "They always thought of the earth and all its lands and peoples as interconnected and interdependent, just as the oceans and all their creatures."

Bishop Moore had a marvelous sense of humor. On what I believe was my first trip to St. Simons Island with him to attend a meeting at Epworth By The Sea, we had turned onto the causeway at Brunswick, Georgia, for the drive across the "Marshes of Glynn" to St. Simons Island. It was about 6:00 p.m., and Bishop Moore suggested we stop at The Deck for dinner. The Deck, located just beyond the entrance to the causeway, was a very popular restaurant in Brunswick. The staff was preparing for the evening

meal sitting. The lights were turned very low, and candles were lit on each of the tables. Bishop Moore took off his black Homburg dress hat, tossed it some eight feet and rung one of the hooks on the hat rack. He then turned to me and said, "The last time I was in a place this dark, I felt like I was running off with another man's wife!"

During another gathering at Epworth, following dinner as he tried to make his way through the crowd to go to his room, a lady who had known him many years earlier latched on to him and would not let go, continuing to talk to him as he tried to move through the crowd. Clearly he needed to find an "out" of the situation. When he saw the entrance to the men's restroom nearby, he excused himself as graciously as he could and entered. I followed him. He simply stood there for a minute or two in the middle of this large men's restroom. When I came up beside him to see if he needed assistance, he said, "I don't have to go, but I knew that this was one place she wouldn't follow me." We stayed there awhile biding our time!

Miss Margaret Adger Pitts of Waverly Hall, Georgia, was frequently in attendance at the Epworth House Parties. She was always invited but was reluctant to attend during the winter months as she said, "I live in an old house and am afraid to leave it during cold weather as the pipes might freeze!" She had become a major benefactor of Methodist institutions and charities in Georgia through the largess of the Pitts Foundation founded by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Irby Hudson Pitts. The William I. H. and Lula E. Pitts Foundation was established in 1941 with earnings from the family's mercantile business and from early investments, which Mr. Pitts had made in Coca-Cola stock. Mr. Pitts named his daughter to a lifetime seat on the foundation's board. Bishop Moore served as board chairman until declining health led him to resign in April 1974.

At one of the Epworth House Parties, "Miss Margaret," as she was affectionately known, asked me to drive her and several of the other ladies on a tour of neighboring Jekyll Island during the afternoon free time. Not intentionally meaning to disparage Bishop Moore's 1965 Buick Electra Sedan, she said to me, "Roger, I want you to drive us in my car. I want you to have a chance to drive a 'real car' for a change." Miss Margaret's "real car" was a new burgundy Lincoln Town Car with a black vinyl roof! Of course, I agreed—anything for Miss Margaret. However, I will confess that

I approached the afternoon with considerable anxiety. For one thing, I had never driven that large a car. And, if the size wasn't intimidating enough, it was equipped with so many features that it made Bishop Moore's Buick look like steerage on the Queen Mary. Also, needless to say, I had never driven over to nearby Jekyll Island and had no idea how to navigate around the island.

However, we headed out with Miss Margaret beside me on the front seat and three ladies in the back seat. By the grace of God, I slowly but surely mastered control of the Lincoln and its various features and somehow found the skill and patience needed to maneuver an automobile, which seemed more a tank than a car, within the correct lanes of the highway. Actually, we had a very nice drive around Jekyll Island. And there were no casualties, car or ladies!

After Bishop Moore's death in 1974, I continued to correspond with Miss Margaret, and she remained a source of encouragement to this young preacher. When I saw her several years later at an Epworth gathering, I noticed she had traded the Lincoln. The new one was solid white, inside and out, and even bigger than the last one.

Miss Margaret died in 1998 at the age of 104. Through the Pitts Foundation, millions of dollars have been directed to Methodist causes and institutions, including LaGrange and Andrew Colleges, the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, Magnolia Manor Retirement Community as well as Epworth By The Sea.

During the years I worked for Bishop Moore, another guest at one of the bishop's Epworth House Parties was Mrs. Asa G. Candler Jr. Florence Adeline Stephenson Candler was born in 1895, a native of DeKalb County, Georgia. Nine months after the death of his first wife, Asa Griggs Candler Jr., married Miss Stephenson in October 1927. He was forty-seven. She was thirty-two. She had been his secretary for a number of years. The wedding was a small and quiet one; the service was conducted by Mr. Candler's uncle, Bishop Warren A. Candler, and held at the bishop's home on North Decatur Road near the Emory University campus.

The second Mrs. Candler was Baptist. When I met Florence S. Candler, her church membership was at the Druid Hills Baptist Church on Ponce de Leon Avenue where the Reverend Dr. Louie D. Newton, also a lifelong

friend of Bishop Moore and a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, had been her pastor and remained a close friend. Mr. Candler was a member of First Methodist Church on Peachtree Street in downtown Atlanta. Although a Baptist, her marriage to Asa G. Candler Jr. landed her in a “swarm” of Methodists and secured her a place in the history of Atlanta business development and Atlanta society, all of which she seemed to successfully navigate with charm and good “down-to-earth” common sense.

There is a good deal that can be said about Mr. Candler. He was a son of Asa Griggs Candler Sr., a druggist who purchased the formula for Coca-Cola from Dr. John Stith Pemberton and several other early investors. In 1892 Asa G. Candler Sr. established the Coca-Cola Company to develop, market, and distribute the sweet carbonated drink. Interestingly, a fascinating and very readable treatment of the life of Asa Jr., his many interests, his business enterprises, as well as his human frailties, which includes information about other members of the Candler family as well, can be found in a new book by Sara A. H. Butler titled *Fortune & Folly: The Weird and Wonderful Life of the South's Most Eccentric Millionaire* published in 2023 by the University of Georgia Press. I recommend it.

After graduating from Emory College in Oxford, Georgia, Asa G. Candler Jr. went to work for the family businesses first in California and then closer to home in Hartwell, Georgia, where his father had invested in a cotton mill. Both efforts brought mixed results. However, in Hartwell he met Helen Arabella Magill, whom he would marry on July 17, 1901.

Returning to Atlanta with his young family, Asa Jr. was soon put to work by his father managing the recently constructed Candler Building in downtown Atlanta where the Coca-Cola Company was headquartered. A quickly developing passion for automobiles, especially fast, large, and expensive automobiles, led him into the establishment of the Atlanta Automobile Association and the association's effort to construct an “Atlanta Speedway” to attract racing enthusiasts. Despite numerous best efforts to promote the speedway and to attract drivers and spectators alike, the enterprise failed after a few years. In 1911, his interest in automobiles and racing ended with a fire in his garage resulting from his working on one of his cars. The fire destroyed the garage and several of his cars housed there and could well have cost him his life.

In the meantime, several aviation enthusiasts sought to use the Atlanta Speedway site as a landing field. In time, as interest in aviation and use of the property grew, Asa Jr. offered to lease the speedway property to the City of Atlanta with the option for the city to purchase the property, which by then had become known as Candler Field. The excitement surrounding a visit by Charles Lindbergh to Atlanta in 1927 promoted the future of commercial aviation and Atlanta's need for an airport. The next year Asa Jr. pressed the City of Atlanta for a purchase of the property. In 1929 the City of Atlanta purchased the property. Today, the airfield is part of what is known as the Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.

In 1910, Asa Jr. bought forty-two acres of land on Williams Mill Road. He would call it Briarcliff Farm. According to the Butler biography, one possible source of the name was for the model of a very expensive car that Asa Jr. had owned—the Lozier “Briarcliff H” model. At Briarcliff Farm, Asa Jr. developed a large farming operation that included chickens, cows, pigs, and sheep. The farm operation was noted for such modern conveniences as electric lights and fans in its modern dairy. Briarcliff Farm did well for several years but, as was often the case, other interests began to take precedence.

In 1916, Asa G. Candler Sr. decided to divide his ownership of the Coca-Cola Company among his five children with his son, Charles Howard Candler, succeeding him as head of the company. Then, in 1919, the children decided, perhaps as some have suggested without even consulting their father, to sell their interests to a group of investors headed by Ernest Woodruff. It was a strange decision in some ways, as the Woodruffs and Candler had often been competitors in business. In five years, Ernest Woodruff's son, Robert W. Woodruff, would take over leadership of the Coca-Cola Company. The Candler family turned increasingly to its real estate development enterprises, which included the development of the Druid Hills area, where many of the magnificent Candler homes would be built.

Among the real estate ventures of Asa Jr. was what came to be known as the Briarcliff Hotel and Apartments at the corner of Ponce de Leon and North Highland avenues. Ground was broken in 1924 for the nine-story luxury complex. The property was originally called “The 750.” It was re-

branded as the Briarcliff Hotel and Apartments in 1938 and remodeled in the 1950s.

Among other enterprises, and a major one, was the development of Westview Cemetery on the west side of Atlanta. According to Butler's biography, in 1930, Asa Jr. bought a controlling interest in the cemetery where many prominent White citizens of Atlanta had been buried, including members of his own family. It was a very large piece of property. In a few years he had personally assumed management of the property with the help of other family members, including Mrs. Candler. In time, his plans for the development and expansion of the property took shape. Like everything Asa Jr. did, his plans were no small effort. He proposed a major renovation of the property to turn it into a magnificent memorial park complete with statuary and a fountain and the addition of a large and ornate mausoleum and an abbey built to "glorify God and the Christian faith." He also planned to add a funeral service and mortuary. In other words, ahead of his time, Asa Jr. proposed "one-stop shopping" for the bereaved.

Bishop Moore told me one of Candler's ideas for the modernization of the cemetery involved placing the various monuments flat in the ground to improve the ease and cost of maintenance. Today such an idea is common in perpetual care cemeteries. The move was not welcomed, however, by families whose loved ones were buried there and who had erected elaborate and often expensive grave markers and monuments. First an injunction and then a lawsuit brought such plans to an end.

In the early 1940s, advance sales of crypts in the mausoleum began. There were some problems related to the nature of those early contracts. Later sales resumed as Asa Jr. hired more salesmen. Butler notes in her book that by 1945, sales had exceeded \$1 million. Plans for the mausoleum and abbey continued. The abbey would include a chapel, which he named in honor of his wife, the Florence Candler Chapel. However, in early 1951, he sold Westview Cemetery. The mausoleum and abbey were still unfinished. At their deaths, both Bishop and Mrs. Arthur J. Moore were entombed in crypts in the mausoleum given to the Moores by Asa Jr.

On another occasion, Bishop Moore told me that during the time that he knew Asa Jr., he had decided several years earlier to go into the laundry and dry cleaning business, building a large commercial plant on his former

farm property then known as Briarcliff Estate. To no one's surprise, it was called the Briarcliff Laundry. The business became quite successful in its early years and was run by his sons. According to Bishop Moore's story, Candler had advertised that all the clothes were insured. Unfortunately, the plant burned down on June 17, 1943, and the resulting financial loss was major. Customers wanted compensation for their losses as the laundry had charged a one-cent fee for insurance according to Butler's book. It was soon discovered that while there was insurance coverage for the plant, there was virtually no coverage for the customers' belongings in the laundry and dry cleaning operation and no coverage for the cold storage part of the operation. More than 2,000 customers filed claims. The United States government entered the dispute, filing charges against the Candler for mail fraud. Both the Reverend Dr. Louie D. Newton and Bishop Moore appeared at trial as character witnesses for Asa Jr. The Candler were found not guilty, but the liability remained.

In her book, Butler provides as thorough a listing of the many business ventures and adventures of Asa Jr. as anyone would desire to know about. Only a few are mentioned here. In fact, one finds it difficult to understand how one man could have been involved and entangled in so many "wheelings and dealings" during a lifetime. If you read her book, buckle your seat belt—you are in for quite an amazing ride.

It is a matter of historical record that Asa Jr. was given at times to excesses and eccentricities. He has been described as being larger than life, a man of many interests including cars, airplanes, boats, magic tricks, exotic birds, and big game animals. It has been said he never did anything in a small way. While in so many ways a remarkable man and a visionary, it is also a part of the historical record that he suffered bouts of depression and alcoholism.

Another story Bishop Moore recounted to me was that, during a low period, Candler claimed to have "lost his religion." His plan to regain it was representative of his tendency to do everything in a big way. He would hire a large auditorium for a religious meeting like the revivals so prominent in the South. Bishop Moore would preach evangelistic sermons, and, during the course of the meeting, Candler would again "get religion." Needless to say, the plan never materialized, perhaps largely because of Bishop Moore's counsel.

Today, if one looks quickly through the gates at what was once 1260 Briarcliff Road, one might be able to catch a glimpse of what remains of the Briarcliff Mansion and Estate, a reminder of the time when members of the Candler Family built large and beautiful homes in the Druid Hills area of Atlanta. In 1916, Asa Jr. began his efforts to turn his Briarcliff Farm on Williams Mill Road into an estate complete with a mansion of such proportions as to overshadow anything any other of his Candler relatives had or would build. In time, Williams Mill Road was renamed Briarcliff Road.

The mansion was completed in 1922. However, during the years that followed, Candler continued to expand the house and the surrounding grounds. In time there would be tennis courts, a nine-hole golf course, and two swimming pools, one of which was open to public use for an admission price. Other structures added included stables and greenhouses in which he housed a collection of exotic plants. In time there would also be a zoo on the property.

Yes, a zoo! It was called the Briarcliff Zoological Park. It started out innocently enough in 1931 when Asa Jr. adopted a bear. Candler saw the possibilities. Other animals soon followed. The zoo included the usual collection of animals that he gathered over time from various sources—monkeys, elk, a buffalo, lions, elephants, a tiger, leopards, a zebra, goats, a camel, baboons—but also a collection of exotic birds and eventually sea lions. Staff and trainers were hired. The facilities for housing such a collection were constructed. The zoo was opened to the public with an admission charge. Unfortunately, the revenue generated by admissions did not cover the expenses. In a few years, the Briarcliff Zoological Park was in serious financial trouble, a situation complicated by various legal actions threatened and taken that included complaints from his Druid Hills neighbors. The zoo was closed in 1935 and arrangements made to sell the collection to the Grant Park Zoo in Atlanta.

In 1925, additions to Briarcliff Mansion included a music room with a vaulted Tudor ceiling measuring 1,700 square feet, a large dining room, and a commercial kitchen. In the music room, Asa Jr. installed an eighty-eight rank, 187-stop Aeolian organ considered one of the largest Aeolian organs ever built for a private residence. Most of the organ was eventually donated to Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia, in 1952.

After Candler married Florence Adeline Stephenson in 1927, they continued to live in the Briarcliff Mansion until the early 1950s. Some sources say the Briarcliff property was sold to the General Services Administration in 1948, but there is uncertainty as to when exactly the Candlers left the property. When they did leave, they moved to the Briarcliff Hotel and Apartments, which Candler had developed. He would live out his last years as a resident of the hotel's penthouse. He died January 11, 1953, at age seventy-two. The funeral service was held two days later in the Florence Candler Chapel at Westview Abbey. Officiating were Bishop Moore, the Reverend Dr. Louie D. Newton, and the Reverend Dr. Pierce Harris, the pastor of First Methodist Church. Asa Jr. was buried at Westview Cemetery in the family plot near his first wife, not in the elaborate sarcophagus that he had planned and had constructed for himself in the mausoleum.

The Briarcliff Estate was subsequently used for other purposes including the Georgian Clinic, an alcohol treatment center. And, later, during the time that I was a student at Emory, the property was home to the Georgia Mental Health Institute. These uses necessitated changes in the mansion and the grounds. "The grandeur that was Rome" soon gave way to the necessities of another day. The property was later purchased by Emory University and today comprises its "Briarcliff Campus." However, the future of the Briarcliff Mansion remains uncertain as it would require an extensive and expensive restoration. Today the mansion sits abandoned on the Briarcliff Campus.

For the Epworth House Party, Mrs. Candler would fly from Atlanta to St. Simons Island on Air South, a small regional airline Bishop Moore and I used occasionally for commuting to Epworth By The Sea. I was directed to meet Mrs. Candler at the St. Simons Airport and drive her to Epworth, which I did. It was a late afternoon flight. Arriving at Epworth around 6:30 p.m., Mrs. Taylor joined us to help get Mrs. Candler settled in her room in one of the new motel units at the center of the Epworth campus. I told Mrs. Candler that unfortunately the dining room at Epworth had already closed for the day but that I would be happy to go out and bring in something for her dinner. I asked her what she might like. She thought for a few moments, and then replied, "I think that I would like some Kentucky Fried Chicken."

Fortunately, I knew where the Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant was located on the island and left to get some for Mrs. Candler. After delivering her dinner and with Mrs. Taylor there to assist her, I returned to my room at Epworth for the night. The image has stayed with me across the years—Mrs. Asa G. Candler Jr., who for more than twenty years with her husband had presided over Briarcliff Mansion and Estate with its music room, ballroom, multiple swimming pools, more than twenty rooms with carved wood paneling and marble fireplaces, greenhouses, and solariums, sitting there in her room at Epworth By The Sea eating Kentucky Fried Chicken!

Sometime later, Mrs. Candler invited Bishop Moore, Dr. Newton, and me to dinner in her Atlanta home. Several members of Mr. Candler's family were also present. At some point after his death in January 1953, Mrs. Candler had moved to a lovely modern home in the Peachtree/Buckhead area of Atlanta. It appeared that Mrs. Candler had brought to her new home some of the fine furnishings that at one time had graced rooms in the Briarcliff Mansion. I remember that the size and quality of the furnishings in her home were unlike any I had seen with the possible exception of the Biltmore House in Asheville, North Carolina.

In the beautiful dining room, we gathered around a large table elegantly set with the finest china and silver flatware. My maternal grandmother, who had impeccable table manners, had prepared me well for such a time as this. However, I will quickly confess I felt out of place in such surroundings. Even so, the members of the Candler family who were present were very friendly and made me feel welcome. And, much to my surprise, Mrs. Candler, who presided from her seat at the head of the table, seated me on her right. Two household employees served that evening—a man, whom I gathered was both butler and chauffeur to Mrs. Candler, and her cook. The meal was served in multiple courses and was delicious as I recall. No, the entrée was not Kentucky Fried Chicken. Mrs. Candler, who was short in stature, had a floor buzzer near her right foot. From time to time she would have to stretch to reach it to summon the butler.

Early in the meal, coffee was served, the butler stopping at each place to pour it from a silver pitcher. After he had poured mine, I noticed a small crystal bowl with a small silver spoon at the head of each place setting. In the bowl was a white granulated substance. I slowly, and with considerable caution, began to spoon the contents of the little crystal bowl into my cof-

fee to sweeten it. Shortly the butler appeared with a silver bowl also filled with a white granulated substance and a spoon, stopping at each person to ask each of us if we wanted sugar for our coffee. I would become a devotee of black coffee that evening. Lifting my cup to my lips, I was able to quickly confirm that what I had been spooning into my coffee was, indeed, salt, not sugar. Too embarrassed to acknowledge what I had done, I spent the rest of the evening pretending to slowly sip my salted coffee. That one cup lasted me the entire evening. I am sure the butler who circled the table from time to time offering coffee as we sat talking after the meal wondered how I managed to sip coffee from a cup that never needed refilling.

The second Mrs. Candler died on October 8, 1977, at age eighty-two. She would be buried next to Mr. Candler in the family plot at Westview Cemetery. Following his death, she had had a very large but very simple monument erected at the family plot. Engraved across the top of the monument is the name "Candler." Today it remains a silent reminder of the tremendous influence in areas of business, culture, and education that one family had in the history of Atlanta, the state of Georgia, and the nation.

About the Author

Roger M. Gramling

Roger M. Gramling is the former president of The South Carolina United Methodist Foundation, from which he retired at the end of 2018 after thirty-three years of service with the foundation. He was named “president emeritus” of the foundation at the time of his retirement.



He was born November 22, 1948, in Orangeburg, South Carolina. He and his wife, Marilyn, a retired public school media specialist, make their home in Irmo, South Carolina. They are parents of two sons. David is a career officer in the United States Army currently assigned to Fifth Corps at Fort Knox, Kentucky. David and his wife, Ann, a nurse practitioner, have two daughters, Ally and Savannah. Mark, a PhD in cellular pathology, is vice president of oncology for the Larvol Company. Mark’s wife, Jennifer, is a public elementary school teacher. They live in Antioch, Tennessee.

Roger has been a ministerial member of the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church since 1972, serving in the parish ministry for twelve years prior to coming to work for the foundation. He is a graduate of Pfeiffer College (1971) and The Candler School of Theology at Emory University (1974). He was personal secretary and biographer

to the late Bishop Arthur J. Moore. In 1998, Pfeiffer bestowed upon him an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree in recognition of his service to the church and his reputation as a scholar.

His service in the South Carolina Conference has included secretary and registrar of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, assistant conference secretary, conference parliamentarian, counsel for the church, and secretary of the trial court. He served as secretary of the South Carolina Conference from June 2002 to June 2005.

He currently serves as secretary-treasurer of the South Carolina Conference Historical Society and chairperson of the board of directors of the South Carolina Methodist Conference Credit Union. He is a former secretary of the SEJ Association of United Methodist Foundations, the National Association of United Methodist Foundations, and the South Carolina Planned Giving Society. In 2022, he was elected president of the Historical Society of the Southeastern Jurisdiction. He has also served as a member of the Commission on Archives and History of the Southeastern Jurisdiction. In 2003, he was named the recipient of its Ministry of Memory Award by the Historical Society of The United Methodist Church.

Roger writes on a variety of subjects related to The United Methodist Church. His biography of Bishop Moore, *A Ministry of Hope: Portrait of Arthur J. Moore*, was published by The Upper Room in 1979. His history of the first thirty years of the National Association of United Methodist Foundations was published by the association in 2002 and distributed across the church.