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**Carlton Watson Todd
and a Footnote**

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Carlton Watson Todd and a Footnote

Carlton Watson Todd (1916-1998) had the longest pastoral service record of any minister of the gospel according to any reasonable standards of church history research.

Carl McIntire (1906-2002) served as pastor of Collingswood Presbyterian Church in Collingswood, New Jersey for 66 years (1933-1999). As far as I know this is the longest known pastorate on record where the same minister served the same church.¹ There are other long continuous pastorates on record but none to compare with McIntire.²

But for Bro. Todd the service was different. He served four churches for over 43 years each and these four churches are located in three different states.³ He served two of the churches for 57 years each and a third church for 47 years and a fourth church for 43 years. In all Bro. Todd served 225 accumulative years as a Baptist preacher in six different churches in three different states.

Bro. Ben Jones served 58 years as pastor of West Park Southern Baptist Church in Jacksonville before he retired. As far as I know this is the longest service record of any Southern Baptist pastor in the same church. But compare Bro. Ben and Bro. Todd. Bro. Ben had accumulative service of 58 years and Bro. Todd had accumulative service of 225 years. What a remarkable record.

The life and ministry of Bro. Todd is an intriguing one. Let me share some details from the life of this faithful man of God.

Early Years

Bro. Todd was born near Bluffton in Clay County Georgia on August 5, 1916. He was the son of Sibley and Mary Lizzie Eubanks Todd. Sibley Todd was a typical 1900's South Georgia farmer in that he had four mules, no land and a love of farming, hunting and fishing. He rented the land that he farmed and lived to be 95 years of age and died at Edison, Georgia.⁴

Carlton Watson Todd married Martha Melvin Peavey of Coleman, Georgia on June 6, 1935. Bro. Todd joined Mars Hill Primitive Baptist Church near Edison, Georgia, the third weekend in June 1935. His recent bride joined the same church two weeks later.

Bro. and Mrs. Todd had three children: Aaron Melvin Todd, Joan Todd Wells and Jeanelle Todd Sapp. At the time of his death in 1998 Bro. Todd had seven grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren and a sister Christine Cook who survived him.

Martha Melvin Todd (1919-2003) was born between Cuthbert and Fort Gaines in Randolph County Georgia. The family reports that Bro. Todd would walk 12 miles to date her. At that time families would have square dances at their homes and Bro. Todd and Martha met at one of these square dances. Bro. Todd played the guitar and after dating a while they married. Bro. Todd was 19 years old and Martha was 16 years old when they married. Martha later worked for ten years in the Vernon, Florida school lunchroom but she was best known in the family as a “professional homemaker.” She loved people and enjoyed entertaining. She liked to cook, clean and prepare for company. On “big meeting” occasions people would stay with the Todd’s and they would have pallets all over the house. Mrs. Todd always managed to have breakfast ready when guests got up for the day and she enjoyed every minute of it.

Mrs. Todd was a “strong lady” and a “complimentary pastor’s wife.” Mrs. Todd was always careful with Bro. Todd’s clothes and he would always have to “pass inspection” before walking out the door each day. When Bro. Todd traveled Mrs. Todd would “pack and stack” his clothes. She wanted him to look nice and he always did.⁵



**50th Wedding Anniversary
C. W. and Martha Todd**

Call to Preach

Bro. Todd was “liberated” in 1939 and was ordained at his home church in October, 1940. Bro. Todd said he was ordained on Monday because the “preacher couldn’t be gone on Sunday.”⁶ The three men who served on Bro. Todd’s ordaining council were also three of the most definite influences upon his ministry. According to Bro. Todd the men were Will Kelly, R. K. Blackshear and Tom Crawford. Kelly was from Edison, Georgia and baptized Todd when he was 19 years of age. Bro. Kelly lived to be 100 years old and preached for Bro. Todd when he was 98 years old. Bro. Todd said he recorded Bro. Kelly on an old wire tape recorder when he preached and Todd recalled that upon playing the tape back for Kelly it was probably the first time he ever heard himself preach.⁷

Rufus King Blackshear and Tom Crawford were also important in the life of Bro. Todd. He said Tom Crawford “went far and near for a penny a mile to call for peace.” Todd stated that Crawford was a “comforter” in his ministry and when a church got upset he was a good one to bring in and restore peace to the church.

Six Pastorates

Bro. Todd held six different pastorates in his lifetime for a service record of 225 years. His first pastorate was Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Graceville (seven years). His second pastorate was Bethel Baptist Church, Bonifay, Florida (57 years). His third pastorate was Shady Grove Baptist Church in Arlington, Georgia (57 years). His fourth pastorate was Union in Colquitt, Georgia (14 years). His fifth pastorate was Trinity Baptist Church in Whigham, Georgia (43 years) and his sixth pastorate was County Line Primitive Baptist Church in Abbeville, Alabama where he served for 47 years. My extended research indicates that this is the longest accumulative Christian pastoral service on record. I asked Bro. Todd what one of his life motto’s might have been and he said “Don’t turn back.” His pastoral ministry work was service that included loyalty, duty and commitment. When Bro. Todd was 80 years of age he told me “I have fought a good fight. I want it to be that way.”⁸

C. W. TODD PASTORAL TIMELINE

1	Nov. 1940-Nov. 1947	7 years	Pleasant Hill-Graceville, Fla.
2	Jan. 1941-1998	57 years	Bethel-Bonifay, Fla.
3	1941-1998	57 years	Shady Grove-Arlington, Ga.
4	1942-1956	14 years	Union-Colquitt, Ga.
5	1946-1989	43 years	Trinity-Whigham, Ga.
6*	1956-1998	47 years	County Line-Abbeville, Ala.

*At his death Bro. Todd was pastor of Shady Grove, Bethel and County Line.

Personal Interests

C. W. Todd was a bi-vocational preacher that had many interests. He served as a school teacher for a short time and was a school bus driver for many years. He taught two years at Liberty School at Vernon and also taught two years at New Prospect, a one room school house in Vernon that had grades 1-8.

Bro. Todd liked to fish in fish ponds and would also fish from the bank. He loved people and loved nature. He had a keen mind and the family reported that he “loved to tinker.” He could patch up lawn mowers and made a pea sheller out of a Prince Albert Tobacco can and a razor blade. He made a device that would grate corn, another that would drop the flag on a mail box when mail was picked up, he wrote three or four songs, and fixed a device for guitar strings that made it easier to play the guitar. His interests seemed to center around people. He was positive and not negative. He was kind and not belligerent. He set a good family example in and out of the home.

After meal time at night the family would gather and sing. Bro. Todd could sing bass or tenor. He taught singing schools in the summer time and encouraged singing in all of his churches.⁹

Philosophy of Ministry

In an interview Bro. Todd stated that “spiritual service is just like natural food to a natural body.” He said he had always been blessed with wonderful deacons. He said “I let them be deacons and they let me be the preacher.” In 1991 when he was honored at Shady Grove Church in Arlington, Georgia for 50 years of service the worship leader stated that Bro. Todd was “a faithful guide, loving father and devoted pastor.” This fit well with Bro. Todd’s own words because he later stated that “when you serve a church a long time you become a part of the family.”

This New Testament view of service was well noted by his congregations and Shady Grove Church voted every year on annual call to ask him to return as pastor. After 50 straight unanimous annual calls to Bro. Todd the church with a building full of people told him “This job is yours as long as you live.”¹⁰

Study Habits

Bro. Todd never had a study. Yet he would “study, read and meditate” often. He loved to read the King James Bible and would usually sit in the living room to read. The only other religious book that Bro. Todd spent much time reading was a *History of The Church of God, From the Creation to A. D. 1885*, by Elder Cushing Biggs Hassell. This book presented a church history perspective from the Primitive Baptist view and was published in New York in 1886 and later reprinted in 1948.

Favorite Scriptures

Upon being asked about favorite texts Bro. Todd said in an interview that “They are all precious to me.” He went on to say that Psalm 23, Matthew 16 and John 5:25 were important to him.

Preaching Texts

Bro. Todd and his family agreed on his favorite preaching texts. He said he “loved the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament” and also liked “the events of Elijah and Elisha.” He said “I love to preach about Paul and Peter.” His son Aaron Todd remembered that Bro. Todd “loved to preach” and would preach often from Paul’s writings and especially the Book of Romans.

Preaching Style

There was only one audio tape available of the preaching of Bro. Todd when this research was prepared. He did not make notes and did not use notes in his preaching. The one tape available at the time of this writing was a sermon delivered at Bethel Church in Bonifay, Florida in 1970. His subject was “Faith” and his text was Hebrews 11. He had a conversation tone and spoke of a faith that “motivates us and moves us.” He did not present a sermonic key word or outline but his logic was valid and his illustrations were personal and Biblically based. His appeal was simple and he used such phrases as “God offers us something better than what we have” and closes with the invitation that we now give you “opportunity for membership.” Bro. Todd revealed concern and compassion in his preaching. He usually had a summary conclusion and

his son Aaron stated that he “gave you something you could take home with you.”¹¹

Conclusion

Carlton Watson Todd was a gift. He had a strong voice, clear blue eyes and a wonderful sense of humor. He had a commitment to Jesus Christ that was woven into his character and ministry.

I interviewed Bro. Todd when he was 80 years of age. He said, “People ask me why I don’t quit?” and then he said “I’m too near home now and the closer I get to home the better it is.”

In 1986 Bro. Todd was diagnosed with lung cancer and after surgery he completely recovered. However in 1997 the cancer returned and after a valiant fight with that dreaded disease Bro. Todd died on February 5, 1998.

Observation

It has been my vocation and avocation to study Christian preaching for over 50 years. Carlton Watson Todd will always be a footnote in the annuals of Christian preaching due to his longtime service as pastor in local Primitive Baptist Churches. Bro. Todd is a preaching footnote.

But for all the people who knew him personally he was something else. He was also an exclamation point. He was a Christian example of service, integrity and humility. As the good people of Shady Grove said upon his 50th Anniversary as pastor of their church: he was “A Faithful guide, a loving father and a devoted pastor.”

SERVICE CHART OF TOP TEN LENGTHS

1.	Carl McIntire	Presbyterian	Cape May, New Jersey	66 years
2.	Mary W. Stabler	Assembly of God	Franklin, Alabama	64 years
3.	Walter H. Brooks	NBC	Washington, D. C.	62 years
4.	William Jay	Congregationalist	Bath, England	61 years
5.	Ludwig Krekeler	Lutheran	Gillespie, Illinois	59 years
6.	Ben Jones	SBC	Jacksonville (West Park)	58 years
7.	Lee Mixon	FWB	Geneva, Ala. (Pleasant Home)	58 years
8.	C. W. Todd	PBC	Bonifay, Fla. (Bethel)	57 years
9.	C. W. Todd	PBC	Arlington, Ga. (Shady Grove)	57 years
10	Lamar Mathis	SBC	Houston, Tx. (Faith Memorial)	54 years

Endnotes

¹Everything about McIntire was controversial. Some say he was pastor for 60 years but the records bear out 66.

²See Service CHART OF TOP TEN LENGTHS

³See C. W. TODD PASTORAL TIMELINE

⁴Aaron Todd interview, March 19, 2010, p. 1.

There are four primary sources for this paper. Source one is the May 13, 1996 interview I had with Bro. Todd. This will be noted as the “C. W. Todd interview.” Source 2 will be the 1998 Howard Harris article on Bro. Todd and will be referred to as “Harris.” Source three is the 1998 “Eulogy of Bro. Todd” and will be referred to as “Eulogy.” Source four is my March 19, 2010 interview with Aaron Todd and will be identified as “Aaron Todd interview.”

⁵Aaron Todd interview, pp. 4, 18-19.

⁶C. W. Todd interview, p. 2.

⁷C. W. Todd interview, p. 2. Later on I asked Bro. Todd if preachers had any concept of a retirement plan back then. He said “Yes. Land was one dollar per acre then and Bro. Kelly told me to buy all I could.”

⁸C. W. Todd interview, p. 1.

⁹ Aaron Todd interview, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰ Shady Grove Audio Tape.

¹¹ Aaron Todd interview, p. 15.