



My Favorite Teachers—A Tribute to Dr. Homer J. Adams

By Wes Eby, Global Representative

Spruill and Hurt. Brown. Nettles and Davison, Adams and Greathouse. Cantoni and Hargrave. These names are indelibly etched on my mind. Throughout my years as a student, from first grade through graduate education, teachers at every level impacted me. These names are engraved on a commemorative plaque that hangs in my mind's "Hall of Heroes":

- Elizabeth Spruill, grade 4, and Ada Hurt, grade 5, in elementary school
- Claire Brown in junior high school
- Ernestine Nettles, social studies, and Ethel Davison, English, in high school
- Homer Adams, history, and William Greathouse, theology, in college
- Gina Cantoni, ESL, and Deane Hargrave, linguistics, graduate school

All teachers have their own "Hall of Heroes"—those people who pour or have poured themselves into their students willingly, skillfully, and sacrificially. Such heroes have helped mold and make us into the educators we are today. I shall always be grateful for each teacher in my life, but I confess that the few aforementioned people rose to the level of superheroes.

Dr. Homer J. Adams

In this article, I wish to pay special tribute to Dr. Homer J. Adams, my major professor at Trevecca Nazarene College (now University). Adams recently joined the myriads who have preceded him to heaven. Just two months shy of his 100th birthday, he was the last teacher in my Hall of Heroes to leave this earth, trading it for eternal life.

Born in south Alabama and growing up in south Florida, Adams enrolled in Trevecca High School, located in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1939. Upon graduation and entering Trevecca Nazarene College, he served in the U.S.

Navy during World War II before returning to school to graduate in 1947. He entered Peabody College in Nashville, now a part of Vanderbilt University, and earned a master's and a doctoral degree in history. He was the first Trevecca graduate to earn a doctoral degree, a significant accomplishment. During his graduate studies, he served as the principal of Trevecca High School and taught social studies at the college level.

Upon completing his doctoral program, he became a full-time professor of history and soon after became dean of the faculty. His long service at Trevecca was interrupted for a decade when he served as dean and later as vice-president of DeKalb College in Atlanta.

When Adams was elected president and returned to his alma mater, his 12-year administration was noted for several significant accomplishments, including increased enrollment, campus expansion, financial growth, and debt reduction. He was also the first graduate of the school to later become president. When he retired, the college honored him by naming one of the original campus buildings —the Homer J. Adams Administration Building. His service at the school spanned 30 years as professor, dean, and president.

After his retirement, he devoted time to one of his gifts—writing. He was named Trevecca's historian and authored several books and historical pamphlets. Most notable was *Trevecca Folklore and Tradition* (1999), a volume that celebrated Trevecca's centennial.

Adams was a devoted churchman who served the Church of the Nazarene with distinction at the local, district, and global levels. Dr. Steven Hoskins, a current religion professor at Trevecca and historian in his own right, wrote Dr. Adams's obituary: "Love of Christ and his church, family loyalty, distinguished achievements, and sacrificial giving marked the life of Homer J. Adams, Ph.D., and it was a life well-lived. May God bless his memory, and may God bless Trevecca, the school he loved."

My Personal Tribute

In June 1954, I marched onto Trevecca's campus as a 17-year-old, green-behind-the-ears teen with big dreams but hardly any cash. In a bit of arrogance, I just knew that Trevecca wanted me as a student. So, despite my immaturity and head-in-the-proverbial-clouds attitude, and no money, I boldly tried to enroll. You see, I lacked 12th grade English and planned to complete this requirement during the summer. But alas! I lacked the money for tuition. Alas! The school would not give me a loan. Even though I pled my case, vowing to get a job and earn the tuition, still the administration refused. Now what? Frustrated and disappointed, I pondered my next step. Should I return home? Should I postpone my plans? Then, Dr. Adams came to my rescue. In his grace (and I think wisdom), he allowed me to sit in his classes and complete the needed subject while I worked to scrape up the money for the tuition. This kind, godly man quickly became my hero. And I was able to enter Trevecca as a freshman in that fall semester. Dream realized!

Since my career goal at that time was to be a high school history teacher (thanks to Ernestine Nettles, my social studies hero-teacher from high school days in Alabama), my declared major was history. Well, it just happened that my new hero was the major history professor. And over the next four years, I took almost every class he taught. What a storyteller! Dr. Adams kept his classes fascinating as he made history come alive as never before. Whether relating events of the Peloponnesian War in ancient Greece or the tragic conflict that divided our

nation called the Civil War, his ability to intrigue and capture attention was truly a gift. I took copious notes; my memory for remembering all the stories and facts was not equal to that of my prof's. Adams was a master teacher—an apt descriptor for him.

In those years, Trevecca's enrollment was much smaller than it is today, and each class had a faculty sponsor. Dr. Adams became our freshman-class sponsor, and we were fortunate to have him for all four years. In our senior year, when my classmates elected me as their president, I could not have been more pleased to work with my hero. He always provided wise advice for every activity, whether sponsoring the school's Thanksgiving banquet or choosing our class's Bible-based drama or selecting the site for our senior getaway weekend. With his sage counsel, our class won the class-of-the-year honor in 1958.

I praise God that He allowed my life and education to intersect with Dr. Adams. In the years I taught in elementary and mid-school, social studies was always my favorite subject. And I know that love is in large part to the influence of Dr. Homer J. Adams—one of my all-time favorite teachers.

Thank you, Dr. Adams. Thank you for all the years you poured yourself into your students and Trevecca and for your investment in my life. May you now take a deserved rest as you bask in the presence of your Lord and Savior and enjoy your eternal home forever and ever.

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