

## WANDA BAKER, INTERVIEW, 2004

Interview of Wanda Baker about her mother, Ruth Moore, fall of 2004

*Mrs. Baker left the IPHC in 1980. She was never ordained or a pastor; she was the Women's Auxiliary president for several years.*

My mother grew up in Texas. They had a large family and were very poor. They chopped cotton for a living and moved from farm to farm. I don't know if they owned land; they may have just been tenants. They were not religious people; they did not attend church.

When my mother was around seventeen years of age, she attended a brush arbor meeting in Woodville, Oklahoma, located near the Texas line. She received salvation during this meeting. I don't know who held the revival, but she was the only one of the family who got saved. She had nine brothers and sisters and then her parents. She committed all to the Lord and was determined to serve Him even though her family did not.

Soon after her conversion she began preaching. She traveled with Lee Hargis and his wife to hold revival meetings in Oklahoma. She evangelized two women first. Both of their first names were Anna. She said, "I don't know what I said. I knew nothing, not being raised in church or anything, but I guess I said something!" Then, she went to Bible College.

I remember mother telling me once, she was humming, "I will go where you want me to go," and her mother said, "Oh, Ruth, you don't mean that" and she said, "Yes, I do."

She had to leave home but she went to live with her grandfather in southern Texas. And he was the one who paid for her to go to Bible school at King's College in Kingfisher, Oklahoma. Of course, that was affiliated with the PH church.

She met Ed Moore while attending Kings College. By that time she must have been nineteen or twenty. They were married September 14, 1929, while she was in her second year of college at the age of twenty one.

Her parents fully expected her to come back home. They never expected, in fact, her father gave her her first Bible because she was so developed in her faith and so determined, but they just couldn't accept that she wasn't coming back. And, it was probably because of her age that they just couldn't accept that. Yet, all of her family came to totally depend on her for prayer. By going to be with them and praying for them, she led almost every one of them to the Lord.

*When was your mother born?*

She was born on May 20, 1908. She joined the Oklahoma Conference in 1931. My dad was Pentecostal Holiness too. He got saved at a little PH church in Mountain View. My parents lived in Enid, Oklahoma, where my father was employed at Long Bell Lumber Company. All five of us children were both there. Brother Rex, your grandfather, was our pastor. I think Brother Finkenbinder was the first pastor that I vaguely remember.

Mother's first pastorate was a church in Drummond, Oklahoma. She pastored this church until her first child was born in 1931. After they started their family, she felt they were her priority and did not pastor again until 1945.

She was faithful to her church in Enid and held a few revivals. In 1943, we moved to Oklahoma City. My father was employed at the Douglas Aircraft plant and we attended the First Pentecostal Holiness Church. My mother was preaching a revival at this church when World War II ended.

In August of 1945, she was asked to pastor the Central Pentecostal Holiness Church in south Oklahoma City. My mother was the minister and my father was the administrator. They were a good team. During this pastorate my father oversaw the construction of a new church building and parsonage and two other houses which were sold to help finance the church construction. He was an excellent builder and helped in the construction of several churches in the Oklahoma City area. They were at the Central Church five years. Also, under their leadership, a church in Moore, Oklahoma, and one in Del City were established.

Their last pastorate was the Trinity Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma City where they stayed for twenty-five years. After my mother died in 1968, my father continued to pastor until 1984. He said later that he had felt “called” when he was younger, but he felt like he had to make a living for his family. He started preaching when they went to Trinity, but that was not until around ’58 or ’60. My mom did all the preaching up until that time and my dad took care of the business part and the board meetings. It was what my mom wanted because he had expertise in that. It worked well.

Mother and daddy loved the Pentecostal Holiness Church. They loved to go to the general conventions. Daddy was a delegate almost every time. He went as a lay delegate for many years. In 1958, my mother was sent as a delegate to the youth convention in Franklin Springs, Georgia. My husband I went with her. After she arrived, she felt she was too old to be a youth delegate so she asked me to attend the sessions with her.

*Mrs. Baker wanted to respond specifically to the questions I had previously mailed to her asking if her mother had ever had any difficulties as a woman preacher, just because she was a woman.*

She never had a problem with recognition or with needing a role in the church. She did have some challenges because not everybody accepted women preachers. I remember a problem

one time when they were building the church on Central and we were worshipping in a tent. They erected the tent right on the ground and it was a cold winter. The wind went through it although we had an old stove in the middle for heat. We had a revival with Brother Rex in the tent. Well, there was a Church of Christ group who decided to challenge the fact that mother was a preacher because they didn't think she should be. They came and, of course, mother opened the service as the pastor of the church and they came right down on the front row and sat down. The good thing is that Brother Rex was right there ready for them and he just talked to them and took care of the situation. We felt like the Lord worked that out because she didn't have a confrontation with them. Brother Rex knew just what to say. But that's the only confrontation, face to face, that I know that she had.

She was loved by her people. She was not flamboyant. She was very shy, very feminine. She never took on the demeanor of a lot of women that adopted sort of a masculine demeanor. Mother was very shy and was not a conversationalist. She was a wonderful listener. I would call her and we would be on the phone for a long time and she would say very little. She would not say a lot, but she would say enough to let me know she understood. And, as I said, my family, we loved her dearly.

*I asked her what "number her mother was out of the ten siblings that survived.*

She was the fifth one born out of ten children. Her mother had some twins that were still born and then there was another child that didn't live very long. So, there were actually thirteen. *We were talking about my father being poor and I told Mrs. Baker a funny story about my parents early days of marriage which reminded her of the following story:*

My father had a terrible time "catching" mother. Every time he thought he had her, she would write him and say she'd changed her mind. So, my father had found another woman and

was going to ask her to marry him one weekend. My mother called him long distance and told him that she was going to be holding a revival with somebody and thought he would just like to know. So, he knew that she had changed her mind again.

*I asked her if she remembered when her mother got filled with the Holy Spirit.*

She was not married yet so she had to have been seventeen to twenty-one years of age. I think she must have been eighteen or nineteen years old and she went to a camp meeting. One of these “Annas” was there and another lady by the name of Killebrew. She was filled with the Holy Spirit. She was laying in the Spirit all night until the morning. In the morning – it was 5 or 6:00 in the morning and they were getting ready to start because they were going to have a sunrise service, as they did in those days. When they were starting the service, she was filled with the Holy Spirit. And those two women had stayed with her all night; they would tell about it too. I remember Mrs. Killebrew telling about it. My mother was sanctified. She was a great believer in sanctification. In the Pentecostal Message, she has a sermon on sanctification. But that experience did so much for her. And I think that experience and determination helped her keep her commitment to the Lord. Brother Rex’s sermon on holiness helped too.

*Mrs. Baker wanted to respond to a question I had mailed before the interview where I asked about whether her mother considered being a preacher a job.*

She did not regard her work as a job, but as a “calling.” She followed her calling because she felt so strongly in her heart about it. What she preached, she lived and she believed. We were pleased to have a lot of, you know, Brother King, Brother Muse, and a lot of leaders of the church in our home when we were growing up. And mother always felt her position was that she was more comfortable when men were in charge. She felt that women should not usurp

authority over men. She was willing to serve and do what she was called to do, but she really felt that men should have leadership in the church.

My mother was very concerned with world events. She voted; she always voted. It really wasn't just being submissive, that she felt she must be submissive, it was what she preferred. For her, it provided comfort for her. Because she was a leader, she was a minister, but she was not an administrator. Even though she enjoyed preaching, she was not an administrator. That's why she was comfortable in that way.

*I asked her if she thought of "submission" more like "cooperation."*

Well, I know there were a lot of women, especially in the early days of Pentecost, that truly felt depressed and I think that maybe they resented that. But my mother, even though my dad was the head of the family, they talked everything over. If my mother didn't agree, she didn't say so in front of us. But when she had the opportunity with just the two of them, they would talk. They just wanted to do whatever it took to be true Christians.

My dad was not raised in church. His mother died when he was very young. I remember one time my father decided the girls needed to wear cotton stockings because that was what they did in those days. So, mother prayed and she finally asked him about not doing it. And he said, "Okay." She didn't always agree with everything dad did, but she waited until the right time to discuss it with him. So, that was such a wonderful example for us.

When I was talking to my sister, we couldn't remember them ever having a fight. We knew that they had their discussions, but they didn't blow up when we were around. Mother was submissive, but if it was something that she felt that she needed to talk to dad about, she did.

Also, I remember one time when I was young, a preacher came to our house because he was holding revival at our church. We were having lunch and I said, "Remember, Mother, you

are going to cut my hair tonight after church.” Mother always trimmed my hair for me and the preacher said, “You don’t cut your daughter’s hair!” And mother said, “Well, yes, I do!” But you must remember back then that was a big controversy to cut your hair.

One time when she called and we were talking about it, she said, “Wanda, I try to look at things this way. Is it going to hurt their experience with the Lord? If it’s not, then you can’t take everything from them. You try to weigh it that way.” And, that helped me a lot. They were strict, but the things that they felt we could do, they let us do so that we would not have bitter feelings. And none of us do. Even though there were things that we didn’t do, it never hurt me. None of that ever hurt me. It helped me. Even though I don’t live up to all those things, it helped me to make better choices in my Christian life. Mother and Daddy were just wonderful examples to us in every way.

They did not have a “you’re going to do it because I said so” attitude. They had a kinder, gentler attitude. They tried to make life enjoyable for us. I don’t ever remember being unhappy. I was always happy. Even though we didn’t really have a lot at all, I was always happy. They didn’t go to the extreme. Even though Mother didn’t cut her hair, she cut mine. And she gave me perms and all of that. But I did have to wear long sleeves and long socks. But I felt like because they really prayed about things, I think the Lord gave them wisdom and they did the best job they could.

*That is such a great testimony.*