**A RARE AND EXEMPLARY MAN**

The Chico community will pay final respects to one of its leading citizens at 2 p.m. tomorrow when services are held at the Chico Funeral Home for Rev. George Jay Strong.

The 59-year old Negro pastor of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church died early Wednesday as he had lived—in service of his fellow man.

Death came to Rev. Strong (he preferred that simple title to the more formal “The Rev. Mr.” adopted several years ago by wire services and most newspapers) three days after the termination of his annual fast for world peace.

Normally a strapping 200-pounder with hardly an ounce of fat on his hard-working, well-conditioned frame, Rev. Strong weighed 137 pounds at the time of death, testimony to the Spartan determination and solemn fidelity of his 40-day travail.

Although his fasting was perhaps in his mind the least of his efforts on behalf of mankind, the unselfish practice was indeed a clue to his basic character.

For example, at the termination of one of his previous fasts, an E-R staffer asked Rev. Strong if he truly believed his fasting could “make any difference” in the pace of the world’s progress toward peace,

“It might make a difference to God,” he replied simply.

Even so, Rev. Strong was a man of immense cheerfulness and good fellowship. More aware than most of the sorrows of the world, the frictions of the races and the frequent modern setbacks in the realms of ethics and morals, Rev. Strong nevertheless was always the supreme optimist. He believed that by working at the problems, they could be overcome—and he worked tirelessly.

Rev. Strong’s envelope in the E-R clipping file is a bulky one. It records his successive reappointments to pastorship of his local church, of which the congregation as much as the reconstructed century-old edifice was much the product of his own efforts.

The file recalls another fast of a year ago- not for peace that time but for the benefit of a white Chico child who had suffered grievous burns over 40 per cent of her body.

Other clippings pertain to his frequent guest sermons at churches of his own and other denominations throughout this community and as distant as Sacramento and the Bay Area.

Some of the yellowing clippings recall honors and words of praise heaped upon him by superiors of his church, from whom he gratefully accepted reappointments after disdaining promotions.

Other clippings tell of his work with the Salvation Army, the Community Chest, the United Crusade and hosts of other programs.

Down in a bottom corner of the envelope is found a sheaf of two-paragraph items of varying age reporting in sequence and regularity the births of the children of Rev. Strong and his wife, Luella, a total of five daughters and four sons.

But perhaps the most poignant clippings in the file of Rev. Strong deal with the many performances at both church and civic functions throughout the community by members of his family, including religious singing and remarkable Biblical quotations from even the smallest of the tots.

The Strong family was as closely knit as it was large. Undisguised affection was the hallmark, as was obvious from the happy chortling of the youngsters as they scrambled to keep at his heels on the street or overflowed his auto while accompanying him on his daily rounds.

By the material standards which have come to dominate so much of American life today, Rev. Strong was a poor man. His family was poor, and so was his church.

But in the lasting—and surely the more important—categories of integrity, pride, self-respect, affection, service, faith and morality, Rev. Strong was among the wealthiest. So was his family and his church- and the community was the beneficiary.

Rev. Strong will be sorely missed.

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