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HOW THEY ENTERED CANAAN
(A Collection of Holiness Experience Accounts)
Compiled by Duane V. Maxey

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

JOSEPH NICHOLAS SPEAKES (Nazarene)

Rev. Joseph N. Speakes has the distinction of being present at all the Nazarene General Assemblies from 1907 to 1956. He has been a familiar figure as either a delegate or a visitor for fourteen consecutive assemblies. It is doubtful if we have any other person alive with that record. Yes, almost everyone who attends general assemblies knows "Uncle Joe" Speakes.

When the delegates of the East and the West met at Chicago in 1907, Rev. C. W. Ruth, the negotiating evangelist who brought the bodies, together, had also invited the brethren of the Southland (Holiness Church of Christ) to attend the historical event. Among the southern visitors were Revs. C. B. Jernigan, J. D. Scott, James Roberts, S. H. Stafford, Mrs. E. J. Sheeks, Mr. T. J. Shingler, and the only one still living [in 1958], J. N. Speakes. Rev. C. B. Jernigan, leader of the group, testifies as follows:

"There will only be one when we get through. We shall never see two again. This is the biggest live thing we have ever seen. Thank God, holiness is rolling on! We have heard Jesus say, 'You must all be one.' And you can't be one without us, so we are here. This is a big thing, and Texas is not afraid of big things. We are here, and we are here to stay."

At Chicago plans were formulated for an assembly at Pilot Point, Texas, which convened October, 1908. It was at Pilot Point that "the three streams of life met," one from the West, one from the East, and the warm Gulf Stream from the South. Jernigan spoke again, "This, is the greatest day of my life. What we see today, I have hunted for ever since I got the blessing," as he seconded the motion for the union. Several others spoke to the union midst much gladness and joy, especially when the brethren of the South hugged those of the North.

In putting the motion Dr. Bresee stated, "This is an epoch-making time. This is the answer to Christ's prayer, but it is, only the early dawn and we are going forth to victory." The motion for a union was adopted unanimously at 10:40 a.m., October 13, 1908, by a rising vote, amidst great enthusiasm. In fact the burst of holy joy continued for some time, and God poured out His Spirit on the gathering in divine approval.

This historical occasion marks the official birthday of the Church of the Nazarene as a world-wide organization. Today not many are left who were eyewitnesses to that holy assembly, but J. N. Speakes was there. He, with C. B. Jernigan, J. B. Chapman, and many others of like faith, laid important church foundations for future generations.

Rev. Joseph Nicholas Speakes -- "Man of Perfect Attendance" -- is often referred to as the "witty Irishman from Arkansas." He was born in the "Bible belt" of that great state on January 12, 1879. The Speakes family came to America before the Revolutionary War and some of them fought for America's freedom. Other members fought in the Civil War and in the first and second world wars. Joe Speakes was, no less a soldier, but of a different type. He was, called of God to fight in a holy war, promoting holiness against much opposition.

In the glow of an old-fashioned Methodist revival young Joe was converted at the age of twelve. He began preaching at fifteen, and by the time he was eighteen he was conducting revival meetings. Also he taught school, but the divine urge guided his path to the pulpit. Then under the scholarly ministry of Evangelist Will Huff, Speakes was sanctified at the Main Springs Camp Meeting, located near Prescott, Arkansas. His first eleven years in the ministry were spent with the Southern Methodist church, mostly on circuits in Tennessee, Arkansas, and Texas.

Source: "Our Pioneer Nazarenes" by C. T. Corbett

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