



Otis Howard Payne

August 24, 1927 - August 8, 2020

Otis Howard Payne was born August 24, 1927, in Brownwood Texas, to Ernest Leonard and Lilla Azalene Payne. Leonard was a barber and Azalene was a housewife. Leonard drove a Model T Ford. Otis was an only child. His first seventeen years were difficult years. His father was a compulsive gambler and alcoholic which led to a broken home. Although Azalene came to Christ at an early age, those difficult years of marriage tested her faith. At two years old, Otis and his mother moved on their own to San Pedro California from Texas. She became a beautician (hair dresser) and seamstress to keep the shattered family afloat. Otis remembered the earthquake of 1933, the swings at school, listening to music on old RCA record players, and eating the heart out of watermelon (which he loved). They then moved to Harbor City, California where Leonard found Azalene and tentatively reunited only to later part again. At seven, Otis and his mother moved to Burbank where Otis's memory was of spending most of his early life fatherless with many hours spent in the movie theater or roller skating rink. At nine, Otis survived being hit by a car when he was knocked unconscious and drug half a block. Azalene placed Otis in a military academy and then in McKinley Boys Home in Van Nuys, which never was a good substitute for a good father.


During this time Otis began to work for Columbia Movie Studios and was given a supporting role in Jimmy Stewart's movie, "Mr. Smith Goes To Washington." He has pointed out to us the crowd scenes where he was in the

background. He was paid ten cents an hour and given all the food he could eat. During this time Azalene paid for Otis to get voice and dance lessons, hoping he would become a movie star. Leonard and Azalene split again after which she remarried several times to other men. These bad stepfathers provided cigarettes and whiskey to Otis during his early teen years. Toward the end of Otis's teen years, Leonard trusted Christ and his life changed. Leonard died in 1968 having been married to Azalene three times.

During the war In 1942, Otis helped one of his stepfathers turn off streetlights when sirens would signal air raid blackouts. Otis remembered at seventeen thinking he was a man because he could hold his liquor, smoke two packs of cigarettes a day, and use every word of profanity proving his "manhood." Otis remembered the very day Pearl Harbor was attacked. That was the moment he decided he wanted to join the military and fight for America's freedom.

Otis was seventeen years old when he enlisted in the Navy in 1944 to serve our country during World War II. He was stationed on several ships in the Pacific theater, including the cargo ship USS Vega, and three destroyers, the USS Barton, the USS Mervine, and the USS Perry. Otis served from 1944-1948. His initial boot camp company was trained to be the helmsmen on landing boats taking Marines to shore during Okinawa. By the grace of God, he came down with scarlet fever on his way to San Francisco for his naval assignment. Many of his boot camp buddies were killed in that tour of duty. When Otis regained his health he was assigned to the USS Vega. One of his jobs was to watch for Japanese subs during the night. Otis was also responsible for catching the 5" gun hot shells as they fired. He had several near misses from Japanese torpedoes or kamikaze attacks. Otis recounted one episode when a Japanese kamikaze pilot flew so close to the ship, Otis could see his goggles before he crashed into the sea.

Otis's seventy-five years of ministry started with his spiritual new birth on May

18, 1945 while in the Navy on board the USS Vega. Otis was sitting on the gun mount looking out over the sunset, he overheard two sailors talking about how to be forgiven of their sins and how to have assurance of going to heaven at death. One sailor was not interested and left, so Otis approached the other individual named Claude Rumfield, who was part of the Navigators, a Christian ministry to sailors. Claude could tell Otis was listening to the first conversation and was under conviction for his need for Christ so he shared Christ with Otis instead. Otis trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and immediately his life changed. Claude asked him was there anything that might hinder his new life in Christ. Otis said he had a habit of smoking cigarettes. Claude went to his bunk and told Otis to follow him. He took the whole locker full of recently bought cigarettes and walked with Otis to the rail and dumped them all overboard. From Otis' point of faith, his life was different. His language, his drinking, his desires  everything changed for good. Just after this event, he had been given a pack of cigarettes from a friend in one hand and had his new Bible in the other. He knew if he was going to light up the cigarette, he would have to put down his Bible, but if he was going to read his Bible, he would have to toss the cigarettes, so he tossed the cigarettes and never smoked again or even had the desire to do so.

Later, after his conversion, he became the Captain's yeoman (secretary) which allowed him to have a small office which he could do evangelism and discipleship. Otis was in charge of the ship's library. He was also the chaplain's assistant. Armed with a transformed life and hundreds of memorized verses of Scripture under the ministry of the Navigators, evangelism on board ship became Otis's lifestyle to sow the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

After Otis returned from the Corona Naval Hospital after a long year with rheumatic fever in 1947, the first person he wanted to see under the cross of

Jesus Christ was his real father. His greatest desire was to see his dad saved. That first meeting in his apartment began by sobering Leonard up with coffee and a cold shower, and he began to read the Bible to him and share special verses, particularly in the New Testament in reference to becoming a believer and follower of Jesus. Thirteen years later, in 1958, Leonard professed his faith in Jesus Christ, and he never drank again.

Otis met Priscilla at First Baptist Church of Van Nuys where he was asked to share his personal testimony of how Jesus Christ had changed his life while he was in the Navy. Priscilla heard his testimony and asked if he would share it to the college group where she was president. He did so and that began a three-year dating relationship with her. He related seeing this beautiful blonde gal running across the street to speak to him. It was love at first sight. They were married August 19, 1949. Otis attended Biola College for one year, during which time he sang with the Biola Men's Quartet, and was a voice on the Biola radio hour. He served as a youth pastor at First Baptist Church of Van Nuys for one year and then started a new church in Sepulveda. Otis is a graduate of Wheaton College with a Bachelor of Arts in Ministry and a graduate of Fuller Seminary in 1962 with a Bachelor of Divinity (M. Div.). He also led the music and soloist for Kenny Poure at Hume Lake Christian Camp during summer adult conferences.

Otis pastored five churches including First Baptist of Sepulveda, Lynwood First Baptist, and Immanuel Baptist Church of Pasadena.

Otis worked for various non-profit organizations including working with John Haggai's evangelistic crusades, working with Ted Engstrom for World Vision as Director of Development, and African Enterprise.

Otis was the founder of Christian Pilots Association (CPA) and Mercy Airlift, which are mission organizations using Christians who are pilots, to fly for

disaster relief and present the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "Flying for Jesus and human need" is the motto. Otis obtained his private pilot license and flew many trips for CPA. His most noted relief works were with Guatemala (1976) after their devastating earthquake, Ethiopia famine relief, supporting Baja California orphanages, and the Uganda measles immunization assistance program. He started 40 affiliate chapters (called "wings") in 30 years and connected over 1000 Christian pilots who moved over ten million pounds of supplies to people in need around the world. One of their most significant wings was the Hawthorne Disaster Wing of CPA led by Nick Spaise. In 2002, Otis resigned and turned the reigns over to Andy Pike as CPA and Mercy Airlift's present successor. Otis served these two mission organizations for over 30 years.

Otis was a Lt. Colonel for Civil Air Patrol (a voluntary auxiliary of the USAF) Squadron 64 where he served as Chaplain (1996-2014).

Otis is an author of three books including *The Catholic Dilemma*, a Greek exegesis of Matthew 16:18. Otis also enjoyed teaching a beginner Greek class at a local church.

Otis is survived by his wife Priscilla Jane Payne. He was 92 years old, just two weeks short of his 93rd birthday. He and Priscilla would have celebrated their 71st anniversary August 19, 2020. Otis has two sons, Dale (Linda) Payne of Visalia, CA and Glen (Denise) Payne of Corona, CA. Otis has seven grandchildren: Jonathan (Ashley) Payne, Jennifer (Jaden) Friesen, Joshua Payne, Julieann Payne, James Payne, Jeremiah Payne, and Caleb Payne. He also has two great grandchildren: Ayton Friesen and Brylee Friesen. Otis and Priscilla have lived in Van Nuys, West Covina, and currently in Visalia, CA.

"Only one life,  will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last."

Tributes and condolences may be offered by logging onto www.salseranddillard.com.

Previous Events

Graveside

AUG **20**. 1:15 PM - 1:45 PM (PT)

Bakersfield National Cemetery
30338 E. Bear Mtn. Blvd.
Arvin, CA 93203

Tribute Wall



“ 10 files added to the album *Memories Album* ”



Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel - August 17, 2020 at 11:31 AM