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A Heart For The World

A tribute to the late
Dr. John C. Wengatz

by Chancellor Milo A. Rediger

Early Thursday morning, March 10, 1977, John C. Wengatz '09 went home to be with the Lord. For those of us who knew John and Helen Wengatz through many years, this was both a sorrow and a joy. We miss hearing Uncle John's booming voice addressing God in prayer as if two close friends were having conversation. We miss his big, firm handshake, and even his embrace.

But who would not rejoice in the ninety-six years of humble, devoted, and fruitful ministry of this great man of God. He still shared his inspiration with us through a memorial service in the Taylor Chapel/Auditorium on Friday, April 1. There we shared the tribute that was prepared and delivered by the minister of the First United Methodist Church of Winter Park, Florida, Dr. C. Philip Torrance, Uncle John and Aunt Helen's pastor.

In it, Dr. Torrance summarized the work and ministry of John Wengatz with the words, "He was all hands and heart; beautiful, strong, large, creative, loving hands, and a heart big enough to hold the whole world."

Dr. Wengatz held the bachelors and master of theology degrees from Taylor University, as well as an honorary D.D. degree, conferred in 1932. He also earned a degree in dental surgery during

a furlough from the mission field in Africa. His time in Africa totals forty-two years, in Liberia, Angola, and the Congo. Records show a total of 44,000 carefully screened and baptized converts. Uncle John would never have boasted of this; his attitude was always one of prayer and praise, but not pride.

In the context of this broad ministry, the special interest of Dr. and Mrs. Wengatz was always the people and campus of Taylor University. Their contributions include financial gifts and many items of missionary interest that are on display in the corridors of Taylor buildings. (Some were lost with the Walker museum in the 1960 fire.)

But the greatest contribution was one that cannot be quantitatively measured or expressed. It was inspirational and spiritual—caring and praying for the University and all of its students and friends.

Uncle John's great and good life is memorialized in the naming of the first of fourteen buildings that represent the new Taylor. Wengatz Hall was dedicated in October of 1965. Also, the mace which is carried at the head of every academic procession is the walking stick that Dr. Wengatz cut from, and used in penetrating, the African jungle as a pioneer missionary.

He will have a continuing presence on the campus of Taylor University, and many Taylor friends remember him with reverence and appreciation.