All About . . .

The Leeds Memorial Indian Station

Compiled by
Kathryn S. Johnson
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THE LEEDS MEMORIAL INDIAN STATION

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INTRODUCTION

As far back as anyone can go in the memory of man, there have been Indians and珺et forests in Louisiana, both are still here, but in forms altered by civilization.

Of the several groups of Indians remaining in Louisiana, only the Koaatla—often designated Cuscaltrim—are considered pure-blooded. In their community near Elkton, this group is trying to preserve their social integrity and the distinctive heritage of which they are proud. There are still the old ones who remember when virgin pines covered Louisiana’s coastal plain. The forests were then virtually free of any kind of growth, the hunter could see hundreds of wild turkeys, and other game could be easily killed. Turkey and other game were a regular diet.

And the memory of the pioneer preacher is eternally green in the hearts of the Koaatla, who say, "We remember that he loved us." After the death of Paul Leeds in 1933, a well-known preacher, one of the Indian men whom Brother Leeds led to the Lord, tried to express his affection for this man in these words: "When they told me he was gone, I felt like both my arms were cut off. We didn’t know how we could get along without him."

Then the Lord led one of Brother Leeds’s protégés, Wanda Kunit Johnson, and her husband, the Reverend Donald K. Johnson, to live and work with the Indians, and so the Leeds Memorial Indian Mission was established. In memory of the man who took God’s Word to the Indians, the son who ministered to them from the 5th Presbyterian Church on Beyou Road for fifty-seven years, the Indian Mission was established in memory of the man who took God’s Word to the Indians, the son who ministered to them from the 5th Presbyterian Church on Beyou Road for fifty-seven years. He acted as advisor in many affairs outside the normal business of the church.

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Of the several groups of Indians remaining in Louisiana, only the Koasatis—often designated Coushattas—are considered pure-blooded. In their community near Elton, this group is trying to preserve their racial integrity and the distinctive heritage of which they are proud. There are still the old ones who remember when virgin pines covered Louisiana’s coastal plain. The forests were then virtually free of scruffy undergrowth; the hunter could see hundreds of yards through the trees, so that he could easily kill deer, turkey, and other game for food.

So it was when Paul Leeds came as a young missionary to Southwest Louisiana—and to the Indians on Bayou Blue. He looked up, literally and figuratively. A hundred feet above, the green tops of the virgin pines moved lazily against the blue heavens. And now, although the second growth trees are not as tall as the virgin pines that stood here at the close of the nineteenth century, the wind still sings unforgettably through their eternal greenness.

And the memory of the pioneer preacher is eternally green in the hearts of the Koasatis, who say, “We remember that he loved us.” After the death of Paul Leeds in 1958, Solomon Battise, one of the Indian men whom Brother Leeds led to the Lord, tried to express his sense of loss in these words: “When they told me he was gone, I felt like both my arms were cut off. We didn’t know how we could get along without him.”

Then the Lord sent one of Brother Leeds’s protegés, Wanda Kuntz Johnson, and her husband, the Reverend Donald K. Johnson, to live and work with the Indians. And so the Leeds Memorial Indian Station was established in memory of the man who took God’s Word to the forgotten tribe, and who ministered to them from the St. Peter’s Congregational Church on Bayou Blue for fifty-seven years. He acted as advisor in many affairs outside the actual business of the church.

From the time of the organization of a Congregational church in 1901 until the death of Brother
Leeds in 1958, the work followed much the same pattern: Brother Leeds gave the second Sunday of each month to an all-day service with the Indians, who spent the day at the church. Each family had a favorite place under the pines for eating a picnic lunch. Following the afternoon worship service, everyone went home.

The Indians carried on the work on the other three Sundays of each month.

An important phase of the work has always been the Daily Vacation Bible School held for two weeks each summer, with evangelistic services each evening.

Now the church is under the full-time care of the Reverend Johnson, and functions as a unit in the Leeds Memorial institution, which includes an elementary school. The mission operates under Bible Conferences and Missions, Incorporated. This non-denominational organization was founded by another Leeds trainee, the Reverend William Seth Baggett, who is now executive secretary. Headquarters are at Camp Pearl, about six miles from Reeves, Louisiana.

The school for the Indian children offers kindergarten through the fourth grade; it is recognized and accredited by the Allen Parish School Board, but is not supported by tax money. Pupils from the mission school are readily accepted in the public schools. Formerly these children were often unable to do good work because of language difficulties; Koasati is spoken in the homes, and the children know very little English when they start to school. Working intensively with small groups in a sympathetic atmosphere, the teachers in the mission school are able to help each individual master English and achieve maximum progress.

The staff consists of Mrs. Don Johnson, principal and teacher of the third and fourth grades; Miss Rose Vilardi, teacher of kindergarten, first, and second grades; Mrs. Rosabel Sylestine and Mrs. Madeline Celestine, lunchroom workers. Mrs. Paul Leeds serves as dietitian, making out the menus and helping the cooks in the preparation of unfamiliar dishes. Miss Ethel Green, office secretary of Bible Conferences and Missions, gives piano lessons each Monday afternoon and evening; from twelve to sixteen young Indians welcome this opportunity to learn music at nominal cost.

Because of the low income of most of the Koasati families, the group cannot fully support the pastor nor the school staff, so Bible Conferences and Missions maintains the work by means of free-will offerings and pledges.

There is a parsonage on the rather extensive grounds of the mission, and plenty of play area for the games which the Indians enjoy playing together on holidays and other special occasions. Christmas and Easter are two of the most cherished times for getting together and playing and fellowshipping all day, with church services -- usually morning, afternoon, and evening sessions. The people especially enjoy singing; they have a song leader and a number of groups that sing special numbers.

The social life and the language are two of the many cohesive factors that bind these people together. They are independent in every sense of the word; they own their land and homes, never having been given a reservation. They secured their land from the Federal government under a special act of Congress providing for a type of homesteading. According to this act, any person buying or securing from an Indian any land, timber or appurtenance thereof should not only lose the property thus purchased, but also the money so paid.

The Koasati settlement covers about 1,100 acres, beginning some three and a half miles northwest of Elton. Most of the land in an area covering about sixteen square miles is owned by individual Indians; a few plots are jointly held by heirs of the original owners. Each family plot is small, often only one or two acres, due to the repeated breaking up of larger units so that heirs each get a share; then, too, at marriage, a youth may be given a small homesite.

Their homes are simple and unpretentious, usually frame buildings with tin roofs. Few are painted; fewer still have modern conveniences such as a bathroom. Almost all have electricity, and many use natural gas.

Most of the men work as day laborers; on construction work, for nearby rice farmers, on the highways, in sawmills, or in the woods getting out pulpwood and other timber. Few year around jobs are available near the home community, therefore many young people must leave in order to find employment. Comparatively few have finished high school, although this pattern is changing now that language handicaps can be overcome as the children learn English under favorable conditions in the mission school.
Many family incomes are supplemented by the sale of baskets made by the women, but this is seldom a major source of money, since there is no constant outlet for these items. The work is also comparatively slow. The method used in this pine needle craft is known as coiling. Baskets are shaped like various animals such as the turkey, the pig, the alligator, and many others. Purses, flower baskets for vases, French bread baskets, pie plates, and other containers are also made for sale. These are marketed through clubs taking active interest in the work of the mission, through individuals who visit the area, and through displays at the annual fairs where the Indians maintain booths each autumn.

Some old customs cease to exist as these people adopt the white man's way of life, but there is still an evident spirit of cooperation. The group works to meet the needs of any one member. In sickness and death this tribal feeling is seen in the sharing of burdens and sorrows, so that the Christian precept, "Bear ye one another's burdens," is truly observed.

Marriage outside the tribe is discouraged, and seldom occurs. However, interrelationships are now making it rather difficult for a young Koasati to find a mate who is not too closely related. Many go to the Alabama-Coushatta community near Livingston, Texas; others have gone as far as the Indian communities in Oklahoma before finding a husband or a wife.

Tribal government does not follow the traditional pattern, since the Indians realize that they must live under the white man's government. They are citizens of the state, with all the privileges and responsibilities entailed. Before the twentieth century, the members of the tribe elected the chief; there is no longer a tribal chief with authority, although a nominal head usually poses in the traditionally colorful role. Most of the Koasati tend to follow the advice of one who proves himself capable of leadership.

These people have never been wards of the government; however, some official attention has been given to them. The Bureau of Indian Affairs operated a day school for them from 1942 to 1948, working through the Choctaw Indian Agency located in Philadelphia, Mississippi. This Agency was established by the United States government in 1918 to care for Indians in Mississippi and Louisiana. It no longer provides any services for the Koasati group.

Numerous attempts have been made to better the lot of these people. For example, the Coushatta Indian Cooperative Association, chartered in 1942, had as its purpose "...to rehabilitate and render self-supporting the families of its members by assisting in establishing, leasing, development, and maintenance of farms, homes, and other facilities and enterprises." The membership of this organization was made up of one member of eighteen or over of any family engaged in agriculture, living in Allen Parish, and approved by the Board of Directors, which was a body of five directors elected by the members of the Association for three-year terms of office.

The mission is a growing force in the lives of some 200 members of this unique tribe of Indians whose history has intrigued countless individuals who have tried to capture the romance in newspaper stories and other publications. No writer has yet equalled the short history of the Koasati Indians which was written by Brother Leeds, and was given by him to those who came to him for information. His story, titled "A Long Trail to Christ" has been revised to form the main part of this booklet, which is designed to answer questions most frequently asked about the work, the workers, and the people to whom the Leeds Memorial Indian Station ministers.
The story of the Indians near Elton, Louisiana, is full of pathos, as we think of their wandering and waiting for centuries for the Word of Life. But it also gives us great joy to know that this long waiting was rewarded in due time, for the Gospel in all its transforming power was brought to them at last.

In 1540, eighty years before our Pilgrim fathers sailed from Delfshaven and Southampton to land later on Plymouth Rock, DeSoto traveled through the southern part of this country and found many tribes of Indians. In a confederacy of tribes known as the Upper Creeks (because they dwelt along creeks on the upper waters of the Tom Bigbee, Alabama, and Chattahoochee rivers) was a composite tribe called the Muskogean or Muscogee, in which were united the Alibamu, the Natchez, and Atakapa, the Koasati or Quasati, and others. This tribe held a tradition that their ancestors came from the northwest, likely from the headwaters of the Red River in the present state of Oklahoma, out to Alabama where DeSoto found them.

The Koasatis, or Coosadas (still another spelling used) were first discovered on the Coosa near its juncture with the Alabama River, in central Alabama. It is quite possible that they took their name from, or gave it to, this Coosa River, for it has no meaning or significance otherwise.

In that early day they probably numbered about two thousand in all. From the Coosa River they gradually drifted westward; about 1800 approximately one thousand of them crossed the Mississippi into Louisiana, where some stopped, while others went on into Texas. Those who remained in Alabama were deported to Indian Territory during the general relocation of Indians in 1838.

From the Red River in Oklahoma to the Coosa in Alabama, and back to the Calcasieu River in Louisiana, was a "long, long trail a-winding" through many places; from 1540 to 1893 was a longer trail through time. But the longest, saddest trail of all was their trail of spiritual night, from their original condition in heathen darkness and sin, winding past and always away from many missions, never being evangelized; retreating before the white man, robbed and deceived, constantly diminishing in numbers,
living and dying in hopelessness for so long before being reached by the Gospel of the new life in Christ.

In 1544, a hundred years before John Elliot began work among the Indians near Boston and Thomas Mayhew labored in Martha’s Vineyard, the Spanish Franciscan fathers went out to the Texas Indians. Intermittently, for a hundred and fifty years, devoted Catholic missionaries labored along the coast from Texas to Florida, but apparently never went far enough north to reach the Koasatis. By 1609 the French had settled in Louisiana, and their priests attempted to work among the tribes then here: Tensas, Natchez, Houmas, and others. Success was small. Then Spain came into possession of Louisiana, and in 1764 all Jesuits were banished by royal decree.

Since the Koasatis did not reach this section until the nineteenth century, they were not affected by these early missionary efforts.

In 1817 the Congregational Board of Foreign Missions sent Cyrus Kingsbury and others to Tennessee, beginning a campaign that bid fair to evangelize all the tribes to the Gulf of Mexico. During the next fifteen years splendid work was done by the men of the Board who carried the work down into the northern part of Mississippi and Georgia, ministering to several tribes, including the Creeks, among whom there were likely some Koasatis who were carried afterwards into Indian Territory. But since the Louisiana group had moved twenty years before Kingsbury reached Tennessee, none of them were touched.

In 1831, when the government began deporting the tribes to their new home, two devoted missionaries, Mr. Worcester and Dr. Butler, were thrown into prison for fifteen months for refusing to stop working with the Indians. Thus were their plans thwarted; fifteen years of labor, and mission property valued at sixty thousand dollars, were rendered useless and undenominated. After the discouraging end to their efforts in that section, the American Board missionaries followed their Indians west into Arkansas and Indian Territory, far from the Calcasieu River; so again the Louisiana group failed to hear the Gospel of free salvation.

About this time Protestant preachers began coming through this region planting churches, but apparently none ministered to the Indians. Settlers took up the land, crowding the Indians back; by 1893 hardly more than 300 were left, hidden in the piney woods and long the bayous of Old Imperial Calcasieu Parish, living in practically the same spiritual darkness of their long past. Careful investigation of every available historical source and close questioning of the oldest whites and Indians failed to reveal any evidence that this group had ever had the Gospel presented to them.

Like Evangeline and Gabriel these Koasati and the missionaries passed time and again almost within hailing distance of each other; yet for three hundred and fifty hopeless years, these Indians received no Christian doctrines, practices, enlightenment, nor even traditions. Their only religion was a vague and unproductive superstition or fear that could hardly be called reverence, for the unknown Spirit whom they called “Mink-co Chitto,” the Great Chief, or “Aba Chacoli,” He who resides above. Old settlers told many stories revealing how near to barbarism these Indians lived, even after the Civil War. Idleness, drunkenness, aimlessness, and poverty marked their daily lives, indicating no knowledge of God or His saving grace.

Small bark-roofed huts were their homes, game, corn, and wild fruits in season made up their diet; liquor-drinking, wild dancing, and playing a crude form of racquet ball provided their usual pastimes.

There is no evidence that the Koasati tribe was ever treacherous or war-like, or ever participated in massacre of the whites. Their women were usually chaste and faithful to their husbands. They were generally a harmless, peaceful folk.

A long time elapsed between 1833, when our missionaries turned westward following their Indians, and 1893, when the Gospel was finally given to the Koasatis; God’s Spirit must have called to many of His servants, and Divine Opportunity knocked at many mission doors in the meantime.

In July, 1893, Dr. C. I. Scofield, then Home Mission Superintendent for the Congregational Church for Texas and Louisiana, sent a young man from his congregation to supply the church at Jennings, Louisiana, for a brief period, and then return to prepare for mission work in Central America under the mission board founded under God by Dr. Scofield and his church in Dallas. But it seemed God’s plan to leave these Indians no longer in darkness, but to evangelize them; for this man found his way into the piney woods where the Indians
lived, and soon began work among them. As in all of God's doings, prayer played the most prominent part in this work.

Picture two men of God in a Georgia prison weeping out their intercessions for a people they longed to reach -- unknown but sought for. Then think of a young mother and her bridesmaid bending in prayer over a cradle, dedicating a babe to God for His service; the same bridesmaid, twenty years later in Dallas, finding and leading this babegrown-up to her church where he was converted and moved to dedicate his life to missions. Now, visualize this young preacher hearing of the Koasati Indians while serving the church in Jennings, and praying for them with no intention of going to them, yet soon finding himself among them -- all unintentionally, not realizing at first that they were the ones he had prayed God to save.

The first meeting with two intoxicated Indians on the road near Kinder would seem to have been fruitless, but in a few minutes seed was sown that bore abundant fruit. Rebuking them for drunkenness, reading a brief portion of God's Holy Word, which they did not apparently understand very well, and finally persuading them to kneel with him in the road in prayer that the Holy Spirit would use the Word according to the promise (My Word shall not return unto me void), the young preacher watched the Indians go on their way; for a few months he kept their names before the Mercy Seat, then he forgot them. About ten years later one of them who was serving as a deacon of the new Indian church asked the missionary, "Do you remember the first time you ever saw me?" The missionary said, "No." Then the Indian told how, after that roadway meeting, he and his companion had gone on toward their intended destination, the saloon, for more drink; but on the way something told him not to drink any more, and he gave up drink then and there. He had soon become interested in the Gospel, and was apparently God's key man to open the door unto his people, as Peter "opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles;" for he did more to interest his fellow Indians in the Gospel and promote the building of the first house of worship, than did any other. While the old tribal relationships were no longer in full force, even at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, yet this man was a direct descendant of the last chief, and was virtually Koasati chief.

The early ministry was personal. The missionary would meet with them on the road or by the river, and would talk. He would visit their cabins, taking fruit or medicine to the sick, singing Gospel songs and reading the Word; thus he formed acquaintances and established confidence which inclined some of them to slip up quietly to the services held in the river swamp, stand behind trees and listen reverently for a brief period, then as quietly slip away, almost unnoticed.

These quiet visits to the white services awakened in the Indians a desire for their own services; so about seven years after that first encounter on the road, they asked for a service at a small building where they had an occasional session of school in their settlement on Bayou Blue. At this first meeting about forty were present, and a number of them professed to receive Christ as Saviour -- among them, the chief and his family. This first service, in March of 1901, was followed soon by another; immediately, without any urging from the missionary, the Indians began building a house of worship. By September it was completed, and they called for the missionary to come out to dedicate the house to the Lord and to baptize a number of believers. Close questioning indicated that twenty-eight were sufficiently clear in simple Gospel truth and were sufficiently earnest, as evidenced by their changed lives, to justify baptism, which was given. Thus St. Peters Church on Bayou Blue was begun.

A Sunday School was organized and was taught for some time by a few white friends; after a few years, the Indians began teaching the Scriptures, and eventually filled all positions. This work has continued without interruption. From 1901 regular preaching services have been held at monthly intervals, with two weeks each summer devoted to evangelistic meetings, Bible study, and singing lessons.

In 1915 Mr. L. L. Simmons, a white man, came to teach public school for these people. He was a faithful, intelligent Christian; for more than twenty years he remained, not only teaching school, but working with them in all matters pertaining to their advancement in right ways. He taught music, assisted when necessary in all church and Sunday School affairs, and proved most helpful in the work. Mr. Simmons was preceeded by Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Ensigh, who were valuable helpers for two years.
An evangelistic spirit seemed to control the Koasatis from the beginning; many of them led their fellow Indians into the faith by personal contacts. They learned to conduct their own services, and like the Pilgrim Fathers, they carry their church with them and establish worship wherever they go. A part of the group moved to a logging camp about twenty miles from Bayou Blue; they soon had a small house built for their Sunday School and occasional preaching services. They maintained this local church at Bel for the few years of their stay, and received several members on profession of faith — largely the result of their own labors.

One of the early converts was Mark Robinson, a young man of the chieftan family on his mother’s side. Bright, devoted, and a natural leader, he soon became a pillar in the church. Carrying a New Testament with him while at work, he made a habit of asking anyone who would to help him read at odd moments of leisure; he made every casual meeting an occasion to gain more light. Thus he became rather proficient in reading and understanding the Word. He soon became an interpreter, and until his death in February of 1934, he interpreted for speakers most efficiently. He was elected deacon, and in 1920 was licensed to preach and minister to his people; not content to minister at home only, he soon found a group of Indians of another tribe some fifty miles away, to whom he went at his own expense, walking fifteen miles of the distance, to give them the Gospel that had so lifted his own people.

In 1935 the census gave 161 Indians in Allen Parish, and about 100 of other tribes in four nearby parishes. Most of these others are of the Tunica and Choctaw tribes, who have had little or no religious instruction. The life of these folk is close to Christian Communism; they help one another when unusual needs arise and in time of distress, supplying burial materials when death comes, and truly “bearing one another’s burdens.” Gradually they have improved their living conditions, building better homes and making heroic efforts to give their children more education. They read and sing at social as well as religious gatherings. Their determination to forget the things which are behind and press on to those things which are before was manifest at one time when a recreational promoter wanted them to have part in a pageant by putting on their old dances; they refused promptly, saying that the Gospel had led them into better ways and they did not wish to go back to those dark old customs, and bring to the new generation the things which Christ had put away from them, which were now but sorrowful memories. Several of the young people have graduated from Elton High School, which is a few miles from the Indian church. One widow cut wood in the forest like a man in order to keep four children in school; one of them graduated from high school with a good record. Many who have moved away from the mother church, to Texas and Oklahoma, return on every possible occasion. One girl came from Oklahoma with her mother to attend a summer meeting, made a profession of faith, and united where her mother, father, brothers, and grandmother had all been members.

At present, in this spring of 1938, the church has about eighty members; nearly three hundred have responded to the Gospel since that first service in March, 1901. When the first house of worship, erected in 1901, became unfit for use, a new one was built, using part of the old building, material from the school house at Edna and from one of the country churches in the Kinder Larger Parish (these two were purchased), and some new material bought with money that the Indians had saved for this purpose over many years.

How much longer the Koasati people will travel this trail till their Lord returns, we do not know; but we trust Him to keep them in the way of life and righteousness to the “End of the Trail” — not with head hanging in utter weariness and despair as in the tragic painting, but with uplifted head and a glad shout of welcome as this new trail shall end in eternal glory with Him.

“Even so come, Lord Jesus.”
SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

Brother Leeds would be delighted to add to his article, "A Long Trail to Christ," regarding our Indians being contacted with the Gospel, and the progress they have made since being confronted with the message of good news. More are coming for Christian marriage, and bringing their children for dedication, than ever before. It is heartening to see them bring their Bibles to church, as well as reading them more. To me, the apex of delight is to observe them living by its principles. All of our folks, even the grandparents, are demonstrating a desire to associate with other Christians. A greater number of our young people are attending summer camp, in addition to attending young people's rallies. The older believers are training the children and young people to help conduct various aspects of the church service, such as leading the responsive reading, offering prayer, or taking up the offering.

It has been their custom to settle near water; so when they came to Louisiana they stopped along the Calcasieu river, (which means "crying eagle") in what is now known as Indian Village, west of Kinder. As often happened, the white man took their land and they had to move. In the late 1800's they homesteaded along Bayou Blue, three miles north of Elton, where they now live.

Of the forty-five family units, which amounts to about two-hundred individuals our folks make their living by cutting pulpwood; working on farms; working in gas stations; and a few labor in Paint and Body shops. Since their incomes are meager, the women help by making attractive pine-needle baskets, and a few of cane.

We have a private school through fourth grade, which is sustained by donations from interested churches and individuals. In 1962 we instituted an "adoption program" so that a person can send a dollar or more a month to buy school supplies for a pupil. Some send birthday and Christmas gifts, through us, to the child they adopted. We encourage folks to visit with that child, so they can pray more intelligently for that one; all of which helps our students to do better school work. Their language is not written; very seldom is anything else spoken in the home. They learn enough English in kindergarten so they will not have to learn that, as well as the subject matter.
This tribe is considered to be the only pure blood Indians in Louisiana. Before Social Security, Welfare benefits, and establishing ownership of land came in with the white man's law, these folks did not bother to be legally married. When a young man and lady walked together through the woods and did not come home that night, in the eyes of the tribe they were married. The women have been, and are, intensely loyal to their husbands. Usually they live with the man's family until they can build their own home. We still have a few old bachelors. This solid and respected idea of being a bachelor must have started with our folks before white men came. The girls usually are in their late teens, while the men are close to thirty before they marry. Some of the men are marrying younger, since there are more jobs available than ever before.

Now they live much as we do, with regards to houses, food, clothing, automobiles, using doctors, dentists and hospitals. Because of the pressures of modern life and the Indian's desire to adapt, we are seeing movement toward the white man's way of life. Since the Leeds Memorial Indian Station is the social, spiritual and educational center, you can readily see that it affects each of the families in varying degrees.

Donald K. Johnson

A TEACHER’S TESTIMONY

"Wherefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new preacher," said one of the first grade girls, quoting a memory verse. I did not correct her, because, while it is true that we are new CREATURES in Christ, I couldn't help but think of the number of our Indian children who are new PREACHERS in Christ, also.

The highlight of our work among the Koasati children is the joy of presenting God's Word and seeing it change lives where nothing else will. It is remarkable to see the effect that the daily teaching of Biblical truth has upon the little ones who, though they love school and try very hard in all of their subjects, still love the Bible the best.

Rose Vilardi
I thank my God upon every remembrance of Brother Leeds and his steadfastness of faith. I remember a living saint who was wonderfully kind-hearted, friendly, courageous, unselfish -- always with a friendly smile. I am certain that this was because of the very power of God working through him by the Holy Spirit. His life was an example of Christ, walking before men.

He has been an inspiration to my people.

In my childhood, I have known him to share his last dollar with the poor and unfortunate. I have known him to buy provisions and then wade through the mud for three or four miles carrying them to the homes of the needy.

In those days there were many people who had no respect for religion, much less neighborliness. I did not fully understand the importance of religion then; it was hard to comprehend, due to the fact that I was brought up in Indian ways, speaking my own native tongue.

I felt that I had to leave my home town in order to better myself. When I look back now, I can understand how hard it is for an Indian to adjust himself to the way of the white man. Brother Leeds set an example before me with his influential life. He also planted the little seeds in my heart to love and serve God.

My words of tribute would not be complete without mentioning Mrs. Leeds. She was truly a helpmate for him, with capability of loving and understanding and sharing in his ministry.

May we all strive to keep the commandments, and the Lord will bless us in our work. May He bless each of you with a desire to follow in the path of righteousness.

This is the way I remember Brother Leeds.

Lydia Robinson Snead, R.N.
Box 154
Talihina, Oklahoma
January 9, 1966