

CHURCHES IN BAXTER

By Jerry Tammer "Gus" Denny

When you hear of the church you should think of the lord, love, kindness and compassion. That was not always the case. Baxter had three churches: Methodist, Church of Christ and the Church of God. At present being a Baptist and living in an area where Baptist are thicker than kudzu it is hard to comprehend why the Baptist stayed out of this community. Since they were smart enough to take me in might prove they had enough sense to stay out of Baxter.

To us at that time being Methodist we referred to "our church" as the only one civilized and in contact with the lord., Who sent his smiles and beams shinning down on our little building. The Church of Christ was a home for the Campbellites at that time I had no earthly idea what that term meant except for a group to be watched very carefully.

The Church of God was another story. Even though they were backwards and "strange" in their religion they offered many hours of entertainment and things to look down on, by those of us that "were chosen" in this case the Methodist. In this small community I am not saying people didn't speak to other denominations but they sure as hell didn't associate with them to closely either. During my youth we would walk the mile to "police" Maynard (his name) Church of God for sight seeing. The shows were always first class. And much to our enjoyment we witnessed the rolling in aisles, the speaking in tongues, foot washing and other fascinating things that were not part of our weekly services. I saw touching of red hot pot bellied stoves, the serpent, and received on one night a pan full of water from the foot washing in my face, because I was standing to close to the window where we stood to gape at the ritual. (I still believe "police" did that on purpose.)

The Church of Christ was something else. It was pretty much a secret society and not to be visited from outside as there was little to see except for the guy plucking the jew harp to get the singing going. Since they didn't believe in music. I felt sorry for them, never being able to hear Roy Accuff. On some occasions there was excitement when they saved a sinner. He was emerged totally in the water (us civilized Methodist sprinkled the heard only) the on lookers suspense came in thinking the elder might drop the sinner into the deep water.

My only experience with what to do and what not to do with them came through true "puppy love" I had fallen in love with this beautiful girl and was more interested in getting into other things rather than heaven. Religion could take a back seat to love. My mother "found out" about these meetings. People always found out and how I don't know, they lived far apart, and had no phones, but probably being a Methodist we had a direct line from above. Anyway I was informed that no Campbellite would be welcomed into her house for any visit. (oh well what the hell, I later married a Baptist. There was not much of a "crop" there for the lord (pop. 384) and the infighting surely caused lots of sin. This sin along with the many others: whiskey, rouge, lipstick, short dresses and tobacco chewing cut many from the fold. Today I am a Christian and a

believer but I look forward to that final day to see how many of these people finally made it. May the lord forgive me, or do I see a slight smile on his face.

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