



*DR. HERMAN A.*  
*HOYT*

THE DISSENTER • THE RIGHT-HAND MAN • THE OPPOSITE • THE RECORD-BREAKER • THE DOER • THE STORM-CHASER

LABORER OF GRACE

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**HOYT** *Laborer of Grace*

## THE DISSENTER

On June 4, 1937, two professors were fired from Ashland College and Theological Seminary. They had been given the choice to resign or be dismissed on grounds that, at the time, were not altogether clear. They chose dismissal. Quietly, but not without a plan, they took their leave.

Two nights before, on June 2, a prayer meeting convened at the home of Dr. J. C. Beal. The two professors were in attendance. They knew that their imperiled jobs were threatening to cause a significant rift in the Brethren Church. But rift or not, they couldn't tolerate the watering down of truth that they believed was becoming epidemic at Ashland.

Alva J. McClain and Herman Hoyt (BD 50, ThM 39, ThD 46) along with an assembly of theologians, pastors and evangelists made two choices at the close of that prayer meeting: first, to establish a seminary that would be faithful to resolute biblical truths that defined their vision of Christian higher education. Second, to separate from Ashland for good.

Hoyt and McClain went home that summer night with the future looming over them like the gargantuan dust storms that had battered the U.S. prairielands just the year before, storms that left devastation in their wake.

## THE RIGHT-HAND MAN

Ron Henry (BA 58, BD 62), a former history professor at Grace and dean of admissions for 36 years, is keen to remember the adversity into which the seminary was born. "History tells us that the year 1937 was the worst year of the depression," says Henry. "I can't think of a worse time to start a school in a town where these men didn't even live. They stepped out in faith, and God honored it."

With the notes from their teaching years at Ashland and a passion for a Christ-centered, fundamentally biblical education, the founders of Grace began a long and tenuous journey "to know Christ and make Him known," as the clarion call of their mission stated.

It was a haphazard project, not doomed to fail but certainly not guaranteed to work. In fact, the odds were stacked against it financially as classes were all but free. But it grew slowly, and by the time McClain had been replaced as president by Hoyt in 1962, there were 102 seminary students, this up from approximately 40 when the school started 25 years before.

When the time came for McClain's leadership to become a background instrument, there was hardly any question as to who would pick up where he left off.

"The task of serving as McClain's right-hand man was one which Hoyt performed admirably," writes Ronald Clutter in his history of the seminary. "No superior could expect more devoted support from a subordinate ... ." On those days when the aging president's health would keep him bound to his bed, it was Hoyt who would employ his robust, hard-working attitude to keep the school alive and healthy.

## THE OPPOSITE

"Dr. Hoyt's personality was quite different from Dr. McClain's," remembers Bill Male (BD 55), who was a student under both and eventually dean of the college. Male is one of many to remember that Grace's second president was somewhat hardboiled in his approach to just about anything. Students and colleagues alike recall his sternness, his "rugged constitution" as Clutter put it. Tales abound of passionately pounded tables, abrasive encounters, brash dismissals, elevated confrontations and the like. Hoyt was hardly a personality to be trifled with and, when things weren't as he'd expected or ordained them to be, it was hardly pleasant.

But Male also remembers a rarely seen compassionate side of Hoyt. "I remember sitting in with him during disciplinary situations with students. After he had dismissed a student, he'd say to him, 'We have two relationships. The first has just

MARCH 8, 1965

First U.S. combat troops  
arrive in Vietnam

ended. But we are still brothers in Christ. And as your brother, I will do anything I can to help you along in life.”

Dr. Jared Burkholder, associate professor of history at Grace and a close observer of evangelicalism’s development as it relates to the Brethren movement, submits that Hoyt and others were concerned and directly in opposition to the way society was headed. “The mission that he saw the school having [was] to give an education that was an alternative ... from secular or worldly learning.” It was the 60s, after all. Hoyt had seen the devastation that divisiveness could cause. The Ashland split was still fresh in his mind. He would not let this fledgling institution fall prey to corrosion from the inside.

So he was rough. A taskmaster in the minds of some. But he was nothing if not completely dedicated to the authority of the Word of God and to Grace.

## THE RECORD-BREAKER

The numbers and achievements speak for themselves. While Hoyt was president (1962-76):

- *The seminary increased by 200.*
- *The college increased by 258.*
- *Two dormitories were built along with a dining hall.*



**A TIME OF GROWTH** / Dr. Hoyt looks over the expansion plans for Grace College & Seminary.

- *Morgan Library and Learning Center was built in the downhill shadow of McClain Hall.*
- *Regional accreditation by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools was earned.*
- *He traveled over 50,000 miles annually in a nationwide fundraising effort.*

During his lifetime he wrote hundreds of articles on Brethren history, modern controversies, biblical nuances and much more. He published nearly a dozen

full length works on biblical subjects that challenged his era and gave thorough, thoughtful analyses of otherwise confusing portions of Scripture.

In a word, he was completely undaunted. “He was a guy who could work on an absolute minimum of sleep,” says Male who often accompanied Hoyt on his fundraising tours. “He could be out traveling ... get back at two or three o’clock in the morning and then teach at seven-thirty the next morning. He was very healthy and strong.” A man with seemingly limitless energy and a man of endless vision.

1966

Dedication of Beta Hall,  
first men’s residence hall

**HOYT** *Laborer of Grace*

**THE DOER**

Both before and after his presidency, Hoyt was an active participant in overseeing and tending to the new Brethren scene that emerged after the Ashland schism. While he was assisting McClain as secretary of the seminary, he became president of what was to one day become the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches (FGBC). And through his involvement with church publications came the establishment of the Brethren Missionary Herald Company of which he was a co-founder and board member.

There was barely an element of the Brethren movement of the mid-20th century that Hoyt did not have his hands

in. His philosophy was simple and his goals ambitious: Christ's return is imminent and we must prepare the world for it.

"[Hoyt and his administration] did have a strong sense of urgency," explains Burkholder. "That was part of what made them successful and part of what contributed to the expansion. When Hoyt and others talked about how bad the world is and about the Christian's mission and about Christ's return, people resonated with that. It got them emotionally involved."

Hoyt's campaigning for the school on the basis of these concerns reveals an essential part of his personality: he wanted more than anything to be a good and faithful servant

in the face of snarling ethical, social and religious opposition. The people who chose to attend the burgeoning school because of his message were the ones who were captivated by his sincerity and excited by his urgency.

**THE STORM-CHASER**

Hoyt passed away in 2000. After his retirement from the presidency, he had seen a great deal of continuing success at the college and seminary. He had faced the storm nose to nose and, perhaps intimidated by his hardened features, the storm of dissension and division had turned tail. Grace was safe; the sweat of many men's brow had secured it, but the lifeblood of this man assured it. \*



**HOYT'S ADVISORS** / Dr. Hoyt meets with his administrative team.



**COLLEAGUES & FRIENDS** / Dr. Hoyt (right) with Dr. Homer A. Kent, Jr.

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JANUARY 20, 1969  
Richard M. Nixon becomes  
37th President

JULY 20, 1969  
Apollo 11: Neil Armstrong and  
Buzz Aldrin walk on the moon

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1972  
Watergate scandal

73

JANUARY 22, 1973  
Roe v. Wade



# THE 'BUMP' DEAL

In the following humorous story, Dr. Bill Male (BD 55) recalls an ironic instance in which Dr. Hoyt faced off with an initiative he approved of.

“The campus was growing. We were starting to get more buildings. And there was the main drive between the library and McClain Hall and Philathea. The traffic there got a bit heavy sometimes and a bit fast too. The dean of students at that time decided that he would put some speed bumps in. We talked about this in ‘The PAC’ – our nickname for the team of school administrators including myself, the president, Dr. Kent [and three others] – and it was decided that we would go with the speed bumps.

“So these bumps were installed while Dr. Hoyt happened to be out on a fundraising trip. He got home at about three o’clock in the morning, came whipping up that drive and hit the speed bumps. I know his beloved Buick bounced off them, and I think the transmission may have rested on the bumps. I also know that the speed bumps were gone the next morning.”

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MAY 2, 1969  
Betty Zimmer Morgan  
Library dedicated

AUGUST 23, 1969  
Grace Theological Seminary and Grace College  
incorporated as Grace Schools in the State of Indiana