

# The Last Circuit Rider

## The Last of the Circuit Riders

Note: My younger sister, Heidi, presented the following tribute to Dad at his funeral, who truly was the Last Circuit Rider.

One of the legacies of the Salmon Methodist Church, where Dad served and our family worshiped for so many years, was the rich history of the circuit rider who founded that church in 1873 -- William Van Orsdel, known as Brother Van.

Dad's ministry was very much like that of the old circuit riders -- he took the Gospel to remote places where there were people, traveling by car, jeep, horse, or rickety cable car to cross rivers. To many, he has represented the fine tradition of the Circuit Rider, and has sometimes even been called the Last of the the Circuit Riders.

For many years, it was the tradition to honor Methodist ministers by placing bronze replicas of Circuit Riders on their gravestones. The program was discontinued some years ago, and at a meeting of the United Methodist National Board of Archives and History at Drew University, it was brought up that there was just one marker left. Lila Hill, the archivist from Idaho, said, "I know who should have that!" She brought the marker home, and privately presented it to Mother at one of Dad's book signings a few years ago. This marker will eventually be placed on his gravestone.

In a final tribute to Dad, who truly deserves to be remembered as The Last of the Circuit Riders, may we rejoice in his homecoming to the Lord he served so faithfully by singing "Harvest Time" -- better known to the Methodists in Brother Van country as "The Brother Van Song."

[I hope to find a version of "Harvest Time" to post sometime in the near future]

While I am still trying to find a recorded version so you can hear it, I do have the words:

&ldquo;The Brother Van Song&rdquo; by W.A. Spencer.

&ldquo;The seed I have scattered in springtime with weeping, and watered with tears and with dews from on high. Another may shout when the harvester's reaping, shall gather my grain in the sweet by and by.

Another may reap what in springtime I've planted. Another rejoice in the fruit of my pain, not knowing my tears when in summer I fainted, while toiling sad-hearted in the sunshine and rain.

The thorns will have choked and the summer's suns blasted. The most of the seed which in springtime I've sown; but the Lord who has watched while my weary toil lasted, will give me a harvest for what I have done.

Chorus:

Over and over, yes, deeper and deeper

my heart is pierced through with life's sorrowing cry. But the tears of the sower and songs of the reaper shall mingle together in joy by and by.

Yes, the tears of the sower and the songs of the reaper shall mingle together in joy by and by.

- Palms of victory, crowns of glory; palms of victory I shall wear.