

Frank Hensley, Jr.
My Story: The Short Version

I was born on October 30, 1946 to Frank and Mary Hensley. I am the second oldest of four children (three boys and one girl). We grew up in the Flat Rock community, two miles east of Mt. Airy, NC. Both parents and all of my extended family (aunts, uncles, and cousins) were Christians and a vital part of the community. Church involvement for me began when I was only two weeks old.

By the time I was seven years old I was deeply involved in church life and knew all the Bible characters and their stories. I loved church and all the people. I was an “Opie Taylor” kind of kid and didn’t believe that I needed this thing called “salvation”. I knew that Jesus had died to save people from their sins, but I was not one of those people. During the summer of my seventh year I



stole an orange from a local store and was found out. God used that event and a neighbor to confront me with the truth that I was a sinner in need of salvation. For the next twelve months God reminded me repeatedly that what I had done was sin. I finally confessed to Jesus my sin and asked Him to forgive me. He did and that changed my life.

Outward change was not apparent, but I had a new focus and a source of purpose for making decisions. That is important because two years later I would need that new source for dealing with life’s struggles.

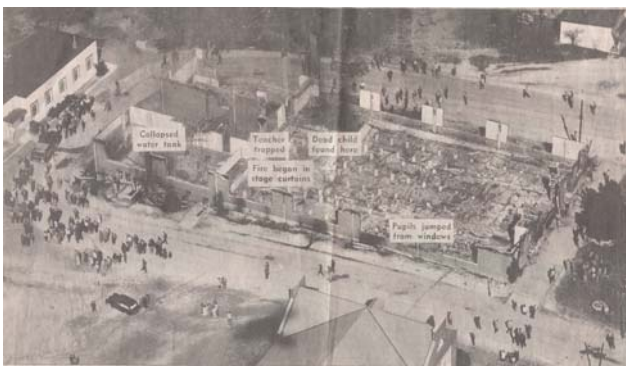


February 22, 1957 began as a cold winter's day. Wearing my brothers cherished jacket, I left for school that morning as a happy, well-adjusted ten year old boy. By days end I lay in the hospital clinging to life and horribly disfigured.

We celebrated George Washington's birthday with a play that morning. Running home for lunch, I changed into a short sleeve shirt. The day had turned into a beautiful spring like afternoon. Having returned from lunch we all settled into an afternoon of math and science studies. Around 1:15 PM the door to our room burst open and a frightened teacher appeared momentarily, shouting out something unintelligible, and then retreating as abruptly as she had entered. "What did she say?" asked Mrs. Badgett. "She said the curtain is on fire" shouted a student. At that moment thick black smoke began to roll under the only door out of the room. Panic!



The events that followed were a nightmare. I delayed my departure from the room by trying to retrieve the borrowed jacket. Trapped in the hall, I was overcome by the dense



smoke and searing heat. God literally took me from that building that day and saved my life a second time (this time, physically). I eventually ended up at the North Carolina Baptist Hospital where I spent the next eight months recovering from the third degree

burns which covered 70% of my body. Six of us children were admitted to Baptist that

day in critical condition. One of our classmates died on the scene and his third grade teacher died four days later from injuries sustained trying to save him. Over forty others were injured and the school building was completely destroyed. Our quiet little community of Flat Rock was shaken to its roots, as was Mt. Airy, Surry County and the entire state and nation.

The next three months were spent in and out of consciousness. A tracheotomy was placed in my throat to help me breathe, eyelids were sewn closed to prevent skin contractures causing eye damage. Multiple surgeries were performed to return function to my body and to close the wounds which were allowing life itself to drain away. Some thirty plus surgical procedures were performed before I was allowed to return home.

Finally the day arrived and I was released from the security of the hospital. Terror gripped me and I wasn't so sure I wanted to leave. The community did everything it could to help us transition back into a "normal life". But we all knew that life would never be "normal" again. The next nine years saw us return three or four times a year for more corrective surgeries.



After each hospitalization we would have to rebuild our life routines, because things had changed due to the surgery.



Forty-four years went by and God was good to all of us. In my case He brought into my life a beautiful young woman named Linda Eads. She became my wife and we have been partners in life for the past 41 years. Together we

have raised four children. They are all college-educated,



married and are successful in their respective careers. We have five granddaughters and one grandson and one more grandchild on the way.

I graduated from college in 1969 and have worked in several career positions. I have worked in accounting, counseling, retail store management, production management, plant management, and regional sales. God called me into ministry in August 1999. I returned to school for a masters degree in Christian Education and graduated in May 2001. Green Street Baptist Church called me as Minister of Education in 2001 and I served in that capacity for six years. I now am Associate Pastor of Pastoral Care.

While attending divinity school I was exposed to the need for peer support counselors for burn survivors. I resisted becoming involved for a year and then God finally put me into a situation that forced me to see His desire for me to get involved. Since then Linda and I have both been trained in this specialized kind of counseling. We ministered to burn survivors through the NC Jaycee Burn Center in Chapel Hill from 2002-2007. We currently serve through the NC Baptist Hospital Burn Center in Winston Salem, NC. God is truly blessing and using us in a mighty way. We also run a survivor support group one Saturday a month at Piedmont Plaza One in Winston Salem, NC and one in Asheville, NC.

I am always open to any question you may have relating to anything you have read. To ask questions email frank@greenstreet.org