Memorial Service for Irving Foss

11-27-83 (Abridged)

Michael Nekora:

This is a memorial service where we can share some of the memories we have of our friend, Irving Foss. The remarkable thing is that before Irving died, he and Adeanne discussed the kind of service they would like, and that is the kind we are going to have.

We are not going to have congregational singing, but a special choral group will begin the service by singing the hymn "Under His Wings."

Now let us bow our heads as Br. Russell Jurd invokes the Lord's blessing upon this service.

Russell Jurd:

Let us pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, our Great God, the giver of all good and perfect gifts. We come before thee to thank thee for the many opportunities and privileges granted us.

We're so thankful for the life of our dear Br. Irving which he ministered to us in the spirit of the Truth, a ministry that would be pleasing to Thee and an example for us to follow his footsteps as he followed the Lord. We have so many heart precious thoughts of him throughout the years and we have been blessed for it.

Today we ask a special blessing on this service and Br. Michael as he directs our thoughts. We also want to remember his dear wife who was so faithful to him during his last time on the earth. For these things we give our praise to thee. In Jesus' worthy name, Amen.

M. Nekora:

Irving Foss was born on February 25, 1898. He died in his sleep one week ago on Sunday morning, aged 85 and ¾ years, in his 86th year.

Those of you that were here an hour ago heard his son-in-law David Bruce say that when we were singing the opening hymn, "I've Found a Friend, O Such a Friend," David was thinking, "I've LOST a Friend" and he was thinking of Irving. In our fellowship together, we use the expression brother and sister, referring to a family relationship we have in Christ. But David's use of the word friend struck me very much, because that's what Irving was to me. Irving was my friend! He was your friend, too!

Irving had a capability that very few have. He wasn't in his 86th year to me.... To me, Irving was just a year or two older than I was. It always seemed that way throughout the whole time that I knew him, and I could see others react the same way. If he was with somebody that was in their 90's, he was about that age to them. If he'd be talking to a teen-ager, he'd seem young to them.

Irving went to business school where he learned shorthand and typing. Because of the ability that he had to write in shorthand, he became the Recording Secretary of the Chicago Bible Students when he was only 18 years old.

Now I don't know what Bible Students think today about 18 year olds, but just to put that in context, many of you know my niece Lynette Simon. Now Lynette Simon is 18 years old, so when you think of Irving as the Recording Secretary of the Chicago Bible Students, you have to put that in context as though Lynette Simon was the Recording Secretary of the Los Angeles Bible Students. That shows you the kind of esteem that the friends in Chicago had for Irving. He was also a Deacon in the Class at that time. Think in your own mind, how many Deacons do you know that were just 18?

Now, Irving wanted to marry Hulda Bell when he was 16 years old. (This was in 1914.) But his Father said, 'No, that's too young. You must wait until you're mature—till you're 20 years old.' And so, he did. Exactly. Just like Irving, it was on his birthday that he married whom we all call "Holly." Holly Bell. Now, it was also when he was 20 that the class elected him Elder, and this is phenomenal in my mind, because the Chicago Bible Students have always had this aura of having to vote someone out or not voting them in for about 10 years before anybody could be an Elder in Chicago. But that wasn't true of Irving. He was an Elder when he was 20 years old.

Many of you have heard him refer to Sr. Nodie Morehouse. That's the wife of Br. Dan, who has passed away. Nodie was the sister of Holly. Now, Nodie was the one who introduced the two—the matchmaker. She thought that Irving would be a good match for her sister Hulda. And Nodie is still alive, living in Chicago and will be 91.

I remember Irving talking about his marriage at such a young age. He said—the friends thought it was very strange to get married back in 1914, 1915, 1916. Br. Russell was still alive and they felt it was wrong to get married and certainly wrong to have any children because the time was so short. Irving's attitude was, he loved Holly and he was

going to get married. If the time of happiness was going to be short, then so be it. They were married 56 years.

Holly died in 1974. From that marriage, they had two daughters. Joy Kandel, living in Chicago, and Shirley Bruce, who is with us here today. One year after the death of Holly, Irving married Adeanne.

Now Irving had the knack of doing the slightly unexpected, whether it was in his talk, his fellowship, or whatever. He did it again when he married Adeanne. As everybody knows, when you get married you have to have a best man. Who was going to be the best man for the marriage of Irving and Adeanne?

He did the unexpected. He selected his grandson, Chris, as the best man. There are not many marriages that any of us have seen when Grandfather and Grandson are standing side by side at the wedding ceremony!

In addition to his wife Adeanne and his two daughters Joy and Shirley, Irving is survived by his four grandchildren: Ginger and Chris Bruce and Alys and Mark Kandel, and one great-grandson, and that is Casey.

Forty years ago, Irving and the family moved to California, and he has been an Elder in the Los Angeles Class all during that time.

In fact, he has been perhaps the most popular Elder of any we have ever had. Now I have kept statistics of the voting in our elections because it is the practice among the Los Angeles Bible Students to vote for Elders and Deacons by the raising of the hand. It requires 75% of those that are voting for an Elder to be elected, so if just 26% don't like the way an elder is performing his duties, they don't vote for him and he won't be an Elder. That is the procedure.

Since 1969 I've been recording the vote. I looked back over the numbers and this is what I found. From 1969 through the end of 1982, the period that I have the figures for, Irving always received percentages in the 90's to be an Elder. More than that, better than 1/3 of the time the vote was unanimous. Everybody voted, Yes. I could find no one else with a comparable record.

Irving took on a lot of responsibilities in the Class and most of the time it pleased him very much if no one else knew he was doing it. He would just quietly see a need and take care of it.

One of the things he did was to administer the TV Films for the Dawn. The Films would be sent out from Faircourt Lane and the mailman would bring them back. The administration of those films was one of those duties that Irving and Holly would take care of.

I remember that house on Faircourt Lane. I was in it and one of those things Irving would like to talk about was the room we were sitting in. We were there in the living room and he said at the time he had the house constructed one of the things that the architect asked him is how big do you want the rooms to be? Well, Irving, whenever asked any questions, wanted to have a Scripture as an answer. So he said, well it seems to me we should make the rooms the same size as the Holy and the Most Holy in the Tabernacle—and it was so. The living room that we were sitting in at that time was 15' wide and 30' long—that is the size of the Holy. The bedroom was 15' square—that is the size of the Most Holy. So you see, there is a Scripture for everything, even in the construction of houses. And that was the way it was at Faircourt Lane.

What are we going to remember about Irving? To a large extent, that is a personal question—everyone remembers different things about him. Certainly, those that were sick remember that Irving and his wife were always there visiting and seeing what they could do. He was the obvious choice for Chairman of the Comfort Committee for this Class—always in touch either in person or by the telephone. Those that are up in years and those who have been sick will remember this for sure!

I'm going to always remember the typewriter. Irving had a unique typewriter. When you typed on it, it looked like handwriting. I'll tell you, when an envelope came, you knew it was an Irving Foss envelope without seeing anything else. Nobody else who ever corresponded with me had a typewriter that was like that! If I ever see type like that again, I know that instantly I'm going to think of my friend, Irving Foss.

Irving enjoyed singing and he was active in leading the congregation singing both here and at conventions throughout the country. And he always had a hearty sense of humor. He is also one of the few men I know who liked bow-ties. So whenever I see a bow-tie, I amgoing to think of my friend, Irving.

Those of us who had the privilege of studying in the same Class as Irving will never forget his marvelous memory for Scripture. If Irving were to say, "Well, I think that is in Galatians, perhaps the 2nd chapter, maybe the 5th verse," you could bet your life that that is exactly and precisely where that Scripture would be found, even though he was operating from memory.

Once Irving gave an answer to any question, that pretty much settled it—few had anything to say after that. Irving had a way of condensing his understanding of Truth into just a few well-chosen words and it was the answer and we all knew it and felt it. We will sorely miss that contribution within our studies.

What was Irving's understanding of the Truth? Irving believed with every fiber of his being in the Harvest Truths as promulgated by Br. Russell. Irving knew his Bible—no question about that! But he knew exactly what Br. Russell taught on virtually any question.

Irving believed that the Lord returned in 1874, and his first act was to raise the sleeping Saints. That's so well known that Irving believed, that that last week one of the sisters said, "Well, now Irving knows whether the sleeping Saints were really raised or not!"

Irving believed that soon we would see the completion of the Church, the Bride of Christ, and that when it is complete, the resurrection of mankind would begin right here on the Earth. The Christ and his Church together would bring forth mankind to perfection.

Paul wrote in 1 Thess. That we sorrow not as others who have no hope, who believe that death ends it all. We share Irving's vision of the future. We have a hope of that promised coming Kingdom for all the families of the Earth. But still there is that bit of sorrow. His passing will be a great loss to the family and certainly a great loss to this class.

I have lots of memories of Irving and so do you. Rather than make this a personal memorial, we know that there are a few of you that would like to share the thoughts that you have of Irving.

So we are going to take a few moments and do that. I'm going to ask you to take that microphone to Br. Sheppelbaum, who will perhaps share a few thoughts about Irving.

Albert Sheppelbaum:

I'm happy to be at this memorial and happy to reflect back on my acquaintance and friendship with Br.Irving Foss. I first met him when I came to the Chicago Class in 1938. There are many things that could be said—perhaps one of the outstanding ones that I didn't get from Irving himself, but from Br. Wylam. It was Irving and he that got together one time and began the establishment of what is now the Chicago Class. It was the two of them that began that and he was a comparatively young man.

So his appreciation of the Truth and the need to take a stand for it was evident even then because this was not a common practice. The others who were there at the time did not feel so disposed—but he did and Br. Wylam did.Also, in the Chicago Class when I first came there, John T. Read was the Chairman.

After he left, Irving was elected Chairman. Br. Whitcomb, who was perhaps 15 or 20 years older than Irving, at one time when we had the elections for Chairman, said I would like to nominate Br. Irving Foss as Chairman for life. I've never heard that since, that anyone would suggest he would be nominated for life. The class didn't accept—I don't remember the details—whether Br. Foss said No or the Class—but that didn't come to pass.

Also—I don't remember if it was Br. Whitcomb or somebody else—wanted him as Chairman and Secretary at one time. This merely points out the respect they had for him, their appreciation of his ability to handle things. From what has been said here, you share that same confidence in your association with him over the years, very confident that whatever task that would be assigned to him he would handle it very capably, as well or better than anyone else.

We did have a chance to speak to him at the hospital. He got on the 24th Chapter of Matthew, though he had gone through quite an ordeal. As anybody knows when you go through surgery, you are not at your best usually. If you are, you're an exception. So we were discussing Matthew 24. I was pleasantly surprised at his clearness of mind, his eagerness to discuss it, and his understanding and appreciation of Matthew 24. I appreciated him as a Brother in Christ, as a friend over the years, and I share that with you.

M. Nekora:

Br. Sheppelbaum reminds me of something that I heard today. After the death of Br. Russell, of course, the majority of the Bible Students stayed in the Society. But Irving eventually did not. Having formed the Chicago Bible Students, he continued to talk to his father and his mother that they ought not remain where they were. The time did come when the father made the pronouncement, 'I'm going to Irving's Class.' The mother never did—but the father did. Now, if I could hear a few words from Art Abrahamsen.

Art Abrahamsen:

I am very pleased to be here and add a word of my appreciation for that wonderful Brother of mine in the Lord. I first got to know Irving in 1940 when, on a business trip to Chicago, I had to spend some time there interviewing people. I knew Irving was the Secretary of the Class and, being the Secretary here, we had a common bond. I called Irving on the phone, and what a welcome I did get! We had a beautiful start in a lifetime relationship.

I remember so clearly, after Joy and Eddie were married—a week or two later, we all joined in the Pittsburg Convention. I remember about three years later, Irving got an invitation to serve at the Los Angeles Convention with Holly, Shirley, and Joy. I enjoyed their fellowship very much. When the convention was over, the Foss Family and Helen and I had a delightful evening together on ice.

They had an ice skating rink in Westwood, outdoors. Here it was, shortly after the 4th of July. We were all on ice skates in the summer time. It was a beautiful experience, one that I have never forgotten.

Irving and I had a beautiful relationship in this class all these years—43 that I can count from when I first met him. One of the wonderful things he did for me was when he performed our marriage ceremony—Loretta and I, 3 years ago. He stood on that platform—guess what, in a beautiful bright red bow tie. Typical of Irving!

We enjoyed the marriage of Adeanne and Irving very much and it was our privilege to follow a few years later.

Now Irving, to me, was a great teacher. He always had scriptural proof and reasoning. It was so solid and good, we didn't question it because it was scriptural proof. I retain a wonderful memory of this man, dear Brethren, and I hope I will never forget what he was to me in my life. Thank you very much.

M. Nekora:

I'm going to take a moment or two in case anybody else has a memory they would like to share. Vincent.

Vincent:

Friends, you've heard of the old cliché, if you don't have anything good to say about someone, don't say it. It's not the case this time. I have many wonderful memories of our dear Br. Foss. Friend—very appropriate to call him friend.

I think I met him for the first time over 35 years ago. My first project as a mason in California was building a barbecue on Elmwood Drive in the back yard. I remember Br. Foss in an apron cooking. A year ago I lost my mother and I had a little eulogy. Br. Foss happened to be the Chairman and he nodded approvingly. The eulogy I would give to Br. Foss would be repetitious—What more can be said? He was a tower of strength in our Class and we will sorely miss him. But we are here to continue his legacy—a legacy of standing for the Truth. At times the Truth might hurt, but then there is the kindness to heal the same wound. In everything he said, his humor was so unusual. When, at times, some words were said unwittingly by someone always he suggested a hymn, if you remember, and everything was OK. I don't want to take such time, but I had a little poem that I made for Br. Irving.

'Fear no longer the world's frown
'Your pilgrimage on Earth has ended.
'I've been waiting for you,' said the Master.
'Well done, faithful one, Here is your crown.'

I'm not a Longfellow or Alice Ripper, but I thought of it for Dear Br. Irving, whom we all loved and had wonderful memories. Thank You.

M. Nekora:

Thank you, Vincent. Russell.

Russell Jurd:

I was thinking of a story Br. Irving liked to tell and he told it over and over again. Many of you have heard it. Shirley and David were out of town, so Irving came to me. It was just between the two meetings, lunch meeting and the next meeting. He was waiting for Br. Abrahamsen to go, but Br. Abrahamsen was doing some duties, so he said, 'Let's go in the other room.' We did.

He said, "I'm just bursting with love." He said, "I want to ask you, Russell, for your permission to marry Adeanne Schills." I said, "Irving, I'll give you my permission and not only my permission, but I'll give you my blessing." Just a little later, they were married and I had the privilege of having that service here in this hall. I wanted to share that with you. They have been blessed and I'm so happy for them. So happy for Adeanne that she had such a wonderful helper in her spiritual guidance. Amen.

M. Nekora:

It reminds me that with Adeanne meeting in this Class and Irving meeting with this class, it is remarkable that they could have the feelings that they had for each other and keep it a secret. I didn't think that it was possible to keep secrets among the Bible Students. But I guess I hadn't counted quite on the characteristics of Irving and Adeanne. Sam...

Sam Krystic:

Dear Friends, bear with me if my voice should break down. I, too, have precious memories of a faithful friend. When I first came into the Truth as a teen-ager in about 1939, Br. Irving Foss was an Elder in the Chicago Ecclesia. In Gary, Indiana, where I myself as a babe in Christ grew up, we made it a point every 4th Sunday of the month to cancel the meeting so that we could be with the Chicago Brethren. It was from that time on to this very present day that Br. Irving Foss holds in my heart many very precious memories. Of all friends, it seems that Br. Irving stands very close to my heart because he's always been a comfort, an encouragement when I was down and out. I have much admiration and I'm sure that he will continue, as he looks down upon us, to help us as we continue the narrow way with one another that soon we also may hear that well done, thou good and faithful servant.

M. Nekora:

Thank you, Sam.

Ed Lamel:

Dear Friends, I will always retain rich memories of Irving Foss as my Brother and my friend. I think we'll always remember him as the epitome of stability and wisdom and understanding upon God's Word. I know any time I've led a lesson, I've always appreciated having Irving Foss in the row and, if things got a little sticky or needed an explanation, Irving was always there to give it and in a very precise, clear-cut manner and to the point.

I think we'll all miss all that. I also appreciate Irving's dedication to the Truth, principles of the Truth, and the Volumes. I think he had a marvelous understanding of the Truth. He had a quick mind and a wonderful memory, and like you suggested, Michael, he seemed to retain his youth clear to the end. He always had a youthful outlook, a lot of vigor, and he made quick decisions. I think we'll all miss him.

Br. Kiddoo:

I haven't known Irving as long as many of you. But I do remember one thing. Since reference has been made about his understanding, he said one time—This is the method I use on myself. I think it's very good. He said, "If I'm studying something, and I'm having a hard time with it, I begin to ask myself questions. If I can answer and explain those questions so that I can understand it, then I feel that I know it.

M. Nekora:

Good lessons for all of us to follow to do in our own study.

David Bruce:

I met Shirley at a railroad station at Rutherford, New Jersey. I got smitten pretty bad and after some correspondence with her, I decided after I got out of the service I better go out to California and see this pretty girl again. On the way, I stopped in Chicago. I had some very good friends there and during the early part of my army career I had been near Chicago getting some training as a weatherman. I'd met Joy and everybody kept telling me about Shirley. 'She was a pretty girl,' 'A wonderful girl,' 'Meet Shirley.' I said, if she's anything like Joy, she must be wonderful. Well, she's nothing like Joy. But she's wonderful just the same. But on the way to California, I stopped in Chicago and Shirley's parents were there. I got very little from Irving. I told him I was going to go out there and I'd like to see Shirley. "Well that's fine...go on out." No encouragement at all. But I've often said, if I had to choose my in-laws first and then chose my bride, I would have chosen Irving and Hulda. They were just wonderful to us in our early years of marriage.

They were a help spiritually and in every other way that you can imagine. They understood. They didn't try to force their learning on us. We made our own mistakes and I know that in the last few years that we lived here, I had the great extreme pleasure of

working together with Irving in the office. We would have just wonderful fellowship together as Brethren in the Lord, as a father-in-law would have with his son-in-law. And as you have said, my friend—that says it all. I remember a Scripture that says that God spoke to Moses as a friend speaketh to his friends. I think that when we can call someone a friend, you know we can't have too many friends. That's a blessing that we can all have.

Our children want to thank everyone and we do, too. We thank everyone of you who have been so supportive in these last couple of months. I personally want to say how much a blessing Adeanne has been to us, and I know she brought much happiness to Irving. They've been wonderful together and now, she'll be alone and I know she'll need help and strength. And I know that we will be there to help whenever we can. But I want to thank Adeanne for her help and what she has done to make Irving happy. Our children also wanted to thank you for the support that you've given. God bless you all, and we look forward to seeing Irving again soon.

Marie Pelle:

I just have to go way back there to 1905 when Irving and I were children in the Chicago Class. His people and my folks were very close friends. We used to meet together. We were just kids and we would tag along and listen to the studies that our folks would ave. At that time, Irving studied the violin and his father would say, Irving, come on, play us a tune.

Which he would and then we would continue in our study. Irving has been a real blessing to me because as a young boy, as you said, he was elected Deacon, Secretary of the Chicago Class. I was out in the colporteur work. When I came back, I was informed that Irving was the Secretary of the Chicago Class. I said, that young boy? But he was wonderful. He has been faithful ever since. Then I married and lived in Louisville, Kentucky.

He and Holly lived in Chicago. When we came out here, we were so happy to find Irving and Holly because they were old friends of ours. Then to see Irving so faithful as an Elder in the Los Angeles Class, he has been an inspiration to me. He would be here in the Class, not only as an Elder, but when the books had to be gathered together, he was right there, just like a Deacon, and gathered up the books. That was an example to me of real service.

I do hope that the memories of Irving will remain with me. I know he is in the Kingdom now with the Lord. I do not believe that he's asleep. I believe he is awakened and with the Lord and the Saints on the other side and that he will do all he can to help us. For I have said to him time and again, Irving, you're such a blessing to me. Don't you dare go home before I do.

M. Nekora: And he let you down...

Marie:

But, bless his heart! He made his calling and election sure. He's on the other side. And I'll assure you that he'll help every one of us to get there and see him. I have to tell you, some sweet thing that happened. After Holly passed away, he met Adeanne, and, I was so glad to see the friendship. He came to me and said, Marie, I want to tell you something, but be sure and sit down. I said, Why? Are you going to shock me? He said, Yes. And he said, I proposed to Adeanne, and she accepted. I said, Irving, I'm so glad and so happy. I just hugged him and kissed him for the joy of it. I'm so glad that happened. And now he is in the Kingdom. I know that Adeanne has been a great help to him.

Now I want to tell you one more thing. There's another girl here that knew Irving as a youngster, that's Adelaide. She was Adelaide Jones when we were kids back there in Chicago. And I think if she's called upon, she'll be glad to tell us a few things about Irving.

M. Nekora:

Is that true, Adelaide?

Adelaide:

Well, I'm very happy to be here and hear all these lovely things about Irving. I've probably known him longer than almost anybody here. He was just a little boy and I was a littler girl, and we all had great fun together. He didn't have much use for the girls at that time.

M. Nekora:

He wasn't 16 yet...

Adelaide:

No. We used to have these suppers at our house for the friends and he would come and sit out on the lawn with the boys and not pay a bit of attention to any of us. So we called him (he was very thin—you won't believe it—but he was VERY thin) and we called him "bones."

It was really very shocking to me to think that Hulda became interested in him, you know. I thought, well that's fine. They didn't have a wedding. But after, we saw them, and

we were with them. I'll have to tell you one thing I remember. You were speaking about his father and mother. We had a testimony meeting there and we had it into the new year. Just as the bells and whistles of Chicago were ringing, here came Irving with an alarm clock. He had the alarm turned on and he was celebrating with us.

So that is one of the things I remember. But it is nice to hear all these lovely things and to see Shirley and Joy. I've known them since they were babies. So it's been fun.

M. Nekora:

Thank you.

Larry Davis:

I, too, would like to add my voice to Br. Irving's memory. I knew him for 40 years and I can say that I will miss him. I feel like I scarcely knew him, and yet he was a great blessing to me in many, many respects. Especially in understanding some of the deep truths that we hold near and dear to us. Now and just to show you how much the Class will miss him, last Sunday, one of the Brethren came to me and said, what will the Los Angeles Class do without Br. Foss? And I said, don't worry. What will happen to the Los Angeles Class is exactly what our Heavenly Father would have happen to it.

In introspect, I would like to read a scripture that I think Br. Foss would appreciate and know that his family will, and a comment on that scripture. (Psa. 37:23) He does not lead us year by year, nor even day by day; but step by step our paths unfold, our Lord directs the way. Tomorrow's plans we do not know. We only know this minute. But he will say, this is the way. By faith now walk ye in it. And we're glad that it is so, because today is enough to bear and when tomorrow comes, His grace shall far exceed its care. What need to worry then, or fret. The God who gave His Son holds all our moments in His hand and gives them one by one.

Adeanne:

Br. Michael and dear Brethren, I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your love and your prayers, your cards and messages throughout this period. You know, before Irving and I married, right after he proposed, after I thanked him, I said, but Irving, what will your family think? Because it was actually less than a year since Holly had passed away. And, you know, he said, why they'll be delighted. I thought that was the craziest thing. How could he speak for them? I know what children think; what they're capable of thinking. But do you know, we couldn't get over, there wasn't one dissent in his family or mine. And I have kind of a large family. Some of them are here today. But I just thank my Heavenly Father for the last eight years and the privilege of being married to Irving. And I ask an interest in your prayers.

M. Nekora:

Irving loved these words: "Close your eyes for a moment..." The choral group will now sing Irving's favorite hymn, "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

Now let us all stand and we will be dismissed with prayer...

Our dear Father Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy most holy name. As a little company of Thy people, we come before Thy throne of grace to thank Thee for all that Thou hast done for us. We thank Thee for Thy love and Thy care over each of us and for the gift of Thy dear Son who has died on our behalf. We thank Thee for the memory of our dear friend, Br. Irving. Indeed, we pray that the lessons of his life, as he lived it, may come alive in our hearts and that through the fellowship that we have had we might better know Thee and that we, too, may be faithful unto the end as we believe that he was.

Indeed, we pray for Thy coming Kingdom and for a share in blessing the entire world of mankind, bringing them back from the land of the enemy to life right here on earth, and eventually the beauties of perfect life. We would remember the family members and pray for an added measure of grace at the time of their bereavement. Bless each heart bowed before Thee at this time and as we go on our way. For we ask and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.