

Ray and Bess Maloy

by Roland Foster

Our assignment was to write about a special person. I'm cheating a little bit by writing about a couple, rather than an individual. After you see what I have to say about them, you'll understand why.

In the 1930s Ray Maloy married the love of his long life, Bessie Curtis, who was known to all of us as "Bess". They had three children.

Since Ray was born in 1912, he was obviously of a prime age for military service during World War II. I know nothing about those years, because he never talked about them, but I do know he became a pilot, and in the 1960s he was a pretty high FAA official, traveling the world to certify (or not) foreign-built aircraft for USA passenger service.

Ray didn't talk about that career much, because he had other things to talk about. He retired from the government at age 55, and he and Bess went off to Bible school in Pensacola, Florida. After receiving their degrees and being ordained as ministers of the Gospel, they volunteered to serve as chaplains for the Washington County, Maryland, Detention Center (the county jail). They did so, faithfully and well, for more than 40 years.

Ray did share a few pilot stories. One was about the time he was stranded at an Air Force base in Kansas, and he needed to get back to Washington quickly. Unfortunately, there was no transport available. Whoever he spoke with told him, "We have a B17 that's supposed to go to Andrews, but there's no crew for it." I don't know if there was urgency, or if Ray just didn't want to wait. I suspect the latter. At any rate, he replied, "I'll take it," and he did. When he got off the huge plane at Andrews Air Force Base, they asked him, "Where's your crew?" He replied, "I'm it."

But Ray and Bess liked to tell stories about their "second career" better. For several years they were willing to go wherever the Lord would send them — and He did. One time they heard Him telling them to go to Iceland and minister there. They knew nobody in Iceland, but they went, and they were received warmly by the pastor and members of a church there, who, it turns out, were expecting them.

A few years into their nineties, Bess had to stop going to the jail to counsel inmates. She continued to write letters to inmates, about thirty or more each month, for a few more years. Ray kept counseling for four or five more years — after he quit driving, a friend took him to Hagerstown each week. Over the years there were hundreds of jail inmates who received the blessing of being loved and counseled by this couple they knew as "Mom and Dad" Maloy.

Ray was once asked by an interviewer, "To what do you attribute your long life?" His reply was, "Stay out of those rocking chairs. They'll kill you."

Ray passed away in 2014 at the age of 101. His beloved Bess, suffering some dementia, outlived him by three years. She died at age 104.

In the middle 1990s, when Bess had slowed way down because of her physical and mental difficulties, she turned their "Good News Guide" monthly teaching newsletter ministry over to me. I'm still doing it — over 180 copies each month, going to inmates and a few others literally all over the USA. That work they started still goes on.

Thank you, dear Ray and Bess. You were an inspiration and a true blessing to me and to many others.