

Clint and Sam: God's Big Mission Team

By Elliott Wright
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They were tall men, robust, energetic, quick witted, God-fearing, people-loving—and good, good friends: Sam Dixon and Clint Rabb—God's big mission team.

That they died after being pinned together for 55 hours in earthquake rubble in Haiti is almost divine poetry, tempered by a sense of loss too heavy to express.

Sam and Clint were in Haiti exploring with international and local groups ways that could improve health services, nutrition, and food supplies in the acutely poor country. Jim Gulley, a colleague entrapped with them, says they were lying side by side, enduring pain and hope together, being faithful to their calling to be the image of Christ in the world.

They were often together: in the offices of the General Board of Global Ministries, where both were employed in New York City; on the road in Mexico City or Manila or someplace in Africa. They had the kind of friendship that allowed disagreement in common purpose, affection in diverse experiences.

Many afternoons, when both were in New York, after most employees had left for the day, Sam and Clint could be found together, the door open, with no pretense to shut out the world, in dialogue about the options and obstacles for helping the church to live up to the Gospel of Jesus Christ—for challenging Christians to reach beyond their sanctuary walls to serve the poorest of the poor and the most wretched of the wretched.

They would welcome a third, or a fourth person to the conversation. They joked, and laughed, and argued, and agonized, and sometimes prayed, in the joy of fulfilling what were mighty summons from the Lord to be ministers of Good News.

Sam from North Carolina and Clint from Texas knew that God was bigger than all the nonsense of politics, economics, the media, and even church bureaucracy. They knew that life was to be relished, savored, enjoyed, and shared. They were unpretentious but sure of their grounding, which made them formidable allies and wonderful friends.

Their work made them colleagues in the field as well as the office, Sam as head of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR); Clint as executive for Volunteers in Mission, a coordinating center for a grassroots movement of thousands upon thousands of good-intentioned people. The portfolios intertwined in many ways, and they worked to forge strong links between humanitarian services and the voluntary impulse inherent in Methodism.

Clint and Sam were about the same age and had been at the General Board of Global Ministries for just about the same number of years, Clint coming a couple of years

before Sam in the mid-1990s. Both held a series of jobs, each increasingly entrusted with greater responsibilities for worldwide mission outreach and service. They carried heavy organizational duties with grace and gratitude.

Jim Gulley told me that a group of six in the close confinement of the Hotel Montana's ruins sang and prayed; shared stories and waited....waited for liberation. All six were eventually saved, four into a world to be rebuilt, and two, Sam and Clint, freed into a realm already finished, where they continue in song and prayer, telling jokes and smiling, forever God's Big Mission Team.