A mighty man of the 381st

Editor's note: In mid-May, the Journal Opinion was alerted by the Haverhill Library Association librarian of the upcoming 100th birthday of a Haverhill Corner resident on July 17, 2001. The message came from the 381st Bombardment Group Memorial Association who wished to recognize centenarian Lt. Colonel James Good Brown, USAF (Ret.), who had served continuously as chaplain of the 381st since he enlisted in 1943. He has been living in Haverhill Corner since 1976 with his second wife Valery Wentworth Brown, who died in February, 2001. Although the bomb group had hoped to have a tribute in the Memorial Day issue, that was not possible. Instead, the story of Col Brown's 100 years will run in two parts in the July 4 and July 11 issues.

by Tom Kent

HAVERHILL CORNER—As three-year-old James Good Brown sat beside his father's pulpit in a York, PA, church in 1904, the furthest thoughts from his mind were that he would live for 100 years and that he would fly in a B-17 Flying Fortress on a bombing raid over Germany.

At that time, the only thing that he knew for sure was that he wanted to preach in that same pulpit someday. He vowed to do the "very best" he could to become a minister who preached with the same "deep convictions" as his theologian-minister father did.

Chaplain James Good Brown in Ridgewell, England 1943.

His basic preparation for the ministry was the gift of his parents, Minnie Ella Wetzel and Rev. William Henry Brown. As they had done with all their children, they formed his character by the way they lived their daily lives, giving him a "caught sense" of what was right and what was expected of him.

Brown's commitment to the preaching ministry required him to seek a liberal arts degree (BA) from Albright College in Reading, PA, in 1923. He had earned his own tuition by laboring in the local steel mills during summers since high school.

Later, he earned theological and graduate degrees at the Yale Divinity and graduate schools in New Haven, CT, completing his PhD in 1936.

Mary Frances Curry Brown

While he earned his way through the latter degrees by preaching, none of this could have been afforded without the help of Mary Frances Curry. Another Albright undergraduate and the daughter of a renowned Methodist theologian and preacher Dr. John Quincy Adams Curry, she and Brown were married in 1923.

For the next 52 years, she was the omnipresent mate, raising their daughters and managing their home. She also managed most of the day-to-day church affairs in Goshen while he completed nearly seven years of study at Yale and later in Lee, MA, for four years while he was a chaplain during World War II.

After college, Brown served Methodist churches in Lewisburg and Johnstown, PA, then decided he needed a theological degree. Without a position or a place to live, he "acted on faith" and drove his family to New Haven, CT. Within the week, Brown had enrolled in the Yale Divinity School, found an apartment and was preaching in Goshen, CT. After preaching that first Sunday at the Olde Pilgrim Congregational Church, the church search committee hired Brown as their full-time minister.

During the 10 years at Goshen, Brown's preaching ministry appeared to mature.

WITH HIS MEN—Chaplain James Good Brown (top right) returns from combat on March 2, 1944, with 381st Heavy Bombardment Group officers (standing from left) Rodney W. Loft, Robert R. Zadnik, (kneeling) George F. Speer and Captain Charles G. Wood.

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