



## Rev. M. Melvin Hough

May 8, 2020

A farm boy who answered the call to Christian ministry, the Rev. M. Melvin Hough, 90, died Friday, May 8, 2020, at Homestead Village in Lancaster, PA.

Mel was the husband of the late Marian Patton Hough, who died April 9, 2020, and with whom he would have celebrated 64 years of marriage on June 2. Heartbroken by their deaths four weeks and one day apart, the Hough family finds comfort in knowing that Mel and Marian, finally free of the illnesses that ravaged their bodies and tested their spirits, are once again whole and reunited.

Born in Flora, Illinois, on May 1, 1930, Mel was a son of Maurice and Maude Rule Hough. He was reared along the dirt roads and cornfields that crisscrossed the rural Midwest. His was a life of farm chores and a horse named Blue. He trapped rabbits -- occasionally a fox and unfortunately a skunk -- only to set them free.

As a boy, he jumped over a creek called Hog Run on his long walk to the Paine one-room schoolhouse that would encourage a lifelong love of reading, and dare him to think about a world beyond nearby Noble High School. It was a childhood lacking in technicolor, he said.

Mel entered Eastern Illinois University in Charleston eyeing a future in journalism. He graduated committed to his faith, heading for United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, where he earned a Master of Divinity degree. During this time, he met Marian, a Lancaster native who signed on for a life of shared pastoral ministry.

He served Sumner-Bethlehem Congregational Christian Churches; Shabbona United Church of Christ; and the First Congregational Churches of Sterling and Prophetstown, all in Illinois. He held leadership posts in the Illinois Conference of the UCC and was a delegate to the denomination's national General Synod. From 1966 to 1969, Mel was associate pastor at Covenant United Methodist Church in Lancaster; he studied at Lancaster Theological Seminary. Prior to retirement, he was administrator of Good

Shepherd Manor in Barrington, Illinois.

Mel was a relevant preacher with a dramatic sermon delivery. He was a champion for social justice. His church, his home and his heart were open to the homeless, the lonely and the outcasts. As a counselor, he was always on call. His adventurous side led youth groups to the Boundary Waters of Minnesota and to the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota.

He preferred a sweatshirt and jeans to a suit and clerical collar. He savored Marian's apple pie, served warm with a slice of cheddar cheese. He helped her to can the red beets and tomatoes from vegetable gardens he meticulously tended. Mel was a talented woodcarver and an enthusiastic bird watcher/feeder. In later years he gave up pipe smoking and perfectionism in the hope of a healthier life.

He taught his children to embrace American history and respect nature. Together they did both, from the mountains of Yosemite to the plains of Nebraska to the beaches of Maine. His kids will remember his high expectations, his moral character, and his Sunday morning cinnamon rolls. His greatest achievement, he always said through tears, was his family.

Mel is survived by three children: Barbara, wife of Dr. Gerald G. Huesken, Lancaster; D. Mark, husband of Sheila (Anderson), Lititz; and Beth, wife of Leopold Gorecki, Yardley; six grandchildren, Audrey Bonchack (Matthew); Jonathan Palomarez (Elizabeth); Amy Stoltzfus (Robert); Rachel and Aaron Gorecki; and Faith Roda; and five great-grandchildren, Natalie, Alice and Lucas Bonchack, and Caleb and Riley Palomarez.

He is also survived by brothers-in-law Jay, husband of the late Phyllis Patton, New Holland, and James, husband of Jean Patton, Lancaster. A niece and nephews also survive. He was preceded in death by brothers Bernard and Leonard Hough and sister Lois Schweizer.

Mel's appreciation for the residents, staff and caregivers at Homestead Village was effusive. He would be delighted to know that gifts in his memory can be made to the Homestead Endowment Fund at Homestead Village, 1800 Village Circle, Lancaster, PA 17603.

Following health guidelines, Mel's memorial service will be held at a later date. Private interment will be in Paradise Mennonite Cemetery.

# Comments

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“ As I read all the memories, I cannot say more. If I close my eyes, and think real hard, I can hear Mel and Marian's voices. They are a part of me. A wonderful part of me.

**Janice Kniss** - May 25, 2020 at 06:49 PM



“ Jan: It so so good to hear from you, and my apologies for the delay in reaching out. Mom and Dad were so, so fond of you. They talked about you often. We continue to work through the reality of Dad and Mom's deaths, so close together. Everything seems so surreal, especially because of all of the coronavirus restrictions, Perhaps when we are able to celebrate their lives with family and friends we can begin to better deal with our grief. They would love what you wrote about them. With affection and gratitude, Barbie

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - June 10, 2020 at 02:08 PM

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“ So sad to hear of their passing. Mel was a wonderful pastor and genuinely kind man. I remember his sermons in Prophetstown - he had a unique way of making them memorable and relatable. One in particular stuck with me even to this day. He talked about a woman in the hospital and not expected to make it - she had a birthday and asked for an expensive purse. Her family asked why she would want that. It was because she had faith that she would be healthy again and use it. And she did. That gave me strength later as I battled cancer. He was an inspiration. My heart goes out to his family.

**Marsha Hummel-Welfer** - May 20, 2020 at 11:31 AM



“ Marsha: Thank you for sharing this with our family. I can't convey to you fully how much this means to our family and to me. We miss Dad and Mom so much. But these kinds of remembrances from people who loved and knew them are providing us with the peace and comfort we need. With much gratitude, Barbara

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - June 10, 2020 at 02:11 PM

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“ Mel and Marion were the best Leroy Ave Rock Falls neighbors ever! Mel and my husband, Smoky, would sit on the deck overlooking the Rock River and trade "the biggest fish" stories. Marion was the epitome of the professional nurse as she always dressed in her white uniform and cap. I was always happy to hear she was on duty as supervisor when I worked in the Emergency Room, as she made the shift run smoothly.  
Pat Stachowiak

Pat Stachowiak - May 20, 2020 at 11:04 AM



“ Good afternoon, Pat: So good to hear from you. We have such wonderful memories of times spent along the river in Rock Falls. They were nearing retirement when Mom and Dad bought that house, the first one they every owned. And I loved coming home to visit, especially at wintertime when we spent so many evenings around the living room fireplace. Thank you for the kind words about them both. They were terrific, weren't they? With much appreciations, Barb

Barbara Hough Huesken - June 10, 2020 at 02:15 PM



“ Barb. So many losses for you in this short year.. My prayers are with you and family, I recall always my first memories of you - coming to work as, may I say, a very young girl who, even then, spoke with such reverence and love for her father . Best,  
Roberta Strickler

roberta strickler - May 19, 2020 at 09:04 AM



“ Thank you, Roberta. 2020 has proven to be a season of profound loss. Trying to take it one day at a time, but I am learning that it is not always as easy as it sounds. Thank you for your kindness. Fondly, Barb

Barbara Hough Huesken - June 10, 2020 at 02:18 PM



“ The world has lost a great couple...so caring and joyful ! We were so thankful when Mel came into our Congregational church family. They both cared for everyone. I loved the banter the two of them shared with each other...Marion had a cute way of teasing him and he loved her dearly. I've saved every card and letter he wrote to us. They made a huge, positive impact on so many. Our deepest condolences to the family.  
Bonnie & Jerry Sternes

bonnie sternes - May 18, 2020 at 06:06 PM



“ To the family of Mel Marian, I will always have beautiful memories of your Mom and Dad when they came to minister at the Congregational Church in Prophetstown. They both were a positive influence on our church and on my family as well. I loved the way your Dad gave his message on Sundays, and no matter what day of the week I would run into your Mom it was always a pleasant conversation and you always new where she stood on the topic. Loved her for that!!  
I know you will all miss your parents, but the memories you have will be cherished for a life time....  
Sincerely,  
Doug and Toni Peterson

My sympathy to all.

**Toni Peterson** - May 18, 2020 at 02:11 PM



“ Doug and Toni: Thank you. As you know, Mom and Dad LOVED the church in Prophetstown ...and when I say that I mean the people. Mark, Beth and I are privileged to call them our parents. Losing them both so close together was something for which I am afraid we were ill-prepared. Thank you for helping to pave our way forward with kindness and support. Warmly, Barbara

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - June 10, 2020 at 02:28 PM



“ Barbara, Mark, Beth.  
Your Dad married Maureen and I when he was the pastor in Shabbona. Later he came to the church in Sterling where we were living. We have great and fond memories of him and your Mother. I was a 6th grade teacher at Jefferson School in Sterling. I do remember Mark and Beth attending that school. I think Barbara was already past 6th grade when your family moved to Sterling. I am so sorry for the loss of your parents. My wife Maureen passed away in 2017 so I can understand your grief. We were both very thankful for knowing your parents.

Gerald Cocking

**Gerald Cocking** - May 16, 2020 at 01:14 PM



“ Gerald: It is so very good to hear from you. I remember you and your wife. And I am very sorry to learn of her passing. Thank you for reaching out, and sharing your connections with Mom and Dad. It means a lot to us. Please take care. My best wishes to you, Barbara

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - June 10, 2020 at 02:32 PM



“ We are so sorry for your loss. Mel was the only minister to get my husband to church and so thankful he performed our wedding ceremony. I worked with Marion at CGH and I'm grateful for knowing her, she taught me a lot. May they both rest in peace together wrapped in the arms of our Heavenly Father.  
Val and Phil Todd

**Val Todd** - May 16, 2020 at 08:34 AM



“ Good afternoon, Val: Oh my gosh, it is good to hear from you. We are missing them so much. But we also find comfort in the fact that they are no longer suffering, and together again. We simply were not prepared for the loss of them both, so close together. Thank you for reaching out. Warmly, Barb

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - June 10, 2020 at 02:35 PM

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“ Mel and Marian were very important in our lives. Mel worked with a family member in a very difficult time of their life and he and God were successful. When we celebrated our 50th. Wedding Anniversary we did a renewal of our vows and Mel officiated. He did a really good job because we just celebrated our 70th. on March 4.  
In my opinion, Mel saved our church. The Houghs were the greatest.  
Bud & Shirley Thompson

**Bud Thompson** - May 14, 2020 at 05:25 PM



“ It is so good to hear from both of you. Thank you so much for the kinds words about our parents. We know how they positively affected everyone they touched. With much gratitude to you, Barbara Hough Huesken

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - May 14, 2020 at 07:41 PM

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“ Mel would take my wife, Debbie, fishing at a lake in Shabbona after telling the boys in his coffee club that he was going fishing with a soprano today, since my wife was in the Church choir. My wife was also a LPN and in later years he told the boys Marian made him take a nurse with him when he went fishing. He had a "lifelong lease" to fish at a Shabbona farm pond which was awarded via a certificate after his great sermons. Debbie would take pictures of the fish caught, and Mel would ask on Sunday morning if she brought the pictures as proof of their quest. I got to trail along and it was fun to see Mel use his fly rod with a popper. Mel took members of the Prophetstown Church & their families to the Boundary Waters in 1996. Mel was the sternsman in the canoe with my two daughters, Jennifer (16) and Julie (14) and I teased him that I could not find anyone better who could steer my daughters straight. Mel got up early (5:30 am) and went fishing by himself in a canoe. I kept watching him and saw that a submerged rock must have tipped him and his tackle out of the canoe. He hustled back into the canoe and looked around to see if anyone had seen his mishap. I teased him that he is only the second person I knew that could walk on water. Mel always wanted to do his fair share when we portaged the canoe even though he was 66 at the time and I was 42 as he and I went exploring one afternoon. On the return trip to Sawbill, Mel lost his footing with a big backpack on his back. He did a beautiful half flip and landed on his back as he looked like an upside down ladybug. He was smiling and laughing as we helped him up. I asked Mel one day if he was going to come watch the Congregational slow-pitch team play softball and he teasingly said only if we were going to play the Methodists. To know Mel and Marian, my family has been blessed and these are some of the memories that I remember best. To the Hough family, we are truly sorry for your loss! Sincerely, Don & Deb Robinson family

**Don Robinson** - May 14, 2020 at 01:10 PM



“ I am crying and laughing as I read this. Thank you so much for sharing these stories about my dad. We miss him and Mom something awful. But these rich memories from people who loved and treasured them offer a tremendous sense of peace and comfort to me, my brother, my sister and our entire family. Thank you for loving my parents! They so loved their friends in Prophetstown. Warmly, Barbara Hough Huesken

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - May 14, 2020 at 01:52 PM

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“ My husband's parents, Harold and Dorothy Michler, were great friends of Mel and Marian during their time in Sterling IL, and thought the world of them! We ourselves had the pleasure of meeting Mel and Marian on several occasions, not the least of which was Dorothy's funeral in which Mel delivered a wonderful, heartfelt eulogy for her. We send you our deepest condolences on the loss of this beautiful, warm couple!

Sincerely, Vicki and Howard Michler

**Howard Michler** - May 14, 2020 at 11:35 AM



“ I remember Mr. and Mrs. Michler very well, indeed. Lovely people! Thank you for your kind memories of Mom and Dad. Losing them during these surreal times of pandemic and isolation has magnified our grief. Thank you for helping to lessen our heartache. Warmly, Barbara Hough Huesken

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - May 14, 2020 at 01:58 PM

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“ Sue and I knew Pastor through his wife because Sue worked at CGH. They were also neighbors of our friends, the Stachowiaks. What a wonderful couple! Their caring and kindness permeated every aspect of their lives. They were the "poster children" for what was great in our community. Our world is lessened by their leaving but Heaven is a more joyous place now.

I was surprised to see my wife and I shared a link- we are all EIU alumni! I am also well acquainted with the Flora/Noble area. How small the world actually is...

Pastor and Marian, Rest in peace and rise in glory! Thank you for blessing our lives.

**Skip Lee** - May 14, 2020 at 11:13 AM



“ Mom and Dad loved their time in Rock Falls, living next door to the Stachowiaks and enjoying a back yard that touched the Rock River. It was the first home that they owned, and that made it even more special. We kids loved coming home for holidays, especially at Christmas when we barely moved from the living room where logs were always burning in the fireplace. If you know where Flora and Noble are, you are a well-traveled man. Thank you for sharing!! It means a lot. Warmly, Barbara Hough Huesken

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - May 14, 2020 at 07:47 PM

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“ Dear Barbara & siblings, I am so sorry you also lost your Father. What a great man he was--we loved living next to him. As sad as it is, i'm sure you're comforted knowing he is in Heaven with your Mother & my dear husband, Bob. Your Dad wouldn't have wanted to live in his state of health. Your parents, as Bob & I, were blest to live so long & share many happy years together. Please accept my deepest sympathy and prayers in these very sad times.  
Love, Mary Anne Aichele

Mary Anne Aichele - May 12, 2020 at 05:27 PM



“ Thank you so much, Mrs. Aichele. You were such a good neighbor and friend to them at Homestead. We miss them so much as I know you do your husband. With gratitude for your sympathy and friendship, Barbara

Barbara Hough Huesken - May 14, 2020 at 07:48 PM

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“ Mel was a great storyteller, and his stories were always filled with truth... and sometimes even timeless truth. One story was about how his dad either inherited or was chosen to be the coordinator of the grave digging detail at the church they attended when Mel was a young lad. Sometimes, if the person was well known, several people would show up that morning to help dig the grave. Other times, he could remember when it was just Mel and his dad out there digging the grave. When his father died, Mel remembered getting in the car to drive over to the cemetery. To his surprise, there were so many men there to help dig his father's grave that they had to take turns jumping in the deepening hole. At his turn, each man would jump in the deepening hole and only throw one or two shovels full of dirt, and then was helped out so the next person could have a turn. He said he sat there a long time, with tears running down his cheek.  
Well Mel, like father, like son. Even though we were not able to physically gather at the cemetery to dig your grave, we were there in spirit. Now your body is at rest, and your spirit is free. Blessings, my friend. -Dave Longenecker

David Longenecker - May 12, 2020 at 01:05 PM



“ Thank you so much for sharing this true story. Dad told it often as a loving tribute to a great man, his own father. I am still numb and a shocked by the passing of Mom and Dad, so close together and at this surreal time in all of our lives. But I will carry them with me always. Thank you, Dave, for remembering this time in Dad's life. Warmly, Barbara Hough Huesken

Barbara Hough Huesken - May 14, 2020 at 07:52 PM

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“ My wife and I moved into Homestead Village last July and we had the pleasure of meeting Mel and his wife Marian. In the short time that we knew them, we enjoyed talking with them and seeing their devotion to each other. We had not seen them since the virus set in and kept people apart, and we are sad that we will not see them again. I am sure that you have many memories to share of their lives together.  
Jim & Linda Bear

**Jim Bear** - May 11, 2020 at 10:48 AM



“ Mom and Dad were extraordinary human beings, and we were blessed that they were our parents. Thank you for the very kind words. They are so appreciated! Warmly, Barbara Hough Huesken

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - May 14, 2020 at 08:02 PM

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“ Back in 2016, I worked for a landscaping company that mowed at Homestead Village and I still remember when Mel came out and introduced himself. He always looked forward to seeing my uncle and I every week, he would always offer us a drink and tell us how great of a job we did. After I left landscaping and became a CNA I visited Marian and Mel a few times at their home. They were some of the sweetest people I ever met and always asked about how I was doing and was encouraging as I went through nursing school, they even sent a few cards to my home. Sending prayers to the family during this difficult time.

**Jennifer Weaver** - May 10, 2020 at 09:26 PM



“ Mom and Dad loved their life at Homestead Village. And they could not say enough about the people with whom they came in contact, whether it was neighbors in the villas, staff at the "big house" or the people who tended to the bushes and lawns. All were friends to them. I am so happy that you knew them and found them to be a positive, encouraging force in your life. Thank you so much for sharing. Warmly, Barbara Hough Huesken

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - May 14, 2020 at 08:06 PM

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“ Mark and family, so sorry about your dad's passing, such a wonderful man! Mark, sure can understand where you received your gift of speaking! Sounds like your dad had that gift! Our hearts and prayers are with you!

**Flickingers** - May 10, 2020 at 12:55 PM



“ Thank you so much for taking the time to write. Yes, Mark gets that -- and a few other attributes -- from Dad Thank you for your kind words! Warmly, Barb Hough Huesken

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - May 14, 2020 at 08:20 PM



“ Mel was the only Brother-in-law I ever had. What a blessing. So many memories come to mind, but one especially stands out. Our family including Mother Patton drove out to Shabbona one summer. During that time Mel and I decided to go horseback ridding, but there was only one horse. Mel was first and came galloping down a dirt road when the horse stepped into a hole and he and the horse went down. I was able to stop the horse but Mel had a bloody head. During that visit we also went on a picnic. We had nothing to roast the corn so we used Mark's diaper bucket.

What wonderful memories.

Jay Patton

**Jay Patton** - May 09, 2020 at 03:20 PM



“ Thank you, Uncle Jay, for the funny stories. I'm not surprised and vaguely remember about the diaper bucket, which in retrospect seems a little gross. Love you! Barbara

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - May 14, 2020 at 08:07 PM



“ What could be better than a life well lived? Marion and Mel each did that. The comments shared here and among their friends and family are truly heartwarming. I knew them as a warm and wonderful couple who loved each other mightily. Mel always had some funny and/or kind words, no matter what the situation. I'm sure God has warmly welcomed them. My sincere sympathy, but I know all of you must have a wealth of wonderful memories. I'll keep you all in my prayers and hope you can still find joy in celebrating MD and FD without each of them.

Fondly,  
Jenny Engle

**Jennifer Engle** - May 09, 2020 at 01:36 PM



“ Jenny, you are so kind. Thank you! The loss of Mom and Dad in our lives has created a gargantuan hole, from which we are trying to work our way out. They were a team, to be sure. And it was hard to imagine one of them leaving this world without the other. Well, we don't have to imagine that now. Warmly, Barb

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - May 14, 2020 at 08:11 PM

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“ May he rest in peace. Mel had a profound influence on our faith. He was unique in his teaching of Christianity. The world is a colder place without him in it. But we are grateful that his earthly suffering is over and he and his beloved Marian are together again. Our sympathy to Barb, Mark and Beth.

Rich and Laurie Gingrich

Lsurie Gingrich - May 09, 2020 at 12:06 PM



“ I read this with a tremendous sense of gratitude. First, that you took the time to write. Second, that we were blessed with parents who touched others in enduring ways. Thank you for your sympathy and thoughtfulness. It is much appreciated. Warmly, Barb

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - May 14, 2020 at 08:14 PM

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“ From the obituary, “His adventurous side led youth groups to the Boundary Waters of Minnesota and to the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota.” I was one of those youths fortunate enough to have accompanied Rev. Hough on those adventures 4+ decades ago and I’m a better man because of it. He was a positive and important influence on me and so many others during our formative teenage years and I’ll be forever grateful for his counsel and guidance. A life well lived, may he rest in peace.

Jon Gingrich - May 09, 2020 at 12:02 PM



“ Jon: Your words touched my heart. And they would have meant so much to my dad. Thank you, thank you, thank you! With gratitude, Barb

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - May 14, 2020 at 08:16 PM



“ Dear Barbara, Mark, and Beth,  
So sorry to hear of your wonderful parents passings. We so treasured their years in Shabbona. Mel gave great sermons. I can still see him rocking back and forth behind the pulpit. Services were much more dignified back then and I miss that. It was such a joy to have your family in our community. We got such a kick out of Mark’s pranks. Beth was the flower girl in our wedding 46 years ago. We were thrilled when Mel and Marion returned to pastor our church after leaving for a period of time. Mom is still living in her own house and in relatively good health. She asked me to express her sympathies to your family also. Sending you all hugs and prayers. Tom and Gail (Jacobson) Loes (Shabbona, IL)

**Gail J Loes** - June 08, 2020 at 09:12 AM



“ Oh, my, Gail. Thank you. I am just reading this. What wonderful memories ... and I remember your wedding! Please give my very best to your mother. We moved several times when I was growing up, but I will always consider Shabbona to be my home town. Much love to you, Barbara (for the rest of the family)

**Barbara Hough Huesken** - September 16, 2020 at 02:45 PM