
Life Legacy Award

E.F. Reifsnnyder, Principal, 1964–68

When the doors of Georgia-Cumberland Academy opened in 1965, Elder Reifsnnyder, GCA's first principal, had already been hard at work for a full year. The tasks of recruiting staff, recruiting students, making decisions about curricula, and thinking through the details of how to get the school up and running kept Ed Reifsnnyder busy that first year. He was already an experienced leader, having served as principal of two schools prior to being invited by the Georgia-Cumberland Conference to bring GCA into existence.



From the first, his spiritual leadership was evident. Early staff speak of the spiritual tone he helped set at this school. He was a man of faith and conviction. He was also a man of prayer.

Elder Reifsnnyder trained and served as a fire fighter before he began his work in education. When he came to Calhoun, Georgia, and discovered there was no fire department for Gordon County, he set to work training students and staff and then established the first county fire department. For many years, the GCA firefighters, trained by Elder Reifsnnyder, were the only fire fighters outside of Calhoun.

One's first impression of Elder Reifsnnyder could easily have been that he was strict and stern. Yet many stories circulate of the funny nicknames he gave people and crazy escapades such as a whipped cream fight in the cafeteria with a student. He knew how to have fun with the kids, and they knew he cared about them.

E.F. Reifsnnyder's partner in ministry was Eloise, his wife of 72 years. The couple had two sons, Ed and Steve Reifsnnyder. Although Ed had already graduated from academy by the time the Reifsnydners arrived at GCA, Steve attended and graduated during his father's tenure as principal.

Elder Reifsnnyder passed away August 31, 2012, at the age of 92. The impact of his life and the legacy of leadership to Adventist Education will be felt for eternity.