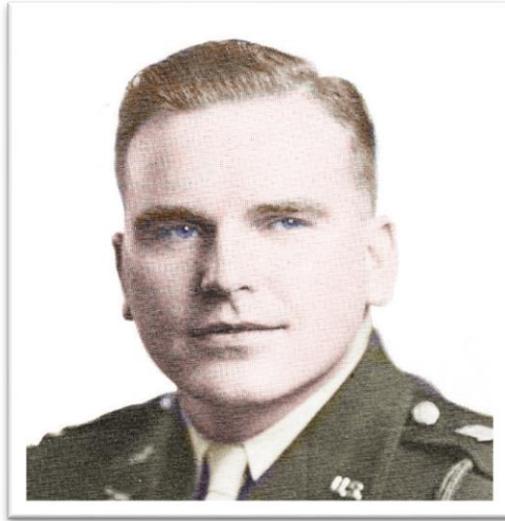




## ACCTS' Founders: Cleo "Buck" Buxton and Louisa Buxton

*"Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you.  
Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." Hebrews 13:7*



As an organization, everything that the Association for Christian Conferences, Teaching, and Service (ACCTS) stands for has been directly influenced by our founders – Cleo "Buck" Buxton and his wife Louisa. As a very young man, Buck's leadership skills were evident early on. By the age of 16 he headed the local 4-H club, and his leadership in that program and others, as well as his skills in debating, helped him win financial aid for college.

In college, Buck was in the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program and involved in InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, which played an important role in his spiritual growth and beliefs. At some point in his young life, Buck adopted Philippians 1:21 as his life verse: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Buck's leadership skills were also evident in his military career. During WWII, Buck served with the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division throughout the North African and Italian campaigns. Buck is believed to have seen more combat duty than the vast majority of US army officers in WWII, experiencing two and a half years of continuous infantry combat. He was wounded three times, and received the Silver Star, Bronze Star, and Purple Heart with two clusters. (During one of those episodes, a pocket-sized New Testament which he kept in his breast pocket saved his life – the bullet hit the New Testament and glanced off, causing less damage to his body.) In 1944, he commanded a ranger-type unit for several months that fought behind enemy lines from Anzio to Pisa. Buck is believed to have seen more combat duty than the vast majority of US army officers in WWII.

In the 1988 book, *Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears*, Homer Ankrum mentions Buck eight times, commenting that "the [34<sup>th</sup>] Division was credited with more combat days than any division in the Theater" and that Captain Buxton "performed with a high degree of proficiency in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions." MG (USA, Ret.) Clay Buckingham recalls that Buck was "a genuine hero of the Italian campaign of World War II. He had 'been through it' as a Christian company commander and I respected him for it."

Combat deepened Buck's prayer life, as he later told his friend Bill Waldrop: "Bill, it was in combat that I really go to know the Lord well. I never did anything, I never made any decision, without quietly speaking to the Lord and saying, 'Lord, what should I do now?'"

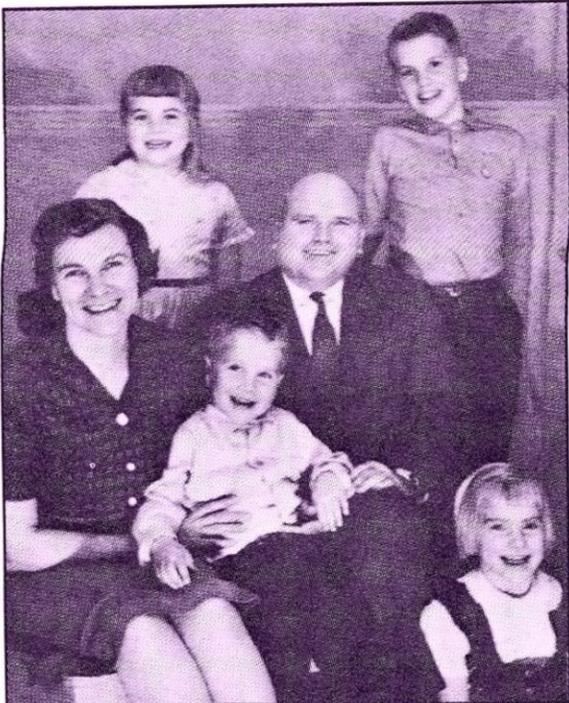
Louisa Buxton grew up in Philadelphia, where she was raised by her aunt and uncle after her mother's death following Louisa's birth. She attended college, and her commitment to helping others was exemplified in her career as a nurse in a

local hospital. Buck and Louisa met in January, 1946 when he spoke at a Pennsylvania church. Their courtship was carried out mainly by mail due to the distance between their homes, and they married in August of that year.

Buck had returned from the war sensing God's calling to be a preacher, and so he applied to the only seminary he'd heard of: Princeton Theological Seminary. He graduated in 1950 and was ordained as a minister shortly after. During this time, he also taught ROTC at Knox College in Illinois. However, his plans to enter ministry were put on hold as, shortly after graduating, he was recalled to active duty as a reservist during the Korean conflict.

Buck was discharged from the service in 1952, and wasted no time in pursuing full-time ministry. That same year he became the first general secretary of what is now called Officers' Christian Fellowship (it was called Officers' Christian Union in the 1950s) – the equivalent of today's executive director. In a 1988 *Command* magazine article devoted to Buck after his death, Lieutenant Commander Bill Young recounted Buck's calling. He recalls that, in 1952, OCF in the Washington D.C. area consisted of just three people. Its work was accomplished by volunteers, and they were looking for a full-time OCU worker. Young wrote, "At a council meeting in Philadelphia, the day of an Army-Navy football game, I met the biggest Army officer I'd ever seen in a uniform. Cleo Buxton was about to be released from active duty at Knox College, where he was serving as professor of military science and tactics. With his InterVarsity Christian fellowship background and his World War II combat experience – as well as his degree from Princeton Theological Seminary – Cleo Buxton was clearly the answer to our prayers."

Young noted that, "The OCF was a fledgling organization when Buck became a staff member in 1952. He was to serve as general secretary for 20 years...during that time, the staff grew, ministries to officers and their families expanded, *Command* magazine was initiated, Spring Canyon [OCF's Colorado retreat center] was acquired as a place for a camping ministry, the size of the membership more than doubled, and the American OCF became a leader of international ministry within the military."



*The Buxton family in 1961.*

The first initial OCF office was in the Buxton home in Lansing, Michigan -- as would be the first ACCTS office twenty years later in Lakewood, Colorado. The Buxton family made tremendous sacrifices to carry out their work with both OCF and ACCTS. In the 1988 *Command* magazine article, Lieutenant Commander Young recalled, "I was very concerned with the low level of financial support for Buck's ministry during those early years. Even today that still weighs heavily on my mind. Buck and his family sacrificed much to carry out their role in the OCU/OCF. We are all deeply indebted to Buck and his family for their dedicated efforts, which were instrumental in raising OCU/OCF from its modest origins to become the outstanding ministry to the military it is today."

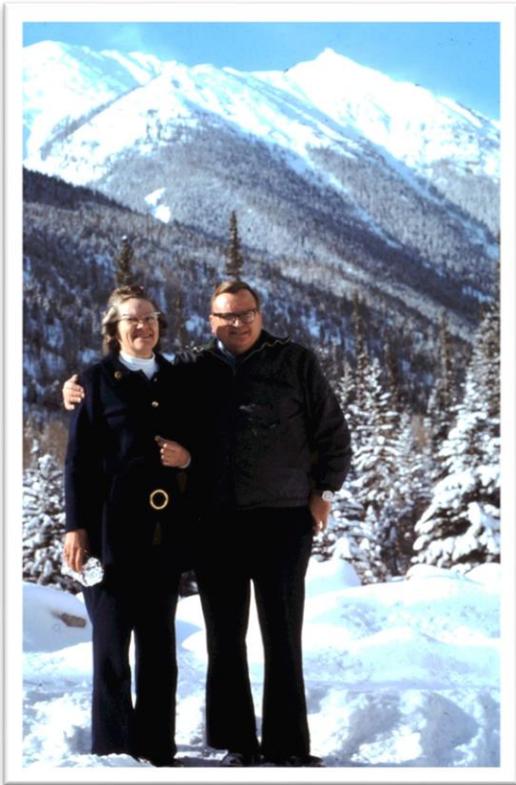
Bill Waldrop affirmed the sacrifices the Buxtons made: "When I think of Buck I think of sacrificial leadership. I don't know of any Christian leader in my own observation who sacrificed as Buck and Louisa did to launch the OCF movement...It was Buck who made OCF a movement. There are Christian organizations and there are Christian movements. Buck's vision was that OCF...would be like a great fire that would spread through the officer corps and through the whole military a society. Indeed,

Buck was a leader such as I have never known. He was visionary regarding the movement, and he was visionary with regard to people. He was a man of faith. Buck went for the objectives and let God (and sometimes a few other people) clean up after him. Buck was a man of goals and objectives."

MG (USA, Ret.) Clay Buckingham stated that Buck's vision "went far beyond that of most other Christian leaders I have observed, and his tremendous understanding of moral and spiritual issues was rooting in and absolute confidence in the Bible as the Word of God."

Don Martin, the editor of *Command* magazine in 1988, paid tribute to Louisa as well. "The story of Buck's walk with God is, of course, incomplete without a telling of the sacrificial love and the faithfulness of his wife, Louisa. She, second only to the Lord Himself, was Buck's rock and hiding place. And she invested herself without reservation in the lives of their family and the multitudes of young people who passed through their home over the years."

"Dad went home to be with the Lord on 28 July 1988. He had gone to bed in apparently good health and woke up in heaven," the Buxton children wrote after his death. "Probably the most striking feature of Dad's life was his love for people. His compassion and desire to assist in practical ways seemed limitless...even when he was in financial straits himself, he found time, energy, and the means to alleviate others' needs, even if they were primarily financial.



"Another of Dad's outstanding characteristics was his ability, in the words of Robert Kennedy, to 'Dream things that never were and say, "Why not"?' He had not only the vision to see possibilities in every situation, but also the know-how to make dreams become reality. The achievements of his life were founded on the grace and power of God, and made possible his willingness to work hard and sacrifice.

"Because of these traits, Dad became one of the most accomplished risk-takers the world has ever seen...he used to recall, 'I'd do what I thought needed to be done, knowing that if I pulled it off I'd get a medal, and if I didn't, I'd get court-martialed.' In civilian life, where the risk of getting shot was minimal, he concluded that almost any risk for a good cause was acceptable. This attitude is in major contrast to many people who think first, last, and always of covering themselves.

One of Buck's favorite sayings was "I'm out to change the world!" He and Louisa truly did change the world by having hearts open to God's leading. OCF and ACCTS are still flourishing and reaching people worldwide for Christ. On personal levels, innumerable lives were changed because of the Buxtons. We are so grateful for our founders' obedience to God's calling to form ACCTS, and continue our ministry today with this godly heritage in mind.



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