

Tribute to Sulu David Kelley

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Sulu David Kelley will be remembered by me as a kind and diligent digital book perfectionist. We met via email only eleven years ago in 1996 due to our common interest in old Methodist and holiness books. He had retired from IBM. At that time I believe Bro. Kelley worked closely with another man correcting files and transforming holiness works into the Adobe Acrobat format. He received files from another holiness man who had introduced Bro. Kelley into the wonderful world of digital books. Some few months after meeting Sulu, this arrangement between Bro. Kelley and his digital predecessor came to a very abrupt and final end. The termination of this relationship was quite painful for Sulu, yet he remained kind and never did I hear him speak ill of this other man. Suddenly becoming a digital orphan, Bro. Kelley seized the opportunity to really expand his own horizons and his work. What many would call unfortunate or even tragic circumstances only served to send Sulu to greater challenges and better opportunities.

Without a ready source of data files, Bro. Kelley spent not only his time, but poured his own financial resources into the great and wonderful Methodist classic books. He purchased some large, expensive Bible commentaries, Bible reference works and theological works of many of the early, great Methodists writers who lived and wrote in the 19th century. These old books would be carefully taken apart and painstakingly transformed into digital masterpieces. When asked, Bro. Kelley would kindly explain his never-ending hours spent looking (or squinting) at his computer monitor correcting his scans again and again. He wanted perfection in his finished product and worked tirelessly to that end. Bro. Kelley had a great love for this kind of work and seemingly had the perfect personality to persevere to make these great works accessible to literally anyone with a computer. Yet with all the endless time, money and hard work he put into his CD-ROMs, he always priced his Wesleyan Works at great, low prices that allowed even Bible college students an opportunity to access these great books.

Over the years I purchased his CDs and encouraged my friends to purchase his CDs. I have used my CD and benefited from them. As one that loved and collected old Methodist books for over twenty years myself, the books that Bro. Kelley put on his CDs would literally cost a few thousand dollars, and that if they could be purchased. Bro. Kelley was so gracious that he would even take requests for books to be digitized. That might mean that he would purchase the book someone wanted to be put on CD, spend a long time digitizing the work to his high standards, and then he would sell it to the requester at a very low price.

No doubt reading these Bible commentaries, and other theological works over and over again in the long and laborious digitizing process probably proved to be some of Bro. Kelley greatest rewards of his labors. Prior to his death he was, without a doubt, the

world's most widely read man of these classic Methodist works. I often thought that he was very probably the only one living person who had ever read all these books and he read them not just once, but many times. We are so thankful that Bro. Kelley rewarded the rest of us who enjoy great theological classics with all his kindness and hard work preparing great CDs that will be able to bless all who use them.

Sulu and his wife, Barbara, celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary with a trip to China so that she could hold a baby panda. As a member of our online accountability group, Sulu's last accountability report was dated March 8. He wrote, "I am cognizant of a deep settled peace as I face the future. Thank you for your prayers." He then closed with a very important and touching admonition, "Keep the faith, tell the gospel message without wavering, love one another. Blessings, Sulu." Bro. Kelley passed on to glory on March 31, 2007. Marion Brown conducted a memorial service for Sulu on August 11 at Mitchell, Indiana. About thirty family members were in attendance. It was disclosed that 267 Gideon Bibles had been donated in his memory and that he had donated thousands of dollars worth of CDs which have been distributed in West Africa. At this time there is no one to take his place in digitizing books. But we are thankful for his faith in Christ that served to spur him on to make his CDs.
