

The Theocratic Life and Times of Theodore Jaracz



For nearly 36 years, Theodore (Ted) Jaracz was one of the most powerful members of the Jehovah's Witnesses Governing Body until he died at age 85 on Wednesday, June 9, 2010.

Little is known of this man's youth. In 1991, I was told by a Writing Department staff member that Ted Jaracz was raised by three maiden aunts. My informant didn't know where, but it has been suggested recently on the Internet that he was raised in southern Illinois. The Memorial brochure dedicated to the life of Theodore Jaracz, and passed out before his funeral service began in Brooklyn, NY, stated he was born in Pike County, Kentucky. Other than his wife, Jaracz was said to be survived by a sister and nephews and nieces. It was news to me that he had a sister still alive. I wish I could locate her and sit down and talk about her *enigma* of a brother.

Why would I want to know more about this man? What did he do to deserve closer scrutiny? The fact is Ted Jaracz was directly responsible for an untold and immeasurable amount of grief or worse to an inestimable, but certainly, an enormous number of people during his reign as a GB member, if not before. His steadfast and unwavering grip on certain Watch Tower notions or opinions he claimed were taken from scripture, resulted in harm to too many followers, and for compelling countless Witnesses to forsake their religion, and, for some, to even renounce their belief in God.

The following information about Ted Jaracz is based on events I personally observed and experienced, or heard about from the mouths of credible informants. Some personal accounts I kept to myself for many years as requested by people who didn't want to be identified by Jaracz as the source of sensitive information and subsequently be disfellowshipped. He certainly had the power to order an investigation into leaks as he did in 2001 when he sent a Bethelite from the US Branch to the UK Branch to hunt for leaks at a time when some at that branch were sending confidential material to "apostates."

A chronicle of miscellaneous events

In 1945, Ted Jaracz, at the age of 20, attended the seventh class of the Watch Tower's Bible College, Gilead, at South Lansing, NY. Lorraine Wallen (married name) was one of his classmates. After graduating the five-month study course, Lorraine was sent to the Philippines. Jaracz was sent to Cleveland, Ohio, as a circuit overseer. Sometime previous to 1951, when he was in the circuit work, he met an attractive Canadian Witness, a beautician by trade, Melita Lasko, at a convention in the United States. (Lorraine eventually married Robert

(Bob) Wallen sometime after 1959. This was when my husband, Joe, left Bethel to marry me, after being there for three years, and at that time Bob, a long-time member of the Bethel family in Brooklyn, was not yet married. Many years later, Bob Wallen would become Ted Jaracz's executive secretary; also an 'Assistant to the GB,' and as of September 1, 2005 he remained vice president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Inc. of Pennsylvania.)

In 1951, Jaracz was sent to the Australian Branch to become the branch overseer, and, at that time, Lorraine Wallen told me, he was the youngest man holding such an important position. Shortly after Jaracz was shipped off to Australia, and, according to family, Melita pined away for him and decided to fly down to Aussieland to 'pursue him.' She was warned that she could get in a lot of trouble 'chasing' a man like she was doing, but she did it anyway and eventually got her man, marrying him in 1956 as soon as he arrived back in the United States. His removal as branch overseer in Australia, clouded by secrecy, took place after only five years in that special assignment. Six months later, the Jaraczs were in the circuit work in California. Then sometime in the early 1960s, Ted Jaracz became the district overseer for the entire state of California. At that time, one California circuit overseer and his wife told my husband and me that both "Melita and Ted" were rude, inhospitable and abrasive know-it-alls.

According to reports, around 1968, in California, Jaracz questioned many of those who professed to be of the anointed, asking, "How do you know when God is calling you to be of this group?" "What does it feel like to be called?" One "anointed" Witness told me that he responded, "If you were anointed, you wouldn't have to ask." The circuit overseer by the name of Wetzler, a witness to the conversation, remarked afterwards that Jaracz apparently wanted to partake.

In and around 1969-70, Jaracz supposedly was transferred to Arizona to be district overseer, and by 1971, he was partaking even in light of the Watch Tower's teaching that by 1935, the door to heaven was closed because the number of anointed chosen by God was filled, although the Witnesses believed that, from time to time, a replacement would be needed if someone fell away. But it didn't sound like Jaracz was chosen to immediately fill the boots of someone who fell away in 1968 because he didn't start to partake for yet another three years after he began asking questions.

The January 1, 1977 *Watchtower* stated,

"To meet further demands of expansion, it was arranged in 1971 to increase the number of "older men" serving as the [Governing Body](#) of Jehovah's Witnesses from seven (the directors of the Watch Tower Society) to a total of eleven members. Further expansion, to eighteen members, took place late in 1974." "And it was during the next year, 1975, that one of the most significant organizational readjustments in the 100-year history of the modern-day witnesses of Jehovah came under consideration. After discussions that continued through most of that year, the reorganization was approved on December 4, 1975, by a unanimous vote of the seventeen members of the [Governing Body](#). It became operative from January 1, 1976."

Jaracz's decision to partake was timely, wasn't it, because around early 1974, he was asked to become part of the Bethel family, with an invitation in late 1974 to be a member of the [Governing Body](#). And to be a member of the [Governing Body](#), one would have to be "anointed."

I would not be surprised to find out that Ted Jaracz was told by his personal friend, Nathan Knorr, before 1971 that during 1971 the number of the GB was going to be increased, although Jaracz didn't become a member until 1974, but he had hopes and was preparing himself just in case he would be invited; hence he claimed to have heard the call to the heavenly kingdom and began to partake of the emblems.

This is not an uneducated guess because I was told by a senior staff writer that it was Knorr who was responsible for inviting a scheming and fanatical Jaracz to Bethel with the intention of inviting him to be one of the GB to get even with the "directors" for removing him from his "throne." After all, Knorr knew what Jaracz did at the Australian Branch that caused him to be removed, and knew full well what he was capable of.

Jaracz became a member at the end of 1974 and by the time January 1976 rolled around, he probably was responsible for much of the "... *most significant organizational readjustments in the 100-year history of the modern-day witnesses of Jehovah...*" that gave him powers that a man like him could only dream of having, especially when he was installed on two of the most powerful [Governing Body](#) committees, Service and Teaching, where decisions made would effect the lives of millions of people.

It's no wonder one former JW, an acquaintance of Jaracz from California said Ted Jaracz was an "imposter."

With regards to the unknown reason why Jaracz was removed as branch overseer in Australia, one time in Brooklyn Bethel, one Bethelite was overheard telling a high-ranking member of the Bethel family that Ted was going to make sure **he didn't mess things up again**, referring to his problems in Australia.

Two sides to the man

Former JW and long time elder, Frank Kavelin, recently wrote: *Barbara Anderson described Ted Jaracz as 'kind and nice to outsiders in the congregations,' but 'mean as all get out' to the average Bethelite worker, sometimes seeming like two different people in one body.* "I think that is a fair assessment based on what I had observed over the years. While I was an object of his affection, I could see the fear of him present in many of his fellow workers at Bethel."

For almost eleven years I lived and worked in close proximity to Ted Jaracz. Over the years, I noted that he appeared to love his wife; seemed to be especially fond of certain people such as very close friends of ours from Texas, who, when visiting Bethel would receive an invitation to the Jaracz's room for a meal. When Jaracz was a district overseer, this couple closely associated with "Ted and Melita" in pre-convention work year after year.

Jaracz appeared to be humorless, yet some Bethelites were eye-witnesses to the fun he had racing his wife up the stairs eight floors, each using stairs at opposite ends of the building, from the dining room to their room in the Towers building. It was their little game in the morning, and when they arrived at the door to their room, they would laugh and carry on like newly weds. That was a side of them I never saw.

"Ted and Melita" were known to be quite active in the field service and often seen in the street work. This was the only positive thing I can remember others spoke about them at Bethel.

We saw emotion in Jaracz's face and heard his voice choke-up when he spoke at breakfast one time about the numbers, in the thousands, he said, of folks out there in remote parts of the world who were converting to the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses. During that episode, at our dining table, one young Bethelite noted, "I didn't know the man had any emotions."

At one Gilead graduation at the beautiful Jersey City Assembly Hall, Jaracz showed the audience slides of thousands of people in Poland assembling for the first time at a convention. His voice expressed so much emotion that the audience was uncomfortable. We thought he was crying. Afterwards, some observed that he didn't know a soul in that Polish audience, but he was visually moved just seeing them at a convention. However, through his actions, it was obvious he was unmoved and unappreciative of those who came to Bethel to volunteer their services, but became emotional about people he would never know just because they were becoming JWs.

One Sunday, Ted Jaracz visited our kingdom hall in Brooklyn to give a talk. He demonstrated unusual kindness to those I introduced him to, mostly people from islands in the Caribbean. I was amazed! As we drove back to Bethel after the meeting, we chatted amiably about the Kingdom work until my husband dropped us off at the front door of the Towers where we lived. When Jaracz and I went through the front door, his change in demeanor was dramatic. He did not say good night to me but acted as if he never saw me before in his life, and ignored people who greeted him as he went through the lobby area.

Other recollections to help illustrate the intriguing "two different people in the same body"

In the four years that I was assigned to the Writing Department, I never saw him there once. During the time I was doing research for the Proclaimers book, I gained entrance to the Branch File Room on the Executive Office floor (where Ted had his office) only when he was out of town because the young man who sat at the front desk was afraid he would get into trouble letting me in if Ted saw me there even though I had permission from other high-ranking men to be in the File room. Clearly, he was afraid of the wrath of "Brother Jaracz."

During the last two years I worked in the Writing Department, Jaracz's closed-mindedness over the child sexual abuse issue, mental health therapy and other topics brought anxious, stressful days upon compassionate staff members in the department. One well-respected writer, Lee Watters, said directly to me that Ted Jaracz was insane. He said, "Watch his eyes when he's speaking, and you'll see he's not normal."

In conversations with others, Jaracz was said to be, "coldly calculating," "insolent," "caustic and sharp-tongued," "underhanded" and "devious." I heard tales of the many times Jaracz imposed his detrimental opinions on weaker GB members through his forceful character.

In the early 1990s, his sneakiness caused him to almost lose his position. It was after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which was characterized by many of the Soviet Socialist Republics declaring their independence, this taking place from the beginning of 1990 until the end of 1991. After the republics claimed their independence, the GB decided it was an appropriate time to hold a convention in St. Petersburg and dispatched Jaracz to the area to make the arrangements. However, he secretly directed that many conventions be held in countries previously under the control of the Soviet Union. When this came to light after many conventions actually took place unbeknownst to the rest of the GB, to placate a very angry Body, he contritely apologized and promised never to do such a thing again.

Our subject had so much power that he prevented the appointment of Harry Peloyan to be an “Assistant to the GB” because of Harry’s doggedness and determination that no more would molesters hold positions of authority in the organization. Incidentally, Jaracz was so disliked by some members of the GB that the wife of one of them told me her husband, Daniel Sydlik, would not go to a group get-together if Jaracz was there.

While *Dateline* was being prepared in 2001, sometime during late summer, a close friend of Jaracz (who later left the organization) was having dinner with him. Jaracz was in good spirits and during the conversation he raised the issue of Christian conscience. He said **only** the GB can state what a Christian conscience is! He had not changed on this point from the time the GB was discussing alternative service back in 1978 when he said, “We should have a united stand all over the world. We should be decisive in this matter.... If we were to allow the brothers this latitude we would have problems.... **The my family need to have their consciences educated.**” *Crisis of Conscience*, page 139. Of course, that meant consciences manipulated by the GB.

Another point Jaracz made during the meal was this: He said that the GB had been preparing for much longer than anybody could guess for an attack by apostates. He said, “Stamping us into the ground brings on Armageddon. Watch Tower is material and when it disappears, the apostates can’t destroy the spiritual. He mentioned an article in the *Watchtower* magazine written by Fred Franz many years before about what happens when “Ariel” or the Watchtower organization is being stamped into the ground—that it brings on Armageddon. (Isaiah 29:7). Jaracz remarked that because of the “apostate” stamping he perceived was going on that summer, he said Armageddon had started.

When the producer of *Dateline* contacted the Watch Tower during mid-2001 requesting an interview for the upcoming program, he explained to Watchtower spokesman, J. R. Brown, what the program was going to be about and who was going to appear in it. In the beginning of September, a source at Watch Tower secretly reached out to a friend of mine to let him know that the Service Department and the Legal Department were arguing about me. Service wanted to immediately have me disfellowshipped, but the Legal Department’s advice was not to do it. Would the Service Department act alone without orders from on high? Of course not! The order came from the head of Service, Ted Jaracz, but Legal prevailed that time. However, as soon as WT leaders were informed of the date the program would air, I was indeed disfellowshipped.

The Watch Tower source talking to my friend sent a verbal message to be given to me which was this: “You are being watched over in friendship.” Further, the messenger expressed very kind words about my character. Nevertheless, due to the frightful events of 9/11/01, the *Dateline* program did not air in November of 2001 as had been scheduled, but was pushed forward to an undetermined date. Consequently, Jaracz began his fear-mongering campaign among his associates that Armageddon was nigh and the “apostates” had to be punished.

Another Bethel insider reported that during that summer of 2001, Jaracz and five other GB members went to France and Jaracz verbally beat the devil out of the branch leadership. They were accused of having had a dalliance with Ray Franz and might be apostate. Also, he said the UK branch was unhappy with Brooklyn and they and the leadership at the Australian branch were pushing to have Brooklyn overhauled and to abandon the two-witness policy. Nevertheless, the preservation of “God’s organization” was second to Jaracz, the Bible-teaching was first. It was also explained that Jaracz was personally opposed to the year 2000

corporate reorganization, and the then new committee arrangement. What the reason was for his opposition, I never heard.

On July 18th, this same insider said that the Public Affairs Office was being shut down due to the liberal attitude of many in that department. This precipitated an internal secret showdown between liberals and hard-liners. The liberals, some of whom were prime movers in Brooklyn decided change was needed over blood and child abuse. Both issues were reviewed but the hold out was Jaracz because of his view of certain scriptures. He and other hardliners insisted that change can't be seen as coming from the outside.

Where did the Legal Department stand in all of this? Overseer of the Legal Department, Philip Brumley, was not liked but was a pragmatist, a realist and he sided with the strongest camp. (For what it's worth, Brumley came up with the donation arrangement.)

The general atmosphere at Bethel during the summer of 2001 was of a very unhappy place. The GB blamed circuit overseers for the problems and they blamed the elders. Craggy veterans were eager and ready to go after the hardliners who they said were driving the organization down, but obviously, Jaracz and his camp won because nothing changed. And by the time Dateline aired in May of 2002, I had been disfellowshipped.

Jaracz's reputation as a tyrant was well known. Few had any good words to say about him except some of his peers who made excuses for him. One story frequently repeated around Bethel concerned his offensive words said to a young woman who wore jeans, even though it was the weekend and she was going shopping. On another occasion, in one of the elevators in the Towers Building, he inappropriately rebuked a young jean-wearing housekeeper on her way to her house-cleaning assignment to such a degree that he brought her to tears. Her husband reported the incident to other members of the GB and Klein was dispatched to scold Jaracz about his attitude, but Jaracz never changed his mind on the subject.

It was Jaracz whose opinions on dress were put in place for the Art Department. In photos or illustrations seen in Watch Tower literature, Witness women or girls were never to wear pants or pant suits. Witness men, and even young boys if possible, had to wear a suit, or a shirt and tie with dress pants in all pictures. It was as if he was still living in the 1950s in the "Leave It To Beaver" era.

Then there was the issue of women wearing pantsuits to the Kingdom Hall and particularly out in service during the winter. One insider said that as long as Jaracz was alive it would never be permitted because Jaracz ruled the Watch Tower with an iron fist and that fist was felt everywhere in the organization.

Now the "iron fist," Theodore Jaracz, is gone. We wait to see if there will be action taken to demonstrate that the present GB of Jehovah's Witnesses really do care about their flock by removing the harmful organizational policies that a hard-liner such as Jaracz supported or maneuvered into place, which have been slowly destroying the organization he came to control, and he did it all in the name of God.

After thoughts:

I'd like to explain what was meant in my article when it was said that Jaracz put the Bible first, not the organization. Usually, Jaracz is identified in our minds as first and foremost

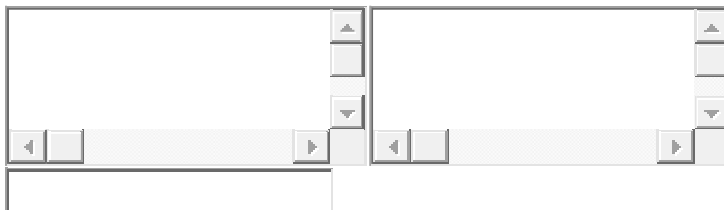
an *organization* man and he picked only *organization* men to groom to be Governing Body members. However, the context actually explains what was meant in my quote:

Also, he said the UK branch was unhappy with Brooklyn and they and the leadership at the Australian branch were pushing to have Brooklyn overhauled and to abandon the two-witness policy. Nevertheless, the preservation of “God’s organization” was second to Jaracz, the Bible-teaching was first.

The two branches were unhappy and wanted Brooklyn overhauled and to “*abandon the two-witness policy*” It was that Bible-based *policy* they wanted Brooklyn to abandon and to Jaracz that Bible-teaching was first, or his believed interpretation of that scripture was first. To the leadership of those two branches, the use of that scripture in molestation accusations was causing all the problems. However, to Jaracz, this Bible-teaching was first even though it meant the “organization” i.e. the UK and Australian Branches were unhappy, but they were of secondary concern to him.

For you who would like to hear Jaracz’s personal views about the events that happened in 2001 connected with the then up-coming *NBC Dateline* program, here’s a link to a lengthy telephone conversation that former Witness and frequent Watch Tower critic, Alan Feuerbacher, had with Ted Jaracz back in 2001 that is most illuminating.

<http://www.watchtowernews.org/media/jaracz2001.mp3>



Post Comment

zeb

Was he ever in the SS.?

[Reply](#)

jb

Probably, but reading through this article nearly brought on a panic attack as I recalled the thick and nausea-inducing atmosphere of the Kingdom Halls and JW-life. Careful, that tie may be a bit too wide to wear; that hairstyle is just too worldly. This same fear-of-man attitude was also reflected in other evangelical religions where a local pastor's reign of fear and intimidation guided flock to starve themselves and suppress individuality.

In defense of his aloof air at Bethel, the man probably was too keenly aware that despite the label of "God's organization" he was surrounded by ambitious and scheming MEN and WOMEN who would push their parents or children overboard into the cold Atlantic if it meant a promotion up the Watchtower's career ladder. A show of affiliation with someone in a hallway might turn into an accusation of favoritism.

I would agree that a Christian conscience is the best guide, if one has been trained to use it, or is training it by Holy Spirit, but last time I checked [which brings on waves of nausea and vomiting] Watchtower literature, Holy Spirit serving as a guide or trainer is a "no-no" because the GB is replacing HS. The weird thing in the Watchtower's perverse obsession with pulling up Mosaic Law practices and covenants, somehow the varied approaches to atonement sacrifice don't seem relevant as a reality that God—if exists—has many paths to atonement.

[Reply](#)

David Woroniuk

I found this very interesting and quite amazing at the same time ,i decided to research in to jaracz as i was recently telling my friend about when i met him in ukraine in the early 90's , i was brought up JW in the uk , my father was a 1st gen Ukrainian, when the soveit union colapsed me and my family drove there in a moto home , while we was there they was having a massive convention, maybe why we went at that particular time (i was 9 so a little hazey) my father was involved in the planning and he helped fund it , While this convention was happening i got to meet jaracz ,now as young JW i looked up to the GB like super heros , so i was super excited to meet him espeacily as i always fancied myself as one of the 1440000 , now meeting him was a let down ive always been pretty good at reading people even at that age ,when i was waiting to met him he was all happy shaking hands but when i met him and shaked his hand he was almost scared of me , we had a moment where i looked at him in his eyes and he melted he was clearly scared of me for some reason , and as soon as i brought up the 144000 he quickly got away from me literaly shrugging my hand away , Now this meeting has stuck me like yesterday for nearly 30 years , afterwards i told my mum and dad that i felt he was demonized, they laughed it off saying no way he GB , but i know what i saw and felt ,i scrutinised the neeting in my head trying to work out what i did wrong , i even came to conclusion that i was the evil bad one and he seen the devil in me , and now i read this article and i think i seen the devil in him and he knew it

[Reply](#)

Lawrae Babka

David Woroniuk, what an amazing boy you were at age 9 to be able to see so completely through him that it freaked him out! Likely he felt you had observed him and looking into his eyes saw something that was at least extremely distasteful if not evil. Maybe you would not have taken much more of it, but his reaction and fear of you definitely seem to clinch and verify your findings. I'm sorry your parents didn't listen to you. It seems we should be grateful that you didn't run into him again, although that would have been interesting, for sure. Anyway, I enjoyed this article and comments immensely as Bethel life in general is so secret but also such an exalted life, it was my dream to end up there, thankfully I am where I am today! The loving sweet older brother we see in the old videos is definitely not what he seemed and was portrayed as!! This is very non-faith strengthening, thank you! Very well written, thoughtful, organized article!

Source: <https://watchtowerdocuments.org/the-theocratic-life-and-times-of-theodore-jaracz/>