

Former *Century* editor James McKendree Wall dies at 92

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(Century photo)

James McKendree Wall, who served as editor and publisher of the *Christian Century* from 1972 to 1999, died March 22 at the age of 92. He is remembered at the *Century* for his ecumenical interests, his stabilization of the magazine's financial picture, and his encouragement of some new directions for the *Century's* pages.

A native of Monroe, Georgia, Wall began his journalism career covering sports for local papers in Atlanta. He later became an ordained minister in the Methodist Church and worked for a time as a pastor. By the time he came to the *Century*, he had a well-developed passion for exploring the intersection of religion and culture, especially film.

In the 1960s, Wall played a key role in establishing the Motion Picture Association of America's film rating system. Throughout his career, he wrote three books and a half dozen book chapters on faith and culture and served as the longtime chair of the National Council of Churches' film and industry committee. In retirement, Wall continued writing movie reviews on his blog.

Wall's other great love was politics. He was close with fellow Georgian Jimmy Carter and chaired Carter's primary and general campaigns in his adopted home state of Illinois in 1976 and 1980. In 1983-84, Wall managed Democrat Paul Simon's successful US Senate campaign.

Wall was an avid traveler, and it was his 20 trips to the Middle East that sparked his interest in Palestinian rights. In 2005, Wall and his wife, Eleanor, were involved in the founding of the Seraj Library Project, which builds children's libraries in rural Palestinian villages.

Wall's extensive pro-Palestinian writing at times devolved into anti-Semitism. After his retirement, the *Century* and other organizations he had been involved with faced pressure to distance themselves from him.

"He was a gifted editor," said current *Century* editor/publisher Peter Marty. "And he had a few very particular and focused passions that caught the admiration, and sometimes the ire, of *Century* readers." —*Christian Century* staff