

## Rhett and Scarlett

"Gone With the Wind," released in 1939, is considered one of the most beloved, enduring and popular films of all time. Southerners, in particular, relate well to the epic for its depiction of life in the South prior to the Civil War (or War Between the States, as it is preferred to be called in this region). Truth is stranger -- and more exciting -- than fiction, and the story behind the movie is proof.

Zig Ziglar, motivational speaker, in his book, "Something to Smile About," tells about the original story. There was a Rhett Butler, but his real name was Rhett Turnipseed. Scarlett O'Hara was Emelyn Louise Hannon. Yes, Rhett did walk out on her and join the Confederate Army.

When the war was over, Rhett Turnipseed became a drifter and gambler. He ended up in Nashville, Tennessee, where his life was turned around on Easter morning in 1871 when he attended a Methodist revival meeting and became a committed Christian.

Soon after, Rhett enrolled at Vanderbilt University and became a Methodist preacher. Reverend Rhett was worried about a young woman in his flock who had run away and was working in a house of prostitution in St. Louis. Rhett rode off to look for her and found her. Incredibly enough, the madam was his former love, Emelyn Louise Hannon -- or Scarlett.

She refused to let Rhett see the young woman, so Rhett challenged her to a game of cards. If he won, the young girl would be free; if Scarlett won, she would remain. Rhett won.

Fortunately, the story ends well for everyone. The young girl married well and became the matriarch of a leading family in the state. Later, Emelyn (or Scarlett), so impressed with the change in Rhett's life, also became a Christian and joined the Methodist church. Eventually, she opened an orphanage for Cherokee children. She died in 1903.

The ironic twists and turns in the lives of these individuals prove that people can change. Going from gambler to preacher and from madam to operator of an orphanage for displaced children represents quite a turnabout. The transformation is testimony to the power of God in lives yielded to Him.

--Beecher Hunter