

# BAPTIST FEATURES

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**Editor's Note:** Baptist Men's Day is a newcomer to the January calendar of Southern Baptist Convention work. This first Baptist Press personality profile tells about George W. Schroeder, who helps make the men's day what it is. Other profiles will follow till executives of all SBC agencies have been presented.

**Schroeder Tackles Work  
With Challenge To Win**

By Roy Jennings  
Baptist Press Staff Writer

"Come on gang. Clobber those guys!"

This positive challenge to win characterizes the way George W. Schroeder, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention's Brotherhood Commission, throws himself into his work.

Whatever the assignment--work or play--Schroeder has the reputation of tackling it as if his life depended upon it.

Schroeder learned the philosophy of giving his best while playing forward for a high school basketball powerhouse at Pinckneyville, Ill., in the 1930s.

The husky German has never let up.

At 48, as the chief executive officer of the commission, he thinks nothing of grinding out a 14-hour day and topping it off with a speaking engagement.

This hungry desire for service has paid off during the last 12 years in new church Brotherhoods and Royal Ambassador chapters.

Under Schroeder's leadership the number of church Brotherhoods has grown from 5,076 to 14,480 and Royal Ambassador chapters from 8,500 to 14,616. Enrolled are more than 392,000 men and 235,000 boys.

Who is this man Schroeder?

Like most Southern Baptist leaders he grew up in a small town, Pinckneyville, a little hamlet of 3,300 people, on the main line of the Illinois Central Railroad between New Orleans and St. Louis.

Schroeder's father was a locomotive engineer. His grandparents had left Germany to settle in southern Illinois.

With three sisters and a brother in the family, Schroeder learned early in life he would have to work for what he got. A sympathetic service station operator gave him his first job.

At the age of 12, Schroeder was so short he couldn't reach the radiator cap on cars so he filled them by sound from a bucket with a long spout.

After high school and college--bachelor of arts and master's degree from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale--Schroeder was working for an automobile agency when Southern Baptists called him into denominational service.

Schroeder's first denominational assignment was in 1940 as Brotherhood secretary for Illinois Baptists. Six years later Lawson Cooke, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention Brotherhood Commission, tapped Schroeder as an associate. His work henceforth would not be for one state alone; it would be for Baptist men from coast to coast.

When Cooke retired in 1951, Schroeder was chosen as his successor.

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"I didn't get into denominational work by accident," Schroeder says. "As far back as I can remember, I had a definite feeling that God wanted to use me in his work, not as a preacher but as a layman in some special way.

"When Brotherhood work was begun in Illinois in the 1930s, my interest quickened. I joined the Brotherhood of my church. The men elected me president. Later I served as president of the association and of the state Brotherhood convention."

Schroeder has great hopes for Southern Baptist men, but he realizes that men alone can't achieve them. That's one of the reasons he starts off every work day in a spiritual way.

In the office by 7:30, he spends a half hour in prayer and quiet meditation before plunging into the assignments for the day.

"This is the only way I can prepare myself for the work ahead," he confesses.

Admittedly concerned about Southern Baptist men, Schroeder would like to see three ambitions achieved.

One is to provide a suitable home for Brotherhood and Royal Ambassador work. With the completion of a third floor of the new \$400,000 Brotherhood Commission building at Memphis, Tenn., that ambition will be reached.

"I also want to have a part in developing a challenging program which will really put men to work for Christ. And when this program is prepared, I want time to lead men into putting it into practice.

"If I can do that, I'll be convinced that my life has been well spent," Schroeder says.

Does he have any frustrations?

Yes. They are found in the red tape of denominational activities.

"Of course, I realize procedures are necessary for a denomination as large as ours," Schroeder said. "But it's still frustrating to see things men need to do which must go undone for now because of red tape."

Despite a busy work schedule, Schroeder still finds time for his family. Schroeder's wife is the former Lorraine Wilson who caught his eye when she was librarian at Pinckneyville Community High School and he was a budding high school senior.

His two sons, George, a 20-year-old pre-med student at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, and Lawson, an 18-year-old pre-dental student at Hardin-Simmons University, insist on a weekly hunting outing when they are home.

Schroeder finds another reason to visit Abilene, Tex., where his 24-year-old daughter, Harriet, teaches science at Hardin-Simmons, a Baptist college. Business trips to Nashville often include a visit to George's dormitory.

Besides hunting, Schroeder likes to read. His library of 3,000 books attest this fact. His particular weakness is biographies, especially those of statesmen.

As executive secretary, Schroeder has literally traveled around the world on Southern Baptist business. He always is in a hurry.

But it took the Mississippi Highway Patrol to slow him down several years ago and bring about the most embarrassing moment of his career.

Fretting at a long line of cars ahead and aware he needed to be in a meeting in Miami, Fla., Schroeder decided to pass. Unfortunately, a highway partolman was in the lead car.

Schroeder climaxed his most frustrating day before a wizened justice of the peace on a Mississippi side road who calmly intoned:

"That will be \$11.20, please. Next case!"

But Schroeder's successes far outnumber his setbacks. That's why Baptist men have confidently looked to him for leadership the last 12 years.