

BAPTIST FEATURES

PRODUCED BY BAPTIST PRESS
NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

127 NINTH AVE., N., NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE AL 4-1631

W. C. Fields, *Director*

Theo Sommerkamp, *Assistant Director*

February 6, 1963

Editors Note: Although February marks a special calendar emphasis on Baptist higher education, it's a year-round task for the Education Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. This fourth SBC personality feature from Baptist Press presents Rabun L. Brantley, commission executive secretary.

A 'Teacher At Heart'
Guides Education Work

By Leonard Hill
Baptist Press Staff Writer

No man was ever more self-conscious than Rabun Lee Brantley the autumn day he strode across the campus to teach his first college class. And he had reason to be. He was only 20 years old, unmarried, on an all-girl Baptist campus--Tift College in Forsyth, Ga.

It was slightly surprising he was teaching at all.

"I never planned to teach. I never decided to teach. I just taught!" Teach he did, plus handling such extra-educational chores as business manager, publicity director, dean of men, dean and registrar. Later came top-level positions of college president and vice-president.

Today if the graying, 59-year-old educator chose to pose as an expert on Pink Teas, no one could question his credentials. "I've been to hundreds," he says, recalling one of the occupational hazards of 29 years spent at three Baptist girls' schools--Tift; Mary-Hardin Baylor, Belton, Tex., and Virginia Intermont, Bristol, Va. At Intermont he was president for 11 years.

In addition he sandwiched in a brief interlude with Georgia State College, Atlanta, an editorial job, and was vice-president of his alma mater, Mercer University (Baptist), in Macon, Ga.

"I must have visited in the homes of 10,000 girls, talking with parents and trying to recruit students," the soft-spoken Brantley reminisces. Wherever he travels he constantly meets former students.

This delights him--except when a woman deliberately tries to embarrass him with the question, "You don't know who I am, do you?"

"Keeping up with men as they grow older is bad enough," Brantley declares. "But when a former student is feminine she can change dress style, hair style, color of hair and even her name." Actually, associates claim Brantley has a good memory of names and faces.

One student he has kept up with is Elizabeth Estes, who attracted his attention soon after he began teaching at Tift. As soon as she graduated he married her! "You know, after we began dating, she would never take a class under me," Brantley recalls.

The couple borrowed money for an exciting honeymoon in Europe and then returned home to pay the debt on a salary suddenly reduced by the 1929 stock market crash.

Brantley believes every man should use his vocation to glorify God. He also believes that all his varied experience teaching and in administration was preparing him for his present job: He is executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention Education Commission.

"I know the viewpoint both of professor and president," he says, "I've been both." His wide acquaintance with leading figures in educational circles is also an asset as the Education Commission seeks to serve Southern Baptist schools and colleges.

-more-

"How do you compare being an administrator to teaching?" someone asked Brantley. "An old professor once warned me," Brantley replied, "never to get into administration. 'Just keep teaching,' he said. But like most teachers I thought I had some ideas about administration and wanted the chance to try them.

"Of course I discovered long ago," he smiled, "that there was usually a difference between what I wanted to do and what I could do."

His main regret in his present position is that what he is able to do seems only a drop in the bucket to what needs to be done.

The Education Commission serves Baptist colleges and schools which desire help in finding teachers, planning buildings and raising funds. It serves as a clearing house and source of information for the entire Convention on matters of Christian higher education.

If Brantley had a feminine environment on the campus, the reverse is true at home. His three children were all sons. Today Billy, 24, is married and studying physics in graduate school at Vanderbilt University, Nashville. Richard, 19, is a freshman at Wake Forest College (Baptist) in Winston-Salem, N. C. Lee, the oldest son, died in an auto accident in 1956 a few weeks before he was to graduate from college. His loss was deeply felt by the family.

The Brantleys have a warm family companionship. While their home is located between two golf courses, Brantley doesn't play golf.

"My hobby is piddling around the house," he says. "Piddling" may range from fixing an aerial on the 35-foot roof--to the dismay of Mrs. Brantley--to building a cat house heated with a light bulb. He vows someday to invent a baking pan with many corners to turn out a cake with all crust.

"The crusty pieces are more chewy and tasty," declares Brantley, who despite an admitted liking for desserts, keeps his medium build trim.

Brantley is a layman. His pastor says, "I wish I had a church full of laymen like him."

When arranging his schedule he makes a definite effort to avoid being away from his church on Sunday. When he is gone the church misses a solo tenor, a college men's class teacher and a deacon.

Brantley was born on a farm near Sylvania, Ga., one of five children. He was converted at 12 and baptized at nearby Green Hill Baptist Church. From Mercer University he obtained a master's degree in journalism and George Peabody College in Nashville granted him a doctor's degree in English.

Today he converses with equal intelligence and enthusiasm about Shakespeare or his Georgia farm.

During World War II, like many people, he held two jobs. At night he was a teacher. Daytime he was editor of Southern Automotive Journal, even though as he expressed it, "I didn't know a transmission from a carburetor."

Fortunately, it was his editorial skill that was in demand and he had skilled technicians to advise him on correct mechanical practice.

"I never thought I'd come to Nashville to live," he says. "I thought the climate was terrible when I was here in school. But my family and I feel right at home now, and we love this city."

Since coming to the Education Commission in 1950, the Brantley circle of friends has not ceased to grow. Partly responsible are contacts through such things as Kiwanis Club (he has 16 years' perfect attendance) and participation in civic and educational groups.

It is Brantley's conviction a man's Christian influence should be felt outside the walls of his own church.

"I'll never get away from being a teacher at heart," Brantley says, and adds in the same breath, "but I love my present work." He says he came to the Education Commission and Nashville because he believed it was God's will.

BAPTIST PRESS ®

127 NINTH AVE., N.
NASHVILLE 3, TENN.

Albert McClellan
Executive Committee
127 Ninth Avenue, North
Nashville, Tennessee

318

NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

WATCH FOR THE (BP) CREDIT LINE

Cutlines to Rabun L. Brantley feature---

Baptist Press--2/6/63

SPACE RACE--"Piddling around the house is my hobby," says Rabun L. Brantley, Nashville, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention Education Commission. Has he tried to enter the race for space? Not in actual rockets. But he is concerned with the race to provide space for students at Baptist colleges and their skyrocketing needs in money and faculty. (BP) Photo

February 6, 1963

California Editor,
J. Kelly Simmons, Dies

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--A young Army chaplain was awarded the Bronze Star for valor in action as he moved with the invading troops on D-Day in Normandy during World War II.

That chaplain, back in civilian life, manifested the same courage in another critical hour of his life.

The doctors had told him he had cancer they could not cure.

"Life now has a fuller meaning," wrote J. Kelly Simmons after hearing their verdict.

"We will live until God calls us home, and we will dedicate our fullest capacity to making the most of every allotted moment," the 58-year-old minister, who served as editor of a Baptist paper, continued.

The call came to J. Kelly Simmons Feb. 1. He died in Fresno, where he edited the California Southern Baptist.

Funeral services were conducted Feb. 2 in Fresno. Morris T. Wall, pastor in Yuma, Ariz., officiated, assisted by Grady C. Cothen of Fresno, executive secretary, Southern Baptist General Convention of California.

A second service was planned for Waco, Tex., where Simmons asked to be buried. Wall again was to officiate, with assistance from E. S. James, Dallas, editor of the Baptist Standard.

Simmons told friends to donate money to Baptist missions in California that would have been spent for flowers for the funeral.

The Baptist editor was born in Westminster, Tex. He majored in journalism at Baylor University (Baptist) in Waco, and attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

He taught high school five years in Texas. His pastorates included six Texas churches, including one at Waco.

The pioneer missions areas of the Southern Baptist Convention lured him. Simmons went to Idaho in 1956 as an area missionary and moved to Arizona in the same role the next year.

In 1958, J. Kelly Simmons took the editor's chair of the Arizona denominational weekly, the Baptist Beacon, at Phoenix. He was to serve out his years as an editor.

The Colorado Baptist General Convention beckoned in 1960. He went to Denver to edit the Rocky Mountain Baptist, circulated in a six-state area.

He served there for one year. The California convention wanted Simmons to edit its weekly and he accepted the call.

He was at one time a reporter for the Sherman, Tex., daily.

Survivors include his wife, Mrs. Edna M. Simmons. Simmons had three daughters and a son by his first wife. They live in Texas.

He maintained the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the Chaplains Corps, as an Army reservist. He was a charter member of Sigma Delta Chi's chapter at Baylor University. This is a professional journalism fraternity.

Simmons was once on the executive board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. He also was at one time or another trustee of East Texas Baptist College,

Marshall, and Baptist Hospital, Waco.

He was moderator of three associations of churches in Texas.

-30-

Douglas M. Branch
Killed In Accident

(2 6-63)

AHOSKIE, N. C. (BP)--Douglas M. Branch, 54, general secretary of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, was killed in a car-truck crash near here Feb. 1.

A truck stalled in the highway directly in front of Branch's car. He could not avoid the collision.

The North Carolina Baptist leader had spoken earlier in the day at Chowan College (Baptist) at Murfreesboro, N. C. He was on his way to hunt turkeys in the northeast part of the state and was clad in hunting clothes when the wreck occurred.

He was evidently killed instantly from a broken neck.

Survivors include his wife and two children, who live in Cary, N. C., and a married daughter living at Murfreesboro.

Funeral services were held Feb. 3 at Forest Hills Baptist Church, Raleigh. The body lay in state at the Baptist Building in Raleigh, where Branch had offices, for 24 hours before the funeral.

Nane Starnes, president of the Baptist State Convention, and pastor at West Asheville, officiated. Charles B. Trammel of Burnsville, N. C., assisted.

Interment was at Raleigh.

Branch came to the general secretary post in 1959 to succeed M. A. Huggins, retired. He was pastor of First Baptist Church, Rocky Mount, N. C., at the time of his call.

Before this, he led the Southern Baptist Convention through a period of major reorganization. He was chairman of the SBC Committee to Study Total Convention Program. This committee reported to the SBC in 1958 at Houston and 1959 at Louisville.

For nearly three years--from early in 1953 to late 1955--Branch was president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

He also was a former member of the SBC Executive Committee.

Born at Wendell, N. C., near Raleigh, he graduated from Baptist-operated Wake Forest College, then located in Wake Forest, N. C. He studied also at Duke University Divinity School, Durham, N. C., and at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

Converted in 1917, at the age of nine, Branch was for a time member of a Methodist church, where his mother also held membership. He became a Baptist in 1933 and was baptized by the Edenton (N. C.) Baptist Church.

He was ordained to the ministry in 1935. He served as moderator of a Baptist association of churches in 1941-1942. In 1951, Branch presided over the North Carolina Baptist Pastors' Conference.

He enjoyed sports of many kinds---boxing, fishing and hiking as well as hunting.

Branch's pastorates included also rural churches in three North Carolina counties while he attended Wake Forest College. Cary, where he made his home at the time of his death, was another early pastorate. He served, too, several other churches in the state.

Branch held pastorate also in Sonora, Ky. He was a field secretary for the state convention in North Carolina from 1941 to 1943.

-more-

In civic life, he belonged to the Kiwanis Club and to the Masons.

He married Jessie Walker in 1933. Their children include Minnie Frances, now Mrs. Ben Sutton, whose husband is business manager of Chowan College; Jessica, 18, a student at Meredith College (Baptist) in Raleigh, and Douglas Jr., 11.

Accident investigators said the driver of a 1-1/2 ton truck stalled in the highway while making a left turn in the face of oncoming traffic. Branch could not avoid hitting the truck broadside. He was dead on arrival at an Ahoskie hospital, where doctors said the collision broke his neck.

-30-

(Note to Baptist state editors: This mailing includes two obituaries which you were mailed Saturday in a special mailing because of urgency. It was impossible to avoid duplication if we were to rush you advance obits, and follow through with a regular mailing. The duplication, which we try to avoid, was necessary in your best interests.)

-30-

Ambassador Congress
Kickoff Day Feb. 22

(2-6-63)

MEMPHIS (BP)--Almost everybody knows Feb. 22 is George Washington's birthday. But to Royal Ambassadors the day has another special meaning this year.

It is "registration kickoff day" for the third National Royal Ambassador Congress.

This national event for an expected 6,000 boys, ages 12-17, will be held Aug. 13-15 at Washington, D. C., under auspices of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission and state Brotherhood departments.

Boys who register early will save money, Edward Hurt Jr., Congress director, said. Registration fee is \$2 for boys who sign up by July 4 and \$2.50 thereafter.

First program personality selected for the boys' meeting is Gregory Walcott, Baptist lay preacher, television personality, and California Baptists' representative on the Brotherhood Commission.

Walcott will play a leading part in a pageant pointing up the prominent role of early Baptists in bringing religious liberty to this country.

The 30-minute pageant will highlight the opening night of the Congress.

Other Congress features will include a short address by the winner of a national speakers' contest and dedication of a memorial to Luther Rice, 19th Century Baptist leader.

The featured speaker, a Royal Ambassador, will be chosen during competition between states Aug. 11 at Washington. Competition within states is being supervised by state Baptist Brotherhood departments.

The memorial to Rice, a 10-foot limestone monument, will be unveiled on the lawn of the new Luther Rice Memorial Baptist Church. It is to serve as a Royal Ambassador testimony to Washington.

Royal Ambassador chapters are permitted by their state Brotherhood departments to give a maximum of \$1 toward the cost of the Rice Memorial, Hurt said.

-30-

(Photo of Gregory Walcott mailed to state Baptist editors)