

BAPTIST FEATURES

PRODUCED BY BAPTIST PRESS
NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

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

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May 25, 1963

Editor's Note: R. Alton Reed, executive secretary of the SBC Annuity Board, is the seventh person featured in this Baptist Press series on Convention leaders.

R. Alton Reed Cooks
Meals At His House

By John D. Bloskas
Baptist Press Staff Writer

R. Alton Reed starts his day with a milk shake!

While he stirs up his own concoction of a small glass of orange juice, an equal amount of non-fat milk, one raw egg and a half a saccharin tablet, he's deciding what he will cook for breakfast.

Reed eats a hearty breakfast although he may go easy on the other meals. Each breakfast is different with hot cakes, cheese omelet and French toast topping his list as favorites.

Reed arises daily at 5:30 a.m., drinks his milk shake, holds his private devotion, then cooks his breakfast. He never wakes his wife, Helen.

"She likes to sleep late. I like to cook, so it works out just right," Reed smiles.

His love for cooking goes back to the days when he served as pastor. To relieve the pressures of the pastorate, he baked cakes on Saturday afternoons. He bakes cakes today, but not as often as he did as a pastor.

Following his morning ritual, Reed gets ready for his heavy schedule as executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board, the post he's held for the past eight years.

Reed's ministry began in 1930. During the depression, a big turning point in his life took place. Reed was rapidly gaining fame in a radio career, while he served as pastor of a small church near Dallas, Tex. He got an offer to manage an Eastern radio station, but, if he took it, he had to give up his ministry.

He wanted to accept but he couldn't escape God's call. So he decided to talk it over with his father who owned a large department store in Henderson, Tex.

"Son, are you really called to preach?" his father asked.

Reed replied: "Yes, Dad."

"Then you must say no to this offer," his father warned.

Reed agreed, but driving back to his home in Dallas he reasoned: "I could work for a while, save my money and return to preach for nothing." His thinking seemed sound. For three years following his training at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., he worked as chief announcer for KRLD in Dallas while serving as pastor of Cockrell Hill Baptist Church nearby for no pay--only a house.

Reed decided to accept the radio offer.

A few moments later, Reed, driving alone, was involved in a two-car collision. Of the five people in the accident, only Reed was seriously hurt. He suffered cuts on his face, his upper teeth were knocked out and his kneecap fractured.

In the hospital Reed decided: "God would always find a place for me to serve if I would just turn myself over to Him completely."

His decision kept him in the ministry which eventually led to his present post as executive secretary of the Annuity Board, the agency that administers retirement plans for the Convention.

Reed was born June 4, 1906, in Henderson to W. Z. and Annie (Smith) Reed.

Seven years later, he accepted the Lord. And in 1926, only a few months away from completing pre-med work at Baylor University, he surrendered to preach during a campus revival. After his decision came a moment that stands supreme in his life.

His mother told him that as a little lad he was so very ill the doctor warned he might die. The parents prayed: "Lord, if he can be saved we turn his life over to you completely."

"When you didn't die, we knew you would some day be in the Lord's service," his mother said. "We didn't want to tell you before because we didn't want it to influence you in any way."

Reed tackles whole-heartedly any project and seems to thrive on the difficult.

Once, Reed memorized the play "Caonsacchi" then playing on Broadway, instead of writing a thesis.

At a university in Louisville, Reed taught freshman English and Spanish. And once he was asked to teach a course in aesthetics. Reed agreed, then went to the library to learn what aesthetics was. He also studied violin for 11 years, playing in the band and symphony at Baylor.

While attending the Southern Seminary, he met Helen Barker. A year later they were married. They have two daughters, both of them married with children of their own.

In June, 1930, the couple moved to Dallas where his ministry began. Then followed Carlisle Church until 1937, when he moved to Lamar Avenue Baptist Church in Wichita Falls, Tex.

In 1940 he became pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas, just organized with 30 members. For eight years he worked and planned a church plant that today is the second largest in Dallas.

In 1948, he became public relations director for Texas Baptists, followed by his call in 1953 to the SBC Annuity Board as public relations director. After Walter Alexander, executive secretary of the Annuity Board, died, Reed was elected to that post in 1955.

Reed's foremost ambition is for the Annuity Board's service to reach into every area of Southern Baptist life.

"If the Annuity Board cannot do more for its people in retirement than any other organization, it has no reason to exist," he maintains.

Consequently, he keeps ever alert to new techniques that will improve efficiency. He tends to become impatient with outworn formulas or outmoded procedures and moves rapidly to change them.

But he seldom becomes impatient with coworkers. Together, they hammer away at the problems, then he takes his impatience out fishing, a sport he loves.

Reed is quick to praise an associate and never takes credit for anything the Board accomplishes.

"What has been accomplished has been because of the leadership of the Holy Spirit," he maintains.

Baptist Press Photo

Cutline

May 25, 1963

(This picture intended to run with feature story on R. Alton Reed, enclosed)

WIFE'S PORTRAIT--Portrait of Mrs. Reed graces the office in Dallas occupied by R. Alton Reed, executive secretary, Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board.
(BP) Photo