

**(BP) -- FEATURES**  
produced by Baptist Press

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January 5, 1984

84-3

Grady Cothen Reflects  
On Multi-Faceted Career

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--As Grady Cothen reflects on 40 years of ministry which encompass virtually every level of the denomination, he recalls satisfying experiences at each juncture, "all of them directly related to what I conceive to have been God's purpose for me."

Cothen, 63, will retire from the presidency of the Baptist Sunday School Board Feb. 1, 1984, after heading the church programs and publishing agency since February 1975.

He will end a professional career that has included the presidencies of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Oklahoma Baptist University, as well as executive secretary of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California.

Earlier, he was pastor of First Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala., Olivet Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, and White Oak Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tenn. He also served two years as a U.S. Navy chaplain during World War II which included duty in the Philippines.

As executive secretary in California 1961-66, Cothen recalled, "I had an opportunity to see the denomination at large for the first time and become acquainted with how it functions. I had the very satisfying opportunity of trying to lead a state in transition from a newer convention into a full-fledged denomination entity."

At OBU, 1966-70, Cothen observed, "The necessity for studying academic administration was laid on me. I had to learn a little bit about many things and it was very stimulating." Also, he noted, "We were able to steer the university back to a close relationship with the denomination."

Cothen described his four years, 1970-74, as president of New Orleans seminary as the job "that was perhaps closest to my own sense of personal call. There was a direct relationship between what we did for and with the students and what the churches did.

"This was discernible and the results were almost immediate," added Cothen. "It was a tremendously fulfilling experience to help reshape the seminary in keeping with the needs of churches as we understood them at that time."

Elected president of the Sunday School Board in February 1974, Cothen called the board "the most complex of our institutions. It has taxed all my knowledge of finance, administration, organization and relationships to our many publics."

Cothen said the most difficult side of being president of the board has been the fact that the chief executive is "constantly in the public eye. There is little privacy and little personal social life."

On the other hand, Cothen cited the board's 1,500 employees as the most rewarding part of being president. "The kinds of people we have at the Sunday School Board, many of whom have come in these nine years, are a constant joy to me," he said. "Southern Baptists, through the board, have the opportunity to enable a lot of fine people to do very fine work."

When Cothen became president in February 1975, he set forth four priorities for his administration: to provide in-depth Bible study for the masses, equip the saints for the work of the ministry, enrich and support family life and encourage and aid pastors, church staffs and their families.

"I think we have made very substantial progress on these priorities, but I wouldn't be true to myself if I didn't say we have not done as well as I wanted us to do," Cothen.

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On Bible study, Cothen cited the purchase of the Holman Company as an opportunity for the board to become a distributor of scripture and the efforts to increase the denomination's Sunday school enrollment to 8.5 million by 1985.

"I recently told Harry (Sunday school department director Harry Piland) "I'm going to the best unemployed support he's got in 8.5," quipped Cothen.

Related to equipping the saints, Cothen noted, "We have church training growing again. We still need many other kinds of training opportunities available to Southern Baptists."

In ministering to families, "We're doing more than we were doing, but we aren't doing anything like we can do," said Cothen.

Evaluating the fourth priority of serving ministers, he cited a broadened scope of influence including an enlarged program of continuing education training.

"I'm very grateful for what we have done," said Cothen. "I'm looking forward with keen anticipation to what the board will do in all these areas."

Despite the fact he has spent the last 22 years in state and denominational institutions, Cothen remains convinced that the focal point of the denomination is the local church.

"The work of the Lord is done basically by the local congregation of believers," said Cothen. "Denominational institutions support the churches. All a congregation has to do to negate anything the denomination does is ignore it. Any denominational program is totally dependent on whether a church wants to do it. If they want to do it, there are many materials available. If they don't want to do it, nobody ever says a word."

After cancer surgery in 1980 and several subsequent hospitalizations (but no recurrence of malignancy), Cothen announced in 1982 he would retire 18 months before his 65th birthday, a decision he continues to believe was right. "Any person who has been in the middle of the denomination's activities will miss them," Cothen observed. "Obviously, when I am no longer a part of it all, it will change the way I live my life."

However, he emphasized, "The Sunday School Board needs a president of vigor and physical health, who can work long hours for extended periods of time without undue fatigue. So, while I shall miss the activity of being president, what has been done is proper."

In preparing to turn over the reins of leadership to Lloyd Elder, elected in February 1983 to succeed Cothen, he said at first he had wished "to tie up loose ends in neat little packages," but quickly realized that was impossible in an institution where many plans in the Cothen administration will be implemented after Elder becomes president.

"I come to these times not with regret, remorse or tears but with rejoicing whether I am here or not, all of this will continue to go on," said Cothen. "Southern Baptists will continue to get church literature, have field service events and emphasize growing Sunday schools. This is inherent in God's plan of redemption and in the continuity of institutions."

Of Elder, Cothen said, "I feel he is the Lord's leader for the next era at the Sunday School Board. He is bright, learns quickly, remembers well. He knows Baptists, is administratively oriented and organizationally knowledgeable."

After Feb. 1, Grady and Bettye Cothen will move to the Mississippi Gulf Coast where he plans to rest several months to regain his health. Then he will respond to invitations he has received to teach at several seminaries and colleges and to preach.

"I will be available to help institutions and churches of the Southern Baptist Convention in any way I can," said Cothen.

And, added the man who relishes his Mississippi roots and the childhood when he roamed rural creeks with a cane pole, "I expect to reserve an appreciable amount of time to fish."

## Military Coup In Nigeria Doesn't Faze Samford Group

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Despite concerns about recent political developments in Nigeria, 28 Samford University students and faculty members headed for the African country Jan. 4.

The departure came after a weekend of news reports concerning the ouster of the elected civilian government by the Nigerian military on Dec. 31.

With a resumption of airline travel to Nigeria on Jan. 3, however, the trip, which had been months in the planning, was given the green light by Samford officials.

"The type of coup that it was would lead us to believe Americans, or anyone else for that matter, would not be in any danger," said W.A. Cowley, Samford faculty member and former missionary to Nigeria who coordinated the trip. The transition of power, he said, appeared to have been "handled in a smooth, businesslike way."

Earl Potts, acting executive secretary of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, had been in telephone contact with Nigerian Baptist officials who "are looking forward to our group's coming," Cowley said.

The trip is an out-growth of a two-year Partnership program being observed by Alabama Baptists and Nigerian Baptists. The Samford group will spend three weeks visiting, sharing and learning about their Baptist counterparts in the African nation.

The Samford group traveled by bus from Birmingham to Atlanta, where they boarded an airplane for Kano, Nigeria, via a day-long layover in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Although numerous visits have been made back and forth on the part of Baptist lay persons and denominational workers during the past year, this will be the first such student trip.

The political changes in Nigeria have not fazed Donna Hix, a Samford senior religion major from Millington, Tenn., who admitted on the day of departure to being "more and more" excited about the trip. "God wouldn't have provided for me to go on this trip and then leave me when I get there," she said.

Traveling with the Samford students are Ginny Bridges, campus ministries director; Harold Hunt, head of the drama department; Ronnie Prevost, a religion professor, and Marla Cortis, wife of Samford's president.

Cowley and Carl Whirley, both Samford religion professors and former missionaries to Nigeria, have worked with leaders of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to arrange the trip.

In Nigeria, the Samford students will scatter, assisting Southern Baptist missionaries and Nigerian Baptist leaders in whatever way possible. Some will visit their peers at high school and college campuses throughout the country. Others will lend medical personnel a hand when appropriate.

"There will be somebody almost everywhere," Cowley said, "in urban areas as well as in bush country."

The 24 students were selected to participate on the basis of commitment, dedication and willingness to handle cross-cultural differences. "They will find themselves in many different situations, so it is necessary they be flexible and adaptable," Cowley explained.

A series of orientation sessions has provided in-depth training in Christian witnessing and cultural information, particularly concerning the place of Christianity in the Nigerian culture. Samford is affiliated with the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

Edwards Fills New  
Vice President's Slot

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--James W. Edwards, vice president and dean of Dallas Baptist College, has been named vice president for financial affairs of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission (RTVC) effective Jan. 1, 1984.

Edwards, 46, will provide financial and business leadership for the RTVC, including supervision of accounting, purchasing, personnel and legal operations. He will be responsible for developing and overseeing the preparation of the RTVC budget (\$10.8 million for the 1983-84 fiscal year). It is a newly created position.

Edwards is a graduate of Western Kentucky University at Bowling Green, is a certified public accountant, has a master's degree in accounting and financial management from Indiana University and has a Ph.D from Michigan State University where he studied financial management, accounting, public policy and finance, economics, statistics and mathematics.

In addition to his work at Dallas Baptist College, Edwards has served on the faculty of several colleges and universities, including Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, the University of Virginia in Charlottesville and Western Kentucky University.

Edwards served two terms as mayor of Plano, Texas, a Dallas suburb. He was founding president of the Plano Preservation Association and was a founding director of the Plano Cultural Arts Council and the Plano chapter of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra.

He is a member of First Baptist Church, Plano, and a former member of Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, where he was a deacon.

He has served as a consultant in financial management, portfolio, accounting and reporting system to religious organizations, educational institutions, foundations, funding organizations, minority business firms and local and national CPA firms.

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Cult Knowledge Needed  
For Successful Witness

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press  
1/5/84

RICHFIELD, Utah (BP)--Caustic remarks and an unloving witness toward others' beliefs deter rather than enhance Southern Baptists' efforts to win cult members to Christ, according to a Southern Baptist pastoral missionary.

Medford Hutson, an appointee of the SBC Home Mission Board, emphasized Southern Baptists should learn about Mormonism and other cults because of the power those groups exert against Christians.

Hutson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Richfield, Utah, talked recently of the need for Southern Baptists to study materials on cults and witnessing resources, including items produced by the Baptist Sunday School Board's church training department.

"When people have a real hunger to learn about cults, they will come at it with an open mind," Hutson observed of his 20 years' work in a predominately Mormon state.

Hutson feels Southern Baptists tend to become "too anti-Mormon or anti-cult when teaching about cults. "When you have a tolerant attitude and a genuine love, you can know what you believe and why," he explained. "A person who becomes agitated does not know what he believes, or thinks he knows everything, and isn't interested in studying anything except the superficial stereotype."

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"The Christian Confronting the Cults," an equipping center module produced by the church training department, is one resource individuals or groups might choose to study.

As one who has experienced both subtle and blatant forms of harrassment from persons who oppose his faith, Hutson strives to exhibit Christian response in every instance.

"We've had to outlive and outlove them," he said of the Mormon residents who control the economy, social structure and school systems in Utah. "There's always an underlying pressure you can feel, but cannot quite put your finger on. We've had to look at them through the eyes of Christ and the Scriptures. We had to leave Mormonism alone and love the people."

Hutson and his family have been tested over the years. However, in passing those tests he believes they have won the confidence and respect of Mormons.

He recalls with amusement when sales clerks would give him too much change to see what h would do, or when shop personnel would put extra merchandise in his package to see if he'd return it. His mood becomes markedly sober in recalling the cross being cut off the top of the church and the pain his children suffered when social activities were limited to "Mormons only."

"We have compensated by loving the people in spite of it. "We've had to pray constantly, 'Lord, help us to see them through your eyes.'"

Noting caustic remarks about Mormonism are not allowed at First Baptist Church, Richfield, Hutson says emphatically, "We do not hate Mormon people. These are people just like we are, who will accept Christ if he is presented the right way.

"It's impossible to save a Mormon," Hutson declares. "I can't do it...but God can!"

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Norman Jameson Named  
Associate Editor

Baptist Press  
1/5/84

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Norman W. Jameson joined the staff of the Baptist Messenger as associate editor Jan. 1, 1984, R.T. McCartney, editor, has announced.

Jameson will move from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, where he has served as associate director of news and information since 1982. He has also been working on a master of divinity degree at the seminary.

A native of Portage, Wis., Jameson, 31, is a 1976 magna cum laude graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University. The OBU Bison was named best small college newspaper under his editorship.

The U.S. Army veteran was reporter and religion editor of the Colorado Springs, Colo. Gazette-Telegraph 1976-77. From 1977 to June 1982, Jameson was feature editor for Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville.

Jameson will fill a vacancy created by the retirement of Fern Hurt who has served on the publication's staff since 1947.

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