

HISTORICAL COMMISSION, SBC

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION PRESIDENTS

DR. RAMSEY POLLARD

Interviewed

by

Lynn E. May Jr.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Nashville, Tennessee

PREFACE

Ramsey Pollard, longtime pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, and Broadway Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tennessee, was a noted preacher and revival leader throughout the Southern Baptist Convention from the 1950s through the 1970s. He served as SBC president from 1960–61, as president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention (1954), president of the SBC Pastors' Conference, chairman of the SBC Executive Committee, and in numerous other positions within the SBC.

Pollard was well-known for his strong and articulate stands against alcoholism and the liquor industry, as well as on other moral and social issues. In the interview Pollard discusses his childhood, spiritual and moral influences on his life, his family, his pastorates and his positions as denominational leader. A biographical sketch lists Pollard's educational, pastoral and denominational experience.

The Historical Commission formally began its oral history program interviews in the 1970s with all the living former presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention. The interview with Pollard was conducted by Lynn E. May Jr., May 13, 1975, in Memphis, Tennessee. The original tape recordings are located in the Southern Baptist History Library and Archives—call number: #R263t POL.

For further information on Pollard in the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, see the Baptist History File, Baptist Biography, and Southern Baptist Convention Annuals.

Carol Woodfin
Publications and Archives Specialist
Historical Commission, SBC
April 28, 1992

Indexed and reset

Jim Taulman
Managing Editor, *Baptist History and Heritage*
Historical Commission, SBC
November 7, 1996

RAMSEY POLLARD

BIOGRAPHY

- Born:** Cleburne, Texas, February 15, 1903
- Died:** Memphis, Tennessee, April 20, 1984 (buried Restland Memorial Chapel, Dallas, Texas)
- Baptized:** First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas
- Marriage:** Della Pickle, b. June 9, 1923, d. January, 1980
- Children:** Ramsey Pollard, Jr., February 26, 1931
Imogene Pollard (Mrs. Robert Cliett), April 10, 1924
- Education:**
Oak Cliff High School, Dallas
Attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Ft. Worth, Texas (Distinguished Alumni Award, 1966)
Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tennessee, D.D., 1950
Atlanta College of Law, honorary degree
- Pastoral Experience:**
El Bethel Baptist Church, Tampa, Florida, 1925-29 (ordained)
First Baptist Church, Handley, Texas, 1929-1932
Evans Avenue Baptist Church, Ft. Worth, Texas, 1932-1939
Broadway Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1939-1960
Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, 1960-1972
- Denominational Service:**
President, Southern Baptist Convention, 1960-1961
President, Tennessee Baptist Convention, 1954
President, Pastors' Conference, SBC
Chairman, Executive Committee, SBC
Chairman, Executive Committee, Tennessee Baptist Convention
Chairman, Radio and Television Commission, SBC
Preacher, Baptist Hour SBC
Preacher, Convention Sermon, Southern Baptist Convention, Miami, Florida, 1952
Revival and evangelistic preacher, throughout United States
Speaker, Glorieta and Ridgecrest
Trustee, Carson-Newman College; Harrison Chilhowee Baptist Academy, Union University, Baptist Memorial Hospital (Memphis), East Tennessee Baptist Hospital (Knoxville)

HISTORICAL COMMISSION, SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Southern Baptist Convention Presidents Program

INTERVIEW BETWEEN:

INTERVIEWEE: Ramsey Pollard

INTERVIEWER: Lynn E. May Jr.

DATE OF INTERVIEW: May 13, 1975

PLACE: Memphis, Tennessee

M: This is an interview with Dr. Ramsey Pollard, Memphis, Tennessee, May 13, 1975, conducted by Lynn E. May Jr. Dr. Pollard is a past president of our Southern Baptist Convention, one who gave leadership to our denomination in many areas which we will be discussing with him today.

Dr. Pollard, I note that you were born in Cleburne, Texas, February 15, 1903.

P: Right.

M: Suppose we begin with something you might share with us about your family, about your mother and father, and the circumstances of 1903, relating to your family.

P: My mother and my father were living, of course, in Cleburne, Texas. My father was a police officer all of his life. When I was about five or six years of age, he was appointed warden of the penitentiary in Huntsville, Texas; and we moved there and stayed there until I was about eleven or twelve. We moved then to Amarillo, Texas, where Papa was superintendent at the County Farm. We lived there for some number of years. I believe I left Amarillo when I was about seventeen years of age. Papa was an uneducated man and yet, a man of exceedingly fine appearance. He made friends easily, and my mother was a splendid Christian woman and a very lovely and beautiful lady. I had one sister and three brothers. Two of my loved ones have passed away, my brothers. I have one sister, Mrs. W. A. Pyle, who lives in Nashville, Tennessee; and I have a brother who lives in California.

M: Tell me something about your home in terms of the church relationship of your mother and father and your early experience.

P: My mother was a Methodist most of her life. My father was not a Christian up until about 1909 or 1910, when L. R. Scarborough held a revival meeting at the First Baptist Church of Huntsville, Texas. My dad was converted during that revival meeting. My mother tells me that Papa stood before the congregation and people were coming by, congratulating him and expressing their joy, and that I stood by his side. Dr. Scarborough came to shake hands with Papa, and she said that Dr. Scarborough put his hands upon my head and prayed that I might be a preacher some day. Little did any of us realize that I would sit at his feet [Scarborough's] at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and succeed him after several years as president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

I have always considered Dr. Scarborough to be the greatest man that I have ever known. He was unselfish and cooperative. He had some qualities of character that I have never seen quite so many of in one man. After Papa was converted, my mother joined the Baptist church. Papa was an active member until the time of his death in 1914, while he was working for the Potter County Home in Amarillo, Texas. He is buried in a little cemetery near Cleburne, Texas, Pleasant Point Cemetery. One of my brothers also is buried there. My mother died some fifteen years ago, and she is buried in Dallas, Texas.

M: I understand you were baptized in the First Baptist Church, Amarillo.

P: Yes, Dr. Wallace Bassett was holding a revival meeting. It was shortly after my father's death. I was just about eleven and a half years of age. I was sitting in the balcony and didn't have my coat on that day. My Sunday School teacher, Mr. G. S. Hopkins, who later became secretary of the Sunday School Department in Texas for Texas Baptists, was superintendent of the Sunday School at that time in the First Baptist Church of Amarillo. This was a special evangelistic service that Dr. Bassett was preaching. I was sitting in the balcony, and Mr. Hopkins came to me and stood by my side and said, "Ramsey, don't you want to be a Christian?" I said, "Yes, sir, but I can't go today, I don't have my coat on." That great big tall Texas man said, "Well, Ramsey, you can have mine." He started to take it off and if I had put it on the coattail would have been dragging the floor and the sleeves would have done likewise. So, I went down there that day and accepted Christ as my Savior. My mother went with me. She saw me as I came down the aisle and she came and stood by my side that day.

Some years later, when I was sixteen, Dr. H. W. Virgin, who was pastor of the First Church of Amarillo, called me one day and said, "Ramsey, I wish you would come by and talk with me." Well, I was going with his daughter, and I didn't know exactly what he had in mind to talk to me about. Anyway, I had to go and I was scared. I got to his office in his home that day, and Dr. Virgin said, "Ramsey, we are going to have a

special service tomorrow, and I'm going to "call out the call." That's the term they used in those days. He said, "I somehow feel in my heart that God is trying to call you, and I want you to be ready. If you feel in your heart that God has called you, I want you to lead the way in the morning." So, the next morning in the First Church of Amarillo, Dr. Virgin preached a great sermon. He issued the call for those who would surrender their lives for special service, and I was happy to lead the way. Though I did not know at that time exactly what God wanted me to be, I put my life on the altar, willing to go where God wanted me to go.

M: At that time did you recall this earlier encounter you had had with Dr. Scarborough?

P: No, I did not. I am not sure that Mama told me about that until some years later.

M: You mentioned your father had served as a police officer most of his life. What do you remember as far as family relationships were concerned? Was this a problem for a boy growing up, realizing his father was constantly in danger for his life?

P: No, I don't think so. The very nature of Dad's work was such that he was not in constant danger as officers in our day are. He made many arrests, of course. I heard him say one time that he never had to shoot at a man or never, of course, had killed a man. He carried, I remember, a great big 45 Colt revolver that all of us had a great deal of respect for; and I well remember that he was a very firm man. He was firm with others, and he was firm with his children and his family; but in all, he was a very kind, considerate man, and I remember him with a great deal of affection and respect.

M: In relation to your call to the ministry, you mentioned the immediate call. Are there other influences that you have not mentioned that perhaps led to that decision? Are there any other pastors or others who may have helped to impress on you the need for people to respond to the call of God?

P: No, I don't remember any special person. I think Mrs. Wallace Bassett had something to do with it. She was my Sunbeam leader, and she also worked in the B.Y.P.U. with us. She was a very gracious, wonderful woman and had a good influence on my life. I think another person who had a great deal of influence on my life, outside of my mother, was my sister, Mrs. Pyle, who lives in Nashville. You perhaps may know Josephine, who is my niece. Mrs. Pyle, my sister, had a great deal of influence on my life, not only at that particular time but afterwards, a tremendous impact on my life. She taught me elocution for one thing. Back in those days that was rather a popular subject. She taught me a great deal about English. She was a tremendous help to me in the early days of my ministry. Of course, after Papa's death, Mama and I lived with my sister and her husband for a long time.

M: I notice that you attended Oak Cliff High School in Dallas.

P: I did not graduate, but I attended it and lacked perhaps a year of graduating.

M: I see. Did you go to work rather than finish school?

P: Yes, I went to work. I worked for a while for the Y.M.C.A.; then I went to Tampa, Florida, where I worked with the Citizen's Bank and Trust Company for some years, two years, I believe. Even before that I had started preaching in August, 1925. I was ordained fifty years ago this December 20, 1975. By the way, I'll be at Bellevue that day; the pastor has asked me to occupy the pulpit.

M: Where were you ordained?

P: At the El Bethel Baptist Church in Tampa, Florida. I had gone down there to work for the Citizen's Bank and Trust Company, and I had gone there to preach for one Sunday. Some of the young people had heard me teach a book at the DeLand Assembly, and they were without a pastor. It was just a half-time church, though it was the second oldest church in Tampa. They went back and told the deacons that there was a young man at the bank and asked them to let this man preach for them the next Sunday. So, Brother Taylor, an old deacon, came down and asked me to preach for them then. I gladly went and stayed there four and one-half years. After a few months they ordained me, and I had a wonderful ministry there during the depression. You know, the depression started there much earlier than it started in this part of the country. The fruit fly came there and closed many, many banks, and commerce was brought to a standstill; the trade business just collapsed all of a sudden. So, I lived there during the depression for five years. I think it taught me some valuable lessons. But the little El Bethel Church grew, and I had a wonderful and glorious ministry there, baptizing several times over one hundred, which was a good record for that church. Each year I would baptize about one hundred people.

M: About what size church was it at that time?

P: When I went out there we had seventeen in Sunday School and about thirty people at night. We got up to where we were running three hundred, I believe, in Sunday School. In those days you had more folk at night than you had in the morning. At night, oftentimes it would be jammed and packed, and people would be standing on the outside. Now the thing is just reversed. You have your big crowd in the morning and your smaller crowd at night. I was there four and one-half years when I determined that I should go to the seminary. In spite of the fact that my church didn't want me to go, my deacons thought sure that the seminary training would ruin me, I went and had several fine years of study at Southwestern Seminary.

M: When was that?

P: I went to Southwestern in 1929 and left there without graduating in 1939. I did not take full courses. Sometimes I would take a full semester's work and instead of turning in the paper or perhaps missing class a day or two over the limit, I would not

get credit for it. But I took numbers of classes over and over again under Dr. Scarborough and Dr. Dana. Some of the greatest teachers I have ever known in my life were at the seminary at that time. I not only studied under them but I had the privilege of knowing them personally and working with them. The seminary then had some 250 students and you had an opportunity to know your professors, talk to them, and let some of their goodness and their greatness rub off on you. That is not true today because our seminaries have so many students that it is not possible for them to have that intimate and personal contact with their professors.

M: Suppose you share with us some of your impressions of some of these men. You have mentioned Dr. Scarborough and the early contact that you had with him when your lives crossed. What kind of man was he?

P: Dr. Scarborough, physically, was not a big man; but he had the biggest heart and the biggest spirit of any man I know. I can recall working with him during the days we were making preparation for the Southern Baptist Convention in Fort Worth. Of course, we were not adequately prepared to take care of it, but we felt like it should meet there that year. Dr. Scarborough was the general chairman, and I was one of his associates. It was my responsibility to find homes for several hundred or perhaps a thousand people. I have forgotten just now, but these were for people who were coming to the Convention. Dr. Scarborough was a worker, and he expected everybody else to work. I shall never forget that during those days prior to the meeting of the Convention, he usually would call me about five-thirty or six o'clock in the morning and say, "Ramsey, how many rooms do you have lined up?" I worked and I worked and I worked, and fortunately we did have the rooms that were necessary.

Dr. Scarborough was a man who not only worked but he wanted other people to work also. He would go out to that great "Cow Barn" where they held the cow auctions and the rodeo, and I can assure you that the very flavor of the air indicated the kind of animals that had been there. There was an open skyview up there, and we had to get someone to climb up there and paint the windows so that the glare of the sun would not affect the Convention. We had to bring in all kinds of perfume to try to kill the odor that was in that place.

Dr. Scarborough was a man who would go out there and work just as hard as anyone else. He was unselfish. He was not only interested in Southwestern Seminary or in the Baptist hospital there, but he was interested in every other seminary. I shall never forget hearing one of our great leaders tell about Dr. Scarborough's attitude toward the other seminaries.

Dr. Scarborough had the fine art of raising large sums of money from some of the men out in Texas, and during those dark days some of the schools were having a hard time. Of course, they were trying to give each one of the seminaries about the same amount. Dr. Scarborough said to Dr. Sampey, I think it was, "Well, Brother President, I am going to turn our portion of this offering over to you because you need it worse

than we do." He had a good attitude toward other seminaries, colleges, and universities. He taught me to be a cooperative Baptist, to love my denomination, to love my fellow preachers, to love the church of Jesus Christ, and to love Jesus supremely. Therefore, I think he was a tremendous preacher in the history of Southern Baptist life.

M: Dr. Scarborough was first noted also as an evangelist, soul winner, and certainly one noted for his teaching. What influence did his life have on your ministry in that regard?

P: Oh, I don't think there is any question but what Dr. Scarborough's spirit affected me. Unconsciously, perhaps, I picked up some of his characteristics; I hope I have some of them. Ralph Moore, who attended the seminary back yonder in the early days, paid a compliment to me when I retired that I think was perhaps the highest I have ever had. He said, "Ramsey Pollard exemplifies the spirit of Lee Scarborough more than any man I know." I told Ralph that that was the greatest compliment that was paid during those several days at the time of my retiring from Bellevue.

I have known some other great men. Claude Duke was a tremendous man. He was pastor of the First Baptist Church, Tampa, Florida, when I went down there and started preaching. He was part Cherokee, a tremendous big man physically. He was a tremendous man intellectually, and he had a tremendous impact upon my life. Then, there was Wallace Bassett, of course, who baptized me and helped me in the formative years of my ministry. He gave me many of his sermon outlines, and to this day I use some of them. I am so grateful for his memory. I think of Fred Brown, who was pastor of the First Church, Knoxville, Tennessee, where I spent twenty years at the Broadway Church. Dr. Brown had a good influence on my ministry. Then, of course, there was Robert Greene Lee, whom I succeeded here at the Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee. I have always admired and loved Dr. Lee, and I have sought to catch something of his spirit in my ministry and in my preaching. Many others have had impact upon me; some were my seminary professors. I think of old B. A. Copass at Southwestern, who taught Old Testament and E. L. Carlson, who taught Old Testament; they put some backbone in my preaching.

Perhaps people have criticized me a little bit because I have been terribly frank about things. I have stood for those things which I thought was right, and I have attacked those things which I consider to be wrong. I have tried to stand up for the right. I have been against the liquor business, the gambling, the prostitution. I have stood for those things which would help people to live a better life and to prepare them to meet God. There are many people, of course, that I don't really remember exactly what impact they had on my life. I have told young preachers everywhere I go that every time they have an opportunity to rub shoulders with a great man, do it, because even though they may not be conscious of it, some of that goodness and that greatness will rub off on them.

There have been laymen who have had tremendous influence upon my life, also. I think of Dr. Dana, who was a teacher of New Testament. He was one of the greatest Christians I have known, a sweet, gentle man. He could just break your heart as he talked with you about some of the great truths in the book of Ephesians and Philemon, and he certainly was a New Testament scholar of the very highest rank.

Charlie (C. E.) Matthews was a tremendous friend of mine; and he and C. Y. Dossey, his associate, perhaps did more to help me get started than any two men. They put me on the program of the first great Southwide Evangelistic Program, and by the grace of God, I hit the ball. From that moment until this day I have been receiving all of the invitations that I could possibly accept, and many, many more. I have spoken around the world in evangelistic crusades and in revival meetings. I shall never forget the fact that Charlie Matthews and Charlie Dossey, two great evangelists, were the ones who gave me an opportunity. You know, I believe there are many, many, many scores of young preachers throughout the Southern Baptist Convention who, if they just had a chance before a Southwide meeting, could reveal some of their possibilities.

When I was president of the Pastors' Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention I never used anyone, perhaps with two exceptions, who had been on the program before. A little while ago the present president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Weber, wrote me and said, "I want you to remember that you are the one who first put me on a Southwide program." The same thing was said to me by (James L.) Pleitz in Pensacola, that I was the one who put him on a Southwide program for the first time in his life. I believe there are great numbers of young and middle-aged preachers who are excellent preachers, and all they need is an opportunity to preach Christ before a great Southwide meeting. They could be used to a great extent.

M: Do you recall that time when you had that first opportunity at the Evangelism Conference from Dr. Matthews? About when was that?

P: I believe it was 1948. I have forgotten.

M: What was it about Dr. Matthews that impressed you so as an evangelist?

P: Well, Charlie and I had several things in common. For one thing, neither one of us had received a great deal of formal education. I admired him because in spite of that handicap, he had gone on and accomplished something. Then, he was a warm hearted evangelist. He and I became exceedingly good friends even though our churches had had a "falling out" some seven or eight years before I went to the Tabernacle Church in Fort Worth. A great number of the members of that church had gone to Travis Avenue because of the split in the church. In spite of that fact, Charlie Matthews and I were close friends, and we drew those two churches together until the day before either one of us left the churches they were cooperating beautifully. Charlie was warmhearted. He preached the gospel, and he never apologized for it. He

magnified Christ and he magnified the local church. He was an evangelist of the highest type.

M: His leadership of the Home Mission Board program of evangelism, I think, was a very significant one.

P: It really started in the right direction.

M: Do you, both as a fellow pastor and as a denominational leader, see any trends that he may have helped establish in terms of the evangelistic thrust among our churches?

P: Yes. Of course, Roland Leavell and Fred Eastham, before Dr. Matthews came on the scene, had dealt with it in some detail; but Charlie Matthews brought a tremendous scope of evangelism with a Southwide Simultaneous Campaign. He organized it into associational and statewide groups, and it was under Charlie Matthews that each one of the states secured full-time secretaries of evangelism. That was the thing that helped us more than anything else. In my humble judgment these evangelistic conferences throughout the Southern Baptist Convention have done more to solidify Southern Baptists than anything else we have, more so than the Convention and the state conventions, because these statewide evangelistic conferences have brought together the preachers who really needed to be brought together. Many of them could not attend the Southern Baptist Convention, but they could go one hundred miles to attend an evangelistic conference. It put fire in their bones and enthusiasm in their souls. All these evangelistic conferences have magnified preaching the cross, the blood, the second coming of the Lord, the authenticity of the Word of God, and those great fundamental truths. So, Charlie Matthews was the father of that great movement.

M: It was my privilege to study under Roland Leavell in evangelism in New Orleans Seminary. Did your paths cross very much?

P: Oh, yes. Roland Leavell and I were good friends. I preached the dedicatory sermon at the chapel there while he was president. We have been together on numerous programs. He was pastor of the First Baptist Church in Tampa, Florida. By the way, I preached the dedicatory sermon of that church when I was twenty-two years of age. Dr. Duke was pastor, and he came and said to the Pastors' Conference, "I want you men to have charge of the program, but I have only one request. I want my young friend, Ramsey Pollard, to preach the dedicatory sermon." So way back in 1925, I preached the first sermon to be preached in the great sanctuary of the First Baptist Church of Tampa, Florida. Therefore, I always thought, "Oh, maybe some day I'll be pastor of this church." Dr. Leavell always admired the church, so when the church issued a call to a pastor, I teased Dr. Leavell about it telling him that he went down there and outvoted me. He was a great man and a great scholar, and one of the few men I know who had tremendous scholarship, great evangelistic fervor, and ability at the same time.

- M: Let's look back at your pastoral ministry. You mentioned your ordination fifty years ago this year. That would have been 1925. Your next pastorate now, after your pastorate at El Bethel, was in Fort Worth, was it, or was it in Dallas?
- P: Fort Worth. We left Tampa, Florida, with about forty dollars and a broken-down automobile which really broke down before we got out of Florida. A man fixed it for me, he happened to have an old motor; he charged me five dollars, and we went on to Fort Worth. I went over to the seminary to talk with the professors about the possibility of a church. I asked them about Handley, Texas, and they said, "Now, Brother Pollard, there's no need for you to go over there because one of our doctoral students is going to take over that church."

I didn't know where Handley was, but on the way back to my mother's home in Dallas we passed through Handley, and a sudden inspiration hit me. I said, "Well, I just believe I'll go up there and see whether they have called a pastor, or whether they have anybody in mind." So, I stopped at the filling station and inquired of a man who said, "I am a member of the church, but Charlie Walston is chairman of the committee and lives right around the corner. He is at home, go see him." So, Della and I went to see Charlie and Pearl Walston, and Charlie was papering the front room. I was just a young fellow twenty-six years of age and weighed about 140 pounds. I walked up on the porch and asked him about the church. I said, "Do you have anybody that you are figuring on calling?" He said, "No, we don't." I said, "Well, what about Dr. So-and-so?" "Oh," he said, "He's a fine teacher but he can't preach; we've got to have a preacher." Well, I said, "Brother, I can preach."

So, I sent a telegram to the governor of Florida, he and I were good friends; and I asked him to send a letter of recommendation. I sent one telegram to Dr. Duke and one to my little El Bethel Baptist Church, asking them to send telegrams to this church. Wallace Bassett wrote a letter for me. I preached at Cliff Temple on Wednesday night, and the pulpit committee came over to hear me; and they invited me to come over to Handley and preach the next Sunday, which I did. I thought sure they would call me the very next service and I stayed at home. Della and I were at her mother's home at that time. We stayed by the telephone that morning and nothing happened. So, we decided to go to hear Marshall Craig at the Gaston Avenue Baptist Church that night. We went and met Dr. Craig for the first time and then went home. The telephone rang and somebody said, "Is Reverend Ramsey Pollard there?" I said, "Yes, sir, he's here." "This is Charlie Walston; the church called you unanimously, and we want to know when you can begin." I said, "Brother Walston, I'll be there at six o'clock in the morning." (laughter) And, so, I had a happy pastorate there for two and one-half years, a very fine pastorate.

Then, I went to the Evans Avenue Baptist Church. It was known then as the Tabernacle Baptist Church, and I had a glorious time there for seven and one-half years. Of course, it was during the depression and we had some good, hard times

together; but we suffered together, bled together, shared our resources as little as they were, and had a good time. I thought surely I'd never find another church like that on the face of the earth.

Then, the great Broadway Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tennessee, called me. It was interesting how that call came. Herschel Ford was the pastor there and had resigned to go to Jacksonville, Florida. The pulpit committee said to him, "When you go to the Convention at Oklahoma City, talk to the people there and ask them who is a good man for us to call," and so he did. He talked to Lee Scarborough and told him the type of man they wanted; Dr. Scarborough thought for a minute and said, "Well, I'll tell you. The only man I can think of is Ramsey Pollard, Fort Worth, Texas." Then Dr. Ford went to R. C. Campbell, who was executive secretary, and said, "This is the kind of man that Broadway wants; do you know of such a man?" Dr. Campbell said, "Yes, there's a young fellow over at the Tabernacle Church in Fort Worth, Texas, named Ramsey Pollard. I believe he could fill the bill." So, Dr. Ford went back to Knoxville and told the pulpit committee, and they called me, and I went over there and preached for them. The next Sunday they extended the call, and I had more than twenty years of the most glorious ministry that a man could possibly have.

M: When was that ministry begun?

P: I started there in 1939. The depression was just winding up. Of course, I got there at a good time. The church doubled in membership and more than doubled in Sunday School, and while offerings were running maybe \$24,000 a year we ran it up to \$250,000 and \$260,000 a year before I left. There was beautiful fellowship in that church. I didn't have a day of grief or trouble in those more than twenty years.

M: That's rather unusual.

P: Yes, but never one day of trouble in that church. Then, the call came from Bellevue. Della and I were, I believe, in Hong Kong preaching in a revival meeting. I was president of the Southern Baptist Convention at that time. Some of the missionaries said, "Did you hear that Dr. Robert G. Lee had resigned?" I said, "No, I didn't know it, but I pity the poor fool who is going to succeed him." So, I came back home; and one day Dr. Lee called me up and said, "Brother Pollard, I want to come talk to you." I said, "Well I'm coming to Memphis next week." He said, "No, I want to talk to you quickly." He said, "I'll meet you tomorrow, meet me at the airport." I met him, and he was there at the instructions of the pulpit committee of Bellevue Baptist Church. I read the letter yesterday. Dr. Lee and the pulpit committee said, "You are the one man who's on our hearts, and we believe it is God's will for you to come and follow Dr. Lee." So, I came here and stayed twelve and one-half years and had a glorious ministry here.

I had one little unpleasant experience about a year and a half after I came. The church stood by me loyally and those who opposed me left; with rare exceptions they were

among the finest people in the world, those who left as well as those who stayed. One of the most beautiful things about it is that most of the people who left came back and they are still coming back to Bellevue Baptist Church. I never did lose my temper; I never did abuse them. I never did answer any of the charges that were made, and there was no charge of immorality or anything of that kind. One funny thing about it was that while I had been known as an evangelist all of my ministry, those who were opposing me at that time said that I was not evangelistic and that was their opposition. (laughter)

But they are good people. Some of the ones who came back said, "We made a mistake, we were misled, and we want to come back. We'll be faithful and loyal to you and the church." They came back and some of the dearest friends I have in the world today are among those who left the church a year and a half after I came. So, I was here for twelve and one-half years as pastor. I retired in 1972. The church was gracious enough to give us a home that is valued at \$100,000. They gave us a Cadillac and an Oldsmobile. They gave us \$25,000 cash and set up a fund which will pay me \$500 a month as long as I live. The church loved us and we loved them. The church, under the leadership of Dr. Rogers, is doing a greater work than she's ever done in her history. I rejoice in it.

M: He and I were classmates in New Orleans Seminary together. You mentioned that some did pull out of the church. Did they join other churches?

P: Some of them did, but they started a Second Baptist Church. It is still in existence and is a very nice church. However, the core of the opposition soon left that church and started an independent fundamentalist church, and it's known now as Emmanuel Baptist Church. I do not know just how they are getting along.

M: You think this core group then was at the root of the division that came about, an ultra, could we say, fundamentalist bent on their part?

P: I don't think they are any more fundamentalist in the right use of the word than Dr. Lee and I are, or as the mainstream of the Bellevue members or the mainstream of Southern Baptists. I think they were just simply misled. I think that every preacher who follows a great preacher, or a tremendous personality like George Truett and Robert Greene Lee, is going to have difficulty and problems. Criswell, for example, had a lot of trouble. I knew that when I came here; everybody knew that. If the apostle Paul had come here, he would have had trouble. That's no reflection on Dr. Lee, because I greatly admire him and love him as I love few men. It is just one of those things that cannot be avoided.

M: People become attached to a person as their leader.

P: Usually there has to be one man to go in there and serve between that outstanding personality, and the next man has to be a man to come in there and solidify the

situation and let it calm down and settle down a little bit. So, I was that man. People have been kind enough to say that very few men could have done any better than I did. I was patient, I was kind, and I just continued to stand in that pulpit and preach without mentioning anything. You could have come to the auditorium and heard the morning service or the evening service, and you would never have known there was a ripple in the church at that time because I never referred to it, never.

M: You found the church as a whole supporting you?

P: Oh, yes. They stood right with me. The last year I was here we had a tremendous year; we raised a million dollars and baptized lots of people. The church grew and we had many, many additions to the church all the time I was here. There was a marvelous sweet Christian spirit here. There were no cliques. When I turned this pulpit over to Adrian Rogers he had no clique in it. He had no ruling class. He had a church that had a spirit of cooperation and love for the pastor that very few churches have. He'll never have any trouble here at Bellevue Baptist Church.

M: I think it is interesting to note that this church traditionally, for at least the last three pastorates, has turned to men who were noted as evangelists.

P: Well, if you don't have that in a location like this, your church will die on your hands. There are little community churches that could live rather well on some other emphases; but in a church like this, Bellevue, downtown Dallas, and many other cities, if you do not have a flaming heart in that pulpit, the church will die on your hands. People will scatter on you. You've got to have something in that pulpit that draws people from all over the country. I had people coming here from Arkansas, Mississippi, and all over Shelby County and beyond. The reason for this was that there was a spirit of concern, a spirit of compassion, and a spirit of evangelism that they admired; and they wanted to be a part of a church like that. That same thing is true today.

M: Your long-time ministry in these churches and the evangelistic thrust that you have given them was done, I understand, also in the midst of a real concern for social problems. Now there have been those in Southern Baptist history who seem to feel that these two do not mix in the pulpit or in the ministry. A person either majors on evangelism and therefore, is going to change society through this means, or he feels like the main thrust needs to be given to changing the nature of society itself through the institutions of society. How do you see these two in relation to each other?

P: I think there is an element of interdependence. I think, first of all, that evangelism and winning people to Christ and getting them right with God is going to lead people to have the right attitudes toward each other. This idea that the main business of the church is to build apartment houses and a new sewer system for the city, or to lead out in other social activities, is not the main objective of the church. That's not the thing we should be doing. In priority the thing we should be magnifying above

everything else is the spirit of evangelism, winning people to Christ. But that does not relieve us of the responsibility of trying to make the world in which we live a better place. I have always taken a real interest in politics and social questions. I am sure you know that one of the foes that I have fought has been the liquor business.

M: Yes. I wanted to ask you to share with us something about how your interest originated, especially with this problem. What did you do about it?

P: Well, for one thing, my father was a drunkard for many years until the time of his conversion. Some of my kinfolk were drunks. There grew up in my heart an intense hatred for the liquor business. I don't hate the people who make it, and I don't hate the people who drink it, but I hate the business. I think it is the greatest enemy that America has. I think it is greater than communism or greater than any other enemy we have; therefore, I have opposed it from the pulpit. At the same time it is ironic that everywhere I have gone some of my greatest friends have been alcoholics and drunks. I have given them money when I knew they were going to buy liquor with it, but there might have been the chance that they would buy something to eat with it. That's what they said and I have helped them. I am going to continue to help them. But I have steadfastly fought the liquor business and the gambling business.

I started that down in Tampa, Florida. They had gambling down there and have had it all through the years. I helped put out the racetrack gambling concerns in Texas and in Knoxville, Tennessee. As long as some of us were there, they never had legalized liquor. We defeated them every two years for a period of twenty years. We defeated them, and the last time we defeated them it was by a larger vote than the first time. Some of us were Baptists, some Methodists, Presbyterians, Church of Christ, and many other denominations. We joined hands together and defeated the liquor business there. As a matter of fact, the second year, I believe, we were here at Bellevue we had a city-wide election on liquor by the drink; and even here in Memphis we whipped them.

They came back two years later, having secured huge sums of money; the liquor business had brought pressure on the banks, the Chamber of Commerce, and all of the businesses here, so they defeated us the last time. They said, "Downtown is going to bloom like a rose; the Peabody Hotel and all the big hotels downtown will be tremendous." The funny thing about it is that the Peabody is closed, and the others have closed. Downtown Memphis is dead and is going to stay dead, and we might as well face that fact.

People had better learn that they cannot have a really successful and great city built on unrighteousness, sin, liquor, prostitution, and gambling; yet, some of the foolish people here in Memphis have an idea that the only way to raise money is by taking something that is morally, economically, and spiritually wrong. So, therefore, I think it is the business of every Baptist preacher, every Christian layman, every Christian woman, and all Christian young people to be very positive and very active in

opposition to these things which bring harm and defeat in the life of individuals and churches as well.

M: Are you saying that individual Baptists, then, need concerted action, not so much necessarily as a church body bringing pressure there but as individual Christians bearing their witness? How do you see these?

P: I see both of those as exceedingly important, but I think there is nothing wrong with the Bellevue Baptist Church or the Broadway Baptist Church taking a positive stand as a church against that which is wrong. However, the thing that will count for more in the long run is the individual voting and standing up for that which is right. But the action that the church takes gives the individual a ground on which to stand, and gives him the courage and fortitude to take his stand. Therefore, again, I think, the element of interdependence is true.

M: There are some who say it is not right to legislate morality as it relates to the liquor industry or others. What is your opinion?

P: Well, I think it's right to keep away from our people that which is harmful. I don't think we ought to tell a man he has to go to church, he has to go to Sunday School, and he has to pray; but I think we have a right to tell a man that he cannot put into his body something that is going to cause him to lose control of his automobile and run over somebody and kill them. We have that right. I think we have the right to say to the people who would sell marijuana, which usually develops into heroin, that "your liberty to do as you wish to do ceases when what you do brings harm, hurt, death, desolation, and defeat into the life of the people with whom you deal." We have certain rules to protect even the dogs in our streets, the cats, and the cattle. Go out to the West, and you will find that they are destroying the locoweeds which drive cattle crazy. Well, why should we go out there and destroy that kind of thing and then give a group of selfish men, for the sake of a few tax dollars, permission to sell that which poisons the body and the brain and the will of human beings. What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? What shall it profit a nation if it sells its soul?

M: Several times in our conversation this morning you have mentioned Della, your wife. I understand you met her in Dallas. Do you want to tell us a little about meeting your wife and the Lord's leadership in your becoming husband and wife, and also something of your home life?

P: Della and I met on a blind date. I had been dating the sister of a friend of mine, Jesse Wilson. It has been so long ago and you have asked me so quickly, I'll have to think. I had been dating his sister and we had fallen out. Jesse was going with a friend of Della's and this friend said, "Well, bring him out here, I have a friend"—that friend would be Della. I went out there that Sunday afternoon; we became acquainted, and I never did go with anyone else after that. I don't remember just when that was. She

and I were married on June 9, 1923. She has been a wonderful, lovely pastor's wife, and very active in the church work. She has been a beautiful Christian. She was an active worker among the young people. She played the piano in some of my churches, she directed the choir at the First Church, and also at Broadway Church. She served as interim choir director there, played the piano, and was superintendent of the Young People's Department. She has gone with me on all of my mission tours, and today she goes with me to all my revival meetings. She sits there and listens to the same sermon over and over and over again, week after week, month after month. She is a very wonderful and lovely woman, and has had a tremendous influence for good upon my ministry.

M: What are some ways that you feel like she has been a special support to your ministry? You mentioned her closeness to you, her being there, and I know that has meant a lot to you. Has she been able to relieve you of some needless worries and things of this nature?

P: Well, she's tried, but one of my faults has been that I have not allowed her to know everything that was going on. I have worried about a good many things myself; I didn't want her to worry about them. I have hidden things from her to keep her from worrying. Of course, eventually, they find out about it so you might as well have told them in the first place. But I have tried to protect her as much as I could from the worries that I had. I seldom discussed problems that had arisen. I didn't want to worry her with those things. She has a very happy disposition; everywhere we have gone the people have loved her devotedly. Some of them didn't like me sometime, but they always loved her.

M: She must be a very lovely person and a companion who has been and still is by your side to support you and uphold you. I understand you have two children. Suppose you tell us a little about your children and about your home life. Oftentimes pastors are so busy they don't have much time for their children. How were things in the Ramsey Pollard home?

P: Well, of course, we led a very busy life. Imogene is the older; Ramsey Jr., is the younger. We had two children. I suspect that we had a normal, happy Christian home life. Both of my children are exceedingly active in the church work. Ramsey, Jr., attends Bellevue Baptist Church, and he and his wife and their three daughters are very active in every phase of the church life. Ramsey, Jr., goes with me in revival work. He is vice-president of one of the great publishing companies here in the city. Imogene lives in Atlanta, Georgia, and she is a member of the Second Ponce de Leon Church and one of the soprano soloists. She also goes with me in revival meetings. In fact, she will be here this Thursday to be with us in a revival, singing for us Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Both of them are accomplished singers. Ramsey, Jr., is a very fine pianist. Imogene does not play the piano. We have five granddaughters. I have a great grandson and great granddaughter. We don't have any grandsons. We hoped for a grandson that we could call Ramsey Pollard, III, maybe; but he hasn't

arrived and I don't guess he will. But we have lovely, good children. To this very day we have wonderful times together. We spend a good deal of time together. Of course, one of the problems of being a pastor is that you are apt to be taking care of other people's children and neglecting your own. Perhaps I was guilty of that to some extent, but I feel that as a whole we had a very beautiful family relationship; and much of the credit for this, of course, belongs to their mother.

M: I don't believe you mentioned her maiden name.

P: Della Pickle.

M: Was she from a Baptist home?

P: No, Della was not a Baptist when I met her. Her people were Methodist, and Della was a Presbyterian. Her parents were both Christians. Her twin brother, Don, was baptized by me at Tampa, Florida, two or three years after I was ordained.

M: Through your long ministry, Dr. Pollard, you mentioned that you had not had as much formal education as you would like to have had. Do you feel like you have been able to compensate this through personal study? It would appear to me that you have, but what is your own feeling about this?

P: Well, of course, in some ways I regret that I didn't go to college. I was a little embarrassed not long ago. I was elected president of the Board of Trustees at Union University. Of course, I have served on the Board of Trustees of several colleges and universities. The girl asked me that question, and she was utterly amazed. She said, "Do you mean that you are president of the Board of Trustees of this university, and you have never been to college?" I said, "Yes, that's true." I have preached the baccalaureate sermons at many universities and colleges. I have raised many, many thousands of dollars for our schools, and I believe in them implicitly. Of course, I would have been a better preacher if I had had a college education or if I had gone on and finished the seminary. I guess maybe it would have helped me; but I think I took all the courses and got the work, although I didn't get a degree from the seminary.

I would advise any young preacher to go to the seminary, to go to college or a university. It's been somewhat, I think, of a handicap for me; but I have been able to overcome it to some extent because I have read over and over again the best books. I think I use fairly good English when I am preaching. I can't tell you why a certain word shouldn't be used, but I know that it shouldn't be used. If I am reading a book or a letter and the word is not proper, I know immediately; but I can't tell you why it shouldn't be used. I just know that it shouldn't because of my reading. As I said awhile ago, my sister, I think, had a great deal of influence upon me along that line. I have a retentive mind; I can read and remember. That's one thing that has helped me in my preaching. I have listened and read after other preachers. Every time I had an opportunity to come in contact with an outstanding man, I took advantage of it. So,

while I would have been a much stronger preacher, I am sure, if I had gone to college or to a university, I just didn't go. I could have gone, but I didn't see the necessity of it at that time.

Of course, I didn't go to the seminary until I was twenty-six years old, but I am so glad that I did go. I didn't change any of my beliefs, but I had an intelligent belief. I knew why I believed in the validity of the Bible, the authenticity of the Word, the atonement. I didn't know what it meant in a way; and yet, I preached the blood of Christ. But by going to the seminary I learned something about the different theories of atonement. I can talk about many things that I couldn't talk about before. Yes, I should have gone to the seminary and finished, and I should have gone to college, but I didn't.

It is an interesting note that in spite of that, if a man will really work hard, love his people, and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ with fervor and compassion, God can use him in a big way. There are lots of preachers in this world today who have a string of degrees after their names and who have never gotten to first base because they didn't have the right spirit in their hearts. If you believe the Word and will preach Christ, love your people, cooperate with your fellow Baptists, and have an optimistic attitude and a happy spirit, God can use you. If I have been any success at all, it is because of that.

- M: Dr. Pollard, through your long gospel ministry of almost fifty years now, I note that over this period of time you have served your denomination in many areas. You served as president of the Southern Baptist Pastor's Conference; you mentioned that a little earlier this morning. Tell us when this was, where the Convention met that year, and something about the spirit of Baptist life at that time.
- P: The Convention met in Houston, Texas, when I was elected president of the Pastors' Conference. I had not even known that I was going to be nominated. I was in the hotel and Homer Lindsey came by and said, "Hello, Mr. President"; I didn't know what he was talking about. A little bit later on someone told me that I had been elected president of the Conference.
- M: The Houston Convention was the first I ever attended. I was a seminary student.
- P: The 1954 Convention was in St. Louis. I had charge of the Pastors' Conference program that year, and we had a fine conference at Third Baptist Church. As I said, I tried to use a great group of men who had never been on the program before, and we magnified the great fundamental gospel truths; and it was a tremendous influence throughout the Convention. At the 1953 meeting in Houston, Texas, the conference passed a motion that the president should serve only one year. I didn't know about that, for I had not attended that particular session. No one gave me any minutes of the meeting, and I did not know about the action taken at the meeting in Houston about just serving one year. No one else seemed to know much about it. I appointed a

committee, and they nominated me for another term which I was glad to accept. Really, I didn't have the right to serve again. We met in the Central Church in Miami in 1955, and we had another tremendous program with a group of new preachers for us, good music and a tremendous impact, I think, upon the entire Convention.

M: How do you see the role of the Pastors' Conference in relation to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting? I know some have criticized the Pastors' Conference as sort of preempting the Convention itself as far as its business emphases and so forth are concerned.

P: Well, I think the cure for the whole thing is to have a Convention program that is as worthy as the Pastors' Conference. Now when I was president of our Convention I suggested, and the committee of course adopted, that the president determine the program of the Convention. I had a great preacher to preach at every closing session of the Convention, and the people stayed through. I think that our Convention program needs to be lightened up and made more brilliant and more positive; and I think we need some great preaching during the Convention. The reason why the Pastors' Conference has been such a success is because of the motivating force and power of the program, the great preaching, the great testimony, the great singing. The same thing could be true of our Convention and would also help us to arrive at some conclusions. Baptists love great preaching, and it gives us something on which to stand.

Now, I think, that one of our problems about the Convention is that we are having too many meetings. We are having the secretaries' meeting, the educational meeting, the janitors' meeting, the business financial agents' meeting; and we are having this committee to meet and that committee to meet. We are having too many semi-Conventions to meet during the Southern Baptist Convention. I think that many of those folk need to stay home and take care of the local church while the official messengers attend the Convention. One way to eliminate a lot of this spurious attendance at the Convention, this vacation type, is to go to Kansas City, St. Louis, or some great central city and let the Convention meet there every year. That will kill the vacation emphasis that we have now about the Convention.

M: Do you not see any problem as far as participation in the Convention is concerned from churches in the far corners of the Convention? Would it tend to become dominated by the geographical area?

P: I doubt that it would, but there is that possibility. Something, I think, is going to have to be done to limit the attendance at the Convention, because there is just no place in many of our cities for that kind or size convention. We are going to have to limit the attendance. One way to do it is to have it at the same city year after year. That would limit it because it would kill the vacation idea. Yet, I tell you very frankly that one of the greatest joys I have had through these years is Mrs. Pollard getting in the car with

us or flying wherever we go, meeting our friends and having a good time. I don't know all of the answers. In fact, I am not as smart as I used to be. (laughter)

M: Well, tell me a little more about the Pastors' Conference before we leave that. In looking at the history of this meeting, I understand that M. E. Dodd had a major role in the beginning of it.

P: He was the father of it.

M: And that it was begun, initially, as a meeting for the men while the women had their meetings.

P: That is true. Dr. Dodd served as president for many, many years, and he made the program up without asking anybody; and it was a tremendous influence on the life of our Convention. He didn't mean for it to be, but it was. Herschel Hobbs, I believe, was the second. I think, perhaps, I was the third president of the Pastors' Conference, or fourth. It has been a great influence for good. People have had their hearts stirred, and preachers have been encouraged. We have sung the great songs of Zion and preached the great fundamental doctrines of the Word, and this has had a great influence.

I would not like to see us do away with it, but I would say that we can lift the level of our program at the Convention in the inspirational messages, preaching, and do away with some of these long-winded reports from the agencies that nobody wants to hear. Anybody can read them if they want to. But even the reports of our agencies can be made to breathe and live and to appeal to the hearts of the people. We do not need to bring in motion picture stars and singers who have big names; that is not the business of our Convention. We have great singers and great men and women in the field of entertainment who are Baptists, and could use some of them, I guess. But I think there has been an overemphasis on the theatrical aspect. We try to put on a show, when in reality those missionaries and those people that we have read and heard about need to come and witness for Christ. You would have the most thrilling part of the Convention program.

M: Do you not see the Convention though, as a time, for agencies, not necessarily reading a long report, to share with the messengers-at-large the work that they have been doing in order to try to implement the total purpose of the program of the Convention?

P: That is the purpose of the Convention. But the thing I am talking about is, let the agencies make their presentation livable, real, attractive, and dynamic so that the people will really get a kick out of it. Nothing can take the place of the business of the Convention. That's important, and that's why we are there. But in order to make the business of the Convention what it ought to be and to make it really attractive and a challenge to our people, those reports of the agencies must be high-class. I've seen and heard some of them that were terrible, terrible, terrible, and the people walked out by

the thousands. That's the thing I am talking about. Make our Convention program viable and alive and visible and thrilling, using missionaries and people. You just can't do that by some long-faced fellow getting up and reading a long report.

People ask me sometime about my presiding at the Convention. Well, I didn't know much about the *Robert's Rules of Order*. I just knew Baptist people; I knew what they wanted to do, and I helped them do it, that's all. If you keep Baptist people happy, singing and rejoicing, they are not going to have much time to fuss and quarrel. The same thing is true about the church, they won't have any time to quarrel. And the Convention, if you can just keep a happy, optimistic spirit in there of evangelism, conquest, and moving forward, you'll never mar your program. I never had any trouble when I was president of the Convention. I can recall not one single thing.

M: While we are talking about this philosophy that you have of a Southern Baptist Convention meeting, I note that you have served in state convention places of leadership. Let's go back as far as we can in your early ministry. What do you recall to be the first office that you held beyond the level of pastor of a local church, that is in an association or state convention?

P: Well, the Tampa Bay Association made the tragic mistake of electing me as clerk of the association. So far as I know, the minutes of that year were never published. If they were, it happened at the very last two or three months of the next year. Of course, I was also moderator of the Tampa Bay Association and president of the Ministers' Conference there.

M: From the beginning of your ministry, do you feel like you have had a very close association with the denomination?

P: Yes.

M: Through your pastorates?

P: Everywhere I have been. I emanate cooperating Baptists from the tip of my toes to the top of my head. That doesn't mean that I would not criticize something that I thought needed to be criticized, and I have done that. But I am going to stay with my fellow Baptists. If they outvote me, I'll go along with them. But I think Southern Baptists are the greatest people on the face of the earth.

M: What do you think, Dr. Pollard, from your long years of experience, contributes to the seeming growth of the independent movement among Baptists today? Even the slumping off of Southern Baptists into the independent movement?

P: Well, I think for one thing that too many of our pastors have slowed up in their spirit of evangelism. They have dodged preaching on some subjects that people are really concerned about. I think some of them have been disappointed in some of the

literature published. I think that most of these independent movements are built around men who, because of their very nature, demand to be leaders; and when they cannot lead in their association, in their state convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention, they start something they can lead. I think that is one philosophy. And many of these men are men of unusual ability, outstanding personalities. Frank Norris is typical. He and I were good, personal friends. I loved him and he loved me.

M: Well, tell me something about your impressions of Frank Norris.

P: He is one of the greatest preachers I have ever heard in my life. Somebody asked Dr. Lee the other day, "Who is the greatest preacher you ever heard, Dr. Lee?" He said, "You'll be surprised when I tell you that Frank Norris was the greatest preacher I ever heard." Frank was a tall, thin fellow with eyes that just looked right through you. He could quote poetry by the arm-length and the Bible by the arm-length. He had a great voice. He had great convictions about the authenticity of the Word of God. He was a fundamentalist in the wrong sense of the word and in the right sense of the word at the same time. You couldn't believe what he said about those who opposed him. He was extremely bitter in his attitude toward Dr. Truett and Dr. Scarborough and our work in general. He mellowed though before he died and told some of his friends that he had made a mistake. His son, Frank Norris Jr., was a member here at Bellevue for a long time, and was a very cooperative member in this church.

He was one of the greatest personalities I have ever known in my life, but Frank Norris was an individualist. He didn't know how to do teamwork. Some of our dear friends back yonder, I think, mistreated him; they didn't know how to handle him. He became bitter, and he was big enough intellectually to make those attacks and admit the mistakes. He rendered a great service to Southern Baptists because he kept us on the right track. If you go out in left field on some of these subjects, you could rest assured that Frank Norris would hit you right square on the head. A lot of these so-called intellectual leadership fellows would really stay close to home base, they were afraid of him.

M: Even in his negative ministry then, you feel like he performed a service?

P: Sure, he did a service to us. Oh, he was tremendous, mean sometimes, mean as he could be; but he was a great man in many ways.

M: I believe during the time you were a pastor in Fort Worth, I guess you would say Frank Norris was in his prime?

P: Yes, he was in his heyday then. Some of the folks in my family, my cousins and aunts, would drive right by my church and go down to hear Frank Norris preach. I tell you, he was in his heyday. He and I used to meet in the park. He lived out there close to Handley where I was pastor. He would come with his grandchildren to the park, and I would be there with my little children. We would sit there and talk, and he would

give me some books and sermon outlines. He was very fond of me personally and I was fond of him personally, but I was afraid of him. I never did raise any issue with him at all.

He called me one day when I was pastor there in Fort Worth, and said, "Ramsey, I'm coming out to see you. Come on and meet me down in front of the church. I'll be there in a few minutes." So, I went on out there. I didn't know what he wanted. He drove up in his big Lincoln automobile that had been given to him, and said, "Sit down," and I sat down. He said, "Ramsey, I'm going to hold a meeting right back of your church here in this vacant lot. It's going to be a month's revival. I am going to do the preaching, but I can't be here all the time; and I want you to preach when I can't be here. I want you to have the members; I've got more than I can say grace over anyway. So, you take all the members, but I am going to hold this meeting and want you to cooperate."

M: He didn't ask you whether you wanted the meeting? He just told you?

P: He just told me, and I looked at him and I said, "Dr. Norris, you know that I am not going to do that. I like you, but I don't believe like you believe; and I can't cooperate." He looked at me for a moment, and he said, "Well, I figured that's what you would say." But he said, "Usually when I go to preachers and tell them that, they say they've got to take it up with the deacons or the church." He said, "I appreciate the fact that you have said you won't do it." I said, "I am going to do this. I am going to announce your meeting, and I am going to attend; but I am not going to preach in that revival." So, I closed a meeting in my church on a Sunday night, and I had had ninety-something odd additions to the church during that two weeks of revival.

Frank started his revival right back of my church on Monday night. I went down there, and Frank Norris could spot a Baptist preacher a mile away, keen as a hawk in his sight. He had me to come up to the platform, and he said some nice words about me and predicted that I was going to be a great preacher some day. I led in prayer and attended several nights of the meeting; but I didn't get any members from the meeting, and I don't know whether he did or not. He was a fellow who wanted you to speak up to him; and if you were afraid of him, he'd just run you to the earth. But I never had any trouble with Dr. Norris at all.

M: Did he ever share anything with you about his contention with other Baptist leaders?

P: Yes, he talked with me some about that. I remember on one occasion he said, "Now, old Lee [he talked about Dr. Scarborough] is a great man. I wish that he and I could get together and work together, but he won't work with me." I never did hear him say anything about Dr. Truett, but he used to bother about Truett a little bit. He would send him telegrams and letters and nearly every Sunday morning Dr. Truett would receive a telegram from Frank Norris. Bob Coleman would catch them and they would never get to him. I knew Dr. Truett quite well.

M: Did you know enough about the situation to evaluate to what extent Dr. Truett actually contributed to the break between the two men?

P: No, I really don't know; but Dr. Truett always stood very, very strongly for our work and cooperation with other of our Baptist people. There were some very difficult and ugly days back then. Dr. Truett had a great deal of opposition in his own church and in the denomination. He was a very stern person who didn't tolerate any kind of opposition at all. Everybody thinks of Dr. Truett as sweet and gentle and kind. Yes, he was as long as you were with him, but Brother, if you opposed him, he could become more angry than Dr. Scarborough. One of the great dangers of Southern Baptist life is that we are tending to make our great leaders think of themselves as supermen, the great Dr. So-and-so, the greatest preacher in the history of Christianity. Well, if we are not careful, we are going to begin to think that and believe it.

M: And believe it, if we hear it.

P: That is one of the dangers. And when a man thinks like that, then he gets to a place where he brooks no suggestions and has no toleration for those who would disagree with him. And that is a dangerous place to get.

M: I am sure you attended some of the meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention that Frank Norris attended. I understand that he made it a point to send a check to the Convention to be sure that he met the requirements of contribution, and then canceled the check. This is what I understand.

P: I don't know. I never heard that.

M: Or it was actually cash. I wonder if he ever shared anything in your conversation with him about his real feelings toward the Convention and why he continued to try to participate, though he wasn't really of cooperative mind.

P: Well, he did it so that he could harass. He didn't have so much against the Convention as he had against individuals. As I say now, I have a very firm conviction that Dr. Norris was given some ill treatment by our leadership back in those days. It may have had a determinate effect upon his life and upon his own attitude. Frank was an outstanding student at Union [should be Baylor] University, but he was critical, you see, of the faculty. When Dr. Brooks gave him his diploma from Union--Dr. Brooks was a great hand at saying, "This is Sam Jones, one of our fine students, he is going to make a great preacher"--he just said, "Frank Norris." Frank was an outstanding student there, but he passed him right on without saying a word of commendation. That's one thing that Frank remembered. And, of course, he was right in that there were some of the professors that were extremely liberal in their thinking, and he just simply would eat them to pieces without fear or favor. I think

he mistreated some of them, and I think some of them needed what he said, just like some of the preachers today.

M: How do you think a man like this justifies the very vindictive spirit apparently that he had in his attacks on others in the name of Christ and in the name of the gospel? It seems that kind of spirit is so foreign from the spirit of Christ.

P: Well, through the months and years he develops the philosophy that he is doing the work of Christ and that he is protecting the church; he is defending the Word of God; he is speaking up against those influences and teachings which will corrupt our young people and corrupt our churches; and anything that is necessary to stop that kind of thing he feels is justified.

M: So the end justifies the means. I notice that you served as president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, Dr. Pollard. This was while you were at Broadway?

P: Yes.

M: Tell me a little about your philosophy of state work and about your role as president of a state Baptist convention.

P: I was elected here in Memphis; I don't remember the year. I had been nominated in East Tennessee the previous year but was defeated by the pastor of the First Baptist Church in the city where we met, Kingsport. Then, maybe two years later, the convention met here and I was elected. My philosophy would be the same as that for the Southern Baptist Convention. We were having some difficulty in Tennessee at that time and our executive secretary was under pressure; and I stood by him, rightly so.

M: Who was that executive secretary?

P: C. W. Pope. I stayed by him through all his experiences, and he was vindicated. I think he was one of the greatest men I have ever known, Charles Pope. I served on it one year, and there were no problems that I can remember at all. I think we need to put emphasis on our associational work. I have never been the moderator of this association. I have been in every other place, but I was not elected moderator here. I just noticed that awhile ago when I was looking at these things that Dr. Sullivan had my wife and my secretary to get up here.

M: What role do you think the association ought to play in the denomination and in the life of the churches?

P: I think we ought to give it more money and more personnel. I think we ought to give it more recognition. I think we are apt to think of the associational work as something passe, as something that has outlived its usefulness; but the very genius of our

Southern Baptist work is being close to the local church, particularly to these small churches, country churches, and rural churches. I think that we ought to undergird our associational work and magnify the importance of it.

M: Do you think the association should be given more support from the state level or from the local churches?

P: I think we ought to give them more money to operate on; money to help the churches and supplement the pastors' salaries; and tie these churches onto the associational work, thereby, tying them onto Bellevue, the First Church, and Highland Heights. Let these country churches out here feel that these larger churches are interested in them; and in helping them they are helping us by rearing kids out there and sending them to Memphis and Dallas to become members of our churches. This church would be in a very poor condition if you took out of it all of the country people and all the small town people. We ought to support our small churches, and that's where some of these offbeat denominations are making such terrific inroads out of these other communities that we are neglecting.

M: How do you see the role of the association in terms of its role as a channel through which our denominational agencies, our Home Mission Board, and our Sunday School Board with its church program helps, may reach the churches with their material and services?

P: I think it is the best possible avenue. That's why I say we need more personnel. We need men free to go out and enlist these churches in these programs and to take these programs to them and explain them. We need to take the videotapes out there and play them; to take our literature out there and explain it, and to explain some errors that we make in our literature. For instance, there was one word left out of an article written by my niece, Miss Josephine Pyle, that literally changed the statement she was making about Jesus Christ. She said, "There was never a time that Jesus did not exist." Well, the word "never" was left out inadvertently. So the article said, "There was a time when Jesus did not exist." In this church, of course, I was not pastor here then, furor broke out, you know. Oh, the Sunday School Board writers say that Jesus didn't exist with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit." Well, we ought to have some who could go out and explain how those things happen. A lot of people don't have any patience about this, and a lot of fellows are looking for it. You are going to find what you look for.

M: Yes, that's very true.

P: If you are looking for something to criticize the Sunday School Board for, you can find it. If you are looking for something to criticize in this church, you can find that. Some crazy people have even found fault with me. (laughter) Always try to look for that which is good. The association should be the closest contact, the most intimate contact that all of our agencies have; therefore, let's rebuild our great associational meetings.

Why I have been to associational meetings here in Memphis where you wouldn't have a handful of people. Let's try to rebuild them, not draw them out and make them a long, drawn out meeting for three or four days; but have it in a central place where the people can attend, have a good program that will challenge the people and let them go home. The programs are too long for one thing.

M: Would you say the meeting is more program-oriented, and would you feel the same way there as you expressed about the larger convention meetings that you should have more preaching?

P: More inspiration.

M: More inspiration in its presentation. Dr. Pollard, I note that you served as chairman of the Radio and Television Commission and also on other Convention agencies. Suppose you share with me something about your view of the role of trustees, the elected members of commissions and boards and agencies?

P: Well, I think they ought to have a very vital part in determining the policies. I think, however, the trustees should turn over to the executive head of that division or agency the responsibility of carrying the instructions out. I think the agency heads ought to have as much liberty as possible in determining their program; but they should keep in very close contact with their trustees or board members, because usually these men and women have a very clear idea of what the Southern Baptist people as a whole would like to see carried out. I think there ought to be a mutual trust and confidence. If I were on the board and could not cooperate with the head of it, I would retire from the board. If there were serious enough charges against a man, then I would seek to have him put out of office.

M: Quite a bit has been said in recent years about the "trustee principle," especially with the study being made recently by the Committee of Fifteen. The view is that the elected board of an agency is responsible to the Convention itself for seeing that the agency carries out its task rather than the Convention becoming a board as a whole at each annual meeting, to instruct the agency step by step in policy matters and so forth.

P: I think that the Convention elects the trustees along with the president of that particular agency, and the trustees should direct the activities of that agency; but in the last analysis of the thing it always has to come back to the Convention. But it would be wise of the Convention not to interfere unless there is an absolute necessity regarding it. To illustrate, I am chairman of the present Board of Trustees at Union University. I would not think about calling one of the members of the faculty there and chastising him or even asking him a question. I would say, "Now, Mr. President, this is the information I have and I know you will handle it." It is the president's business to handle it, not mine as a trustee. Now, if the president doesn't handle it, then, of course, the trustees would have to do it.

M: I notice that you served for eight years as chairman of the Radio and Television Commission. Do you have any impressions of this particular agency, its role you saw as chairman of that Commission that you would not see, necessarily, as pastor or church member?

P: Well, of course, I went on that committee in 1940 as it was just beginning. We had absolutely no money, but we did have a great deal of opposition. I think that we received \$250 from the Southern Baptist Convention to study the wisdom of having any radio work at all. The thing grew and grew and grew. S. F. Lowe was our first director. We had some other good men on the staff, and we had a very fine program. As best I can recall, M. E. Dodd was the first Baptist Hour speaker. I can recall that now they have multiplied millions of dollars invested in equipment, grounds and building; and they receive, I believe, something like two million dollars a year from the Cooperative Program. So, the Radio and Television Commission has had a tremendous growth. I used to have to get on trains, buses, and airplanes and go to Nashville, to talk to Dr. Holcomb, then go out and talk to Bill Fleming in Fort Worth to get five thousand dollars. We had tremendous difficulty in those days getting money to operate on. Now the Radio and Television Commission has grown until it is one of the really great agencies of our Convention.

Dr. Paul Stevens is the president of it now. When I first met Paul, I helped him in a revival meeting in Ada, Oklahoma; and we had a great revival meeting. In talking with Paul about our work, he said, "You know there is one thing I would like to do. I would like to be on a Southwide committee." So I said, "Well, I think I can get you on one of them." The next year I suggested to the committee that he be elected to represent Oklahoma on the Radio and Television Commission, the Radio Commission it was at that time. He was put on there, and then, when Dr. Lowe died after a little while we turned to Dr. Stevens; and he has done a magnificent job. He has imagination, courage, and faith; and he has the ability to speak. I think he has become one of the great leaders of our Baptist denomination.

M: You have used the radio and television, I am sure, in your own ministry.

P: Yes, for thirty-five years.

M: Have you found this agency to be of special help in any way to you as a pastor?

P: Oh, yes. They helped me to formulate a program, and sent me information about how to speak, what not to do and what to do in presenting the program. They were quite helpful. But that is not the primary purpose of the Radio and Television Commission. They have developed a system whereby they can help every church. Now, the biggest help they can render to a local church is in developing their television program. They helped us here. By the way, the television ministry here at Bellevue is tremendously significant. Everywhere I go in the radius of this television program people come to me and say, "I was converted. I was saved by listening to you

on television." Dr. Rogers and Dr. Lee have had and are having a similar experience; and I am hoping that more and more Southern Baptists will use television, especially, and radio is almost as valuable.

M: The Radio and Television Commission has greatly expanded its outreach, too, in terms of types of program and so on that it has done under Paul's leadership; and also, in the geographical scope of its work in terms of world missions involvement. There seem to have been some conflicts at times between his work and our Foreign Mission Board. Do you have any comments or any reflections?

P: Well, the best I remember that it was largely a matter of personalities. Of course, all of our agencies have a tendency to say, "This is my job and you stay out of this field." There is always a danger of overlapping. So, we had to work out as best we could the difference between Dr. Lowe and Dr. Baker James Cauthen and also, between Dr. Stevens and Baker James Cauthen. But the beautiful thing about it is that all of these men were devoted to the cause of Christ, and these men felt like that they were doing what God would have them to do. They were zealous of their fields; and may I add also, that in the proper sense, they were jealous of their fields. It is a perfectly natural reaction. But those things have all been ironed out, and there is a very splendid spirit of cooperation between Radio and Television Commission all our agencies.

M: What has been your involvement with our Home Mission Board? I know of your interest in evangelism and the work there. You served at one time, I believe, on the Committee on Evangelism. Is that right?

P: Yes.

M: What was the function of this committee over against what we have now?

P: Simply to advise the director of evangelism concerning the programs that he suggested and help him develop literature; and to try to be a liaison committee between him, the entire Board and the membership of the Southern Baptist Convention. We didn't have a great deal to do. In many of these committee meetings, and I know that you are aware of the fact, it is a question of going in there and listening and voting aye. That's about all there is to it, but there have been times, or there may come time, in all of the agencies' experiences where there was debate and criticism, and where a fellow had to stand up and vote no. But usually, those things are matters of suggestions. They ask us for suggestions, and we give them. They are accepted most of the time, and they move on in a fine way of cooperation.

M: During your service on the Home Mission Board, do you recall any particular outstanding programs that were developed?

P: Except in the field of evangelism, and it is my honest opinion that the Department of Evangelism carried the Home Mission Board for a number of years. The Home

Mission Board has come back strong, but there was a period of time there when the Home Mission Board program was rather weak. I think if it had not been for the Evangelism Department, the Southern Baptist Convention would have eliminated the Home Mission Board altogether. There was widespread talk about doing that and just having one great mission board that would take care of both home missions and foreign missions. But the Home Mission Board leadership has come back in a very strong program, and I think they are in very good condition.

M: Some have proposed in more recent years that a new board, a Board of Evangelism or a Commission of Evangelism, be developed to separate this work from the Home Mission Board. What is your attitude about that?

P: I think that would have been necessary if the Home Mission Board had not developed the Evangelism Department to a new level in recent months. It may be yet necessary, I do not know. In other words, we say that evangelism is the big thing, the most important thing; and yet, we put the Evangelistic Department way down on a level that it shouldn't have been on. My understanding now is that in recent months the Home Mission Board has elevated the Evangelistic Department to a new high level. It may work out all right, I Home Mission Board hope so.

M: You served for a while I note as Baptist Hour preacher. How long did you serve?

P: I served six months. In those days we were shifting and getting new ones every three or six months. Then, we settled on Dr. Hobbs, and he became the Baptist Hour preacher. We felt like it would be better to have one man over a long period of time where he could build up a congregation.

M: You served, also, on the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, Dr. Pollard. This committee has played a very vital role in the life of our Convention, as you are aware, since it was formed in 1917. What were some of the main functions of the Executive Committee as you understood them—I guess we could say first, as a member of that committee and then, also, as president of the Convention? How would you interpret the role of this committee in the life of the Convention?

P: Well, I served on the Executive Committee perhaps nine years, and I was chairman of it back in the late fifties and early sixties. Of course, the Executive Committee is a very important committee, and the main thing that the Executive Committee must keep in mind is that it has no authority except that authority which has been specifically given to it by the Southern Baptist Convention. One of the dangers throughout our denominational life has been that committees such as the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention should take over a field of service and a field of authority that it should not take over. Again, the thing that determines nearly all of our efforts is the motive that we have. So far as I know, with rare exception, the Executive Committee of the Convention has carried on a very fine relationship with the great masses of our people; and I believe it has rendered a very distinct service for

Christ. I have believed in the Executive Committee all of my life; and certainly after serving on it and serving as chairman of it for the year or two, I certainly believe in all that it does.

M: The committee has come under fire from time to time, I assume, both in part from some of the agencies as well as from individuals, as perhaps moving in areas of action that are not necessarily assigned to it, at least in the minds of these individuals. Was this what you had reference to a moment ago?

P: Yes.

M: I think the action of the Committee of Fifteen was especially criticized at this point in terms of attempting to relieve a particular agency, for example, of its assignment and get the Convention to reassign that work to the Executive Committee, particularly stewardship promotion. As I recall, this change came actually during your first year as president of the Convention. You were elected in 1959, and I believe the first vote was in 1959; the second vote on the establishment of the Stewardship Commission came in 1960, your first year to preside. As you have observed the work of this agency, do you think this was a wise step for it to become a separate agency rather than the stewardship function being handled by the Executive Committee as it was done for many years?

P: I really don't have any opinion about it because since my retirement as president of the Convention I haven't been on the Executive Committee or any other committee, because the policy of the Convention whether it is a policy or not is that after you serve as president, you are really put on the shelf and not asked for any service of any kind. Of course, I have never attended a meeting of the Executive Committee since I retired as president of our Convention. I have never been on a committee of any kind so far as I can remember since that time. So, I really am not competent to make any comment on that.

M: I believe you were chairman of the Executive Committee immediately prior to your election as president of the Convention.

P: Yes.

M: And I assume the move toward this separation took place during your last year of service on the Executive Committee.

P: I don't recall.

M: In 1959 the Southern Baptist Convention met in Louisville, Kentucky.

P: I was elected president in 1959.

M: I notice that there were several who were nominated that year for the presidency, and there was a second ballot in which you were elected as president of the Convention, 1959. One of the first things a president is involved in is a press conference. Do you remember that press conference in 1959? There were several issues, I think, that were raised with you, and the press was very complimentary of your response, your decisiveness, and that you were not caught lacking with an answer to the problems. One that they raised a question about, I believe, was the Supreme Court's decision regarding public schools. This was about five years, I believe, after that decision; and the segregation issue was very much alive at the time. Has this in any way been a divisive issue in any of your pastorates?

P: No.

M: What was the church's reaction to the problem, especially of race, in the sixties—the marches and so forth?

P: Here? At Bellevue?

M: Yes.

P: Of course, all of our people regretted that the events were taking place. We never had any problem here at Bellevue. Just before, you know, K. O. White had been literally forced out of Houston because of the race issue. So, some of the black people started coming here. They have always been welcome to attend here; Dr. Lee used to have some black people who heard him regularly, particularly one old white-haired Negro who came here. So, there was no objection on the part of Bellevue. I knew that since I was coming here and, since I was president of the Southern Baptist Convention, that in all likelihood they would bring in outside forces and try to force the issue here; and they did. They picketed the church here at one time, just a handful, who had been hired by some fellow from Detroit.

So, I called my deacons together, most of them were Mississippians; and I told them that since I was president of the Convention and this was one of the great churches of our Convention that we were going to be put to a test. I said, "Now the thing for you to do, the biblical thing for you to do, is that if those Negroes want to come to this church, let them come. Make no issue of it, let them be seen where they want to be seen; but don't give them any special welcome. Don't say anything that would hurt their feelings. Just treat them like you treat everybody else." I said, "In the first place, not many of them are going to come. In the second place, those who do come treat them in a Christian spirit. In the third place, none of them are going to come back very often." Well, they came, forty or fifty at a time. I remember one Sunday morning one of the international leaders, I can't recall his name, Abernathy, I believe, came here and brought about forty or fifty. It happened that there wasn't a vacant seat downstairs, everything was full so they had to go upstairs to be seated. Nobody said a

word to them about it. Only one man that I know got mad and left the church because we had them in.

I told my church that there is no biblical ground for excluding black people from your church. You can't find it. You can do it on prejudice, you can do it on earthly reasoning; but so far as the Bible is concerned, you can't do it. I said, "Another thing. They are not going to come to your church, they don't want to come. They've got better preachers than we have in the first place, and they want to be with their own people. They have a different type of service." We had no problem about that at all.

M: The election of the 1959 Convention president, can you tell me a little about that? Did the person who nominated you tell you he was going to do that beforehand?

P: I believe it was Homer Lindsey who nominated me. No, he didn't discuss it with me, but I knew that he was because someone had written me and asked me if it would be all right if Homer nominated me. They knew I was going to be nominated, and they wanted to know if somebody else was going to nominate me. I didn't know then who else it was, so I said, "So far as I am concerned, I am not asking anybody to nominate me; but if he wants to, he has a right to and I have no objection." Of course, the interesting thing about it was that there I was a Southwestern man being elected in Louisville, Kentucky, on the 100th Anniversary of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Interesting, too, the first Convention I ever attended was in Louisville.

M: Tell me about it.

P: My little church sent me from Tampa, Florida. They gave us \$180 and put us on the train and sent us up there. I went to the Convention, and stayed in the same hotel and on the same floor as Wallace Bassett and George W. Truett, I think. I never did go back to Louisville anymore. I was just a poor, ignorant, country preacher, I mean poor, too. The fact of the matter is the church had to send us some more money to get home on. The next time I went to the Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, I was elected president.

M: So it was from 1927 to 1959 then.

Dr. Pollard, you served for two years as president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Suppose you give me some of your impressions of this job. I know it must be quite a heavy task, and a very demanding task, of a man who is already a very busy person as pastor of a large church as you were.

P: Well, you forget about the responsibilities and the burdens of it in the thrill of holding such a place of service. I always have been physically strong and full of optimism and courage, I think of the right kind, so bearing the burdens of the office did not have any bad effect upon me physically, mentally, or spiritually. In fact, I rather enjoyed it; I think most men do. For one thing, I didn't have any serious

problems that came up during my two years as president of the Convention. I cannot recall any question that came up that was anywhere near causing a division in the Convention. On one occasion I was out and something came up; I had turned the gavel over to Dr. Vaught. When I came back in, he was right in the middle of it and tried to give the gavel back to me; and, of course, I wouldn't accept it because I didn't know what was going on. He was very anxious to get rid of it at that time, and I wasn't anxious to receive it. But I don't recall anything that caused any division at all. I remember that there was a man by the name of James Bullman who had been causing a great deal of dissension, but he wasn't there, at least, I never saw him during the two years I was president of the Convention.

I am one of the fundamentalist fellows, not the capital *F*, and I believe what the overwhelming majority of those preachers, laymen, and women believe; and when I expressed my opinion along that line, they were pleased and therefore gave me their very earnest support. I didn't have any trouble; I enjoyed every day of it. I went around the world and preached in many, many places. Opportunities after opportunities were given to me, and I weighed just as much when I left office as I did when I went in. It was a joy, a thrill, and an honor that I shall never forget.

M: How did you handle the many demands that you had for speaking engagements in the light of your own pastorate? Did you set up any schedule of how much time you would be away?

P: Well, of course, I couldn't accept all the invitations, but I accepted many of them and my church understood it; and so far as I know, there was no criticism of me. I tried to be here on Sunday as frequently as possible, though I could not match the record that Dr. Lee and Dr. Weber had set. I think I have heard of them that neither of them missed a single Sunday during their terms as president of the Convention. I cannot say that because I went on long trips to our mission fields, and I held revival meetings.

M: One of the things that was an issue at the Convention in Louisville in 1959 was the recommendation that some brought, or a motion, that churches from Canada be received into the Convention. As I recall, you were asked for some comment about that when asked if you favored receiving churches or messengers from churches in Canada. I think you replied in the negative, when asked if you favored Southern Baptists extending their organization into Canada. Was your feeling that we ought to have cooperation without affiliation with these people?

P: Yes. Support them, cooperate with them, but have no organic affiliation.

M: Did T. B. McDormand, who was leader of the Canadian Baptists at that time attempt in any way to bring any pressure to bear on you as president of the Convention?

- P: No, none at all. He wrote me and tried, of course, to express his judgment on the thing, but he never used any personal influence at all.
- M: But he did make his views known to you, of course, as president of the Convention. The president has a major role to play in the development of the program for the Convention each year. I note that the theme for the program in 1960 in Miami was "Required of Stewards . . . Found Faithful." This must have been about the first year of the Baptist Advance Program. Do you remember the five-year, 1959-1964 Jubilee Year? What role did you actually play in the development of the program?
- P: Not a great deal that I remember except that I was for it and gave it encouragement, and I gave them places on the program to present the matter to the Convention and to promote it. But so far as I can remember, I had very little to do with the formulation of the program of that particular work.
- M: How closely does a Convention president, or did you as president, work with the Executive Committee during the interim between annual meetings? I believe the president meets with the Executive Committee.
- P: Yes. He has the right to do so if he so desires. I do not remember any matter that came up that I felt necessary to take to the Executive Committee. Porter Routh and I worked together, along with the Program Committee, in formulating the program and choosing personnel and things of that kind. But the Executive Committee had very little to do with that.
- M: What about committee appointments? Was this quite a chore?
- P: Yes, it is. It is a very hard job to do, and if one isn't careful, there will be prejudice. I did my very best to have a good representation from all of our seminaries. But in those matters, if a man isn't careful he will make the mistake of naming his friends only on committees, on nominating committees especially. The Nominating Committee, in nominating the various committees of the Convention, can literally control the Convention over a period of years. You get the wrong Nominating Committee and that man stacks the committees, you can have real trouble; and that has been done at least one time that I know of.

I always sought, in arranging the program of the Pastors' Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention and in naming committees, to name men who represented a different seminary equally well, with laymen and women on there, and a well-distributed membership. Because if you don't do that, you make a mistake. As I said, the chief danger is this: There's an old boy, and he and I went to the seminary together. We have been friends, and he would be thrilled to death if I would put him on a certain committee; but maybe he's not the one for it. You have to make some hard decisions. I lost some friends because I didn't put them on committees, but I didn't feel they were best for it. If I felt maybe the committee was lopsided or

overweighted with one group, I had to use somebody else; so, I lost some friends because of that.

M: I am sure it is quite a weighty responsibility.

P: It is about the most difficult job.

M: What can you share with us about your representation of our Convention or Southern Baptists in meetings of other Baptist bodies? I am sure that you attended some.

P: Yes. I went to the American Baptist Convention, and they received me very cordially with one exception. A man who had formerly belonged to our Southern Baptist Convention, who had faded out and failed in his work, bitter and antagonistic toward his old church and toward Southern Baptists, was unkind; but that was "one of our own," so to speak. But the great mass of people there were very receptive, and I spoke to them about our love, our spirit of cooperation, and our desire to be helpful to them; and of the hope that they would be helpful to us. The Negro Baptist Convention, I went to one of those and they had a whale of a good time. They asked me to preach for a little while, and I did. Those black people went up and down the halls and the aisles, and they walked and sang and shouted for thirty minutes. It was a sight to behold. I enjoyed being with them, and they were very gracious toward me, too.

M: Would you say that the kind of response they gave would encourage a man to preach his heart out?

P: Oh, yes. If he's got any preacher in him, they'll bring it out.

M: I would think so.

P: I loved that kind of thing, and I still love to do it.

M: We have just observed today, Dr. Pollard, the fiftieth anniversary of the Cooperative Program. You became a pastor the very year that the program was born officially, 1925. What was your response as a young pastor to this approach to mission support?

P: Well, of course, I didn't know much about it in my little church at that time. I didn't know anything about missions, and we didn't give anything to missions. It was along about the last two years I was pastor at El Bethel in Tampa that we began to give anything to mission causes. We didn't have anything to give. We were just as poor as we could be. They gave me all the money they took in outside of the money to pay the light bill and buy kerosene for the stoves during the wintertime. I mean we were poor. I remember one year there for January, February, and March I received less than five hundred dollars for the three months. We were very poor.

I didn't know anything about the Cooperative Program myself, and of course, they didn't. But as I learned about it from attending conventions, I began to talk about it and emphasize it, and we gave a little bit of money. Of course, when I went off to Texas I learned more about it, and through the years I have been a strong believer in the Cooperative Program. Lee Scarborough put that thing in my heart. He said, "Wherever you boys go to preach the gospel, *cooperate, cooperate, cooperate.*" Lee Scarborough burned that into our very souls. So I have been a very firm believer. I believe that God gave that program to us just like he gave the program of evangelism to us, and I think we had better undergird it and continue to undergird it with all that we can do.

I don't think that the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the Annie Armstrong Offering has any bad effect on the Cooperative Program. I think the danger in our Cooperative Program work is that it will lose the element of personality. It will become just a dollar-and-cent program, that's the chief danger. We should keep William Wallace in our minds. He grew up in Broadway Church, my church, and he was a dear friend of mine. He was also a member of this church while he was going to medical school. But we've got to keep human personalities in the forefront in mission causes. People are a great deal more interested in personalities than they are in money, in dollars and cents. So, I think the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the Annie Armstrong Offering, the Children's Home Offering, and things of that kind undergird and help our offerings. They loosen up the pocketbooks of our people. I believe in the Cooperative Program, and I support Cooperative Program it.

M: One very important event in American history occurred during your term as president, the presidential election year of 1960. I am sure as president of the Convention you were asked for your opinion and perhaps received some correspondence related to the election issue. Do you want to share something with us about that?

P: Well, of course, I opposed Mr. Kennedy on religious grounds. There are some of my very best friends who say that was a mistake. I did not think so then, and I do not think so now. I made it emphatically one of my observations and truths that I was not speaking for Southern Baptists; I was not speaking for Broadway; I was not speaking for Bellevue; I was not speaking for anybody except Ramsey Pollard. Now, of course, it is hard to wipe out the relationship in the mind of the press because they want to tie you together. They want to say that the president of the Convention is speaking for Southern Baptists when in reality, he isn't. I opposed Mr. Kennedy on the grounds that the denomination he represented was opposed to religious liberty. At the very time he was running for office, our churches in Spain and South America were closed because of the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. I said that it would be an encouragement for that kind of thing to go on all over the world, so I was opposed to him because his religion did not grant to all people religious liberty. He would have

been defeated, if that election had not been stolen. Everybody with common sense knows that election was stolen.

M: What do you mean by that?

P: I mean in Chicago and in Texas it was stolen; there were enough electoral votes involved there to switch the election. There were just a handful of votes that separated them. It was a stolen election, but Mr. Kennedy did better than I anticipated. I don't know what would have been the ultimate outcome, but he certainly took his ground and stood that ground as long as he was President of the United States. In fact, he was stronger in his declarations than some of Baptists were who occupied that office.

M: As far as church-state relations were concerned.

P: That's right. Then, I think also the coming into power of Pope John XXIII had a good effect. But you must never forget the one reason those men, Pope John and fellows like him, came to that better decision was the fact that the spotlight had been put upon them. The radio, television, newspapers, and public speakers were saying, "This is what these fellows believe, and this is what they have done." When you turn the spotlight on, somebody is going to crawl, and that's what happened there. Roman Catholicism is not near as strong as it used to be, and the reason for it is that the spotlight has been turned on them and they have had to back up. Even their own people have compelled them to back up. It used to be that they could do anything they wanted to in Spain, and we never knew about it in the United States. Now you know about it before the people in that town know about it because of radio, television, and newspapers. So, light has brought about the end of persecution in many places, and I think there is a much better relationship between Roman Catholicism and our Baptist people and others than there has been in a long, long time. There is still room for improvement, but it is getting better.

To illustrate, I preached in a Roman Catholic church not long ago when I was pastor of this church. Father Joe called me and said, "We want you to preach down here." I said, "You must have the wrong party." He said, "No, we know who you are, we know what you have said, and we respect you. We want you to come down and preach." I went down there and preached in a Roman Catholic church down the street, and the auditorium was full. He said, "There are no strings, preach what you want to." I preached on the grace of God and religious liberty. We had a fine service and everybody was happy.

M: Quite a change that you wouldn't have anticipated only a few years earlier.

P: But the spirit is there, and it is going to get better, I believe.

M: You mentioned that you got some mail during your time of service here. Did this largely come, do you think, from Catholic people?

P: Oh, yes. Ninety-nine percent of it, the obscene mail and things of that kind, came from them. I'll give it to you, I don't need to keep it. I haven't thrown it away, but it's pretty bad reading, some of it.

M: Convention presidents and the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee get letters from people who have the answer to the world's problems. They get letters from people who are very critical of Southern Baptists. Do you recall any of these kinds of letters that particularly stand out in your mind?

P: I got some letters from the deep South and one from Texas when I made the statement about the black people, that they had been mistreated and we should treat them with Christian consideration. I made the statement that so far as I know there is no biblical ground for turning a black man out of your church because of his color. I got some mail about that, and of course, about the Catholic president. I got a lot of mail about our seminaries. The seminaries were under a good deal of criticism at that time and justly so. I got a good deal of mail about that. Of course, in one of my presidential messages I made a very strong statement there: that, "The seminary professor who didn't believe the great fundamental truths of God's Word should be terminated before the setting of the sun. We ought not to pay a man a salary to destroy the faith of our young preachers." Well, I got some ugly mail about that, but every time I got one like that, I'd get a hundred from people who said, "Thank God that the president of the Southern Baptist Convention will stand up and say a thing of that kind."

I didn't get too much bad mail. Most of it was very good, but that which was bad was very bad. I didn't pay any attention to it much; it didn't worry me. I never did like to offend people or hurt people; but if I said what I knew was right and it offended people, why it was just too bad. It was their shoe, let them wear it. And I said some things, of course, I shouldn't have said, all of us do that. I have said one or two things that I wish I hadn't said, and I've done one or two things as the leader of the Convention that I wish I hadn't done.

M: Do you have any impressions at all about the two Conventions? One impression you have shared is that you don't recall any divisive issues at the time that at least threatened to divide the Convention.

P: No.

M: What seemed to be the tenor of Southern Baptists in 1960 and 1961?

P: As best I can remember, it was good and forward looking. Things were moving along in a fine way. You see, we were all in pretty good shape. As far as I can remember—

there may be something in the minutes there that will refresh my memory of something that happened that I don't recall—the whole theme and tenor of the Convention was one of courage and optimism and faith and moving on.

M: The Christian Life Commission, especially in the last decade or so, has had what some people call an "annual call." Some people have wanted to undo it. I believe A. C. Miller was head of the Commission during the time of your presidency. He's a Texan, I believe, isn't he? Did you know him when you were a pastor in Texas?

P: Yes. He was a very wise man. He had some deep convictions, but he had wisdom to go along with it; and he was not a brash man.

M: What is your impression of the Christian Life Commission and some of the attacks that it has taken?

P: I think they have been bringing it on themselves, and I think that they ought to be more cautious in irritating the great mass of our people when there is no real objective to be won. I think the present head of the Christian Life Commission [Foy Valentine] has been exceedingly unwise in his programming. I think he has brought in people who were, in reality, envious of the things for which we have stood through the years. And I think—I don't know whether I should say this or not—if it had not been for me that the Southern Baptist Convention would have done away with the Christian Life Commission in Denver, in 1970.

M: I wanted to ask you about that. I do remember that. I was there at that meeting and I know the feeling was very strong on the part of some people in reacting to a recent seminar that they had had.

P: It was overwhelming.

M: I recall your speaking to the issue. What led you to come to the defense?

P: Well, two things. I had attacked the Christian Life Commission in my church paper here, and publicly, because of the foolishness of the program that they put on in Atlanta. I went to Nashville to hold a revival meeting, and the executive secretary came out to see me at the hotel. He expressed his regret and told me that he would never make that mistake again and asked me what to do to get over it. The First Church at Amarillo, Texas, had notified the Southern Baptist Convention that they were going to withhold all the Cooperative Program receipts, it's the largest giver in the world, you know. They had had a tremendous reaction. I said, "Get on a plane and go out there and talk to Winfred Moore, tell him I asked you to; and explain to him what you told me, that you regret it and that you made a mistake. Winfred is a good guy. You just played the fool, that's all there is to it. Go out there and talk to him and write these other men letters. Put it publicly and express what you have said to me." I

don't know whether he did it or not, but anyway, I was under the impression that he had seen the error of his way and that he was not going to do it again.

Well, at the Convention, there was a division about it and bitterness. We had a good Convention, and I had worried about that thing. I didn't want to see the Convention hurt; they did not know what he had told me, and I believed him. Therefore, the motions had already been made and the floor was greased, it was ready. He was a gone goslin, that's all there is to it. And so at two o'clock in the morning I got up and wrote this motion, because the other motion would create a division in our Convention. I made a motion that we table all of the motions referring to the Christian Life Commission, because all those fellows at the Convention had not been very far removed from my own office. They knew how I felt, and they had confidence in me and in my convictions. I knew they would vote with me on the thing. And, then, to further seal the thing I had all the ex-presidents there to sign it with me, Herschel Hobbs, K. Owen White, and four or five of us signed it. I read the thing, and Criswell gave me the privilege of making a personal comment. And so, my motion carried. But do you know something? From that day until this Foy Valentine has never said thank you. He hasn't written me a letter, called me or spoken to me since that day.

M: Well, that's interesting.

P: That's the biggest mistake I have ever made in my denominational life, saving the Christian Life Commission. I did it; I plead guilty.

M: Well, it is interesting to see how things develop and evolve in our Convention, and I guess one of the amazing things is, that with the democratic polity and the openness that we have in our meetings, that we have the unity we have.

P: Well, we love each other. And let me say this: Not long ago, Foy Valentine wrote one of the strongest and the best articles about our Baptist faith that I have ever seen in my life. It is magnificent. Have you read it?

M: I don't believe I have.

P: In the last sixty days it has been in some of our papers. You look it up and read it; it is a magnificent statement. How he could write that and believe it, and I think he does believe it. I think Foy is a good man; but I think that in his grasp for publicity and the unique and novel thing, that he has gotten out in left field. But he is a good man and I think he is a good Baptist, and if he would just use some of that good sense that God gave him he wouldn't be in trouble all the Christian Life Commissiontime.

M: There are many things, I am sure, that we could share about the Convention; and I hope that we will have an opportunity, Dr. Pollard, to do a follow-up when you are in Nashville or when we can get together with you again. I am afraid I am about to talk

you out and knowing you have a service ahead it would probably be best to pause here.

P: Well, this is important to you, and I realize the importance of it. Sometime when I am in Nashville quite soon, I will be glad to come and sit down in the office with you and go over this thing and make any corrections that you think are needed. I know that reporters don't want you to rewrite their articles, but sometimes there is a glaring mistake that I have conveyed to you that shouldn't have been made; and if we can correct a thing of that kind, it is the best thing to do.

M: Well, let me share with you just a word about our usual procedure. We will transcribe the tapes; then, we will send a copy of the transcript to you so that you will have a chance to review what has been said. We may have a few factual errors here and there, dates or other things that, with the source in front of us, we can look up and correct, to be sure we get the spelling of names right. Then if it has come through on the tape conveying something you did not really intend to say, then, we would want you to have the opportunity of correcting that. Also, if we review what we have talked about, I am sure we will both think of other things that we would like for you to share with us, because you may decide one of these days to sit down and write your autobiography.

P: My wife is always threatening to do that.

M: We just don't keep diaries and other personal records these days, it seems, like people used to do. Therefore, our records really are incomplete, oftentimes, of a man and his life and his ministry.

P: I have had several thoughts of publishing a book of sermons, but you know I have an inferiority complex about it. I don't want to write a book of sermons that is ordinary; there are too many of those now. I think, perhaps if I work on it hard enough, that I could dig up ten or twelve messages I have preached at Southern Baptist Conventions, Pastors' Conferences, and evangelistic conferences. In fact, I am going to preach one of those tonight in the revival meeting. Then, I have had a lot of terrific experiences, funny experiences in my ministry. I thought a little bit about writing a little booklet of those, just writing and telling people some funny experiences. I am not a good writer; that is one reason I don't answer a lot of things that people send me. I don't like to write.

M: Well, between now and the time we get together again suppose you give some thought to what we have talked about. There are some areas of your ministry that we did not cover and, too, there are several things that have happened in Southern Baptist life in the 25 or 30 years that I would like for you to think with me about: the Elliott Controversy, the *Broadman Commentary*, the issues of this nature and others that have been before the Convention. We didn't talk about the Baptist World

Alliance and any relation you had there with world Baptists, so we will have to get together again.

P: I'd like to tell you something about my missionary trips to Alaska, Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong.

M: Yes. We want to hear about it.

P: I have been around the world a couple of times and preached lots of places, and I'd like to tell you a little bit about those things.

M: Yes. This we very much want to hear and have you share. We will be getting in touch with you.

INDEX

- Abernathy, Ralph David 34
- Agencies, SBC
 - reports 22
- American Baptist Convention 38
- Annie Armstrong Easter Offering 39
- Associations, Baptist 27-29
- Baptist Advance Program 37
- Baptist Hour 30, 32
- Bassett, Mrs. Wallace 6
- ✓ Bassett, Wallace 5, 9, 12
- Baylor University (mistakenly cited as Union University) 26
- ✓ Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee 9, 13, 15
- Black Baptists 38
- Broadway Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tennessee 13
- Brooks, Samuel Palmer 26
- Brown, Fred 9
- Bullman, James 36
- Campbell, R. C. 13
- Canada 36
- Carlson, E. L. 9
- Cauthen, Baker James 31
- Christian Life Commission 42-43
- Church-state relations 40
- Cliett, Imogene Pollard (Mrs. Robert) (daughter) 18
- Committee of Fifteen 29, 33
- Cooperative Program 38-39
- Copass, B. A. 9
- Craig, Marshall 12
- Dana, Harvey Eugene 8, 10
- DeLand Assembly 7
- Depression, Great 7, 12
- Dodd, M. E. 22, 30
- Dossey, C. Y. 10
- Duke, Claude 9, 12
- Eastham, Fred 11
- ✓ El Bethel Baptist Church, Tampa, Florida 7, 35, 38
- Emmanuel Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee 14
- Evangelism 11, 15, 23, 31
- Evans Avenue Baptist Church, Ft. Worth Texas (See Tabernacle Baptist Church)
- Executive Committee, SBC 32, 37
- First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas 5, 42

- First Baptist Church, Handley, Texas 12
- First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tennessee 9
- First Baptist Church, Tampa, Florida 9, 11
- Fleming, Bill 30
- Ford, Herschel 13
- Fundamentalism 14, 24, 36
- Gambling industry, opposition to 16
- Hobbs, H. H. 32
- Holcomb, T. L. 30
- Home Mission Board 31-32
- Hopkins, G. S. 5
- Independent movement 23
- Kennedy, John F. 39
- Leavell, Roland 11
- ✓ Lee, Robert Greene 9, 13, 24
- Levell, Roland 11
- Lindsey, Homer 35
- Liquor industry, opposition to 9, 16-17
- Lottie Moon Christmas Offering 39
- Lowe, S. F. 30
- Matthews, C. E. 10
- McDormand, T. B. 36
- Miller, A. C. 42
- Moore, Ralph 9
- Moore, Winfred 42
- Nominating Committee, SBC 37
- ✓ Norris, J. Frank 24-27
- Norris, J. Frank Jr. 24
- Pastors' Conference, SBC 10, 20-22, 37
- Pleitz, James L. 10
- Pollard, Della Pickle 17
- Pollard, Ramsey
 - baptism 5
 - birth 4
 - call to ministry 6
 - children 18
 - early home life 5
 - education 19
 - high school 6
 - marriage 17
 - ordination 7
 - parents 4

- pastorates 12
- retirement gifts 14
- SBC presidency 35, 41
- Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary 7
- Pollard, Ramsey Jr 18
- Pope John XXIII 40
- Pope, C. W. 27
- Presidential election, 1960
 - stolen 39
- Pyle, Irene Pollard (Mrs. W. A.) (sister) 4, 6
- Pyle, Josephine 6, 28
- Racial issues 34-35
- Radio and Television Commission 29, 30
- Religious liberty 39
- Rogers, Adrian 15
- Roman Catholic Church 39
- Ruth, Porter 37
- Sampey, John R. 8
- ✓ Scarborough, L. R. 5, 6, 8, 13, 25, 39
- Second Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee 14
- Simultaneous Campaign 11
- Social ministries 9, 15
- Southern Baptist Convention
 - extra meetings 21
 - trustees 29
- Southern Baptist Convention, Denver, Colorado (1970) 42
- Southern Baptist Convention, Ft. Worth, Texas (1934) 8
- Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, Texas (1953) 20
- Southern Baptist Convention, Louisville, Kentucky (1927) 35
- Southern Baptist Convention, Louisville, Kentucky (1959) 33
- Southern Baptist Convention, St. Louis, Missouri (1954) 20
- Stephens, Paul 30
- Stewardship Commission 33
- Tabernacle Baptist Church, Ft. Worth, Texas 10, 12
- Tampa Bay Association 23
- Tennessee Baptist Convention 27
- Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Ft. Worth, Texas 10
- ✓ Truett, George W. 25-26
- Union University 19, 29
- Valentine, Foy 43
- Vaught, W. O. 36
- Virgin, H. W. 5

Wallace, William 39
Walston, Charlie 12
Weber, Jaroy 10
White, K. O. 34
Y.M.C.A. 7