



LEGACY

Our Mission: Researching, preserving and promoting the Legacy of Florida Baptists

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LEGACY, as the monthly newsletter of the Florida Baptist Historical Society, has as its mission to highlight the legacy forged by the people and events in Florida Baptist history. During 2024, the LEGACY's monthly issues will feature brief personal profiles of selected Florida Baptist men and women, who through their Christian commitment, have demonstrated Legacy Leadership in their ministry service on the Florida Baptist mission field. These persons, could join with the Apostle Paul, in declaring as "God's fellow workers" they have "laid a foundation" for God's kingdom on earth and upon which "someone else is building" [II Corinthians 3:9-10NIV].

Clyde Merrill Maguire: Christian Author and Missions' Education Advocate

Clyde Merrill Maguire (b. 1910; d. 1995), who was most notably known as the spouse of Florida Baptists' longest serving executive secretary-treasurer, was in her own right a Christian author and missions' advocate.

From a very young age, she was "full of spunk," by her own admission. A native of Heflin, Alabama, Clyde Merrill, at age 14, grew up in rural Alabama in the mid-1920s, taught Sunday School. "There just wasn't anybody else to teach it," she explained.

At age 17 and already in college, Clyde was working as a summer waitress during the first Southern Baptist Convention-sponsored south wide Sunday school training event held in conjunction with the Alabama Baptist State Convention. John Henry Maguire (b. 1900; d. 1987) was in attendance as a training leader, employed as a Sunday School field worker for the Alabama Convention.

One night in the dining hall, Clyde met John Maguire, a man ten years her senior. Maguire teased Clyde about her first name. "Who ever heard of a girl being named Clyde? I'm going to change your name," John Maguire said. Without hesitation she countered in her genteel Southern accent, "Oh, this is so sudden. When are we going to get married?"



Marriage and Family

That question was finally answered four years to the day after the couple's first meeting. Clyde Merrill married John Maguire in Anniston, Alabama, on September 3, 1931. **Maguire was Clyde's "only real sweetheart" and the man who would be her husband for the next 56 years.** Eleven months after marriage, their first son, John (b. 1932), was born, followed five and seven years later, by two daughters, Merrill (b. 1937) and Martha (b. 1939), respectively.

By the time of her marriage, Clyde had completed her college degree at Alabama College (later became Montevallo University) and earned a master of religious education degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The couple lived in Birmingham while Mr. Maguire served as a Sunday school specialist from 1927 to 1936. Then Mr. Maguire was called to Florala, Ala., where he served as pastor 1936 to 1939.

Then as a minister's wife and mother of three, when most women had their hands full with domestic responsibilities, she learned first-hand how to support her husband in ministry. Clyde was active in the church's ministry programs, particularly the missions' education ministries, possibly an uncommon feat during the era in which she was living.

In 1945 the Maguire family packed up and moved from Birmingham, where John Maguire had been serving as pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church since 1939, to Florida. In Jacksonville, John Maguire subsequently earned the distinction of serving the longest tenure of any executive secretary-treasurer (1945-67) for the Florida Baptist Convention. With her husband garnering respect and love in his leadership with Florida Baptists, Clyde continued to develop a ministry of her own.

Missions' Education Advocate

Clyde Maguire was dedicated to the missions' education of Baptist women. She started soon after her introduction to the January 22, 1945, Florida Baptist WMU annual meeting held in Jacksonville. WMU historian Martha Trotter wrote that **“Clyde, unusually talented and deeply committed, invested herself alongside [Josephine] Jones (state WMU executive secretary) giving strong leadership wherever she was needed in Florida W.M.U.”**

In the course of her volunteer service with Florida WMU, Clyde Maguire served as the director of the relief offering, state mission study director and president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ministers Wives conference. Her most significant contributions to Florida WMU would be the missions' education study guides and pageants she produced in the ensuing years.

Prolific Christian Author

After having been a contributor to various “training union” and Sunday School magazines for years, she published her first book in 1953. The book, *The Cokesbury Dinner and Banquet Book*, published by Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, which was dedicated to her husband John, was a compilation of creative ideas for various church banquets and dinners for special occasions. She included ideas for decorations, invitations, entertainment and menus.

After that first book, her pen rarely stayed idle. Over the next 33 years she authored or co-authored eleven additional books. She followed up her first book with a second book, dedicated to her children, in 1956, *Abingdon Party and Banquet Book*. Also, that year she wrote another book, *Magnify Your Office*, which provided ideas for installation services for church workers. **That book was dedicated to her parents who “taught me the meaning of words like faithfulness, loyalty, and unselfish service by the object lesson of their lives.”**

In 1958, the wife and mother wrote the home mission study book for young people, *Won by One*. In her Foreword, she wrote that the book was written “with the hope that its stories will challenge YOU to be a soul-winner, to pray more intelligently, and to give more liberally for the soul-winning work done by our Home Mission Board.” In 1960 she wrote a biography of a respected Christian education leader, *J.M. Price: Portrait of a Pioneer*, published by Broadman Press.

Writing Collaboration

During a busy twelve-year period, Clyde combined her talents with Agnes D. Pylant, also a pastor's wife. The duo had met years earlier at Southwestern Seminary, where Clyde enrolled in a story-telling class taught by Pylant. “The two developed more than a teacher-pupil relationship; they became devoted friends.” Together they wrote five volumes of “story” books. In one of their co-authored books, **Clyde wrote that “a story was not art unless it had three factors, truth, beauty and the power to elevate and uplift. We believe our stories pass the test.”** Of her stories, her favorite was “Our Money and the Jones's,” published in *Here's a Story to Tell* by World Publishers of Orlando in 1970.

Her last two books, self-published volumes when she was a vibrant 70-year-old and then 76-year-old, were aptly entitled *Fun for Senior Adults* (1980) and *More Fun for Senior Adults* (1986). The books presented program suggestions for senior adult luncheons.

With modesty, Clyde said, in an oral history interview conducted in 1985, “That’s right. I have 12 books that I’ve written. But there’s no theme in them. I mean, there’s no continuity, except maybe two at a time. They’re just things that seem to be needed, and I’d just buckle down and write them. I just wrote fun books when they would be needed.”

Writer of Family and Missions Resources

Additionally, she wrote a pamphlet entitled, “Background for Backbone,” published by the Baptist Sunday School Board and distributed in the late 1950s or early 1960s. The pamphlet encouraged parents to establish Christian homes. **The pamphlet was just one of many specialty publications she wrote, including teacher helps for mission study guides distributed by the Southern Baptist Convention’s then-called Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board.**

In 1966 the prolific writer penned a brief history of Calvary Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Her husband had served as pastor of the church from 1939 until 1945, when he became executive secretary-treasurer for the Florida Baptist Convention. In 1965 the church facility was sold to an African American congregation and renamed the Macedonia 13th Avenue Baptist Church of Birmingham.

Pageants on Missions and Baptist History

As if writing books and pamphlets were not enough, Clyde Maguire also used her creative energies to write several pageants for Florida Baptists. For example, in November, 1948, she wrote and directed a pageant on state missions, entitled “Florida Baptists: A Great Team, Facing a Great Task,” in which state convention employees told the Florida mission story. Six years later, in November, 1954, Florida Baptists’ first lady, along with Mrs. James Nemec, wrote a pageant commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Florida Baptist State Convention. The two-hour pageant, entitled “Baptists in Florida,” featured a cast of Florida Baptist historically significant characters portrayed by faculty and staff from Stetson University.

While serving in several elected positions with Florida Woman’s Missionary Union, Clyde also used her writing skills for special commemorations. She wrote a “Sixtieth Anniversary Pageant” in April, 1954, to commemorate Florida WMU’s sixtieth anniversary. In 1958, she wrote a program, entitled “Love Triumphant,” presenting goals for the Baptist Jubilee Advance, the sesquicentennial celebration of the organization of Baptist work in North America. Her program was filmed for showing at associational meetings. In April, 1962, she wrote and portrayed the character “Annie-Versary,” to celebrate the diamond anniversary of Florida WMU. Also, in that year, Florida Baptists’ first lady was invited to speak at the state convention annual meeting on the topic, “The Christian Home.” Her address was subsequently printed in the December 6, 1962, issue of *Florida Baptist Witness*.

Honored for Missions’ Commitment

In 1985 the Florida State Mission Offering was named the Maguire State Mission Offering in recognition of John and Clyde Maguire [pictured]. Also, the Maguire Minister’s Wife Award is presented annually to a Florida Baptist minister’s wife who has demonstrated faithful use of the gifts God has given her in support of her husband’s ministry and in her own ministry.

Her beloved husband preceded her in death in 1987, and the full-of-spunk girl who matured into a full-of-spunk missions-advocate woman died in 1995.



[RESOURCES: This article is based upon a 2008 narrative written by Margaret Dempsey [now Colson], titled “Clyde Merrill Maguire, Full of Spunk,” which utilized additional resources including: an oral history interview with John and Clyde Maguire conducted by Donald S. Hepburn in December, 1985; Margaret Redding Hallam, *The Maguire Memoirs*, published 1987; Martha Pope Trotter, *Faithful Servants* (1994); Clyde Merrill Maguire books, *Magnify Your Office* (Broadman, 1956) and *Won by One* (Home Mission Board, 1958); Clyde M. Maguire and Agnes D. Pylant, *Best of all Stories*, (Florida Baptist Convention Press, 1968; and Florida Baptist Historical Society files.]