

A Convention Feature

# A Tribute to O. K. Radford

By James W. Parrish  
Vice President, Stetson University

"And he was a good man . . ." Acts 11:24a

An old Mississippi preacher lamented the era in which we live. "Ministers," said he, "have grown careless in the use of words. Take the word 'good.' It has been used so carelessly that now it is **good God, good Devil, good Hell, good Bilbo.**" This statement has helped to make me more conscientious about the use of the descriptive adjective. Then I remember Dr. Charles Farris of the Stetson faculty in yesteryear saying, "Young gentlemen, nothing will mark you more as being intellectually dishonest than the promiscuous use of the superlative degree. Make sure that you are right when you say that anyone is the **best**, or anything is the **greatest.**" With these two warnings in mind, I feel that I am honest in my statement about O. K. He was not the **greatest**, he was not the **best**. But he was a **good** man in the true significance of that description.

He was good in that he was **HOLY**. O, how we mix metaphors and misinterpret words. How often we get mingled into our ideas of holiness preconceived ideas of sanctity and an almost odious definition of **pious** that can only be termed **piosity**. In the finest sense of the word **holy**, O. K. was holy. Dr. W. Hersey Davis had a way of saying that one cannot be **HOLY** until he is **WHOLLY**—surrendered and committed to a task. We cannot consecrate. Only God can do that. We can only dedicate. We hand over to God. That is dedication; God then consecrates. I am quite confident that O. K. handed over that which he was and God consecrated him to the service which our late beloved brother rendered. A service which he rendered to the Kingdom of God through Florida Baptists. What Van Ness was to the Sunday School Board for Southern Baptists, giving it stability and balance, Brother Radford was to Florida Baptists and the Training Union. What Willingham was to the Foreign Board, giving it vision and perspective, O. K. was to us. Spilman pioneered in field work, plodding and persevering. So did O. K. Landrum Pinson Leavell, with uncanny skill, lifted the horizons of Southern Baptists and had their compassion to encompass the youth of our Southland. O. K. did the same for Florida Baptists. Jerry Lambdin, and I think that he and Dr. W. W. Willian were Brother Radford's ideals, was patient as he persevered the trying days of conversion of our program from a youth movement to a church-wide training program. O. K. borrowed from Jerry Lambdin as he faced the unrelenting and little rewarding task of leading his adopted state in this conversion. Starting out with Dr. Willian, O. K. saw potentials for this new program far beyond the possible span of his earthly existence.

To Brother Smyly I say, your



O. K. Radford

predecessor built on faith, he moved forward in the healthy atmosphere of hope. He progressed, he kept on keeping on when few there were who cared. The few encouragements that were his shall be yours. The many discouragements, disillusionments and disappointments that were his shall be yours also. I hope that coupled with your own natural ability there shall be this same determination which O. K. possessed, Or, to put it correctly, the determination possessed O. K. Just as Phil Harris is to see, so must you see. Phil is not to try to fill Jerry Lambdin's shoes. He is to stand on Jerry Lambdin's shoulders and see a greater distance into the direction in which Jerry was always looking. You know, Brother Smyly, that yours is the same challenge where the incomparable Radford is concerned.

O. K. was a good man because he was sincere. The ancients had their Pure Food and Drug Law just as we do. The nomadic merchants would, sometimes in their moving, crack a vase. They would put it together with wax and in the shade of their tents it would hold together. A purchaser, upon taking the vase into the sun, would have it to come apart again. Fair trade compelled the traders to stamp their pottery with the words "sine cera"—meaning **without wax**. The product would stand up in the sun as well as in the shade. O.K. Radford was "without wax." He was sincere. Though he may never have been conscious of the actual words, I am sure that a

bit of his philosophy was "To thine own self be true, and it follows as the time the day thou canst not be false to any man."

O. K. was a good man in that he was a happy, **HUMOROUS** man. Jesus was a humorist. Some of the funniest word pictures in all of literature Jesus painted. The fat Pharisee draped over a seat at the soda fountain straining at a gnat in his milk-shake and swallowing a camel. The man who came up with the corner of his handkerchief asking if he could remove the sawdust speck from the other fellow's eye and all of the while there was a two by four sticking out of his own eye. O. K. knew how to get his point across with impersonal humor. I remember one brother who prayed for many minutes one night at a Florida Baptist Assembly in the Stetson Auditorium. O. K. went to him immediately after the service and said, "Brother, the place to preach God some of your tired old sermons is in the closet with the closed door. When you have caught up there, then I will call upon you again for public prayer." The man laughed, and so did all of us who heard the remonstrance. The late Will Rogers was asked why his humor, his barbed wit, his caustic criticisms never seemed to offend those who were the objectives of this onslaught and his kidding. The great comedian answered, "Maybe it is because I never met a man whom I did not love." I believe that Brother Radford could have said the same.

If O. K. were here he would blister me good if I let this be given to soggy sentimentality. I have tried to share with you the man, O. K. Radford, as I have known him for twenty-eight years.

Minnie, O. K. loved you much. Many of us really knew you well before ever we laid our eyes on you. The endearment with which he made reference to you always carried with it Love, and all of Love's by-products—respect, admiration, understanding and appreciation. You know how much he loved Florida Baptists. Florida Baptists loved him equally and they will ever love his memory. And, O how he loved your mother, Minnie. For a long time I thought that it was his own mother to whom he made reference.

In London's great square where they honor all of their celebrities with statues, one finds many tributes to admirals, generals and statesmen. In the midst of them there is one to a man of God, Thomas Guthrie. A young urchin is clinging to his trouser leg. Beneath the statue are these lines, and they are so appropriate as they revere the memory of O. K. Radford:

"I live for those who love me  
For those who know me true,  
For the Heaven that smiles  
above me  
And the good that I can do.

## Wives Of Prominent North Carolinians Die

RALEIGH, N. C.—(BP)—Wiv of two prominent North Carolina retired Baptist leaders died.

Mrs. C. C. Warren, 59, wife of the former Southern Baptist Convention president, died in Charlotte Nov. 12. Funeral services were scheduled Nov. 14.

Warren had been pastor of Charlotte's First Baptist Church until a few years ago. Since his retirement from the pastorate, he had been directing Southern Baptists' 30,000 Movement, an effort in church extension.

Mrs. L. L. Carpenter, 65, whose husband edited the Baptist state newspaper here before retiring, died Nov. 11. Funeral services for Mrs. Carpenter were held Nov. 13.

## State Convention Action . .

(Continued from page 1)

President, Mrs. J. H. Lockhart of Tampa; and Recording-Statistic Secretary, M. D. Jackson of Edgewater.

Orlando was chosen as the next meeting place with the dates to be November 14-16, 1961. Vaughn M. Johnson of St. Petersburg was named to preach the Convention sermon and Malcolm B. Knight of Jacksonville alternate.

### Officers of Related Groups

Officers of the Baptist Pastors' Conference and the Religious Education Association were elected during the meetings of these bodies immediately preceding the Convention.

Pastors' Conference officials are: James L. Monroe, Miami president; Griffin Henderson Jacksonville, vice president; Roland G. Barrington, St. Petersburg, secretary-treasurer; J. B. Smith, Sarasota, chorister; and F. H. Watkins, Miami, pianist.

Religious Education Association officials: Louie L. Wilkinson Orlando, president; R. E. LeFavre, North Miami, enlistment vice president; Jack Culbreth Tampa, education vice president. Frank Bozeman, West Palm Beach, music vice president; Frank Delrose, Jr., Jacksonville, secretary-treasurer; Ralph Bayliss, St. Petersburg, chorister; Mrs. Stanton Brunner, Palatka, pianist.

"For the cause that needs assistance

For the wrong that needs resistance

And for the good that I can do."

Following the delivery of this memorial tribute, the congregation stood to sing "Loyalty to Christ" as Mrs. O. K. Radford was accompanied to the platform by Dr. John Maguire, who presented her with red roses on behalf of Florida Baptists. The memorial service was concluded with the messengers still standing for a period of silent prayer.

This Florida Baptist Annual

1460

is **Dedicated** to



**O. K. Radford**

BORN MARCH 2, 1901 — DIED APRIL 28, 1960

WORKED WITH FLORIDA BAPTIST  
CONVENTION

OCTOBER 1, 1926 - APRIL 28, 1960

# THE INDEPENDENT

AND ACCIDENT INSURANCE COMPANY / Home Office: Jacksonville,

# LIFE

Florida



**C. B. CARROLL**  
VICE PRESIDENT AND  
DIRECTOR OF AGENCIES

April 15, 1970

Mr. Rollin S. Armour, Curator  
Florida Baptist Historical Society  
P. O. Box 1351, Stetson University  
DeLand, Florida

Dear Rollin:

I am including as much information as I have been able to secure on  
O. K. Radford.

Mrs. Radford could not furnish me the date of graduation from the  
University of Kentucky, therefore, I have not included it. She first  
told me it was 1917, but I believe this is incorrect as he would have  
been only 16 years of age at that time.

I realize this is brief. She could not furnish me the dates of his em-  
ployment with Clear Creek Assembly, nor the dates he served as  
educational director in the three churches I have listed.

If I can be of further assistance, please advise.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cecil B. Carroll'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Cecil B. Carroll

CBC:WKM  
Enc.

RADFORD, OSBORNE KILLEBREW (b. Hopkinsville, Ky., Mar. 2, 1901; d. Jacksonville, Fla., Apr. 28, 1960). Businessman, assembly manager, educational director, denominational servant. Graduate (B.A.) of University of Kentucky. Married Minnie Bell, May 7, 1927. Following a period in the insurance business, became business manager of the Clear Creek Baptist Assembly, Clear Creek, Ky.; educational director of First Baptist Church, Pineville, Ky.; First Baptist Church, Hopkinsville, Ky.; First Baptist Church, Winter Haven, Fla. Joined Florida Baptist Convention, Oct. 1, 1926, as associate to Dr. W. W. Willian in Sunday School and Training Union Department, Florida Baptist Convention. July 1, 1938, appointed state secretary of the Training Union Department of Florida Baptist Convention. Led in the development of church training in Florida Baptist Churches. Instituted four District Training Union Conventions in 1946. Later expanded to eight in 1955.

Submitted by Cecil B. Carroll