

June 15, 1950

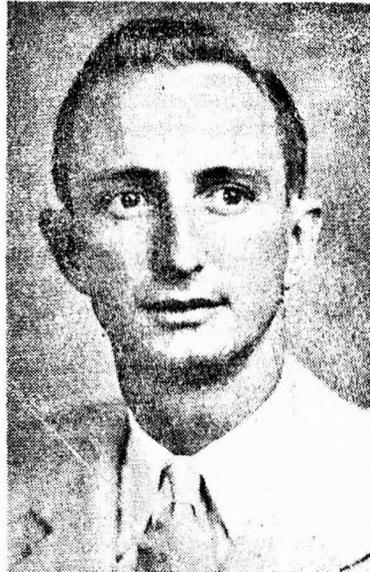
WOMAN'S MISSIONARY UNION

JOSEPHINE JONES, Executive Secretary
307 Baptist Building, Jacksonville 2, Florida

ELIZABETH PROVENCE
Young People's Secretary



Mrs. Cecil Rathel
on W.M.U. Faculty, West Florida Assembly, July 13-21



Mr. Cecil Rathel

HOME MISSION OFFERING

To date Florida's Annie Armstrong offering for Home Missions is \$28,104.68. The goal was \$28,000. This offering is still being accepted so if your society has not taken this offering or sent it in please send it to the Florida Baptist Convention.

OFFERING FOR W.M.U. BUILDING

This offering has reached \$5,035.14. Our goal is \$7,200.00. This building for our W.M.U. offices in Birmingham is greatly needed. It will mean space for literature and workers that will enable us to get the literature and workers that we need.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S NOTES

SPECIAL BUS TO TAKE JACKSONVILLE GIRLS TO G.A. CAMP

L. L. Gwaltney Retires from Alabama Editorship; Leon Macon Is New Editor

BIRMINGHAM, ALA.—(BP)—Dr. Leon Macon, pastor, First Baptist Church, Bessemer, Ala., has been elected editor of **The Alabama Baptist**, to succeed Dr. L. L. Gwaltney, who has resigned effective July 1. Dr. Macon will assume his new position at that time.

Macon is a native of Alabama, born in Whitley in Clark County. He graduated from the Grove High School in 1929 and from Howard College in 1933. He received his Th.M. degree from Southern Seminary in 1938 and a D.D. from Howard College in 1949.

His first full-time pastorate was at Minette. He also pastored Athens and Atmore in Alabama and West Point, Miss. He came to the Bessemer church early in 1946.

His writing experience includes editorials and regular columns in several Alabama and Mississippi newspapers and contributions to the Baptist papers of the two states. His denominational experience includes nine years as member of the Alabama Executive Board and two years as member of the S.B.C. Radio Commission and several terms as associational moderator.

Dr. Macon gives as his proposed writing platform for **The Alabama Baptist** (1) loyalty to all Baptist causes, (2) avoidance of controversies, and (3) use of the paper as voice for entire constituency.

When asked about the removal of the paper from Birmingham to the state headquarters city of Montgomery, Dr. Macon said he had not been approached by anyone on the subject. Though **The Alabama Baptist** is owned by the denomination, some of the fees never published.

To Be or Not To Be a Department

Because of the calendar changes made in the January 1946 annual meeting, the state Convention met again in November 1946—that time without the companionship of WMU. Interesting differences occurred in Maguire's reports. In the January report, WMU headed the list of nine "Departments of Our Work." The WMU staff was also listed first under "Convention Employees and Salaries" for the past year. Jones' \$2400 was only two thirds the salary of most other department heads.³⁴

In contrast, after separation of annual meetings but affirmations, clarifications, cooperation, and praise during the year, WMU appeared in neither list in the November report. Maguire explained: "The Woman's Missionary Union is not a department of our work, but an auxiliary to the Florida Baptist Convention. Miss Josephine Jones is Executive Secretary of this Department." However, the recommendation to organize the State Board of Missions into committees for studying the needs of "each phase of our work" did include WMU.³⁵ Messengers may have felt somewhat confused by such seeming contradictions.

Most significant of all, perhaps, was the naming of three women—Mrs. Robert R. Walden, Mrs. Doak S. Campbell, and Mrs. C. G. Illingworth—as at-large members of the State Board of Missions.³⁶ For a period of 20 or so years just before and following the turn of the century, women regularly held Florida Baptist Convention committee posts. Gradually as Baptist work in the state strengthened, the number of women on committees decreased. Between World War I and World War II a woman on a Convention committee was an exception rather than a rule.³⁷ When appointments of a few women to FBC committees began to re-occur, there seemed to be little correlation with WMU. Neither the state WMU president nor other Executive Board members received routine State Board of Missions appointment, a request made as early as 1926 by the WMU and again in Dr. Bolton's resolution in 1946. However, the women certainly sensed progress and cooperation when the State Board of Missions named the at-large posts.

A-Camping We Will Go

With the help of Elizabeth Provence and RA summer workers, camping in Florida grew in statistics and in effectiveness. At first Josephine Jones thought the idea of state GA and RA camps was impractical because no central location was available. But her young people's secretary felt strongly about the need to sponsor such camps, especially in northwest Florida, where young people had almost no camping opportunities. When Stetson student Cecil Rathel began part-time RA work in 1947, Provence found an ally. "I learned early on that if there's a program or a project that is God's design and His will, then He's going to make everything fall into place," Provence said.

I saw Him do it with our first camps. My associational young people's leaders and I had talked a lot about planning a state camp. Sam Renfroe, the business manager at Chipola Junior College, offered to let us use the college's old army barracks.

We didn't have much money—nobody had much money in those days—and we had to plan camp as cheaply as possible. We charged the campers \$5.00 for Monday to Saturday. Of course, \$5.00 wouldn't cover all the cost of food, so we asked the associations to ship us caseloads of #10 cans of vegetables and fruit, and some sent beef stew or canned chicken. Then we got a volunteer cook who helped us plan our menus around what we received. Cecil directed the RAs, and then I led the GAs and YWAs. That's the way we started camp.³⁸

Cecil
Rathel

According to Provence's 1947 annual report, 87 boys and 147 girls attended those first camps. With 29 professions of faith and 54 dedications to special service, 35 percent of the campers made life-changing decisions.³⁹

A Chariot Named Chip, Jr.

Provence's arrangement with Chipola Junior College resulted in more than summer camp quarters. It put her "in the right place at the right time" to purchase a much needed car:

All the associational presidents and WMU folks in the smaller associations knew what a time I was having with my traveling. Mother McCullough, president in St. John's Association, proposed at the Executive Board meeting that they open a fund and invite people to contribute to help Miss Provence get a car. Josephine Jones was just the most wonderful person that ever walked this earth and never hesitated to stand up for staff in their work, but she was very reluctant to ask people to do things for the staff, or for herself either. So when she didn't push for it, it was voted down.

Well, Mother McCullough came to me and said, "Lib, open a savings account. You're going to be getting some money for a car." She went home and wrote every associational president, the very women that had turned down the request, and said, "Miss Provence needs a car. Let's get her one." Sure enough, the checks started coming in. I was very careful to keep a record and acknowledge every gift.

New cars were still almost impossible to find, and I didn't know where I could locate a good used car. But while we were having camp, Sam Renfroe asked if I wanted to buy a car. I said, "Sure, if it's a good one." As it turned out, Chipola Junior College had just bought it for their president, but he had resigned suddenly, and Sam needed to sell it. So I bought this 1941 two-door black Ford and named it Chip, Jr., for the college.⁴⁰

Later Provence wrote in the *Witness*: "To my many friends over the state I want again to express my deepest gratitude for making this possible. I pray that as a result of this gift His Kingdom may be extended with more effectiveness and greater rapidity."⁴¹

Jump
to 162

Tampa Bay Assembly grounds in September 1948. "My Place in God's World Plan" was the theme. In the *Witness*, Milner appealed to her readers' business sense: "The cost is \$5.50 per person for the entire time. You can't stay at home that cheaply." The 46 registrants organized a state BWC Federation, electing Milner president.⁵¹ A change of pace for working women, the annual Labor Day weekend conferences grew in popularity, and a camaraderie developed among working women from all over the state. To encourage BWC attendance at WMU annual meetings, Milner planned a special BWC feature each year, usually a banquet. Milner continued to give strong guidance to BWC work until her retirement in 1968.

Mountain-Top Experiences

A "fine Florida delegation of about 75" attended Ridgecrest WMU week soon after the May 1948 election of Alma Hunt and Margaret Bruce. The Florida women found the two new leaders to be "gracious, charming, capable and devout handmaidens of the King," reported Mrs. R. Kelly White, West Palm Beach. Florida's Lelia Lassiter taught one class each day, and the women enjoyed conferences on the WMU Fundamentals: prayer, mission study, stewardship, community missions, and missionary education of young people.⁵²

Well-planned conferences with excellent leaders and missionary speakers, and plenty of Nibble Nook ice cream, continued to draw Southern Baptist women to WMU week. Similar conferences at the new Glorieta Baptist Assembly in New Mexico met the needs of the growing Baptist population in the "pioneer" western states. In 1994, WMU, SBC, began a policy of alternating WMU weeks between Ridgecrest and Glorieta.

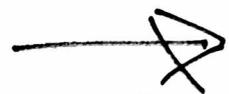
A Matter of Honor

Jones and Provence had become fixtures on the WMU staff, and Ruby Milner would add 20 years of office stability. But other staff came and went with disarming frequency. WMU, and particularly Lib Provence, played match-maker with young staff members. Cecil Rathel, who worked with RA, and Hazel Hodge, who in October 1949 began her job as field and office worker, were visiting Provence one evening. Provence suggested to Rathel that he "take Hazel somewhere."

"I don't have any money," Rathel bemoaned.

"Well, there's a Youth for Christ meeting. Go there. That won't cost you anything," Provence advised. That first date led to marriage a few months later. At the end of the ceremony, the couple exited under an arch of crossed swords held by Rathel's RAs, an impressive sight as they also displayed their RA shields.⁵³

When the couple left for Southwestern Seminary in August 1950, Mrs. Lois Wells became the WMU office and field worker. The Rathels returned



to Florida for summer RA work in 1951, and WMU had high hopes of employing Cecil full-time when he graduated in 1952. However, the State Board of Missions declined WMU's request for the position "because of financial commitments already made." In her annual report, Provence responded to that action:

The keenest disappointment of my whole nine years of service with Florida [WMU] occurred when we failed to employ Mr. Cecil Rathel as our full-time Royal Ambassador Secretary. . . . I am praying that God will give us another chance to do for the cause of missionary education among our boys what we ought to do.⁵⁴

Mission Coupons—Mission Dollars

Numerous successful projects pointed to the healthy condition of Florida's expanding WMU. Members continued their long-time commitment to the Children's Home. In 1948 the Home moved from Arcadia to a new campus in Lakeland. To furnish cottages, Florida WMU borrowed money from the State Board of Missions, then paid it back from State Missions Offerings. The women also collected coupons, by the hundreds of thousands, from soap and food products. Over a one-year period, coupons provided "three pianos, a deep freeze, sufficient blankets for the entire Home, a carpet for the new chapel, a power mower and a vacuum cleaner."⁵⁵ Boxes from WMU members and sponsorship of children remained important avenues of support.

Through both direct contributions and allocations from the State Mission Offerings, Florida WMU gave over \$12,000 (goal \$7,200) toward the purchase of the new WMU, SBC, headquarters building. In Birmingham for the annual planning meeting, Josephine Jones, Elizabeth Provence, and Lelia Lassiter represented Florida WMU at the building dedication on January 21, 1952. The national Union basked in the light of God's blessing: a recently constructed edifice, tailored perfectly to WMU's needs, at perhaps one third the cost of a new building.⁵⁶

Restating the Case

Ever since Florida WMU, at the request of the State Board of Missions, promoted the first State Mission Offering in 1908, the Union had pushed the offering with unflagging zeal. The money had always supported causes important to the work of Florida Baptists. In recent years, the State Board of Missions had become more involved in directing and promoting the uses of the offering. At the February 1952 State Board of Missions meeting, a joint committee from the SBM and the WMU Executive Board unanimously presented a significant recommendation related to both WMU and the State Offering:

We recognize the continued existence of the WMU as an Auxiliary. We request the Florida Baptist Convention, through the State Board of Missions, to consider and allocate a WMU operating budget to be taken



Armand B. Ball, Jr. and Beverly Jane Hodge Ball exit First Baptist Church Tallahassee, flanked by six Ambassador Plenipotentiaries. The two in the immediate front are: left, Roderick Conrad of Panama City and James Gross of Jacksonville. If their precision was somewhat less than military, their enthusiasm compensated. Note the RA shields held "heart high" by each boy. September 15, 1957.

at least 15 years old and working on an advanced step or rank. Both participants and leaders paid their own way. The group visited Southern Baptist mission points on the western end of the island and attended a citywide rally of GAs and RAs in Havana. A third chaperon, Beverly Hodge, became Mrs. Armand Ball. Like Cecil Rathe, Ball used an RA honor guard in the wedding.⁷³

Under Ball's effective leadership, RA work in Florida made unusual progress. However, WMU, SBC, was moving rapidly toward transfer of Royal Ambassadors to the SBC Brotherhood Department. Florida WMU had contributed to that move. Louise Smith and Susan Adams, in 1939, had recommended that the Brotherhood become involved in training RA leaders who would then take leadership of RA organizations. The concept finally

Faithful Servants

*The Story of
Florida Woman's Missionary Union
1894 - 1994*

By Martha Pope Trotter

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Florida Woman's Missionary Union
Jacksonville, Florida



Hazel Rathel Obituary

Hazel Hodge Rathel, 95, of Americus, passed away on Tuesday, June 22, 2021. A native of Orlando, FL, she was born on May 9, 1926, the eighth of 12 children born to Melton and Mittie Hodge, and the last surviving sibling.

She was preceded in death by her parents, siblings, husband, Cecil Rathel, and son, Craig Rathel. Survivors include daughter and son-in-law, Anne and Terry Adams, of Dunwoody, GA; son, Bobby, of Andersonville; grandson, Brent Adams, of Atlanta; granddaughter and her spouse, Kelli and Daniel Williamson, of Greenville, S.C.; and great-granddaughter, Miller Katherine Williamson; also surviving are sisters-in-law Joyce Rathel and Bettie Rathel.

Hazel had a lifelong love of learning. She attended Mars Hill College and graduated from Florida State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree. She also earned Master of Education and Educational Specialist degrees from Georgia Southwestern, and earned many leadership certificates and took courses from the University of Georgia & Georgia State University.

After marrying Cecil in 1950, they attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas. She then worked alongside Cecil as he served as Minister of Education at St. John's Baptist in Charlotte, N.C.; Central Baptist in Miami, FL; First Baptist of West Palm Beach, FL; and Bayshore Baptist of Tampa, FL. They made many lifelong friends from these church homes.

She began teaching elementary school for DeKalb County Schools, then Americus City Schools. After retirement, she served as a Language Arts Consultant for the Georgia Department of Education for Regional Education Service Agency (RESA), then Student Teacher Supervisor at Georgia Southwestern.

She was a proud member of the Kappa Kappa Iota, Delta Kappa Gamma Honor Society, Phi Delta Kappa educational organizations, and a dedicated member of Retired Teachers.

She dedicated her life to serving others, including Charter Volunteer for Americus Hospice. She taught Sunday school, and served as a church librarian at First Baptist. She also taught children's organizational development in North Carolina and Florida.

Most of all, she loved her family. She credited her siblings for their sacrifices in assisting her in obtaining her education. She dearly loved her nieces and nephews, and loved her husband's extended family. She was an inspiration, and constantly encouraged all whom she encountered to continue learning and enjoy reading.