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Skiles, Elwin L., Sr. (1912-2022) was born in Scranton, Texas the son of Asa Irvin and Leoma Parks Skiles. He graduated from Baylor University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Skiles served as pastor of churches in Kentucky, Virginia, Texas and Florida including First Baptist Church, Pensacola, 1949-1953. He served as president of Hardin-Simmons University. Skiles and his wife, Ruth Kinder Skiles (m.1938) had three children.



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up, but wish for him and his family much happiness and success in their new work. With all sincerity we can say to our sister church in Gainesville that their new pastor is one of the very best to be found in all the land."

A Strong Man to Run a Race

— E. L. Skiles —

The Christmas season of 1949 took on new warmth and cheer for First Baptist Church. There would be a new pastor and his family to carol — and of course the songs would include Pierpont's "Jingle Bells."



Elwin L. Skiles

Dr. Elwin L. Skiles, the attractive, dignified minister whom some remember as having a "movie-star look," had just arrived in Pensacola from Georgetown, Kentucky. With him were his wife, Ruth, and their two children, eight-year-old "Winn" and eighteen-month-old Ann Collier.

Before Skiles was called from the Georgetown Baptist Church, the deacons had debated several times the advisability of securing a pastorium. Some felt it wiser for a pastor to invest in his own home, but traditional thinking prevailed and a committee was appointed to formulate a plan. The agreement was that the church would provide a house, the financing of which "combined with the annual salary paid to the pastor would not exceed the allowance for the pastor stated in the budget." A lot at the corner of Spring and Lee Streets in the North Hill area was purchased for \$4,000. The funds were allotted from the Building Fund, which had been slowly accumulating toward a future time when the great dream of a new sanctuary would become a reality. The site chosen for the pastorium was about half-way between the church and the new Baptist Hospital, making it convenient for the First Baptist pastor.

"Real Revival" was the first concern of Dr. Skiles at his first deacons' meeting in his new church. When he proposed the concept, the men responded enthusiastically, assuring him of their support in the venture and of their appreciation that his primary concern was of a spiritual nature. The revival was scheduled and the church, eager to become better acquainted with the man and his preaching, implored the new pastor to be the "guest preacher." Dr. Skiles' delivery, although tinged with "formalism," was warm and uplifting.

Skiles brought with him a reputation for energy in his work, the gift of organization, and a background of service in connection with Baptist hospitals. He was a graduate of Baylor and Southern Seminary and had

Dr. E. L. Skiles.

Dr. **Skiles** has served as pastor in Russellville and Georgetown, Ky.; Richmond, Va., and Pensacola, Fla. He also served as chaplain in the United States Navy during World War II.

He has served the denomination on a number of hospital and seminary boards as well as having served on the Foreign Mission Board.

Celebration

The grotto of St. Vincent's Academy will be the scene of an evening mass to be celebrated by Father Patrick Donohoe at 6 p.m. Sunday in honor of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

This mass will be the official Marian Year celebration of St. Vincent's Sodality and therefore all who attend will be afforded the opportunity to gain the special

WHY I AM A MINISTER

Rev. Skiles Dedicated Life After Leaving High School

(EDITOR'S NOTE — Dr. Elwin L. Skiles, pastor of the First Baptist Church for the past two years, attended Hardin - Simmons University and was graduated from Baylor University. He holds the doctor of philosophy degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Dr. Skiles' account on his entering the ministry is part of a series being run in The Reporter-News.)

By DR. ELWIN L. SKILES

It was my good fortune to be born into a Christian home. My parents dedicated themselves to the Lord at the time of my birth, which occurred in a little two-room house on a rented farm in Callahan County. These wonderful parents of mine recognized the need for

additional training and so they moved to Abilene when I was less than 3 months old in order that father might enter Simmons College. My earliest recollections of church attendance were in Abilene, for we attended South Side Baptist Church until my sixth year, at which time we moved to Cisco.

The Sunday services of the church, the mid-week prayer service, the seasons of revival, and other meetings of the church were always on our family's schedule. I was not forced to attend the services. The church life of my parents became as much a part of my young life as the normal activities in the home and the church played a very important role in my decision to enter the ministry.

Other Christians who made lasting impressions on my young life were Sunday school teachers, Training Union leaders. (It was

his life had its bearing in my decision.

Another man, well known to many people of this section, who was an inspiration to me while he served as the pastor of my home church in Cisco was Dr. Acker C. Miller, at present secretary of the Christian Life Commission of Southern Baptist. He and his noble wife, the former Margaret Goodnight of Abilene and for a time youth workers in the First Baptist Church of this city, were a constant inspiration to me.

Sought Will of God

In 1930, during my senior year in high school, people began to ask what I intended to do in life. My interest at that time was divided between medicine, law, and the ministry. My parents would have been happy for me to enter any of these vocations or, for that matter, any other field of service which

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were Sunday school teachers, Training Union leaders (it was known as B.Y.P.U. in those days), and preachers. One of my Sunday school teachers was Miss Fannie Stevens, who taught in the public school system of Cisco for many, many years. Her life revealed the spirit of Christ. She instilled into the boys who sat in her Sunday school class the desire to live lives of service to God and man. Miss Fannie had something to do with my decision to become a preacher.

Grandfather's Influence

Then there was my grandfather, George W. Parks, who is still remembered by many readers of this paper. A man of unusual ability, possessing a great storehouse of wisdom and knowledge, he gave himself to the village and town churches of West Texas for more than half a century. He is remembered as a profound interpreter of the Bible. During my high school years when I faced the decision of what I would do with my life. I spent some of the summer vacation periods in Roscoe where I had a chance to hear grandfather preach and to have intimate association with him in the home. I don't recall that he ever mentioned the ministry in connection with my own life work but the influence of

of these vocations or, for that matter, any other field of service which would have led to a useful and productive career. As the time of graduation approached, I prayerfully sought the will of God. The conviction became very strong that I ought to prepare for the ministry. I know not why, I suppose it was the characteristic impulse of immaturity, but I hesitated to tell others of this conviction, preferring to say that I planned to be a lawyer or a doctor.

During the summer our pastor spoke to his prayer meeting congregation on the theme of dedication to the will of God. For several weeks I had halted at the point of decision; but on this Wednesday evening in July I surprised the pastor, my parents, and others by making a public surrender to the will of God, which was then and is now to preach the gospel and to serve as a pastor.

I have never regretted this decision. I continue to thank God for the privileges and responsibilities of my office. I have made many mistakes. There have been periods of doubt. The doubts have faded away, however, as I have rededicated my life to the ministry of God's word and to service in His name.

Dr. Skiles to Take Over Pulpit Of First Baptist Church Today

Dr. Elwin L. Skiles, new pastor of First Baptist Church, will preach his first sermon here Sunday morning on "Onward With Christ."

Dr. Skiles and his family arrived in Abilene Thursday — the birthday of their youngest child, Sarah Parks, 1. His two other children are Elwin L., Jr., 12, and Ann Collier, 4.

He will preach on "A Praising Church" at the evening service.

Dr. Skiles is not a newcomer to Abilene or West Texas. He lived here as a youngster and then later attended Hardin - Simmons University for two years—1930-32.

Grandfather at H-SU

He first moved here with his parents at the age of 3 months. His grandfather taught at H-SU, and later moved to Cisco.

"I've always been familiar with Abilene," Dr. Skiles said. His grandfather, the late George W. Parks, was a well-known Baptist preacher over West Texas for more than 50 years.

The Rev. Parks taught at H-SU and later held pastorates at Cisco, Roscoe, Clyde and Scranton.

Dr. Skiles' father was employed

here by West Texas Utilities Co. and transferred to Cisco in 1920. Dr. Skiles was a member of First Baptist Church here while a student at H-SU.

He went to Baylor his last two years as an undergraduate and received his B.A. there in 1934 and his master's degree in 1935.

He received his Th. M. degree in 1938 at Louisville, Ky. and a Ph. D. from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary there in 1941.

Dr. Skiles has held pastorates in Georgetown, Ky., Richmond, Va.; and Pensacola, Fla. He was pastor of First Baptist Church in Pensacola from 1949-53.

He served as a chaplain in the Navy for two years during World War II.

"We are looking forward to the fellowship in the community with everyone," Dr. Skiles said Saturday. "Abilene is a wonderful place."

Dr. Skiles succeeds Dr. James L. Sullivan, who resigned in May to accept an executive position with the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tenn.

Dr. Elwin L. Skiles

Pastor – University President

<https://www.hsutx.edu/about-hsu/dr-elwin-l-skiles/>

A native of Callahan County, Skiles was born June 15, 1912, in the Scranton community, the only child of Mr. and Mrs. A.I. Skiles and grandson of a prominent early West Texas Baptist preacher, George W. Parks.

At the age of three months, Skiles first became an Abilenian when his parents moved to the city in the fall of 1912 so that his late father could continue his education at Simmons College, now HSU. Skiles' father eventually graduated from Draughon's Business College.

Skiles graduated from Cisco High School in 1930 and attended HSU from 1930 to 1932. From 1932 to 1935, he attended Baylor University in Waco, receiving a bachelor of arts degree in 1934 and a master of arts degree the following year.

He had determined by the time he finished high school that he would enter the ministry and was ordained by the First Baptist Church of Cisco in 1933.

Skiles attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., earning the master of theology and doctor of philosophy degrees in 1938 and 1941.

In 1938, he married Ruth Kinder of Homer, La., a student whom he met at Baylor. She received a bachelor's degree from Baylor in 1937.

A member of what journalist Tom Brokaw has deemed "The Greatest Generation," Skiles served as a chaplain in the United States Navy during the Second World War.

For a quarter century, he served as pastor of Baptist churches in Russellville, Kentucky, Richmond, Virginia, Georgetown, Kentucky, Pensacola, Florida and Abilene, Texas. He had served as Pastor of First Baptist Church in Abilene for 13 years when he was elected President of Hardin-Simmons University in 1966.

During Skiles' presidency at HSU, the physical appearance of the campus was changed drastically. New buildings constructed included the Sid Richardson Science Center, the Mabee Military Science Building, the president's home on Cedar Street, the Cowboy Band Hall, Woodward-Dellis Recital Hall, Rupert and Pauline Richardson Library, maintenance building and warehouse, and the Central Heating and Air Conditioning Plant. Funds also were raised for the Mabee Physical Education-Health-Athletic Complex. Other improvements included the Brand Swimming Pool and Recreation Area, the Streich Tennis Center and a new baseball field.

Perhaps, he is most remembered for quoting his “signature scripture” each time he approached the microphone in Behrens Auditorium. It was Psalm 118:24: “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

Dr. Skiles was a great orator, a dignified gentleman who possessed a clever sense of humor and an extremely effective fundraiser who understood the importance of expanding the institution’s contacts throughout the nation and the world. During his last commencement, the Board of Trustees awarded their beloved president with an honorary doctorate. He was named Chancellor – a title he held for six years – and was then named as President Emeritus.

Skiles also served as a trustee of Hendrick Medical Center in Abilene, trustee chairman at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, trustee of both the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and Sunday School Board.

In Texas Baptist life, he served as chairman of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Program Coordinating Committee and as vice chairman of the BGCT Executive Board. In 1995, he was named an Elder Statesman by the Independence Baptist Association – a prestigious statewide honor.

Dr. Skiles and his wife, Ruth, had three children – Win, Ann and Sarah. A total of five grandchildren and two great grandchildren followed. Ruth Skiles died in 1983, a tremendous loss for the Skiles’ family and for the Abilene community. Dr. Skiles passed away on Friday, March 22, 2002, at the age of 89, having been a significant force in Texas Baptist life for more than five decades. His children made the lead gift to the Skiles Building on the HSU campus – a beautiful and lasting tribute to their father. The building opened in 2003, a year after Dr. Skiles’ death.

In recognition of his dedicated service to Hardin-Simmons University and his exceptional ministry in the cause of Christ, Hardin-Simmons University proudly inducts Dr. Elwin L. Skiles into the HSU Hall of Leaders.

Elwin Lloyd Skiles Sr.

Birth

15 Jun 1912

Scranton, Eastland County, Texas, USA

Death

22 Mar 2002 (aged 89)

Taylor County, Texas, USA

Burial

Elmwood Memorial Park

Abilene, Taylor County, Texas, USA

Family Members

Parents

Asa Irvin Skiles

1887–1943

Leoma Parks Skiles

1893–1980

Spouse

Lavonia Ruth Kinder Skiles

1916–1983 (m. 1938)

Children

Elwin Lloyd "Win" Skiles Jr

1941–2001

Sarah Parks Skiles Zachry

1952–2012

ELWIN SKILES

... don't sell short

About The Author

Elwin L. Skiles now heads as president the institution which he attended as a freshman and sophomore in 1930-32.

In the intervening interval, he devoted many years to additional higher education, served as a Navy chaplain in World War II, and pastored Baptist churches both large and small across the Southland.

Dr. **Skiles** is a native of the area where he has now reached the pinnacle of his career. He was born at Scranton in Callahan County, lived his first childhood years in Abilene, Hamby and Clyde, and grew up in Cisco. He finished high school there and came to Simmons University. He was ordained to preach in 1933.

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ordained to preach in 1933.
He transferred to Baylor where he took both the Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees. He continued his education at Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville, Ky., taking the Master of Theology and Doctor of Philosophy degrees there.

He held several student pastorates. Since the war, he pastored First Baptist churches at Georgetown, Ky., and Pensacola, Fla., before coming to First Church, Abilene, in 1953. He served as its pastor until being named president of Hardin - Simmons.

He has held many foremost posts of responsibility in Baptist denominational affairs, including serving as trustee of Hardin - Simmons and Hendrick Memorial Hospital, and president of the board of Golden Gate Seminary in California.

Dr. and Mrs. **Skiles** live on campus. They have three children: **Elwin** Jr., senior in law school at the University of Texas; Ann, H-SU freshman (living in Behrens Hall); and Sarah, sophomore at Abilene High.

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