

The Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle

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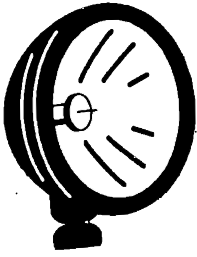
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Historical Display at the Falls Creek Centennial Celebration



Historical Secretary Bob Nigh and his wife, Glenda, took the Historical Commission/Society display to the R.A. Young Tabernacle for the Falls Creek Baptist Conference Center Centennial Celebration over the Labor Day weekend in September. The display featured historic photos about Falls Creek and samples of publications.



Spotlight

Wimberly Authors Book about Bushyhead

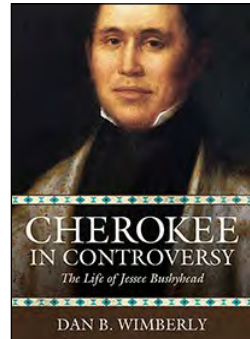
Former Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission member Dan B. Wimberly has authored *Cherokee in Controversy, The Life of Jesse Bushyhead*, published in May 2017 by Mercer University Press, Macon, Ga.

The 6-by-9-inch hardback volume contains 240 pages, complete with bibliography, index and illustrations, and focuses on Bushyhead's religious and political life.

Bushyhead was a detachment leader during the forced Indian removal on what has become known as the Trail of Tears. As such, he was responsible for the safe conduct of more than 900 emigrants from Tennessee to Indian Territory in eastern Oklahoma. After the trek, Bushyhead was a principal participant in the formation of the new Cherokee government, providing stability in the turbulent struggle between factions and serving as a chief justice of the Cherokee Supreme Court, although he lacked legal training.

A Baptist minister, Bushyhead assisted missionary Evan Jones in establishing a vibrant presence among Cherokees. While he was a key leader in bridging the gap between the whites and Cherokees, the removal process divided his tribe and family, resulting in the murders of two close family members. He, himself, received several death threats.

"During a most crucial era, Jesse Bushyhead provided leadership to the Cherokee Nation," Wimberly writes. "Born



as the Nineteenth Century opened, Bushyhead played a multifaceted role. Early on, he gained recognition as a Cherokee interpreter and translator, using his linguistic skills in legal disputes and delicate negotiations with United States authorities. He also utilized his knowledge to aid missionaries in Bible translation and interpreted for public worship. His conversion to Christianity was noteworthy because he became one of the first Cherokees to receive ordination to the ministry. Moreover, he was the pastor of at least two autonomous Baptist congregations and aided in the establishment of several mission stations. Unfortunately, few of Bushyhead's personal papers exist. If he left a journal, it has not survived. And there are no records from the congregations that he pastored. The little remaining correspondence is found in Baptist periodicals or the papers of John Ross."

Wimberly is a retired professor of history from Oklahoma Wesleyan University, where he taught for 20 years. He holds a PhD in history from Texas Tech University and is the author of *Frontier Religions: Elder Daniel Parker—His Religion and Political life*.

Cherokee in Controversy, The Life of Jesse Bushyhead (\$29) is available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble and the Mercer University Press (www.mupress.org).



Oklahoma Baptist Hall of Fame
RAYMOND A. YOUNG

1904—2002
Inducted 2017

Raymond A. Young was born on March 10, 1904, in Stillwater, Oklahoma Territory. He was one of eight children born to Charles and Phoebe Young. Developing a strong work ethic at an early age, in the fall of 1910, six-year-old Raymond had to wait until cotton picking time was over before he could enroll in the first grade at North Star School, located two miles north of Stillwater. He was paid one cent per pound for his hard work. He graduated from Oklahoma A&M, known today as Oklahoma State University (OSU), in 1924, with a degree from the School of Business. While a student at Oklahoma A&M, Young's first job was managing the Falls Creek grocery store during its summer sessions. He hitchhiked from Stillwater to Falls Creek every summer, and later credited his work there for his interest in the retail business.

After graduation, Young taught school for a short time and then worked managing a "five and dime" store for several

years. Wanting his own store, he founded R. A. Young Co. in Kingfisher, Okla., in 1927, and within a few years, had eight R. A. Young Stores. In 1929, Young married Miss Verna Newman, and to this union two daughters were born: Karita and Carolyn.

In the fall of 1935, Young partnered with Rawdon E. Tomlinson and Enoch L. "Les" Gosselin to form a firm known as Central Merchandise Company and build a warehouse in Oklahoma City. This storage facility allowed them to purchase bulk quantities directly from manufacturers, rather than from wholesalers. When the three men first met at a trade show in Oklahoma City in 1932, they individually operated variety stores throughout the state, and they decided to pool their resources.

In 1941, the partnership was converted into an Oklahoma Corporation named T.G.&Y. Stores Co., Inc. The company's initials were ordered according to the ages of the three partners with Tomlinson being the oldest. T.G.&Y. opened its first variety store in Norman, Okla., in 1936.



A typical T.G.&Y. storefront.

T.G.&Y. stores were "five and dime," or variety stores, which initially opened in rural areas of Oklahoma, but eventually moved into bigger cities. T.G.&Y. stores soon became embedded in southern culture as modern-day general stores with a bit of everything, and were often called, "Turtles, Girdles, and Yoyos," "Toys, Games, and Yoyos," or other irreverent monikers. The T.G.&Y. chain eventually grew to 920 stores in 29 states, and at its peak, had sales of more than \$2 billion a year and employed more than 30,000.

In 1944, a reorganization was needed, and another partnership was formed joining the R.A. Young Stores, the Gosselin Stores and the T.G.&Y. Stores Co. In 1957,

T.G.&Y. was sold to Butler Brothers, and in 1960, City Products Corp. acquired Butler Brothers. Young served as president of T.G.&Y. from 1936 to 1964, and as chairman of the board from 1964 to his retirement in 1976.

When T.G.&Y.'s corporate headquarters opened in Oklahoma City in 1936, Young and his family moved there and became members of Oklahoma City, First. Saved at the age of 15, Young was a devout follower of his Lord and an active member of the church teaching a men's Bible class for many years and serving as a deacon. He served on the pulpit committee which called Herschel Hobbs as pastor, and he remained a member of Oklahoma City, First until his death. In the following decades, he served both his church and Southern Baptists in many capacities in the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (BGCO), the Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma, as a member of the Board of Regents for Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU), and as a member of the Board of Trustees for Southern Seminary.

Through the years, Young also was an active member of the civic community serving as president of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, the Oklahoma City Symphony Society, the Oklahoma Industrial Authority, and the Oklahoma Heritage Association. He also served on the board of directors of the Metropolitan YMCA and Liberty Bank & Trust Co., and was a member of the governing board of Baptist Medical Center. He was instrumental in the completion of the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City and for his lifetime contributions to the State of Oklahoma, he was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

Young also was active in the educational community serving on the Oklahoma State University Foundation, was inducted into the Oklahoma State University Alumni Hall of Fame, established the Phoebe Schertz Young Chair of Religion at OSU, established the Auguie Henry Chair of Bible at OBU, received the Henry G. Bennett award at OSU and received an honorary doctorate degree from OBU in 1983.

In addition to his service to the civic community, education, and his Lord, Young became one of the greatest philan-

thropists in the history of Oklahoma Baptists. Throughout his life, he gave of his resources for Baptist and civic causes, as well as planning gifts through his estate.

He became acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Johnson, who gave the land and the initial gift to begin Boys Ranch Town, resulting in his giving financially to build a cottage there. At the completion of the Young Cottage in 1998, Young said, "Through the years, I have had the ambition to do something for the Ranch, and was pleased when this opportunity came along. The idea is not original with me, but I agree that when you give money while you're alive, it warms the heart twice. It warms the heart of the person who receives it, and it warms the heart of the person who gives it."

In 2001, Young was honored by the Board of Trustees of the Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children (OBHC) with membership in the Gladys Smith Society, which recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the ministry of the OBHC.

Young was also active in serving and supporting the Oklahoma medical community. He was instrumental in co-founding the Baptist Medical Center in Oklahoma City in the 1950s and in 1983, he founded Integris Health, Inc., which became the largest health care system in Oklahoma and one of the top 25 health care systems in the United States. He served on its board of directors and chaired its first planning committee and first building campaign. Through its flagship hospital, the re-named Integris Baptist Medical Center, Oklahomans are served by one the best hospital facilities in this section of the country. In 1986, his continuing financial contributions made possible the Raymond A. Young Conference Center at the Integris Baptist Medical Center complex.

In 2000, the BGCO began the "Falls Creek, For the Sake of the Call" campaign to raise \$34 million to transform Falls Creek from a summer camp to a year-round, full-service conference center with the summer youth encampment continuing as the heart of the ministry. Phase I of this campaign was the building of a new \$24 million, 7,253-seat, 108,800 square foot Tabernacle to replace the open-air Tabernacle originally built in 1929. Young served as a member of the campaign's

Leadership Team, and after his death, it was revealed that he gave the initial gift of \$5 million to the campaign for the start of the new Tabernacle. His gift was the largest monetary gift ever given to any Baptist cause in Oklahoma and served to energize the campaign to reach its monetary goal. Groundbreaking ceremonies for the new climate-controlled Tabernacle with state of the art audio and visual technology was held on July 29, 2005, and dedication ceremonies for the completed project were held on May 26, 2007. In recognition of Young's dedicated Christian service and his decades-long support of Baptist ministries in Oklahoma, the United States, and around the world, this newest addition to Falls Creek was named the Raymond A. Young Tabernacle.

On March 23, 2002, Young passed away at the age of 98, after having lived a long, full life faithful to his Lord. He was preceded in death by his wife and two children.

Young is remembered as one of the nation's leading businessmen, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists, but his greatest achievement was his love and faithfulness to his Lord and Savior in his service and generosity in support of the cause of Christ. Across the landscape of Baptist life, it is hard to find anyone who has made a broader impact on the work and ministry of Oklahoma's Southern Baptists than Raymond A. Young.

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(Submitted by Richard E. McCullough)



Oklahoma Baptist Hall of Fame

E. FRANK TRIPP

1895-1975

Inducted 2017

Frank Tripp was a stalwart leader among Southern Baptists his entire adult life. He served the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) as an agency head, hospital builder, fund raiser and pastor. Born on March 12, 1895 in Scott County, Arkansas, he attended public schools in Indian Territory, which later became the State of Oklahoma. He matriculated at Ouachita Baptist College in Arkadelphia, Ark., and at Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) in Shawnee.

Tripp's connection with Baptist work dates prior to his attending OBU prior to 1920. In "My Life and Labors among Oklahoma Baptists," *Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle*, Vol. I, No. 2, 1969, p. 12-13, Auguie Henry, (former Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (BGCO) and Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma (BFO), reports that he and Tripp were "end men" for the OBU pep team (circa 1919).

Tripp was involved with Falls Creek ventures from the very beginning. He was one of those called the "bitter enders," a reference to the campers at the first Falls Creek Assembly, Aug. 16-26, 1917, who remained and attended all 10 days of the encampment. Among those surrendering for

missionary service during the inaugural session, as recorded on page 91 of the BGCO Annual, were Rosalee Mills Appleby, Miriam McConnell, Bertha Hawkins and Tripp.

Tripp was involved in the infamous “Roughneck” story at Falls Creek around 1920. Ruffians invaded the camp grounds late one night during the week and started shooting guns. Tripp, who was operating the kitchen, grabbed his gun and returned fire. The four roughnecks were pursued by Tripp and three others, and were captured. Falls Creek co-founder J. B. Rounds beat up his man and called the sheriff. Rounds hated to prosecute the men who had been drinking, but knew they needed a lesson. The judge suspended sentences with the stipulation they had to hear Rounds preach every time he was in the area. BGCO Historical Secretary Emeritus J.M. Gaskin wrote in *Sights and Sounds of Falls Creek* that Rounds eventually baptized three of the four.

The first permanent Falls Creek meeting place—a 40-foot-by-60-foot structure with a seating capacity of 500--was built in 1918. In Falls Creek’s first year of 1917, the 273 registered campers met for classes under trees and for worship in a large 30-foot-by-50-foot tent. Tripp, pastor at Yale, First, described the process of obtaining the funds necessary to build the pavilion in *Sights and Sounds of Falls Creek*: “I made a small investment in an oil lease on 80 acres of land. A few months after I secured the lease a producing well was brought in near my holdings. I organized the Tripp Oil Co., and sold enough stock to drill a test well. From the sale of some stock I built the first tabernacle on the assembly grounds.

“It was named the Tripp Pavilion and used for a number of years (10). You may be interested to know that the test well was a dry hole and the only money I made out of the project was the amount used in building the Tripp Pavilion.”

According to an article by Dana Williamson in the *Baptist Messenger*, “Seating under this first tabernacle, known as the Tripp Pavilion, consisted of benches made from two long boards, about 20-24 inches, with 12-inch planks put across them and about 18 inches extending beyond the upright support boards.”

Later in life, Tripp originated and promoted the “Hundred

Thousand Club," which raised \$7 million to eliminate indebtedness of SBC agencies during the Great Depression. The club encouraged 100,000 Southern Baptists to give an extra \$1 every month toward the elimination of Southern Baptist indebtedness. Tripp campaigned extensively across the convention on behalf of the effort, and the SBC survived the crisis; the debts had been retired.

He also served for 12 years as executive secretary and general superintendent of the Southern Baptist Hospitals agency in New Orleans, La. In 1959, he retired as leader of the hospital agency, now separated from the Convention.

During the 12 years of Tripp's administration, assets of the Hospital Board increased from \$2,233,644 to \$10,991,115. Additions at New Orleans hospital amounted to \$4,161,000. The Jacksonville hospital was built during his service. The building site on the St. John's Riverfront was valued at \$800,000 and the cost of the building was \$2,250,000. The board borrowed \$1-1/2 million for construction of the Jacksonville hospital, to be repaid out of hospital earnings.

During 1958, the two hospitals owned and operated by the Southern Baptist Convention--Southern Baptist Hospital at New Orleans, La., and Baptist Memorial Hospital at Jacksonville, Fla.--gave care to 82,915 patients, Tripp reported. It was his 12th, and final, annual report to the Convention. Of that number of patients, more than 42,000 were bed patients. There were 6,869 births at the two hospitals during the year also, Tripp continued. The hospitals employed 1,500 persons not including physicians and surgeons, nor nursing students.

"Modern hospitals," Tripp declared, "staffed by dedicated people, especially those operated under the sponsorship of Christian groups, have made themselves indispensable to the health and welfare of the people of this nation."

Tripp served as pastor of churches in Oklahoma, Louisiana, Missouri and Alabama. He was a past president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, the Alabama Baptist State Convention and the SBC Executive Committee. He also was a first vice-president of the SBC.

(Prepared for the Oklahoma Hall of Fame committee by Eli Sheldon; edited by Bob Nigh.)



ROBERT L. ROSS

2017

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Former Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma (BFO) president and author Robert L. (Bob) Ross was named the recipient of the 2017 Distinguished Service Award by the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission at the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Society's Annual Meeting Oct. 7 at Oklahoma City, Portland Avenue.

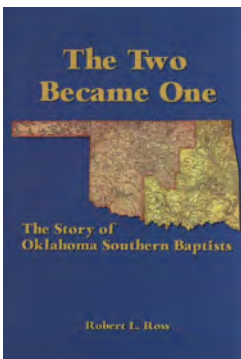
A native of Ponca City, Ross is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) in Shawnee and Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas. For 22 years, he served as pastor of several churches, including Round Grove in Ponca City; Panola; Drumright, First and Oklahoma City, Knob Hill in Oklahoma. Texas pastorates included Weatherford, Greenwood and San Antonio, Calvary.

Ross joined the BFO in 1977 as vice president for communications. He was named the Foundation's president in Janu-

ary 1986 and served in that role until his retirement in April 2002.

OBU honored him with the Joe. L. Ingram School of Christian Service Award in 1989 and the Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award in 1993. The university conferred on him the Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree in 1986. Ross also served as chaplain for the Oklahoma House of Representatives and the Oklahoma Senate.

In 2001, Ross was commissioned to write the history of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (BGCO) as part of the Convention's Centennial Celebration in 2005. Beautifully written and thoroughly researched, the 416-page



book was lauded by BGCO Executive Director-Treasurer Anthony L. Jordan.

"His book is a treasure chest of the people and events that have shaped Southern Baptists," Jordan writes.

"History is facts, but far more than facts. Dr. Ross has shown the struggles, failures, challenges and victories our denomination has experienced. He has introduced us to the men and women who forged on the anvil of time this great

denomination."

Historical Commission member Ron Fannin, retired senior associate executive director of the BGCO, has had a long-standing relationship with Ross, whom he calls, "My preacher, my boss at the BFO, my friend."

"As a student at OBU, I began working on the staff with Bob Ross at Drumright, First in December 1968," Fannin said. "He was a planner, a visionary for the church he served and pushed his staff hard to perform excellence in their work. I am grateful for a mentor like this man as I began ministry. I found him to be an excellent preacher because of the hours he committed to sermon study, preparation and development of his topic for the week. I then followed him to Oklahoma City, Knob Hill, where we worked together for another three-and-a-half years.

"I had moved to Lawton, Central and had served there for 15 years, when Ross asked me to join the staff of the BFO in

June, 1988 as vice president for church loans. Again, I found the industrious leader and visionary qualities that are a part of his DNA. He loves the Lord, wants to do Kingdom work and enjoys a relationship with many Oklahoma Baptists who have become his friends through the years. He promotes excellence, but also produces excellence in the programs he is leading. He is a pastor and a staff member's supporter always, and has promoted the BGCO work in all of his years in the Baptist Building.

"Bob Ross has been my friend now for the past 48 years, and I consider him a Father in the ministry. A true friend is there (Whatever the time of day or night) and they always strive to help folks around them to further develop their talents. They are a positive influence and a Kingdom servant. Bob has been that to my wife, Jamie, and me since we were married."

Robert Kellogg, who succeeded Ross as president of the BFO, said, "Dr. Robert L. Ross is the most influential leader in the Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma's seventy-two year history. His contributions, leading to the growth and development of the Foundation and to the advancement of the organization's mission are numerous. Chief among them are: his vision to implement a comprehensive strategic planning process, establishing a culture of planned purposeful achievement and advancement, hiring and empowering qualified competent Christian business professionals dedicated to serving the Kingdom impacting ministries and the faithful stewards that support them and emphasizing and expanding the Foundation's church building loan and estate planning services.

"Under his leadership tenure the Foundation's assets increased from \$62 million to just over \$200 million, and \$110 million was distributed to ministry. The real impact, in terms of lives changed and ministries advances, cannot be calculated this side of Heaven. The success the Baptist Foundation enjoys today is a direct result of the strong and stable organization that Bob Ross built and entrusted to the next generation. He delivered to us a strong, fiscally sound and principled organization without stain or question. We are humbly building on the foundation he laid.

“Those who have come behind him have found him faithful. Oklahoma Baptists, our churches and our institutions owe a debt of gratitude to Bob Ross. He was my boss, he is my mentor, and he will always be my trusted friend. Congratulations Robert L. Ross on receiving the Distinguished Service Award. Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Oklahoma Baptist Historical Society Annual Meeting Minutes – Oct. 7, 2017

The Society met on Saturday morning, Oct. 7, 2017, at Oklahoma City, Portland Avenue. President Wayne Childers called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. He read from II Timothy 4:13, Revelation 1, and Hebrews 2:1-3 and then opened the meeting in prayer. Eight persons were in attendance.

Business Session – Part One

The minutes from the 2016 Society meeting held on Oct. 7 at Camp Lela Baptist Assembly were approved as printed.

Committee Reports – None

Historical Secretary's Report by Bob Nigh. Change was the operative word for the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Society and Baptist Historical Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (BGCO) during 2017. Eli Sheldon retired from the position of Historical Secretary on Dec. 31, 2016 after serving in that position for eight years. Sheldon's wife, Freida, who had served with the BGCO for 14 years, most recently as her husband's assistant, also retired on that date. Convention officials decided to convert the Historical Secretary's staff position to that of a consultant, and former *Baptist Messenger* Managing Editor Bob Nigh was contracted to be the new Historical Secretary.

Members of the Historical Commission convened for their semi-annual meeting on March 14 at the Baptist Building, updating reports and progress being made toward the annual meeting of the Historical Society scheduled for Oct. 6-7, 2017 at Oklahoma City, Portland Ave. Also in March, Commission member Terrell Romberg, pastor of Cordell, First resigned from the Commission.

During the first quarter, the Historical Secretary's office handled phone requests for information concerning church anniversaries and prepared and mailed appropriate certificates to

Cardin, Miami for its Centennial Celebration and to Oklahoma City, Southern Hills in observance of the service of a long-time ministerial staff member.

Nigh produced the first issue of the *Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle* under his guidance in April, and copies were mailed to Historical Society members. The issue focused on Falls Creek Baptist Conference Center, in conjunction with the campground's Centennial Celebration.

One major ongoing project for the new Historical Secretary this year has been condensing two office spaces in the Baptist Building into one, including updating files and organizing other materials. Three large pieces of historical material pertaining to Camp Hudgens and Camp Nunny Cha-ha were delivered to CrossTimbers Children's Mission Adventure Camp, and those items are now displayed in a prominent place at CrossTimbers.

Since March, the historical office has handled many phone requests for information concerning church anniversaries and prepared and mailed appropriate certificates to Altus, First for its 125th Anniversary; Arplear, First—35th Anniversary; Castle Baptist Church—75th Anniversary; Coweta, First—75th Anniversary; Elgin, Locust Grove in recognition of Associate Pastor Jimmy Lehew's 20 years of service; Golden Baptist Church—Centennial Celebration; Headrick, First—130th Anniversary; Holdenville, First—120th Anniversary; Lamont, First—Centennial Celebration; Maud, Trinity—50th Anniversary; Miami, Green Acres—Centennial Celebration; Oklahoma City, Capitol Hill—115th Anniversary; Oklahoma City, Grace Place—25th Anniversary; Soper, First—125th Anniversary; Webbers Falls, First—135th Anniversary; Wilson Community Church—110th Anniversary and Wister, Summerfield—Centennial Celebration. Nigh and his wife, Glenda, personally attended events in Elgin, Headrick, Holdenville, Maud, Oklahoma City, Soper, Webbers Falls and Wister to present certificates to each church and for some, its oldest member(s) and member(s) of longest-standing on behalf of the OBHS and Historical Commission. Nigh also assisted several other call-

ers seeking information about a church ministry staff member or event.

Nigh also produced the fall issue of a Circular Letter (Update), which announced the names of two new people to be enshrined in the Oklahoma Baptist Hall of Fame (Raymond A. Young and Frank Tripp) the winner(s) of the annual church history award, the person selected for the Distinguished Service Award, and included details of the upcoming OBHS meeting. He also worked on his second issue of the *Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle*. The issue focused primarily on details of the Oct. 6-7 meeting of the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission and Society at Oklahoma City, Portland Ave.

The Historical Secretary and his wife also represented the OBHS, Historical Commission and Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma with a display at the Centennial Celebration for Falls Creek Baptist Center over the Labor Day weekend in September.

Old Business – None

New Business

Election of Officers – Ron Fannin nominated Wayne Childers to serve as President. Second by Leona Marion. Passed by acclamation. Andy Latta nominated Luke Holmes to serve as President-elect. Second by Leona Marion. Passed by acclamation. Ron Fannin nominated Michael Dershem to serve as Secretary. Second by Andy Latta. Passed by acclamation.

Business Session – Part Two Awards and Induction Ceremonies

1. Church History Award by Wayne Childers. There were nine entries this year. This year's award goes to Binger Baptist Church. Other histories submitted for consideration included Carney, First; Coalgate, First; Oklahoma City, Prospect; Oteo Baptist Church; Poteau, Southside; Rubottom Baptist Church; South Rock Creek Baptist Church and Vinita, First.

2. Distinguished Service Award by Ron Fannin. Ron Fannin, Chairman of the Committee, made introductory remarks about the process of selecting the award winner for 2017: Robert L. Ross. Fannin then added remarks about Ross and his long tenure of distinguished service to the state as a pastor, president of the Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma and as the author of *The Two Became One*, a history of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma.

3. Oklahoma Baptist Hall of Fame Inductions moderated by Wayne Childers. Childers introduced Ron Fannin, Chairman of the selection committee, who explained the process by which the committee chose the two men to be inducted into the HOF this year. Fannin said their selection was driven by each man's significant contributions to Falls Creek Baptist Conference in conjunction with the camp's Centennial Celebration held in September.

Raymond A. Young, Co-founder of TG&Y Stores, civic leader and Baptist philanthropist who made the lead gift for the construction of the new tabernacle at Falls Creek. See monograph, pages 7-12.

Frank Tripp, Baptist leader who, earlier in life, provided the funds to build the first permanent tabernacle at Falls Creek—the Tripp Pavilion. See monograph, pages 13-15.

The 2018 meeting of the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission and Society will be held Saturday, Sept. 29, 2018, at Oklahoma City, Trinity.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ron Fannin, with a second by Richard McCullough. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 10:25 a.m.

In the absence of Michael Dershem, Secretary, the minutes were prepared by Bob Nigh, Historical Secretary, with assistance from his wife, Glenda.

Twin brothers, WW II vets, joined for eternity

By Mike Schueler, director of marketing and communications for The Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma.

MCALESTER (BP)--Claude Stokes guessed he had about 15 seconds to decide how he was going to die.

It was 1944, and the 20-year-old tank commander was lying face-down in a ditch in the middle of a firefight in central Italy when he heard something sizzling. Claude looked up to see a German artillery shell sticking out of the mud about six inches from his head. Since the shell didn't explode on impact, he had a choice: stay put

and hope it was a dud or run for it through a cloud of German machine gun and mortar fire.

Though he wasn't yet a Christian, 73 years later, Claude looks back at that day and sees providence, not coincidence. He believes God spared his life so he could be used to help others hear the Gospel during more than a half-century of service as a deacon at McAlester, First.

"Polish workers were known for sabotaging ammunition in German factories," Claude recounted. "Today, I thank some Polish person for making that shell a dud."

It was one of many brushes with death that Claude and his twin brother, Clyde, would experience during World War II. At age 19, the Stokes brothers volunteered for the Army, trading the family farm's tractor for an M-10 tank they nicknamed the "Oklahoma Wildcat."

Claude was the tank's commander and Clyde its driver. A personal letter from President Franklin D. Roosevelt--in response to an appeal from their father--allowed Claude and Clyde to serve togeth-



Claude and Clyde Stokes (Far right) pose for a photo with the crew of their M-10 tank following the Battle of Salerno (1943) during the Allied invasion of Italy. The tank was named the "Oklahoma Wildcat" by Claude after its original commander was wounded in battle. Photo courtesy, Hannah Hanzel/*Baptist Messenger*.

er throughout the war, and their adventures in the Oklahoma Wildcat made them celebrities in news dispatches from the war's front lines.

But it was their battlefield courage that made them heroes.

"This one here is a Silver Star, that's the third-highest award you can get," Claude said matter-of-factly as he takes a visitor on a tour of the medals and war memorabilia hanging above his bed at an assisted living facility where he lives with his wife Madlyn, who wrote a 2003 book titled *The Stokes Twins Ride the Oklahoma Wildcat*.

The Stokes twins earned the Silver Star at the Battle of Salerno when their tank took out five German tanks, an ammunition truck, an armored half-track, a pill box and captured 180 enemy infantry. Claude was also awarded a Bronze Star for helping save the lives of fellow soldiers and a Purple Heart, having been wounded twice.

A new medal also hangs in his room. In August, Claude and Clyde Stokes were named Chevaliers (Knights) of the Legion of Honor for their role in liberating France. Established by Napoleon, the honor is the French government's highest decoration.

But after 93 years of life, Claude said the thing he's most proud of can't be hung above his bed. That's because it's measured in eternity--the lives impacted by the Gospel during the spiritual battles he helped fight after the war--beginning with the battle for his own heart.

Claude thought he didn't need to go to church because he was a "good guy;" he didn't smoke or drink and took care of his family. Through conversations with a local pastor, he came to understand that it was only Christ's death on the cross--and not Claude's good deeds- that could wash away sins.

He was at work one day at the Naval Ammunition Depot in McAlester when he clearly heard God's voice: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased." He had never read the verse from Matthew 3 before.

"I looked around and found there wasn't anyone in the room but me," Claude recalled. "I wasn't too smart, but I was smart enough to know that God had spoken those words." That night at a church revival service he surrendered his life to Jesus.

In 1950, Claude became a deacon at McAlester, First. For more than 36 years, he taught a men's Sunday School class, discipling more than 30 men. Taking cues from his time in the Army, Claude ran the class with military discipline. He referred to the class as an "Army company," and he was their "captain." Any class member absent on Sunday had to report to him to be excused, or his name was put on a blackboard as AWOL (absent without leave). Claude also threatened absentees with KP duty (kitchen patrol). It was all in good fun, and the men loved it, gravitating to Claude's passionate pursuit of Jesus.

"I have never seen anyone who could murder the King's English and get away with it like Claude Stokes," said Harold Worthen, a member of Claude's Sunday School class and fellow World War II veteran. "But Claude is the best Bible teacher and scholar I have ever met."

The change God brought about in Claude's life was instrumental in leading Clyde to the Lord.

"Claude and I were never separated in World War II or in our lives at that time," Clyde once said in a Veteran's Day address. "That worried me as I began thinking: Claude was going to Heaven and I was going to Hell. It took a letter from U.S. President Roosevelt to keep us together during the war, but it took God's Son and my surrender to keep us together for eternity."

On the battlefield, Clyde excelled at driving the Wildcat. At McAlester, First, he also used those skills to drive a bus that picked up anyone who needed a ride to church. Together, Claude and Clyde also led a ministry to local nursing homes, sharing the Gospel and encouraging residents for 25 years.

Today, the brothers still bear scars from the war. Clyde suffers from post-traumatic stress syndrome. Pieces of shrapnel remain embedded in Claude's body. His hearing was another casualty, the result of repeated blasts from the M-10's 50mm cannon.

Above Claude's bed, a weathered blue mechanical pencil with a chunk missing from its middle also is among the wartime memorabilia. He said it was in his shirt pocket and likely saved his life when it stopped a piece of shrapnel from a German mortar. It happened on Claude and Clyde's last day of combat. They began the journey back to Oklahoma the next day.

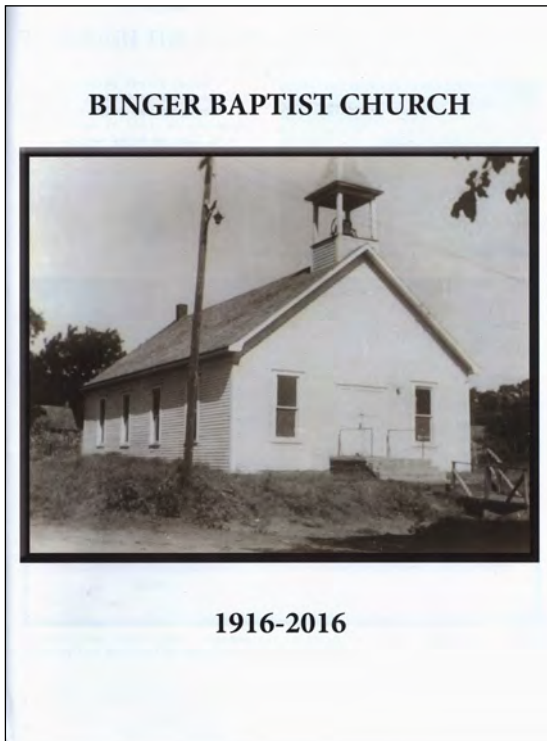
"God had a plan for us," Claude said with a smile. "He had work to do through us--that's the reason we survived the war."

Read more about Claude and Clyde Stokes' experiences before, during and after World War II in Madlyn Stokes' book, *The Stokes Twins Ride the Oklahoma Wildcat*, available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

(Hannah Hanzel of the *Baptist Messenger*, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, contributed to this story.)



Claude and Clyde Stokes admire the medals awarded by honorary French Consul Grant Moak during a ceremony at McAlester First on Aug. 13. Photo courtesy, Hannah Hanzel/*Baptist Messenger*



The history of Binger Baptist Church was selected by judges as the winner of the 2016 Gaskin Baptist Church History Award.

2016 WINNER

GASKIN BAPTIST CHURCH HISTORY AWARD

Nine Oklahoma churches submitted documents for the 2016 Gaskin Baptist Church History Award. Historical Commission committee members Michael Dershem, Luke Holmes and Bill Rains served as judges for the competition, and selected the Binger Baptist Church entry as the winner.

The 72-page book commemorating the church's 100th anniversary features a lengthy history of the church written by

longtime Sunday School teacher and church clerk Mary Belle Dieball Gabehart, who wrote several essays regarding the history of the church and transcribed church minutes from 1916-1984 by hand.

It also contains an abundance of photos, both of church activities and members and the Binger area itself, reminiscences by church members and articles copied from the *Binger Journal* and *Anadarko Daily News*.

The history was composed, edited and/or compiled by Arleen Farr Bordwine and Patsy Bowling Metheny.

Bordwine, in her comments, wrote, "Binger Baptist Church has been a part of my life since I was about 6 years old. I was saved and baptized when I was 9 years old when Brother (Lyle) Garlow was pastor here. I am so thankful for our faithful forefathers who kept this church going before us. I have many good memories of VBS and Falls Creek when I was growing up. Later years left many great memories of cooking for our Falls Creek kids. I pray that I have had a small part in helping change young people's lives for Christ."

Metheny wrote, "My earliest memories are of lying on a quilt under a bench while my mama and Lilly Ragsdale listened to a preacher. . . . I was baptized Dec. 3, 1950 at the age of 13. Many of my best memories are of the youth activities here at the church. This was near the beginning of Lyle and Willa Ruth Garlow's ministry here and they were such good, solid, spiritual people and such fun for the young people to be around. They taught us to have Christian fun and our youth department blossomed under their watch."

Other histories from 2016 were received from Carney, First; Coalgate, First; Oklahoma City, Prospect; Otoe Baptist Church; Poteau, Southside; Rubottom Baptist Church; South Rock Creek Baptist Church and Vinita, First.

Churches are welcome to submit their histories (4 copies) written in 2017 to be considered for the 2018 Gaskin Baptist Church History Award to Bob Nigh, BGCO Historical Secretary, 3800 N. May Ave., Okla. City, OK 73112-6506.

Memorial Gifts

On Sept. 8, 1998 by vote of the Historical Commission, a memorial fund was established whereby a gift of \$25 or more may be made to the Gaskin Historical Archives and Library Forever Fund in memory of a deceased relative or friend. Gifts received thus far include:

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