

Biffar recalls fun by design serving Texas Baptists

August 5, 2015

DALLAS—Looie Biffar generally worked behind the scenes, but anyone who attended a [Baptist General Convention of Texas](#) annual event reaped the benefits of her labor.

And anybody who hung a poster on a church bulletin board promoting a Texas Baptist emphasis or perused a BGCT brochure in the last four and a half decades likely saw her handiwork.



Looie Biffar retires

Aug. 13 as senior designer for Texas Baptists' communications office after more than four and a half decades working for the Baptist General Convention of Texas. (PHOTO / Ken Camp)Biffar retires Aug. 13 as senior designer with Texas Baptists' communications staff after a career that included service to six BGCT executive directors—T.A. Patterson, James Landes, Bill Pinson, Charles Wade, Randel Everett and David Hardage—and work at three Baptist Building locations.

For more than three decades, she designed, coordinated and supervised the set-up of the exhibit hall at the BGCT annual meeting.

As BGCT communications director from 1980 to 1999, Tom Brannon supervised Biffar. He described her as “the ideal employee” and “one of the most totally loyal, hard-working and creative people” with whom he worked.

“Looie loved to laugh, and she always made the day brighter for everyone she met,” Brannon said.

Put people ahead of projects

In spite of a busy schedule, Biffar managed to put “people ahead of events and projects,” and her work reflected her love for God, he added.

“Looie has spent more than four decades making the BGCT stronger and better,” he said.

When Biffar began work at what then was called the BGCT public relations office in 1968, she used a drawing board, rapidograph pen, utility knife and T-square. Over the last two and a half decades, she became proficient in multiple types of graphic-design computer hardware and software.

“Technology changed things,” she said—including the workload.

During her early years as a designer with the BGCT Executive Board staff, she typically handled four or five projects at a time. When she was art director of the fully staffed graphic services area of the communication office in the 1990s, she worked with three other full-time and one part-time designer on about 300 projects at peak season, leading to the BGCT annual meeting. Even in recent years, when she generally handled graphic design alone for the most part, she often juggled up to 50 projects at the busiest times.

Moving with the BGCT

Biffar vividly recalls moving from windowless first-floor offices at 703 N. Ervay in downtown Dallas to the 13th floor of the nearby 511 N. Akard building, which the BGCT Executive Board staff occupied along with the Southern Baptist Convention's Annuity Board.

"When we moved to the 511 building, I remember us rolling our desk chairs across the street," she said.

When the BGCT Executive Board staff moved to 333 N. Washington, adjacent to the Baylor University Medical Center campus, staff not only appreciated the new facilities and covered parking, but also the opportunity to offer suggestions about how the workspace could be designed, she recalled.

In a career spanning 47 years—interrupted on two occasions by just a few months—Biffar not only witnessed changes in technology and location, but also in personnel.

"I think the greatest change is in the number of women and people of different ethnic groups serving on the consultant or director level," she said.

Appreciates BGCT's progressive and inclusive attitudes

She credits Texas Baptist leaders who maintained a commitment to traditional Baptist principles while demonstrating progressive and inclusive attitudes toward women in Christian service—particularly in light of Southern Baptists' ultra-conservative shift in the last three decades.

"Women would not have had a place here if it had gone another direction," she said. "It's wonderful to have been able to do what I feel like God called me to do."

Other memories also stand out for Biffar:

- Covering beer advertisements at Reunion Arena with black drapes prior to a Youth Evangelism Conference.
- Being sent home from the office for wearing a pantsuit to the Baptist Building.
- Perpetrating good-natured practical jokes on other staff.
- Going to lunch with a printer, returning to find the printer's car stolen and realizing all the artwork for a major project was in the backseat.
- Deep-sea fishing off the South Carolina coast with co-workers prior to a professional workshop—and being one of only two people other than the boat's crew who escaped seasickness.

“How many people have the opportunity to work in a place where you have the freedom to do what God has called you to do, to see results of your work and have fun while doing it?” she asked.

Back to oil painting

When Biffar retires, it won't mean going back to the drawing board. It will mean returning to a brush, easel and canvas.

“I'm turning part of my garage into a studio, and I'm looking forward to oil painting, which I haven't done in years,” she said. She also plans to work two days a week with Woman's Missionary Union of Texas, volunteer at [First Baptist Church in Lewisville](#), spend time with her nephews and play with “the kids in the neighborhood.”