

# Lay leader and philanthropist Howard E. Butt dead at age 89

September 13, 2016

Howard E. Butt Jr., who devoted much of his life to helping Christian business leaders recognize their daily work as a high calling, died Sept. 11 in San Antonio due to complications from Parkinson's disease. He was 89.

Butt, whose father built the H-E-B grocery chain, was born in Kerrville Sept. 8, 1927. As a student at Baylor University, where he earned a business degree in 1947, he participated in the Youth-Led Revival movement as a lay preacher.

After graduation from Baylor, he worked in the family business. However, he left day-to-day operations of the grocery company by the late 1960s, transitioning from the vice president's role to vice chairmanship of the board, in order to devote more of his time and energy to Christian ministry.

He headed the H.E. Butt Foundation, a philanthropic enterprise his mother, Mary Holdsworth Butt, first operated. He became the foundation's president in 1982.

In 1961, he was instrumental in creation of Laity Lodge Retreat Center in the Texas Hill Country, where he pioneered the "small-group" Christian discipleship model. He later launched the Laity Lodge Youth Camp and the Laity Lodge Family Camp.

He also developed the Laity Lodge Leadership Forums, which brought together senior business leaders from Fortune 500 companies and their spouses every two years to listen to internationally known speakers from a variety of fields.

Butt spoke at one of the first National Prayer Breakfasts during the Eisenhower Administration in 1956. President John F. Kennedy named Butt to the first Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity in recognition of his efforts on behalf of workers.

Butt served on the board of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and created with Graham the Layman's Leadership Institute. He was a founding member of the *Christianity Today* board of directors.

In 2000, he launched the nationally broadcast radio program, "The High Calling of Our Daily Life."

He wrote multiple books on faith and leadership, including *The Velvet-Covered Brick: Christian Leadership in an Age of Rebellion*, *At the Edge of Hope: Christian Laity in Paradox* and *Renewing America's Soul*.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara Dan; three children, Howard III, Stephen and Deborah Dan Rogers; two siblings, Eleanor Butt Crook and Charles Butt; eight grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.