

Toby Druin: ‘An informed Baptist is a better Baptist’

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From 1976 to 1998, Toby Druin served the Lord and Texas Baptists as associate editor and then editor of the *Baptist Standard*. From deep in the heart of one Texan, he shares his background and thoughts on church and ministry. To suggest a Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated leader to be featured in this column, or to apply to be featured yourself, [click here](#).

Background

Where did you grow up?

I was born and grew up in Amarillo, the son of Tobe and Tressa Druin. My father was a conductor for the Ft. Worth and Denver Railroad. I graduated from Amarillo High School in 1953.

How did you come to faith in Christ?

I came to faith in Christ through the witness of neighbors, friends and members of River Road Baptist Church in Amarillo. I became convicted of sin and aware of God’s grace through hearing hymns sung by the woman next door to us as she hung out her wash. My Sunday school teacher, Mrs. Harold Heard, who was also one of my teachers at River Road School, presented the plan of salvation to me as did my pastor, A. B. Moseley, and many of the deacons.

I made a profession of faith at an Oral Roberts tent revival in the spring of 1949. The next Sunday I was baptized at River Road Baptist Church and the next Sunday Pastor Moseley handed me a hymn book and told me I was the song leader for the Sunday School general assembly. I learned that it is

important to give new Christians something to do in the church.

Later, after I had taken a job as a sports writer for the *Amarillo Daily News*, I took a class in conducting music offered by the Baptist General Convention of Texas Church Music Department at First Baptist Church of Amarillo. I went to the class on my dinner break at the paper.

Why did you feel called into ministry?

I began to feel called into ministry or “full-time Christian service,” as I referred to it, in the late 1950s. I had become sports editor and then city editor of the *Borger News Herald*, and my wife, Larra, and I had become members of Calvary Baptist Church. We heard gospel preaching from our pastor, Jeff Moore, who urged us to live out the Christian life in service. We heard challenges from missionaries and evangelists who came to the church for revival meetings. The Lord began to speak to me and my wife.

I resisted the “call” at first. I had worked myself into a good job, we had bought a house, and I didn’t want to uproot my family—by then we had two daughters—and go to college to prepare to be a preacher, minister of music or missionary. Those were my only options, as I saw it. Of the three, I could only see myself as a minister of music. I was a world class stutterer, but I didn’t stutter when I sang.

In 1959 I was leading singing in the married young people’s department at Calvary, when Marvin Knox, pastor of Keeler Heights Baptist Church, asked me to lead singing at the church, a mission of First Baptist Church of Phillips. I served there about a year, praying with my wife about our future. Telling myself that I needed more journalism training, but really trying to get away from the Lord, I took another job as assistant city editor of the *Wichita Falls Record News*. Surprise! The Lord was there, too.

A family business concern took me back to Amarillo after only a few months, and in the fall of 1962 I surrendered my life to full-time Christian

service. In February 1963 I enrolled as a music major at Wayland Baptist University and worked as a reporter for the Plainview Daily Herald. I had no background in music, and though I did fairly well in the music classes, I began to question my calling into the music ministry. I continually asked God for guidance.

In 1961, while attending an Associated Press Managing Editors Meeting in Dallas, I heard Dave Cheavens, director of the AP Austin Bureau, announce his retirement. A Baylor graduate, Cheavens said he would be returning to the university to be director of the Journalism Department and the Office of Public Relations. He said he planned to begin a course sequence in religious journalism. The memory of what he said about religious journalism came to mind repeatedly as I prayed about my future. I talked it over with my wife, Larra, and we prayed, asking the Lord for guidance. Finally, it became clear that I should pursue religious journalism.

I called Cheavens about getting into his program but told him I would have to work full-time while in school. We were expecting our third child. He got me an interview with the night managing editor of the *Waco News Tribune*, who had an opening on the night side desk. I worked there for about four months before accepting an offer to be a news writer in Baylor public relations.

I graduated in June 1966, helped along by a *Baptist Standard* scholarship which paid my tuition my senior year. The scholarship would have entitled me to work as an intern at the *Standard* during the summer following graduation, but Cheavens created a job for me as director of the Baylor news service in the public relations office, and I chose to stay at the university.

That fall, however, I took a job as associate editor of the North Carolina Baptist paper, the *Biblical Recorder*. In each of those job changes, I sought God's will through prayer. As each door opened, I felt it was the Lord

giving me a new opportunity for service.

In addition to your most-noted position, where else did you serve in ministry?

Following graduation from Baylor, I directed the Baylor news service, followed by seven years as associate editor of the *Biblical Recorder*, the weekly paper of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and three years as editor of news services of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board before coming to the *Baptist Standard*.

After my retirement from the *Standard*, I did some freelance writing for Buckner Baptist Benevolences, produced a monthly insert for the *Standard* covering the six associations in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex and then for eight years was editor of the *Cowboy Times*, a monthly publication of the American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches, covering the birth and development of cowboy churches in Texas and across much of the nation.

A few people might remember that I lead the singing at Grand Avenue Baptist Church in Amarillo, South Plains Baptist Church in South Plains, Finney Baptist Church in Plainview, Chalk Bluff Baptist Church in Waco, North Street Baptist Church in Raleigh, NC and Millbrook Baptist Church in Lancaster. At none of them was I the “minister” of music.

I was ordained as a deacon in 1968 but was never licensed to preach or ordained as a minister. I am a layman. I have served on many Baptist boards, among them the Texas Baptist Executive Board, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and the Baylor University Board of Regents.

When did you leave your most-noted position and/or retire from full-time ministry?

I retired from the editorship of the *Baptist Standard* on Dec. 31, 1998, and from the editorship of the *Cowboy Times* at the end of 2012. I was a

professional journalist for 56 years.

How have you occupied yourself since then?

I am an active churchman at First Baptist Church of Waxahachie where I have served as a deacon and sing in the choir. I hunt and occasionally fish, play golf and travel with my wife, Vicki, whom I married in December 2010 following the death in 2008 of my first wife, Larra.

Where do you live now, and where do you go to church?

I live in Waxahachie and am a member of First Baptist Church in that city.

Ministry/life

What was your favorite or most joyful aspect of ministry? Why?

The favorite part of my ministry was delivering into the hands of Baptist church members stories and newspapers that were “readable, relevant and right,” to borrow a phrase from E. S. James, editor of the *Standard* from 1954-66. Baptist Christians are, for the most part, wonderful people who love Jesus and want to serve him. Telling their stories was for me a blessing beyond measure.

Walker Knight, who was associate editor of the *Standard* from 1950-59, and as director of editorial services was my boss at the SBC Home Mission Board, told me once that he loved his job so much he wished he could pay for doing it rather than take a salary. I felt the same way.

What part of ministry delivered the greatest heartache

or headache?

The controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention ultimately cost many good men their jobs as leaders of convention agencies. I knew those men and believe I knew their hearts. To see their beliefs questioned and then to see them summarily fired was truly painful to me. The convention that I had loved so much became less than I thought it had been, and I blamed myself for not being able to communicate the issues in such a way as to stir more participation.

Name the most significant challenges and/or influences you faced during your ministry.

Communicating to Baptist church members what the issue was in Southern Baptist life that spawned the controversy. Fundamentalists won the day and control of the convention by making the issue biblical inerrancy or the “nature of scripture.”

What element of ministry do you wish you could have changed?

The increasing cost of delivering the *Standard* to the reader in the churches. For 60 years a subscription cost \$2.00 a year. Postage rates began to skyrocket, and so did the cost of the *Standard*.

How did your perspective on ministry change?

My perspective never changed. I wanted to tell the story of what Texas Baptists were doing in Jesus’ name and to keep them informed of what Satan was doing to stop it.

What would you tell the young you, just starting out in ministry?

The best stories, the stories that inspire others to attempt great things for

God, are stories about Baptist people in local churches, not about denominational debacles.

If you could go back and launch any new ministry, what would it be? Why?

I would make an effort to place the printed version of the *Baptist Standard* in the hands of every Baptist Christian. An informed Baptist is a better Baptist.

What do you wish more laypeople knew about ministry or, specifically, your ministry?

I wish every person, man or woman, would seek God's plan for themselves. Every Christian is a minister, whatever their role or place in life. My ministry was to tell the story of Baptists.

How do you expect ministry to change in the next 10 to 20 years?

I wish I knew. Texas Baptists will still be doing exciting things and the story about it will need to be told.

About Baptists

What were the key issues facing Baptists during the heart of your ministry?

The key issue throughout most of my ministry career in Texas was who was going to have control of the Southern Baptist Convention.

On one side were Baptists who birthed it and saw it as a missions, educational and benevolent enterprise that brought together a wide variety of Baptists in support of the common cause of winning the world to faith in

Christ. On the other were Baptists who wanted a commitment to the inerrancy of scripture to be the glue that held the convention together. The latter group has been in control of the convention machinery since 1979.

What would you change about the Baptist denomination—state, nation or local?

There is only one Baptist denomination. There are more than 30-odd state conventions that cooperate with the Southern Baptist Convention, and there are several other national conventions or fellowships, including the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Each is autonomous, just as is the local church.

About Toby

Who were/are your mentors, and how did/do they influence you?

I have had many mentors: my parents, of course; my high school baseball coach, Sam Pecchia; sports writer Putt Powell, who encouraged me to get into journalism; Dave Cheavens and David McHam at Baylor; my many pastors; editors for whom I have worked, J. Marse Grant of the *North Carolina Biblical Recorder*, Walker Knight of the SBC Home Mission Board, and John J. Hurt and Presnall Wood of the *Baptist Standard*. I have also learned a lot from Marv Knox, whom I brought to the *Standard* as associate editor and who succeeded me. His editorials have helped me be a better Baptist Christian.

What did you learn on the job you wish you learned in seminary?

I didn't attend seminary. I had already been a journalist for several years and continued to work as one as I went to Wayland Baptist University and

Baylor University. I believe my work experience enabled me to better apply what I learned in the classroom.

What was the impact of ministry on your family?

We lived on meager rations while I was in college, and the moves I made from job to job in answering God's call forced changes in the life of my family that at times were painful.

Other than the Bible, name some of your favorite books or authors, and explain why.

I am a voracious reader, usually having two or more books going at a time. I love history, especially accounts of the Civil War and World War II and biographies of men who helped shape our nation. I read many novels. I love poetry, especially the kind that rhymes.

My favorite authors include Bruce Catton, Shelby Foote, Winston Churchill, Stephen Ambrose, David McCullough, Theodore Bernstein, Carl Sandburg, Rick Atkinson, Larry McMurtry, Thomas Perry, C. J. Box and Elmer Kelton.

What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?

My favorite Bible verses are Philippians 4:4-7: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Who is your favorite Bible character, other than Jesus? Why?

My favorite Bible character is Joseph. Aside from the story of Christ, the story of Joseph and his forgiveness is without peer.

Name something about you that would surprise people who know you well.

I cry easily.

If you could get one “do over” in ministry, what would it be, and why?

I am a better journalist after 56 years of learning how to do it. I would like to do it all over.

Write and answer a question you wish we had asked.

I used to end my interviews of people with “What do you do for fun?”

If I were asked that question, I would say watching baseball games and wishing I could get down behind the plate and catch one more game and throw a runner out who was trying to steal second base. That would be fun.