

This is Mrs. Keegan, the Sunday School Board archivist interviewing Dr. Clifton J. Allen, Associate Editorial Secretary of the Sunday School Board from 1937-1944; and Editorial Secretary of the Sunday School Board from 1945 through 1968. He came here to work alongside Dr. Hite C. Moore as associate editorial secretary and stayed on to be full editorial secretary for many years. Dr. Allen, would you comment on many things that are near and dear to your heart and about ways in which you have served the Sunday School Board, the Southern Baptist Convention and anything that you would like to tell us, we'll be grateful to you.

Dr. Allen: Mrs. Keegan, this is an opportunity that I hadn't anticipated to get to talk about a period of work at the Sunday School Board which has been the major part of my life in length and I hope in terms of significant ministry. As we begin, let me say that I would like this to be informal. I hope you will interrupt and ask questions if things I discuss or mention are not adequately interpreted or made clear. And let me supplement in any way that will be helpful for your permanent record.

Maybe it would be good to begin by speaking of my own personal background. I would like to declare and affirm my indebtedness to a Christian home, having been the son of dedicated and devout Christian parents. My mother and father being not only persons of strong personal character and integrity but being loyally active in the church and committed to the rearing of their children in the Christian faith.

I was the last one of eleven children and the last one of the eleven all save one having gone to maturity to become a Christian. My conversion came when I was about twelve years of age after careful instruction by my mother and father and by a coincidence by my oldest brother who happened to be the pastor of the neighborhood church.

Mrs. Keegan: And what was the name of this church. It has interested me greatly.

Dr. Allen: I ought not to have neglected the name, Catfish Creek Baptist Church in typical country fashion.

Mrs. Keegan: And where was this church in what state?

Dr. Allen: Down in South Carolina near the little town of Latta. So this is the beginning of my life in terms of a sense of commitment to Christ and in terms of a preparation for the work that the Lord has given me the privilege of doing.

My decision to become a minister came when I was about 17 or 18 years of age after a good deal of struggle during the years of my youth I came to a clear conviction that the will of God for my life was a Christian ministry.

I remember the counsel of a mature minister at the time who was an intimate friend of my mother and father who said that my call to the ministry should not be thought of as unnatural for I had been the product of a Christian home and had been under the influence of persons in the family committed to the Christian ministry. My grandfather being a minister. One of my uncles being a minister. My two oldest brothers also having become ministers.

Now without taking too much time I would comment on the facts of my education.

Mrs. Keegan: I'm glad you're going to do that.

Allen.

At a country school which was rather inadequate and not the best preparation for college experience, but I entered Furman University as the realization of a long dream for I had grown up with an interest in Furman, my older brothers having attended this school, my older sisters having attended other Baptist colleges in South Carolina. Furman was good for me. I had a meaningful experience as a college student. I think I could say without inordinate pride that I was successful in regular student activities--winning a good many medals for various college or university activities in terms of debating and declamation and oratorical contests, writing contests. The one that meant most to me was to receive on graduation the general excellence medal which was awarded to the student on the basis of the judgment of the faculty in terms of all-round excellence as a college student.

After finish Furman, it was necessary to return to my home because of the aged state of my mother and father and live at home for two years while I taught in a neighborhood school not far away. And then it became possible for me to pursue plans for training at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

My ambition in terms of preparation was the best preparation possible, and so after getting the Master of Theology Degree in 1928, I was invited to stay on for doctoral study which I completed in 1932, having served as a tutor or a fellow with Dr. W. Hearsey Davis. Teaching a good deal of the time because of the heavy load which faculty members had and particularly because it was thought by the trustees that Dr. Robertson and Dr. Sampey ought to be lightened in their load. And this required that Dr. Davis and Dr. Yates, the associate professors in Old Testament and New Testament should take up part of the load. Therefore, the fellows took up part of the load of the associates. But this was a helpful experience in terms of some seminary teaching in the field of New Testament Greek and a much better preparation for my ministry later.

My first pastorate was of a little church in a mining community in Western Kentucky, Mc Henry in Ohio County. A rather primitive area. A section of Kentucky strongly influenced by the Landmark concept of the church, but this gave me insights and an understanding of Baptist life which I never would have had if I had not had my first pastoral experience in this little mining town church. Following some three and one-half year there I went to Utica, Kentucky for a period of time until I had finished my work at the Southern Seminary and then went to a pastorate in Fairmont, North Carolina from 1932 to 1936. I resigned to accept the call to the Western Avenue Baptist Church in Statesville, North Carolina in April, 1936, not anticipating that very soon I would be invited to come to the Sunday School Board so that my pastorate in Statesville was just a little more than a year's length, and I came to the Sunday School Board in 1937, the first of July.

It may be of some interest, Mrs. Keegan, as to how and why I came to the Sunday School Board to editorial work.

Mrs. Keegan: We would be glad to hear about this.

Allen: After going to Fairmont where I did some writing, my wife to whom I would pay a great tribute of appreciation had worked at the Sunday School Board before we were married. And let me say she was Hattie Bell McCrackin, born in Mississippi, reared in Alabama, and a graduate of Mississippi Woman's College and later of Peabody College. She had worked in the Sunday School board in the old BYPU Department, assisting Mr. Lambdin in the work on the Fraining Union Magazine. After graduating with her Master's Degree from Peabody and it was while she was engaged in this that our friendship matured to genuine affection and we were married in 1930. But she used to say that my first writing opportunity at the Sunday School Board was one that she had given me for this actually came years before while I was a student at Southern Seminary and while she was helping with the editorial work in the BYPU Department at the Sunday School Board.

But later in my pastorate at Fairmont I was invited by Dr. Hite C. Moore to attend a writer's conference at Ridgecrest and following that due to an illness which he had I was invited to undertake a writing assignment for The Teacher, preparing the Sunday School lesson expositions. Something about this must have pleased Dr. Moore for he approached me soon after that and asked if I would undertake review and criticism of the old graded lessons which became a rather demanding assignment. But as a result of this I think he was led to invite me to come to the Sunday School Board to work in the editorial department.

Mrs. Keegan: It seems you've had demanding and hard assignments all the way along doesn't it?

Dr. Allen: Well not too hard, demanding just as anything significant would be, but not too hard. I discovered in my pastorate in Statesville, however, that the assignment from the Board was one that required more time than I could give to it which I explained to Dr. Moore, and I think this encouraged him more quickly to recommend to Dr. Holcomb, the executive secretary that I be invited to come to the Board as a regular employee.

This was the major turning point in my life for I had always expected my ministry would be as the pastor of a church so that it was after much serious thought and earnest prayer that I came to the conviction that God's will for us was that I undertake this ministry at the Sunday School Board. And when I made this decision I thought of it as a lifetime commitment. Not long after I came to the Sunday School Board I had invitations to accept rather inviting pastorates again, but these involved no struggle of decision for I felt that I had followed the leading of the Lord and that my life had been given to another phase of the Christian ministry in connection with the editorial ministry of a denominational board. And I cannot be adequately thankful for God's opening to me this area of ministry which made it possible for me not only to serve one church but to serve our denomination through the materials prepared for the Bible teaching and Christian training educational program of the church. It's now more than 35 years since I came to the Sunday School Board. I came with a sense of commitment and privilege, and I rejoice that the Lord has given me these long years of service here.

Mrs. Keegan: And you have truly made a significant contribution to Southern Baptist Life through your work here at the Sunday School Board and other ways, too.

Dr. Allen: What do you think, Mrs. Keegan, would be some of the main things that I might tell about my work here at the Sunday School Board?

Mrs. Keegan: Well, because of your position here with the Board you had charge of Bible conferences and writer's conferences for a while at the assemblies didn't you?

Dr. Allen: Yes, perhaps, however, it might be helpful to mention a little bit earlier in that respect or responsibility. The rather limited, but very meaningful relationship I had with Dr. Hite C. Moore, the editorial secretary when I came.

Mrs. Keegan: Fine, please do.

Allen: He was, at the time of my coming, in his late years and anticipating his retirement. I think it would not be improper to say that I think he perhaps dreamed that I might succeed him as the editorial secretary though that was not something that he tried to manipulate or accomplish in any way. One of the richest experiences of my life was the relationship with him for he was one of God's great saints, as well as very competent and capable editor and editorial executive at the Sunday School Board. My intimate association with him in the work of the Board, traveling with him, visiting in his home, all of this established a very strong bond of personal friendship. I think he thought of me

as a younger son in the ministry of the Sunday School Board and felt so devoted to me that it was my privilege and his desire that I should conduct his funeral. But I want to express appreciation for the marvelous ministry of Dr. Moore to Southern Baptists and to the wider circles of Baptist life.

My first assignments at the Sunday School Board were in the area of reading all the materials from the standpoint of biblical accuracy and doctoral interpretation. This was not a position identified in this way, but it was a responsibility which was assigned to me and along with this editing some of the materials for adults. It later developed that I was asked to give general direction to the development of a new series of graded lesson materials for the younger age groups, especially primaries and juniors, and it was because of this being a responsibility for which I was not adequately equipped in terms of specific editorial guidance that Dr. Holcomb and Dr. Moore felt that my wife who was an experienced and competent worker with children should undertake this responsibility, and while the revised course of closely graded lessons for primaries and for juniors which were developed, while this course came out under the my name as the general editor, it was actually my wife who did the editorial work and who gave the creative guidance and leadership to the writers.

Mrs. Keegan: This was a tremendous area.

Dr. Allen: It was a big accomplishment for her and a very great undertaking because of our young family. It was rather funny that Dr. Holcomb and Dr. Moore referred to this as our working together all the time night and day. Well actually it was about like that for both of us did a great deal of night work plus the day work which I did here at the Board and which we did at home.

But this was just one of her major contributions to the life of the Sunday School Board and her reinforcement of me in my total ministry is more important and more significant than I can explain or interpret in these brief comments.

But I was about to say that along with my early years at the Sunday School Board I was related to the entire editorial ministry of the Board after Dr. Moore's retirement in 1943, Dr. W. R. White was elected editorial secretary and I was privileged to be associated with him for a period of time until his resignation to return to the pastorate and following this I was elected by the trustees of the board on Dr. Holcomb's recommendation to become the editorial secretary at the beginning of 1945. Actually I believe it was at the beginning of February, 1945.

Well, this was a new era in my work, and I do not know how to summarize some of the significant developments that came. We aspired to the refinement and improvement of all the curriculum materials and supplementing

the work done for primaries and juniors we had already initiated a new course of materials for beginners and for the nursery group. Soon we developed a new course of graded lesson materials for intermediates under the leadership of William J. Fallis and Annue Ward Byrd, and this was the foundation for our Sunday School lesson materials until further studies were undertaken in the late fifties and throughout the sixties.

I should comment on one thing about which I have considerable pride and that is the privilege of enlisting persons to come and work at the Sunday School Board.

Mrs. Keegan: I did want you to comment on that phase of the responsibility.

*Allen:* It may be that I have done nothing of more importance in the work of the Board than to be at least instrumental in part in enlisting persons who have come to work here.

Mrs. Keegan: And that rather preceded what we now have as the work in the Office of Personnel, is that true?

Dr. Allen: Well not directly related perhaps. Before we had an office of Personnel each department head, of course, under the leadership of the division director was responsible for recommending professional personnel and not only for recommending but discovering and evaluating and testing and recommending such persons. So it was in this connection that I had the opportunity to recommend to Dr. Moore the enlistment of Miss Annie Ward Byrd and later Miss Josephine Pile and others. These two, however, have continued their work at the Board until Miss Byrd's retirement recently and have accomplished a great deal in their editorial work. Later on Howard Colson, William J. Fallis, Raymond Rigdon, Charles Treadway are among some of the ones who were enlisted to come and work with us at the Board. These whom I have mentioned are not the only ones but are certainly persons whose years of ministry at the Sunday School Board have been very significant.

Mrs. Keegan: Now in connection with your work as editorial secretary that made possible for you and demanded of you working with a larger organization relating to the work of the Uniform Lesson Committee and with other denominations. Would you comment on this work or part of the work.

Dr. Allen: I'm glad that you mentioned this. One of the early opportunities I had after coming to the Sunday School Board was attending the International Sunday School Lesson Committee which was usually called the Committee on Uniform Lessons with Dr. Hite C. Moore as a proxy for one of our other members who might not attend. I remember serving as a proxy for Dr. John L. Hill on one or two occasions. Perhaps once for Dr. Holcomb. At any rate, I did attend this committee three or four or five times in the years 1939-1942. And so I was related to the

Uniform Lesson Committee just before a significant change or evolution in its organization and work. At that time the committee was called the Committee on Improved Uniform Lessons. Dr. John R. Sampey was the chairman and had been the chairman for a long period of time. I knew the older representatives of the various denominations and had great respect for them and appreciation of their work.

But, it was time for a new era in the life and work of this committee which took place in 1942 and 1943. There was a growing demand for some new emphases and new approaches in the work of the committee and especially for a revival of a plan to provide lesson outlines which denominations could use for younger age groups as the committee had done in the earlier years. So as a consumation of these expressed needs of the cooperating denominations. A change took place in the committee, and it was changed with a new basis of representation. The cooperating denominations appointing all of their members, that is, all of the members representing these denominations to the committee. Dr. Sampey, I think, felt that it was time for his retirement and a number of the older people were at the time of retirement. So a new committee came into being on an exploratory basis to begin with which became a permanent committee and which took over the work of the committee on the Uniform Series beginning with the preparation of outlines for 1945. I should explain that at that time the committee was responsible for developing materials at least develop9ng a plan which denominations could use in developing their curriculum materials for primaries and juniors, intermediate or youth and young people and adults. So that the membership of the committee began to be inclusive of children's workers and youth workers along with editors of materials for young people and adults and editorial executives.

I was appointed by the Sunday School Board, that is by the executive of the Sunday School Board along with others to represent our Board from 1943 on and the years following.

Mrs. Keegan: What are the names of some of these others, would you like to mention?

Allen: Are you thinking of the related organizations to the committee?

Mrs. Keegan: Some of the others, the people that went along with you to these meetings.

Dr. Allen: At the beginning of this transition, Annie Ward Byrd and Robert Trent and I were the ones who had the first experience when William J. Fallis came in 1944 or '45, he was appointed to the committee as a young people's editor. Later when Howard Colson came he was appointed to the committee and for a time Raymond Rigdon served on the committee after Fallis resigned from Sunday School editorial work and became the book editor of the Board. So through the years the Sunday School Board had a cross section of representation from the Sunday School Board editors from the children's level up through the adult level, and I continued to serve on the committee until my retirement in 1968.

As a member of the committee, I served in many capacities as chairman of quarterly committees, but more important as chairman of the Cycle Committee just before becoming chairman of the entire committee. I served for seven years from 1960, I believe it was, to 1967 as the chairman of the Committee on Uniform Series and in this responsibility had the opportunity to be closely related to the whole curriculum process which was carried on cooperatively by some thirty odd denominations in the United States.

I'd like to mention in this connection that the work on the committee on the Uniform Series was one phase of cooperative work with representatives of other denominations which meant a great deal to me at the time of my becoming a member of the committee on the Uniform Series in 1943. I also became a member of the committee on the Graded Series and served on this parallel committee which developed outlines for use in the development of closely graded and group graded lessons. I served on the committee for some ten years as long as it was fruitful for me to do so in terms of the interest of the Sunday School Board. But along with the work on the interdenominational curriculum committees, I should explain that these were sponsored by the old International Council of Religious Education and subsequently by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches. Our Sunday School Board was not a member of either the International Council of Religious Education or the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches. But, participation in the curriculum committees and in the curriculum activities sponsored by these interdenominational organizations was not limited to denominations having a structural relationship or an organic relationship. And so our Sunday School Board was privileged to participate as freely and as helpfully as representatives of the boards of other denominations which had actual membership both in the earlier International Council of Religious Education and then later the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches.

I was very much interested in this interdenominational relationship because I felt that it was an expression of a helpful relationship--helpful for us and helpful for others. I was an active member of the editor's advisory section which was one of the advisory sections of people in the field of religious education related to the International Council and then later the Division of Christian Education and as a member of the editor's advisory section I served in the various offices and then I believe at one time or another as every officer of the section. That is, secretary, vice-chairman, chairman, and so forth for a period of years. I enjoyed relationships with persons of other denominations of Christian dedication of educational experience and of sound biblical understanding. I came to have an increasing concern for the whole matter of Christian unity not in terms of organizational expression or national structure but in terms of cooperative fellowship, in terms of mutual reinforcement which I believe to be the true expression of the Christian unity which all people of Christ have. I do not see this as an obsession but through the later years of my ministry and particularly

the later years of my activities at the Sunday School Board I tried to capture every opportunity I could for such valid expressions of the value of Christian unity.

Something amusing comes to my mind at the moment which will be a surprise to you, Mrs. Keegan.

Mrs. Keegan: Yes, this is a surprise.

Dr. Allen: Before Dr. Holcomb's retirement in 1953 I think it was just the year before as a matter of fact, he knew of my relationships with interdenominational groups and my interest in these relationships, and he knew, also, of the strong prejudice on the part of many Southern Baptist pastors and others about involvement in interdenominational organizations. So he asked me to prepare a brief statement on our relationship with other religious bodies. He was thinking in general terms, of course, of our relationship as Southern Baptists to other religious bodies. I prepared a brief statement that was basic and fundamental in every respect dealing with basic principles of Christian unity. I think he was rather impressed by the statement which was he thought helpful, and so he decided to ask me to read this statement at one of the meetings of the Trustees of the Sunday School Board. And I did so. I think Dr. Holcomb had in mind that it was simply a general statement that would be helpful to share with the group, but quite to his surprise and even more to mine, one of the persons in attendance upon the Board meeting who was not a trustee but a denominational leader from a portion of our Convention territory strongly influenced by landmarkism, this brother arose to express a real concern about the editorial secretary's interest in relationships with other religious bodies. And then one of the most influential members of the Board of Trustees arose to imply his concern and then to go on and make some rather unjustified attacks upon our literature as not being sound in biblical interpretation. Well, all of it seems so utterly amusing, but it was even suggested that a committee of the Board should be asked to confer with the editorial secretary and discuss with him these matters. And as a result of this a committee of three members of the trustees of the Board were designated by the chairman, I believe, consulted with me, and we had a delightful conversation and fellowship. And I think they discovered that I wasn't as heretical as some of the brethren had thought. So they reported to the next meeting of the Board that they thought all was well.

Mrs. Keegan: Well, I'm glad it came out well. I know there had been some concern expressed outcroppings of it fairly regularly about this in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Dr. Allen: One of the regrets that I have is that Southern Baptist people generally have lacked a mature, I think, understanding of the meaning of Christian unity and a mature appreciation of the contribution

of all Christian groups to the total Christian mission in the world. I do not speak as an advocate of organic unity, but of or I speak my own conviction that Southern Baptists have lost some avenues of opportunity to give a witness to other Christian groups which could have been helpful and I think we have lost the opportunity to be gained from other Christian groups things which would have strengthened our own witness and fellowship. But let us hope that the future will be brighter than the past and without any involvement in edumenical organizations which might be devisive in their reaction on our own fellowship. We can certainly be creatively involved in the true objective of Christian unity and we can try to cultivate appropriate and helpful avenues of fellowship with all Christians in all the world.

I've wandered a bit from something you said a while ago and I come back to it because of its importance, I think. While I was the editorial secretary of the Board, even before Dr. Holcomb's retirement, he had asked that I assume responsibility for directing the Bible Conference at the two assemblies, Ridgecrest and Glorieta. Therefore, this was another area of opportunity, and under the leadership of Dr. Sullivan I was asked to continue this responsibility. I sought to develop a conference at the two assemblies which would allow for very serious Bible study from the standpoint of some major theological concept or Christian doctrine from the standpoint of biblical exposition and from the standpoint of ethical practice. And I developed a program design emphasizing the expository study and the doctrinal or theological study and the area of relevance for personal Christian living and personal Christian relationships. People who attended the conference seemed to express appreciation for this approach. And in connection with this I tried to put major emphasis on a new meaning in worship, and this seemed to be widely appreciated by people in attendance in the conference. For a long time prior to this responsibility I had directed a writer's conference each year at Ridgecrest Assembly from 1938 or 1939 on and from the beginning of the Glorieta assembly, as well.

Mrs. Keegan: Now these writer's conferences were beamed toward helping people to write for the periodicals here at the Sunday School Board?

Dr. Allen: Yes, and not only to write for the periodicals of the Board but to capture other opportunities for writing with a sense of Christian mission and Christian objective whether writing for the secular press or secular magazines or writing book-length material, the writer's conference was somewhat inclusive in its objective to help in the development of curriculum writers and writers for denominational publications but also for a wider ministry in Christian writing.

Mrs. Keegan: Now at present, now, in 1972, we do that a little differently. We do not have the writer's conferences at the assemblies do we?

Dr. Allen: The decision was made some two or three years ago that the writer's conferences would not be held at the assemblies but would be conducted here in Nashville. I believe Dr. Colson, each year, has conducted a conference in Nashville somewhat along the line of earlier tradition but perhaps slanted more definitely toward the editorial ministry of the Sunday School Board at least this has been one of the major concerns which he has continued to emphasize and to direct.

Mrs. Keegan: And we have several writer's conferences each year beamed toward different age group levels, smaller conferences in charge of different editors at the Board.

Dr. Allen: This is a most essential and important part of the work of developing curriculum materials. I think we could go back to the experience of our predecessors long years ago when this was first initiated not on a widespread basis but in certain instances even before my time at the Sunday School Board and beginning with my years here we developed a conference for the writers of young people's materials and adult materials, and this, of course, is no observed not only in the Sunday School but in Church Training and Church Music and other areas of the Board's life.

Mrs. Keegan: Well, are you ready to move on to another phase of your work or have you finished commenting on this particular phase?

Dr. Allen: Well, one thing that came to me as a new and unexpected opportunity while I was at the Sunday School Board was an opportunity to be related to our worldwide Baptist fellowship through the Baptist World Alliance in connection with a commission of the alliance--a commission that was first called "The Commission on Bible Study and Membership Training." I would comment in this connection that one of my dreams from the late forties and early fifties was to encourage some sort of worldwide Baptist fellowship in the area of Christian education. I may not have been the first person to dream of this, I'm sure I wasn't. I know that Dr. Hite Moore, when I came to the Board, was sensitive to the need for worldwide Baptist fellowship in developing Sunday School lesson materials, but I'm not certain that his ideas visualized the structure related to the Baptist World Alliance. This, however, became a concern not only of mine but of others. I am sure that Dr. Gaines Dobbins had something of the same dreams. Dr. Holcomb also had something of the same dreams. We discussed this, but it was after Dr. Sullivan came to the Board that this became a possibility when with his encouragement and Dr. Dobbins' initiative and encouragement, also, on the part of Dr. Duke K. McCall a conference was called at the congress of the Baptist World Alliance in London in 1955 which opened the way for the creation of the commission on Bible study and membership training.

At the first meeting of the commission in Hamilton, Ontario in 1957 I was asked to serve as secretary, and this was renewed and continued

so that I was related to the commission from its beginning and had the special opportunity of gathering the materials together for the commission and working with the first two chairmen, Dr. Dobbins and Dr. Benjamin Brown of the American Baptist Convention and having a wonderful privilege that involved some international travel. In 1958, with Mrs. Allen, I went to Europe and we joined Dr. and Mrs. Dobbins and Dr. and Mrs. Woodbury in conferences in a number of European countries in the interest of evangelism and in the interest of Christian education. These opportunities increased as the years came along, and I was privileged to attend the meetings of the commission held annually in connection of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Baptist World Alliance and ultimately after Dr. Dobbins had served as chairman for two terms I was appointed chairman of the commission in 1965 and served for the next congress period, 1965-1970. I was wonderfully enriched in this experience by having opportunities to visit a number of countries in South America on two or three occasions--visit countries in Europe on a number of occasions, go to Africa twice and on around the world to Australia and New Zealand. In 1970 to go to the conference in Tokyo and have charge of the workshop conducted by our commission prior to the BWA Congress in 1970.

Mrs. Keegan: I suppose as a result of this you have had people from these different countries with mutual interest in our Baptist teaching and training to come to see you here in Nashville and to see the Sunday School Board and other workings of the Convention, perhaps.

Dr. Allen: One of the things Dr. Sullivan asked me to do in my responsibility after some structural reorganization in 1954 was to serve as a liaison person with other religious bodies and especially the Baptist bodies so that I was privileged to receive visitors from other Baptist bodies around the world and have connections with them. This has been a further dimension not only of my work at the Sunday School Board but a further dimension of my perspective, my outlook on world mission and certainly an enriched dimension in terms of personal relationships with many people from around the world.

I would mention another thing that has some bearing upon this. I mentioned that Dr. Sullivan wanted me to serve as the liaison person in this way. He also asked me to serve as a liaison person for the Sunday School Board for a time in relation to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminaries and I arranged for conferences that I think turned out to be fruitful and especially recommended to Dr. Sullivan that we undertake a conference with the faculties of all the seminaries. So on two occasions, five or six years apart, Sunday School Board professional workers in the educational field especially joined with the entire faculties of the six Southern Baptist seminaries in a two or three day conference here in Nashville at which time mutual concerns were explored through study papers and dialogues that proved very helpful for Sunday School Board workers and I think very helpful for the seminary faculties. This was the only time that the entire

faculties had ever been together at once and was the only time for some of them in fields, that is, in the same fields of study and special interests to get together for conversation and discussion.

Maybe I have taken about as much time as I should. I would mention, perhaps, one other thing.

Mrs. Keegan: Let's talk about your teaching the Sunday School lesson, weekly, on WSM just a brief sentence or so on that.

Allen: Dr. Moore used to go to Ridgecrest from my first days at the Sunday School Board to spend the summer. He had built a home there and so he asked me to take over the broadcast of the International Sunday School lesson on Saturdays for him during the summer period beginning in 1938. I continued this until his retirement and then most of the time during Dr. White's period as the editorial secretary and then took over this responsibility completely with the beginning of 1945 so that I have continued the weekly broadcast over WSM since that time.

I was about to speak of some writing that I've done which I think is perhaps significant. I do not know that I should stress this too much. Maybe the writing of Sunday School expositions all through the years has been something of importance and outstanding significance for our Southern Baptist teaching ministry, but I was thinking in addition to that of a few other things that I have undertaken. In the late 50's I wrote a brief study course book on the letter to the Romans entitled, The Gospel According to Paul, but there are some other things that I think are significant. I wrote a tract some years ago that is I had written an address which Don Ackland turned into a tract and the title he gave it was which I had called it before, I'd Like You to Meet My Friend. This is a very simple tract as it has turned out to be, but a great many people have written to say that it became the means of their coming to personal faith in Jesus Christ. I think the opening chapter in the curriculum guide was a helpful introduction to our study of curriculum materials and our exploration of curriculum concepts and principles. I wrote the major article on the Sunday School Board for the Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists which I hope was a helpful summary of Sunday School Board history.

Mrs. Keegan: It was a tremendous thing.

Dr. Allen: I wrote a good many papers for the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Christian teaching and training which I hope have some value. One friend of mine said that perhaps the most significant thing I have written is a statement concerning the crisis in our nation. I didn't identify myself as the author of this statement. It was a statement adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, Houston, in 1968; but it was my privilege in cooperation with W. C. Fields and Foy Valentine to write the statement and most of the statement was my production. I've had a lot of satisfaction in believing that this

was a statement of outstanding importance to be adopted by our convention at a time of unusual crisis in the life of our nation. I have written one of the articles in the Broadman Bible Commentary which is I think of importance, the introductory article in volume I of the commentary, the title of this article being, "The Book of the Christian Faith." In this article I have tried to set forth something of my understanding of the nature and message and significance of the Bible. And I hope it will continue to be a contribution.

It may be important to say that the commentary became a source of much controversy in the life of our convention to my amazement for I never dreamed that people would expect a commentary to be a creed or I never believed that the messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention would take action banning a book published and written by responsible Baptist scholars and published by the agency of the denomination assigned this responsibility, but the Convention did take this action and it may be as some think that the crucial issue which disturbed some of the messengers of the Convention was the view of the Bible as inspired in its content, in its truth, in its revelation and not in its verbage. This is a crucial matter. My own view of the Bible is that it is inspired as a revelation from God fully adequate for the purposes of God in giving guidance for all matters of faith and practice and that the inspiration is not inclusive of the verbage or the wordage set forth in the Bible. We do not have a text that goes back to the original of any part of the Bible. So far as we know we will never have the original text of any part of the Bible, and I do not think that it was important in the design of God that we should have the original text preserved, but it was His purpose and His design that the Bible would be given as a full and adequate revelation which would find its meaning in the perfect revelation of Jesus Christ. And I've tried to say some of these things in this article. It is a source of a great burden to me that this volume was withdrawn from circulation. It is my hope that the volume will later be authorized for distribution and circulation along with a new treatment of the book of Genesis which will be published in a later volume, still. But I need not go into this controversy. I have, I suppose, concluded my work at the Sunday School Board with a post assignment by contract to serve as the general editor of this twelve volume commentary and my prayer is that it will be a continuing contribution to fruitful Bible study on the part of multitudes of people in the life of our denomination and by other people of other denominations in the years to come. Very soon we shall be moving away from Nashville, I guess, to return to North Carolina where we lived prior to our coming to Nashville, but the Sunday School Board will be written on my heart as long as I live with much praise to God for its ministry and much prayer to God for its ministry in the years to come. I owe a great deal to the Sunday School Board. I owe much to the persons who were instrumental in my coming to the Board, Dr. Hite C. Moore and Dr. T. L. Holcomb. I owe a great deal to all the fellow workers at the Board through the years and especially to Dr. Sullivan and Cr. Crow as the executives during the last years of my ministry

here. I owe a great deal to my wife who has been a creative person and who has contributed more to my ministry than any other one person, and I owe a great deal to my children who have taught me much and in whom I have great joy and pride. And I owe, above everything, my life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mrs. Keegan: We thank you so much, Dr. Allen, for this tremendous oral history you have given us this morning. I do want a little comment on your southwide contribution as secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention. That, too, along with all this other busy schedule I don't see how you carried on all the responsibilities you had.

Dr. Allen: Well thank you, Mrs. Keegan, I am serving now and have since 1965 as the recording secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention. This happened as a sort of accident. Dr. Joe Burton was the secretary at that time, and he felt led to relinquish the responsibility and he became convinced that I could serve helpfully because of being here in Nashville and having facilities for editorial activity. So he nominated me to serve as the or nominated me to be elected as the recording secretary and did it with such enthusiasm and persuasion until he captured the convention and I was elected. I have been happy for this privilege and count it another opportunity to render service to the denomination I love and to which I am so greatly indebted and I hope that I may continue to serve maybe for two or three years longer if I remain active and I hope reasonably healthy. At that time I will, of course, anticipate relinquishing this responsibility and someone else will be elected to carry on.

Mrs. Keegan: I hope you will have many opportunities to serve in maybe interim pastorships and other opportunities to speak and to preach during your retirement years. Is it Winston-Salem where you're thinking of living?

Dr. Allen: We plan to move to Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Perhaps I will have more opportunities for a continuing ministry in that area than I might have here. At any rate, we will be available, we hope, for the service the Lord wants us to undertake and look forward to returning to Nashville a whole lot of times I hope to see our friends here one of whom you are in a very special way so thank you so much for this time to talk together.

Mrs. Keegan: I appreciate this friendship and treasure it very, very much and wish you the very best of everything in the years ahead. Thank you greatly.

Dr. Allen: Thank you.