

Interview of Dr. Joe Burton by Mrs. Kearney Keegan

This is Mrs. Kearney Keegan, Archivist with the Dargan Carver Library of the Sunday School Board interviewing Dr. Joe W. Burton who this year on September 30, 1972, retires from his work with the Sunday School Board. Dr. Burton, you have had a special ministry in our denomination in three large areas. First, your work with the Home Mission Board; second, your work with the Sunday School Board; and third, as secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention for a while. Let's talk about these and other subjects of interest during this interview. Would you like to tell something of your background, family, education, pastorates, whatever you'd like to say to us on that.

Dr. Burton: Thank you, Mrs. Keegan. Yes I will be glad to. I grew up out in west Texas, son of a tenant farmer, the eleventh of twelve children, the youngest of nine who survived through many years together. Went to school in the public schools, of course, of the community where we lived. Harden-Simmons University where I graduated in 1929. And then on to Southwestern Seminary where I graduated with your husband in 1932 along with a number of other interesting persons such as Baker James Cothen, Thomas Patterson, Perry Crouch, J. D. Gray, quite a few of us in that class, and we have had a good fellowship one with another in these intervening years.

After graduation from the seminary I was pastor of a church near Wichita Falls, Texas, a rural church for less than a year. Then went to the church at Big Lake, Texas way out in the western part of the state for 28 months from which position, as pastor, I went to the Home Mission Board then to be publicity secretary of that agency.

Mrs. Keegan: I see, who did you follow in that work or had there been that person?

Dr. Burton: That's an interesting question because I had not thought of whom it was that I succeeded, and you probably do not even know the man by name. I succeeded Victor Masters.

Mrs. Keegan: I have read of him in my papers that I have gone through.

Dr. Burton: Yes, well he was publicity secretary or educational worker or whatever, editor with the Home Mission Board, and they had not had a man in this position for some ten or fifteen years. He was then at that time when I went with the Board in January, 1936, the Home Mission Board, Dr. Masters was then editor of the Western Recorder. But I went to the Home Mission Board in January, 1936 and for exactly ten years, one decade, I was the editor, I was the public relations man, I was the photographer. I promoted schools of missions. I had the total responsibility in a very small organization. That is, small in its headquarter staff and small, also, in the number of missionaries. But I had the total task of telling people about home missions through publications, through pictures, and through platform appearances.

Mrs. Keegan: Well you were certainly a busy fellow in those days.

Dr. Burton: I gave the most energetic years of my life to home missions literally working day and night. I had the dark room for my photography in my home in Atlanta, and I was on the field over a fourth of the time.

Mrs. Keegan: So I suppose you worked in that dark room at home at night.

Dr. Burton: Yes I did, I did very much and enjoyed it. I made color pictures, I made black and white pictures as well as being editor of everything the Board published which during those ten years amounted to 42 volumes. I wrote one or two of them myself. My wife wrote one. Others wrote other volumes and I was editor of their magazine which we called Southern Baptist Home Missions.

Mrs. Keegan: Well mighty fine, it's good to hear about that, and that prepared you for a busier life, perhaps, even busier here at the Sunday School Board. What entered in to your view of the challenge and the call to your work here at the Sunday School Board? Why were you interested in coming here?

Dr. Burton: It came, of course, as a complete surprise. I responded to it with great reluctance. I was determined at that time to re-enter the pastorate. I even wrote to your husband who was in the pastorate and told him of my concern as I did to other friends to be back in the pastorate again in a preaching ministry. And when Dr. Allen of the Sunday School Board approached me about coming here.

Now which Dr. Allen is that?

Dr. Burton: Dr. Clifton J. Allen--Clifton Judson Allen in whom there is no other. Dr. Allen approached me I was here in Nashville for some reason and he tapped me on the shoulder and said I'd like to have lunch with you, and he said would you talk with me about a new work that we plan to begin in family ministry. We want to create a department and we want to publish a magazine, and we want to bring together a unity of effort with reference to the home to support the home. Well of course this would appeal to any person. Anyone would know here is the critical issue, and yet, as I say, I had no thought of further editorial work. I had the intention, and this was personal and human, of returning to a pastorate somewhere. But I said to Dr. Allen, "Yes, I will consider it." He said, "would you talk with me in Atlanta. I'll be down that way and if you could meet me on a Sunday morning as I pass through town at the railway station and we can have a conversation there. And I said, "I'll be glad to do so.

And then we had another conversation or two and exchange of letters and it was with reluctance that I was willint to look this way. I had never thought of it. I was not trained for what we would call family ministry except only as a pastor in general training and in college

where I did have some work in sociology, but I was challenged, of course, by the need for I knew then as I know now, and as all of us will realize that the home is basic, it's primary, and no civilization can stand except by stability in the family. So I knew that Dr. Allen was asking me to address myself to the area of greatest need in society, the home. And it was on that basis that I was willing to consider it.

Mrs. Keegan: And this was in 1946?

Dr. Burton: This was in 1945. The Board had established a department. I think the department was called Home Education, I'm not quite sure, but at the beginning, it has had a number of names and the name is not exactly of primary importance, but there was a department established, and Dr. Allen said we want to address all of the energies that we can as a publishing Board and an educational board, and through a magazine to a crusade for Christian homes. So I came then for a crusade, a movement to head up the energies of our denomination addressed to this critical area of life--critical then after the close of World War II and continuing to be so. So actually, Mrs. Keegan, through the years I have been driven by the compulsion that we are attempting to deal with the problem of society where our world is simply burning to a cinder because of infidelity, shallow approach to marriage, lack of comprehension of the essential nature of the family and its need in this time. I have become, because of this, the factors involved, "Mr. Home Life" to Southern Baptists simply because of the general recognition of need.

Mrs. Keegan: I know that we would all agree, all who know you and the work agree that it is a great work and has reached far and wide. It has been one of the great contributions of the Sunday School Board to our denominational work. This ministry to our homes.

Dr. Burton: The response at the very beginning was amazing. I came here to start the work January of 1946 on the very first of the month. And we were to plan a magazine, that was our primary thrust, and I gave myself to that in many, many sessions of planning with people here at the Board and from the denomination at large determining the kind of publication and mainly that first year my energies were with reference to the magazine, the kind of magazine. Now what will be the response of the people. That was the question. How many copies shall we publish? For instance, of the first issue?

Mrs. Keegan: And what was the name of this magazine you started?

Dr. Burton: That was a very interesting thing. We had that as a primary item on the agenda and finally decided to call it home, h o m e, one word, home. I was up in Philadelphia. I went to see my friend up there with the American Baptist Publication Society. He said, "by the way, we have a publication by that name." I said, "Yes I know, but yours is a devotional quarterly, a little pocket size thing, and we're thinking of an 8½ x 11 slick sheet publication, color cover and color inside and we don't see that there is much conflict, if any, either in purpose or in type nature or in circulation."

Well I had hardly gotten back to Nashville until the head of our Board, Dr. Holcomb, had a letter from the head of the American Baptist Publication Society saying we have a publication by the title that you're proposing to use and although you have legal right to do it, we object to your use of the same title as ours. We had already made the plates for the first issue the engravings, but we had a meeting and Dr. Holcomb was of the opinion that we ought to make some change out of deference to the position of our brothers in the North, the American Baptist Publication Society. We changed the name, and it was a fortunate change. As often is the case some difficulty is confronted and you arrive at a better answer. So we added the word "life"--Home Life, and this has been the name . . . .

Mrs. Keegan: I think it is an attractive name.

Dr. Burton: Well, the man who made the motion that we adopt this name was Dr. J. O. Williams, a good friend of yours, and a good friend to Southern Baptists, leader here with the Sunday School Board. I had said this might be a possibility and he said the editor has made the suggestion, I make a motion that we adopt that name, and we did, and we wrecked the plates, destroyed them and made new ones and inserted the new name, Home Life. So Home Life had a new name or a second name before it ever came into existence. The first issue, by the way, was January, 1947. I've been editor of Home Life one year longer than the magazine has existed.

Mrs. Keegan: Now that is strange.

Dr. Burton: Yes, for one year longer. Well, as to quantity to print, I was discussing that a moment ago. We absorbed two other little publications. Little Onewas a quarterly and I do not recall the number of pages, pocket sized quarterly, and the other was a four page, just one fold sheet of paper one was for circulation to the shut-ins, people that cannot come to church on Sunday, the Extension Department as it was then called. The other was distributed to the Cradle Role, the parents of the babies. And we combined the two circulations of those publications and said we'll just print 250,000 of the first issue. And the remarkable thing is that we sold everyone of them. The very first issue. And this is indicative of the concern of Southern Baptists, of Christian people for what we were attempting to do. They recognized the need. We announced in the publicity this is going to be a popular reading magazine. It will not be a study p9ece, not a curriculum publication, but popular reading, and it'll be on the home to support you in your efforts to make yours the kind of home you want it to be. And we had that response to the first issue and a continuation as the circulation at some peaks in its history simply skyrocketing. One year I recall one single year the circulation increased over one hundred thousand from what it had been the twelve months before.

Mrs. Keegan: That's amazing. I think it's been or it has had the widest circulation of any periodical here at the Board.

Dr. Burton: Not the largest, but the largest that comes out monthly.

Mrs. Keegan: Yes, I see. That excludes the quarterlies, then that are studied in Sunday School and Training Union. The widest aside from that.

Dr. Burton: The adult quarterlies, now two quarterlies, have had larger circulation than Home Life, but they're published quarterly, but this, a popular reading magazine for reading only, not for study, not necessary, for curriculum use has had the largest.

Now there are several explanationa that in my judgment and I think maybe it would be well to discuss why this response.

Mrs. Keegan: Well sure, that's fine.

Dr. Burton: One, of course, is the need. Everyone recognizes the need and everyone is concerned, of course, about his own home. Two people who get married, standing at the altar, have an amazing optimism. It is marked by optimism. We are entering into a relationship for life, we're committed to it, and we're committed to each other, and with joy and with gladness we come to this union. Now this continues as a characteristic attitude of persons toward their own family. We delight in it. We want it to be a good family, and so there is inherently in the very nature of our humanity a desire to make our homes delightful, pleasant, successful. Maybe successfully emotionally and spiritually. That's one reason for the success.

Another reason for the success is that we came into existence by reason of the initiative of a tremendous organization. That is, an agency that had resources, materials, but beyond that and even more important, contact with the people and acceptance with the people. I'm talking about the Baptist Sunday School Board. And because of the stature of the Sunday School Board at that time, we could launch a magazine of this sort and be assured that we had the backing of an agency that could guarantee good material. Dr. Holcomb, the secretary of the Board said publicly, "In print, we're going to put everything into this magazine and he referred to the magazine primarily was still just a part of a movement, a crusade. We're going to put into this magazine everything that is necessary to make it the kind of magazine that is needed in days like these. So we had, shall I say, a showpiece, and yet no one thought of it as something done just to be seen, just for appearance, but something that was attractive, and something that was worthwhile. We had the backing of a tremendous agency, a Christian publication, association, agency, the Sunday School Board that guaranteed the material support. And everything that the Board did gave me, the editor of this magazine, and the leader in this program of family ministry. We didn't use that phrase at that time, but came to use it, but that was what my position was even then to be leader in the movement. Everything that was said and done gave me the understanding that the Board was back of us--that it was an effort of the Sunday School Board to do a

worthwhile magazine, a worthwhile family ministry.

Now there is one other aspect here, Mrs. Keegan, that I think I need to name and that is that the denomination had a similar attitude as did the agency. When this work was announced and when the editor and the leader was introduced at the Convention, there was an immediate and hearty response. At any session, 1946, 1947, 1948, the whole spirit of all who were involved was of cooperation and of tremendous drive and purpose to make this a meaningful effort. So all of these combined factors brought about a continued growth of the magazine year after year after year until we reached the peak and this was the peak of about 850,000 copies of Home Life each month. Well it got up to 875,000 at one time.

Mrs. Keegan: That's tremendous.

Dr. Burton: Tremendous--eight freight carloads of paper for one issue of Home Life at one time.

Mrs. Keegan: Oh my, that's hard to conceive of that.

Dr. Burton: I don't know what it costs now, but back then it would cost the Board, and this I'm saying back then, several years ago when I had more familiarity with these things, the paper alone would cove the Sunday School Board or Southern Baptists, I should say, our subscribers, our churches, \$35,000 a month just to buy the paper. It's astounding.

Keegan: What else goes into a magazine besides the paper? Yes.

Dr. Burton: Well, the paper, of course, blank is of little value, but what goes into it? Mrs. Keegan, we received about one thousand manuscripts a month.

Mrs. Keegan: That was what I wanted to know of that.

Dr. Burton: A thousand manuscripts a month and these . . . .

Mrs. Burton: And how do you decide which ones to accept?

Dr. Burton: These come without solicitation. These come simply because people have learned of Home Life. These come simply because people have something they want to say, and this is the kind of material we have wanted to publish. That is, what comes forth because of an inner urge, a compulsion, an experience, a message that one must get across. Everybody has at least one story, and we want at least that one story, you see, from everyone who has a story. And that's the kind of material we wanted to publish--not a professional magazine, although we wanted to be professional in quality, in every way, but mainly we have wanted material from those who write out of experience.

Now in addition we do and have, through the years, solicited some material from professional people in the family field, but in the main we have built the magazine on the selection from these manuscripts that come. Well, how much do we use and how do we decide? Really, the way of deciding is simple. Anything that will help home builders to build their family life, and home builders, in the main, are adults, husbands and wives, nearly altogether, of course, husbands and wives. Occasionally you'll find a person interested in a magazine like this who is not married who may be sharing a room with someone, and these persons, of course, do have families of a sort, but Home Life needs content and uses content that will be a support to persons in building their homes. So our job, as editors, is to read these manuscripts and to request others and to bring together about 3 percent in quantity of the total manuscripts that come to our desk.

Mrs. Keegan: What you receive.

Dr. Burton: And we like it that way.

Mrs. Keegan: Do you plan around some central theme each month or not?

Dr. Burton: No, we do not.

Mrs. Keegan: The central theme overall is what will be good for the family.

Dr. Burton: Right, and then, too, we feel that the need for something specific is guaranteed by normal human experience and by the compulsion of those who would express it. I would judge that nearly everything that comes to us is because the person who writes it simply feels that he has a message he must share with others.

Mrs. Keegan: That makes a very interesting contribution, then, from this person.

Dr. Burton: Yes, and I am tempted right now to spend more time than you'd want me to on some of the manuscripts that I've considered. Yesterday, for instance, and the day before, always open.

Mrs. Keegan: Could you tell us about one or two.

Dr. Burton: Here's one. This is a piece of fiction, and by the way, fiction is the most difficult to write, and we get less fiction, usable in our pages than any other kind of writing material. But here is a piece of fiction written from the girl's viewpoint a twelve-year-old girl's viewpoint. You know a writer can put himself into the viewpoint character, whomsoever he will, and in this case the writer put himself in the person of the twelve year old daughter awakened by her father early in the morning. And as soon as she was aroused from her sleep, she regretted that she had promised that she would go with him down to the seacoast, down to the beach to watch the sunrise. But she had to

But she had to fulfill her promise that she'd made the day before, and so drowsily she got out. She looked at the window and it was dark, pitch black outside. It wasn't morning. It was in the middle of the night, and yet her father had gotten her up by the timepiece, that is, the watch, and they were going down and they went down to the beach, and they sat there, very little conversation in this story, almost no dialogue. Simply only the account of walking down and sitting down on the sand and watching and waiting and after a while a little pink on the horizon and then the sun began to peep up and there it was full orbed, and the father said it's time to go back isn't it and she said yes and so they got up to go back and he went ahead of her and held out his hand to her and she caught hold of it and she didn't say to him I'm now an adult. I am grown, I don't need to hold your hand as I used to when I was a child. I don't need your fingers, I don't need to hold onto you. I didn't say it. I didn't say it. I didn't think to. That's the end of the story.

Mrs. Keegan: Well, how interesting.

Dr. Burton: And we've accepted it and will use it because it's a powerful story about father-daughter relationships.

Mrs. Keegan: Wonderful. Let's move on to this subject. Family life conferences have been meaningful with us here at the Sunday School Board. I know that you have been involved in these and wonder if you would tell us about that and how certain outstanding persons have been asked to participate in these through the years.

Dr. Burton: It has been a very rewarding experience. We initiated conferences. First of all, we had two or three little family life conferences. I say little because we enlisted only 30-40 people to come, and we did this every year for two or three years. Then we changed the term and made it counseling conferences and they grew to oh 100-125 in attendance year after year and were carried on for several years. Then we moved to a Southern Baptist Family Life Conference--a once in a generation thing or once only maybe in a lifetime. And we enlisted the persons. We went to every state. I did personally with one of my associates to every state. We had two or three working with us, then, Ellis Bush, Bob Watts, Reuben Herring, and one of these would go with me and we went to every state and talked with the leaders in the state about soliciting attendance, people to come to the Southern Baptist Family Life Conference which was held in 1963. It had tremendous impact. After that a number of state family life conferences were held and are still being held. Also, associational family life conferences. The aim in these conferences being to address problems as experienced by people in their own families and to get together in small groups for dialogue--help one to another on how to deal parents with parents, husbands with husbands, wives and wives--even growing up children. It has been a meaningful experience. Oh you asked about persons.

Mrs. Keegan: Yes, about outstanding personalities other than Southern Baptists outside the field who have been brought in. I know there have been a number of those.

Dr. Burton: Well the 1963 conference had or was a sort of "do it yourself" thing because everybody in the conference was on the program. We divided up into four assemblies. We had work groups in each of the four assemblies with a leader in each work group and a recorder in each work group, and we recorded the findings and each work group had a different subject. But, we also had plenary speakers, and we had three towering giants of our generation in family life. (NOTE from transcriber: I may not know the spelling of these names.) We had Paul Popino from Los Angeles who forth years ago back in about 1931 established the American Institute of Family Relations. He's written books. He's been on radio and television. He's been with Art Linkletter and his programs. Paul Popino recognized as a great leader in family ministry.

We had Evelyn Duvall, trained in Vanderbilt and other universities. A writer of renown and a spokesman known far and wide, a professional on the highest level. She was one of the speakers and one of the persons to respond to questions in the work groups and in the assemblies and in general meetings.

And the third was David Mace, native of Great Britain, formerly a minister, that is, he turned aside from the active pastoral ministry to family work and has actually extended his career around the world, having been a consultant on family life to religious leaders on every continent. He now lives in the States. A towering person, David Mace. And these three have become my warm personal friends as have persons such as Aaron Rutledge up in Detroit, Howare Lane in New York and a number of others that I might name. In the contacts with professional groups and in bringing people to Southern Baptist life, we've had a very meaningful experience. These three persons, Popino, Duvall, and Mace have written for us as well as being on these conference programs. Both here in Nashville and in the states.

Mrs. Keegan: Well this has been a very significant ministry to Southern Baptists, and I'm sure that these three have been glad to widen their influence through having entre into the work of such a large group of people as we are as Southern Baptists. Is there anything else you'd like to say on that or shall we go on to talk about the Christian Home Week emphasis and the part that you have played in those.

Dr. Burton: Well, I'll be glad to discuss Christian Home Week. It was begun in 1939. I came here as you know in 1946. (Note from transcriber: Dr. Joe Burton came in 1946 and on tape said 1936. I corrected this. I suspect that Christian Home Week actually started in 1949.)

Christian Home Week was the idea of J. E. Lambdin and Harold Ingraham.

Mrs. Keegan: Now let's correct that, isn't it 1946 when you came here, not '36, 1946.

Dr. Burton: Thank you for doing it. I went to the Home Mission Board in 1936 and came here in 1946. And in the middle of that tenure

at the Home Mission Board, while I was there and I had nothing to do with it, J. E. Lambdin, then Training Union secretary for Southern Baptists and Harold Ingraham, aggressive leader in Sunday School work were on the train returning from the Southern Baptist Convention, and one of them said to the other, we need to do something about Mother's Day. That is, it becomes maudlin and it becomes the wearing of a rose and it becomes sentimental. Let's do something to make it positive. And as they talked, the idea came to them of a week emphasizing the home which is a woman's greatest interest. Of course it is. And so they decided to promote a family week which they called Christian Home Week. And the first session or rather the first promotion of Christian Home Week as an all-church effort was in 1940. Well the other denominations picked it up, of course, it was a good thing and a needed emphasis. So ultimately with the other denominations also having a similar week and at the same time, finally the President of the United States would issue a proclamation to observe national family week. Now this was the situation when I came. And of course I took responsibility as was inherent in my position and did my utmost to make it a meaningful experience with leaflets prepared and other material each year on the observance of Christian Home Week in the church. It's become a tradition. And people everywhere think of the month of May and the week ending on Mother's Day as an appropriate culmination of an emphasis on the family. It has been a good emphasis.

Mrs. Keegan" Well, that's a great story that you have in all of this wonderful work. Are there any changes that you have seen come about through this work or anything of that sort you would like to talk about or have we covered that, already.

Dr. Burton: We haven't covered it. I think it needs to be added that family ministry is a difficult task--the difficulty being in the circumstances of our times. We are in a period that emphasizes the organization and neglects the individual or rather I should say that accents the individual to the neglect of the tight little group, the family that is from both sides--that is from the organizational side and from the individualization side. There is pressure on the family to its disadvantage and to create problems in family ministry. Southern Baptists are caught up in these trends--the organizational trend. The organizational man, and the emphasis on the individual to the neglect of family relationships. Now the effect, here, of a dynamic informal emphasis like the family is to displace it and so the family members have the feeling that there is lack of concern for the family. And wherever I go, in those early years, in the mid years, wherever I have gone, people have raised the question about how the family, itself, is hurt by the aggressiveness of the church. This is a complex thing. This is a delicate matter, and everywhere I have said, "We must now allow ourselves even to agree with the thought that the two are competitive--that is, home and church. And yet the organizational idea is very dominant even in the church so much so that Southern Baptists, as individuals may have developed a trend toward feeling that it is support of the church organizations which is characteristic of the Christian and not so much the character of life that he lives or even the nature of his fellowship.

Now this has had adverse effect on the family and still has adverse effect on the family. The Sunday School Board is an agency to promote organizations. That is inherent in its task--that is church organizations. And study material for these church program organizations. So the program of family ministry is in a delicate position a sort of a mavoric a sort of a intangible off by itself with the full support that is needed and without the tie-in that is needed. Family ministry needs to be projected always in cordial relationship to the church and its organizations and in support of them, but the opposite, also, is true. The church and its organizations need always to give cordial and sincere and aggressive support to the family, to the home. My own feeling, and you've given me the opportunity to say it, and I will for anyone who will listen. My own feeling is that we should address ourselves to a program of education within the churches designed to train young people for marriage and adults for family living, for family making. That is a deliberate on-going Sunday by Sunday, week by week aggressive program on training, of teaching for family life. Comparable, commensurate with the Sunday School. And yet not as an organization. Now how we're going to get that done, of course, is a very delicate question, and I do not know the answer. I am simply expressing a conviction that this is a need and that we will face it. We cannot evade it . We must address ourselves to it. You didn't ask me to preach like this.

Mrs. Keegan: Well that's fine, though. I'm glad you expressed yourself in this area. Shall we move on now to your work as secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention?

Dr. Burton: I think so, and I think so because I believe . . .

Mrs. Keegan: Or are you ready for that?

Dr. Burton: Yes, I'm ready. I think there's a relationship although the secretaryship of the Convention is incidental to my employment and my vocation.

Mrs. Keegan: That was while you were here at the Sunday School Board between 1947 and 1965.

Dr. Burton: Right, I was elected in 1946 and began the first service in '47 and served last in '65 as secretary. There was a sharp distinction a clear distinction in fucction. There were two secretaries-- one to be the registration person and the other to record the minutes. And from the outset I had charge of registration and did so for eighteen years. Two of those years I had to record the minutes, also, one because of the death of the other secretary and the second time because of the illness of the other secretary. And then I was elected recording secretary oh maybe a little bit over my protest I mean inner protest. I did not voice it. I was not quite sure that I wanted to record the minutes be pinned to a chair. Those who know me know that I jump about a lot I must run around and I must or I cannot be chained down and registration--meeting all the people I knew everyone. Everyone knew me.

My job on the floor made me or put me before the public. Now the connection, though, which I want to mention is that this prominence before the or at the sessions of the Convention gave strong support to family ministry because people identified me, and it had tremendous worth for us and I exploited it. That is, I used it to accent the family ministry, and it had a good value. I am quite sure that one reason I was invited to have part on the Convention program eleven years in succession was not only because of the significance of the work and because of the contributions needed to be made, but also because I was so well known as the secretary of the Convention. And so the committee on order of business year after year made it possible for me to give a presentation to have the responsibility for a presentation on family ministry at the annual sessions of the Convention. So the two were tied together even though one was incidental.

Mrs. Keegan: I see. I didn't realize that there could be such a close tie and such a worthwhile relationship.

Dr. Burton: It was very worthwhile. I think maybe it's an illustration of the text which says, "All things work together for good to them that Love the Lord." I think the better translation is, "God is at work in all of these things for our good and no one had this in mind when I was elected secretary that there would be a connection. But it just worked out because it was a fortunate occurrence.

Mrs. Keegan: Well, let's think about something now that you're facing in a few months that already have made good preparation for, and I hope you're enjoying thinking about this retirement. You know your chapel talk a few weeks ago was interesting in this respect with you sharing with us your thoughts and your plans and we'd like to hear about those.

Dr. Burton: I said in that talk that I had written down seventeen options. I think that very circumstance is typical of my personality that is, I plan more than any person can get done. I have more ideas than I can carry out, and I guess that's true of many of us. But I have written down, actually, seventeen options. I didn't name them in chapel. There wasn't time, and there wasn't the interest and the audience would have marched out, I guess, if I had started naming them so I didn't name them, but one of them is counseling, of course. Another is consulting with churches on family ministry on a short-term basis on a recurring, that is from one church to another. Another is preaching which of course is the thing I most want to do and like most to do and have preached all of these years. I've tried to add up the number of churches in which I have preached, and it's amazing virtually it's almost unbelievable when you multiply 52 times 36 and get the number of Sundays there have been in these 36 years of denominational employment. I've done it, but I've forgotten what it comes out to be. I guess 52 times 36 would be about 1,700, something like that. I have preached, and I've tried to add this up rather carefully. I have been in around 800 churches. Now I can't believe that. I don't expect you to believe it. I figured out the percentage. I did this and I recall

the percentage. 43 percent of the Sundays I have been in a different church. Now this is amazing.

Mrs. Keegan: That certainly is a wide contact with churches.

Dr. Burton: All the way from Massachusetts to California and Oregon and Amsterdam and Israel, but primarily, of course, in the United States. Not because I'm versatile but simply because the opportunity has been tremendous and I'm grateful. Very grateful.

Mrs. Keegan: You were usable.

Dr. Burton: Usable, and I never would say no, no matter what the church nor the place nor the time if I could get there, and I didn't ask anyone if I could go. I accepted the invitation and went knowing that I was rendering a service unto the Lord and no employer has ever raised a question with me about my engagements. I have taken them. I have gone. I've taken too many, maybe, but I have rejoiced in it.

But, other things that I might do. I said I might counsel. I might even set up an office and offer counseling. I might write. An editor doesn't write much. He doesn't have to. That's not his job. His job is to evaluate what others write. But I might write, and I'm talking with some persons right now about the possibility of a writing commission to do a very significant piece of writing maybe three volumes-- one a year for three years. But immediately, as you know, and as I said in chapel, I will be going to Munich, Germany right after the retirement is effective to become interim pastor of the English speaking church in Munich. I was in a church recently and I told the pastor of this plan and he said twice, I didn't correct him until he said it twice, he said, I'll be pastor of the Baptist speaking church of Munich. And I have an idea it will be a Baptist speaking church at least before I leave.

Mrs. Keegan: I didn't know we expressed it that way but sometimes we think that we do have a Baptist vocabulary don't we.

Dr. Burton: Well, it was a slip, of course, with him.

Mrs. Keegan: I know you have some hobbies which you enjoy one of which is woodworking isn't it? And you'll probably pursue some of that along with other things.

Dr. Burton: Yes, I began to assemble a woodworking shop oh ten or fifteen years ago. And the way I've gone at it is to make whatever anyone in the family wants if they'll give me the plans. If they'll give me the plans, but they have to give me the plans or specifications. Well I'll make the specifications on the basis of the plans or drawing of some kind and make whatever they want.

Mrs. Keegan: And what are some of the items you have made?

Dr. Burton: Well, one of the first things I made was a hutch. Another was a dining table a round dining table and I enjoyed this so much it was walnut and I put a maple band about an inch and a half wide, a circle here not the inner circle but a circle and the lazy susan on top of it, of course. I enjoyed making that.

Mrs. Keegan: How nice, and clocks?

Dr. Burton: I made four clocks. I made one for my wife on our 25th anniversary. It was the first clock I made. It's not suitable. I want to give it to anybody if I can find someone who will haul it away and make another one that would be better.

Mrs. Keegan: You say haul it away, was it large?

Dr. Burton: OH it's a grandmother clock. A grandmother clock, you know, is 74 inches or 75, 72 or something like that and the grandfather clock is 94, much taller and I've made two grandmother clocks and two shelf clocks, but I want to make another right away. Whatever, oh there's a list that would keep me occupied from now on, and the problem is to establish priority. The next thing I think, I'm not sure, after I get back from Germany will be the grandmother clock for my wife.

Mrs. Keegan: You'll probably see so many interesting things there that you would like to or ideas that you'd like to bring back with you and work on till that would give you a lifetime of pleasure.

Dr. Burton: And too, you can get better things, of course, by buying antiques and my wife likes antiques.

Mrs. Keegan: Oh I see.

Dr. Burton: Oh I know we'd have nicer pieces of furniture or whatever if we bought antiques and refinished them, but I'm not good at refinishing. I don't like to refinish. I just like to make it.

Mrs. Keegan: I see, you just like to build, yes you like to make it.

Dr. Burton: And I'm nervous about finishing what I make. I want to get onto something else.

Mrs. Keegan: You get in a hurry, you want to get through.

Dr. Burton: That's right, I'm in a hurry. I live on the margin.

Mrs. Keegan: Well this has been so interesting. I don't want to cut you off if you have something else you'd like to add to this. It's been an interesting interview and we're glad that you've given us the time for it and appreciate it very much.

Dr. Burton: I think that Southern Baptists simply must have a unified, cohesive, pull together program of family ministry.

I know that WMU has a stake in it. Sunday School has a stake in it. Training Union has a stake in it. Brotherhood has a stake in it. Music does. All of these organizations, and yet there needs to be a strong, recognizable, cohesive force which we call Family Ministry and people know it. We need that. Now it ought to be commensurate, I said this earlier. Let me repeat it right here for emphasis. It ought to be commensurate with the need, and that suggests to me that we ought to realize it as an effort of our denomination comparable to the Sunday School. The home is the primary teaching agency, and we ought to have a program of family ministry that is large enough to have the right relationship to the problem, and the problem is basic and fundamental in our society. Now because of the complications, the inter relationships and the well just the sheer difficulty of mounting a program like this and keeping it going, there needs to be periodically objective evaluation of it. I don't mean an internal evaluation, but I mean an objective evaluation of it to be sure that we're doing what needs to be done, doing it in the best way, and doing it through the right channels. This I think would summarize my conviction with reference to family ministry and what we ought to do.

Mrs. Keegan: Well this has been a very fine interview, and I do thank you, and this will go on record as history of your work or part of your work and we're glad to have this time with you this morning. Thank you very much.