

Leonard Wedel

Since I am retiring a year early, Mrs. Marian Keegan asked me to dictate some paragraphs related to my twenty-nine years here at the Baptist Sunday School Board. I am very happy to do so.

At first glance it seems that the past twenty-nine years have gone by very rapidly. However, when you begin to look more closely at the happenings along the way, you realize that a great deal was accomplished. These past twenty-nine years have been very, very happy ones in my life. If I were to sum it up in a sentence or two, I would have to say that the Board has been exceedingly good to me. My work at the Board has been satisfying and motivating.

When I came to Nashville from Oklahoma City in 1944, to serve as associational Training Union director in the Church Training Department of the Sunday School Board, one of my very good friends on parting told me that in my new job as a field worker I would make a lot of acquaintances but few friends. I believe I can somewhat dispute that statement for those first eight years of field work at the Sunday School Board were exciting ones indeed. My work carried me into all of the then cooperating Southern Baptist states. I worked in many churches directing Training Union enlargement campaigns, as well as serving in associations in directing Central Leadership Schools. During these years I made and cultivated a number of friendships which have continued to this day.

Maines Rawls, Versel Crenshaw and I came to the Sunday School Board in the fall of 1944, and we had many field trips together. I recall with pleasure the fellowship we had in working with some of the state Training Union secretaries such as O. K. Radford of Florida, Gainer Bryant of Georgia, E. W. Westmoreland of Oklahoma, Brother Bizelle of Arizona, Ralph Davis of Arkansas, Byron C. Espejan of Kentucky, P. J. Wright of Virginia, John Lane of South Carolina, George Bagley of Alabama, Aubrey Wiles of Mississippi, George Eland of New Mexico and Charles Norton of Tennessee. Those days were exciting ones indeed.

One main difference between that day and today is the mode of travel. Practically all of our travel was done by train or by bus. Of course, to ride a good train with an individual pullman compartment was really living in high G. In reviewing some of my travel expense accounts of 1945-46 I couldn't believe my total expenses for a six day trip from Nashville to Atlanta and then to six different cities in Georgia plus hotel, meals, and tips came to \$48.42. A three week trip to San Francisco, Sandiego and Phoenix, Arizona, came to \$201.85. One of the great privileges and joys that I had in those early years was to work with and to be associated with people of the Sunday School Board such as Dr. E. P. Aldrich, Dr. J. O. Williams, Dr. John L. Hill, Dr. William P. Phillips, Dr. T. L. Holcomb, Dr. Frank Leavelle, Dr. Homer L. Grice, Dr. J. N. Barnett, Dr. J. E. Lambden, Dr. B. B. McKinney, Dr. H. E. Ingraham, George Card and Noble Van Ness.

On November 1, 1951, I began my work as manager of the Personnel Department. In January of 1952, Pauline Summers joined me as secretary. She had served for a number of years as secretary to George Card in the Sales and Advertising Department. The next employee was Mrs. Ruby Dispain followed by Manerva Alexander, our nurse, and later Mrs. Rubena Horn came to fill that position, and some other employees at that time were Mrs. Nina Seat, John Jackson, Mrs. Jean McGowan, Mrs. Jenny Bell Burlin, John Demerich, Mrs. Pauline Cothage, Mrs. Genevieve Webb, Herbert Barnard, Howard Gallimore, Hubert Smothers, Bob Baker, Don Burnett to name a few.

In the job and salary analyst work we began with Bill Norwood and then we had Wallace Holleman followed by Charles Lee, Steve Lawrence, and presently Van Simpson.

The Personnel Department moved four different times before locating in its present quarters. Our first location was outside the door of Noble Van Ness' office on the second floor of the Administration Tower Building. Pauline and I were located in the hallway. The carpenter had built a portable standard allowing only a very small passageway to the back exit. Our second office was located near the front of the old Accounting and Control Department about where the exhibits begin toward the front lobby side across the Dargan-Carver Library. Our third location was in the old bookstore part of the lower floor of the Administration Tower Building. Presently, this is used as an exhibit area for the Board. Our next move was to the second floor of the Administration Building in the area now housing the Public Relations Office. And then in 1964, we moved to the present location in the West Wing.

When I began as personnel manager, there wasn't very much I could do or get hold of. Almost everywhere I turned to implement some phase of personnel work, I would step on some manager's unwritten prerogative. What interviews there were of applicants had been conducted by Miss Ann Porterfield a worker in the office of Dr. H. E. Ingraham, the business manager. Every department manager was in a sense his own personnel director. Whenever he had a vacancy, it was his job to recruit, screen, and interview and then bring a recommendation to the business manager to place the employee on the payroll.

It seems unbelievable, but occasionally an employee would be placed on the payroll and not know what his salary was until he got his first paycheck. Then there were times when some bargaining took place with the new employee in arriving at a mutually acceptable salary. There was no such thing as a formal salary program or a merit rating program based upon job performance.

I recall in those earlier years that if one department head wanted an employee who was in another department, he'd first ask that employee if he would like to transfer to his department and would offer him ten dollars salary increase per month depending upon the approval, of course, of the business manager. Then the department head who wanted the employee would go to the business manager and request the employee to be

transferred to his department with the ten dollar increase. Well, you can guess what happened. When the first department head found out he was about to lose one of his employees, he would go to the business manager and insist that the employee in question was worth just as much to him as to the other department head and that a ten dollar increase should be given the person in his department. During those early years employees very seldom transferred from one department to another. There was very little incentive provided for promotion.

In the fall of 1953, the Trustees of the Sunday School Board upon the recommendation of Dr. James L. Sullivan, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, authorized Booz, Allen, and Hamilton, Management Consultants, to make an organization study of the Sunday School Board. The study was approved and implemented in June of the following year through the division and the department heads at the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis. I recall that there was a great deal of anxiety and frustration and some feeling of insecurity, especially when the announcement was made relative to some phases of the organization which did not please every one of the older department heads. In the fall of 1954, the Sunday School Board accepted the study made by Booz, Allen, and Hamilton, establishing the Board's first formalized salary program. I recall the hours and the days that we worked together with the representatives of the consulting firm in securing job questionnaires from employees and reading these questionnaires, arranging them in batches of like descriptions and preparing from each batch a representative job description which would best fit each batch of jobs. Altogether, we came up with about 220 jobs, as I recall. About 125-30 of these were in the professional, supervisory, and executive category and about a hundred in the office, clerical, and manual. Today we have a total of 550 job titles.

The salary program was implemented in the fall of 1954. We arranged for meetings with the various levels of management to which Dr. Sullivan and Dr. Crow assisted me in the new salary plan as far as communicating it was concerned. Some of the department heads and division directors felt their style of management was threatened by the new plan. If it had not been for the backing and support of the executive office, I would have had a rather difficult time effecting a smooth implementation of the new salary plan. I recall we made very few, if any, exceptions to the plan. We asked the managers to adopt it and to try it, and then as we would go along, we would work out the problems.

As I look back on it now, I realize that the most significant action we undertook in those earlier years was to establish a formal salary plan. The attitude and morale of employees began to show a deeper loyalty to the Board and a confidence and appreciation to and in the leadership of the Sunday School Board.

Along with the implementation of the salary plan we began to prepare policies and procedures related to qualifications of employees, promotions, demotions, transfers, terminations and so forth. Some of these were worked out by the hardest. Within eighteen months, an organizational

study plus a formal salary program had been introduced and implemented.

As I look back on it now, I can better understand the feelings of some department heads who historically had considerable latitude to conduct their work with few restrictions and operated somewhat independently of other departments. It was a shock to tradition to say the least. I can still hear some of them say, "The Board just isn't what it used to be." I recall the first thing we did was to develop an application form and to request the business manager's office and his receptionist to refer applicants who came to the Sunday School Board to the new personnel department. We did not have many applicants in those days. I recall that there would be some days pass before we would have anyone come up to our office to make an application for work. The actual following of employment procedures by managers came about with some difficulty. The managers were not used to employment procedures. Traditionally, whenever they needed an employee, they called a neighbor, a friend, or an employee's friend. Various wage rates were promised. The Personnel Department would inadvertently be bypassed. We helped correct this situation by encouraging managers to work with us in order not to delay payment of wages to people who were not screened by the Personnel Department.

I recall, also, in my first year or two, that I had to proceed cautiously in implementing the personnel concepts. I began to look for things I could do. I began to visit the employees at their stations or desks of work. I had a regular schedule each day that included one or more units, sections, or departments of work. I would visit an area such as the shipping area. We had two such areas--one in the North Wing which was at one time a shipping building and the other on the ground floor of the Administration Building. In the North Wing shipping building there was graded literature order filling, the post office, promotional materials, addressing and mailing, and the multilith department.

I would go to the employee in a section (perhaps I had seen him on occasion but I didn't really know him) so I'd go up to him and say: "I'm Leonard Wedel. What is your name?" After this exchange I would usually ask him to tell me what he did. I made a comment or two related to how important his job was to the Sunday School Board and that we appreciated him doing the job. I had several of them to tell me during those visits that no one had ever asked them before what they did or told them that their job was important. You can understand, then, after visiting these people several times each month over a period of a year or a year and a half, I began to have a very fine relationship with them. I would never overlook the foreman or the supervisor or the department head in the process. I would visit with him, too, sitting down with him sometimes as long as an hour to talk with him about his work, how he was getting along and how I could help him to do a better job. I had no feeling or feedback from foremen or supervisors that my appearance on their floor threatened them. In fact, I found them to be just as hungry and eager for someone to talk to. I learned the name of everyone of the six or seven hundred workers we had here at the Board at that time. I knew where each one worked, something about

his family, his children, and something of his hopes and ambitions. As I look back upon it now, I find that the period of time I spent visiting the employees was a most profitable and rewarding experience. I recall asking each employee what his job title was. And you can believe that I got some very fantastic job titles for in those days there was no job description covering the work and every employee not only made up his own job description in a general way but he also made up his own job title.

Lest one would think that the situation here at the Board in 1944 was not too desirable, let me correct it immediately. One of the memories I have of the people is that they were very happy in their work, they seemed to enjoy it, they were very dedicated, and I know for a fact that some of these people during the post depression years went eight years on the job without any kind of an increase. They were glad they had a job, and they expressed their appreciation through their work and dedication.

Management at that time did what management was motivated to do. There were no training classes, no incentives provides for training. But, in spite of these negatives, there seemed to be a good relationship between the foreman or the supervisor or the department head and the people he supervised.

I recall even before I was named personnel manager in 1951, and for a year or so afterwards, that it was not uncommon for a farmer to bring in one or two crates of eggs and place them in the lobby of the administration Building to sell to the employees. The employees would expect him every Friday morning so they would sort of line up or come at intervals to buy a dozen or more eggs which he would place in a paper sack. At times fresh meat was sold in the area of the post office. In season, fruits and vegetables were sold from a pickup truck on the parking lot. Merchandise was brought to the Board for sale such as homemade pocketbooks, perses, bootees, ear rings, bracelets and so forth. These were placed on the counter of the PBX operation which was located at that time in the lobby. If an employee had an old lawn mower, a table or a chair or whatever that he wanted to sell or trade, he would bring it to the lower floor of the shipping building which is now the North Wing and place a price tag on the item hoping someone would come along and buy it. The Board was almost like a merchandise mart.

During the first year on my new job I was also given the responsibility of handling a certain amount of petty cash for loans to employees who had emergencies. They would come to see me for a loan of five dollars or ten dollars until the next payday. Some of these employees were regular borrowers. They would pay me the five dollars or ten dollars and then borrow it back for the next pay period. Sometimes, it was rather difficult to get the money back. You can understand how happy I was when Dr. Sullivan, Dr. Crow, Dr. Colson, W. H. Donnell, and a number of others at the Sunday School Board joined me in organizing a Baptist Board Employee's Credit Union. The credit union was organized on the mezzanine of the James Robertson Hotel in February, 1954.

It was assigned organizationally to the Personnel Office. I feel that the credit union has played, and is playing, a significant role in helping to develop good morale among the employees of the Sunday School Board. Many employees who heretofore have not practiced a systematic plan of saving now do so through the payroll deduction plan of the Credit Union. The Sunday School Board is to be commended for providing facilities for the credit union and giving it full support through its early struggling years. The credit union today pays all of its own expenses, salaries, and so forth. The only item that the Sunday School Board still provides without cost to the credit union is the space it occupies. In those earlier years the Sunday School Board paid the salaries of the credit union employees.

When I first came to the Sunday School Board in 1944, the Training Union Department was on the third floor of the Frost Building. Across the hall from my office was the new Dargan-Carver Library with Helen Conger as the librarian. Marie Thompson was my first secretary, and when she terminated her services I requested Mrs. Chettie Mae Kelley to assist me. The Art Department was on the roof of the Frost Building. A false floor was built on the roof. The sides were walled in and a ceiling placed over the Art Department. The space was occupied by Mr. Herman Burns and his small staff for a number of years until the Fire Department condemned the space.

The Administration Tower Building was only two floors in 1944. The Shipping Building which is now the North Wing had a huge water tower on its roof which helped to supply the pressure for the Sunday School Board's water use in its various buildings. The West Wing was occupied by the Baird Ward Printing Company. Of course, there was no Operations Building.

In 1960, the North Wing was renovated with Indiana limestone wrapping the outer structure to match the Administration Building. The upper structure of the Administration Building was begun in 1949 and completed in 1953. The seventh, eighth, and ninth floors of the Administration Building were not fully completed until after Dr. Sullivan came to the Sunday School Board as executive secretary-treasurer.

The operations Building was begun in 1958 and was completed in 1960. Dr. Sullivan conducted two or perhaps three chapels in the various stages of completion of the Operations Building. The West Wing was completely renovated and ready for use in 1964.

The first snack room of the Sunday School Board was on the ground floor of the Administration Building in the area now reserved for used equipment and materials. Mrs. Jean McGowan was the first manager. At first we planned to provide only cold and hot drinks, sandwiches, hamburgers, pies, doughnuts, and so forth. But Mrs. McGowan wanted to try some hot lunches. It's amazing what she was able to do with limited space and equipment. The original space had a low ceiling, and when two or three hundred people occupied the tables, believe me, it was noisy. You could hardly hear your neighbor across the table or beside you. Consequently, you talked louder and he talked louder,

creating a situation where everybody had to outtalk everybody else in order to be heard. When I observe the excellent acoustics we have in our present cafeteria and how relaxed one can be in it compared with the first cafeteria location, I often wonder how in the world we were ever able to call those fifteen minutes at coffee break a relaxation.

When I first came to the Board in 1944, we worked from 8:30 until 4:30 with an hour off for lunch. We worked these hours Monday through Friday and on Saturday we worked from 8:00 until 12:00. We worked thirty eight and one-half hours a week. It was not until several years later, perhaps 1948, or '49 that the Board decided to close on Saturday and extend the work week from 8:00 until 4:30 with a fifty-minute lunch period. The overall time per week was cut by ten minutes. About six or seven years ago the employees of the Sunday School Board voted to begin work at 7:30 and to close at 4:00 with a fifty-minute lunch period. This schedule has really helped in reducing traffic congestion coming to work as well as leaving the Board to go home.

At one time, the Personnel Department was charged with the responsibility of installing all telephone systems throughout the Sunday School Board, providing tour guides for all tours, and manning the lobby receptionist desk as well as PBX operation. These items were in addition to operating the snack room. Over the years, the Sunday School Board has constantly made progress in upgrading the total benefit program for employees. The pension plan was changed from Aetna to the Annuity Board in 1949, and again in a new plan in 1956. Then the Sunday School Board decided to fund its own plan in 1966 and has already made three amendments to this plan through 1972.

Twenty-five years ago the life insurance coverage was \$750 per employee. In those earlier years we had a basic hospital plan that paid \$6 a day for hospital costs with a maximum of \$60, and as I remember a maximum of \$200 for surgical costs.

The holidays have been upgraded from five to eight during this period. Vacation benefits have also been improved. In the earlier years a maximum vacation was two weeks. Then it was increased to three and now to four. Then the tenure was decreased from 25 years to 20 years for four weeks vacation and likewise from 20 years to ten years of service for three weeks of vacation.

The Board increased the coffee break time from two fifteen minute periods a day to two 20 minute periods a day when we completed the Operations Building.

Through the years the Sunday School Board has led our community in the way it treats both black and white employees. At no time that I can remember during the 29 years was there any restriction placed upon any employee as to the fountain he could drink of or the rest room he could use. When we announced the opening of the snack room I recall that three or four of the black employees came to see me in response to a general letter I had mailed to all employees inviting them to eat

in the snack room. These black people thought they might have gotten the letter by mistake. I reassured them that they were sent the letter because they were regular employees and that they would be treated the same as anyone else. They seemed to be very pleased and showed their appreciation by the use of the snack room.

The Sunday School Board also led our business community when we set in the formal salary program in 1954 thus eliminating salary discrimination between sexes for the same type of work. Believe me, there were a few employees who felt we were carrying this equality matter to the extreme. I had several visits by employees wanting me to rationalize why a single lady editor working off the same job description got as much pay as the male editor who had four or five children.

The theme of the Office of Personnel through the years has been to treat every employee fairly inasmuch as it is possible to do so, giving consideration to what seems best for the majority, if not all employees.

The setting in of the internal communications program about 1955 or '56 was a great advent in the life and progress of the Sunday School Board. It was amazing how much overlap and duplication of work we discovered between departments as well as inside the department.

For approximately twelve years I have had the responsibility of planning programs for each Friday chapel service. Before the construction of the new Van Ness Auditorium, we had an auditorium that seated about 400 people. For two or three years prior to the construction of the new auditorium we planned two chapel programs on Friday--one at 8:00 AM and the other at 11:00 AM. I consider the weekly chapel program another very fine morale builder at the Sunday School Board. It is the only opportunity that employees have to come together and to see who we all are. I think it is an inspiration for the employees to hear the members of their number speak or sing or lead in other worship activities.

Just before I was elected to become manager of the new Personnel Department, the Board experienced a rather rough and rugged union activity sponsored by the Teamsters. There was an election and the union lost. About ten years later in 1960 the Teamsters tried again to organize a union among a picked group of custodial and manual workers of the Sunday School Board. However, when the Sunday School Board presented to the Labor Relations Board a larger list of names of employees who appropriately made up a community of interest, the union leaders admitted they did not have sufficient signatures to request an election.

Whatever success we have had in the office of personnel through these years was made possible by the progressive attitude, foresight, and support of Dr. James L. Sullivan and Dr. J. M. Crow. With all their pressures, it is amazing how much time, thought, and counsel they gave me in helping to bring to a high level of development the various phases of personnel work.

But there is still more to be accomplished. Combining the functions of the Office of Personnel and the Manpower Development Department, as planned for the future, is a forward step and will prove to be a very practical approach in unifying the total functions of personnel work at the Sunday School Board. There are several different areas in which these departments relate such as testing, organization structures, job audits, managerial audits, employee development records to name a few. The staffs of these two departments are skilled, competent, and dedicated. The prospect for creating additional personnel services is potentially possible. The new Personnel Department with its staff can continue to become even more sophisticated in its use of personnel tools in making depth surveys in the community and outside of our immediate community as it relates to salary administration, employee benefits, employee communications and so forth.

Many times during the past several years during stress periods when emergency assignments appeared, the Office of Personnel staff did not hesitate to do whatever was required in additional amounts of work or time to complete the job. Even a casual analysis of the number of years spent at the Sunday School Board by workers in the Office of Personnel indicates a decision to make the Sunday School Board a life career. I would not be true to myself if I did not express my deep personal appreciation for each one of them and that my association with them through these years has truly enriched my own life.