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TEXAN DIGITAL

THE RUNNING MAN

*For 96-year-old Dallas
deacon, running the
race is more than just
a biblical metaphor*

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RONNIE FLOYD
PUTS FOCUS ON
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

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PASTORS MUST 'GET IN
THE FIELD' TO EVANGELIZE,
MEADOR URGES

Contents

2 Criswell founding dean dies at 77

James Bryant, founding dean of Criswell College and author of "The New Guidebook for Pastors," died June 11. A service celebrating his life was held June 16 at First Baptist Church of Dallas.



3 GuideStone announces new enrollment for medical Personal Plans

GuideStone has new guidelines for enrollment in its medical Personal Plans, effective July 1. Churches and ministries eligible to offer GuideStone's medical Personal Plans will be able to add new employees and their families to those plans within 60 days of employment.

5 New president puts focus on spiritual awakening



Ronnie Floyd has his heart set on seeing Southern Baptists come together in "explicit agreement, visible union and extraordinary prayer" for the next Great Awakening in the United States.

8 'Get in the field,' Euleless pastor tells convention

It begins with a man, and pastors must be that man who will "get in the field" and evangelize by example among hurting people who need the gospel, Texas pastor John Meador urged SBC messengers.

16 Be wary of graduation speakers

Graduation ceremonies are a time for pithy quotations. But the greatest wisdom for a life well lived comes from the One who walked among us.



At 96, hanging it up is not Orville Rogers' style

Forty-six years ago, Army Air Corps veteran Orville Rogers read the then-controversial book "Aerobics" by medical doctor Kenneth Cooper. So motivated by Cooper, Rogers started running the next day and hasn't stopped.

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"Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."

(1 Corinthians 16:13).



At 96, Orville Rogers could hang up his red pair of New Balance runners. But hanging things up is not his style.

By Sharayah Colter



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orty-six years ago, Army Air Corps veteran Orville Rogers picked up and read a copy of the then-controversial book "Aerobics" by medical doctor Kenneth Cooper. So motivated by Cooper, Rogers started running the next day and hasn't stopped.

Now 96, he averages 10 miles of roadwork a week. Rogers said he is an example of Cooper's adage that as people age they don't wear out; they rust out. Nearly half a century of running and maintaining a steady level of physical activity has him all the more convinced that people "don't stop running because they get old; they get old because they stop running."

Needless to say, he has no plans to stop—taking his fellow University of Oklahoma graduate Cooper's advice as a lifelong habit.

Having already set nine world records in track and field events, Rogers will travel from his Dallas home to Winston Salem, N.C. this July to compete in the National Outdoor Masters Championship.





“If I can’t serve God well, if I cannot finish strong, then all of these achievements are worth nothing,’ I told them. And I dropped the medals on the floor.”

Yet it’s all worthless to him, he said, unless he can glorify the Lord in his efforts. He told as much to a church group of about 500 people recently as he held eight of his medals in his outstretched hands.

The most important race

“If I can’t serve God well, if I cannot finish strong, then all of these achievements are worth nothing,’ I told them. And I dropped the medals on the floor,” Rogers said.

Serving the Lord is Rogers’ bottom line. Saved at age 10, Rogers said he got serious about his faith as a senior at the University of Oklahoma. He had a love for airplanes and said he had wanted to be a pilot ever since he learned what an airplane was, but he also felt drawn to ministry. So in the fall of 1940, after earning his degree in mechanical engineering from OU, Rogers enrolled at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Three weeks in, Rogers received a draft notice.

“I enrolled in the U.S. Army Air Corps and served four-and-a-half years in World War II, almost all of it as an instructor,” Rogers said. “I figured that was God’s way of telling me I didn’t need to be in vocational ministry.”

Prepared for God’s plans

But God’s placing a heart for ministry in Rogers was not misplaced, nor was it an accident, the pilot said. Instead, the Lord used the training Rogers received in the Air Corps to allow him to serve in ways he otherwise would never have been able to.

During his 31-year-career with Braniff Airways, Rogers would often use vacation time to fly airplanes for Wycliffe Bible Translators and for Southern Baptists to locations around the world, facilitating the spread of the gospel. He also volunteered to fill in for other missionary pilots while they went home on furlough.

Rogers said he thinks the Lord may have been able to use him more as a ministry-minded pilot than if he had become a vocational

minister—a message he shares with fellow retirees and veterans.

“There is a place to fit in,” Rogers said. “That’s particularly true of veterans. They can use their job skills in mission work somewhere in the world either on a short-term basis or for a year or more.”

Rogers, who has served as a deacon at First Baptist Dallas since 1953, started the church’s first young marrieds Sunday School class one month after he and his late wife Esther Beth joined the church in 1946—three years into their marriage. Rogers didn’t miss a beat in answering just how long he and Esther Beth were married before her death: 64 years, nine months and five days, he said with a serene smile. That same smile returned when, standing in the parking lot beside his red Camaro, Rogers explained the significance of the “10” on the license plate, which reads “BETH 10.”

“My wife asked me that,” he said, chuckling. “What’s the 10 for?’ she wanted to know. I told her I picked 10 because she’s a ‘10.’”

Rogers’ commitment to gospel expansion stretches beyond his local church and his missionary service. A library in the MacGorman Chapel and Performing Arts Center on the campus of





"I intend to run as long as the Lord gives me the ability. I'm looking forward to 100 so that I can enter a new age bracket, God willing."

Southwestern Seminary bears Orville's and Esther Beth's name and honors their missionary service and support of the institution, especially highlighting the way flying boosted the ability to get the Bible to other nations. Rogers said he and Esther Beth gladly chose to support and partner with Southwestern because the school consistently turns out graduates who are firmly rooted in the "effective, inerrant Word of God."

Rogers serves on the Board of Visitors at the seminary. He also served on the Criswell College board when it selected Paige Patterson as its president in 1975.

A bomb, the gospel and Moscow

Rogers' flying career and life-long ministry service collided in 2004 in a palpable moment of gravity, for which the pilot says he simply has no words.

In 1951, Rogers was called out of the reserves to fly in Europe after tension and conflict had risen in Korea and Russia. For 21 months, Rogers flew a B-36—the largest and

most advanced aircraft in the military at the time—out of Fort Worth and over a target in Russia, armed with an atom bomb comparable to the one dropped in Japan just six years earlier.

"I was on a select crew with an assigned target in Moscow," Rogers recalled, going on to talk about his great relief at never having to drop the bomb his plane carried. The bomb his plane was prepared to drop, he said, would have decimated an area of about 10 miles.

Fifty-two years later in 2004, Rogers found himself on a mission trip to Russia where he and about 230 other people traveling by ship stopped and witnessed on the streets in three cities on the way to Moscow, handing out English and Russian Bibles. When they docked in Moscow where they set up a medical clinic inside a school building, Rogers realized with great heaviness that he had come full-circle—back to the very location he had flown over in a bomber half a century earlier.

"We were within five miles of

where my target was in 1952," Rogers said. Staring off into the distance for a moment, he said there was just no way to express the emotion he felt that day when his mission trip brought him to an unobliterated Moscow.

"Instead of bringing death and destruction from above, we were bringing the Word of God which promises abundant life and eternal life on the horizontal plane," Rogers said.

Rogers said he logged more than 38,000 hours flying millions of miles. Recently, he rolled over 40,000 miles in running. Both have given him opportunities to serve the Lord and share the gospel, he said. Though he retired from flying at age 79, Rogers said he has no plans to stop running or even days when he'd like to give up. He said he encourages others to "finish strong" and wants to do the same.

"I intend to run as long as the Lord gives me the ability," Rogers said. "I'm looking forward to 100 so that I can enter a new age bracket, God willing."

