

Tucker, Julius Lafayette

(1895–1989)

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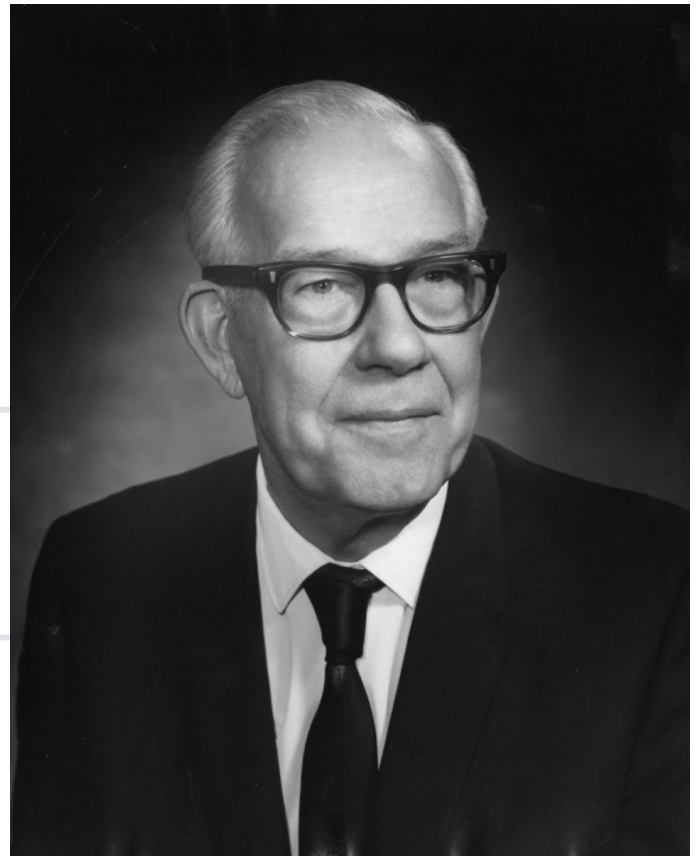
J. L. Tucker was an Adventist pastor and founder of the Quiet Hour, an international evangelistic broadcast ministry.

Early Life

Julius Lafayette Tucker was born on April 5, 1895 in Elk Point, South Dakota. His father, Ernest Tucker, was an English immigrant, settling in Elk Point in the early 1870s with his family at young age. There, he met his wife, Cora. The two were married by Joshua V. Himes, who had been one of the foremost leaders of the Millerite movement in the 1840s. They had three sons: Clayton, Ward, and Julius, in order of birth.¹

The family moved several times during Julius' early years – first to Beeville, Texas, to farm cotton, then to a homestead in Lewistown, Montana, and finally, by the time he was a teenager, back to the land they had previously owned in South Dakota.² There, the Tuckers farmed tomatoes along the banks of the Missouri River and became owners of their own cannery.³

Julius' parents, though no longer active Adventists themselves, strongly encouraged their children to attend the local Elk Point Seventh-day Adventist church. Julius, or J. L. as he became known, greatly enjoyed attending the church's midweek meetings as well as Sabbath services. It was at the Elk Point church that J. L. Tucker faithfully attended revival meetings held by Pastor C. M. Babcock, then president of the South Dakota Conference, who subsequently baptized J. L. in the Missouri River.⁴



Julius Lafayette Tucker, c. 1970s

Photo courtesy of Center for Adventist Research.

Several days following J. L.'s baptism, Babcock returned to Elk Point and told the young man that he felt that God was calling him to be a preacher and that he should go to school. J. L. was unsure of this calling due to his shy nature and his parents' strong desire that he continue in the family's farming enterprise. However, Babcock convinced J. L.'s parents to allow him to pursue ministry, and he was soon on his way to attend Plainview Academy in Redfield, South Dakota. There, he met Ida Jane Stratton and following J. L.'s junior year of academy, they married on July 4, 1917 in Billings, Montana. The couple would have two children, a son, LaVerne Erman, born in 1922, and a daughter, Jewel, born in 1924.⁵

Pastoral Ministry

During that same summer of 1917, J. L. and Ida Jane were hired for an evangelistic series in Billings, J. L. as an associate speaker and Ida as a pianist and organist.⁶ There, J. L. preached his first sermon. It proved to be a struggle for him due to his shy and soft-spoken nature, but countless sermons were to follow in a ministry that would continue for close to seven decades.⁷

After the evangelistic series ended, Tucker was called to Mount Ellis Academy in Bozeman, Montana. There he served as the dean of boys, and taught Bible, algebra, and history.⁸

In 1919, Tucker was given responsibility for the Scobey, Montana district as his first pastoral assignment.⁹ He was ordained to gospel ministry in College Place, Washington, in 1921.¹⁰ Following his ordination, he pastored churches in Montana, Colorado, and Minnesota. In 1935, he was called to pastor the Central church in Portland, Oregon, where he would begin the Quiet Hour broadcast.¹¹

For more than twenty years, Tucker continued his radio ministry even as he moved to new pastoral assignments. After working in Portland for close to eight years, J. L. was invited to pastor a church in Berkeley, California in 1943. Then, in 1954, the Michigan Conference called Tucker to pastor the college church at Emmanuel Missionary College (now Andrews University) in Berrien Springs. He was charged with leading a new church building project that brought into being the Pioneer Memorial church, dedicated in 1959.¹²

Experiencing health problems in the harsh Michigan climate, Ida Jane Tucker went to Redlands, California for the winter in 1958. J. L., wishing to be with his wife, decided to retire from pastoral work in 1959 after 42 years of denominational service, making his work with the Quiet Hour his primary occupation.¹³ Ida Jane Tucker later died on August 9, 1979.¹⁴ J. L. later married to Dorothy Came, a widow, in 1980.¹⁵

The Quiet Hour

While Tucker was pastoring in Portland, evangelists Dan and Melvin Venden conducted a well-attended series of meetings. After the effort concluded, time remained on a one-year contract for weekly broadcasts on the local radio station KEX and the Vendens recommended Tucker, with his rich, gentle voice, as the speaker for the

remaining broadcasts.¹⁶

This initial experience with radio inspired Tucker to start his own evangelistic radio broadcast. However, before making a final decision, he sought guidance from H.M.S. Richards, founder of the Voice of Prophecy radio ministry, visiting him in Long Beach, California where the ministry was then based. With Richards' encouragement, Tucker launched his first radio broadcast on July 7, 1937 on KEX in Portland. He drew inspiration for naming the program "the Quiet Hour" from Isaiah 30:15 – "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" – and a passage from *The Desire of Ages* by Ellen G. White – "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ" (page 83). The name also fit well with his soft-spoken voice and gentle preaching style.¹⁷ Tucker committed himself to making the broadcast "a soul-winning agency,"¹⁸ using it to preach the gospel and spread the Bible-based beliefs held by Seventh-day Adventists. He would also use it to encourage support for a variety of evangelistic mission projects both in the United States and internationally.

The new radio broadcast drew a favorable response right from the beginning in 1937. The financial support provided by listeners was so great that the weekly 15-minute broadcast became a daily 30-minute program.¹⁹ Hundreds of letters, questions, and requests came in, some from people who had no idea about the Adventist faith. With such a positive response, Tucker added a dramatic program to the Quiet Hour ministry called "The Friendly Neighbors." He also began a print ministry, publishing books and a periodical, *The Quiet Hour Echoes*, and a started a correspondence school.²⁰

As Tucker was called to churches in different states, the Quiet Hour moved with him. Each move meant leaving everything behind and starting over again from the very beginning. When the Tuckers moved to Berkeley in 1943, Tucker contracted time with KRE, a small, 500-watt station. Soon afterwards, he was able to add a larger station in Oakland, California, KROW. To meet the growing needs of the program, Tucker leased and remodeled a two-story building in downtown Oakland to serve as its headquarters. It included a radio studio, a reading room, a prayer room, a counseling room, a small bookstore, and a chapel.²¹

It was in Oakland that Del Delker, who would become a renowned Adventist female vocalist, was baptized by Tucker in 1947 after a series of evangelistic meetings held by the Quiet Hour. Delker made her start in radio ministry by singing for the Quiet Hour in a trio with Jewel Tucker and Bonnie Barnett. Soon afterwards she began her long association with the Voice of Prophecy.²²

In 1949 J. L.'s son, L. E. Tucker, joined him on the broadcast, and the Quiet Hour was televised for a few months on KGO in San Francisco. This was very early in the emergence of television as a mass medium and preceded the well-known Adventist television program Faith for Today.²³

J. L. Tucker then brought the radio ministry to Michigan in 1954 when he was called to pastor the Emmanuel Missionary College church in Berrien Springs. There, he bought time on 50,000-watt CKLW in Detroit. Also, within a month after the move to Berrien Springs, the Quiet Hour was released over two powerful radio stations in

Mexico, reaching a large portion of the United States. Station XEG in Monterey was able to cover the southern, central, and eastern parts of the United States, while XERB covered California and other western states. Soon after, with increasing support from listeners, Tucker bought time on WLS in Chicago which reached thirty-four central and eastern states, as well as some provinces in Canada. The first broadcast from this station drew 775 letters.²⁴ The broadcast had grown remarkably over the five years in Michigan, and by 1959 reached the entirety of North America, western Europe, Africa, and Asia.²⁵

When Tucker left for Redlands and retired from denominational service in 1959, the Quiet Hour became a self-supporting ministry. He ran the broadcast ministry from his own home for the next 10 years. After that, he rented a building in Loma Linda for five years, until, finally, the Quiet Hour was moved back to Redlands where its headquarters have remained to the present.²⁶ By 1979, there were about 450 stations releasing broadcasts weekly.²⁷

During its years in southern California, the Quiet Hour increasingly became an international outreach ministry. It supported numerous overseas evangelistic campaigns, provided airplanes, jeeps, boats and other equipment for world mission projects, and funded construction of chapels for open-air congregations.²⁸

Quiet Hour Ministries continues its work in the 21st century as a “worldwide evangelism ministry that has reached more than 188 countries.” It discontinued broadcasting in 2005 but continues to send hundreds of volunteers on overseas evangelistic mission trips. Their services include presenting evangelistic meetings, leading children’s programs, offering medical care at free health clinics, doing home and hospital visits, and building churches, schools, and orphanages.²⁹

Final Years

In 1985, at the age of 90, J. L. Tucker retired from his ministry with the Quiet Hour after 48 years with the broadcast and over 65 years in ministry. His son, L. E. Tucker, who had been vice president of the ministry, succeeded his father as president while his son, and J. L.’s grandson, Bill Tucker, became vice president.³⁰

Pastor J. L. Tucker died in his sleep at Loma Linda Community Hospital on February 28, 1989 at age 93. His funeral was held on March 4 in Loma Linda University Church.³¹

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NOTES

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2. Tucker, 21-22, 24-25.
3. Shefrah Ann Rozenstain, "Echoes from the Quiet Hour," *ARH*, August 22, 1985, 5.?
4. Tucker, 29-30; Rozenstain, 5.?
5. Rozenstain, 5-7.?
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8. Ibid.
9. "Founder of 'The Quiet Hour' Dies."
10. Tucker, 51.
11. Rozenstain, 6.
12. Ibid.
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14. "Ida Jane Tucker obituary," *Central Union Reaper*, October 4, 1979, 15.
15. "Julius Lafayette Tucker, 1895-1989." *MyHeritage*, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://www.myheritage.com>.
16. Rozenstain, 6.

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18. Tucker, 71.
19. Ibid., 72.
20. "Founder of 'The Quiet Hour' Dies."
21. Tucker, 78-79.
22. Rozenstain, 6.
23. "Founder of 'The Quiet Hour' Dies."
24. Tucker, 106-109.
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27. Tucker, 106-109.
28. Rozenstain, 7.
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30. "Quiet Hour Founder Retires, Son Elected," *Columbia Union Visitor*, May 1, 1985, 12.
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