



SEPTEMBER 30, 2018

ODELL McDANIEL: LONGEST-SERVING STAFF MEMBER OF MBBC

*“Didn't know You'd come to save us Lord
To take our sins away
Our eyes were blind, we could not see
We didn't know who You were.”*

Mountain Brook Baptist Church has been blessed with a staff of influential Christians, and the employee with longest continuous service was Odell McDaniel. He served Mountain Brook Baptist Church for 39 years, 1956-1995. He spanned the Waterhouse, Nelson, and Moebes pastorates. Even after retirement, he could be seen from time to time visiting friends at the church. Odell became part of the staff right after the educational space was added to the back of the Chapel, and he saw the facility grow into the present footprint.

Odell was hired by longtime member Harry Terrell, who provided him after-hours work at apartment properties he managed, so he could support his family including five children. In an interview just a few weeks prior to his death December 19, 2017, Odell recalled approaching Dr. Dotson M. Nelson Jr. when he considered leaving the church for another job. Dr. Nelson, as effective a salesman as pastor, convinced him that at Mountain Brook Baptist Church, “the sky is the limit.” Realizing he would be happier “doing something for the Lord,” Odell agreed to stay. The next week, when he was asked to climb the steeple for some maintenance work, Odell said that from the height of the steeple, he then understood about the “sky being the limit.” Over the years, this quote became a joke between him and others on the staff.

Odell recalled the 1963 bombing at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. He was at Mountain Brook Baptist Church that Sunday and knew the events were something “touching everybody.” Everyone at the church was “so sorry and so sad.” He knew that Dr. Nelson was involved with both black and white leaders trying to “cool things off.” “We went through that, we all suffered but we got better.”

At the time of his death, Odell McDaniel was a member of Jackson Street Baptist Church in Woodlawn. During his years with Mountain Brook Baptist Church from time to time he would sing with the choir. He was a regular on Wednesday nights before Christmas singing “Sweet Little Jesus Boy.” He had vivid memories of the Friday Skate Nights in the Fellowship Hall in the 1960s. He said the large crowd of teenagers was generally well behaved but “boys will be boys.” Even when pressed, Odell declined to name names.

WE’VE A STORY TO TELL
75th Anniversary Memories of Mountain Brook Baptist Church



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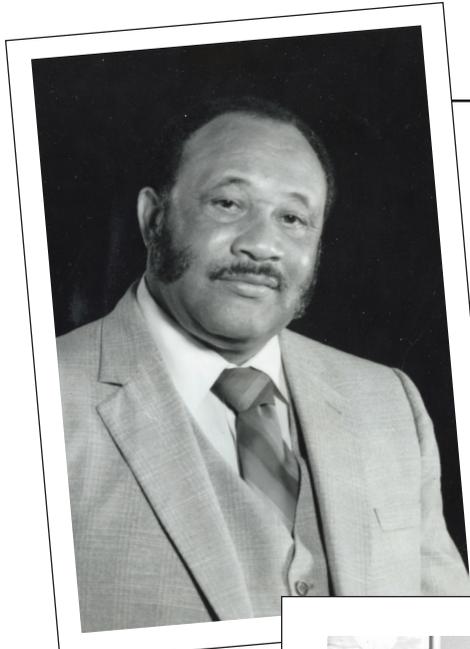
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ODELL AND THE RABBIT

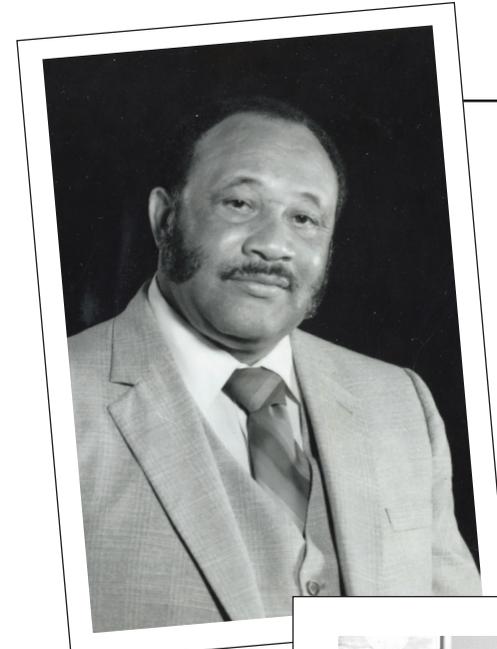
The head custodian at Mountain Brook Baptist Church during my childhood was loved dearly by all the church members. His name was Odell McDaniel. My family had a pet rabbit that had outgrown our rabbit cage, so the custodian said he would love to have the rabbit come live at his house. Thinking this would be a good home for Cottontail, we told him goodbye and handed him over to his new owner. About two weeks later, upon inquiring how Cottontail was adjusting to his new home, we were horrified to discover he had been eaten and was just delicious!

Cecil Berry Avery

Portrait of Odell McDaniel



Odell McDaniel with his family



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