

Church of God Leader Ray H. Hughes Passes Away

Dr. Ray H. Hughes, Sr., former general overseer of the Church of God and past president of Lee University, died late last night at a local hospital. He was 87.

Hughes served the Church of God denomination as its top leader on three separate occasions, the most recent in 1996. He is the only person in the 125-year history of the Church of God to serve as general overseer three separate times. He was first elevated to the post following the death of R. Leonard Carroll in January 1972. He was elected later that year to serve out the two-year term and was re-elected general overseer in 1978, serving until 1982 when tenure limitations came into effect. In addition to general overseer, Hughes was elected to first, second and third assistant general overseer on several occasions, serving a total of 22 years on the Executive Committee, the denomination's highest-ranking body of leaders.

Hughes first served as president of what was then Lee College from 1960-1966. Under his leadership, the present-day Higginbotham Administration Building on front campus was constructed, as well as the school's first science building. He also set Lee on a course toward accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools as a liberal arts college. He returned as president of the college in 1982 to serve a two-year term. During this time he was instrumental in securing funding for the current Pentecostal Resource Center and a reconstruction of the campus gymnasium into an arena.

Following his second tenure at Lee, Hughes served as president of what is now the Pentecostal Theological Seminary from 1984-1986.

Outside the Church of God Hughes was one of the most respected Evangelical leaders. He rose to top leadership posts in several organizations including president of the National Association of Evangelicals, Pentecostal Fellowship of North America and the Pentecostal World Conference (PWC). During his chairmanship of the PWC he led worldwide conferences in Oslo (1992), Jerusalem (1995) and Seoul (1998). Hughes was on stage with President Ronald Reagan at the National Association of Evangelicals Conference in Orlando when Reagan delivered the famous "Evil Empire" speech about the former Soviet Union. Hughes appeared with Reagan the next morning on the front page of the *New York Times*.

Hughes considered himself first and foremost an evangelist and he led crusades around the globe, speaking to thousands at a time. He was an author of several books and was a pastor, department leader, state overseer, and national radio speaker for the Church of God.

"Dr. Hughes set the example of leadership in the Church of God," says Church of God General Overseer Dr. Raymond Culpepper. "He was a towering figure generations have, and will continue to admire. Dr. Hughes' influence has been profound in the number of lives he touched and the ministries in which he led. He will be missed by the thousands upon thousands he touched over the more than 65 years of active ministry."

A viewing and visitation will take place on Wednesday from 3:00 until 8:00 p.m. at the North Cleveland Church of God. The funeral will follow on Thursday at 11:00 a.m. Grissom Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. A Web link with information on the life of Hughes, including a full obituary is located on the Church of God Web site, .