

## Grady Nutt Collection



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**The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary**

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## I. Biographical Sketch

Grady Lee Nutt was born in Amarillo, Texas, on September 2, 1934. He was the oldest of four children of Grady C. and Doris (Rickman) Nutt. His father worked as a dairy salesman and operated a dry-cleaning business before going into the ministry. Grady grew up in a strong Christian home where going to church was a consistent aspect of his life. At the age of three he was already singing gospel songs for church suppers and socials. At age eleven, he discovered his knack for storytelling while he was in Vacation Bible School. Two weeks after his thirteenth birthday, Grady publicly announced his decision to be a minister, and his church licensed him as a Baptist minister that very day. Grady also attended Alice Landergin Elementary and Nixon Junior High, where he initially became interested in entertaining. At the age of fourteen he and his family moved to Jacksonville, Texas, where his father received ministerial education at Jacksonville Baptist College. After high school Grady first attended Wayland Baptist College, where he sang in the International Choir, then transferred to Baylor University in Waco, where he graduated with a B.A. degree in 1957.

Nutt married Eleanor Wilson, of Memphis, Tennessee, on June 18, 1957, and the two had two boys together. Grady served as the minister of youth at the First Baptist Church in Waco and later at Gaston Avenue Baptist Church in Dallas. In 1960 they moved to Louisville, Kentucky, so he could pursue further education at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He received his master's degree in 1964. While he was in Louisville he served as minister of music at Southside Baptist Church and later became the pastor of Graefenburg Baptist Church in Graefenburg, Kentucky. Grady also was involved on the campus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary serving as director of alumni affairs and as an assistant to the president of the seminary.

In addition to his ministerial duties, Nutt began entertaining youth with humorous stories about churches and preachers, experiences from his early life, and familiar events from the Bible. In 1966 a close friend suggested that he quit his job with the seminary and become a professional entertainer. By 1969, after being discovered by television game-show host Ralph Edwards, he had appeared on "The Mike Douglas Show" eleven times. In August of 1969 Nutt left his position with the seminary to take on his new career as an entertainer and speaker. Shortly thereafter he was averaging about twenty speaking engagements a month. He continued to regularly speak at Baptist student gatherings and was a featured speaker at the 1980 and 1982 Southern Baptist Convention meetings. He also continued to play an active role as a deacon at Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

In 1979 his career hit its benchmark when he joined the cast of "Hee Haw." His personal stories as a preacher on the show won him the title as the "Prime Minister of Humor." By July 1981 he was also starring in his own show, "The Grady Nutt Show." In his career, Nutt recorded a total of six albums and wrote four books, including his autobiography, *So Good, So Far* (1979). He was very personal in his approach to his work; getting all of his material from his own experiences or from stories he had heard.

On November 23, 1982, Nutt was the guest speaker at a youth rally and banquet in Cullman, Alabama. Later that evening he and two employees of Central American Airways in Louisville were killed when their plane crashed shortly after taking off in Vinemont, Alabama. Grady Nutt was buried in Louisville, Kentucky. His death was mourned by the country music and entertainment world, as well as by those influenced through his ministry.

Information accumulated from:

*Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Nutt, Grady Lee,"  
<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/NN/fnu7.html> (accessed March 28, 2005).

*The Courier-Journal Magazine* (28 September, 1980)

## II. Scope and Content Note

## III. Published Works

Nutt, Grady. *Being Me*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Gospel According to Norton*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1974.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Agaperos*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1977.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Family Time*. American Family Society, 1977.

\_\_\_\_\_. *So Good, So Far*. Nashville: Impact Books, 1979.

## IV. Additional Reference

Boozer, Pat. *On Being Me*. Musical score. 1975. Master's in Church Music thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. 1975

Patterson, Ward. *Holy Humor : The Religious Rhetoric of Grady Nutt*. Dissertation, Indiana University. 1983.

Pondering Kentucky, the Magazine. Number 18. 1991. Includes a piece called "Remembering Grady Nutt".

## V. Collection Description

Box 1

- 1.1 Correspondence after death
- 1.2 Memorials
- 1.3 Newspaper article of death
- 1.4 Grady's stationary
- 1.5 Articles in magazines
- 1.6 Articles in magazines
- 1.7 Miscellaneous sent in from individuals
- 1.8 Miscellaneous sent in from individuals

- 1.9 Miscellaneous sent in from individuals
- 1.10 Miscellaneous sent in from individuals
- 1.11 Extra magazines
- 1.12 Article written by Nutt's manager

#### Box 2

Videocassette: Rehab '82 Telethon (West Texas Rehabilitation Center), 9 January 1982  
 Videocassette: Grady Nutt Commercials for First Federal of Fort Myers  
 Envelope containing Campbellsville College photos  
 Record album: Grady Nutt, The Prime Minister of Humor – 1976 (2 copies)  
 Record album: All Day Singin' & Dinner On the Ground – 1980 (2 copies)  
 Record album: The Gift of Laughter – 1982  
 Record album: Taking Notice – 1978  
 The Courier-Journal Magazine – story on Grady Nutt, 28 September 1980 (59 copies)  
 Cassette: The Flip Sides of Grady Nutt Humorist – Recorded live at Ridgecrest, N.C.  
 Book: So Good, So Far – 1979  
 Book: Agaperos – 1977  
 Brass plaque-memorial  
 Poem: “Between Us Alumni” by Grady Nutt (“I’d like to discuss an intriguing dimension,” etc.)  
 Framed quote: “To me, this is the essence of living: to look back from the brink of death with a solid smile and say, ‘I’m glad I did that.’” [Frame has been removed]

#### Box 3

Videocassette: Grady Nutt with Kenny Price  
 Videocassette: Grady Nutt with Roy Acuff  
 Videocassette: Hee Haw – Grady Nutt – cued 17 September 1983  
 Videocassette: Is Seminary for You? (rough draft; featuring interviews with Roy Honeycutt, Libby Allen, David Harmon-Vaught, Peyton Thurman)  
 Videocassette: Is Seminary for You? (#1: Cave Hill Cemetery and Highland Baptist Church)  
 Videocassette: Is Seminary for You? (#2: June 1982)  
 Videocassette: Student Pastors Conference Banquet (#1: 30 March 1982)  
 Videocassette: Student Pastors Conference Banquet (#2: 30 March 1982)  
 Videocassette: Classroom Lecture of “Grief” (for Andy Lester, 1981 – 2 copies)  
 Videocassette: Classroom Lecture on “Humor and Preaching”, 7 May 1980  
 Reel-to-reel tape: Quizarama (Eleanor and Grady Nutt)  
 Reel-to-reel tape: Grady Nutt Interview, “Is Seminary for You?”

#### Box 4

Videocassette: “Lifestyles” (ACTS satellite network – Eleanor Nutt Interview, 29 May 1984)  
 Videocassette: Grady Nutt at Holy Rosary Academy, Monday after Derby Day in 1982  
 Videocassette: Belvedere Senior Citizens  
 Videocassette: First Baptist Church, Kingsport, Tennessee  
 Videocassette: 32 Alive News clips

- Videocassette: Grady Nutt Memorial Service – Channel 11 Broadcast news coverage, 29 November 1982
- Videocassette: Grady Nutt Memorial Service Part 1
- Videocassette: Grady Nutt Memorial Service Part 1 (edited)
- Videocassette: Grady Nutt Memorial Service Part 2
- Videocassette: Grady Nutt Memorial Service Part 2 (edited)
- Videocassette: Grady Nutt – story from banquet tape on SBTS campus
- Videocassette: Grady Nutt with panel interviews, 27 July 1982
- Videocassette: Hee Haw 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 29 May 1988
- Audiocassette: The Gift of Laughter – no cassette in case, 1982
- Audiocassette: Wingate College In Memoriam – Grady Nutt, Prime Minister of Humor, 9 February 1982
- Audiocassette: Worship Service – Crescent Hill Baptist Church, 9 January 1983
- Audiocassette: Grady Nutt “On Walking the Third Mile”, *Interrobang* – Crescent Hill Baptist Church, 20 May 1979
- Audiocassette: Grady Nutt, *Interrobang*, 23 May 1982