

Register of the

George E. Vandeman

Collection

Collection 288

Center for Adventist Research
James White Library
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-1440
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Scope and Content

George E. Vandeman was born in October 21, 1916. At the age of 21, he enrolled at Emmanuel Missionary College. He found a job working at a weekly 15-minute radio broadcast in Elkhart, Indiana. While there, he met Nellie Johnson and they were married the following year on October 2, 1938 in South Bend, Indiana. After completing his second year of college Vandeman began working as a full-time evangelist. He eventually earned a Master of Arts degree in speech and communication from the University of Michigan. His thesis was entitled, *Spurgeon's Theory of Preaching* (1946). He was then ordained as a minister and worked as a field instructor in evangelism at Emmanuel Missionary College for four years.

He joined the General Conference Ministerial Association in 1947 taking the position of associate secretary. At age 33 he was one of the youngest to work in Adventist church leadership. In the years following World War II, Vandeman and other Adventist speakers spearheaded a drive for the public evangelism of major cities. He conducted campaigns in Pittsburgh in 1948, Washington, D.C. in 1951, and London in 1952, amongst other places. In 1948 General Conference president J. L. McElhany convinced Vandeman to try television as a means of reaching others with the Gospel. Vandeman created a six-month experimental evangelistic effort for television. At the time, he wasn't able to get the financial support he needed, and temporarily put the effort on hold. Around 1954 he was asked by the new General Conference President, R. R. Figuhr, to continue exploring the Christian television program idea.

In the mid 1950s Vandeman started work on a series of television programs called *It Is Written* (based on Matthew 4:4), which he planned to air for several weeks in an area as a warmup to an evangelistic program. In spring 1956, *It Is Written* launched its first telecast in black and white—a full-message, Bible study telecast in Washington, D.C. The program later became one of the first religious television programs to air in color. Vandeman ran the first *It Is Written* evangelistic campaign in Fresno, California, in 1958, and later in Washington, D.C., Detroit, Philadelphia and other cities. The telecast was launched to all of California in 1962, and this effort was followed by a month-long series at the Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena. By the mid 1960s the program was being broadcast internationally on a weekly basis. In 1971, the *It Is Written* production studios moved to the Adventist Media Center in Thousand Oaks, California. In 1975, Vandeman began conducting Revelation Seminars. The seminars consisted of a one-day, eight-hour Bible study followed by a luncheon. Over a course of 10 years, tens of thousands of *It Is Written* viewers traveled hundreds of miles to attend one of 300 seminars.

In 1979, the ministry's success was noted by Excellence In Media, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting excellent family-oriented programs by honoring media with Angel Awards. Vandeman and the *It Is Written* team were given their first Angel award. They would ultimately received a total of 10 Angel Awards from Religion in Media. Vandeman was later presented with an International Distinguished

Achievement Gold Angel award—Excellence in Media's highest honor. In 1980 he received the Religious Heritage of America Faith and Freedom Award for Television Religious Personality of the Year. He was a member of Religious Heritage of America, the Strategy for the Elevation of People Foundation, and the Year of the Bible Committee. Vandeman was invited to presidential briefings during both the Reagan and Bush I administrations.

It Is Written was a "pioneering force" in Adventist evangelism. By the 1980s, *It Is Written* had more than 600,000 regular viewers. That number surpassed 1.5 million in the 1990s. In 1990, the *It Is Written* production team and Vandeman traveled to the Soviet Union to tape *Empires in Collision*, an eight-part series. *It Is Written* was one of the first religious telecasts to be aired on Soviet television. In 2000, it was broadcast in 8 languages to over 150 countries.

George Vandeman served as the primary speaker of *It Is Written* until his retirement in 1991, when Mark Finley succeeded him. Vandeman died on November 3, 2000 at the age of 84, at his home in Newbury Park, California, of heart failure while asleep.

The scope of the collection is very narrow in that it consists only of diplomas for his educational accomplishments and commemorative plaques presented to Vandeman in recognition of his work of evangelism and television.

The researcher is directed to the *It Is Written* telecast archives collection also housed at the Andrews University Center for Adventist Research. It contains program scripts from 1972 to 1981 and a few minutes and reports from the ministry.

Arrangement

The collection contained two kinds of items—diplomas and commemorative plaques. The items were therefore divided into these two categories, and put into chronological order.

Provenance

The provenance of this collection is uncertain though based on the nature of the content it must have come from the Vandeman family. It was in the possession of the Andrews University President's Office and University Advancement for several years until it was given to the Center for Adventist Research on November 30, 2010.

Use

All users of this collection are required to complete the "Application to Use Unpublished Records," and to observe the regulation specified in the "Patron Agreement" and "Researcher's Code of Conduct." All records in this collection are open and available for research. Citation for this collection:

Box ____, Folder ____, George E. Vandeman Collection (collection 288), Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

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Diplomas

- Bx 1 Fld 1 Laminated diploma of the degree of Bachelor of Arts from Emmanuel Missionary College (Berrien Springs, Michigan, June 1, 1942).
- Bx 1 Fld 2 Laminated diploma of the degree of Master of Arts (Speech) from the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, Michigan, February 23, 1946).
- Bx 1 Fld 3 Laminated diploma of the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, June 4, 1978).

Commemorative Plaques

- Bx 1 Fld 4 Adventist World Radio for more than twenty years of gospel broadcasting (Washington, D.C., [1976]).
- Bx 1 Fld 5 Pacific Press Publishing Association for 30 years of broadcasting excellence and support of the publishing ministry (February 1986).
- Bx 1 Fld 6 Adventist Broadcasters Association for 34 years of gospel broadcasting (Indianapolis, Indiana, July 3, 1990).
- Bx 1 Fld 7 North American Division Evangelism Council, evangelism recognition (Daytona Beach, Florida, December 15-19, 1991).
- Bx 1 Fld 8 South Pacific Division Adventist Media Centre for outstanding media ministry (August 19, 1992).
- Bx 1 Fld 9 Voice of Prophecy in grateful appreciation for the generous gift of his personal library to the Research Collection of the Voice of Prophecy (June 1994).

Oversize Items

- Bx 2 Fld 1 Alumni Association of Andrews University, Citation for the outstanding alumnus preacher (Berrien Springs, Michigan, January 17, 1970).
- Bx 2 Fld 2 Religious Heritage of America, Faith and Freedom Award Television (St. Louis, Missouri, October 6, 1980).
- Bx 2 Fld 3 City of Los Angeles, congratulations to Dr. and Mrs. George Vandeman on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary (Los Angeles, California, October 9, 1988).
- Bx 2 Fld 4 General Conference Ministerial Association for soul winning (Silver Spring, Maryland, December 10, 2000).

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