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## Ronald "Pete" Reese

Pete Reese  
*Cedarville University*

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## Interview with Pete Reese

February 16, 2018

Speaker 1: All right. Mr. Reese, can you tell us the story of how you came to Cedarville?

Pete Reese: Well, I'm going to assume you're wanting the story of when we were hired as a faculty or staff member, so I'm going to have to go back a little bit. Perhaps my situation is a little bit unique because I came to Cedarville as a student, and I think that is a little bit unique. When I graduated from high school I felt that I wanted to teach and coach, particularly basketball, loved to play basketball. And there was two things that was giving me the urge to kind of go onto college and that was again, I knew I had to get a degree if I was going to coach and teach. Then I really wanted to go some place where I could play basketball, but the kicker in this thing, I did not want to go away from home. I was raised on a farm a couple miles outside of town, and basically I guess you would call it, I was mama's boy and I had never spent a night away from home in any situation.

Pete Reese: Cedarville College did not necessarily fit me because I was a Presbyterian kid and most thought that I needed to go to a Presbyterian college, but Cedarville College was the only place I could stay home with mama and go to school and get an education to play basketball. So that's really how I came to Cedarville basically, to play basketball. The folks here at that time, the coach and the students were very gracious towards me. In fact, I got the first athletic scholarship they ever gave, which was a basketball scholarship. That was kind of my start of my journey and set the stage in life for what the Lord has given me to do. Then I guess when I graduated from Cedarville in 1960 with a degree in Physical Education, myself and another fellow student, Rosemary Smith, we were the first ones to graduate from Cedarville College with a Physical Education degree.

Speaker 1: Wow.

Pete Reese: Unfortunately Rosemary's gone on to be with the Lord, but with that degree I went to Flint, Michigan, and got a job there in the public schools. Now the interesting thing is in that day Cedarville was not accredited. They had no teaching credential, did not offer teaching credential or hardly any education courses as we have it today. It was rather difficult to get a teaching job or a coaching job after graduating from Cedarville in them days. So basically myself and a couple other graduates drove up to Flint, Michigan, and found out where there was a superintendents meeting and basically had to sell ourselves to one of the superintendents and convince them that they should hire us as a teacher, and believe it or not that's how I got my first job.

Pete Reese: As a matter fact we went to Flint, found out where there was a group of superintendents meeting and we sat on the outside of that building until those Superintendents came out and we kind of just said, "Do you need a teacher? Do you need a coach?" And a guy named Matt Chubb hired me at Hoover High School, and that's really how I got my first job. Then I was there five years in Flint, Michigan, teaching, coaching and then the Lord called us to LA Baptist College in Los Angeles,

California. Actually it was in New Hope, California, just north of Los Angeles. Now again the unique thing about it, in that day when you took a job they did not fly you. The small Christian schools did not fly you for an interview and etc., they just did it over the telephone. So you kind of went like a missionary. If you felt the Lord was calling you, you said yes or no over the phone.

Pete Reese: So I told the President, "Yes, I would like that job." And I went to LA Baptist to start an athletic program. To start a physical education program, and to build facilities. Again in that day, if you wanted facilities you first of all had to raise money. Everybody had to raise money, unlike today. One of my first jobs was to go out and raise money so we could build a gymnasium, but that was a great experience. We were there for actually 23 years. We were there at ... LA Baptist College actually had changed names in 1985 to the Masters College, they're now the Masters University. Then after 1988 we came to Cedarville College. Now how did we come to Cedarville College? Now we finally get to where you asked a question. I felt I had to give a little bit of information there to lead us up to this time. I felt the Lord perhaps certain times was up at the Masters College, and felt the Lord maybe was leading us someplace else.

Pete Reese: In the fall of 1987 I believe it was, I was back home here visiting because I came home every once in a while because this was home for me. So I came home and I decided to go to a high school football game. I went to the football game and I had met Don Callan, who was the Athletic Director here at Cedarville, but did not really talk with him at any extent. But Don happened to be there at the football game so we struck up a conversation, and he mentioned to me that in the athletic department they really needed somebody in the area of facilities to take care of the gym and the outside facilities as well as the inside facilities. So in conversation I informed him, "Well, if you would ever get serious about hiring somebody in this area, I would be interested." Because I had spent quite a bit of time both in the high school situation in that and then in LA Baptist and Masters building athletic facilities and etc. I always had a passion to do that type of work.

Pete Reese: So I informed him if he ever they ever decided to hire somebody in facilities I would be interested. So that's where that kind of began, leaning against the fence over at Cedarville high school at the football field. That was the initial conversation. That was in the fall, then the spring of 1988, Dr. Callan called me and said, "We have decided we would like to try to hire somebody for the athletic facilities to take care of the gym inside as well as outside." Wanted to know if I'd be interested and I said, "Well, as I explained last fall, yes I would be." He said, "Well, we really would like to hire somebody but we only have one problem." I said, "Well, what's the problem?" He said, "We don't have any money." I said, "Well, I'm used to that. We try to do things here at our institution and many times we don't have any money anyway but we just have to ... We always trust the Lord will provide if there's a vision there to do something."

Pete Reese: So we talked and I said, "Well, I would be interested I guess, but I would like a couple weeks to think and pray about it." And he said, "Well, I will call you back in a couple of weeks and let you know. See if we can find some money." A couple of weeks later he called me back and he told me, he said, "Well, we did find some money." He said, "It's very little." And it was very little. I said, "Well you know, my wife and I again would like

to think about, pray about it." So within a week we called and we said, "Look, we'd like to come to Cedarville and work." And he said, "Well you know, I wish we could give you more money." And I said, "Well, that's really not that important. I've never taken a job for money and probably never will as long as I feel that's where the Lord wants me. He won't let me starve."

Speaker 1: Yeah, wow.

Pete Reese: So we took the job and I guess the question would be, what was it about Cedarville? We get to the root of the question now, what was it about Cedarville that attracted me? And again, I guess at that time our son Chris, he was here, he decided to come to Cedarville. Left LA kind of against the wishes of his mom, his mom was glad he came to Cedarville but after all it was 2500 miles away. And she felt, "Hey look, there're good schools in this area. We have got Biola and Westmont, all of those. Why you have to go to Cedarville?" But again, he felt the Lord was leading him back to Cedarville. But he was and then Cedarville obviously, I always felt that over the years they have always maintained a good solid testimony for the Lord and regardless of what they've been involved in through all their academic programs, or athletic programs, or other programs, music programs or whatever. They've always had a good solid testimony for the Lord.

Pete Reese: Their mission has been a ... They always had a good solid mission, and I always looked at Cedarville College as one of the best fundamental Christian schools in the country. I always appreciated what it did for me as a student and always had in the back my mind it would be neat if someday that the Lord would call me back to Cedarville and I could return something to them, because I was always very grateful the fact that this was, accepted the Lord here and gave me some real direction in my life and some great opportunities I had if that had not happened. So I always thought it would really be great to go back to Cedarville sometime, but mind you it took 28 years for it happen. So the moral of this story is we just have to do the best we can as we move along and what the lord gives us to do and maybe someday the desires of our heart will be met.

Pete Reese: As far as athletics, they had good athletics facilities. They had a great athletic department. Really good solid people working in the department, so it was just a real great opportunity and actually a privilege that I was asked to come back to return to where it all basically happened. Anyway, that's kind of the story. That's a round about way of why I returned to Cedarville, because just the college here. I always thought the college was kind of my spiritual earthly father in some way because I grew up in a home that was a good solid home morally, but I don't know to the best of my knowledge. I don't believe my folks at that time were Christians when I came to school so what the college did for me here was very important in my life.

Speaker 1: Thank you for sharing that. Could you go into a little more detail on what Cedarville has done for you? You mention that it was during your time as a student that you got saved. Could you explain that?

Pete Reese: Yeah as I said, I'm not sure because in that day I'm sure that the application ... I would love to see that application. I'm not sure it exists anymore but where it asks for your

salvation experience, I am not sure what I wrote. But I must've written something because in that day it was very, very narrow of who they accepted. Although they were eager for students there was hundreds of students. As the old saying was, "If you're warm and had some money." But I'm not sure what I put on the application, but again, I recognized it was a evangelistic services. We were having evangelistic meetings in the fall of 1956, and that's when I realized that I really had never given, made the decision to follow the Lord, and that's when.

Pete Reese: Then after that there was good discipleship from ... The coach here, his name was Bob Underwood, an outstanding man. Not only a coach but was really interested in young lives, he discipled me along with classmates. I had some classmates, particularly a fellow named Marv Troyer. A fellow named Don Sul. Two Christian fellows, great guys, but as fellow students they discipled me, helped me along. I remember when I had first came to Cedarville, the first class I went to the instructor said, "Okay, who would like to lead us in prayer?" I was, "Oh my goodness, what am I doing in this?" I never had any class ... So in fact I remember going to classes and I thought, "Oh my, I hope they don't call on me to pray on."

Pete Reese: So those kinds of things again, the two or three classmates and the coach and the other faculty, there weren't very many but they all understood where I was coming from and I needed a lot of discipling. Again that just changed ... I remember being in Dr. Jeremiah ... Dr. Jeremiah was the President at that time. I don't know if you ever heard of that name. In fact, he had just become the President when I started. I took a class from him called Baptist History and Polity. I don't know if you take that course now but he would explain to me ... Would explain to the class what the Baptists believed and he would look at me and said, "Well, now Pete what did the Presbyterian's think about a certain doctrine?" Well I didn't know what the Presbyterians, and I should have, but I didn't know so. And I thought, "Well, maybe I may as well just become a Baptist. I grew up to believe the way." But it was things like that. Dr. Jeremiah was the President.

Pete Reese: He knew that I was a new Christian who really didn't know much about the Bible and so forth. They just had a passion to not only help me but the other students here and that we might be a success. And again as I said, the decision to come here again ... As I looked at Cedarville in 1988 when I came, there was still that solid mission they had, and it was still that school that I had gone to, it's much bigger by that time. I think in 1988, I'm not sure. Maybe they were up to like maybe around 1,800 students. But they had kept their mission and was still a good solid institution, intertwining Christ with all their programs and everything they did. Because so many of the Christian schools through the years had kind of moved away from a good solid Christian mission and so forth.

Pete Reese: Yeah, when I think back...I retired in this past September. I actively worked every day, went to work. I was always there by 8:00. I told my son this the other day, we were talking I said, "You know Chris, for 57 years I reported to work no later than 8:00." I said, "Maybe it does feel pretty good once a while." To report at eight, but anyway and you know what, I always looked forward to going to work every day. There were few days in those 57 years that I didn't look forward to going to work.

Pete Reese: I always tell young people when I get a chance, "Get involved in something which you have a passion for." When you get something, involved in something you have a passion for, and that was with me. Again I go back, my thing was I wanted to be involved in teaching and coaching, and the facility part, building something. Designing something. You got to have something that you can't wait to get up and get at it.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Pete Reese: 57 great years, I wish I had 57 more. But I'm not sure if there's anybody that wants to hire me.

Speaker 1: What were some of the best memories or highlights from that time?

Pete Reese: Well again, here there were several small events, again, I was the Athletic Director here for 10 years and I always loved it as an Athletic Director when our teams were successful and won championships. We had a few of those, and as an Athletic Director that always made me feel good. I remember, I believe the biggest thrill I had maybe was in 2003, I believe, I hope I got the year right, but our women's cross country team won the national title. They won the NEIA national title. Now they were the best amongst probably roughly 250, 300 schools at that time.

Pete Reese: They won the national title. They ran up in Kenosha, Wisconsin and I was fortunate enough to be able to go to that meet. Our young ladies won that national title up there. Oh my goodness, that was exciting. Again, it was not only the fact they were great runners, but just a great bunch of group of young ladies running for Coach King. That probably was a special highlight. Then we did win, had some teams that won some other events, some other championships. But those were always exciting, very exciting times.

Pete Reese: We always had events where our athletic department personnel would get together. A close bunch of people. We really enjoyed our fellowship with each other. I always enjoyed that, Christmas time we had a special get together. Three to four days we got together, had breakfast, lunch, just a good time of fellowship. That was special time. Other times, just sitting around the table when I was Athletic Director or even working in other areas, just sitting around the table and talking to coaches and so forth. These were just casual times, but these were good times. Good times. Again, these are just things that made Cedarville very special for me. Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 1: You were talking earlier about your experience as a college student. You mentioned a lot of the professors and people that had an impact on you then. When you came as a faculty member at Cedarville, who were some of the people that had the biggest impact on you then?

Pete Reese: Well, of course Don Callan, Dr. Don Callan. Don was the Athletic Director for many years here, and he was at that time. He was a basketball coach for many years and obviously I worked for Don and coached with Don. Don has always had a real heart for missions through sport. Don was a great example and role model in this area. I always

appreciated him not only for the work he did here on campus, but how he represented the Lord and Cedarville College/University all over the world. Don has done mission work in many, many countries. He obviously has been a real mentor for me in many areas.

Pete Reese: Then of course, Dr. Dixon. His leadership was, when it came, he followed Dr. Jeremiah who had done a great job in those early days. Then Dr. Dixon picked up. The school grew, I'm not sure maybe 12, 1,300 into 3,000, new buildings were built, new programs, a lot of new programs were started. Again, not wavering in the testimony of Jesus Christ. I mean, that was always the most important thing. All programs were biblically based and so forth. There was a fellow that was born, raised and had a business here in Cedarville. This fellow was born, I believe, in 1917. He just passed away last fall. He was 100 years old plus four months.

Speaker 1: Wow.

Pete Reese: Herman Randall was a dear friend. He was a mentor for me. Herman had a business downtown. He owned and operated a grain elevator. I worked for Herman three summers when I was in college. I worked the first summer. Things went well. I came back to school. Second summer I worked him. Things were good, and I guess I'll go back to school. I went and played basketball, but I wasn't too fond of the books. But I loved to play basketball. But you know if you want to play basketball in college, you've got to do something with the books.

Speaker 1: Right.

Pete Reese: So I did come back. The third summer I worked for him, I said at the end of the summer, "Herman, I'm not going back to school. I'm tired of school." Even though I wanted to play basketball, I'm not going to school. I don't like the books." He looked at me, he said, "I will not hire you. You're going back to school." He gave me a fatherly lecture and I came back to school. I thought many times if he would have said, "Oh, I'll hire you. Just stay and work for me," how different my life would have been. Certainly I had many opportunities I would not have had if I would have stayed. So I've been very, very thankful for Herman Randall.

Pete Reese: As I said, he just passed away last fall. He was our oldest living resident of the Cedarville community. His mind was crystal clear. He was talking to me one day about his teacher, or his kindergarten teacher, what would have been kindergarten in that day, it was first grade teacher, and his other teachers. I've just always been grateful for his part he had in my life and what he meant to me because again, he was one of those people that kept me on the straight and narrow, so to speak.

Pete Reese: Those are some people. There's been many others here at the university. I've had a great time with all of the coaches and the people in the athletic, and even the other disciplines, the other areas, academic areas. I've had the opportunity to work with a lot of wonderful people. But those are just ... I guess I could go on and name many that I've enjoyed working with.

Speaker 1: Mr. Reese, those are the questions that I have for you today.

Pete Reese: Okay.

Speaker 1: We got through all of them. Thank you so much for sharing so much of your story, how Cedarville has impacted you. I've enjoyed hearing them.

Pete Reese: Well thank you guys for your part in this project. I think it's really great that you're doing this. I hope both of you, that the Lord will give you a great 57 years in whatever, at least that many and more, in whatever he leads you into. Again, just go day by day, step by step and who knows where you'll wind up. You'll have some great experiences. I appreciate you doing this project, fellas.

Speaker 1: Thank you.

Pete Reese: Okay.