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CROATIA--Pastor at least one winner in Yugoslavia's bloody war.

CROATIA--Love in action boosts church growth in Croatia.

FLORIDA--Robert Denny dead at 81; was BWA leader, 1968-80.

KENTUCKY--Georgetown's Jim Reid dies; was coach for 23 seasons.

ARKANSAS--Transplant athlete had winning spirit, faith.

TENNESSEE--Correction.

Pastor at least one winner
in Yugoslavia's bloody war

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press
4/8/96

KARLOVAC, Croatia (BP)--List Ladislav Ruzicka among the winners in Yugoslavia's war.

Despite attacks which rained hundreds of artillery shells around his apartment, Ruzicka has nurtured four growing Baptist congregations in Karlovac and outlying areas. Two have doubled their memberships, and one in Plaski has grown to 70 members since it started late in 1995.

Croatian Baptist leaders say Ruzicka's ministry has established a Baptist toehold in a vast area of Croatia and Bosnia where evangelical Christianity is unknown.

He's used a variety of skills to make an impact on his city. The infamous Krajina area of Croatia begins less than a mile from Ruzicka's front door. This is the part of Croatia held by Serbian forces until they were uprooted in heavy fighting last fall -- where 80 percent of the houses have been destroyed. In 1991 Serbian tanks were less than half a mile away, and 350 artillery shells rained down around the church. A house next door had its roof blown off.

During the fighting, Ruzicka visited more than 400 homes in the area. Often people told him he was the first minister of any kind to visit them. He conducted 35 funerals for Serbian families and others who are Roman Catholic or Orthodox. Families told Ruzicka their priests had fled when fighting broke out. But Ruzicka, his wife, Melany, and their young daughter stayed through it all.

During a bombardment in May 1992, Ruzicka urged Croatian soldiers to leave their hastily made bunkers outside and take shelter inside the church building. They did -- and seconds later an artillery shell blew the bunker to pieces. "You saved my life!" exclaimed one grateful soldier when the dust settled.

Ruzicka also has directed one of the largest food distribution efforts by Croatian Baptists, providing food to 70 people a day. Although peace has returned to Karlovac, the city's economy is in tatters and thousands are living on aid from abroad.

In mid-February dozens of women lined up in front of the bomb-scarred Karlovac Baptist Church building to receive boxes of basic food items. Some hauled their packets away on sleds through deep snow. In Plaski, about 40 miles away, nearly 2,500 people are fed each month. Ruzicka also directs this program.

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Much of the food he has distributed was provided by Southern Baptists, who have sent almost \$3 million worth of food and supplies into the region. As a result, Ruzicka has become one of the best-known people in the city of 60,000 people.

A newspaper survey in February named him among the 20 most respected people in Karlovac -- the first time a Protestant has ever made the list. Ruzicka has a thick sheaf of commendations, awards and letters of thanks from the city police, hospitals and assorted government offices.

One admirer is Kaja Mihalic, a 74-year-old grandmother, who lives alone and works as a street sweeper to supplement her meager pension. Her face breaks into a warm smile when Ruzicka and his wife drop by with a box of food. Such food parcels mean the difference between eating and going hungry. "Do you have enough firewood?" he asks her.

Ruzicka also has preached on daily radio broadcasts and led his members to pass out enough gospel tracts for every man, woman and child in the city.

Although he is happy with the numbers, Ruzicka is clearly a people person, happiest when he is talking to people. As he passes out food parcels or delivers them to homes, he calls people by name and often pats a shoulder. When someone relates a hardship, his eyes mist and he turns away for a moment.

But he must look to the future. As peace returns to the region, Ruzicka is gearing up for even more ministry. His members have signed a contract on a large building in downtown Karlovac, though they do not yet have all the needed funds.

"We cannot (adequately) stress the importance of the Karlovac church as a missionary center," wrote Branko Lovrec, president of the Croatian Baptist Union. Lovrec said Roman Catholic priests have pressured local authorities to keep Baptists out of central Karlovac.

But Ruzicka dismisses the opposition with a wave of his hand, confident the same Lord who protected him during the war will now help him grow a thriving church -- and keep him a winner.

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Love in action boosts
church growth in Croatia

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press
4/8/96

ZAGREB, Croatia (BP)--During four years of bloody war in the former Yugoslavia, Southern Baptists have quietly sent almost \$3 million worth of food, cooking supplies and other help to victims on all sides.

Those four years of love in action are now boosting church planting across Croatia.

People throughout the region have come to see Baptists as a people who care, people with a message that just might be worth hearing.

Soon after the war broke out, Croatian Baptists set up aid organizations to channel food and aid from Southern Baptists and other Christian and humanitarian organizations. As they handed out food parcels, they also distributed thousands of Bibles, tracts and other Christian literature. And they have preached on television and radio.

This past winter, Baptists helped keep hundreds of thousands of refugees alive with ongoing food distribution. For example, Baptists shipped more than two dozen truckloads of food into the Tuzla area of Bosnia within weeks after the road between Zagreb and Tuzla was reopened.

In February, women trekked through snow to Karlovac Baptist Church to pick up parcels of food, cooking oil and other basic supplies to help get them through the winter. Some pulled the food back home on sleds. Scenes like this have been repeated in towns across Croatia in recent years.

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Many refugees are trying to start life over with few possessions in houses which are little more than empty shells. "Those people will need longer-term help than those who stayed in their homes," says Ivan Vacek, coordinator for Duhovna Stvarnost (Spiritual Reality), one of the two main Baptist humanitarian relief agencies in Croatia.

Unfortunately, the amount of aid coming into Croatia now is decreasing, Vacek says, although many here will need help for months or years to come.

But Baptists say their four years of labor under fire have helped create a new day in evangelism and church planting.

"We are quite enthusiastic. Our churches are growing and we have some great new projects on the way," says Branko Lovrec, president of the Croatian Baptist Union, which now claims 33 churches and about 2,800 members.

Lovrec points to growth points across the country. Twenty-five people have been meeting for Bible studies in Split, a major coastal city, and are looking for a building in which to start a church. In Karlovac, a key city between Zagreb and the coastal city of Rijeka, two churches have doubled their membership in recent years, and one new work in nearby Plaski has grown to more than 70 members since it started late last year.

Zagreb Baptist Church in the capital city is expanding its sanctuary to better accommodate overflow crowds at two Sunday morning services. A Baptist church in Petrinja, Croatia, reopened in December and 20 people attend.

Croatian Baptists also are starting churches in Bosnia -- in Tuzla, for example, the city where U.S. troops have established a presence.

In Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital, Teufik Cerovic, a former Muslim, has restarted a Baptist church which closed during the war. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board contributed about \$150,000 toward the purchase of this building. It opened in January 1992, just three months before the war broke out in Bosnia.

To help with evangelistic efforts, Southern Baptists have sent five new missionaries to join Nela Williams, a veteran foreign missionary who has served many years in Zagreb. She has been active in Bible translating and earlier taught in the Baptist seminary that wound up on the Serbian side of the border after Yugoslavia broke apart. In recent years she has focused on equipping Croatian Baptists to teach in their churches and has worked with Zagreb Baptist Church as a teacher.

The Foreign Mission Board also provided \$14,000 to Croatian Baptists to help them produce their news/evangelism magazine, which is widely distributed. Devotional materials published by Croatian Baptists will be sent into Serbia and Macedonia, possible now because postal service has been re-established between the countries.

Southern Baptists in Indiana also will help Croatian Baptists between this spring and the fall of 1998 through a partnership agreement. Indiana Baptists expect to send dozens of teams into the region for church construction, discipleship training, Sunday school leader training, children's work, sports camps and many other projects.

"This partnership will be very positive," says Branko Lovrec.

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Robert Denny dead at 81;
was BWA leader, 1968-80

Baptist Press
4/8/96

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--Robert S. Denny, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance from 1968-80, who played a significant role in defending religious freedom during the communist totalitarianism of Eastern Europe, died at noon on Good Friday, April 5, at the Quality Home Care, Orlando, Fla:

Denny, 81, had suffered for the past two years from Alzheimer's disease.

"Now he is at peace," said his wife, Jane.

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Denny held his first BWA position in 1950 when he became chairman of the BWA youth committee. In 1956 he was elected BWA associate secretary for youth work.

In this position, through involvement in planning BWA meetings and travels on behalf of the BWA around the world, Denny was recommended to the post of general secretary.

A native of Kentucky and a lawyer, Denny never practiced law but upon graduation from law school served as director of Baptist student work at Louisiana State University and First Baptist Church, Baton Rouge. He was at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, as director of religious activities, 1939-41, and the Baptist Sunday School Board as associate secretary of student work, 1945-56.

"He will be remembered as a great student leader and BWA youth leader and determined BWA general secretary in bringing Baptists together around the world," said Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary

In addition to his wife, Denny is survived by two daughters, Allie W. Denny, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and Julia G. Denny, Woodbridge, Va.; four grandchildren and two great grandchildren. A son, Robert F. Denny Jr., is deceased.

Funeral services will be April 9 at 2 p.m. at First Baptist Church, Windmere, Fla.

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**Georgetown's Jim Reid dies;
was coach for 23 seasons**

**Baptist Press
4/8/96**

GEORGETOWN, Ky. (BP)--Georgetown (Ky.) College's head basketball Jim Reid, who won his 500th game Dec. 1, died April 4 at his home in Georgetown.

Reid, 48, who battled cancer, continued coaching the then-No. 1-ranked Tigers in 1994, after a cancerous lung was removed Jan. 17. He returned 12 days later to coach the Tigers while receiving radiation and chemotherapy treatments.

Reid had the most wins in the state of Kentucky aside from Denny Crumb, head basketball coach at the University of Louisville, who has a 571-215 overall record in his 25th year.

In his 23 seasons as head coach of the men's basketball team, Reid became the seventh-winningest active coach in the NAIA and led his Tiger basketball teams to be the second-winningest active men's basketball teams during the past five and 10 years. He was inducted into the NAIA Basketball Hall of Fame in Tulsa, Okla., in March.

In the past five years, Reid led his teams to a 155-24 overall record, two Final Four finishes and one Final Eight finish in NAIA national tournament play and was named an NAIA National Coach of the Year.

A native of Beaver Dam, Ky., Reid began what was to become his long career at Georgetown as a member of the men's basketball team from 1966-70. Along with teammate and 1972 Olympic Team basketball captain Kenny Davis, Reid led the Tigers to 82 wins in his four-year career and became one of the top 20 scorers in the college's history.

After graduation in 1970, Reid served as an assistant coach at Georgetown, received his master's degree in education and began teaching health and physical education classes. In 1973, at age 25, Reid took over the reins as head coach of the Tigers' squad.

When it was announced that Reid was named by the Lexington Herald-Leader as one of the top 10 Kentucky sportsmen of the year for 1994, local radio personality Scott Pierce of Lexington's WLXG radio said, "In battling cancer, Jim Reid displayed courage and an attitude his players will remember forever. It's one thing to teach players not to lose games; it's another to team them to win life's bigger battles."

Survivors include Reid's wife, Nancy; two children, Shannon, a 1991 Georgetown graduate, and Jack, a senior at Georgetown; his mother, Gladys Reid of Beaver Dam; and a brother, John Harlin Reid of Lexington. The funeral was April 6 in the college's John L. Hill Chapel.

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Transplant athlete had
winning spirit, faith

By Russell N. Dilday

NORTH LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--During Jerry Cound's brief life, he received two heart transplants, completed a college education and competed globally in the World Transplant Olympics. He was only 25 when heart failure claimed his life March 15 while playing basketball on vacation in Valencia, Spain.

In addition to hurdling huge medical obstacles and establishing a world-class athletic record, Cound also is remembered by friends, fellow church members and family for his testimony of faith.

"He had a heart for people and he had a heart for God and his righteousness," said Adam Jordan, who attended junior high school, Sunday school and Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., with Cound. "In everything he did, that seemed like what he was after."

Sharing his testimony during the 1995 Arkansas Baptist youth convention in Little Rock, Cound listed "sports and church" as the two key influences in his life while growing up.

"I was always involved with my church with mission projects and Bible studies," said Cound, a member of Park Hill Baptist Church in North Little Rock. "I went to Canada and Guatemala with different missions trips."

Cound also noted, "I come from a very athletic family."

Describing his father as a tremendous athlete, Cound recounted "it was said at one time he could have gone to the Olympics ... (He) set some state records in track and field and was a tremendous athlete in basketball and baseball." Cound's older brother, Mike, and sister, Chela, played college basketball and volleyball.

Cound's faith often was evident while playing sports, especially basketball, Jordan recalled. "On the court, he had a great attitude. I never saw him get mad. I never saw any temper at all."

Jordan described Cound's playing style as "aggressive. He was real quick and a real team player. He had a lot of endurance." After Jordan and Cound began playing city and YMCA leagues after college, Jordan said, "We'd play back-to-back three-on-three games and he never missed a step."

Although one of Cound's deepest wishes was to excel in sports like his father and siblings, a heart disease contracted as a child damaged his heart muscles, excluding him from school sports.

"At two weeks old, I had a virus ... that went to my heart and almost killed me," he noted at the statewide gathering of young people.

"But I survived and it left some scar tissue on the heart in a condition ... which is basically just a weakened heart muscle. So growing up I had this heart condition but I never would admit it to anybody. I never admitted it even to myself. I always thought I was very normal.

"As far as I knew, in elementary school I was faster than all my friends and was just as ... strong as any of them," he said. "So I didn't think there was anything wrong with me."

"He did not want other people talking to him about his problems," said his father, Gerald Cound. "He did not want them to consider him any differently than anybody else.

"Jerry's heart was tough," his dad added. "I think he knew tough love.

"To be honest, that's the script we wrote as a family," said the elder Cound. "We emphasized early on we weren't going to treat Jerry any differently than we treated our other children. We didn't expect anything from anybody and we had to go out and make things go for ourselves and there was no reason to complain about things.

"So I never heard Jerry complain about anything," his dad said. "Even in the depths of his toughest times, he never once ... complained."

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But a physical examination prior to junior high school showed his heart "was working on about 25 percent of what it should be working on," said the younger Cound. "It was just compensating and ... working harder than it should." The tests showed "that I didn't need to compete in junior high athletics ... I was very upset and very disappointed. I wanted to follow in my brother's and sister's footsteps and even set some of my own records like my father had."

Despite being unable to compete in school athletics, "I was still playing church basketball and YMCA basketball and stayed in good shape," he said.

Luke Flesher, Park Hill's minister of pastoral care and Cound's former youth minister at the church, observed Cound's dedication while playing church basketball. "Whatever he did, it was never 100 percent. It was always 120 percent. He always dived into the bleachers" going after a basketball.

Cound's life was interrupted again when, at age 15, "I got sick and went into the hospital with pneumonia" and other complications, he shared during his testimony. "I was basically on my deathbed and getting worse. Then they diagnosed heart failure."

Jerry was taken to Houston, where doctors decided to transplant a new heart. Describing that experience as "tough," Jerry said, "I lost 20 pounds and they were feeding me through IVs and were doing everything for me. The month before, I had been playing basketball. I had my own little lawn mowing service. And all of a sudden I was down and out."

He received his new heart June 1, 1986. In Jerry's words, "Everything really went well for five years."

He continued to be active and participated in the World Transplant Olympics in Singapore in 1989, the same year he enrolled at Ouachita Baptist University. His primary events at the Olympic competitions, said his father, were running "the 100, 200 and long jump ... He was also a volleyball competitor."

Jerry again participated in the World Transplant Olympics in 1991 in Budapest, Hungary. Following the games, he recalled, "I got sick. We thought I just had a little bug. But I passed out in my apartment. My roommate said I quit breathing for about 30 seconds."

The next morning he was back in Houston. "They told me I might have another transplant. They said the only reason they would give me one is if they found the perfect heart."

On Sept. 23, 1991, doctors told Jerry they had found that heart. "I started thinking about what they were going to do to me. I said let's go for it. I came through and got a stronger, healthier heart."

During a bout with rejection the next month, which Jerry said was common for transplant patients, he experienced a low point in his recovery. "I was laying there in bed one day and was just feeling terrible and was crying in my bed."

"He almost gave up," his dad said. "There came a time when I got very angry and threatened to throw him out of bed. We both cried. After a day or two, things straightened out. He had gotten to a point where he wasn't for sure he wanted to continue everything. I needed his fighting spirit to make things go."

"I said, 'God, just let me die,'" Cound recalled. "'Why do you keep putting me though this? Let me go. I'm ready.' The next thing I knew I was waking up and was feeling fine and from that point on I got better and better."

He returned to OBU the next semester. Ouachita classmate Wade Tomlinson met Cound when Tomlinson and one of Cound's close friends, Brian McKinney, took Cound home following his second operation. Tomlinson said he noticed then that Cound's "heart's desire was to live life to its fullest."

"That meant taking risks, being open to friends and to people regardless of who they were," Tomlinson said. "It meant taking risks not only physically and athletically, but also relationally because he wanted to experience all that life had to offer."

"I remember coming home from Houston," Tomlinson continued. "Jerry said, 'This heart might last five years.' Even though he didn't talk about it a lot, he knew he wasn't going to live forever."

Cound's recovery was hampered when personal tragedy struck his family in February 1991. "I got a call from my father. My mother had passed away. My mother was the angel in my life. She took care of me through just about everything.

"Losing my mother was a tough thing," he said. "It was a lot tougher than any transplant or surgery."

Cound went on to participate in more U.S. and World Transplant Games. He also was chosen by Gov. Jim Guy Tucker to represent the state at the National Victory Celebration in Washington in 1993.

Carolyn Dowling, recognition specialist for the Arkansas Department of Human Services' division of volunteerism cited Cound at the time for his "remarkable strength of purpose in continuing his education and competing in the United States Transplant Games soon after his heart surgeries." She noted Tucker "chose Jerry as an example of the great resolve of the human spirit and as an inspiring example to all of us."

Cound graduated from Ouachita in 1994 and began work as the fitness director for the Downtown Little Rock YMCA. He also used his testimony to speak to church and civic groups.

"Life is good," he told an estimated 3,000 youth at last year's youth convention. "Life is very good for me. I'm very blessed. Each year I've traveled to the World Transplant Olympics. I've been to Singapore, Budapest, Vancouver and England and all over the U.S.

"Just like my father, although I wasn't able to set some records in college, I was able to set my own records in both world and national Transplant Olympics.

"Every day I have to deal with different trials," he added. "My trials are just a little different. I don't know why God has allowed me to live this long. An average heart transplant lives about five years after surgery and that is something I think about a lot. But I try to live life to the fullest and try to give God my all and I hope I do."

"He sensed every moment was valuable, and he was ready," said Flesher. "I think as time went along, he matured and came to an awareness that his life was fragile, but he never focused on that."

"His spirit testified to who he was," commented Jordan, who worked alongside Jerry in the OBU admissions office. "There was so much evidence in his life of the Lord and his purpose."

Confidently sharing that perspective, Jerry quoted Psalm 73:26 to participants at the state youth convention. "My heart and my flesh may fail," he acknowledged, "but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

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CORRECTION: In the Southern Baptist Convention program, published 4/2/96, please correct the name of one church listed relating to the Thursday morning, June 13, session to Coggin Avenue Baptist Church, not Coggins.

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