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**Sadness overcomes missionary
as he leaves Liberia behind**

By Marty Groll

**Baptist Press
4/15/96**

DAKAR, Senegal (BP)--As the shoreline of Liberia faded into the distance underneath a smoky haze, Bradley Brown's insides wrenched with grief.

Brown, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary from Marietta, Ga., knew the helicopter airlifting him to safety April 12 was swiftly putting distance between him and the place he called home for more than three decades.

How he left crushed him the most. "We left so many dear people almost in a state of shock. They were in bewilderment as they tried to help us get ready to go. It was just almost more than I could take," Brown said after evacuating to Dakar, Senegal, with his wife and six other missionaries.

"You can't be in a place for 33 years and leave it like that, and just say to yourself, 'Well, that's the way it is.' You can't expect it that way."

Missionaries leaving with the Browns were Rachel DuBard of Carrollton, Miss.; Felix and Dene Greer, both of Jackson, Miss.; John T. McPherson of Knoxville, Tenn.; and James and Jane Park, both of Paducah, Ky. Edward and Fran Laughridge, of Rock Hill, S.C., decided to pass up that airlift, but they too were forced to evacuate shortly afterward. They arrived in Dakar April 13.

Mission board policy leaves the decision of whether to go or stay to the discretion of each missionary. Often Foreign Mission Board missionaries are among the last to leave besieged areas because of ties with friends who live there and the openness to Jesus Christ they sense among people in the midst of uncertainty and conflict.

Relief at barely escaping death didn't figure in Brown's memories as he recalled the ordeal he and his colleagues lived through after civil war violence began in the wee hours of April 6 and degenerated into bloody anarchy.

Relief, no. Sadness, yes. Sadness for the place where he and his wife, Carolyn, of East Point, Ga., reared their four children. Sadness for the Liberian friends they left behind.

In Senegal, the missionary evacuees -- veterans of Liberia -- told of a country they had never known before, not even in other days of the six-year civil war. Still fresh were images of death witnessed through bullet-proof windows in a U.S. Embassy vehicle speeding along the streets of Monrovia.

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The group had planned to leave in a convoy. But just moments before their embassy escort was to arrive, they were told by two-way radio to abandon their cars. Carrying a piece of luggage each, they piled in with an embassy security officer and sped away -- just as armed troops broke into their compound. "The very time we were rushing out our back gate, fighters were coming in the front to get our vehicles," Brown said.

A high-speed drive carried the missionaries around the city, past people taking potshots at each other while hanging off or standing atop vehicles commandeered from peacekeeping troops. It also took them within sight of what had been a serene area, where United Nations buildings were now billowing out columns of smoke.

"This had to be one of the saddest days of my life," Brown said. "The whole city is being destroyed. The fighters are on a high. The saddest thing is the anarchy that reigns now -- and the suffering of the people."

Years of civil war had forced Southern Baptist missionaries to move into housing on a compound on the outskirts of the capital city, more stable than outlying areas because of west African peacekeeping troops under United Nations command. Missionaries have worked to meet human needs by participating in hunger relief and have fought to keep a seminary going. Until recent weeks, the seminary had been meeting in a rented building, after successive groups of peacekeepers commandeered the Baptist seminary compound.

The security officer who rescued the missionaries negotiated their evacuation with a general of the faction who controlled the surrounding territory, Brown said. Brown had felt protection from this faction and from the U.S. military and embassy since shelling first began.

Through it all, he knew it was God, ultimately, who was protecting him and the others. "We had the Lord and his angels," Brown said.

In Dakar, missionaries will be meeting for the next several days with leaders of the Foreign Mission Board's west Africa area office. They are trying to determine together what the future holds for their ministry.

Brown remembered his mother asking him a couple of years before she died in 1978, "'Son, don't you think your work in Liberia is finished now?' I had to say to her then, 'No, Momma, the Lord hasn't told me that.' But there's a strange feeling it is now.

"I'm afraid this was our farewell to Liberia."

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Rankin, FMB staff visit BSSB;
Draper sees global BSSB role

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
4/15/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--It is not the Foreign Mission Board's responsibility to do missions around the world on behalf of Southern Baptists, FMB President Jerry Rankin told a group of managers and professional employees of the Baptist Sunday School Board April 12.

"The Great Commission is given to every Christian, to every church and every entity and agency of the (Southern Baptist Convention)," he said. "I see the Foreign Mission Board's role as mobilizing people and facilitating the involvement of all Southern Baptists in reaching all the peoples of the world for Christ."

Rankin visited the Sunday School Board along with 26 other FMB employees to dialogue about ways the two agencies can work together to promote missions awareness and involvement. A group of BSSB employees visited the Foreign Mission Board in March for similar meetings.

"No one has more contact with Southern Baptists than you do through your services, programs, literature and materials," Rankin told BSSB workers. "You have resources and opportunities that are unique and I know that (Sunday School Board President) Dr. (James T.) Draper (Jr.) would agree with me that they are not just to serve kingdom work here in our Southern Baptist churches, but churches throughout the world."

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Rankin enumerated several ways BSSB employees can assist in foreign missions, from including missions information in literature and periodicals to having discipleship and Bible study resources "contextualized and translated" for use overseas. He also mentioned the possibility of involving BSSB consultants in training and equipping missionaries in leadership, pastoral and editorial skills and expressed hope the board would consider sending volunteer teams of employees for direct involvement on the field.

Draper, who has frequently expressed his vision for the Sunday School Board to be a global publishing agency, said: "This is what we ought to be about. It's not something we have an opportunity to do; it's something we must do."

With a record number of foreign missionaries on the field -- 4,125 as of Jan. 1 -- and recent increases in the number of baptisms and church starts overseas, Rankin told BSSB employees there has never been a more exciting time to be involved in foreign missions.

"We are now working with 3,200 missionary candidates in the appointment process and that doesn't even include more than 2,000 others who have contacted our office expressing an interest in missions who have not yet followed through, or the 4,000 students and young people who have expressed a call to missions involvement," Rankin reported. "What that says to me is that God is about to do something in the future beyond what we can imagine."

Despite Southern Baptists' success in foreign missions, Rankin said in an earlier board-wide chapel service "there are still more people who have never heard the good news of Jesus Christ than ever before."

The FMB has identified 2,466 distinct ethnic and linguistic groups that have not had access to the gospel, Rankin said, adding many are located in predominantly Muslim and Hindu countries closed to a traditional missionary witness. Of that number of unreached groups, however, only 193 have more than 1 million people, and Rankin said the FMB already has personnel assigned to 100 of those groups.

"God has not given any church the right to draw a circle around their community and say, 'This is our mission field,' when the heart and mission of God is to reach the whole world. We must keep reaching out," Rankin said.

"God's purpose will be fulfilled. He doesn't have to use Southern Baptists. He doesn't have to use the Foreign Mission Board. And he doesn't even need the Baptist Sunday School Board. But he is giving us the opportunity to be faithful in joining him in that mission (of reaching the world for Christ)."

When asked by one BSSB employee what he would like for every Southern Baptist to know about foreign missions, Rankin responded: "First, that God is at work. Second, that he is at work through the Foreign Mission Board. And third, that they can be involved in it."

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(BP) photo posted in the SBCNet News Room and also mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Andy Stanley's church not
Southern Baptist, for now

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
4/15/96

ATLANTA (BP)--Andy Stanley, son of former Southern Baptist Convention President Charles Stanley, said the church he is helping start in north Atlanta will not be Southern Baptist, for now.

The new church, North Point Community Church, has yet to accept members, purchase land or meet weekly. About 1,600 people attend Sunday evening worship services held twice a month. Worshipers currently meet in a conference center in the neighboring county to where leaders hope to build.

Stanley said the decision was a difficult one, based on the church's vision and mission. The decision is not a criticism of the Southern Baptist Convention, he said, adding two-thirds of the leadership come from Southern Baptist backgrounds. "I'm very grateful for the convention, and we will support financially Southern Baptist causes."

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Stanley, 38, was on staff at First Baptist Church of Atlanta for 10 years. A graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, Stanley preached three years at the church's northern campus. He left the church in August 1995, disagreeing with his father's continued leadership at the church while wife Anna pursued a divorce. Anna Stanley has since withdrawn her petition for divorce.

The younger Stanley said First Baptist Atlanta was criticized because members don't use Southern Baptist literature, don't send students to Southern Baptist seminaries and "don't support the Cooperative Program that much."

"I felt like we would sort of fall into that same category," he said.

He added the local association had expressed a preference that mission congregations give 5 percent of offering receipts to the association and 10 percent to the Cooperative Program, the convention's funding channel for denominational agencies and missions work.

"When I really understood what it meant to be a good, card-carrying Southern Baptist, I just don't think that fits the personality of our church right now," he said. Stanley said he wants the church to send a higher percentage of dollars to world missions and less to such domestic efforts as state Baptist colleges.

Unchurched people's attitudes toward Baptists and less than full support for Southern Baptist programs were other factors in the decision, Stanley said.

"It's not just Southern Baptist. It's the word Baptist," he said. "For a lot of unchurched and unbelievers, the term Baptist is an obstacle. Whether it should be or not is a whole other discussion, but the fact is -- it just is right now."

As an example, Stanley noted a Southern Baptist church in Thomasville, Ga., gained national attention when a deacon asked the body of a racially mixed baby be exhumed from the church cemetery.

"Suddenly, you're in the boat with a group of people who you probably have nothing in common with in any way. But unfortunately, the outside world just says, 'All Baptists are the same,'" he said. "I understand that's unfair in some respects."

SBC statements on moral or legislative issues also would impact the church's evangelistic efforts, Stanley said. "My values are definitely in alignment with those decisions. It's just going on record with those decisions kind of skews people's thinking," he said. "It's not really an issue in presenting the gospel."

The church likely would not use the Sunday School Board's Bible study materials, Stanley said, which he said target a medium-size church. "A lot of the larger Southern Baptist churches struggle with the same (question)," he said.

The combination of these issues led the church steering committee to vote unanimously to not affiliate with a denomination. "What was going to happen is we were going to be a bad Southern Baptist church."

Church leaders had pursued being a Southern Baptist mission and affiliating with the Roswell Baptist Association, said director of missions Leonard King. "I realized at their first meeting, when they had 2,000 that this was not going to be an ordinary mission start."

The association received a letter in late March thanking them for their support and informing them of their decision, King said.

Stanley added he wants to keep a door open to later affiliation with Southern Baptists. "Six months down the road we may say, 'You know, maybe this isn't as big a deal as we thought.'"

King also said he wants to keep the door open for the church to join the association later. "I thought this would be a very strong Southern Baptist church."

Bill Taylor, director of the Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division, meanwhile, noted the board's Bible study literature, especially the Life & Work curriculum, focuses more on generational issues, not church size.

"But we are interested in meeting the needs of all sizes of Southern Baptist churches, and some of our materials are now being customized to do exactly that," said Taylor, who served on staff at three mega-churches in Georgia, Texas and Arizona before joining the Sunday School Board staff.

"I certainly respect any Southern Baptist's right to choose their own materials, but I hope he'll take a second look at what we have to offer. I think he'll find our generational approach is on target."

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Chip Alford contributed to this story.

3 B&H books in running
for CBA Gold Medallions

Baptist Press
4/15/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Three books published by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Broadman & Holman Publishers have been selected as finalists in the 1996 Gold Medallion Awards Competition sponsored by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association.

The books are "Out of Their Faces and into Their Shoes" by John Kramp, missions/evangelism category; "The Empowered Leader" by Calvin Miller, Christian ministry category; and "In His Steps, 100th anniversary edition" by Charles Sheldon, classics category.

From 440 entries by 57 publishers, five finalists have been selected in each of 22 categories. Books are judged for content, literary quality, design and significance of contribution.

The winners will be announced July 13 during the annual convention of the Christian Booksellers Association to be held in Anaheim, Calif.

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Polly Dillard dies,
was prof at Southern

Baptist Press
3/15/96

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Polly Hargis Dillard, the first woman to teach Christian education at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, died April 11 following a battle with cancer. She was 79.

Dillard joined the faculty of the Louisville, Ky., seminary in 1954 as an assistant professor of elementary education. Dillard's two female predecessors on the faculty had served in the school of church music.

Dillard remained at Southern until 1958, when she resigned after her marriage to Badgett Dillard, a seminary administrator. At the time, seminary policy prohibited two members of a family from serving on its staff.

Badgett Dillard was executive vice president of the seminary when he died in 1986.

After leaving the seminary, Polly Dillard helped begin the Head Start program in Kentucky. She also wrote several books and articles on the Christian education of children.

In 1977, she became preschool/children's consultant with the Kentucky Baptist Convention. She served in that role until her retirement in 1981.

Dillard, a native of Somerset, Ky., earned the A.B. degree from the University of Kentucky in Lexington and the M.A. degree from George Peabody College for Teachers (now merged with Vanderbilt University) in Nashville, Tenn. She is survived by a son, a daughter and a grandson.

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Hard-working vols enable
ministry to the hungry

By Julie Jenkins

Baptist Press
4/15/96

DANVILLE, Va. (BP)--Harry Parrish trucks more than 300 miles a week collecting potatoes, cabbages and other foods for the hungry. Then he forklifts every bushel, every crate onto the shelves at God's Storehouse in Danville, Va.

It's a thankless job, and that's why he does it.

"I know how to do the work. I have time to do the work. So, I'm doing it," Parrish says. Volunteering is that simple.

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God's Storehouse is an ecumenical food pantry ministry shared by more than 100 congregations in Danville and the surrounding Pittsylvania County. God's Storehouse feeds almost 17,000 families a year, serving 100 of those families per day. Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons especially keep the place hopping.

Parrish, a member of Liberty Baptist Church in Callands, Va., plus a large crew of volunteers make the operation possible. A well-disciplined Air Force veteran, he is a man of few words and quick action.

One woman enters the Storehouse with her two children and asks, "Who's the owner of this place?"

Parrish returns, "God is, ma'am."

"Well, is he around?"

Parrish just grins.

Families without food stamps may eat at God's Storehouse every two weeks. Parrish knows the regulars and makes new friends easily, and his dependability and dedication to hard work are his testimony.

Lewis Harris, pastor of Woodberry Hills Baptist Church in Danville and president of the God's Storehouse board of directors, says Baptist volunteers like Parrish reflect a faithfulness that glorifies God, even in picking out mushy tomatoes from bushel baskets. The pantry operation requires 30 to 40 volunteers per week.

"We have good community support," Harris says. Businesses as far as Lynchburg regularly give their excess or day-old produce for distribution at God's Storehouse. "It is very much an interdenominational effort. We started out as a food pantry, but we have also given away furniture, appliances and clothing."

While Baptists in the Pittsylvania Baptist Association celebrate their eighth year with this ministry, they also celebrate involvement in prison ministry, substance abuse programming, migrant ministry, special worship services and partnership missions.

"The volunteer efforts in the Pittsylvania Baptist Association are the most vital part of our whole work," says Alden Hicks, director of missions. "We have set a goal to serve 1 million volunteer hours within a five-year period. From the reports I've heard, we've accomplished 250,000 volunteer hours per year for the past two years among our 48 churches. I believe we're going to give well over our goal."

Volunteers at God's Storehouse make a big difference for low-income families in the Danville area. "Harry Parrish has been one of our most loyal workers," Harris says. Parrish even drove out to help during a week-long snow storm. Fewer families came for food that week, but shelving, sorting and boxing afforded endless work.

"A lot of people think you have to have special talent to volunteer your time," Parrish says, "but we're just hard workers." While he decided to get involved after retiring from the military, he says several other volunteers wanted to offer service because God's Storehouse helped them in their own time of need.

Hard-working volunteers like Parrish put food in hungry stomachs. "After eight years of working here, it's still not boring," he says. "I don't mind even working overtime -- anything to get the job done."

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Jenkins is a free-lance writer in Richmond, Va.

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Southern Baptists added 1,458 congregations in '95," dated 4/12/96, please note:

HMB research notified Baptist Press the story has an error. Instead of the congregation count given, it should be 45,836. That number is a combination of the BSSB's official count of churches (40,120) plus the HMB missions count (5,716).

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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