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**Family advocate, Disney spokesman  
debate Disney's 'Gay Day' support**

**By Ken Walker**

**Baptist Press  
7/17/96**

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--Is Walt Disney World a willing host of the annual "Gay and Lesbian Day" that is drawing larger crowds each June? Or is the company simply allowing homosexuals to purchase tickets to the Magic Kingdom like anyone else?

Southern Baptists nationally were alerted to the issue when messengers at the convention's annual meeting in June adopted a resolution citing such "Gay Days" among several reasons for a possible Disney boycott.

David Caton, director of the Florida chapter of the American Family Association -- which already has called for a national boycott -- said he believes Disney indeed is a willing host to thousands of homosexuals who come to the Orlando, Fla., theme park for the annual event.

Two years ago, AFA's Florida newsletter printed a photograph of two men wearing "Gay Day" T-shirts and a photo of a pamphlet they were distributing listing various events and encouraging homosexuals to write Disney a letter of appreciation.

The pair were among several volunteers who told an AFA representative they were Disney employees acting as "official/ unofficial greeters," said Caton, a member of Ottawa Baptist Church in Tampa.

Those efforts, Caton said, have since been discontinued, as well as signs informing park guests of the event and group discount tickets.

"We thought it was interesting that those three things were dealt with by Disney," Caton said. "We didn't see anybody handing out anything this year. That was a situation where Disney had control and exercised it."

In its June newsletter, the Florida group reprinted a copy of a memo sent to its office by an unnamed Disney employee. In the memo, a manager requested a management team member from each Disney resort unit in Orlando to volunteer for "Gay Pride Day" on June 1. The employee told AFA it was the first time the company had asked for "Gay Day" volunteers.

But Bill Warren, manager of public affairs for Disney in Orlando, maintained Disney has nothing to do with planning or hosting the event.

Since he wasn't aware of the AFA photos, he said he couldn't comment on them. But he said the e-mail message reprinted in AFA's newsletter was simply a request for extra help to answer questions from large numbers of anticipated guests.

Nor does the schedule of events, including a breakfast buffet at Disney's Continental Resort and an evening dance at Pleasure Island, imply Disney officially backs the homosexual gathering, Warren said.

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"Any group that comes in and pays the going rate is allowed to have a breakfast at the Continental Resort," Warren said. "They come in just like they come in to the park and purchase tickets.

"As for Pleasure Island, it's a similar circumstance. There are no special advance tickets sold or any kind of package put together. The group instructs their clientele to come there on that night and buy tickets. It's not a special event planned by the Walt Disney Company."

Meanwhile, a veteran Disney management employee confirmed it is not unusual for the resort to request additional assistance for special events. The company also wanted to be sure additional employees were on hand if protesters showed up, the Disney veteran said, noting, "I think they're anticipating problems as this thing escalates."

A Christian, the Disney employee asked that his name not be used because Disney frowns on anyone talking to the press except its authorized spokesmen.

Disney is not trying to enlarge the homosexual event, he added, because the company likes to avoid controversy -- although he acknowledged his employer does less to "play it down" than in the past.

"We don't want the controversy that would come in saying gay people aren't welcome," the employee said. "If you define promotion as advertising, that isn't done. I don't think we go out of our way to promote it, but we don't go out of our way to discourage it. We take a solid fence position."

But these statements fail to convince Caton. He questioned a company the size of Disney World needing to ask for extra volunteers for any event.

Caton called that a way for Disney to provide management assistance to homosexuals without advertising it as such. Caton said he and another observer witnessed a group of volunteers wearing light-blue hats and multi-colored Mickey badges at this June's event.

"In overhearing their talk, they were not there to help the straight people," Caton said. "They were there to escort and inform homosexuals about the event. Realistically, (Disney) reformed the nature of the 'official-unofficial greeters.'

"These people weren't dressed in attire that would lead you to believe they were Disney employees."

Among other factors Caton cited as evidence of Disney support for "Gay Days:"

-- The failure of the company to take action after a cartoon from Gay Chicago Magazine appeared on a copyrighted Internet home page ([www.gayday.com](http://www.gayday.com)). The cartoon portrays Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck holding hands as they walk into "Gay Day," with Mickey saying, "... it's so nice to spend the day with family."

While the company sued a kindergarten for painting Disney characters on the wall of its child-care facility, the company didn't take legal action to prevent the cartoon's use promoting the sixth annual "Gay Day," Caton said.

"I think if you check libel law," Warren responded, "you'll see that editorial cartoons have a special place in our realm of freedom of speech. And if you'll look at the fine print of the cartoon, you'll see that it came out of a magazine. Disney protects its images and wherever there's a clear violation of our copyright, it's our policy (to pursue it)."

-- Company policy regarding other special events shows preferential treatment for "Gay Day," which is held during the day. AFA has requested it be changed to a nighttime setting, such as a mid-November homosexual event at Disneyland in California scheduled from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Disney World's "Grad Night" for high school seniors and "Night of Joy," a Christian music festival, are held after normal operating hours, Caton pointed out.

"I can't speak for Disneyland," Warren responded, "and I can't speak for this event. We don't plan it. Someone else does the planning that's not involved with the Walt Disney resort."

-- Allowing homosexuals to wear red T-shirts as a way of proclaiming their sexual preference. Disney won't allow a few dozen gang members wearing their colors to enter Disneyland in California, Caton said, but last year allowed 2,000 men dressed in drag to walk around the Magic Kingdom.

However, the Disney management employee said the one-time prohibition against groups wearing same-color shirts faded away in the mid-1980s. He attributed that to many foreign tour groups showing up in similar dress to help identify each other and stay together during their visit.

Still, Caton argued that under state laws Disney has a legal right to prohibit park guests from wearing clothing, exhibiting behavior or distributing literature which promotes homosexual lifestyles.

"'Gay Day at Disney' would not happen if Disney required that homosexual patrons dress and act in the same manner as regular patrons," Caton said. "It wouldn't be 'Gay Day' if homosexual patrons were not allowed to openly promote the homosexual lifestyle."

**Disgust over Disney 'Gay Day'  
registered by other visitors**

**By Ken Walker**

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--After 15 visits to Walt Disney World, Kim Jones won't be returning. The Sarasota, Fla., woman plans to boycott the Magic Kingdom after her experience at this year's "Gay and Lesbian Day" June 1.

Not only did many lesbians make suggestive remarks to her and her mature-looking, 10-year-old niece, homosexual men were whistling at her fiance and yelling crude remarks at him, said Jones, who attends Bay Haven Baptist Church in Sarasota.

"It's disgraceful," she said.

Jones said the most embarrassing incident was taking one of her two daughters into a rest room and seeing two men dressed in skirts entering the stalls. It was obvious they were males because of their hairy legs, she said, and two more were coming in as she and her daughter exited the rest room.

Outside, many other men were wearing skirts, skin-tight tights or muscle shirts with long fingernails and long hair, while the majority of the "Gay Day" participants wore red T-shirts -- the "uniform" for homosexuals, Jones said.

She also was offended by obvious cocaine snorting by homosexuals in front of and behind them as they waited in ride lines, Jones said. After several hours they had seen enough.

"We didn't complain, we just left," she said.

Jones isn't alone in her disgust. Ray Henry, pastor of Belvedere Baptist Church in West Palm Beach, said a couple from his church meets out-of-state relatives for a three-day family reunion at Disney World yearly, but they left early this year because of "Gay Day."

This happened before the family was even aware that Southern Baptists were going to consider a boycott, he said, referring to a resolution adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in June threatening a boycott if the Walt Disney Company continues in an anti-family direction.

"Once people stumble upon these things, you're going to have an automatic boycott," Henry said. "They're not going to let their kids stand in line with gays flaunting their homosexuality. They're going to leave without any SBC resolution."

Henry said others' distasteful experiences likewise have been the subject of much discussion and have prompted a dilemma at Belvedere Baptist. The question is whether to support the upcoming "Night of Joy" Christian music festival, he said, or boycott it and hurt the artists.

"What (Disney) is doing now is offending people," Henry said. "They're having these days and people are leaving. They can jump on Southern Baptists, but we may be helping them out -- they may need to adjust what they're doing."

The outrage extended beyond Florida's borders, too. Four weeks after "Gay Day," a Pennsylvania woman wrote to Disney officials to complain, sending a copy of her letter to the SBC Executive Committee.

Joyce McCoury of Spring Grove, Pa., said she and her husband, Richard, had long awaited a visit to Disney World and were upset there were no signs warning them of "Gay Day." She said she felt her civil rights were violated by having to see some of the things they did and not having a choice to return another day.

"The displays of affection and some of the things we witnessed were appalling to us," McCoury wrote. "There were other people who had children and some of the comments we heard were very upsetting. People were very disgusted that their children had to be subjected to such behavior."

Not all visitors were upset by "Gay Day," however. Houston Chronicle reporter Melissa Fletcher Stoeltje, whose husband is an Episcopalian youth minister, said the homosexuals she observed didn't behave like perverts or monsters.

"They behaved pretty much like human beings," Stoeltje wrote in the Chronicle June 14. "If you can call spending hundreds of dollars to walk around a hot theme park all day normal."

While the occasional man in Mickey Mouse ears or a Fairy Princess hat didn't disturb her 8-year-old son, Stoeltje wrote, adults were a different matter: "You could tell from the grim expressions on the faces of some couples pushing strollers and towing kids that they were none too thrilled to have Gay Day plopped, without warning, in the midst of their costly vacations. You could see that the straight world clearly didn't like being outnumbered for once."

Stoeltje acknowledged, "It didn't help that the back of the official Gay and Lesbian Day T-shirt bore the motto, 'A Day of Magic/A Night of Pleasure' -- a rather randy sentiment for people out to prove they're not 'perverts.'"

Stoeltje concluded her column, "As we boarded the monorail for the Econolodge, I was hoping the gay folks at Disney World were going to behave themselves as the sun went down. Because Gay Day is a great idea -- if it helps us view each other as what we truly are, fellow ticketholders in the big theme park of life."

However, a number of Orlando residents don't share Stoeltje's enthusiasm for "Gay Day," which may be expanded next year. It's being publicized on the copyrighted "Gay Day" home page on the Internet for June 5-9, 1997.

The week after this year's event, the Orlando Sentinel-Star tourism columnist wrote that sponsors hope to turn it into a three-day celebration including Universal Studios and Sea World.

That prospect bothers Barbara Williams, who chairs the current issues committee of Orlando's First Baptist Church.

"What we're troubled about is they're going to advertise in foreign magazines and call Orlando the gay and lesbian vacation spot," Williams said.

However, Williams doesn't plan to boycott the amusement park because of "Gay Day" -- she said she started a long time ago because of Disney-subsidiary movies, such as Miramax's R-rated "Priest," "Kids" and "Pulp Fiction," as well mysticism and New Age material in its Epcot Center exhibits.

"They have a lot of good things, too," Williams said, "American exhibits and other things. But I think the bad overcomes that, especially the movies they've gone into."

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**Christian, anti-Christian upswing  
apparent at Disney, employee says**

**By Ken Walker**

**Baptist Press  
7/17/96**

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--While boycott debates and talk-radio lines heat up around this central Florida tourist mecca, a veteran Disney management employee sees another story being overlooked.

In all his years with the company, he said, there has never been more Christian activity going on within Walt Disney World. Nor as much anti-Christian activity, he added.

The employee, who agreed to speak to Baptist Press on the condition his name not be used, said he reminds his church to pray for the Christians who are working at the mammoth Orlando theme park.

"While Disney can be criticized, and rightly so, there are a bunch of us who need to be prayed for, too," the employee said.

One of his requests is for spiritual support for many small groups of employees throughout Disney World who meet regularly for Bible study and prayer.

"I'm finding out about groups all the time that I didn't know about previously," the employee said. "I'm meeting people I didn't know were Christians. Not that they didn't act like it; we just never talked about it."

Among the resort's Christian meetings is a periodic luncheon for management personnel, which in August will be held for a third time this year. The most recent speaker was popular author John Trent and its next guest will be a business consultant who formerly worked for Campus Crusade for Christ, the Disney employee said.

There is also a company-sanctioned organization called "Crosstalk." Aimed at younger, non-management employees, it sponsored a National Day of Prayer observance in May, he said.

Ironically, the employee said a gay and lesbian group sanctioned by Disney World's cast division has faded from view, with no mentions of its meetings appearing lately in company employee publications.

In addition to multiple prayer groups, an employee has been sending daily entries from the Southern Baptist "Open Windows" devotional to an extensive list of Christians on the company's e-mail system.

Such activity has stirred some complaints, and in one division an executive ordered a devotional group to stop using the conference room for Bible study, the employee said.

However, he said those people simply joined with "Crosstalk" to expand their opportunities for fellowship.

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One thing that has always surprised him is the most popular events sponsored by Disney World are the Christian music festival, "Night of Joy," and the two-week-long "Candlelight Processional" at Epcot Center each December. The three nightly performances are always packed, the employee said.

"The two most consistently popular things we've done have been Christian activities, in a secular company," he said. "I'm sure there's a message there -- that God can use any group or organization to get his message across."

Although he is very concerned about such policies as extending health benefits to homosexual partners of company employees, the employee said he doubts a Disney boycott will be successful.

There are too many properties involved and too many popular items, like family videos and theme parks, that people will continue to use, he said.

However, the employee said he hopes officials from Disney and the Southern Baptist Convention will meet soon to discuss the issue: "That's what's going to change things, if anything is going to change."

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**Listener response gratifying  
to RTVC radio marketing director**

**By C.C. Risenhoover**

**Baptist Press  
7/17/96**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--For Lisa Young, the most gratifying part of her job is the response from listeners -- hearing about and seeing their lives changed for the better.

Young, director of radio marketing for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, is responsible for obtaining public service (free) time for airing five weekly programs produced by the RTVC. Those programs and number of stations currently airing them are: "The Baptist Hour," 407 stations; "Country Crossroads," 867 stations; "MasterControl," 539 stations; "On Track," 431 stations; and "Powerline," 624 stations.

Together, the five programs have a total estimated potential audience of 474 million each week.

"There was this man who deserted his wife," Young recounted. "He started driving across country listening to his car radio. When he got out into one of the western states, he heard Jerry Clower give one of his inspirational messages on 'Country Crossroads.' It caused him to pull his car off the road. He prayed, accepted Christ, turned his car around and went home. He reconciled with his wife and is now a deacon in a church. The couple are committed Christians who are raising two children.

"That's the sort of story we hear often as a result of one of our radio programs."

Born in Louisville, Miss., Young studied about the RTVC in the Baptist youth group, Acteens.

"I was interested in speech and drama when in high school," Young said, "and was very excited to learn that Southern Baptists were so involved in radio and television. I thought the RTVC would be a great place to work, but never imagined that I would get the opportunity."

Young graduated from Mississippi University for Women in Columbus with a major in communications and was offered a graduate school scholarship at Southern Mississippi University in Hattiesburg. Instead of pursuing a graduate degree at the state school, she decided to work at a florist shop in her hometown for a year prior to attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

"When I was a senior in high school and considering colleges, I felt the Lord wanted me to use whatever major I chose for his glory," Young said. "I majored in communications with an emphasis in journalism and public relations. I wasn't sure how the Lord could use me or where, but I turned down the scholarship at Southern Mississippi because I felt the Lord wanted me in seminary.

"It was a step of faith at the time, but I had the Scripture Joshua 1:9 to guide me and it has proven to be true."

That Scripture reads: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Young's first RTVC experience was as an intern for the "Life Today" television program. She became a full-time production assistant for the program in January 1988, but it was discontinued in June of the same year. In July 1988, she became a marketing assistant in radio for the RTVC. She became radio marketing director in July 1990.

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Since the RTVC is the largest Christian producer of programs geared to the public service arena, Young spends much of her time dealing with program directors for secular stations. So, how tough is it to get free time for RTVC-produced radio programs?

"It's not as difficult as some people might think," she said. "People throughout the industry are impressed with the quality of our programs. They also know that our producers are consistent in providing such quality. That's why our programs are in 44 of the top 50 markets in the United States. It's why 'The Baptist Hour' alone is in 24 of those top 50 markets."

Young said when a station provides free time for a program, it may not always be aired at what some people would consider the best time of day or night. However, she does not consider that a major problem.

"Even when we're on a station in the wee hours of the morning, we're reaching people who can't sleep, people who are hurting," she said. "No matter what time one of our programs is aired, we're reaching people that we ought to be reaching."

She said a foreign listener recently wrote: "You are a light in our dark world."

Through her church activities, Young's ministry extends beyond the RTVC. She directs drama for the worship ministry of Southcliff Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

"I direct a drama team that travels to other churches as a ministry," she said. "We do a performance once a month, either at Southcliff or some other church. And every December we do several performances of a 'Singing Christmas Tree' production, which brings thousands of people into our sanctuary."

Young credited much of the positive direction her life has taken to Christian parents, both now retired. Her father is a deacon and her mother is active in Woman's Missionary Union.

"I'm constantly reminded that God goes before me in my job at the RTVC," she said. "Our radio programs are up against some very tough competition, but after sending out promotional material we always have amazing results. That's because the Lord is preparing the way."

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### RTVC radio programs provide spiritual help to millions

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press  
7/17/96

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--When limousine driver Beulah Hurst picked up two men at the Hot Springs, Ark., airport, she told one of the passengers, "If I didn't know better, I would swear you were Jerry Clower. You could pass for Jerry Clower's brother. You could even be his twin."

Clower, humorist and Grand Ole Opry star, is, of course, co-host of "Country Crossroads," the weekly radio program produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission. He is also co-host of the RTVC-produced television version of the weekly country music program.

Hurst's passenger seemed pleased by her observation and said, "Really? What do you know about this Jerry Clower?"

"Well, I listen to him on 'Country Crossroads' and really enjoy the program," she said. "My entire family enjoys it. When it comes on the radio my family and I are very quiet. We don't even answer the telephone ... just let it ring. I've been blessed so much by 'Country Crossroads.'"

Tears welled up in Hurst's eyes and she continued, "I don't know if either of you gentlemen will understand what I'm saying or not, but my husband listened to that 'Country Crossroads' show and it motivated him to go to church. And while at church he got saved. He's a Christian now."

"Gentlemen, I used to dread going home because my husband was a wicked man, but I look forward to going home to him now. We're both in church now ... all of our family is in church. I've had one son-in-law saved. He's had a brother, mother, father and sister-in-law saved. And I credit all the good things that have happened to listening to Jerry Clower's inspirational messages on 'Country Crossroads.'"

She then gave testimony to all that God had done for her family.

Hurst's passenger was, in fact, Clower, who was in Hot Springs for a performance. The other passenger was former "Country Crossroads" producer Jim Rupe, who by this time was crying.

"When we pulled up to the Hot Springs Auditorium," Clower said, "I got out of the car and put an arm around Beulah. I told her, 'Beulah, I am Jerry Clower. And you've thrilled my soul.'"

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"Ain't it wonderful what God can do. Beulah's husband, Leroy, didn't even want to listen to 'Country Crossroads' at first. I'll never forget Beulah telling us, 'We have a happy home now. I can hardly wait to get home.'"

Clower said he often wonders how many times stories such as the one told by Beulah Hurst have been told around the world by others like her.

"Since going on the air, more than a half-million 'Country Crossroads' listeners have written," he said, "but Beulah never wrote to us. We're only going to know what God has done through 'Country Crossroads' when we get to heaven. I'm willing to trust him to keep the record until I get there. When I do get there, I'm going to look at that computer and say, Lord, let me see what 'Country Crossroads' did for you."

The RTVC produces five weekly radio programs -- "The Baptist Hour," "Country Crossroads," "MasterControl," "On Track" and "Powerline."

Ed Malone, RTVC vice president of radio services, recalled a trip he made by Amtrak from Washington to Philadelphia to call on radio stations.

"I was renting a car in Philadelphia and handed my credit card to the young woman behind the counter. She was curious because the card read 'SoBaptRadioTV Comm' and asked what it meant. I told her and she then asked what I did for the RTVC. I told her I produced radio programs and she asked me to name them. When I came to 'Powerline,' she stopped writing and said, 'You've got to be kidding.'"

Malone said the young woman told him that when a teenager she had run away from home and become caught up in drugs. Her life, she told him, was at rock bottom with no help or hope on the horizon.

"But one day I was listening to 'Powerline' on a Philadelphia radio station and the inspirational message I heard changed my life," she said. "I'm now a born-again Christian."

Malone said he was confident there were thousands upon thousands of testimonies about each of the radio programs produced by the RTVC.

"As we travel throughout the United States doing interviews for 'MasterControl,' whether in Hollywood, New York City or rural America," he said, "we're constantly running into people who say they've had a spiritual experience as a result of the program. Willie Ames, an actor who was on the TV program 'Charles in Charge' and who now has a ministry, is quick to tell everyone how 'MasterControl' influenced his life. Michael Gross, who played the father on the TV program 'Family Ties,' tells how he listens to 'MasterControl' on his way to church. TV and radio talk show host Larry King has referred to interviews on 'MasterControl.'

"Like Jerry Clower I'm convinced that this side of heaven we'll never know just how many people have heard our radio programs and been influenced by them.

"One morning a man rededicated his life at the Baptist church I was attending. His testimony was that he was a traveling salesman and that his marriage was on the rocks. When driving home from a trip he listened to 'Country Crossroads' on his car radio. On that particular program, Jerry Clower gave an altar call, so he pulled off the road, went to the Lord in prayer and rededicated his life to Christ.

"There are thousands of stories like this, but I would never have known this one if I hadn't been in his church that day."

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**Tackle fear of witnessing,  
home missions volunteer urges**

**By Sarah Zimmerman**

**Baptist Press  
7/17/96**

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--People who are afraid to share their faith will overcome their fear by doing the very thing they dread, said a Home Mission Board volunteer who leads witness training workshops.

"Fear will diminish and confidence will grow as you do this more," said Dale Griffith of Woodstock, Ga. "The greatest single reason people don't witness is fear, and they're afraid because they don't know how."

While Griffith said most Southern Baptists have been taught how to share Christ, they have not been taught by example. Every witness training program should include a time for participants to go into the community to use what they have learned, he said.

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In a Billy Graham Evangelism Association survey, 50 percent of those questioned said their greatest difficulty in witnessing was fear of how the lost person would react. That is a ploy of Satan, Griffith said.

"Satan is the number one source of fear. He tries to make us think we're going to be failures. We are to initiate sharing the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and leave the results to God," he said. If people reject the gospel presentation, they are rejecting Jesus, not the person witnessing, he said.

Some of the tips Griffith gave to help Christians deal with their fear include:

- 1) Memorize Scriptures such as Philippians 4:13 and 2 Timothy 1:7-8.
- 2) Build relationships with lost people. Have compassion for them and show genuine interest in them.
- 3) Ask questions and listen to their responses. Don't try to dominate the conversation.
- 4) Develop a natural way to present the gospel and make it part of your lifestyle.
- 5) Be relaxed. Go through your gospel presentation with a Christian until you are comfortable.
- 6) Observe the level of your voice. Don't talk loudly or rapidly or with a self-righteous attitude.

Speak softly and gently.

- 7) Use the person's name frequently as you talk and pronounce it correctly.
- 8) Use fear to force you to depend on God and keep you humble.
- 9) Maintain daily fellowship with Christ, including confession of sins and obedience to his commands.
- 10) Stop focusing on programs and methods and focus on God.

Griffith was among the speakers at Home Missions Week, July 6-12 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

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**Photographer Rutledge retiring  
after 30 'impossible' years**

**By Martha Skelton**

**Baptist Press  
7/17/96**

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--As a youth, Don Rutledge was warned his dream of using photography to tell about missions was impossible. On Aug. 1, Rutledge will retire from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board after 30 years of doing the impossible.

"I wanted to be a bridge between the subject and viewers, to introduce nationals and missionaries as somebody I'd like to know about and you need to know about," Rutledge said. "But my pastor said God didn't call a person into that kind of service, only to be a pastor, evangelist or missionary. I was young and thought I had misunderstood my calling."

Rutledge, 65, spent 10 years honing his craft as an assignment photographer for Black Star, a prestigious photographic service in New York. Then talks with communicators at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board gave him an opportunity to start fulfilling his dream. He served as a missions photographer and director of photojournalism services for the Home Mission Board from 1966-80.

From mission trips during his student days through Black Star and Foreign Mission Board assignments overseas, Rutledge's sensitive eye has focused on the world's peoples. He learned to work unobtrusively in all kinds of cultures.

"He has found how to capture the peaks of action that bind people together, those instants when two souls are really communing. People are drawn to his pictures because they're like he's thrown open a window shade on a soul," said Mike Creswell, longtime Rutledge colleague and an overseas correspondent for the Foreign Mission Board, where Rutledge came to work in 1980.

"His lens and shutter have been as mighty as any pen," said Louis Moore, the Foreign Mission Board's associate vice president for communications. "That's why he is such a legend among Southern Baptist journalists."

Rutledge's professional reputation is recognized beyond denominational communications. Thomas R. Kennedy, senior assistant editor of photography at National Geographic magazine, praises his significant work, his ability to establish intimacy and trust with his subjects, his generosity to colleagues.

"I have great admiration for him as a human being and as one of the genuinely good people in our business," Kennedy said. In his humility and putting his subject first, Rutledge is "an incredible example of how we should behave. I think the world of him."

Numerous photographers have turned to Rutledge for encouragement and critique. By his openness to look at their work, he has influenced a generation of photojournalists.

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"I can't say enough about what Don has meant to me and my work," said Joanna Pinneo of St. Petersburg, Fla. A former Foreign Mission Board overseas photographer, Pinneo has gone on to do award-winning work for National Geographic, U.S. News & World Report and now the St. Petersburg Times.

Early in her career, Rutledge helped Pinneo identify and focus on what communicated in her photography. He showed her and others "his deep spiritual connection with people, and using photography to explore that," she said. "I think of (his advice) every time I go on an assignment."

During his 16 years at the Foreign Mission Board, Rutledge's photography has appeared most extensively in The Commission magazine, the board's publication.

"Don challenged us to make Christian printed work the best of any printed work anywhere," said Dan Beatty, longtime design editor of the magazine. When photography, written stories and design came together, "people identified with the stories and responded."

Part of Rutledge's legacy at the board is that response -- people who have given material resources, time and their very lives to serve, at least partly because God spoke to them through his visual storytelling.

Rutledge has worked in 142 countries. He has won more than 300 awards for his work in both the secular and religious photojournalism fields, including the Grand Award for photo story, Photographic Society of America; silver medal in photojournalism, Washington International Salon of Photography; and many awards from and exhibits at the Atlanta Press Photographers Association.

He also has won numerous awards from Christian communications organizations and was one of the founding members of a Southern Baptist photojournalist fellowship. He speaks frequently at news photography and photojournalism conferences.

Rutledge's photography has been used in several books, including the recently released "A Journey of Faith and Sacrifice: Retracing the Steps of Lottie Moon," written by Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin; a 1950s work, "Black Like Me"; and five home missions books.

Rutledge is a graduate of Temple College and Temple Seminary, both in Chattanooga, Tenn., and the New York Institute of Photography. He is an ordained minister and was pastor of several churches before concentrating on photography. He and his wife, Lucy, of Anniston, Ala., have two grown sons, Mark and Craig. Mark and his wife, Peggy, are Foreign Mission Board missionaries in Haiti.

After retirement, Rutledge will stay active in photography and anticipates filling some freelance assignments for the Foreign Mission Board.

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(BP) photos (1 vertical, 6 horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers July 17 by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines available in SBCNet News Room.

**Racial accusations false,  
Miss. church's pastor says**

**By William H. Perkins Jr.**

**Baptist Press  
7/17/96**

MAGEE, Miss. (BP)--Allegations that the June 5 appearance of an African American youth at Beulah Baptist Church, Magee, Miss., prompted cancellation of Wednesday evening services are simply untrue, according to pastor Billy Ingram.

"No services were canceled, and the young man was not turned away," Ingram said.

The incident had its beginnings a few weeks prior to June 5, Ingram explained, when two adults who work with youth at the church promised they would foot the bill for a pizza party at a Magee restaurant if the church's young people attended a revival services.

"These men were going to pay for the pizza out of their own pocket; this was not something sponsored by the church.

"They were expecting six to eight young people for the party, and when 18 young people showed up, they simply didn't have the means or money to take them all. That's why the pizza party was canceled," Ingram said.

Among the disappointed young people were three brothers and their African American friend. The mother of the three brothers -- one of whom was baptized at the church -- had earlier dropped them off, Ingram said.

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Regular church-sponsored Wednesday evening activities proceeded, however, including a devotional time and baseball game for the young people while the adults met inside the church, the pastor explained.

"All the children went home after the regular services ended. Arrangements had been made to take these four children home at the end of the evening and that's that happened.

"There was never a racial intention," Ingram stressed.

A male acquaintance of the mother of the three boys telephoned Ingram at his home on June 7 to complain, and the pastor said he had explained the situation to him.

Secular news media outlets were apparently given erroneous information about the canceled party along with a suggestion that the cancellation was racially motivated, Ingram said, and his telephone began ringing soon after that.

"The deacons and I took time to talk with the reporters and explain the situation, but it was like they came here with a predetermined idea and it didn't matter what we said.

"Their news reports were inaccurate and incomplete, and the church has been hurt by that," Ingram said.

Members of the 187-member church want to move past the controversy and get on with the work they believe God has called them to do, the pastor pointed out, but they also want the truth to be known.

"We've never turned anyone away. Worshipers will always be welcome here," Ingram said.

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**From work to ministry,  
a 'blabbermouth' grows**

**By Charles Willis**

**Baptist Press  
7/17/96**

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Stacey Giles used to think maybe God had made a mistake when he made her a "blabbermouth." But what used to be a deficit when she was in school has turned to a ministry asset, she has learned.

For quite a long time, Giles, a member of Southwest Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas, felt left out on Wednesday nights. Her husband taught children and her daughter participated in classes, while "I felt bad that I didn't want to teach, and I needed work to do."

Some months earlier, she had quit a full-time job to care for her newborn second child, and after 10 years in the work force, the need for work other than being a mother was real in her life.

Wandering into the church media library on Wednesday night, Giles asked librarian Debi Srader about the stacks of books and videos piled beneath a table. Srader confessed she had not had time to organize the materials. Giles immediately saw the opportunity for work.

"These are great books people can use," Giles told fellow participants in the church media library track of National Conference for Church Leadership at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center. "I offered to organize them. I could separate them into stacks of hardback and paperback books," she declared. "That's the only way I knew to organize them," she added with some embarrassment. "I could do work."

One night a woman with four children came to the library. Although she was not a church member, the woman checked out the family limit of 15 books and two videotapes. Giles was working alone at the time and began to have panicky feelings after the visitor left with so many resources.

"When Debi came in later, I told her what had happened. I told her I was afraid we would never see those books and tapes again. I wondered if I should try to get them back," Giles recounted. "But Debi reassured me, reminding me that 'they are God's books, and if all of them don't come back and they bring that woman to the Lord, do you think I care about losing those books?'"

It was then, Giles said, she realized what she does in the media library "is not work to keep me occupied. It's my God-given gift to minister. It just caught me on fire."

Today, Giles said, she goes to people to tell them about "my library." Although she has the zeal for ministry through the media library, she came to Glorieta to gain the skills she has come to realize she needs. And in doing so, she has learned that she can contribute to the lives of other library workers who may have the skills, but who have lost their original zeal.

And that is where she said her history as a blabbermouth has taken a positive turn. Giles said she uses her inclination to talk enthusiastically to promote the library's resources for life needs, and she can encourage her fellow library workers to remember the most important fact:

"The materials are not ours; they are God's."

The National Conferences for Church Leadership, July 12-15 and July 15-19, focused training on leadership, ministry and worship and were sponsored by the BSSB's church leadership services division.

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