

August 8, 1964

American Boys Build
Missions In Mexico

By Roy Jennings
Baptist Press Staff Writer

Mix a set of blueprints, concrete materials, 22 eager Royal Ambassadors from the United States and 15 Mexican lads, and what do you get?

At two Mexican villages near Torreon, the answer was foundations for two Baptist missions and 37 excited boys.

Preliminary construction of the two missions served as a special service project for the Ambassadors who participated in a two-week summer missions tour and work trip into Mexico under the sponsorship of the Southern Baptist Convention Brotherhood Commission.

The boys, all Royal Ambassadors 15-17, saw missions progress in the cities of Saltillo, San Luis Potosi, Queretaro, Guadalajara, Zacatecas, Durango and Monterrey before they began the building project.

The Mexican boys shared a dormitory with the Royal Ambassadors at the Torreon Baptist seminary during the work week and took part in the project.

Each morning the boys traveled 30 miles by bus to the building sites in the villages of Zapata and Sixth of September (date of land reform) where the only other religious witness was Catholic.

The boys prepared the ground, poured the foundations, built and painted benches and partially painted a church.

Their menu consisted of tacos, tortillas, frijoles, enchiladas, eggs, sweet rolls and hot dogs.

Some of the boys slept on a tile floor with a heavy quilt for a mattress. They washed their own clothes.

Frank Black, Memphis, Brotherhood Commission officer and project director, said the main complaint of the boys was they didn't get to work enough.

The boys spent four hours daily in construction and the remainder in rest and entertainment, Black said. A fellowship and a fiesta comprised the social features.

Purpose of the tour and work trip was to give the Royal Ambassadors a new mission perspective and a greater appreciation for people of other countries. Each boy paid his own expenses.

Boys who participated included Jack Averett Jr., Columbus, Ga.; Grady Baskin Jr., Taylor, Mich.; Jay Dannelley Jr., Holt, Mich.; Fred Farris, Atlanta, Ga.; Don Gamble, Marion, Ill.; Richard Gilleland, Nashville, Tenn.

Philip Hardy, Dothan, Ala.; Richard Jones, Springfield, Tenn.; Robert King, Fayetteville, Tenn.; Phil Kirk, Ada, Okla.; Richard Leach, Alpine, Ind.; Glynn Ligon, Bellaire, Tex.; George McDow, Checotah, Okla.

Danny McGraw, Pineville, La.; Ken Neely, Spartanburg, S. C.; John Payne, Cincinnati, Ohio; Danny Spitler, Phoenix, Ariz.; Robert Springate, Raytown, Mo.

Gordon Teachey Jr., Richmond, Va.; Gary Townsend, Manchester, Md.; Robert Veazey, Houston, Tex., and Thomas Wood, Norfolk, Va. (BP)

Soloist Sings Without
Words To Unseen Audience

GLORIETA, N. M. (BP)--When the soloist sang she neither heard the words nor saw the audience. Neither did she open her mouth. She was both blind and deaf.

Nevertheless, she drew an audience of more than 1,500 people here into worship through her rendition of the song, "Purer in Heart."

Mrs. Elia Rose Brownell of New Orleans sang her song with graceful movements of the sign language of the deaf. An interpreter translated her signs into words and music.

The solo was a part of the worship service for the closing night of Home Mission Week at Glorieta Baptist Assembly. Mrs. Brownell was one of the 147 deaf people and deaf workers attending the annual Southern Baptist Conference for the Deaf, this year meeting in connection with the home mission conference.

The deaf conference reelected Clifford Bruffey of Jacksonville, Fla., as its president; and elected Neal Peyton of Wake Forest, N. C., as vice-president; Joe Johnson of Little Rock as secretary, and Max Floyd of Midland, Tex., as treasurer.

The conference also resolved to take an active interest in foreign mission work among the deaf, to study ways and means of extending assistance to deaf overseas, and to promote the work through the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist conventions of other nations. The deaf will meet next year during Sunday School Weeks at assemblies.

Mrs. Brownell, the blind and deaf soloist, has been a Baptist for only one year. She is a member of the First Baptist Church of New Orleans. Her pastor, J. D. Grey, calls her "our Helen Keller."

Mrs. Brownell was converted a year ago through the deaf ministry of the New Orleans church. She immediately wanted to learn to sing, a task workers first thought would be impossible. She did not even read Braille, the printed language for the blind.

However, she had learned the deaf sign language, which she understands by placing her hands over the hands of the other person, feeling the formation of the letters. Thus her sensitive hands become her only communication with the world.

She surprised everyone by quickly learning her first song, and now has memorized 19 through the teaching hands of her oldest daughter.

Mr. and Mrs. Brownell met at the School for the Deaf at Baton Rouge. He is deaf and makes a living as a carpenter, building door frames. They have two daughters, 12 and 10, and a son, 3.

-30-

Pictures of officers available on request from Home Mission Board.

Study Group Clashed
Over School Religion

(8-8-64)

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Baptist seminar study group could not agree on the way religion is to be practiced in public schools. One of the group severely criticized Baptist leaders and conventions that supported the Supreme Court decisions barring required Bible readings and prayers in public schools.

The conflicting opinions were expressed in a study paper prepared by six Baptist ministers from Pennsylvania and New Jersey. This is one of several papers being prepared by seminar groups across the country for the Religious Liberty Conference here Oct. 7-9. The conference, sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, will be on the theme, "The Meaning of the Free Exercise of Religion."

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The writers of the paper included John Nichols, pastor, Woodlyn (Pa.) Baptist Church; A. Scott Hutchison, executive secretary, Philadelphia (Pa.) Baptist Association; Herbert C. Cottrell, pastor, Oak Lane Baptist Church, Philadelphia; Bryan F. Archibald, pastor, First Baptist Church, Haddonfield, N. J.; Melvin M. Forney, pastor, Roxborough Baptist Church, Philadelphia, and O. John Eldred, pastor, Levittown (Pa.) Baptist Church.

A. Scott Hutchison said the 1963 Supreme Court decision outlawing required devotions in public schools "points up the government cannot approve nor order religious exercises, neither can it deny those performed on a voluntary basis."

Many questions remain unanswered because there has been no real case testing the "freedom clause" of the first amendment, he said.

Hitting at the court decisions against required devotions, Melvin M. Forney said such expressions of religion are needed to "remind the children that we are a God-fearing nation and that we recognize divine guidance."

The American Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist Convention, Baptist General Conference and North American Baptist General Conference in their meetings this year supported the Supreme Court decisions. The resolutions passed by these bodies reaffirmed their faith that genuine religious experiences must be "voluntary."

Forney criticized Baptist leaders for their support of the court decisions. The Baptist position of church-state separation "has not been inconsistent" with Bible reading and prayer in public schools, "even if, as in some states, it was compulsory," he said.

He charged that the Baptist leadership and Convention positions on the matter are not the same as that of church members and pastors. Possible reasons for the "difference" could be, he said:

1. Denominational leaders may say they are taking the right position and exert leadership to bring others to their point of view;
2. Denominational leaders deal with "different people, not necessarily those committed to the Christian faith and through dialogue accept a different position";
3. The "Madison Avenue" technique of getting support from the "top" before the idea is "well-aired before the public."

Expressing a different view, Bryan F. Archibald wrote: "It cannot be said too often that the task of the public schools is not to teach religion. Religious instruction belongs to the homes and to the free churches of the land."

Archibald faced the problems in teaching religion in public schools, the observance of religious holidays, objective courses in religion and in provisions for students to be excused from religious participation. "The customs, morals and ideals of American life can be taught in the public schools, but not as religion," he said.

In seeking a solution to the religion-school problem Archibald appealed for "a real neutrality of openness and respect" on the part of the schools. This, he pointed out, should allow "to those free institutions of home and church their proper functions as the molders of religious convictions in our nation."

Herbert C. Cottrell said maximum freedom for all people, in the practice of religion, is provided in the Constitution of the United States.

"It must therefore be acknowledged that any state law prescribing religious exercises for use in public schools constitutes a contradiction and a violation of the principle of maximum freedom," he stated.

He said existing constitutional amendments and resulting court decisions relative to religious exercises "do not exclude reference to or information about God" but they oppose religious ceremony prescribed by public authority. However, he said there is a danger that continued testing and interpretations may preclude all religious influence in public schools.

Cottrell questioned whether legislation would be a solution to the problem or a cause for continued controversy among varying religious groups.

"The only reasonable solution appears to be an accelerated and improved system of religious education in the home and church," he said.

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Editor's Note: Alma Hunt, executive secretary of Woman's Missionary Union, is the ninth person featured in this Baptist Press series on Convention leaders.

(Picture sent Baptist papers)

Alma Hunt Intrigued
By Antique Goblets

By Dot Weeks
For Baptist Press

"Come for dinner, I've been to the farmer's market."

This invitation is often issued by a vivacious blonde who feels shelling beans and peeling tomatoes are better than a tranquilizer after a long day at the office.

Cooking is just one of Alma Hunt's hobbies; going to the farmer's market is another.

Guests who share her farm-style feast (no meat--just vegetables and cornbread) are served on a handsome antique cherry table laid with imported linen and set with English bone china and antique pressed glass goblets.

Antiques, especially goblets, are intriguing to Miss Hunt. She has skillfully blended old pieces with art objects purchased during her world travels, to give her apartment a cosmopolitan flavor.

"I wish I could have company more often," she confesses with true Southern hospitality. "I can cook other foods besides vegetables, you know!"

When vegetable season is over, Miss Hunt tries her hand at pancake or chili suppers. Sometimes she serves hot dogs with mustard and lots of onion.

But time for entertaining is scarce and trips to the farmer's market or the antique shop often have to be postponed. This busy executive has many demands in her position as executive secretary of Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to Southern Baptist Convention.

Alma Hunt was dean of women at William Jewell College (Baptist) in Liberty, Mo., when Baptist women asked her to be their executive secretary. But this was not her first encounter with Woman's Missionary Union or with the Convention set-up.

In her home town of Roanoke, Va., Alma Hunt attended the First Baptist Church with her parents, her brother and sister. At the age of 10, Alma Hunt was converted and baptized.

Miss Hunt remembers listening to her pastor then, Dr. Walter Pope Binns, describe Conventionwide meetings he attended and tell about denominational leaders he knew.

She feels this was when she began to be aware of the scope of the Southern Baptist Convention--an awareness that deepened into a desire to be a part of this denominational movement.

Miss Hunt grew up in the organizations of Woman's Missionary Union. But it was in Young Woman's Auxiliary, both as a member, and later as a counselor that mission interest seemed to blossom.

Serving on the staff during Young Woman's Auxiliary Week at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly brought her to the attention of Conventionwide Woman's Missionary Union leaders.

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Miss Hunt graduated from Virginia State Teacher's College, and from Columbia University, where she received a master of arts degree.

For a time, she taught in the public schools of Roanoke and took an active part in associational Young Woman's Auxiliary and Woman's Missionary Union work.

In 1944, she went to William Jewell College, and four years later she moved to Birmingham to assume her present position.

Roanoke, where her mother and brother live, is still "home" to Alma Hunt. Though trips there are infrequent, she does try to go often enough to keep up with the growth of her niece, Mary Anna and nephew, Dickie.

Soon after Mrs. R. L. Mathis was elected president of Woman's Missionary Union, the new president visited the Birmingham office. During a tour of the building, Mrs. Mathis paused at the water fountain.

"Here, let me hold it for you," volunteered Miss Hunt. She quickly pressed the lever and sent a spray of water directly into the face of the new president.

As Mrs. Mathis dried her face she remarked, "Well, I see you operate a water fountain just like you do everything else. You put your whole self into it!"

Staff members at Woman's Missionary Union headquarters in Birmingham agree with Mrs. Mathis' evaluation of Miss Hunt's enthusiastic approach to her job.

But the fact she can punctuate a tense staff meeting with a funny story, or will interrupt a busy day to perform some thoughtful deed for a fellow employee, are the qualities which endear her to the office force.

"She seems genuinely concerned for the general welfare of every employee," one associate remarked.

Another added, "She's always impartial in her decisions. I may not agree with her, but I always feel she is fair."

"I admire her dedication to Woman's Missionary Union and to the denomination," says Mrs. Robert Fling, of Cleburne, Tex., newly elected president of Woman's Missionary Union.

Mrs. Fling feels Miss Hunt is making one of her most valuable contributions in leading Woman's Missionary Union into a closer working relationship with all denominational agencies.

Woman's Missionary Union's executive secretary is a gifted speaker and colorful conversationalist. She laughingly tells hearing her grandmother compare her two young granddaughters.

"You know," said the grandmother, "Sis will amount to something, but Alma Hunt will talk herself to death!"

So far the grandmother's prediction on Alma Hunt's future has not come true. Baptist women are glad, for they appreciate the dynamic leadership of their executive secretary.

Cutline to Hunt feature

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Baptist Press Photo

HOBBY--Collecting antique, pressed glass goblets is one of the hobbies of Alma Hunt, executive secretary of Woman's Missionary Union. She often tries to match the interests of her guests with the significance of the goblets she uses. (BP) Photo