

October 7, 1966

**Baptist Pastor Wins Medals
For Detonating Explosives**

By Hiley H. Ward*
For the Baptist Press

Reginald A. Peltier has so many medals from governments around the world that he couldn't begin to pin them all on.

Recently, the retired Army Lt. Col. turned Baptist pastor, got his 31st.

Awarded on behalf of the president of the United States through local officers, the newest medal for Peltier is the Legion of Merit, and second highest presidential award in peace time.

Peltier has been pastor of the Venetian Village Baptist Church, Fraser, Mich., since retiring from the Army in February. The church is a Southern Baptist congregation.

The rotund, but strongly built, balding pastor at 46 hardly looks like a battlefield wonder, adviser to governments, and one of the nation's leading bomb detonators, on land or in water, for nearly a quarter of a century.

But Peltier is all of that, and while he talks of faith simply and reasonably, with no special brief for miracles, you realize that there is a terrific miracle about this man, that he is alive at all.

He has detonated every imaginable type of explosive, conventional and otherwise, including nuclear explosives, (he says he is not allowed to talk about that).

He should have been blown to bits when in Soissons, France, he disarmed a German bomb that was supposed to be fool-proof and incapable of disarming.

"We didn't know that until we were working on it," he said. "We found a new anti-withdraw fuse that any movement was supposed to set off the bomb. But there was a short circuit."

After World War II, he disarmed 150 explosives in Japan alone, including two underwater mines. In Korea, he dismantled 1,500 explosive units. "I suppose in my lifetime I've handled 2,500 explosives."

In his 23-year Army career, he was chief munition analyst in the Department of the Army and logistic expert planning the moving of munitions in Korea and Vietnam.

"The only reaction you have is when the job is over," he said of his dismantling of bombs around the world.

"We know what we are doing, for this is probably one of the highest technical jobs there is." He said that confidence in skill and training prevents any consternation. "It's when you relax; then you think of the possibilities."

Once he had a lot of time to reflect on a bomb, but sooner than he had intended.

It was 1951 in Korea. An ammunition dump had been sabotaged. White phosphorous hand grenades had been rigged up with wire. Tons of munitions and TNT were going off. Peltier, then a captain, and two enlisted men carried 16 wounded men out of the area. Then the trio returned to disconnect cars not yet exploded.

"After 30 minutes another 240 tons of explosives, 35 yards away, went off. It blew me a quarter of a mile." It left a 70 foot wide, 30-foot-deep crater.

Peltier was left deaf and blind, and was sent back to the states for "rehabilitation" in Walter Reed Hospital.

But once the shock had worn off, he regained his full sight and hearing.

"It was an act of God. He was gracious in giving us good doctors, technicians and medicine.

"I had the will to live. God gives the will. This was one of the turning points in my life. After this, things of God took on new light. I could see and hear things I never heard before."

A native of Mt. Clemens, Mich., he was a trailer builder before World War II.

Peltier started out in the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Mt. Clemens, then after meeting a number of Southern Baptist chaplains in the service, decided on the Baptist ministry.

During his military career, he worked as pastor and associate in three churches in France (Chateauroux, Evreux, Orleans) and was an associate chaplain at the Reformatory for Women, Lorton, Va. He started a church in Savanna, Ill., and was co-pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, Saigon.

In the Vietnam war, he was wounded slightly on two occasions directing operations from a helicopter.

One of two chief U. S. advisers to Generals Ky, Thi and Nhon, he also flew out into the field to chart transportation, port, and road facilities.

At Tam Ky, 60 miles south of Da Nang, he went out in a helicopter to check on a 120-truck convoy that was overdue.

"We found 150 Viet Cong starting an ambush. We caught them on the white sand, and fortunately they stood out like a sore thumb." The F104 fighters came in, and we alternated with them. Forty-eight Viet Cong dead were counted. "I just had minor flesh wounds in my leg."

How did he reconcile killing with his other vocation, as a Christian minister?

"When you're in the army as long as I," he said, "two things are predominant. Above all, there is a will to live, and secondly, in the type of war in Vietnam, there is nothing personal, but a real desire to maintain a way of freedom."

He opposes extension of the war on land to North Vietnam for that would go beyond U. S. declared commitment. The air strikes to Hanoi, are different, he says, for "the majority of battles in war are not to kill, but to strangle the supply lines and make people incapable of fighting.

Peltier and his wife, Mildren, have three sons--Gene, an Army sergeant, Bruce, who is in helicopter training, and Keith, a high school student.

Peltier believes his military training in logistics and administration have been an asset to maintaining budgets and leadership in the churches. "I've been able to evaluate people and see talents and channel people where they can do the best job in the church."

He faces problems as soon as they arise so they don't get out of hand.

"I would rather disarm a 2,000 pound bomb," he said, "than try to separate two factions in a church."

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*Hiley H. Ward is religion editor of the Detroit Free Press.

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BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Telephone (615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Jim Newton, Assistant Director

REGIONAL OFFICES

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Editor/161 Spring Street, N.W./Atlanta, Georgia 30303/Telephone (404) 523-2593
DALLAS R. T. McCartney, Editor/103 Baptist Building/Dallas, Texas 75201/Telephone (214) RI 1-1996
WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Editor/200 Maryland Ave., N.E./Washington, D.C. 20002/Telephone (202) 544-4226

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**African Student Joins
Wake Forest Congregation**

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (BP)--An African student attending Wake Forest College (Baptist) here has joined the Wake Forest Baptist Church, calling the church's welcome after the service "one of the highlights of my life."

He is Julius A. Imosun, 35, a Nigerian and former general secretary of the Ghana Baptist Convention.

On the same day that Imosun, who also was president of the Ghana Baptist Convention, was welcomed as a new member of the Wake Forest Church here, another Baptist student from Ghana was turned away from Baptist church services in neighboring Georgia.

On Sept. 25, Sam Jerry Oni, a student from Ghana at Mercer University (Baptist) in Macon, Ga., was held by police outside Macon's Tattnell Square Baptist Church until he agreed not to enter the church. Inside, the church voted to fire the entire church staff because they had urged the congregation to seat Negroes as worshippers.

A news report announcing the contrasting story here in North Carolina was carried in the Biblical Recorder, North Carolina Baptist state paper. Beside the report on Imosun's joining the church here was another story reporting the action of the Macon church in firing the church staff and refusing to seat the other Baptist student from Ghana.

Imosun, who plans to continue a ministerial career after graduation from the Baptist college, became the second African to join the campus church here.

The first was William Ojo, who graduated in the summer of 1965 and now has returned to Nigeria as a minister.

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Another Wake Forest graduate, David Nichols of Lexington, is/Nigeria working near Ojo under the missionary journeyman program of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Imosun is a graduate of the Nigerian Baptist Seminary and since 1961 had been preaching and teaching in Ghana. He entered Wake Forest College, a Baptist school, this fall.

His reaction to his warm reception as a new member of the Wake Forest church was in direct contrast to the reaction of the other student from Ghana, Sam Jerry Oni, who on the same day was turned away from the Tattnell Square Baptist Church in Macon, Ga.

Said Oni after he was denied permission to enter the church: "My faith has been shattered."

Oni, who is a member of the Vineville Baptist Church in Macon (Southern Baptist) added that he planned to keep trying to attend the Tattnell Square Church because "missionaries from the Southern Baptist Convention came to my land teaching the word of God, but when I attempted to practice their teaching, I was refused the opportunity in this country."

The issue of the Biblical Recorder which reported Imosun's joining the Wake Forest Church also included an editorial suggesting that missions money sent by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to Ghana could better be spent by sending "home" missionaries to many churches in the Deep South.

"In view of incidents like this, it is time for the Foreign Mission Board to revise its strategy in African countries," said the editorial by J. Marse Grant.

"It is a waste of Tattnell Square's Cooperative Program money to send missionaries to Ghana to win converts to Christ who can't worship at Tattnell Square when they come to this country to prepare themselves for the Christian ministry.

"This is the height of inconsistency and hypocrisy and brilliant young Africans see through it," said the editorial.

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The issue also included reproduced clippings showing how a leading daily newspaper in Africa, the Daily Nation of Nairobi, Kenya, headlined the stories on page one reporting on the incident in Macon.

The editorial quoted Southern Baptist Missionary to Tanzania, Earl R. Martin, who said that news stories like this from America "increase the embarrassment to our presence."

Said the editorial in conclusion: "We trust members of Tattnell Square Church will be aware of the hardships they have caused on our missionaries by their vote."

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North Carolina Baptist
Training Union Man Dies

10/7/66

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--James P. Morgan, 55, secretary of the Training Union department of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina for the past 16 years, died here Oct. 6 after several months of declining health.

Funeral services were (to be) held Oct. 8, at the Forest Hills Baptist Church here where he was a member and former deacon, with Pastor John E. Lawrence officiating. Burial was in Durham, N.C.

A native of Dunn, N.C., Morgan was minister of education at First Baptist Church, Durham, for 17 years before joining the state convention staff.

An honor graduate at Wake Forest College (Baptist) in North Carolina, Morgan did graduate work at Duke University Divinity School although he was not an ordained minister.

His father, the late Perry Morgan, was a pioneer Baptist leader in North Carolina, serving as secretary of the Baptist Young People's Union, and the Sunday School departments of the North Carolina convention. Later he was manager of Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly, Ridgecrest, N.C.

Morgan was survived by his wife and two daughters.

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CUTLINES with feature mailed 10/5/66 October 7, 1966 Baptist Press Photo

Ph.D. TURNS FROM PROFESSORSHIP TO MINISTRY: Clustered under the portrait of James B. Taylor, the first secretary of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, is the Eugene McLeod family. McLeod left a promising career as a full professor at Ohio State University to study for the ministry at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest. His family (left to right) includes Gwen, Mrs. McLeod, Ann, and Clair. (BP PHOTO)