

(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS  
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

November 25, 1996

96-207

MISSISSIPPI--Gambling-addicted hooker once was stay-at-home mom.  
MISSISSIPPI--Counselor, pastor, laywoman help addict battle gambling.  
MISSISSIPPI--Businessman seeking to undo gambling's damage on family.  
ARKANSAS--Arkansas messengers adopt Ouachita reconciliation plan.  
ALABAMA--Ala. Baptists again address Samford, Mobile universities.  
FLORIDA--Baptist collegians unfazed by 'party school' rankings.  
TEXAS--Hail, deceit, theft overcome by church's community care.  
TENNESSEE--90-year-old still teaching Sunday school after 70 years; photos.

EDITORS' NOTE: The following two stories recount the gambling addiction of a mother who became a prostitute. A third story is about a businessman's struggle with gambling.

FIRST IN SERIES

**Gambling-addicted hooker  
once was stay-at-home mom**

By William H. Perkins Jr.

**Baptist Press  
11/25/96**

GULFPORT, Miss. (BP)--Gaylon (not her real name) wishes she had never accepted the casino's invitation to dinner.

She believes if she hadn't, she would never have become addicted, lost her family, humiliated herself in prostitution or lived in fear of using her real name on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

"I thought I could handle it, but it's the strongest drug I've ever done," Gaylon said as she sat trembling in her counselor's Gulfport office.

What could compel Gaylon -- a lifelong Gulfport resident, devout Southern Baptist and stay-at-home mother who voted against the county referendum that brought gambling to the Gulf Coast -- to give up everything for a hooker's life on the street?

"Satan can appear to be an angel of light, and that's what those casino lights are for me," she said.

Tempted again and again to return for the elaborate, inexpensive buffets -- a casino staple -- Gaylon eventually began detouring by the video poker machines on her way out of the building.

In a matter of months, she had stolen \$30,000 from her children, driven her recovering husband back into alcoholism and was hurtling toward utter personal destruction.

She lost 30 pounds because she gambled three to four days at a time without stopping to eat, always convinced the next bet would be the big winner.

"I talked to the machines; I worshiped the machines. I have seen people wet their pants because they couldn't bring themselves to leave a machine," Gaylon said.

As her money vanished into the machines, she became increasingly desperate for more cash to stay "in play."

She was approached by a casino floor employee, who gave her a room number at the casino hotel. He was, in effect, the casino pimp, splitting with her the proceeds of her prostitution.

"They've got all the bases covered," Gaylon said.

The deeper her addiction became, the darker her personal life became.

"(The pimps) loved me, because they knew I'd do anything for the money. I'd go to a room thinking, 'Let's get this over with so I can get back to my machine,'" she said.

--more--

She also developed a strong paranoia about the "eye in the sky" -- the state-of-the-art surveillance systems used by every casino. "The 'eye in the sky' sees everything, from the time you pull off the highway into the casino parking lot. They know who I am, and I'm totally convinced I could get hurt if they found out I was doing this (interview)," she said.

Gaylon considered prostituting her teenaged daughter for gambling money. She contemplated robbing a bank, as much for closure as for the money.

"I had access to a gun. I didn't care if I got away with it, or if I hurt somebody and went to prison. I just wanted it to end," she said.

Her 23-year marriage crumbled and her children turned her away. She couldn't get credit extensions and no business in town would cash her worthless checks.

Abandoned, forlorn and homeless, the starving Gaylon knew she had hit bottom.

That's when she began thinking about suicide.

--30--

## SECOND IN SERIES

**Counselor, pastor, laywoman  
help addict battle gambling**

**By William H. Perkins Jr.**

**Baptist Press  
11/25/96**

GULFPORT, Miss. (BP)--For Gaylon (not her real name), an inexpensive buffet at a Mississippi Gulf Coast casino cost her more than she ever wanted to pay.

Before long, the dinners were being capped at the casino's video poker machines.

In a matter of months, the lifelong Gulfport resident and faithful Southern Baptist churchgoer was flat broke, estranged from her family, living on the street and prostituting herself for enough money to get back to the casino machines.

Gaylon was addicted.

"The casino was my lover. I'd sit in front of the machines for three or four days; even the casino employees would plead with me to stop long enough to get something to eat," she said.

When she couldn't raise another quarter to drop into the machines, she considered prostituting her teenaged daughter or robbing a bank.

"You go from having a conscience to not having one," she said, with a snap of her fingers to indicate how fast it can happen.

At the end of her rope and living an exploited, subhuman existence, Gaylon seriously considered ending her life.

"I had lost all self-respect. Suicide is something you think about when you just want it over," she said, echoing the sentiments of many addicts who want to break out of their downward spiral but don't know how.

In the midst of her personal crisis, a friend urged Gaylon to talk with a Southern Baptist counselor specializing in problem gambling.

The counselor helped find Gaylon a place to live and convinced her she could turn her life around.

She confessed her addiction and her lifestyle to her pastor. A godly woman in her church began to pray for her.

"She's been my spiritual mother," Gaylon said. "Her picture is in the dictionary under 'Christian.' She walks the walk. Even when I rejected her, she never gave up on me. She gives me hope. As long as she is on my side, I know God won't give up on me, either."

Gaylon is hanging on, but the temptation is almost overwhelming.

"Just sitting here with money, I get nervous. Everything makes me think of it; with gambling, you really are possessed," she said.

Gaylon harbors a special disquiet regarding her fellow Southern Baptists who frequent the casinos.

"I kept thinking, 'If you're really saved, you wouldn't be doing this.' Then I would see church people in there at 3:30 in the morning when they thought no one would see them.

"I thought a lot about their hypocrisy," she said.

Gaylon has a suggestion for anyone who believes legalized gambling has brought prosperity to Mississippi.

--more--

"I would invite them to come with me and stand outside a casino at 3 a.m. They will see men and women fighting. They will see wives crying. They will see hungry children locked in cars.

"They will see how wholesome it is," she said.

Gaylon is determined to make her life what it once was before gambling, but she knows it will be a one-day-at-a-time struggle.

"Every morning I wake up and promise myself that I won't go to the casino, but the urge is there," she said.

Perhaps the most telling example of her personal battle is her response when asked how much she would have to win to quench her thirst for gambling:

"Do they print that much money?"

--30--

### THIRD IN SERIES

**Businessman seeking to undo  
gambling's damage on family**

**By William H. Perkins Jr.**

**Baptist Press  
11/25/96**

GULFPORT, Miss. (BP)--Harley (not his real name) didn't have to go all the way into the pit. Just teetering on the edge was enough for him.

"I never gambled in my life. I voted 'no' in the referendum and swore I'd never go in one, but when the casinos opened on the coast, I went out of curiosity," said Harley, a small businessman, a lifelong Mississippi Gulf Coast resident and churchgoing Southern Baptist.

Within three months, he was frequenting the casinos seven nights a week, forsaking his young wife and newborn baby. He stopped only long enough to put on a fresh change of clothes and go to work when the sun came up.

Harley knew he was in trouble.

"Every time I'd leave a casino, I'd be sick to my stomach, hating myself. I thought, 'You should have paid the house note. You should have paid the insurance.' It was like a craving for a drug," Harley said. On the hook for more than \$30,000 in losses, Harley's relationship with his wife began to founder as his addiction grew.

"She didn't understand why I'd go down there just to lose. At one point, I had to take the day's receipts from my business and give it to my wife at night so I wouldn't lose that money," he said.

A pastor friend intervened with words that jarred Harley out of his fantasy world.

"He asked me what I'd do if he told me my wife was having an affair. I couldn't believe it; I just sat in his car dumbfounded. Then he told me she wasn't having an affair, but that was exactly what I was doing to her with my gambling," Harley explained.

From that point, Harley determined to set things right. It hasn't been easy, but he is working to rebuild his relationship with his wife and focus on important goals.

"I still have the urge to go to the casinos. Before I started gambling, I slept all night. Now I wake up at 3 a.m. and can't go back to sleep. I pray that God will take away this urge and give me peace," he said.

Harley describes the scourge of casinos in Mississippi as "spiritual warfare."

"I don't know if you believe in evil spirits that can control you, but I do. I would head for a casino with my heart full of Jesus, and come out with Jesus gone and evil in his place.

"Gambling interferes with your relationship to Christ, and that should be enough to keep you out.

"Don't give the devil this opportunity to get a foothold in your life. It may be years before you realize it, but if you put yourself in that situation, you'll find out eventually," he warned.

People don't see legalized gambling for what it truly is, Harley said.

"The casual gambler doesn't see the hurt and misery. If we don't consider gambling the same as alcohol and drugs, we're not looking at the whole picture. It's the same," he said.

Harley's message is that a person can stop the ruinous slide before all is lost.

"As this point, I am as free as I've ever been. You can look away, but it's going to take God to keep you strong.

"God does not take joy in our foolishness, and gambling is foolish," he said.

--30--

**Arkansas messengers adopt  
Ouachita reconciliation plan** By Trennis Henderson & Russell N. Dilday

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--More than 1,500 Arkansas Baptist messengers gathered Nov. 19-20 to address the future relationship between the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and Ouachita Baptist University.

Responding to an Oct. 10 action by OBU trustees to become a self-perpetuating board, messengers voted 801-456 to approve a compromise between the university and the convention. The action sets in motion a two-year procedure to formally amend OBU's trustee selection process.

Ouachita President Ben Elrod described the plan as "a win-win situation" for both entities. "The new arrangement will foster a strong element of trust between our two institutions, and I have confidence that the process will work to the benefit of all concerned," he stated.

Agreeing "the reconciliation agreement is a good one," convention Executive Director Emil Turner added, "No other state convention that has been through this has an arrangement that puts the final say in the hands of the messengers, but Arkansas has that. This keeps Ouachita accountable to the messengers of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention."

In other action, Rex M. Horne Jr., pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, was re-elected by acclamation to a second one-year term as president. Del Medlin, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cabot, was elected first vice president in a three-way race and John Dresbach, associate minister of music and university students at Central Baptist Church, Jonesboro, was elected second vice president among four candidates.

Messengers adopted eight resolutions including "appreciation for gambling opposition" and affirmation of "Christian public school teachers and administrators." Other resolutions affirmed racial relations and the sanctity of human life and opposed homosexuality, pornography and alcohol and other drugs.

The anti-gambling resolution was adopted just two weeks after a Nov. 5 election that resulted in the almost 2-to-1 defeat of a proposed gambling amendment. The measure sought to legalize casino gambling, a state lottery and statewide charitable bingo.

The resolution affirming Christian teachers noted "many public school teachers and administrators are active members of Southern Baptist churches." It emphasized many Christian teachers "are attempting to make a difference in the lives of their students through lifestyle evangelism" and pledged "prayer support to all Christian public school teachers and administrators."

The Ouachita recommendation was developed by a five-member convention "reconciliation committee" working in cooperation with OBU's five-member bylaws committee. The proposal gained the approval of OBU's board of trustees and the Arkansas Baptist executive board before being submitted for messenger action.

The primary focus of the agreement is for future OBU trustee nominees to be recommended to the convention by a joint committee "composed of an equal number of people from the Arkansas Baptist State Convention nominating committee and the Ouachita Baptist University committee authorized to act on behalf of the board." The plan also allows messengers to make substitute nominations from the floor of the convention.

The previous process gave the convention's nine-member nominating committee the sole responsibility for submitting a slate of trustee nominations to the convention each year. Although the nominating committee traditionally invites recommendations from agency officials for their consideration, concern was voiced this year after the nominating committee declined to recommend any of the eight names submitted by Elrod for four openings on Ouachita's board of trustees.

Following the nominating committee's action, OBU trustees voted Oct. 10 to return to the university's original charter and resume responsibility for naming their own successors. Their action reversed a 1914 decision by OBU trustees to allow the convention to elect the school's trustees. Elrod said at the time that the action was taken "to remove Ouachita from the line of fire of denominational dispute" and "to guarantee a return to a more inclusive trustee selection process."

The convention executive board's executive committee responded four days later by voting to escrow OBU's Cooperative Program funds until the issue was resolved. They also voted to establish the five-member reconciliation committee to negotiate with Ouachita trustees.

The groups held two joint meetings to draft the proposal adopted by convention messengers. Emphasizing "it is understood that good faith and a spirit of cooperation and respect are essential for this plan to be followed," the report added, "It is in the spirit that it has been recommended and it is in that prayerful spirit that we petition our respective institutions to follow it."

--more--

ABSC executive board chairman Chuck McAlister, who also chaired the reconciliation committee, presented the proposal to convention messengers. Acknowledging he personally viewed OBU's Oct. 10 decision as "a wrong action," McAlister added, "The time for blame is past. The issue is no longer who was right or who was wrong. ... The issue is now how to fix it."

Comparing the proposal to action in other state conventions, McAlister said, "This is the strongest agreement in existence for the benefit of a state convention." Although "it's not a perfect agreement," he added, "It is a strong agreement ... that starts a process of reconciliation." He explained the process would begin immediately with the convention releasing OBU's escrowed funds and the joint nominating plan being utilized in 1997.

During debate on the issue, David Miller, a member of Tumbling Shoals Church, voiced concern OBU's trustees were seeking to "steal the university out from under Arkansas Baptists."

"We ought to stand for righteousness and truth and not compromise or be held hostage by any group," he insisted. "We would not be here today voting on this proposal if we were not being held hostage by the trustees of Ouachita Baptist University."

Miller was one of four people recommended by the convention nominating committee to serve on OBU's board but he was not among those elected Oct. 10 by the Ouachita trustees. Two other individuals -- Stephen Davis, pastor of First Baptist Church, Russellville, and Bill Elliff, pastor of First Baptist Church, Little Rock -- were both proposed by the nominating committee and elected by the OBU trustees. Both Davis and Elliff also served on the reconciliation committee.

Del Medlin, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cabot, called the proposal "a good way of doing our work so the convention can still have its authority and Ouachita can continue to do the work that it does." Medlin, who served as chairman of this year's resolutions committee, was elected ABSC first vice president the following day.

Rex Terry, a member of First Baptist Church, Fort Smith, also was proposed by the nominating committee to serve as an OBU trustee but was not among the slate elected by the Ouachita board. Describing OBU's Oct. 10 vote as "a fundamental breach of trust," Terry said the proposed compromise "violates our constitution and violates our bylaws." He urged messengers "to vote against this on principle."

Following the 801-456 vote to adopt the reconciliation proposal, Terry offered a proposal to defund Ouachita from the convention's proposed Cooperative Program budget. Labeling the messengers' 63.7 percent affirmative vote a "very unwise action," Terry insisted "the convention will regret this decision" to amend the trustee selection process.

Terry's effort to defund OBU was overwhelming defeated on a show-of-hands vote followed by a strong vote in favor of the proposed 1997 CP budget of \$17,595,000. The budget earmarks \$10,245,569 for state programs, including \$2,527,528 for OBU, and \$7,349,432 for Southern Baptist Convention causes. The SBC allocation is 41.77 percent of the total budget, which is unchanged from the current budget percentage.

In other action, messengers approved a unified budget formula for 1998-2002 which specifies any percentage increase to SBC causes will be based on the average five-year increase of CP gifts from local churches.

Messengers also approved extending Arkansas Baptists' missions partnership with the European Baptist Convention through the year 1999 and adopted a series of priority projects to highlight the state convention's 1997 "Strengthen the Family" emphasis.

Next year's annual meeting will be Nov. 11-12 at Park Hill Baptist Church, North Little Rock.

--30--

**Ala. Baptists again address  
Samford, Mobile universities**

**Baptist Press  
11/25/96**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--A two-year controversy over Samford University's election of trustees peacefully ended during the 174th annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

A "Covenant of Sacred Trust" between the convention and Samford passed overwhelmingly by the 1,938 messengers who attended the Nov. 19-20 meeting at Birmingham's Shades Mountain Baptist Church. A few concerns and questions during the floor debate lasted less than 20 minutes.

--more--

While not a legal document, the covenant calls for Samford to submit its trustee nominees to the convention's committee on boards and commissions. Only those nominees jointly selected by the committee and Samford will be recommended to the convention for approval.

The dispute has been a major focus for the past three annual meetings, after Samford trustees voted in September 1994 to become a self-perpetuating board.

A committee was appointed to study the issue at the 1994 convention. However, its report was rejected by messengers at the 1995 annual meeting. A 13-member Samford Reconciliation Committee was then appointed to prepare a proposal that could be agreed upon by both parties. The committee included ABSC President Fred Lackey as chairman and ABSC Executive Secretary-Treasurer Troy Morrison.

Samford trustees have acknowledged taking action to keep political factions of the convention from stacking the board. John Pittman, chairman of the Samford trustees, declared to messengers this year, "There were documented threats to Samford University, its board of trustees and to its future that we couldn't ignore." Now, he said, "I hope now we can get on with our business and love each other, trust each other and work together."

The bylaws committee subsequently asked messengers to voice their opinions through a non-binding vote about extending a covenant similar to Samford's for all entities. Messengers favored the idea by a 79-vote margin.

The University of Mobile also figured into this year's annual meeting, when administrators disputed the convention's audit committee report, which voiced "continuing grave concerns" about the financial condition and operations at Mobile.

University President Michael Magnoli said no such complaint was expressed in the university's audit report that was reviewed by the convention's audit committee.

"We take great exception to that report," Magnoli said, noting university officials were unaware of any such concerns by the committee until they read it in the book of reports Nov. 19. "It just shows the vindictiveness of selective members of the audit committee," Magnoli charged.

The convention audit committee, made up of certified public accountants around the state, review each entity's audit and management letter in presenting an annual report at the convention.

Audit committee chairman Mac Carpenter, a CPA for Carpenter, Bevis & Eberhart, P.C. and member of First Baptist Church, Dothan, declined comment on the committee's report but said the complaints are evident in the management letter given to the university Sept. 20.

The management letter from the Wilkins Miller firm noted significant deficiencies in the internal structure that "could adversely affect the University's ability to record, process, summarize, and report financial data consistent with the assertions of management in the financial statements."

Cited specifically in the letter:

-- Accounting records and details maintained at the university's Latin American Branch Campus in Nicaragua do not consistently agree with records maintained at the main campus in Mobile.

-- Various journal entries during the year were made for the incorrect amount and some entries should additionally have been made.

The auditor noted neither of these reportable conditions was considered to be a major weakness.

Steve Lee, chief financial officer for the university, said he considered the audit a "clean report," free of any concerns strong enough to warrant the convention audit committee's statement.

Magnoli and Lee said there were seven recommendations from the 1995 audit on areas the university needed to improve. Magnoli and Lee claimed they have resolved six of the seven.

The final area of improvement recommended last year is the first significant deficiency reported in the 1996 audit. Magnoli claimed the accounting discrepancies mentioned are mainly due to different computer systems at the Mobile and Nicaragua campuses.

In fact, the management letter reports progress has been made but states "improvement is still needed. ... The University has made progress and now appears to have the proper personnel in place to implement" recommendations stated last year, such as disciplined communication between the two campuses about financial transactions.

For the second deficiency noted in the management letter of improper or missing journal entries, the auditor recommended a more supervised system of accounting to be "carefully controlled and monitored."

--more--

The University of Mobile has been under fire from the convention over its Nicaragua campus opened in 1993 because Mobile failed to get convention approval for funding its new campus, an ABSC bylaw violation. Other financial irregularities had also been alleged.

A special subcommittee of the state board of missions' executive committee was appointed to study the situation. The committee reported in 1994 several agreements reached regarding the payback of convention funds to the Mobile campus.

At last year's annual meeting in Montgomery, messengers adopted a report of a reconciliation committee recommending continued Cooperative Program funding to the university and putting further discussions of financial accountability to the university's board of trustees.

Messengers unanimously approved a \$32.12 million base budget and a challenge budget of nearly \$33.5 million. The 1996 base budget was \$31 million. Morrison praised Alabama Baptists for record giving in 1996, the third year Alabama Baptists have given above the base budget.

Alabama Baptist ministries will receive 57.7 percent of the budget; Southern Baptist Convention national and international ministries, 42.3 percent. The percentages are unchanged from the current budget.

In the election of convention president, Leon Ballard, pastor of 229-member York Baptist Church in western Alabama the past 14 years, won a 60-40 percent margin over Mike McLemore, pastor of 2,000-member Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham. Ballard won 612 of 1,036 votes cast.

Ballard has served as ABSC first vice president the past two years and was chairman of the state board of missions in 1994.

Elected first vice president: Buddy Gray, pastor of Hunter Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, in a two-nominee ballot. Jerry Grandstaff, director of missions for Columbia Baptist Association, was re-elected second vice president, also in a two-nominee ballot. Also re-elected were Hortense Barnes, recording secretary; James R. Glaze, statistical secretary; and Billy Austin, registration secretary.

Among resolutions adopted were condemnation of arson attacks against African American churches and a call to Alabama Baptist churches "to reject racism in any form and to work for reconciliation and healing" and reaffirmation of "our historic stand against abortion in general and partial-birth abortion in particular" and "our historic position opposing all forms of gambling." The latter resolution commended the presidents of Alabama Baptist higher education institutions for opposing an appeal for a state lottery even though tuition grants would be made to students attending their schools.

Next year's annual meeting will be Nov. 18-19 at First Baptist Church, Huntsville.

--30--

Reported by Laurie A. Lattimore and Jennifer Davis.

### **Baptist collegians unfazed by 'party school' rankings**

**By Karen L. Willoughby**

**Baptist Press  
11/25/96**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (BP)--Southern Baptist 20-somethings are among those enrolled at the nation's top "party" colleges, but that doesn't mean they're partying.

An annual guide to the nation's top colleges published each year by the Princeton Review educational services company ranks the schools in 61 ways -- academics, dorm life, sports and extracurricular activities, among others. It is available for \$18 in most bookstores.

According to the 700-page, 1997 edition of "The Student Advantage Guide to the Best 310 Colleges," Florida State University at Tallahassee is the nation's top "party school;" second is George Washington University in Washington; third, the University of Florida at Gainesville.

There are six lists in the party section of the guide, coauthor Ed Custard said in a telephone interview. They were compiled by surveys conducted on campus by the publisher.

"The party system focuses specifically on the Greek system," Custard said. "The rankings are based on a combination of surveys that indicate alcohol and drug use, hours of study and the popularity of fraternities and sororities."

Florida State University Baptist campus minister Linda Osborne said the ranking was a non-story among her Baptist Student Union members.

--more--

"Two years ago we received that same 'honor,' but I don't know that I would rank it as (a party school)," Osborne said. "Florida State is so large I think you would find almost every type of student here -- party-ers, scholars, Christians.

"Florida State was also listed -- by the Home Mission Board -- among the top 10 schools in the nation to send out summer missionaries," Osborne noted. "We sent out 17 last year; the top school sent out 25, so that's our challenge for next year -- 25."

About 500 students are touched each week by BSU activities headquartered in a one-story brick building that has a swing on the front porch, Osborne said.

"We're in a pretty visible location on campus," she said. "The university has moved toward us in the last 20 years."

More than 200 students attend Tuesday night small group "Encounter" Bible study sessions. At least 160 attend the "Edge Cafe" Thursday luncheon program with a Christian speaker. About 100 freshmen are involved in family groups led by an upperclass "mom" and "dad."

"For a lot of people, if we don't reach them their first three weeks on campus, we don't reach them," Osborne said. "I try to get them involved in one big group and one small group program. We've developed a lot of programs to meet individual needs -- graduate student Bible studies, residence hall Bible studies, community missions opportunities and intermural sports, all organized by a 32-member student council."

But what about partying?

Some students "kind of compartmentalize life," Osborne said. "They can come and worship God and let God control that part of their life; then go out and party and not let God control that part.

"This generation is very interested in what makes them happy right now, the immediate," Osborne said. "They're not as much looking long term as students a few years back were. The good side is that there's a real openness to discussing spiritual things.

"I think students are looking for realness, for relationships that are real," Osborne said. "A lot of these students have never had a genuine relationship. They're latchkey kids growing up."

Unlike most students interviewed for this article, BSU President Barry Leathers said he has many non-Christian friends on campus.

"Most are friends I play sports with," Leathers said. "They know where I stand but still are open with me because I'm honest with them. If they know you're honest and a good friend, they'll listen when you talk about spiritual things. Some turn the conversation to other things, but others like to talk about it."

There is a growing concern -- he called it fear -- among college students concerning the decreased value of human life, Leathers said.

"With there being so much advancement in computer technology, it's scary to think that the human resource isn't as valued as it once was," Leathers said. "People are very valued if they know a lot about computers. People in service industries? Not so much.

"For example, in my field -- banking. They're thinking of getting rid of all the tellers and replacing them with computers," Leathers continued. "I think, I definitely think the human resource aspect is going to continue to decline. People are driven so much by money and wealth and making a profit that they find the easy way out, which in the end will lead to self-destruction."

Stacey Barrows has been part-time campus minister at George Washington University in Washington since August. This is the third year -- and she is the third leader -- of BSU on the campus that was started by Luther Rice but which now is a completely secular school.

BSU at GW numbers at most five students, Barrows said.

"I think BSU here has struggled over the last three years because they have had a different leader every year," Barrows said. "There hasn't been a constancy established. I know other Christian organizations on campus have large numbers of students involved, so there is room for growth, lots of it."

The BSU meets in a GW-provided office suite of two small rooms shared by the campus' Board of Chaplains. There are weekly lunchtime Bible studies and once-a-month social activities, plus plans for community service projects and activities with BSU students from other colleges and universities in the metro Washington area.

But what about partying?

--more--

"There are a large number of fraternities and sororities and students have a lot of free time, plus the school is located near the Georgetown area of Washington, which has a lot of bars and clubs," Barrows said. "I think alcohol is the biggest problem. A lot of the students are looking at future careers in politics, and social situations is where a lot of the business of politics takes place.

"The ones I know, they are really goal-oriented," Barrows said. "They really do have goals set for themselves to be people of integrity, to be the best at what they do."

Elizabeth Elliott is a freshman BSUer from Oklahoma who chose GW because it offered a major in her area of interest -- international economics.

"I was kind of surprised GW had that reputation (as a party school)," Elliott said. Her mother was concerned when she found out about the party ranking, "but I told her I'm not directly associated with that, don't do that, don't support that.

"It's not easy, but I don't think it's necessarily hard," she said. "On the whole, I think a large percentage of the students are just enjoying the now. Some of the people go to clubs, some go to symphonies."

At the University of Florida at Gainesville, Baptist student minister Otto Spangler said he doesn't know anybody who does party. He didn't even know his school was named the number three party school in the nation.

"I knew we were number one in football," said Spangler, who is chaplain to the Gators. "We have a great FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes) group. Just all kinds of things have been breaking loose with our leaders."

Focusing on spiritual matters for 25 years at the university has resulted in 301 students committing their lives to full-time Christian service, Spangler said.

The Baptist Student Center is a two-story, red brick building with white columns across the street from the campus. Activities include Rush Week activities for incoming students, Thursday night dinner with worship around the table; small-group Bible studies, intermural sports, home football game ice cream socials, square and line dancing once or twice a year, and other special events as organized by the BSU executive council.

About 500 of the university's 40,000 students participate in BSU, Spangler said. This includes 112 who are international students and the 106 volunteers who work with them once a week in an "English in Action" program. New this semester is an Asian fellowship.

"I try to get them to see that every part of life is spiritual. It's not just Sunday activity versus weekday activity," Spangler said. "I learned a long time ago, put God first; get your priorities right. God takes care of those people who have their priorities straight."

As to partying, Spangler said, "The times I have been at different places or spoken, I haven't seen any of it. None of the BSUers drink, to my knowledge. ... It just never comes up."

The same thing goes for drugs, he added.

"We don't have people coming through the doors of the Baptist Student Center who are high on cocaine," Spangler said. "This isn't their crowd. This isn't their scene."

Education major Trung Vong, a member of the BSU executive council, said he hasn't "actually seen any partying but I've heard stories about it. On home game days, you can smell the beer all over campus. Even the academic societies have a large number of social hours, probably as many as they have meetings.

"But as you become involved with a church or with Christians, your best friends tend to be Christians," Vong said. "You surround yourself with a great cloud of witnesses."

There is a great need for BSUers to witness on campus, Vong said.

"Just looking at some of the situations I've seen, there is so much need on this campus for something more than they have. I see people needing hope and purpose. They drown themselves in alcohol or studies; they try to use a lot of substitutions. But deep down, they need Jesus."

**Hail, deceit, theft overcome  
by church's community care**

**By Bryan McAnally**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--May 5, 1995, is a day many Dallas-Fort Worth residents won't forget.

The metroplex was battered by one of the most violent and damaging hail storms in Texas history. Pelting ice balls injured some people caught in the storm, while many others were left to file insurance claims for battered cars, broken windows and destroyed roofs.

Barbara Long, secretary for media services at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, was among the victims. What began as a routine insurance claim for roof damage evolved into a year-and-a-half journey of deceit and waiting. Now, thanks to the ministry of Fort Worth's Sagamore Hill Baptist Church, Long once again has a safe and solid roof over her and her children's heads.

"The insurance company paid quite quickly," Long said. "I paid a roofing company a \$2,000 down payment to repair the roof. They told me that it would be sometime before they could get to my house because of the vast numbers of repairs that they'd been contracted to fix."

Little did she know, the roofing company never intended to perform the work she so desperately needed. "They never showed up. I later discovered they had collected deposits from several other homes, only to file for bankruptcy and take all our money with them."

Long found she had little recourse and even fewer resources to make the repairs. "We had lived in the house for less than a month. There was nothing we could do. We just lived with a damaged, leaking roof for a while. Eventually, though, I heard about Sagamore Hill's ministry."

That ministry was the campaign initiated by Sagamore Hill specifically to repair damaged Fort Worth roofs. Southwestern Seminary President Ken Hemphill contacted pastor Gary Miller, who added Long's name to the repair list.

"Barbara's house represents the last of over 250 homes that were repaired," said Ray Visor, Sagamore Hill's missions coordinator. "The story is a great testimony to God blessing an endeavor that is done in behalf of his name."

"Our church had all the supplies and materials needed to repair her roof," Visor said. "But a few nights before her house was to be fixed, somebody stole the supplies. It was very disappointing. Then, generously, the North Texas Roofing Association volunteered their time and labor, as well as all the supplies."

According to Visor, roofing repairs cost an average of \$3,500.

The roof repair ministry is an outgrowth of Sagamore Hill's Mission Fort Worth Disaster Relief, organized following the hail storm by assistant pastor Johnny Castor. The congregation walked the six square miles surrounding the church and offered food and plastic for repairs immediately after the deluge.

"Ours is a transitional neighborhood, so we were a bit leery about going out into the streets at first," said Visor, noting the mostly Caucasian church sits in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood.

"We quickly found out, though, that the people around us are just people. They have the same needs and desires as the rest of us. This ministry allowed us to go across racial, economic and denominational lines," he said.

"We walked and found the needs of people in getting repairs done. With those who had insurance, we worked with the insurance companies to get the work done. With those who were without insurance, we did what we could to step in and make sure that their home repairs were taken care of."

"We have seen people accept Jesus Christ as their Savior because of this ministry," Visor added.

It has opened up lines of communication that never before existed. It has been a great Christian witness that has spoken to the private community as well as the professional communities involved with the repairs."

Long considers herself among those receiving a blessing from Sagamore Hill's roof-repair ministry. "To see how God has blessed the ministry of a single church has been overwhelming to me. I -- and countless other people -- have seen how godly people reach out to their fellow people, and that is an impact that stays with a person."

The experience taught her something, Long noted.

"First, I learned not to ever give money up-front, but I've learned a larger lesson about how God works. I never would have been able to get the roof repaired if it weren't for the ministry. But God's people saw a need and went into action."

**90-year-old still teaching  
Sunday school after 70 years**

**By Chip Alford**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Almost half of American marriages end in divorce.

Politicians plan advertising believing most people are too bored to listen to anything for more than seven seconds.

Churches are scandalously short of Bible teachers, especially for children's and preschool classes.

But in today's "don't bother us, we don't want to commit" society, a 90-year-old Missouri woman sticks out like a sore thumb.

Diminutive, white-haired and sparkling-eyed, Esther Catron is a life force that's impossible to ignore. She's lived almost all of her nine decades in Adrian, a rural farming community with fewer than 2,000 residents, about an hour's drive south of Kansas City. Most of the locals know her simply as "Esther," or "Auntie Catron."

For more than 60 years, Esther has been owner/operator of Darlene's Beauty and Gift Shop, a business sandwiched between a martial arts school and a bowling alley and named after a niece who "had the prettiest hair you've ever seen."

Stop by her shop one morning and you'll likely find Esther giving a haircut, wave or permanent to a customer while chatting away about the latest vitamin therapy or health food discovery.

She stocks organic foods and every vitamin you can think of on her gift shop's shelves and uses health magazines to promote her business. So, whether it's discussing the merits of shark cartilage for fighting cancer or red cayenne pepper tablets for improving circulation, Esther knows her stuff.

"If you take care of your body, it will take care of you," says Esther, who speaks from experience. She had liver problems about 35 years ago until she went on a strict one-year diet consisting of brewer's yeast, yogurt and carrot juice. She recovered and she's been a nutritional guru ever since, taking a slew of natural vitamins, growing her own naturally fertilized vegetables and constantly reminding friends to eat healthier.

"If they'd just listen to me they'd be better off," Esther says, matter-of-factly. "But a lot of them just think I'm crazy. Well ... I'm still here."

"We call Esther the Unsinkable Molly Brown, because she never gives up on anything," says Ruth Blocker, a friend and part-time worker at her store.

Business isn't the only commitment for Esther. A devoted, active member of First Baptist Church of Adrian, she's taught children's Sunday school for 70 years.

"I just felt like the Lord led me to do it," she says, smiling. "I've always liked children and I never had any of my own. So, I guess this kind of helped me fill that gap.

"And because I've had to study and prepare all these years, it's also helped me deepen myself in the Bible."

Currently department director for the first and second grade class, Esther still loves working with kids. And they love Esther.

A visit to her classroom on Sunday morning confirms that. Whether its working with a young girl on a memory verse from the "Bible Learners" Life & Work quarterly, sending her class members a postcard when she goes on vacation or simply handing out hugs, Esther is appreciated.

"I thought about giving it up last year. I mean, I thought maybe it was really time to turn it over to someone younger. But Jeweldine (Smith, a helper in her class and a former student), told me: 'Esther, you can't quit. You're the backbone of this department.'"

Bill Taylor of the Baptist Sunday School Board, who has lamented the lack of teachers for children and preschoolers in Southern Baptist churches, said Esther is "a remarkable lady who serves as a great example of faithfulness in teaching." Taylor, who directs the board's Bible teaching-reaching division, met Esther last summer at a leadership conference in Glorieta, N.M. "I was really impressed with her; we need more like her."

Esther is a big supporter of Sunday School Board-produced materials, especially the Bible study literature.

"I'm always telling people we need to use Southern Baptist materials. This new literature is really good. I've always loved activity-based teaching because it gets the kids involved in what they're learning about. It's not just a teacher reading stories to them."

--more--

Esther, who recently attended her church's hayride and wiener roast, also sings in the choir, something she's done since age 12. And she continues to attend training seminars and events and Southern Baptist state and national conference centers.

"I was really bashful as a young girl, but Training Union helped me get out of that. I still try to improve myself, learn something new."

Toward that end, Esther's also completed several discipleship courses in recent years, including "MasterLife," which she said helped her "really find myself;" "The Mind of Christ;" and "Experiencing God." Esther knows about commitment in her personal life, too.

She was married only seven years to her late husband, Troy, when he was diagnosed with a brain tumor in 1933.

"It was quite a shock. He had to have surgery and it affected his speech."

Other than "uh huh" or "uh uh," Troy never spoke again and could only point at words and pictures in magazines or phone books to communicate.

"There was a lot of guessing and it was very frustrating at times, but I never argued with him because he couldn't talk back. If I got really upset, I'd just walk away."

She put him in a nursing home once, but only for 28 days. "I just couldn't leave him there, so I got a woman to help me here at home."

Eventually, Esther helped her husband become trained to sell and repair refrigerators, accompanying him on deliveries so she could communicate with the customers.

Troy lived almost 60 years before his death in 1991 at age 93.

While she now has more free time on her hands, Esther, who has no plans to retire, is hardly sitting still. She likes to travel, has visited Mexico, Alaska, Hawaii and Israel twice. She'd still like to visit Australia and Scotland, her late father's birthplace.

Oh yeah, in addition to her business and church responsibilities, she also sells antiques on the side.

Asked if she had advice for healthful longevity, Esther replied, "Get in with the Lord and do something. You'll be much happier. I'd be a couch potato, too, if I didn't have something to do."

Probably the best description of Esther can be found on a poster hung on the light green concrete wall in her Sunday school room.

A teddy bear decked out in sunglasses and a tie-dyed T-shirt is accompanied by the caption, "I'm a heaven-made original; a one-of-a-kind design."

So is Esther.

--30--

(BP) photos (color) posted in the BP Photos Library on SBCNet.

HOUSE MAIL

**(BP)**

**BAPTIST PRESS**  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, TN 37234

**F  
I  
R  
S  
T  
  
C  
L  
A  
S  
S**

**Southern Baptist Library  
and Archives**