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March 21, 1969

Phelps Resigns Presidency, Cites Conservative Opposition

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. (BP)--Citing strong disagreement with ultra-conservative forces within the Arkansas Baptist Convention, Ralph A. Phelps has resigned as president of Ouachita Baptist University after 16 years in the post.

Phelps said there were too many conservatives in the Arkansas convention who wanted to make Ouachita into a Bible institute, and that the convention seemed to be in control of the ultra-conservatives who were against quality education.

The 47-year-old educator has been named president emeritus of the Baptist school, according to Jeral Hampton of Booneville, Ark., president of the school's board of trustees who announced officially Phelps's resignation.

Phelps said he is considering several other positions, but has not yet made a decision on his plans for the future. He said he would make a decision in a few days.

Hampton said Phelps had written letters dated Oct. 15, 1968, and Jan. 13, 1969, saying he did not plan to serve as president beyond the present contract year. Announcement of his resignation was made when faculty appointments for 1969-70 were released.

In an interview, Phelps said that he felt 16 years as president of Ouachita were enough, especially in the light of the difficulties of the job.

"The job of running any Baptist school is extremely difficult, and the denomination does not give any man enough money to do the job," he said. "Instead, the denomination fences him in with restrictions against federal aid and against going direct to the churches with an appeal for funds.

"It boils down to the fact that one man has to carry the load that a thousand men ought to carry--and a good many of those thousand are always jumping up and down on top of the load to make it harder instead of helping to carry the load," Phelps said.

"My views of what a university ought to be and the dynamic role it ought to play in our changing society are quite different from those who feel Ouachita ought to be run like it was in the 1800's.

"The ultra-conservative group in the convention is much opposed to my views on integration, federal aid, academic freedom, freedom of inquiry, freedom of the press on the campus, etc.," Phelps said. "They're not my kind of cats," he quipped.

"Baptists claim to be great believers in freedom, but they really only seem to believe in the freedom to agree with the traditional position," he added.

Phelps said he feared Baptists are going to lose a great number of Baptist schools in the next few years unless the denomination provides more support and more freedom for the schools, and less criticism.

On Sept. 1, 1967, Phelps took a year's leave of absence from the Ouachita presidency to become regional director of the Office of Economic Opportunity's Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta. He left after six months, however, saying he was disappointed with the federal War on Poverty.

Once before, in 1961, he announced he was resigning as president of Ouachita, then to become president of Houston Baptist College. But he later changed his mind and withdrew the resignation.

In 1966, and again in 1968 it was rumored he might run for governor. He told reporters in Atlanta when he resigned the War on Poverty post he was considering running for governor. But he decided against it several weeks later.

Only one president of the school, J. W. Conger who founded Ouachita, has served longer than Phelps as president of the 84-year-old institution.

Under his administration, Ouachita reached university status, tripled its enrollment, and doubled its endowment. Assets have increased from \$1.8 million to \$8.4 million. The Gorman Rating System ranks the school second in the state in quality of education.

Phelps is a graduate of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth with the doctor of theology degree.

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Midwestern Seminary Board
Adopts Record 1970 Budget

(3-21-69)

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--The board of trustees for Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary meeting here adopted a record budget, authorized construction of a new apartment project, and elected new officers.

The operating budget for the school year 1969-70 was set at \$575,970 by the board.

Construction on the new apartment complex was authorized as soon as financial arrangements could be negotiated.

Elected to serve as visiting professor during the 1969-70 sessions was Charles L. Culpepper Jr., missionary on furlough from Taiwan where he has been professor of theology at Taiwan Baptist Seminary, Taipei.

The trustees elected as new president of the board Norman H. McCrummen of Birmingham, Ala. He succeeds Earl Harding, executive secretary of the Missouri Baptist Convention, who presided over the meeting as outgoing president of the board.

Other officers elected by the board were Grant Davis, Springfield, Mo., first vice president; Glen Crofts, Phoenix, Ariz., second vice president; Luther Kyer, Jefferson City, Mo., secretary; and Frank Myers, Warrensburg, Mo., treasurer.

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Festival of Arts Planned
At Southwestern Seminary

(3-21-69)

FORT WORTH (BP)--A Festival of the Arts (FOTA) at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here April 22-29 will include two art exhibits, lectures, a medieval morality plan, an oratorio and special chapel programs.

The festival is a new venture in relating the seminary, Fort Worth, and surrounding area to meaningful art forms and Christianity, according to Southwestern Professor William Hendricks, faculty co-chairman of the festival.

The week will open with two lectures by professor John Newport of Southwestern at 10:00 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., April 22. He will speak on "Christianity and Art Forms."

The formal opening of two major art exhibits is set for 8:30 p.m. the same day.

One art exhibit, courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. F. Howard Walsh of Fort Worth, will feature landscapes from the Walsh Collection. Included will be works by Constable, Gainsborough, and Corot, the famed "Christ Carrying the Cross" by El Greco.

The second art exhibit will include 16 prints by Mildred Good Taylor, color etchings, a graphic collage, and color wood-cuts. Among the titles will be "The Burning Bush," "In the Beginning," "No Greater Love," "The crucified," and "God Forgive Us."

Mrs. Taylor, the wife of seminary staff member Robert P. Taylor, has exhibited in numerous national, regional and state shows, five of which were "one-woman" shows.

Albert Johnson's version of "Everyman," a medieval morality play, will be presented Thursday night, April 24. David Jones is a student director for the play.

A special chapel program on Thursday will be presented by Robert Burton, professor of conducting and ensemble activities.

The festival will close on Tuesday, April 29, with the presentation of Mozart's, "The Penitent David". Burton will direct the 150-voice seminary oratorio chorus and orchestra. Soloists will be Sue King, soprano, and Frank Stovall, tenor.

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Baptist Seminary Student
Is "Flying Nightingale"

LOUISVILLE (BP)--She may not have the fame or unusual ability of television's "Flying Nun," but Miss Mary Ann Smith here boasts a somewhat similar title.

She's a "Flying Nightingale."

Miss Smith, a religious education student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, recently left her books for three weeks in Air Force Reserve active duty as a member of the Military Aircraft Command.

She spent the time flying to Travis Air Force Base in San Francisco, Calif., on a C-141 Starlifter plane, bearing nearly 80 wounded or diseased American soldiers home from Vietnam. She was one of three flight nurses, three medical technicians, and a reserve medical technician.

Such nurses serving in the Air Force's most prestigious assignments are sometimes called "Flying Nightingales."

Thousands of sick and wounded servicemen have been airlifted out of South Vietnam since 1961. During the air evacuation missions, often lasting 24 hours, flight nurses such as Miss Smith shoulder heavy chores traditionally left to doctors, who rarely make the trips.

The "Flying Nightingales" cope with such emergencies as performing blood transfusions, giving intravenous feedings, treating shock, and providing medication for jungle diseased or mentally disturbed victims.

Miss Smith, a 1966 graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University School of Nursing, and member of the 73rd Aero Medical Evacuation Flight at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma, has been in the reserves two years. She went to Japan and made two trips between the States and Japan -- one to Alaska and Dover, Del., and the second to Travis Air Force Base in California with patients heading for hospitals in their home areas.

The C-141 is a cargo aircraft that has been converted into a hospital wing carrying 42 litter patients and 42 ambulatory patients. Half of the interior has airline seats and behind the seats, each wall is lined with tiers of litters, with each tier holding four litters.

The most difficult time, according to Miss Smith, was "deadheading" back to home base "which means spending 20 hours in flight from Delaware through Alaska to Japan. There were only 12 to 24 hours crew rest between each flight.

"These men are tremendous patients, so eager to help themselves in spite of their injuries that you almost have to force them to accept assistance," she said. "They were thrilled over going home and happy to see American nurses again after seeing only jungles and hours of battle, but some of the more severely injured patients, especially the amputees, were worried about facing their relatives again."

After the initial surprise of crew personnel and patients upon meeting a Baptist seminary student considering foreign missions and working in the Air Force Reserve, Miss Smith said she used the opportunity to "dispell their stereotyped image of the church-mission worker unable to accept people and enjoy life in a non-church setting."

The nurse-student also made an "ambassadorial visit" to a Japanese couple, friends of another student, hoping to come to Southern Seminary next fall. She answered their many questions about seminary life at Louisville.

An accomplished photographer, Miss Smith once won \$140 in a national newspaper photograph contest and now owns thousands of slides.

She is also an 'on-call' nurse at a Salvation Army Hospital and a psychiatric nurse at another hospital in Louisville to help with her expenses during her seminary studies.

One can easily infer from hearing about her experiences that she has a love for traveling. "I want to return to Hawaii for a longer look and I also hope to see Israel someday."

She's bound to get that second and lengthier visit to Hawaii soon--she can hardly wait for her next term of two-week reserve duty, which comes up in August.



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MAR 24 1969
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BP PHOTO

With feature mailed 3-21-69

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"FLYING NIGHTINGALE" -- Grounded and back in school, Miss Mary Ann Smith, a coed at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, wears her Air Force uniform blues -- complete with wide collars, name tag, wings, and slacks. She's also back on her regular part-time job as a nurse in a Louisville hospital.

(BP) Photo

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(BP) Photo