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Camille Was No Lady; Baptist  
Damage Estimated at \$1½ Million

by Jim Newton

PASS CHRISTIAN, MISS (BP)--Hurricane Camille, the worst storm ever to hit the nation, destroyed Baptist property to the tune of \$1¼ to \$1½ million, not including the homes and businesses of countless church members.

Camp Kittiwake near here was totally and completely obliterated, without a building standing. Gulfshore Baptist Assembly here was almost wiped out, with only four structures remaining, almost all beyond repair.

At least one Baptist mission, Shoreline in Bay St. Louis, Miss., was reportedly demolished completely, and four major Baptist churches received extremely serious damage--Beach Boulevard Baptist Church in Pass Christian, First Baptist Church of Gulfport; First Baptist Church of Long Beach, and Mississippi City Baptist Church.

The damage to property, bad as it seemed, was little compared to the loss of human life and the human suffering caused by the hurricane. An accurate death count was still not available one week after the storm, but it was well over 300.

Property damage was estimated by Mississippi Governor John Bell Williams at \$500 million to perhaps as much as \$1 billion.

The damage and suffering caused by the storm, even to those who have walked in the rubble and smelled the stench of death, was unbelievable and indescribable. Perhaps the best word to describe the effect of the 190 mile per hour winds and 35 foot tidal waves is "sickening."

The Red Cross set the figure of totally destroyed homes at 4,717, and the number of homes sustaining major damage at 9,718.

More than 80,000 telephones were out, and communications and transportation facilities at the Mississippi Gulf Coast were seriously hampered. Accurate information on the extent of damage was almost impossible to obtain.

Entire shopping centers were destroyed, like the one just adjacent to First Baptist Church in Long Beach, which suffered damage estimated by some at more than \$200,000. The church, located about 300 yards from the water, sustained extensive water damage, but fared better than the shopping center which was demolished completely.

Inside the church, water was two feet deep, hitting with such force that the pews were ripped from the floor and slammed toward the front of the auditorium like an accordion. A broken water pipe spewed water on the floor even after the tide receded.

The situation was similar at Beach Boulevard Baptist Church in Pass Christian, located just one-half mile from Gulfshore Baptist Assembly. The building stood, but the inside was gutted by the water, three to four feet deep.

First Baptist Church, Gulfport, a church with a new sanctuary and total property value of \$3 million, was hit by three feet of water in the auditorium, and an inch of mud on the floor. A 30-foot sailboat rested outside the church. John Traylor, pastor, said the church would hold "thanksgiving services" the Sunday following the storm.

No accurate information was available on the number of Baptist people who lost their lives or loved ones in the storm. At least one member of First Baptist Church, Gulfport, was killed --J. C. Rich, who tried to ride out the storm in his home.

A deacon at the Gulfport church, James Landrum, told a harrowing story involving his son, Jimmy, who was in their two-story home one block from the beach when the storm struck. The water immediately filled the first floor, and the 25-year-old man ran up the stairs with the water following.

Young Landrum climbed out the window and clung to the chimney after water began to fill the second floor. The last he remembers is seeing a house from across the street coming toward him, and the roof collapsing.

Police found Landrum 25 blocks away walking around in a daze. He had apparently floated there on a section of the roof.

The father and mother, meanwhile, returned and found not only their home demolished, but the dead body of a neighbor in a nearby tree. They were overcome with fear their son was dead.

Mrs. Landrum stepped on a nail, and they went to the Gulfport hospital for a tetanus shot. There they found Jimmy, alive, but badly bruised and in a state of shock.

Landrum, assistant superintendent of schools in Gulfport, told relatives that nobody will ever know the feeling of such an experience.

Another deacon at the Gulfport church, Bob Garner, said after surveying the three feet of water in his own home and the complete destruction of his mother's house, "we really haven't lost much. It's just a house. Our family is all safe, so our home is still intact."

Garner shared a peanut butter sandwich lunch with long-time friend Joe T. Odle, editor of the Baptist Record and former pastor of the Gulfport church. "That's the best food I've had since the storm," Garner said.

"It's funny how your values change after something like this," Garner added. He wept as Odle, his pastor for 2½ years, was about to leave. "Don't mind me," he said. "I'm all torn up inside--I'm in a daze. If you'd come and hit me in the stomach, I could take that, but you've been too kind."

Somewhat similar words were uttered by a state legislator, who stumbled up to this reporter near Gulfshore Assembly asking for drinking water. When given both a plastic jug of water and some ice, considered precious commodities in the storm-wracked area, he replied, "You're too kind. You just don't know how much a cup of cold water means."

The hardest hit area seemed to be the 19-mile stretch from Long Beach, Miss., to Bay St. Louis, Miss., especially around Pass Christian.

Camille also lashed the Gulf Coast of Louisiana, but apparently not as hard as the Mississippi Coast. Louisiana Baptist officials estimated losses to Baptist churches in that area at \$250,000, and said that Baptist churches in Venice and Buras-Triump were completely washed away. Many other churches suffered damage, but details were not available.

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, which was badly wrecked by Hurricane Betsy in 1965, suffered only minor damage to trees and buildings.

At Kittiwake Baptist Assembly here, however, everything was gone. Nearby Gulfshore Baptist Assembly fared only slightly better. Of the 13 buildings on the assembly grounds, only four were left standing, and all of them were seriously damaged.

A tidal wave estimated at nearly 40 feet hit the main building, The Gulf. Water was four feet deep on the beach side of the second floor of the building where all the furniture and equipment had been moved by the assembly's staffers.

The auditorium was left with only a shell standing, and it was beyond repair. Some Baptist leaders in Mississippi feel it would take at least \$1 million to repair the assembly and it appears doubtful that funds would be available to do so.

Some weird things were done by the force of the storm. The roof of a house one-half mile away rested on the grounds of the assembly near a railroad track, and the house was on the other side of a stout wire fence. A fire hose attached to the hallway of The Gulf was washed through an office, out a window, and wrapped around a tree a dozen times.

Pine trees were snapped like matchsticks, and one pine was washed 200 yards, coming to a rest across Gulfshore's olympic size swimming pool. Trees were uprooted, and the huge oaks were often stripped of their leaves. Even bark was washed and whipped off the trees.

There appeared to be no logic in the way Camille picked her victims. A house was left standing with no damage at all, while everything surrounding it was completely demolished.

Churches often fared better than houses, shopping centers and motels. First Baptist Church of Pass Christian was hardly hurt, except for some wind damage covered by insurance.

"I have a building, but no congregation," said the pastor, Thomas Ayo. He added that 90 per cent of his members lost everything, homes and jobs alike. He did not know how many of his members were dead.

So many other churches in Pass Christian were destroyed that Ayo said he was going to open up his church building for other congregations to hold their services there.

Tom Douglas, manager of Gulfshore Assembly, recounted his experiences in riding out the hurricane at his home about three blocks from the beach. His home suffered only minor damage caused by a tree falling on the roof.

"The thing that touched me," he observed, "was to watch the families come back here after the storm. There were 16 houses destroyed on my street. One couple walked by to check on their house, and returned later carrying the only thing they could salvage--a hobby horse."

At least two Baptist pastors, John Traylor of First Baptist Church, Gulfport, and John Wade of Pass Road Baptist Church, lost much of their personal belongings when high water coming from the Back Bay of Biloxi filled their homes.

Mrs. Traylor said the water was 10 feet deep on the first floor of their split-level house, and five feet deep on the main level. "It was unbelievable. Water started pouring in everywhere at once," she said. "It sounded like a terrible tornado or gigantic freight train."

Despite the awesome damage and the daze affecting many of those experienced the storm, most of the people seemed determined to rebuild.

Scribbled on the steps leading to what once was an expensive beach-front mansion totally obliterated by the storm were the words: "We will rise again."

Gail DeBord, pastor of First Baptist Church in Long Beach, said his church was already nearly \$250,000 in debt, but the members were determined to rebuild. "They feel it is their obligation to rebuild the church just as they do their own home."

Later, as a sudden rainstorm subsided four days after the hurricane hit, a bright rainbow could be seen in the sky. It seemed to end just at the spot where the First Baptist Church of Long Beach stood. Though there was no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, there seemed to be an abundance of faith worth even more.

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Baptist Pastor, Episcopal Layman  
Lead Biloxi Hurricane Relief Effort

8/25/69

BILOXI, Miss. (BP)--A Southern Baptist pastor and an Episcopal lay leader have been commissioned by the mayor of Biloxi to feed and clothe the people of this Mississippi Gulf Coast city in the wake of Hurricane Camille's devastation.

Larry Rohrman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Biloxi, and Dick Guice, a math teacher, at Jefferson Davis Junior High School here, are coordinating the Civil Defense relief work at the request of Mayor Danny Guice, a cousin of the Episcopal layman.

The response of their efforts, in Rohrman's words, has been "overwhelming,"

But so has the amount of work necessary to set up the program.

Rohrman had not slept for 2½ days after setting up a vast receiving center at what was called the Hurricane Room of the Buena Vista Hotel, located just behind the First Baptist Church.

Guice, too, had rested little after establishing eight distribution points throughout the city to take the food and clothing to neighborhoods where many of the people had no transportation.

In almost every instance, the eight centers were manned and directed by church people in all faiths, said Guice.

One of the eight centers was located at the downtown First Baptist Church and directed by Mrs. Betty Buckley, a member of the church. Inside the church, stacks of canned food and piles of clothing for men, women and children filled a half-dozen rooms.

Mrs. Buckley said that response to the center had been tremendous, adding that one young man came up to her and said, "Lady, I praise you for what you and this church are doing. I've heard a lot of talk about the church in action, but now I've seen it."

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The center has attracted all kinds of people, rich, poor, black, white, she added. She told of one wealthy lady in the community who "had everything she ever wanted" who was in the center looking for a pair of shoes to wear. She had lost everything after Camille hit her home.

Asked how the people learned about the food and clothing available at the center, Mrs. Buckley replied that she had a loud voice, and she drove through the neighborhoods nearby hardest hit by the hurricane and yelled to the people that food and clothing was available.

Some of the people, especially the children, were crying because there was no food and they had lost everything, she recounted. One group of people was kneeling on the street in prayer as she yelled that food and clothing was available.

Bob Cherry, administrative assistant for the Biloxi public schools and a deacon at First Baptist Church, said that needs at the center he directed at one of the schools were so great that the people almost fought over jugs of water when they were made available.

Cherry came to the central receiving center warehouse that Rohrman was directing and asked for "all the C-Rations you can spare," explaining: "These people at my area are starving. We can use a whole truck-load of C-Rations."

Rohrman had plenty of C-Rations on supply, but was short of trucks to take them to the center. It didn't take him long, however, to find a pickup and get it loaded.

The Baptist pastor had gone to nearby Kessler Air Force Base here and enlisted the aid of 100 Airmen to work at the central receiving center at the Buena Vista Hotel. The Airmen formed a human chain to load and unload the hundreds of trucks coming to and going from the center.

At one point, 14 truckloads--all kinds of trucks including one horse trailer--sent to the Gulf Coast by Presbyterians across the nation arrived in a caravan to be unloaded. It was 2:30 a.m. before the Airmen finished, but they never faltered.

Rohrman said that some of the Airmen didn't want to return to the base when their relief and replacement crews came. Some of the Airmen had worked more than 24 hours without sleep.

"The response has been overwhelming," Rohrman said. "The need is so great that it cuts right through all barriers--rich, poor, black, white. There's a real kinship of people here, for they all know what it feels like to be hungry, tired, and distraught."

Guice pointed to one man wearing a Salvation Army armband who had just loaded up his own pickup truck to take food to hungry people. "That man owned a skating rink that was completely destroyed. His home was wiped out. His chances of getting a new job are almost gone, but he's been working night and day ever since Monday to help others."

Guice told of another truck driver who was on crutches and had lost his home and everything in the hurricane. He had worked all night and all day without sleep.

He also told of a caravan of trucks from Union, Miss., headed by two Baptist preachers, the mayor, a doctor, and the civil defense director. The doctor had bought 400 water containers personally and filled them by hand.

Food is coming from all over the United States, both by plane and truck, Guice said. People drive up with a load of food and then disappear, asking for no glory or honor.

Church groups were especially sensitive in their response to the need, Guice said, even the churches that were almost destroyed by the hurricane. Guice himself is a member of the historic Church of The Redeemer, which was completely demolished.

Rohrman looked at the stacks and stacks of food in the warehouse-like room and added: "If you look in every one of these boxes, you'll see the love of some mother who is sending something to people in need. It really restores your faith in people."

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Baptist Response To Hurricane  
"Immediate and Compassionate"

by the Baptist Press

Southern Baptists have responded to the needs of people ravaged by Hurricane Camille's devastating winds and waves both immediately and compassionately, denominational leaders across the country have reported.

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The response had provided food, clothing, personal needs, volunteers and money to the churches and people of the Mississippi and Louisiana Gulf Coast.

Southern Baptist Convention President W. A. Criswell of Dallas and SBC Executive Secretary Porter W. Routh of Nashville quickly issued an appeal for Baptist churches to send funds for assistance to the Mississippi Baptist Convention office in Jackson.

Service organizations such as the Civil Defense, American Red Cross, Salvation Army and the federal government have done "heroic things" in meeting immediate needs of the people, said W. Douglas Hudgins, executive secretary of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson.

Hudgins said that the greatest need of the Baptist churches is money to assist people and rebuild buildings as they face \$1.2 to \$1.5 million in uninsurable damage, mostly caused by rising water not covered by insurance.

To administer the funds, Hudgins is recommending that the Executive Committee of the convention, in consultation with the executive committee of the Baptist associations in the Gulf Coast area, disburse funds received to aid churches and Baptist people.

All checks, whether from individuals or churches, should be made to the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P. O. Box 530, Jackson, Miss., said Hudgins.

Meanwhile, in Louisiana, the executive secretary of the Louisiana Baptist Convention issued a similar appeal for funds to aid churches in Southern Louisiana which suffered up to \$250,000 damage in the hurricane.

Contributions to Louisiana Baptist churches should be marked for the Hurricane Camille Disaster Fund, Louisiana Baptist Convention, P. O. Box 311, Alexandria, La., said Robert L. Lee, the convention's executive secretary.

The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta, responded almost immediately with \$5,000 to Mississippi Baptists for emergency relief needs.

In addition to money, the Home Mission Board teamed up with the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission in an appeal for laymen in the construction trade to volunteer to spend time working to rehabilitate the devastated areas.

T. E. Carter of the board's department of Christian social ministries said that more than 100 laymen volunteered almost immediately, should their services be needed.

An appeal from the executive secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, T. A. Patterson, went out to all pastors and area missionaries in Texas, calling for money, linens and cooking materials, clothing and foodstuffs, work teams, and books to replace pastors' lost libraries.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas' program coordinating committee approved withdrawal of \$10,000 from its reserve funds for immediate hurricane relief. Patterson said he hoped the contribution would stimulate Texas Baptist churches to contribute many times that amount.

One of the quickest responses came from the pastor of First Baptist Church, Paris, Tex., James Semple, who called executives of local Campbell Soup Co., plant and got them to give two semi-trailer truckloads of canned foods--53,000 cans of spaghetti and pork and beans.

Even quicker response came from Douglas Hudgins Jr., of Jackson, a commercial pilot, who immediately rented two DC-3 airplanes at personal cost of \$6,000, appealed to Jackson area residents for milk, bread, orange juice and baby food, and flew 100,000 pounds of such food to the Gulfport airport even before other service agencies could get organized.

On the Mississippi Gulf Coast, two central receiving stations were set up for such truckloads and planeloads of food and clothing.

The Gulf Coast Baptist Association established a central receiving point at the Grace Memorial Baptist Church, 23rd at 23rd in Gulfport, Miss., for all food and clothing given through Baptist channels.

Meanwhile, in Biloxi, Miss., the pastor of the First Baptist Church, Larry Rohrman established a Civil Defense central receiving stations at the request of the mayor "to feed and clothe" the city of Biloxi. That central point was set up at the Buena Vista Hotel in downtown Biloxi.

J. W. Brister, superintendent of missions for the Gulf Coast Baptist Association said that any food, clothing, personal or household items given by Baptist people should be sent to one of these two central points.

Brister asked, however, that Baptists not clean out their closets and send worn out clothes to the centers. "We want good, usable clothing," he said.

All clothes contributed should also be tagged with the size of the clothing. Relief workers simply do not have time to do this, Brister said.

Once electricity and safe water supplies were provided by the city, the immediate need for food and clothing lessened, since many of the people were then able to wash their clothes and cook food.

Need still exists, however, for such things as mops, brooms, cleanup equipment, insect repellent, disposable diapers, tarpaulins, portable buildings and tents, portable generators, chain saws, canned foods and milk, etc., Brister said.

Brister and a number of Baptist pastors from the storm ravaged area agreed, however, that the biggest need is money. Almost all of the churches hit by the storm are in debt. First Baptist Church in Gulfport, for example, has an indebtedness of about \$1 million, and First Baptist Church, Long Beach, owes about \$250,000.

Many of the members of the churches have lost not only their own homes with long-term mortgages on them, but their businesses and jobs. Their ability to help the church is almost nil, one pastor said.

"The tithe of nothing is nothing," remarked First Baptist Church Biloxi Pastor Rohrman.

In addition to the Gulfport and Biloxi centers, a similar Red Cross emergency relief center was established at First Baptist Church, Wiggins, Miss., about 35 miles north of Gulfport. Pastor Paul Grissitt coordinated the efforts there, aiding refugees who had been evacuated from the area.

At Bay Vista Baptist Church in Biloxi, Pastor Lloyd Sparkman offered his church to the District 30-D Lions Club members who wanted a place to set up a clothes distribution center.

Baptist pastors in the area also were seeking to set up an organization to make a study of the losses and needs and come up with a comprehensive long-range plan to help the entire area to dig out and rebuild after the devastating storm.

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On story headlined "Baptist Response to Hurricane 'Immediate and Compassionate,' carried above in this mailing, please insert the following after graph 11 on page 5 of mailing. Information arrived too late to be inserted in original copy:

Baptists in neighboring Alabama swung into action to help bring relief to survivors by setting up a central receiving center for relief supplies from Baptist churches in Alabama. The center is located at 2001 Southern Blvd., Montgomery, Ala.

Though the Alabama coast was not hit as hard by the hurricane, some of the aid will go to Baptist churches and people in Alabama. George Bagley, Alabama Baptist executive secretary, asked that checks be sent to the convention at Box 11870, Montgomery, marked for "Relief."

(Pickup with graph 12 of story on page 5, this mailing as sent.)

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Conversion, Social Action  
Key Points in Jewish Dialogue

8/25/69

by Bob Terry

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Two overriding concerns seemed to dominate the first Baptist-Jewish Scholars' Conference at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here--the role of conversion in the dialogue and areas where the two groups could cooperate.

A total of 73 Baptist and Jewish scholars attended the historic conference, which opened with host seminary president Duke McCall saying: "Brotherhood is not like a hot-house plant that has to be tended carefully day and night.

"Where brotherhood is real, it can grow up even between the cracks of a sidewalk," McCall said.

While the brotherhood seemed real, at times the discussions, especially in the areas of conversion and social action, grew somewhat heated.

In the opening session, one Jewish rabbi said: "If you are here to convert me, I am very uncomfortable. But if you are here to better understand me then I welcome this opportunity for dialogue."

In an early paper, Eric Rust, professor of Christian philosophy at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, pointed out that all monotheistic faiths are exclusive. Therefore, Christianity and Judaism are both missionary by definition, he said.

During group discussions, Rabbi James Rudin, assistant director of Inter-Religious Affairs for the American Jewish Committee was asked how Southern Baptists could help the Jewish community.

"Leave us alone," he responded. "Quit trying to convert us."

Leonard Dinnerstein, professor of history at Columbia University, New York, said efforts to convert Jews to Christianity was one of the worst types of anti-Semitism. "It shows you have no respect for our Jewish heritage and our relationship to God," he declared.

Luther Copeland, professor of missions at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, said he was not trying to convert Jews to Christ. "I'm bearing witness to a great truth which I have experienced," he told the audience. "If God uses that to convert someone that is up to him. My task is to bear witness."

Rabbi Arthur Gilbert of the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation pointed out that evangelical work with Jews was a strike against anti-Semitism. He told the audience that a few years ago many Christians wanted to cross the Jew off as accursed and worthless. "Evangelicals would not let this happen," he emphasized. "They said the Jews had value and refused to give us up."

A Los Angeles Rabbi, William Kramer, professor of Jewish Cultural History, Hebrew Union College, asked why the idea of conversion was a one-way street. "I've got my eye on several of the Baptists here," he said. Last year 60 Christians were converted to Judaism under Kramer's influence.

The area of social concern and cooperation produced more emotional displays than any other issue during the colloquium. Rabbi Gilbert ignited the social concern fuse when he stated that unless some concrete action was taken as a result of the conference, it would be another case of "empty words" from the church.

The conference adopted a resolution calling for an Ad Hoc Committee composed of as many faiths as possible to consider national moral priorities.

Copeland pointed out that no group or persons could officially speak for Southern Baptists that an ad hoc committee might represent many Baptists very well.

Marc Tannenbaum, director of Inter-Religious Affairs for the American Jewish Committee and Joe Dick Estes, director of the Southern Baptist Home Missions Board department of work with non-evangelicals, were charged with implementing the resolution. Other areas of concern were the role of the Messiah and concept of mission.

Christian theologians outlined the concept of a personal Messiah. Jewish Scholars pointed out that nowhere in Jewish thought is the role of the Messiah. The Messiah is to redeem corporate Israel, they insisted.

Jewish Scholars also saw the mission of Judaism as making the world ready for the Messiah. Christian thinkers generally agreed that the Messiah would have to make the world a better place although they did not deemphasize the need for social action.

Estes of the Home Mission Board, said he had no doubt but what God had been in the conference. "There is no danger of some type of monolithic church structure developing between us, so there is no fear of cooperation."

"No one has a monopoly of truth," Estes said. "The truth of God exceeds all our understanding, but each of us has a contribution to make. Our hope is that God will draw us out to the ultimate truth, himself," he declared.

The last action of the conference was adopting a statement outlining eight areas for further Jewish-Baptist cooperation. The areas stated are: ~~the~~

- (1) publish the proceedings of the conference.
- (2) the need for following up conferences including more clergy and laymen.
- (3) a more systematic way of forming joint academic work groups, on such subjects as the definition of God or examination of the Messiah concept;
- (4) joint action on behalf of Baptists and Jews in the Soviet Union and other countries where religious persecution still prevails.
- (5) examination of curriculum to determine if prejudicial material is contained.
- (6) determine ways which Baptists and Jews can confront the increasing secularism of society.
- (7) identify social and moral problems where Baptists and Jews can cooperate and implement programs to this end.
- (8) a more serious effort to deal with anti-Semitism and group prejudices.