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December 21, 1971

Home Missionary Dies
After Battle with Cancer

ATLANTA (BP)--Albert Casteel, who fought cancer for more than a year, believed that death would be his greatest victory--his finest hour. He died Dec. 18 at age 42.

Casteel, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board missionary to Montana and Puerto Rico, was buried Dec. 21 after funeral services at Elm Grove Baptist Church in Eastern, Ind., where he once served as pastor.

Casteel, who left the Home Mission Board on medical leave in 1970, had been disabled since last April.

In 1958 he went to Montana as a pioneer pastoral-missionary with the HMB church extension department. He went to Puerto Rico in 1966 as a language missionary to the Spanish-speaking people with the HMB language mission department and worked there until 1970.

In early 1971, after almost a year of medical tests, his illness was diagnosed as incurable cancer. In a widely circulated article Casteel wrote, "Many have written asking about my attitude toward life since, at the age of 40 with a devoted wife and four lovely children, my year-long illness was diagnosed as incurable cancer.

"We (he and his wife Barbara) were not angry with anyone, and least of all, God. Our attitude was based upon our concept of God as a personal, all-wise, ever-present, comforting, and sustaining being. Having believed in this truth for most of our lives, we were better fortified to accept this grim prospect without anger and with an attitude of profound trust in God. . . .

"Indeed, I have already been rewarded in many ways. For example we are told that in the normal lifetime of a missionary, he may expect to establish six or eight new churches. The Lord has richly blessed my humble efforts in that we have seen the beginning of a dozen churches, and 2000 persons have professed faith in Christ as Saviour. . . .

"Life itself is the greatest miracle. Human existence for just one day or one hour is something miraculous. And the Christian faith gives this assurance of eternal, never-ending life. Each minute that ticks by makes me realize that all time is under the administration of God."

Casteel is survived by his wife, the former Barbara Jean Knorr of Maumee, Ohio; four children, and two foster-daughters from Puerto Rico.

A native of Lewisville, Ind., Casteel helped in organizing the first association in Indiana and pastored the Elm Grove Baptist Church in Eastern. He also helped establish new churches in Illinois and Ohio.

While in Montana in 1964, he served on the Executive Board of the Colorado Baptist Convention, which includes Montana.

He was a graduate of Ball State University, Muncie, Ind., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

Baptist Board Citation Given
Miss Annie Ward Byrd

NASHVILLE (BP)--Miss Annie Ward Byrd, who will retire in January as editorial coordinator for the Church Services and Materials Division of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, has been cited for her proficiency and tenure at the board.

The first recipient of such an award, Miss Byrd was presented a certificate by Executive Secretary-Treasurer James L. Sullivan in chapel services at the board Dec. 10. In addition, the word "senior" has been added to her job title.

As senior editorial coordinator she maintains editorial scheduling of all the board's periodicals and Convention Press manuscripts. This includes at least 110 periodical publications and some 200 undated materials for use in Southern Baptist church educational programs. Check reading of these materials for clarity of concepts is also a large part of her work.

Among the factors qualifying Miss Byrd for citation were her 31 years of service to the board, individual work far exceeding satisfactory performance level, her service to First Baptist Church, Nashville, and her development of methods which have improved job results.

Among these methods which improved job results are periodical schedule implementation, "outside" doctrinal reader assignments, improved processing of church study course books, editorial quality control and a proofreading simplification project.

A native of Mississippi, she earned the bachelor of arts degree from Mississippi State College for Women and the master of arts degree from George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville. She holds an honorary doctor of literature degree from William Carey College, Hattiesburg, Miss.

Miss Byrd came to the Sunday School Board as assistant editor of Intermediate Sunday School lesson material in 1940 and in 1949 became editor of that work. She assumed her present duties in 1961.

BP PHOTO mailed to state Baptist paper editors.



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