



BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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May 19, 1972

Terror-Filled Maelstrom
Prompts Baptist Relief Work

By Robert O'Brien

NEW BRAUNFELS, Tex. (BP)--When Mr. and Mrs. Henry Parker awoke about 2 a.m., Friday, May 12, their bed was afloat in rapidly rising water.

After that, everything happened so quickly in that terror-filled maelstrom of swirling death and destruction that the 63-year-old deacon at First Baptist Church here had little time to think.

Leaping atop his bedroom dresser, Parker frantically pounded a hole in the ceiling with the first thing he could grab. He pulled his wife up into the attic and then tried to batter his way through the roof--but could not.

Then the pressure of the debris-clogged water from the raging Guadalupe River cracked the roof, and Parker hoisted his wife through. A giant pecan tree still towered over the beleaguered house.

Hold on to the tree, he told her, until I can climb out. But by the time he got out, she was gone.

Numbed, he clambered into the tree and held on as the house broke up and washed away.

Screams for help punctuated the roar of destruction as the flash flood hurled uprooted trees, automobiles and the substance and contents of once elegant riverside homes.

After what seemed to be an eternity, Parker, an employee of a furniture store in San Antonio, was plucked to safety by an Army helicopter. His wife was eventually found 10 miles away, one of at least 16 persons killed in the flooding.

By Friday afternoon, two members of the disaster relief team of the Baptist General Convention of Texas arrived to survey the scene.

By Sunday morning, the Disaster Relief Mobile Unit, headed by Robert E. Dixon of Texas Baptist Men, rolled into Seguin, about 15 miles from New Braunfels, where it began to dispense food and first aid.

The unit, a huge, rebuilt tractor trailer, was dedicated last fall, but had not been needed in an actual disaster before a ferocious rainfall piled up to 18 inches of rain on the already saturated Guadalupe watershed.

The self-contained unit carries its own food, water, emergency supplies, sleeping and work quarters, generator capable of running a hospital, two-way communication equipment, boat, trail-bike and tools.

The rain, which fell in a two-hour period, dispatched a 30 to 40 foot wall of water on a rampage down the Guadalupe River and its tributaries.

New Braunfels, where most of the lives were lost, and Seguin, Tex., received most of the severe damage.

At least two Baptists, Mrs. Parker and Julie Downs, 14, a member of First Baptist Church, Canyon Lake, Tex., were killed, according to reports compiled by South Central Area Baptist Missionary Holland P. Smith.

About 50 homes of Baptist laymen, along with hundreds of others in the area, were damaged or destroyed.

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Three feet of water damaged the interiors of First Mexican Baptist Church, San Marcos, Tex., and the parsonages of Miguel Barrios, First Mexican Church pastor, and Claude Tipps, pastor of First Baptist Church, Seguin.

By the time it ceased operation late Monday, the disaster unit, with the help of Trinity Baptist Church and First Baptist Church, both of Seguin, had distributed about 2,500 meals and administered first aid and tetanus shots to several hundred persons.

The disaster galvanized local Baptist churches into immediate action. Trinity and First Baptist Churches opened as refugee centers within hours of the flood.

Members of Trinity, led by Pastor Gerald Thurman, served hot breakfasts to victims early Friday morning, after having already spent hours ferrying people out of the disaster area to safety. First Church members and Tipps had similar operations underway.

In New Braunfels, First Baptist Church members and Pastor Bill Arnold also began relief efforts.

"Our people have really rallied to help 35 families from our church and others damaged in the flood," said Arnold.

Thurman and Tipps both noted that the disaster has given them the chance to talk about spiritual things to persons who would never listen before.

Besides on-the-scene help, the Texas Baptist disaster relief committee, headed by Charles P. McLaughlin, sent \$1,000 initial aid. Surrounding associations gathered relief supplies and funds.

Meanwhile snakes, the reptile kind, routed out by the flood, were joining vultures--"the human kind," as one resident described them--to further torment flood victims.

"You can look," one man testily warned a bystander, "but if you lean over to pick up anything you may be shot."

"Disasters like this bring out two kinds," said one resident, "the compassionate and the greedy. We appreciate the fact that you people (Baptists) cared enough to help."

Johnny Williams of Seguin, a member of a nearby black Baptist church, swung his hand toward the disaster unit, surrounded by its uniformed operators.

"This town will never forget these folks," Williams said. "They're real Christians. They're helping us when we need it."

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BP PHOTO mailed to state Baptist papers.

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University of Richmond
Receives \$100,000 Gift

5/19/72

RICHMOND (BP)--The University of Richmond has received a \$100,000 anonymous gift which will become \$200,000 through a matching funds provision under the Robins matching grant.

Source of the \$100,000 gift was not disclosed, but H. Gerald Quigg, executive director of development at the Baptist school, said the funds came from a foundation.

Quigg said the funds would be used toward one of the capital projects in a 10-year \$50 million development program approved by the school.

Under a provision of a 1969 grant made by the E. Clairborne Robins family, all new and increased giving to the university up to \$10 million will be matched dollar for dollar by the Robins fund. At the same time, Robins gave \$40 million to the school in A. H. Robins Co. stock.

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