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Leobardo Estrada:
Two-in-One Missionary

by Tim Nicholas

Leobardo Estrada speaks English with a Spanish accent--some say he also speaks Spanish with an English accent.

As new language missions coordinator for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, he is a blend of two distinct cultures.

Born in Mexico of Roman Catholic parents and educated in Texas, Estrada considers himself "a product of both foreign and home missions."

"My father heard the gospel in Mexico and took me to a Baptist church. When we moved to Texas I was baptized in a Baptist church in Corpus Christi."

Responsible for all language work in Texas, including more than 500 Spanish-speaking congregations, Estrada says it's a distinct advantage to be able to click from one language-thought pattern to another.

"I can see all through the state that any ethnic work we have will be bi-lingual, whether it's Spanish-English or Chinese-English," he says. "It's amazing; sometimes the preacher will be extending the invitation and will do it in Spanish, then he will change to English. Then you start seeing some of the teenagers and juniors come forward. They understand it better in English."

"Rudy Sanchez (pastor of First Mexican Baptist Church in Dallas) has a translating system, but sometimes even as he's preaching, he changes from Spanish to English--alternating paragraphs," says Estrada.

The Spanish language remains an integral part of the Spanish culture in the U. S., says Estrada. "I heard a missionary 30 years ago say that in 15 or 20 years we will not be using the Spanish language in our Spanish-speaking congregations. When he said that, we had 100 congregations--now we have over 500."

Estrada returned to Texas this year after an 11-year "exile" doing language work in New York. He directed language missions for the HMB in New York City when any Southern Baptist work there was "less than pioneer missions, it was primitive missions," says Paul James, executive-secretary for the Baptist Convention of New York.

The Spanish work in New York began "by just walking on the streets of Manhattan, giving out gospels. When it was snowing, I would get on the subway, and go from station to station inviting people to church," Estrada remembers.

In 1970 he became state language director for New York, and when he left "we had been able to develop 16 Spanish congregations plus two churches and seven chapels among French-speaking Haitians," he says, "plus work with eight Asian and European language groups and sign language."

Being language director for New York made Estrada the first Latin American to hold that post for any state convention. "I heard a group of Spanish-speaking pastors discussing me--they didn't know I was listening--'Brother Estrada, he's more Anglo than Spanish,'" estrada recalls, "Some Anglos would say I'm still more Mexican than Anglo." The SBC in 1965 elected him as second vice-president--the first Latin American to hold that post.

"We will always have some Anglo pastors serving Spanish-speaking people," says Estrada. "Some Anglo pastors have a special call and are able to serve adequately."

Estrada encourages area missionaries who work with Spanish-speaking people to learn the language; he reports that Mexican Baptist Bible Institute in San Antonio, Tex., is beginning a 16-week intensive training course in the Spanish language.

Considered to be friend of all cultural groups, Estrada remembers harder times. "I was going to Houston and the bus made a stop at a hotel. As I went to the restroom, I saw a sign that said, 'No Mexicans or Dogs Allowed'," he chuckles, "I went in and the Anglos looked at me and wondered maybe he's not Mexican or maybe he can't read. I would say we have improved a whole lot, but we still have improvements to make.

"This prejudice is on both sides, not only between Mexican and Anglo, but even within the races," he says.

Even labeling an ethnic group is dangerous. "Chicano is a dirty word for some," says Estrada who holds to the theory of origin as a combination of Chico (boy) and Mexicano. "Some like to be called Chicano, but not many. Some Spanish-speaking people in New Mexico get offended when you ask if they are Mexican-Americans. They like to be called Hispanic because they are proud of being of Spanish descent," says Estrada.

Leobarda Estrada has his prejudices too--he's prejudiced toward good Mexican food. During his New York years when he would fly to Texas or Mexico, he would take along an extra empty suitcase, filling it with tamales for his return trip to eat in New York. "Sometimes they were still warm," he says. Now in Dallas Estrada can get fresh tamales any time; now he's home.

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(Photo sent to Baptist state editors.)

Cooperative Program Receipts
Up 7.4 Per Cent Thru June

7/6/73

NASHVILLE (BP)--Gifts to Southern Baptist Convention causes increased substantially in June bringing the total Cooperative Program contributions to \$25,379,441.88 for the first nine months of the fiscal year, an increase of 7.4 per cent.

Cooperative Program receipts for the month of June amounted to \$2,995,143.54, a 12.06 per cent increase. The Cooperative Program is the denomination's unified budget.

Designated giving for Southern Baptist national causes was up 57.48 per cent to \$2,534,390.02 during June.

Porter Routh, SBC Executive Committee's executive secretary-treasurer, commented, "The spirit of compassion and cooperation expressed in the recent meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Portland, Oregon is reflected in the receipts from the states in June."

He pointed out that designated gifts for the first nine months of the fiscal were up 1.16 per cent, to \$25,025,990.92, largely because of special offerings for home and foreign mission. Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions amounted to \$5,728,586 through June.

The combined total for Cooperative Program contributions, which are undesignated, and designated gifts through June amounted to \$50,529,533.56, an increase of 4.21 per cent.

The amounts reflected in the financial report prepared by the SBC Executive Committee do not include funds contributed to local and state Baptist mission efforts. The report includes only financial support for national and worldwide Baptist mission efforts.

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Earl Kelly Named Executive
Secretary in Mississippi

7/6/73

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Earl O. Kelly, pastor since 1967 of Ridgecrest Baptist Church here, has been elected unanimously as executive secretary-treasurer of the Mississippi

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Baptist Convention Board.

He will succeed W. Douglas Hudgins who will retire November 13, according to Robert L. Hamlin of Tupelo, Miss., president of the board.

Kelly will begin a period of orientation for his duties on August 16 and will assume the full responsibility for the new position on November 14.

Kelly, 50, is a native of Ecru, Miss., and a graduate of Mississippi Delta Junior College and Mississippi College with a B. A. degree. He received the Th.M and Th.D degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Prior to his Jackson pastorate, he was pastor of First Baptist Church, Holly Springs, Miss. Earlier he had been pastor of Sand Creek Baptist Church, Greensburg, Ind., and associate pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Tupelo, Miss.

The nomination was submitted to the board by its executive committee which Kelly has served as chairman.

In presenting the nomination, Glenn Perry, a layman of Philadelphia, Miss., and vice chairman of the executive committee, said that the group was presenting the name of Kelly over his objections because "it felt that Dr. Kelly was, because of training, experience, knowledge of the work and commitment, the best qualified person for the position."

Kelly is a former president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

He is married to the former Amanda Harding of Cottage Grove, Tenn. Their children are Dana, 15, Brian, 7, and Kay, 6. One son, Barry, is deceased.

Hudgins became executive secretary in February, 1969, succeeding Chester L. Quarles who died in Peru on a visit to Baptist missions.

Baptist leaders in the state expressed confidence that Kelly's election heralds an era of progress for the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

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(Photo mailed to Baptist state papers.)

Dallas Housing Adequate For
16,000 Baptists Expected

7/6/73

NASHVILLE (BP)--The 1974 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas, June 11-13 is expected to register 16,000 "messengers" and the Dallas Housing Bureau promise that there will be adequate hotel and motel rooms for this throng.

A large percentage of the rooms committed for Southern Baptist Convention use during that week will be located convenient to the Dallas Memorial Auditorium and Convention Center where the sessions will be held, housing authorities say.

Requests for rooms at Dallas for the convention will not be processed until after Nov. 1, 1973, according to the Housing Bureau.

Room reservation forms will be available at Baptist state convention offices by October 1, 1973. The October issue of The Baptist Program, SBC promotion monthly, will carry full housing information and reservation forms.

Block reservations for charter flights and other groups will not exceed fifty per cent of the rooms allocated for convention use by any hotel or motel, according to John H. Williams, SBC Executive Committee staff member who works with convention physical arrangements.

In keeping with an action of the Southern Baptist Convention at Portland, Ore., the Dallas hotels and motels have been instructed to assign no more than 75 per cent of their total rooms for reservations through the Housing Bureau.

"This does not necessarily mean that the 25 per cent (or more) remaining rooms in a given hotel will be available to individual Baptists for the period of the convention, as this would be a decision of the hotels," Williams added.



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