

(BP)

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

---FEATURES

produced by Baptist Press

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Nashville, Tennessee 37219

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September 13, 1973

Grant Teaff's a Winner-- At Football and Lifestyle

By John Rutledge

"If some of the over-enthusiastic youths that attend Baylor are bound to test their kicking abilities, let them cross legs with a burro. It will be fully as civilized and much less dangerous."

--J. B. Cranfill, editor
(Texas) Baptist Standard, 1899

WACO, Tex. (BP)--Football at Baylor University here has had its ups and downs since that editorial appeared urging Texas Baptists to put an end to the "murderous game."

But it was never so down as when Grant Teaff became Baylor's head football coach in 1971. He inherited a 0-10 season record and the consensus of sports observers that it was "physically impossible" for Baylor to win even one game.

Teaff met the challenge, came up with a respectable 5-6 record and was named Southwest Conference Coach of the Year. He also became a popular speaker, giving his Christian testimony at churches, evangelism conferences, deacons' meetings and convention gatherings.

Since January, Teaff has made more than 140 speeches.

Response has been positive. Presnall Wood, pastor of Park Place Baptist Church in Houston, said he called Baylor President Abner McCall after Teaff spoke at his church in May and told him he thought Teaff was the best thing that has happened to Baylor.

"His presentation of the gospel and, indirectly, his presentation of Christian education is one of the most welcome experiences we've had in our church," Wood said.

"He didn't come wearing (Baylor's) green and gold, and he didn't talk much about football, but he did wonders for Christian education."

Wood said he was amazed at Teaff's schedule and cautioned him to cut down on appearances.

"I told him if you're not careful the Baptists will kill you, physically kill you, because of the pace," Wood said. "There's no evangelist that keeps that schedule. He'll have to slow down."

Teaff, in Waco preparing for the Bears' season opener against Oklahoma, said he will slow down, at least until the spring.

"I try to go anyplace I'm asked to speak, if at all possible, because I know God wants me to," he said. "I feel I have the ability to communicate, and He wants me to use it."

He relates in his testimony how a near plane crash made him realize God had a plan for his life. That close call has not made him hesitant about flying and he frequently travels by plane.

"Somebody looking at these statistics might say, 'That guy never never does coach', but I do my full-time job first," he said.

Teaff curtails his speaking engagements during football season and also in the early spring when he spends 90 hours a week recruiting high school and junior college players for Baylor.

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One reason Teaff does so much speaking is to try to change Baylor's image and prove that a Christian institution can be competitive.

Pride was Teaff's key word last season and his philosophy has not changed.

"The difference at Baylor is the concept that just to have Christian education is not enough. You must have the finest Christian education," Teaff said. "It's exactly the same in athletics. You must have the finest.

"One of my very strong beliefs, even before coming to Baylor, is that there's more to life than butting somebody in the mouth," he said. He tries to maintain that atmosphere and at the same time dispel Baylor's "holy joe" image.

"We want the players to grow in all areas and be competitive. In no way does that take away from being a good Christian," he said.

"We try to treat our players as intelligent young men and expect them to respond in like manner--to approach things on an intellectual basis," he said. "We're not ranters and ravers."

To achieve his goal of quality athletics, Teaff demands much from his players.

"I'm as tough as any coach at any college," he said. "I don't believe in profanity, and we don't use it, but other than that we don't run our program any differently than any other university.

"All we try to do is create an atmosphere where a guy can grow spiritually. Nothing is crammed down anybody's throat."

Teaff surprised many people, including his own coaching staff, when he contributed to a tract handed out during the homecoming game last year.

Titled "The Difference at Baylor," the tract outlined the plan of salvation and ended with a statement by Teaff: "Football games will be won and lost, but there is one sure way where we may be total winners and that is through the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our personal saviour."

"My coaches didn't know I was passing it out. One came to me later and said he thought it was dangerous because if we'd lost the game, people would have thought we were trying to condition them to the defeat because of the 'won and lost' part."

The Bears won that game and enough others to give them the best record since 1966.

Asked at the end of last season if coaches Darrell Royal of the University of Texas and Frank Broyles of the University of Arkansas, would one day start looking back over their shoulders at Baylor, Teaff responded, "They're already looking back." The tone was not cocky--just confident--a hallmark of Grant Teaff.

"We're 20 to 30 per cent better than last year," Teaff said before the Oklahoma opening game this year, but our schedule is 40 to 50 per cent tougher."

Besides his speaking ministry Teaff, who grew up in Snyder, Tex., serves as a deacon in First Baptist Church, Waco, and is also involved with Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

"A lot of people don't understand the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Some ministers were afraid they were starting another church," he said.

"But the nation is sports minded, and what athletes say is important to a lot of people. Why shouldn't we as Christians stand up and speak for Christ?"

Maston, A "Loyal Critic,"
Probes Southern Baptists

NASHVILLE (BP)--A Southern Baptist elder statesman assumed the role of "loyal critic" and led members of the denomination's Christian Life Commission here through what to him was a "personally painful" examination of trends affecting Southern Baptists.

T.B. Maston, speaking at the commission's annual meeting, bared his feelings on such subjects as "big business" attitudes within the denomination, ultra-conservatism, anti-intellectualism, denominational publishing efforts, freedom of press and conscience, the charismatic movement and maintenance of Biblical the theological foundations for ministry.

"One condition that I think very definitely affects the Christian Life Commission and what it stands for is the affluence which has touched and influenced all of us in the entire program of our denomination," said Maston, professor emeritus of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

Citing the millions of dollars handled by Southern Baptist Convention agencies, Maston said, "I'm not condemning the agencies, but the effect is almost inevitable that those who administer these agencies and institutions will have a 'big business' perspective.

"Some, and possibly most, of them will tend to have little sympathy or understanding of the ordinary working man and especially for the underprivileged, the poor and the needy in general."

He said the suburban living patterns of employes of agencies and large churches minimizes contact with the poor and needy--"the very ones with whom the prophets and Jesus were most concerned.

"The rather liberal salaries and fringe benefits paid by some--and I emphasize some--of our larger churches and to some employes of our denominational agencies is dangerous.

"The sympathies of such individuals will tend--and I emphasize tend--to be with the privileged, rather than the underprivileged. Some who receive the large salaries, which may be true of some of us, will not want to know how the other half lives. They'll not want to be disturbed."

Maston emphasized that Southern Baptists "should couple a basically conservative theological stance with our social concern," but he pointed to a "revival of ultra-conservatism" among Southern Baptists, "which is almost fundamentalism" and noted:

"Extreme conservatives have little interest in social morality or social concern in general. This is a threat in so far as there has been a revival there."

Closely related to the ultra-conservatism, Maston said, "is a constantly latent anti-intellectualism" among Southern Baptists.

"Many are suspicious of education. This seems to be true even of some of the educated. This ultra-conservatism and anti-intellectualism makes it difficult for the creative mind to find the freedom it must have to function most effectively," he said.

"We lose some of our most creative young people. Others prefer to stay and work in the denomination, but they're never able to make their maximum contribution, and the denomination is impoverished. What we need desperately is freedom to differ in love. My, my how I wish we had this among Southern Baptists."

Maston outlined problems he sees with both state Baptist papers and Broadman Press, publishing arm of the SBC, operated by the denomination's Sunday School Board.

"I doubt if there is any group among us that influences the thinking of our people more than the state Baptist editors," Maston said. "How grateful we ought to be that a considerable number of them--I didn't say all of them--can be counted in the rank of denominational statesmen.

"There have been and are attempts to make these papers little more than promotional agencies for state denominational leaders. We should help the editors resist every such effort. It's doubtful if there's anything that threatens a democracy, religious or political, more than a controlled press."

Turning to Broadman Press, Maston said, "They're bringing out a book for me in January and I hate to say anything that sounds like I'm critical."

"All of us should seek to cultivate an atmosphere among Southern Baptists that would give our (Broadman) Press greater freedom, as well as give its writers more freedom. You may not believe this, but there are books which will never be written, particularly by the teachers in our seminaries, because they are afraid and concerned about what Southern Baptists will do--not just to them, but to their families (through economic pressure). And that's tragic."

"We are the largest Protestant denomination in the United States." Our (denominational) press, it seems to me, should be as highly respected in the publishing field as any church-related press. I do not believe that is true.

"It seems to me that the press should publish more quality books--books which will serve the needs of a segment of our constituency (the more educated and sophisticated) that tends to be neglected."

Maston said later his comments should not be interpreted to mean he has no respect for Broadman Press, "which has published many fine books."

"I've had nothing but the best relations with them," Maston said, "but they seem to be pushing mainly subjects which they think will sell, such as on the charismatic movement."

Noting that Southern Baptists have been moving from a "sect type" stance to a "churchly type" position, Maston explained, "Sects renounce the world, emphasize personal rather than social morality and the negative rather than the positive aspects of the Christian life. The 'thou shalt nots' are prominent."

In contrast, he continued, "the churchly-type tends to have made its peace with the world, adapts to the culture and... majors on social morality and on the positive aspects of the Christian life."

He said the Southern Baptist move away from sectism has "tended to ignore and in some cases ridicule, the emphasis on personal morality that was formerly so central. The point is that we should have social morality and personal morality. We better have!"

The move to the churchly-type stance, he said, "also tends to leave behind many of the common or poor people who do not have a big stake in the status quo."

He urged Baptists to be "cautiously positive instead of negative" to the charismatic movement.

"We should never try to restrict God in the way he operates," Maston said. "It may be that he has manifested himself and his power in and through the charismatic movement. I am not going to say he has not."

"I will not object to contemporary manifestations of the spirit as long as those who participate in such manifestations do not make them law for all Christians and do not claim them as a test of whether one is really a Christian," he said.

"Paul laid down some conditions for speaking in tongues that are not being observed by many, if any, who claim to have the gift."

"Let us also remind the charismatics among us... that there are some fruits as well as gifts of the spirit" such as "love, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control."

Maston said he would ask those "magnifying the work of the spirit not to forget Jesus... his teachings and the kind of life he lived among men."

He told the Christian Life Commission that the impact of its work over the past 20 years shows itself in the programs and literature of a number of denominational agencies.

But, he said, the Christian Life Commission and all those interested in applied Christianity lack the unifying and cohesive issue "to give us a sense of mission and urgency we had a few years ago with the race issue."

He said the commission and Southern Baptists need to increase concern for all kinds of people--with a "special concern for the underprivileged"--and that emphasis on people will surface important social issues--including a possible rediscovery of the race issue.

Maston warned the Christian Life Commission to guard itself against success. "The better the work of this commission gets and the more established and accepted it is by the denomination, the greater will be the temptation of magnifying its ministry of service and minimizing its ministry of challenge. It must fulfill both a priestly and prophetic function in our denomination."

As for its basic thrust, Maston warned the commission and all Southern Baptists to "ground what we do as far as possible on the scriptures--your voice will carry a lot further if you can honestly say, 'thus says the Bible.'"

Maston was asked by the commission to discuss the future and implications of social Christian ethics in the denomination.