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**Cartoonist Helps Baptists
To Laugh at Themselves**

By John Rutledge

DALLAS (BP)--Baptist cartoonist Doug Dillard, an ordained minister, uses real people and situations as a basis for cartoon messages. If you're around him for more than a minute, you may find yourself in one of his cartoons. But be prepared to laugh at yourself if you do, because that's what Dillard intends.

The Baptist cartoonist, who directs a firm here called the Ministry of Ideas, said he has discovered he can say things in cartoons that might get him fired if he said them from the pulpit. Dillard's firm includes public relations, church promotion, advertising, and his first love--cartooning.

Dillard's office displays posters he has designed for evangelists, promotional material for churches and pictures of his two most famous clients, Apollo 15 astronaut James Irwin and Johnny Cash, country music artist. Several large cardboard boxes in the corner contain copies of his book, Meet Bro. Blotz, a collection of church humor cartoons.

Dillard's first cartoon came from a life situation.

While minister of education at Riverside Baptist Church in San Antonio, he was having trouble with a women's Sunday School class that refused to limit its membership to one age group. One Sunday he drew a cartoon suggesting they grade the classes by weight rather than age and posted it outside his office.

"The people would come by, look at it and break up laughing. They knew exactly who I was talking about," he said. "It didn't make them go back to their right classes, but it stopped all the fuss."

The success of that cartoon revived an interest he had as a boy in cartooning. He had set it aside when he decided to become a minister at age 15 because he didn't see any connection between cartooning and the ministry.

At Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Dillard took a course in audio visual aids and worked on a project about cartooning in which he interviewed Jack Hamm, a Christian cartoonist.

"But I still didn't get the connection that I could do that until years later," he said. "After the first cartoon, I saw I could say some things in cartoons that I would have gotten fired for if I had said them in the pulpit."

Dillard showed his cartoons to editors of several denominational publications, but none agreed to print them. One year, mounting Christmas bills forced him to submit some samples to W.C. Fields, director of Baptist Press and then editor of the Baptist Program, with the idea of running a series based on one character.

"I sat at the typewriter and paused, realizing I hadn't thought of a name for the character," he said. "I pulled it out of the air... 'Bro. Blotz'."

In the years since, Bro. Blotz has been used in more than 500 church bulletins on a continuing basis, and one missionary reported he had seen Blotz used in a church in Africa. Two collections of the cartoons have been published, Meet Bro. Blotz and Bro. Blotz the Bullder.

"Cartoons communicate real well to the kids, and to the kid in each of us," Dillard said.

This is his fifteenth year as a cartoonist and his fifth year of drawing editorial cartoons for the Baptist Standard, weekly paper of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

The editorial cartoons in the Baptist Standard present a special challenge for his talents. "I call it creating in a straight-jacket," Dillard said. "I'm limited to the editorial topic, and it's very hard to come up with ideas."

Dillard uses the Standard cartoons to communicate more than most people realize. Every week he puts a hidden message in the cartoon to his daughter Debbie, a sophomore at the University of Texas in Austin, and Baptist Student Union (BSU) member.

"Usually it's 'Hi Deb' or something like that. I started the first week she was in school. When she was elected president of the freshman BSU I put in 'Congrats Prez'," he said.

Recently he put in both a message to his daughter and one to Skylab III astronaut William R. Pogue, telling him best wishes before his space mission.

Dillard said some people are surprised that after 15 years as a cartoonist he has not yet run out of ideas.

"Ideas happen all around me, and most of my cartoons are based on something that happens to me," he said.

If he goes to a Baptist meeting and sees a situation that would make a good cartoon, he jots it down and puts it in a file. "It may not be hilariously funny, but there's an idea there. Can I exaggerate it? Give it a reverse twist?"

He pulled a thick file from a drawer--ideas that were later turned into cartoons. "It's like a first blob of catsup," he said, "It just keeps on pouring.

"But some ideas are too hot to handle," he said. He shuffled through the papers until he found a sketch of a Lord's Supper table that converts to a pool table. The idea never developed into a cartoon.

Pastors have to be especially careful around Dillard. When Baptist minister Buckner Fanning came to Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio "in view of a call," he told one group he was unsure whether he would accept the pastorate and that he was reluctant to give up his work in evangelism.

Dillard overheard the minister say to a friend that he had been looking for a house and was getting acquainted with the church members so he sketched a cartoon showing Bro. Blotz at the pulpit thanking the pulpit committee for inviting him--surrounded by his suitcase and bags.

"I showed it to Buckner and it broke him up," he said.

Dillard said his ministry as a cartoonist is to be a "needle-puncher," not just to entertain.

"God help us if we can't puncture some of these balloons," he said. "If we can learn to laugh at our mistakes and stupidities, then we can make it."

Cooper said that, as a Southern Baptist layman, he had previously used "proof-texts" of scripture to substantiate an attitude toward race," but added, "I came to the conclusion I was wrong.

"...I simply want to say that when the total impact of Christ's teachings and ministry in the area of race relations came in confrontation with the narrow, provincial and restricted attitude I had toward race, particularly members of the black race, my ideas lost the battle," Cooper said.

Cooper said he was born and raised on a hill farm near Vicksburg, Miss., and "grew up amidst all the tradition of segregation, discrimination, and denial of civil rights that prevailed during my boyhood.

"I don't know why I was not spiritually sensitive to the wrong that was in the system, but I was not," Cooper observed.

The SBC president said it was years later that his conscience "began to stir," and he "began to ask questions about the right and wrong of the system under which we were operating."

He continued, "The reasoning I had undertaken to build or to maintain my position began to melt away in the light of an open-minded search of the scripture and the growing Christian conviction that all men are equal in the sight of God, that we are all children of God, and if children, then brothers in Christ."

His own children were a "great deal of help" for they were "far ahead of me in the application of basic Christian principles in the area of race," Cooper said.

Actions of the Southern Baptist Convention, "which was ahead of me at this time, also gave me cause to think," he said.

His thinking, attitude, and actions changed gradually, "over a period of years," Cooper said. "...I do not count myself to have arrived; I am still on a pilgrimage, but I am making progress and I believe my steps are pointed in the right direction."

Cooper urged other Christian laymen to review their ideas and attitudes on race in light of the total impact of Jesus Christ's teaching and ministry.

He said, "there was a time when I wanted my pastor to be silent in the area of race... I am now prepared for my pastor to speak on the subject of 'race,' from the pulpit."

Besides "unmuzzling your pastor on race," Cooper said laymen could encourage their church, or some part of it, to participate in Race Relations Sunday, an annual observance of Southern Baptists in February. He suggested that laymen read other Christian materials, in addition to the Bible, concerning race relations and "ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in connection with your attitude and action in this sensitive area."

Laymen could, according to Cooper, lead their churches to involvement in an "outreach ministry that touches blacks." He said also that laymen might try to have a better understanding of the attitudes of black persons toward whites.

He also encouraged laymen to "get to know one or more blacks who are our peers, intellectually and spiritually, and encouraged white persons to take the initiative in establishing such relationships."

Cooper urged that black and white laymen work together in religious projects and in governmental programs directed toward helping poverty or low income groups.

He said his list was not all-inclusive but merely suggested it as a beginning point for involvement of laymen, and added, "The last thing I would do would be to impose my thinking or any suggested action of any layman.

"Generally an imposed solution to a problem of this nature always stirs up feelings, animosity, and resistance.

"Southern Baptists' position on race is on a volunteer basis, but because it is voluntary, it does not mean that it is unimportant; because there is no compulsion does not mean it is unnecessary; because we must act on our own individual volition does not mean it is undesirable..." Cooper said.