

October 21, 1974

In Missouri

Bike Riders Raise
\$1,850 for State Missions

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INDEPENDENCE, Mo. (BP)--Two high school Royal Ambassadors mounted their 10-speed bicycles and challenged semi-trailer trucks, pouring rain, narrow, hilly roads, and four-lane interstate traffic to raise more than \$1,850 for the Missouri state missions offering.

Ron Nichols and Kevin Button, both members of Birchwood Baptist Church in Independence, rode their bikes 300 miles in four days from Tarkio, Mo., to the front steps of the Baptist Building in Jefferson City where they were met by State Brotherhood Director Jimmie Gresham.

Plagued by fatigue, sore muscles, and chilly weather, the Royal Ambassadors (Southern Baptists' organization for boys ages 6-17) said the force that kept them going was the knowledge that money pledged by 131 church members and friends would go to support Missouri Baptist ministries across the state.

Royal Ambassador counselor, Dan Shippey and a helper Don Springate, took turns serving as pacer by riding a lead bicycle.

Taking advantage of regular rest intervals, the two men set a consistently fast pace for the two Royal Ambassadors. The duo averaged more than 15 miles per hour during the cross-state excursion.

Nichols, the state Royal Ambassador president, said RAs attending the Missouri RA Congress last spring were challenged by Gresham to make the ride.

"Mr. Gresham told us if we'd ride 300 miles for missions he'd personally give us a check for \$200," Nichols said. "That offer was too good to pass up," Nichols said laughingly, "so we took the challenge."

According to the two bikers, the entire chapter of 14 boys was planning to make the ride, but the schedules of a new school year and the sheer thought of riding a bicycle across the state eliminated the other 12.

The cyclists began their journey at Tarkio in a steady rain that endured throughout the day. They stayed overnight at churches along the way, where they collapsed into sleeping bags on the floors of activities buildings or Sunday School rooms.

The group planned their route so that their bicycle odometer broke the 300 mile mark as they cycled up to the Baptist Building at 1:00 p.m. Sunday.

"We were really sore at night and had a hard time getting our muscles loosened up in the cool temperatures of early morning, but we made it and I won't hesitate to do it again next year," Button explained.

"Our state missions offering helps support children's homes, homes for the aged, and ministries to the military, among other things. Our bike ride pointed out to our church members that we're serious about missions," he added.

According to the cyclists, their pastor, Tom Bourne, was thrilled by the response of the church members showed toward the bike ride for missions.

"Our goal for state missions this year was only \$600 and the money we collect from sponsors will more than triple that goal," Shippey pointed out.

"One of the main purposes of the Royal Ambassador mission education program is to promote missions through praying and giving," Shippey said.

"We felt it was our responsibility to educate the church members about the mission offering. We rode our bicycles to church one Sunday morning and parked them in the church vestibule where we encouraged church members to sign pledges," the counselor explained.

"We also picketed the church on another Sunday with signs encouraging members to support the state missions offering. We are just overwhelmed with the enthusiasm and support the people have given us," Shippy noted.

Gresham said the boys are already making plans to sponsor another bike hike for missions next year. "They hope hundreds of other Pioneers will join them," Gresham said.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

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Rummage Sale Nets \$100
For Literacy Missions

10/21/74

By Toby Druin

ATLANTA (BP)--A rummage sale for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board?

It may seem like an unusual way to raise money, but it netted \$100 and was Rebecca Summers' way of showing gratitude for being able to read her Bible and letters from her children.

Mrs. Summer was one of the first to participate in a literacy project begun in 1971 by the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) of Harrisonburg (Va.) Baptist Church.

Reared in an isolated mountain community, Mrs. Summers was never able to attend school. She married, had five children and worked at manual tasks as a maid and housecleaner and factory worker for some 50 years without ever learning to read or write.

In 1971, she told Mrs. Joan Trobaugh, for whom she worked as a housecleaner in Harrisonburg, that she wanted to learn to read. "I want to read the letters I get in the mail. I want to read the Bible," she told Mrs. Trobaugh.

Mrs. Trobaugh offered to teach her, using her children's books, but then learned that the Harrisonburg Baptist Church WMU was beginning literacy classes. She introduced Mrs. Summers to Mrs. Betty Barnett, one of the teachers.

That was almost four years ago. Now her progress as a new reader has been documented in a booklet, "Becky Enters the Open Door," by Estelle C. West. The booklet, written in controlled vocabulary, is given to new readers and is designed to encourage them to continue efforts to learn to read.

The Harrisonburg program began as one of the results of literacy workshops sponsored by the Christian social ministries department of the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board. The literacy missions program, headed by Miss Mildred Blankenship, has only one missionary, Mrs. John Isaacs of Tallahassee, Fla., but utilizes some 250 volunteers in leading workshops across the nation.

Miss Blankenship has received a check for \$100 from the Harrisonburg Baptist Church's WMU. Accompanying it was the following note from Mrs. Summers:

"Just a note to tell you about the rummage sale that I had for the Home Mission Board. I wanted to have it because you all have done so much for me, and I just wanted to do something for you. If it had not been for you I would not have got to read my Bible. I got a wonderful teacher. My teacher has had patience with me. I can't thank my teacher enough, and I can't thank you enough. I enjoy reading my Bible.

"I gave 25 of the little books away. People love to read them and wanted to keep them. I wanted to have the rummage sale to pay for them. Lots of other people want one too. Thank

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you again for all you have done for me."

The \$100 from the rummage sale will be used to print more of the booklets for new readers.

Southern Baptists participate in literacy projects through support of the SBC's national Cooperative Program (unified budget) and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions.

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Latin American Churches
Active Beyond Buildings

10/21/74

RICHMOND (BP)--While they believe it is still significant for a church to move into a new building, some Baptist churches in Latin America are now trying to move beyond the building.

This fall, more than 80 delegates to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board-sponsored conference on urban evangelism in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, discussed the need for churches to become more personal as they develop urban strategies in that area of the world where 14 cities have populations of more than one million people.

The conference brought to light ways that several Latin American churches are ministering to people in urban areas.

The house church, strongly emphasized at the conference, is gaining popularity in Bogota, Colombia, according to James H. Stiles Jr., Southern Baptist missionary. Baptists there have a goal to establish 50 of these churches in homes by the end of 1974. A house church is a group of believers who meet in someone's home, in an office or some similar place other than the church building.

Guillermo Kratzig, a student at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Buenos Aires, Argentina, used to be pastor in an area of Buenos Aires where one skyscraper a month went up over an eight-year period. He resigned his pastorate to study urban problems and methods.

Kratzig, a believer in the house church approach, emphasized evangelism in apartment buildings with the backing of a local church. A tent meeting held near a skyscraper in Buenos Aires produced many contacts among apartment dwellers.

He also mentioned selling Bibles as a way to gather data concerning non-believers since he says the census approach is not well received there.

Iraja Baptist Church in Brazil dismisses services after Sunday School once a month so members may share the gospel with vendors and shoppers in a nearby open-air market. Evening training groups are also suspended once a month so members may go out and bring visitors to the evening evangelistic services.

First Baptist Church in Niterio, Brazil, concentrates its activities on weekends because, as Pastor Nilson Fanini describes it, Niterio is a weekend town with residents working in nearby Rio de Janeiro. Home groups are also well received in Niterio. During one week last April, 200 religious services were held in homes.

The church, which seeks to minister to both physical and spiritual needs, provides literacy training, social services, a medical clinic, a pharmacy, a laboratory, legal aid and home economics training. Last year the church distributed more than 12 tons of food to hungry people.

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Catholic Bishops Seek
To Define Evangelism

By C. B. Hastings

ROME (BP)--"Man is born a pagan and is always in need of evangelization!"

So proclaimed the French bishops in reporting their small group discussions to the general assembly of the Fourth Synod of Catholic Bishops meeting here.

Everyone agreed, then proceeded in 63 "interventions" this second week to qualify that statement.

During the first week, the "Third World" dominated the speeches before the 225 bishops. In the second week, European bishops and the Vatican came back strong with more conservative views of the Synod's theme, "Evangelization in the Nations."

Three clear understandings of "evangelization" have surfaced:

(1) The basic view of proclaiming the Gospel to those who have never heard. (2) "Forming" believers after the Gospel's pattern and especially Christ's, including reclaiming lapsed or non-practicing Catholics. (3) Evangelism as bringing the principles and the power of the Gospel to bear upon the social injustices of men and institutions so as to "liberate" the oppressed from social ills.

One needs to be light on his theological and sociological feet to keep up.

Cardinal Wajtyla of Poland introduced the theological section of the debate, after the discussion of world conditions the first week.

He gave a traditional definition: "Evangelization consists in announcing the Gospel to all men, in teaching all nations to implant the church, beginning with baptism and perfecting the work by the other sacraments, the Eucharist especially."

Faith is still seen as the confidence in the truth as taught by the "magisterium" (teaching authority in the popes and bishops). Certainty of the faith is viewed as doctrinal, not experiential in Christ.

Some bishops expressed concern over the "liberation" theme sounded by the Third World bishops the first week. The Spanish and Latin-speaking groups warned that the latter easily led to a surrender to "politicization" instead of evangelization.

Some of the old triumphal stance of the church showed through. Cardinal Gray of Scotland did not view those outside the church "with excessive optimism, as it is only in the Catholic Church that one can find both the fullness of the truth and the necessary means for salvation," he said.

And Cardinal Garrone, prefect of the Congregation ("department") for Catholic Education, observed that "the witness of the Word starts from the doctrine of the Apostles and their successors who guarantee its authenticity."

Baptists would like to define those "successors" as all true followers of Christ and see in their changed lives "the guarantee of its authenticity."

But theological issues aside, the Synod is having to face some hard realities, which their own members are stressing.

Mentioned as difficulties are the defection of youth from the institutional church, the powerlessness of the church in some areas where the hierarchy has been captured by the power structure of the nation, the desperate shortage of priests and religious workers to carry out the usual missionary activity.

And there is the constant pressure of the twins, secularism and anti-clericalism, especially in traditionally Catholic countries.

Beyond these looms the mountain of "pagan" cultures and religions. The church has always known loneliness in the shadow of that Gibraltar. Now it is experiencing a "diaspora" or exile within those cultures it has largely created.

No wonder the strategies needed for evangelization in such diverse situations are a source of tension in the Synod debates.

Easily the most newsworthy event of the week to the press corps was the address to the Synod by Philip Potter, general secretary of the World Council of Churches. He was invited to speak on the Synod's theme in recognition of the dialogue, and some social action, which has been continuing for several years between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church.

To underscore the point that Potter was not speaking in a regular session, the Synod moved its meeting place in the same building, but still maintained closed session.

Pope Paul sent greetings through the secretary of the Synod, but did not attend due to "the press of duties."

Potter saw in the urgency of evangelization for our time a powerful thrust toward a united effort of all Christians. He referred to various reports from assemblies of the World Council of Churches to demonstrate their concern:

"Evangelism is the bringing of persons to Christ as Savior and Lord that they may share in his eternal life. . . . There must be personal encounter with Christ," he said.

The Jamaica-born Free Methodist also stated what he believes evangelization is not, "i.e., the purveying of a particular confessional doctrine or way of life or of a so-called superior Christian culture to the exclusion of others."

Nor is it proselytism, Potter said, which is "the corruption of witness. . . . when cajolery, bribery, undue pressure or intimidation are used--subtly or openly--to bring about seeming conversion, when we put the success of our church before the honor of Christ. . . . when we seek to advance our own cause by bearing false witness against another church; when personal or corporate self-seeking replaces love for every individual soul."

According to a group of the superiors general of both men and women Catholic orders in a private press conference later, Potter was warmly applauded. Some bishops, however, made a few polemical thrusts in the question period which followed.

I have repeatedly asked if any note has been taken of the International Congress on World Evangelization in July in Lausanne, Switzerland, and the Council of Youth, attended by 40,000 from all over the world at Taize France, in August.

One of the superiors general reported that several of the small group discussions had spoken of the two events as "signs of the times."

Back in the small group sessions, the Synod again faced many of the same issues plaguing all missionary efforts: how do you relate winning individuals and serving human needs; what do you do about growth of charismatic groups and "basic communities;" how do you develop self-dependence of the younger churches without fracturing unity; how do you free the missionary effort from colonial hangovers.

Meanwhile, in moments when the Synod is not in session, a great boon for me here in Rome is the fellowship with our Southern Baptist missionaries. Robert Holifield, chairman of the mission in Italy, and his family; the Roy Starmers, the Stanley Crabbs, the W.C. "Dub" Ruchtis (he who drives like Tehu).

One Sunday, Holifield took me to the Italian Baptist Church in Trastevere. Earlier, I had observed at least a dozen masses from St. Peter's Cathedral to Il Geau, the great Jesuit church, where about 75 attended the 9 a.m. Mass.

I climbed a winding flight of stairs hoping to get a picture from the organ loft. Imagine my surprise upon coming out into a completely enclosed chapel dedicated to the "Purification of the Blessed Virgin."

By contrast, the warmth of the prayers, the heartiness of the singing and the simplicity of the Trastevere Baptist Church was deeply moving. Bob Holifield preached for the retired pastor, Brother Abramo. I did not understand much, but I liked his style and fervor.

On the way home afoot near the Piazza Navona, I came across yet another Catholic church of the 400 I had not seen. Again, I was surprised, this time by a little group around the priest near the altar baptizing a newborn baby. Since one photographer was shooting already, I decided they might not notice another.

As I observed the proceedings I felt I would have to agree with the French bishops. This baby probably will always be in need of evangelizing!