

November 11, 1974

Her Ministry Is Delivering
Books to Elderly Shut-Ins

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ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)--Four years ago a friend asked Mrs. G.L. Hovnatanian to deliver a book to a nursing home resident. She has been doing it ever since.

"After I made that first visit, she said, "I listened to some of those who lived there and sensed their loneliness, I realized I wanted to help."

The wife of an Alexandria surgeon, Mrs. Hovnatanian, a former nurse, recalled that at the time her son was nearing high school age, and she had some free time each week.

"After that initial visit, she said, "I learned that many of the residents tired of talking with others of their age or playing checkers all day. They wanted something they could do just by themselves. Some expressed the desire to read books, but they did not have access to them.

"I learned a bookmobile stopped once a week at a shopping center near the home where I visited. So I went to the bookmobile, checked out a few books in my name and brought them to the two or three who expressed a desire to read.

"In about a month I had about 30 patients who requested books. This was keeping me busy every Tuesday morning. Soon these people became my 'family', and they felt free to ask me to pick up some dusting powder, stamps, or other personal items on my way to the home."

Before long the news spread and Mrs. Hovnatanian began receiving requests for books from other nursing homes. Her days were too short.

A call for help went out to some of the ladies of the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Alexandria, where she is a member. She received some assistance and was able to expand the service.

Mrs. Hovnatanian's "helping hand" did more than just take books to the residents. As she walked up and down the halls she had opportunity to share a word of encouragement to one who seemed depressed, compliment another on a new dress or succeeding with a recent endeavor.

Many just wanted to talk.

"At one of the homes there was a 50-year-old retarded woman who was living there because her mother was there, she continued. She helped me deliver the books and we soon became friends. And I also learned she couldn't read. After she expressed an interest in learning, I spent time with her on each visit and now she can read even such things as National Geographic and mysteries."

But some of Mrs. Hovnatanian's elderly friends go in for the "deep stuff."

"I want to tell you about one man," she said. "He is Ben Parker, a 94-year-old retired Baptist minister who has lived through the gold rush, experienced life in Alaska and is one of those who could become the subject of a book. He reads deep books, ancient history, philosophy, studies advanced mathematics and geometry. He spends much of his time making up puzzles and always has something to show me when I visit him. There's nothing wrong with his brain at 94. I always have to allow myself extra time when I go to see him. He is so interesting."

Mrs. Hovnatanian and four other women, all members of Emmanuel Baptist Church, distribute more than 300 books a month. She works at two homes. Mrs. Claude Boutte goes to one home. Two women, Mrs. Inez Hunt and Mrs. George Keene, share responsibilities at one and Mrs. M.W. Minard distributes books at another home.

The system is simple. A bookmobile with two library staff members stops at two homes every two weeks. The women gather up books that have been read and check them in. Then they check out new ones and deliver them to their respective homes.

In the homes the books are placed on a table in a central location for the readers to make their own selection. Other books, and special requests, are delivered to those who cannot come to the central room.

The books are checked out in the names of the women who keep their own records.

"In four years I have lost only one book, and that was because the person left the home and the book got mixed up in personal belongings," Mrs. Hovnatanian said.

Subject matter takes in everything from A Child's Garden of Verse to Riddle of the Pyramids. "However, she said, the readers do not want books filled with vulgarity or too many of the contemporary themes."

Delivering the books is an opportunity to share with another. It's person to person Christianity. That's what it's all about, Mrs. Hovnatanian believes.

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American Mobility--Rising
Problem in Reaching People

11/11/74

By Michael D. Chute

NASHVILLE (BP)--Leaders from the Southern Baptist Convention's Sunday School and Home Mission Boards have concluded that too little is being done by Southern Baptists in ministry to mobile Americans in multi-family housing, including apartment complexes, condominiums, mobile home parks and planned cities.

At a strategy meeting here, personnel from both agencies focused on a six-month research project commissioned by the Home Mission Board to determine the current state of mission involvement and to discover potential strategies for witnessing to people engaged in residential movement.

Used as a basis for the meeting, the research project discovered that renters are more mobile than owners; the higher the income, the lower the rate of mobility; and age is the most significant factor in mobility.

"The average American moves 14 times in his or her life," said Larry McSwain of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., one of the survey researchers. "One of every five persons in the U.S. changes address every year. Since 1950, approximately one-half the American population has moved every five years."

The mobile American is essentially in the young adult group, the survey concluded. If the movement of these persons between the ages of 20 and 34 were discounted, it could be said that our society is a relatively stable one.

The study discovered a correlation between the highly mobile person and housing patterns.

Persons targeted by the development industry for new multiple-family housing are the newlywed couples, the single parent family, the "empty nesters" and retired persons.

These same groups are the people of mobility and they represent the vacuum for the outreach and ministry for the churches.

The report also discovered that the region in which one lives significantly affects the degree of mobility. From 1970 to 1973, the northeast region experienced a 23.9 per cent

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rate of mobility, while the north-central region, 30.4 per cent, the south 34.7 per cent and the west, 41 per cent.

Mobility affects all kinds of communities with relatively equal significance. In terms of the degree of mobility, the data indicates that 15.1 per cent of the total population moved within megalopolitan (or massive urban) areas within a three year period. Approximately 7.8 per cent moved from one non-metropolitan residence to another; 4.5 per cent moved from one metropolitan (or medium sized urban) area to another; 2.4 per cent moved from metropolitan to non-metropolitan areas; and 1.9 per cent moved from non-metropolitan areas to metropolitan areas.

"In light of these statistics, our denomination is lacking a plan whereby churches will discover 'how-to-do-it' in developing a ministry in a mobile setting," said Warren Rust, metropolitan missions director for the Home Mission Board and supervisor of the research project. "For instance, Vacation Bible School is a plan for teaching Bible outside the regular church setting."

The major finding of the research project is that there are no long term, well developed and highly successful ministry projects to highly mobile persons.

"The congregations which we have discovered with some degree of effectiveness in enlisting highly mobile persons have focused deliberate energy upon the mobile person," stated McSwain. "Their strategy has been precisely the opposite of the traditional program orientation which Southern Baptists have given to reaching people."

"These congregations are not putting a high priority on visitation to prospects, but incorporate interested visitors into the total life of the church. Little effort is made to reach new people in a community until they have first taken the initiative to visit the congregation. Once that has been done, a massive mobilization of attention, attempting to incorporate the person into the congregation, on his own terms, is made. Thus there is little stress put upon membership, commitment or belief. Rather, the emphasis is put upon interaction, involvement and expressing one's own interests in the context of the congregation."

The representatives from the two boards included the leaders in the Sunday School Board's church administration, Sunday school and church training departments, and the Home Mission Board's metropolitan missions department.

These departments work in such areas as bus ministry, family ministry, Vacation Bible School, young adult ministry, the "People Search," "Hello Baptist" and "Metro Reach" emphases and metropolitan missions.

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N.C. Convention Defeats
Alien Baptism Issue

11/11/74

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina soundly defeated a proposal which would have ousted those churches not requiring re-baptism of members coming from other denominations.

Margin of the defeat, on a standing vote, was estimated by some to be as much as 3-1. The proposal fell far short of the two-thirds majority it needed for enactment, since a constitutional change was involved.

The issue has caused more floor debate in the convention than any other single question during the past four years. It was the third time the issue has been defeated, and was the worst defeat it has suffered.

The amendment was turned down in 1971 and 1973, while in 1972 a special committee was appointed to make a year-long study of the issue. The committee found that only 11 of the convention's 3,456 Southern Baptist churches accept members from other denominations without re-baptism.

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With such an overwhelming defeat, the issue is considered dead although the convention parliamentarian, James M. Bulman, who introduced this year's amendment, vowed to bring it back next year at Asheville when a new general secretary-treasurer for North Carolina Southern Baptists will be elected.

This year's 144th annual session featured three joint sessions with the General Baptist State Convention, a predominantly black body. A joint resolutions committee from the two conventions introduced a series of sweeping resolutions which were accepted by the final joint sessions with very little debate.

One resolution called for repeal of the state's three per cent sales tax on food, calling it "regressive taxation which hurts those the most who can least afford it."

World hunger was the focal point in three resolutions adopted by the Baptist state convention. One called on Congress to ration grain and food products to breweries and distilleries. Another added World Hunger Sunday to the convention calendar. Still another resolution called for a decrease in the use of fertilizer on lawns, golf courses and cemeteries.

An effort by Cecil E. Sherman, pastor of First Baptist Church in Asheville, to change the Cooperative Program unified budget percentages was defeated by a wide margin. He proposed to take one per cent of the \$10.5 million budget from the convention's seven colleges and add it to the Southern Baptist Convention percentage, making it 35 per cent. By turning down the motion, the convention held to its present division of 66.66 per cent to state causes and 33.34 per cent to world missions through the national SBC Cooperative Program.

All officers were re-elected, including Allen Bailey, Charlotte attorney, as president. Parliamentarian Bulman held on to his seat by a slim five-vote margin, when he received opposition for the first time in several years.

Next year's convention is set for Nov. 10-12, 1975, in Asheville, N.C.

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Spanish Baptist Publishers Plan to Hit Secular Market

11/11/74

EL PASO , Tex. (BP)--More and more people in Latin America can read, and the Baptist Spanish Publishing House here is working to make sure reading material is available.

Plans have been considered to hit the secular market with the publishing house's Christian publications.

The possibility of secular expansion, as well as long-range planning involving present ministries, were discussed at the meeting of the international advisory committee of the publishing house. The committee, composed of both indigenous national Baptists and Southern Baptist missionaries, meets every five years. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board operates the publishing house, which serves 40 countries.

Missionary Thomas W. Hill, publishing house director, commented, "We are about to begin a program in Argentina that could show us the way in penetrating the secular market. We hope to publish two to four books there through a major secular distributor. If it is successful nationwide, that will be our signal to begin in other countries."

Another missionary commented: "The secular bookstores are opening their eyes to religious materials. To them it is a business, but to us it is a ministry."

More than 100 recommendations came out of the meeting. Each of the recommendations will be evaluated by the staff and many will be implemented, said Hill. Major concerns that surfaced were the need for flexibility in preparing, printing and distributing literature to the Spanish-speaking world and the desire for a curriculum design that would meet the individual needs of each nation.

Two nationals and one missionary from every Spanish-speaking country where Southern Baptists have missionaries make up committee membership. Also included are Baptist representatives from El Salvador and Nicaragua, where Southern Baptists have no work; Brazil, a Portuguese-speaking country where Southern Baptists do have work, and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

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Elected president of the group was Aldo Broad of Argentina. Guido Picada of Costa Rica is the new vice-president.

The advisory committee also cited a need for more national participation in the local and international operation of the publishing house, Hill said.

"The most important thing that happens is not what took place this week, but what members will do as they go back to their countries better oriented and prepared to promote the sale and usage of our literature," Hill said. "From our standpoint, if we really take seriously the recommendations and implement them, then they become feasible and possible."

The publishing house is the largest evangelical Spanish publisher in the world. The material is used by Baptists in 17 countries where Spanish is the official language and in another 23 where it is spoken by a sizeable minority. In 1973, more than one million books and almost nine million other pieces of literature were printed.

The staff of 90 includes 26 Southern Baptist foreign missionaries who form the publishing house mission (organization of SBC missionaries) and serve as its board of trustees.