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"Been Traveling for Years
Toward This Special Day!"

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By W. C. Fields
Director, Baptist Press

The big white-and-blue Air France 747 materialized out of the Caribbean darkness and pulled up to the gate.

In the line of passengers disembarking were Alvin and Judy Gary and their little son, Jonathan. Pointe-a-Pitre, Guadeloupe was for them a long-awaited destination and a much-prayed-about beginning.

A long pilgrimage stretched back behind them from the tarmac at Raizet Airport. Four years of college, three years in seminary, three months of missionary orientation, and a year at Tours, France in language school.

And suddenly, in the velvet blackness of a tropical night, the great moment of reality for their dreams and visions was at hand.

No contenders in human affairs are more highly motivated than Christian missionaries. No one! Life for these has a sharp focus. Goals are specific.

With this kind of orientation, certain moments are bound to be dramatic. Arrival at the place of one's life work has got to be one of those symbolic occasions which illuminate the entire missionary adventure.

Over 2,500 of the Gary's fellow missionaries in 81 countries have shared such exhilarating moments of fulfillment.

When asked about her feelings on seeing the lights of the island for the first time, Judy Gary said, "Me, I'm pregnant, so I cried!"

Her husband, Alvin, said, "After language school in France we had a choice of going home to the States for a visit or coming directly here. We chose to come immediately to Guadeloupe!"

"After all of that studying, thinking and talking about this place, we are eager to get to work," he said.

Asked about their expectations, Alvin said that a seminary professor had told him, "Don't go to Guadeloupe to do 'mission work.' Go there to find out what God is doing, and plug in to it!"

"I don't expect success to fall into our laps," Alvin added. "I know the work will not be easy. It will be slow. But there is a vast difference between the Christian and others in the ability to meet difficulty. This is not a vocation for us. It is a life calling. We have been traveling for years toward this special day."

Twenty-four hours after his arrival in the picturesque port of Pointe-a-Pitre (pronounced Point-ah-Peet), Alvin Gary (from Texas) observed, "Already today I have seen things that are not within my experience. I can see that my Americanism will cause me some problems. The Guadeloupians are distinctive! But I haven't seen anything that will turn me off. And I know we cannot expect too much to happen quickly."

Judy (from New Mexico) expressed her feeling that the language of the French West Indies would doubtless be one of her big problems. "Nobody really tells you the truth about how difficult language study is, you know."

"In Paris," she said, "I remember finding a Hallmark card with the Christmas story from Luke, in French naturally. I was so proud that I could read it.

"Colloquial French can be quite tricky," Judy noted. "For instance, our expression in English--'Run for your life!'--can come out in straight-faced French: "Search your salvati n while in full flight!

"One big problem I had," she continued, "was to pray in French for the first time. I felt hypocritical! But then it really began to sink in on me that God understands French, too. That's fantastic!"

Alvin told about the satisfaction of preaching his first sermon in French at Tours, France. "I preached from a manuscript, but it was a great experience."

Then he added, "The first time the Lord uses me to win a Guadeloupean to Christ, that will be a great, beautiful moment.

"That," he stated quietly, "is what we are here for."

Wayne and Florence Frederick, the Southern Baptist missionary couple (from Mississippi) who were already living in Guadeloupe, were glad to receive re-enforcement.

"Knowing that the Garys were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board to Guadeloupe, we have been like parents waiting for a child," Florence Frederick told a visitor. "They were loved and wanted before they got here."

Guadeloupe is made up of two dissimilar islands--Grand Terre and Basse Terre--s parated by the narrow Riviere Salee. On the map of the Lesser Antilles or Leeward Islands it looks like a butterfly in full flight.

Grand Terre Island has flatlands and rolling hills with waving fields of sugar cane. The French colonial plantation culture is still visible. Pointe-a-Pitre is the busy port, trade center and largest city.

The luxurious new Meridien Hotel on the eastern end of the island and the PLM Arwak on th palm-fringed sandy beaches of Gosier typify the growing importance of tourists from Europe and the USA in the local economy. The rocks and spectacular surf at Pointes des Chateau look like the headlands of Brittany.

Bass Terre Island is mountainous and largely covered with rain forests. The picture postcard capitol city of Guadeloupe is also called Basse Terre.

Baptist work in the twin islands began in 1964. When the Garys arrived there were three churches--Pointe-a-Pitre, Raizet (pronounced Ray-zay) near the airport, and Bate Mahout (pronounced Bay Mah-oh)--with three national pastors, one ordained and two lay preachers. Ther was one mission at Port Louis.

Robert and Carel Shehand of Texas are completing language school in France and are expected t arrive in Guadeloupe in December, to add their own momentum to the Baptist work.

Alvin and Judy Gary have come to Guadeloupe with the intention of putting down roots and staying.

The day following their arrival, Alvin said, "Last night we heard the Air France 747 take off from the island. That finalized it for us. We are HERE. It is a good feeling. W are at p ace."

Not long afterward their second child, Timothy Alan, was born in Pointe-a-Pitre. H is th refore something of a native, a Guadeloupean. He is another link with the lively people whom the Garys have identified their lives and their future.

'Shirt-Pocket' Missionary
Starts 70 Baptist Churches

By Charlotte Decker
For Baptist Press

O.R. (Benny) Delmar has been characterized as a "shirt-pocket" missionary--but out of that shirt pocket, he has pulled 70 churches.

"Brother Benny," as his friends call him, is Wyoming's area superintendent of Southern Baptist missions. Even with his responsibility of 98,000 square miles, Delmar has always worked out of his shirt pocket, seldom returning letters and infrequently filing reports.

Yet from his disorganized ways, Delmar concedes to helping establish Southern Baptist churches throughout Wyoming, Montana and North Dakota.

"Wherever there is the need of a church, I am compelled beyond anything else to have a church in that place," he says.

Delmar came from a pastorate in Arizona in 1951 to help organize the First Southern Baptist Church of Casper, Wyo., the earliest Southern Baptist church of the Northern Plains area (Montana, Wyoming, North and South Dakota). At that time, the nearest Southern Baptist church was over 400 miles away in Salt Lake City, Utah, which was itself a newly organized work.

When couples from the church in Casper moved to North Dakota and other states, they asked Delmar to come help begin churches there. The spirit in the church at Casper seemed to extend across the Northern Plains, and Delmar was almost always there to lend a helping hand in the beginning works.

When the load became too much for a full-time pastor to handle, he was appointed as a missionary by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and the Arizona Convention. (The churches affiliated first with the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention and then with the Colorado Baptist General Convention until the four states formed the Northern Plains Baptist Convention in 1967.)

The work hasn't been easy. Delmar still spends at least 130 nights a year away from home, encouraging pastors and searching out areas for new churches.

When he supervised missions for the Northern Plains area, he traveled as much as 8,000 miles a month by airplane, train and car.

"Now," Delmar says, "I only average 5,000 miles a month."

Delmar doesn't even remember how many of the early churches he served as an interim pastor until the church was able to secure its own pastor. For 2 1/2 years, he simultaneously served as interim pastor of four churches in three states in addition to beginning a new mission.

"I went to each one every week. Sometimes I had to ride a bus at night so I could sleep. I even chartered a plane once so I wouldn't miss an appointment," Benny remembers.

Many times the multi-state supervisor prepared his sermons while driving. One winter day while driving to Cody to preach, he thought of a scripture he wanted to read. He opened the Bible to mark the scripture and looked up just as the front right wheel dropped off the edge of the pavement into the ditch.

Delmar braced himself as the car rolled end-over-end and side-over-side.

The accident totaled the car but Delmar crawled out of the place the windshield had been, caught a ride into Cody, preached, and then asked someone to take him to the hospital after the service.

Through the years, Delmar developed definite ideas about how to establish a mission; and apparently these ideas work. The first step requires entering a community in search of at least one Southern Baptist couple willing to hold Bible study or Sunday School in their home.

Delmar tells of one Southern Baptist woman with whom he talked. When she asked how

many members his church had; Delmar answered, "When you and your husband join, we'll have three." The woman was not impressed.

Delmar is convinced that many sponsoring churches make mistakes when beginning a mission.

"If a sponsoring church provides the workers, the program or even the church building, the mission congregation will not participate nearly so well and possibly not at all compared to the way they would otherwise," Delmar explains. "If you don't find enough workers, you carry on the best you can with what you have."

He believes that as soon as the mission obtains a pastor and permission of the sponsoring church, it is ready to constitute into a church itself.

Delmar remembers the time that Southern Baptists almost had an "underground movement" in the Northern Plains area because so many of the churches met in basements.

Although many new works still face an underground situation, other Southern Baptist missions in the Northern Plains have grown and developed into strong, stable churches. Many of these have begun with the influence of Brother Benny Delmar. (BP)

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