



February 3, 1975

75-18

Women Welcomes Challenges  
Of Counseling Boys' Group

By Tim Fields

MT. VERNON, Ind. (BP)--It was a warm July night at a camp that Sherry Shephard heard her husband tell their group of Royal Ambassador (RA) boys, "Well, if the Lord called me home right now I'd be ready to go."

This was the last time Shephard would share his faith in Jesus Christ with the couple's young RA charges. The next day Shephard died in an accident close to the spot where he uttered the prophetic words.

The night before Shephard died, the RA group and counselors sat around a campfire and sang until after midnight. (RAs is Southern Baptists' organization for boys 6-17, sponsored by the denomination's Brotherhood organization).

"One-by-one the boys began to share what Christ had done in their lives," Sherry recalled. "When someone asked, 'How do you know when you are ready to go to Heaven?' Norman shared his testimony.

"After breakfast the next morning, Norman and the boys returned to the campfire site and began sliding and rolling down a grassy hill nearby.

"They had been gone about an hour when I got the word," she said.

"Norman had been swinging on a vine and caught his foot on the root of a tree. It sent him flying head-over-heels and when he hit the tree it fractured his skull. He never regained consciousness," Sherry said.

"He died the next day. It was Sunday."

The Royal Ambassadors honored their counselor by standing single file between the church door and the funeral car. At the graveside they placed a large floral wreath with the letters "RA" spelled out in blue and gold flowers.

No one expected Sherry to continue as Royal Ambassador counselor at First Baptist Church in Mount Vernon.

But she came back because she believed, and still does, that a missionary education program for boys is important.

"It was about three weeks later," Sherry recalled. "Of course it wasn't fair to the boys. They wouldn't participate because they didn't know how to react. They were scared and I was scared and we kind of fought.

"We had a big discussion and I told them if it didn't mean anything to them that Norman gave his life while working with them, and if they were going to act up and be ornery, then I wasn't coming back.

"They really got upset then and I did too," Sherry said. "I felt so bad. I shouldn't have thrown it at them and I guess I shouldn't have gone back so soon, but there were more boys there the next week," Sherry chuckled as she remembered. "They were quiet too and they listened to everything I said."

"I went back because Norman definitely would have wanted me to," Sherry pointed out. "During our three years of marriage our whole life revolved around the Royal Ambassadors. Everything we planned was with them."

"I had already gone through my mother's death shortly after Norman and I were married.

She died in a fire.

"Mother always told me that if you trust in the Lord he'll help you through, and without that I know I'd never make it."

Now, nearly two years later, Sherry is still serving as a Royal Ambassador counselor at her church and takes the boys on campouts, hikes, and mission activity projects. She continues to meet with them each Wednesday for chapter meetings. A young man in the church assists her.

In addition, Sherry now serves as youth division leader in Sunday School, where she functions more as a youth director for all church programs.

Sherry and her three-year old son Rodney recently opened a crafts shop in Mt. Vernon. But when she speaks of her plans for the future, Royal Ambassadors are in Sherry's dreams.

"I'd like to work with Royal Ambassadors on a state-wide level," she said. "Royal Ambassadors has a lot to offer boys. I know its male-oriented but I still think it would be interesting and a challenge."

"Of course I'd like to see my new shop boom and I've got a full-time job working in my church too. It will be hard to know which way to go."

-30-

(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers.

Adapted from the February, 1975, issue of World Mission Journal.

# # #

#### National Cooperative Program Sets One-Month Record

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE (BP)--Continuing to rise, despite the growing recession, the national Cooperative Program unified budget of the Southern Baptist Convention topped the \$4 million mark in one month for the first time in the 130 year history of the nation's largest Protestant-evangelical denomination.

The \$4,303,029 collected in January represents a 9.3 percent increase over the \$3,937,030 collected during the same month of 1974. The 1974 figure had been the previous all-time, one-month high for Southern Baptists.

"We feel that this increase, in the face of the recession factors, shows that Southern Baptists are really placing spiritual factors in a high priority as we face the world in 1975," said Porter Routh, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.

"We are reminded, however, that the rate of increase for the first four months is just about half of the rate of increase for the last fiscal year," he said. "We are going to need some more \$4 million months to catch up and meet our total budget for 1975."

The funds, which come from the 34,665 Southern Baptist churches through 33 state or regional conventions covering 50 states, represent about one-third of the total contributions sent by churches to the state conventions, after the churches retain what they need for local operations. State conventions retain the remaining two-thirds for causes supported by the Cooperative Program in the states.

Through the first four months of the 1974-75 fiscal year, the national SBC Cooperative Program has received \$13,675,353 or 6.74 percent more than the \$12.8 million collected during the same period in the 1973-74 fiscal year.

Total national contributions for the fiscal year-to-date, including designated gifts above the Cooperative Program, amount to \$20,927,279--some 9.95 percent above more than \$19 million collected during the same period last fiscal year.

Designated funds for national SBC causes alone amounted to nearly \$7.3 million, a 16.56 percent increase over more than \$6.2 million designated in the same period in the previous fiscal year.

For the month of January alone, total national level SBC contributions amounted to \$10.4 million, which includes the \$4.3 million and another \$6.1 million in designated contributions.

-30-

**(BP)****BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**

SBC Executive Committee  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
(615) 244-2355  
W. C. Fields, Director  
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor  
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

**BUREAUS****ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041**DALLAS** Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996**MEMPHIS** Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Gomer Lesch, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 254-5461**RICHMOND** Jesse C. Fletcher, Chief, 3808 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151**WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

February 3, 1975

South Named To Top  
Missouri Baptist Post

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--Rheubin L. South, pastor of Park Hill Baptist Church, North Little Rock, Ark., since 1952, has been elected executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention, effective Feb. 17.

South, 53, succeeds the late Earl O. Harding, who died in late 1973, and Thomas W. Nelson, director of the Missouri Baptist Foundation, who has held the top Missouri Convention post on an interim basis.

Olan Runnels of Kansas City, chairman of the convention board's search committee, said, "We feel that the leadership of Dr. South will be a major factor in the bright future we see for Baptist work in Missouri."

The Missouri Baptist Convention, affiliated with the 12.3-million member Southern Baptist Convention, is emerging from a period of discontent which generated severe criticism of convention fiscal policies and procedures. The convention, late last year, resolved the controversy in a harmonious annual meeting in Joplin at which convention structure underwent extensive reorganization.

South, a native of Criner, Okla., was reared in Portales, N. M. He is a cum laude graduate of Eastern New Mexico University and holds a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, Ark.

During World War II, he was a bombardier captain in the U. S. Air Force, collecting a Distinguished Flying Cross with two clusters, an Air Medal with four clusters and two battle stars. Currently, he is a chaplain, with the rank of colonel, in the Arkansas National Guard and is past chief of the guard's chaplaincy section.

Before going into the ministry, South was a dry cleaning business in Lovington, N. M. He held pastorates in Milam County, Tex., and Grand Prairie, Tex., for four years before accepting the pastorate in North Little Rock.

Denominational service has included the presidency of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, chairmanship of the state convention's executive committee, membership on the SBC's Executive Committee (which included chairmanship of the Executive Committee's program subcommittee), membership on the Committee of 15 which surveyed Southern Baptist agencies and programs, presidency of Southwestern Seminary's Alumni Association, and service on boards of trustees of several Baptist institutions.

In 1973, South was voted the Man of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce in North Little Rock, where his service has included chairmanship of the North Little Rock Library Commission and of the North Hills Exceptional School Board and presidency of the Baptist Pastor's Conference of Pulaski County.

He is married to the former Verna Lois Roberts of Clovis, N. M. The Souths have a son, Gregory, a physician in the U. S. Army, and two daughters, Mrs. Mark Coppenger, wife of an assistant professor at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn., and Diedra, a student at Ouachita Baptist University.

-30-

(BP) Photo mailed to state Baptist editors.

# # #

O'Hair-Criswell 'Debate'  
Strikes Sparks in Dallas

By Dan Martin

DALLAS (BP)--"I am aghast," W. A. Criswell said after his three-hour radio talk show with atheist Madelyn Murray O'Hair. "The result in my heart is one of amazement," he added.

Mrs. O'Hair summed up her opinion of Criswell, pastor of Dallas' First Baptist Church, after the marathon "debate": "I had expected an erudite, intelligent, educated, sophisticated man of the cloth. I find him crude."

Criswell also had an opinion of Mrs. O'Hair's opinions: "I am not accustomed to confronting a gutter thought and a gutter religion and a gutter theology and gutter attitudes. It is new to me."

The much publicized confrontation featured Criswell, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Mrs. O'Hair, of Austin, Tex., whose objection to prayer in public schools led to the famous 1963 Supreme Court decision.

The pair struck sparks from the very first.

At a pre-talk show press conference, they admitted having met each other only 15 minutes earlier.

Asked why they were appearing on the Ed Busch Show on a statewide broadcast originating on WFAA Radio in Dallas, Mrs. O'Hair replied:

"I would like Dr. Criswell to understand that atheists are viable, warm, human, kind, intelligent, understandable, understanding and durable people. We have the right to our opinions.

"I want everyone to understand that we are fine citizens and that our opinions are just as valid to us as the religious opinions are valid to them and that there must be a sphere of opinion in the United States big enough for both of us to operate in."

Criswell responded: "My whole attitude and circumference is that she has a privilege, of course, to be an atheist, but I think that what she is trying to do is destroy our churches . . . destroy the Christian faith in America."

The pattern which was to follow was established as Mrs. O'Hair interrupted Criswell to interject: "Only Christians can do that . . ."

"My impression of all that she does is that she is seeking to destroy the churches, and her words of freedom, of taxation, of all the avenues--nomenclature by which she approaches it--has as its ultimate end the destruction of our churches. I think that is what would please her. She would like that."

Criswell likened her pronouncements to those of "Russian propagandists," whom he said "sound exactly like Madelyn Murray O'Hair."

She countered that she "did not come here to defend my patriotism," and the battle was joined.

The pair insulted each other over academic qualifications.

A questioner from the 100-member studio audience asked about their educational backgrounds.

Mrs. O'Hair boasted of having a Ph.D. in theology, and Criswell asked: "Did you get it from a diploma mill?"

"That's insulting," she said.

"It may be, but I want to know," Criswell countered.

-more-

When she replied it was from the Minnesota Institute of Theology, Criswell asked the audience: "Whoever heard of that?"

When he said he received his degrees from Baylor University (bachelor of arts) and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (master of theology and Ph.D. in theology) she replied:

"You're no Princeton, you know. You're no Yale."

But, all in all, the biggest fight was over the Communism remarks Criswell made on the air, in the press conference and during a station break.

He also said he "equates Communism with atheism and atheism with Communism."

The two disagreed on almost every point from the religion of the founding fathers of the nation to a definition of atheism.

Terms such as lie, half-truth, Fascist, Communist, red herring, exorcism, martyrdom, schizophrenia, repression, intolerance, narrow-mindedness popped up time and again.

Busch, who hosts the talk show--which also was videotaped for possible showing on television--pointed out before the confrontation began that it was not "not a debate. It is a talk show . . ."

Nettled by her constant interruptions as he attempted to make his points, Criswell asked Busch to "keep her trap shut until I reply."

Criswell was asked on the air how he feels about Mrs. O'Hair. "I love her, for Jesus' sake," he replied, "but I hate everything she stands for."

Mrs. O'Hair took exception and called the response schizophrenic: "You can't love a person and hate the substance a person is possessed of. You can't separate the person from the idea. If you hate my ideas, you hate me."

One point both agreed on--after the show had ended--was that it was too "broad" and did not allow each the opportunity to properly rebut the remarks of the other.

Asked if he would do it again, Criswell replied: "I don't know. I would have to think it through."

Mrs. O'Hair, on the other hand, announced she is soon to leave on a trip to California where she has "54 radio and television appearances in two weeks, supporting atheists and organizing them."

-30-

Dan Martin directs press relations for the Baptist General Convention of Texas and associate chief of the Dallas Bureau of Baptist Press.

(BP) Photc will be mailed to state Baptist editors.

# # #

Scout Group Names Chief  
Executive and Relocates

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE (BP)--Homer M. "Smoky" Eggers of Tyler, Tex., a Baptist layman and Boy Scout executive for 22 years, has been elected as the first fulltime executive director of the Association of Southern Baptists for Scouting.

Owen Cooper of Yazoo City, Miss., the association's chairman, also announced that the group will be moving its headquarters to Nashville.

The association, which began about 25 years ago in Austin, Tex., is not officially related to the Southern Baptist Convention.

-30-

Life Saved, Churches Report  
At Honduran Baptist Meeting

MAPULACA, Honduras (BP)--In the midst of an annual meeting of the Honduras Baptist Convention here, Southern Baptist missionaries joined together to save a woman's life.

The woman, in a complicated state of labor, came asking for missionary doctor, David Harms who visits the area regularly.

Harms discovered the woman's unborn child was dead. He radioed Missionary Aviation Fellowship for a flight to take the patient to the hospital for emergency surgery.

A Ford pickup with a fiberglass cover, used by missionary Ralph Wilson, became an ambulance to take the woman to the airstrip. The cot placed in the truckbed was surrounded by the woman's relatives. Harms held the intravenous medicine he was administering as they rode on rocky mountain trails.

Thanks to immediate help, according to missionary press representative Sue Austin Wilson, a successful operation was performed in the Evangelical hospital in Siguatepeque and the woman's life was saved.

Missionaries report that many other gratifying events" occurred at the convention and that Pastor Jorge Gonzalez, a graduate of the Baptist Theological Institute, and his congregation in Mapulaca "were well prepared to host" the 47 delegates and other guests coming to the three-day program.

Church members and others in the community, some who were not believers, opened their homes, providing food and lodging.

Pastors in areas which had been struck by Hurricane Fifi in September reported that many professions of faith in Christ were made in the months following the hurricane.

Workers have been busy in the reconstruction of a school and houses, which were destroyed by the flood. They also have repaired damaged houses.

Pastor Rafael Flores of Second Baptist Church, San Pedro Sula, said that people now know who Baptists are. Before the hurricane, Baptists were not well known in the area.

Services were held during the conference in the Mapulaca Plaza, which is dominated by the huge Catholic church. A priest comes to the church once a year to marry people and baptize the babies born during that year.

A single light bulb hung from a large Ceiba tree. A series of wide concrete steps around the huge tree trunk provided a high platform for those leading the services as about 300 persons assembled in front of the platform--most standing, some sitting on benches brought from the Baptist church.

The people listened to missionary Wayne Wheeler's bass solo, "Cuan Grande Es El" ("How Great Thou Art") and sang to the accompaniment of Pastor Roman Pineda's accordion.

Also participating were A. Clark Scanlon, field representative for Middle America for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and Judson Blair, guest speaker from the Baptist Spanish Publishing House, El Paso, Tex.

*(BP) photo to be mailed to state Baptist papers.*