

(BP)**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICESBC 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, 3806 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

June 23, 1975

75-93

**Christians Persist in Laos
Baptist Missionary Says**

MIAMI BEACH (BP)--Despite the recent evacuation of all Southern Baptist missionaries from Laos, Christianity will persist there, asserts a missionary who helped to start Baptist work there in 1971.

Now that the missionaries are gone, the Lao Baptists will probably merge with other denominations, according to Jerald W. Perrill, a Southern Baptist missionary who recently returned to the United States after four years in Laos.

"I don't think there's going to be a Baptist distinctive there for a long time," he explained. "They (the Baptists) will be spread over a wide area. There won't be more than two or three in one particular area."

Perrill believes the Baptists will draw Christian strength and support from other groups. The Lao Baptists had a close relationship with the Lao evangelical church even before missionary evacuation, he said.

"In a Communist country, you forget denominations, especially when the church goes underground."

He added, however, he does not foresee Christians in Laos having to go underground in the near future. The government, Perrill noted, has promised its citizens freedom of worship.

He expressed the hope that the Lao Baptists will not be hindered by their former association with American missionaries.

Perrill and his wife, who were one of the first two couples who started Baptist work in Laos in 1971, have been in the United States just a few weeks. He was a participant in a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board consultation held here prior to the Southern Baptist Convention.

There are about 20 to 25 Lao Baptists in the country, Perrill estimated, and they have been Christians from two and a half years to eight months.

The four missionary families and one journeyman assigned to Laos could see the tense situation coming and began preparing the Lao Baptists to continue on their own, Perrill said.

"Our work in the past months was to teach them the principles of Bible study, of prayer and worshipping together."

He said the national Baptists had previously warned that the missionaries might have to leave soon because of anti-American sentiment and expressed concern about their physical safety.

Before the missionaries left, he said, the Lao Baptists joined together to choose leaders "to carry on the fellowship of believers."

Perrill concluded, "We've entrusted them to the Lord."

About 1,000 Vietnamese Have SBC Sponsors, More Needed

ATLANTA, Ga. (BP)--At least 1,000 Vietnamese refugees have been resettled by Southern Baptist groups, but the goal of relocating and resettling the Indo-Chinese from temporary camps in the United States is far from fulfilled, according to information from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board here.

"We need sponsors. Our number one goal is to get these people out of the camps," says Jim Lassiter, field representative for Southern Baptists at Camp Pendleton, Calif., one of four stateside camps set aside for living quarters and processing stations.

The other camps are, Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., Ft. Chaffee, Ark., and Indiantown Gap, Pa.

As of mid-June, a board spokesman said, Camp Pendleton's press office released information saying that 88,389 refugees had arrived at the four stateside camps.

Thus far, only 29,389 refugees have been processed out, says Lassiter, who formerly served as a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary in Vietnam and is now aiding in securing sponsors for the Vietnam refugees.

"That leaves 59,000 still in the camps," he says, "plus more than 40,000 waiting to get into the states.

"Pendleton's getting out about 350 people a day, and that's more than twice the amount for all the other camps combined," Lassiter notes.

Reports reaching the Home Mission Board's Office of Immigration and Refugee Service in Atlanta indicate that the largest number of refugees resettled by Southern Baptist groups have been in the Washington, D. C., area, including Maryland and northern Virginia.

Others have been resettled in California, Florida, Georgia, Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, Mississippi and Louisiana, according to Irvin Dawson, who heads the Baptist service which is working through Church World Service.

Churches willing to commit themselves to serve as sponsors are urged to take the following steps:

- 1) Vote in conference to sponsor a family; decide on size of family the church would prefer, available housing and job opportunities.
- 2) Write the Baptist coordinator (who is usually state director of missions) or the Office of Immigration and Refugee Service, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, 1350 Spring St., N. W., Atlanta, Ga., 30309, for commitment forms.

Processing time may be as short as two weeks from approval of an application for sponsorship to arrival of the family at the sponsor's city.

Sponsorship, according to Dawson, includes providing for the support of the refugee family until members can provide for themselves. This may take a few weeks or a few months, depending on employment opportunities.

Sponsorship involves, in the early stages of resettlement, provisions for housing, clothing, groceries, and other basic needs.

Transportation is provided by the government. A transitional resettlement grant of \$100 per refugee is provided by Church World Service in a check requiring the signatures of the refugee and the sponsor.

The refugees are anxious to get out of the camps and resettle, Dawson adds. Even those highly skilled indicate willingness to take most any employment necessary.

The size of families varies considerably, from couples to extended families of 20 and 30. Many speak English.

A Look At Honduras
10 Months After Fifi

By Sue Wilson and Nancy Carter

CHOLUTECA, Honduras (BP)--A trickle of water runs in the river beds. After four months without rain, the area around San Pedro Sula is dry.

In moister parts of Honduras, women busily scrub laundry on the rocks along placid streams as children play in the water.

One would hardly believe 10 months ago Hurricane Fifi ravaged the country and these rivers and streams overflowed their banks.

Perhaps these same women and children were left homeless, sick and without food after 160-mile-per-hour winds destroyed houses, churches and crops indiscriminately.

One clue of last year's disaster are the boulders spread along the route the floods took. Scars from mountainside landslides are also still visible, although vegetation is beginning to cover some of them.

Much of the worst damage--to buildings and roads--has been repaired or rebuilt completely.

About 300 Southern Baptists have worked alongside Southern Baptist missionaries and Honduran Baptists in reconstruction. They came from 13 states, from many walks of life, and in ages ranging from youth to retired persons.

Texas sent 73 Baptist representatives to assist in work efforts. Florida sent 70; Alabama, 41; and Louisiana, North Carolina and Virginia 15, 13 and 11 respectively. Seven other states--Georgia, Kentucky, Colorado, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Illinois and Tennessee-- each sent a few laymen.

About 12 other individuals, all with medical experience, went through the sponsorship of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's medical consultant, Dr. Franklin T. Fowler.

The medical personnel cared for long lines of patients which formed each day outside clinic areas. They treated individuals suffering from flu, colds and upper respiratory infections as well as many other chronic problems, such as parasites and anemia.

The 300 laymen are gone now. Gone too are the disaster relief vehicle from Texas, which served 3,000 meals daily to refugees, and the orange and blue tent, the scene of three month's evangelistic services by Baptists.

There are other reminders however, that Baptists have been here.

A short distance away from the revival tent site is a concrete block chapel. Sixty-five members have been baptized as a result of the revival in Las Brisas. This mission was begun by Second Baptist Church, San Pedro Sula, before the hurricane. After Fifi Church's pastor, Rafael Flores, and the congregation were active in relief, engaging in personal evangelism as they distributed food supplies.

A school located next to the mission was also built by Baptists. A plaque on the school reads:

"A labor of love, built by a joint effort of the Honduras Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' Proverbs 22:6."

Ten families who lost their homes in the flood now live in houses built by Baptists. Major repairs, such as replaced walls, were made on 27 houses.

One group of 23 Texas men went to Siguatepeque to begin building a pastor's home. Later four men from Georgia continued the project, which was completed by five men from Alabama.

Six carpenters built cots at the Theological Institute in Tegucigalpa. These cots were distributed in a number of areas where people lost beds in the flood.

After construction was finished in Las Brisas, Southern Baptist missionaries led in construction of a school and chapel in Salama. The church became a member of the Honduras Baptist Convention in January.

The work continues for Southern Baptist missionaries.

"The worst hurricane to strike the coast of Honduras this century," as it was described by a spokesman for the National Hurricane Center in Miami, Fla., has left its mark on the small island country of Honduras. However, Baptists have helped and are still helping the scars to heal.

The one positive result of Hurricane Fifi is the life-changing decisions it caused.

Over 200 persons were baptized into churches of the Honduras Baptist Convention in a seven-month period following the hurricane. During the previous 12 month period, 107 were baptized.

Southern Baptists and Honduran Baptists have not only helped reconstruct Honduras physically but have helped many to reconstruct their lives.

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NOTE: Sue (Mrs. Ralph A.) Wilson is a Southern Baptist missionary to Honduras. Nancy Carter is a staff writer for the Foreign Mission Board press office.

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