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75-125

Jim Pickens Ministers In
"The Great Outdoors"

By David W. Forman

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky (BP) --As congregations go, Jim Pickens, a 21-year-old minister from Flint, Mich., has a pretty unusual one.

The Campbellsville (Ky) College senior can visit his members only when they're not home, and his congregation always has more visitors than "regulars" present. When he gets up to preach, his listeners put down newspapers and coffee cups, instead of hymnals.

"Brother Jim" is camp minister at the KOA (Kampgrounds of America) between Campbellsville and Columbia, Ky. He is sponsored by the Taylor County Association of Baptists under direction of the Association's Missions Committee.

His chapel is a sun porch beside the swimming pool, his platform is flanked by swings and pinball machines, and for 17 weeks out of the summer his "members" are the campers who come nearly every weekend to stay and play near the Green River Lake.

The Missions Committee, chaired by layman Darrell Hunt, has sponsored the services there for the third straight year, and they hope in the future to expand to other campgrounds in the area.

"The folks at the KOA have been very satisfied with the program and have asked us to continue it," Ken Forman, associate pastor at the largest Baptist church in the association says. "Many people have told us they really appreciate the ministry and look forward to it when they come."

"Sis" Childers, who along with her husband, "Chick", manages the Campbellsville KOA, says, "Everyone really enjoys the services. It's something that a lot of people ask about."

"Last week we had 321 campers and nearly 150 of them were at the church services."

Ralph and Mable Judd, of Louisville, are typical of the people Jim calls his "regulars". Mrs. Judd says, "We're here more than at home on weekends during the summer. When they tease us about being away from church so much, I tell them I get more out of church here than I do at home."

How do they feel about their "summer pastor"? Mrs. Judd says, "We think he's great; he's doing a good job. We told him you gotta' get out here on Saturday and let the people know who you are, and he does."

A physical education major at Campbellsville College, a Southern Baptist school, with plans to attend seminary when he graduates, Pickens says the ministry has meant a lot to him, especially when campers share their testimonies.

"I feel that as a student I can do more than a preacher might in the same situation, because the campers don't think of me as a preacher," he says. "When I started, I used to go out there in a suit and tie, but some of them got on me about it and told me to just dress like they do, so I do."

"I try to preach gospel messages rather than doctrine or anything like that, since people from all different denominations come."

"One couple who comes all the time took it for granted that all KOA's had services. When they were traveling in another part of the state they spent the night at the KOA, and on Sunday morning went to the pool to wait for services as usual. When nobody showed up, they asked about it and were surprised to find out that there wouldn't be any service."

"People hate to go into a strange church," Jim theorizes, "and most of the campers don't bring any good clothes or anything. It's really been good to worship with them and to share what Jesus means to me with those who don't know him."

Eight people so far this summer have responded to Jim's invitations, and Mrs. Childers says one family from Lexington noted after a service that if they hadn't already been Christians, they would be now.

With the wind blowing the tree leaves, the sun shining, and nature so close all around, it's hard to imagine anyone in Jim's "congregation" not having some kind of worship experience.

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(BP) Photo mailed to state Baptist papers

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**Baptists Help Bengali
Refugees Help Selves**

Baptist Press
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DUTTA PARA, Bangladesh (B)--A newly built campsite houses more than 25,000 Bengali refugees here who were moved out of Dacca because the city was reportedly overcrowded and could not support all its people.

The residents of Dutta Para are among the poorest in the world, says Southern Baptist missionary James F. McKinley Jr., and the least amount of rain brings tragedy.

The refugees' poor condition and the threat of floodwaters prompted a 21-day "food for work" project, funded by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Some 2,229 baskets of earth were carried to raise the foundation area of the little huts at the site, so rains bringing floods would not wash them away.

The baskets of earth were carried by refugee men and women participating in the "food for work" project. The workers were paid half of their salary in wheat and half in cash so they could purchase a few necessities.

"We watched after a little shower as women dipped water by the pan full out of the huts," McKinley said. "When it rains, they huddle together as if a terrible storm were blowing. To them every little rain is a terrible storm."

The graveyard is always a center of activity. Death strikes often. Many of the graves are shallow. At night, the jackals steal the decaying bodies from the more shallow ones.

"Faces are hard, life is hard," McKinley said. "Not many care. Perhaps most of the time it seems no one cares."

"Life was better for those 21 days," McKinley said of the Dutta Para project. "There was food to eat--bread from the wheat. There was some money to buy fuel and cooking oil."

The Bengali Christian young men who helped McKinley in the project had their devotional meeting in this camp where every family but two is Muslim. As they sang, prayed and read from the bible, many gathered to try to understand these men.

"We may not have been doing all there was to do," McKinley said, "but in the name of Jesus, we were doing what we could at the time."

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(BP) Photos mailed to Baptist state papers

He's 89, Expects to Be
Pastor 50 More Years

By Fletcher Allen

SIQUIRRES, Costa Rica (BP)--It happened 65 years ago, but Wilfred Watson remembers the dangerous days better than if it were yesterday's news.

At age 24, he immigrated in 1910 to Panama from Jamaica where he took a job with a new outfit, the Panama Canal Company, builders of the Panama Canal.

Watson's life was exciting then--and he says it has been so ever since. The personable black Baptist leader made history of a sort when he was ordained as pastor of the Siquirres Baptist Church, Siquirres, Costa Rica, in June. He's 89! And he expects to live and be pastor of the Siquirres church for at least 50 more years.

Watson was able-bodied and willing to work back in 1910. The fifty miles of canal began in 1906 and every foot of building and digging and blasting was treacherous. The main work was completed in 1914--but Watson had come and gone by then.

"Men's lives were falling like leaves," he recalls of those earlier days.

It was not the threat of yellow fever or malaria that got the best of Watson. It was the murderous landslides. "The engineers had to blast through the rocks and mountains with explosives," he says, "and whole crews of men would be buried, never to be seen again."

"I decided to leave," he says, "because I was young and afraid. That was not the place for me!"

No one can fault Watson for not staying on that job. And Costa Rica Baptists are happy that he did not. Though he did not continue with the Panama Canal Company, there was something about Panama that lured him to stay.

He became a carpenter for the United States Army and worked in the Canal Zone from 1928 to 1948. He was given jobs that required dependability and discipline.

"I gave them more than they expected and never less than what God gave me the ability to perform," he says, with satisfaction.

During those years two important events shaped young Watson's life. In one memorable year, 1923, he was baptized and married.

Though he didn't know it at the time, his marriage was the result of prayer by a young lady. "We just happened to go to the same church and met," she says after 52 years of marriage. "I had asked God for the blessing of a good Christian companion. He answered me 52 years ago, affirmatively."

The Watsons stayed in Panama for a while after he left employment with the U.S. Army. He was 62 then--and by modern standards was ready for retirement. He had lived a full life, but the ordinary way is not Wilfred Watson's way.

They moved to Siquirres in 1956, to stay.

Staunch Christians, the Watsons were never quite satisfied with their worship experience in Siquirres. They worshipped with Christians of other denominations, though Wilfred and Leonora were Baptists.

"On Nov. 28, 1966," says Watson, "I talked with a missionary in Panama. We talked about starting some Baptist work in Siquirres. We prayed about it. I went to see Donald Redmon (Southern Baptist missionary) over in Turrialba. We decided to start the work.

"At first," Watson says, "we met here in my home and in the yard. Then as others joined with us, we began to meet in the old unused lodge hall--it required much repair.

"Here's a notation in my journal just after we built the new building in town--'today we gained four souls.'"

It took hard work to establish the Baptist church in Siquirres. It is a black Baptist church in a Spanish-speaking land dominated by catholicism. Most of the membership is English-speaking, of Jamaican descent.

The Siquirres blacks also speak Spanish. Their literature--including (Southern Baptist) Broadman and Baptist Hymnals--is donated by Southern Baptist churches. One of the donors is Sans Souci Baptist Church, Greenville, S.C., which in July sent 16 young people and three sponsors on a mission trip to Costa Rica where they spent some time with the Siquirres church.

Watson's ordination was unusual in that he was 89 years old. But it was simply the right thing to do, Baptist missionaries avow.

"He has been the church leader for so long--and they wanted him to be the official pastor," says missionary Jackie Cooper of Turrialba, who arranged the service.

During the service on Father's Day, 1975, Watson looked around at the missionaries--and remembered the founding of the church--with Don Redmon, Deacon Osmond Brown, and others back in 1966.

Watson and his wife, Deacons Brown and Oswald Kelly, Deaconess Hortensia Smith had been leading the church. But every church needs a pastor. Thus, the Father's Day service came about. Besides Cooper, veteran missionaries Sidney Goldfinch and Dan Sprinkle were also present.

Watson is best known in Costa Rica for his praying. Friends are so impressed by his spirituality that they attribute a number of problems overcome and healings directly to his prayers.

Like real stalwarts of the Bible, he prays until something happens. He is impressed by the prayer life of President Ford. Of the United States Watson says, "No nation is pure. I say this broad and plain--the United States acts on Christian motives most of the time."

The Baptists of Siquirres have a church--and now they have a pastor. He's 89, but young, very young at heart and mind. You get the feeling that they would rather have him than any other pastor from any place. The people will tell you--without being asked--what God is doing in their land. They live their Christianity so that they can easily be identified as Christ's followers.

They do it better with Wilfred Watson as leader!

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