



**Big Spring Takes Vietnamese  
Refugees into New Texas Home**

By Dan Martin

BIG SPRING, Tex. (BP)--More than 100 Vietnamese refugees have found a new home on the arid plains of Texas, thanks to a combined effort by a church, community and a military installation.

The effort is being coordinated by First Baptist Church here and isn't stopping with the first group of new neighbors. The Big Spring community, the church and Webb Air Force Base hope to find places for at least 50 more refugees in the near future.

The Big Spring relocation project has been highly successful, so much in fact that Mike Manning, resettlement director for Catholic Community Service in nearby San Angelo said, "If all communities throughout the United States were as active as the Big Spring community, there would be few or no refugees remaining at the resettlement camps."

First Baptist here has served as a go-between, information center, processor, clearing house and catalyst in resettling the refugees. The project has been a blending of diverse elements, however, including Baptists and Catholics, military and civilian, American and Vietnamese.

Several of the church's families have sponsored refugees, as have others in the 30,000 population city.

"It would be nice to say we had a well organized plan and went at it that way," says Col. Robert Owens, commander of the 78th Flying Training Wing at Webb, AFB.

"But it was not that way at all."

"We started training Vietnamese pilots here in December of 1973," Owens said. Webb is a pilot training base which has provided instruction for 14 countries, including the United States.

"When things began to get tense in South Vietnam, we began getting some letters and telephone calls. The former students wanted to know what we could do to help them," Owens added.

There wasn't much the officers in West Texas could do except worry, hope and pray.

When South Vietnam fell, personnel at the base--and civilians in town--began calling to find out what happened to acquaintances, friends or former students.

At first, Capt. Bill Albright, an instructor pilot, tried to help. But the job soon swamped him.

He suggested the church become involved as a clearing house for information about people and sponsorship.

About that time, Major Jim Stokes, a member of First Baptist, approached the pastor, Kenneth Patrick, to ask what the church could do to help.

Patrick said the church would do what it could and assigned Herb Shipp, minister of activities, to the job.

Neither Shipp nor Patrick realized how big the undertaking would become.

The townspeople and the base had come into contact with many of almost 100 Vietnamese students trained at the base the past two years.

"I thought there might be two or three families involved. I never thought it would be as big as it has become," Patrick said.

Shipp, aided by the Big Spring Herald, the city's daily newspaper, began to get calls. "Almost overnight we became the information center. We began to work not only to give our information about sponsorship, but to seek out and find some of the refugees," Shipp said.

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Many of those first calls questioned whether so-and-so had gotten out, and if Shipp knew anything about To, and Anh or Tran or a hundred others.

Shipp began to search out the individual refugees. In those first chaotic days, there was no central listing, as there is now. Shipp called the refugee camps, asking for information on each person.

Refugees began to be discovered and others began to arrive. When Shipp found a refugee, he went to the nearest refugee sponsoring agency. Often, he worked through the United States Catholic Conference (USCC), since many of the Vietnamese are Catholic. The refugees had to register with a sponsoring agency in the camps in order to be sent out.

"Some of the best luck we had was with the USCC. We had a real good relationship with them and ran quite a few of the families through them.

"Most of our requests were along specific lines," Shipp said. "We located the family and began the paperwork procedures to get them out.

"At the same time, we asked people here for houses and jobs and clothing," Shipp said.

The community responded. Clothing, household goods and jobs were made available. The only thing difficult to find was housing, as "we have a housing problem here in Big Spring," says Shipp.

Housing, however, was discovered. And, when it was not available, the refugees stayed in sponsors' homes.

The only complaint Shipp received was from a woman whose son was out of work.

"She was a bit angry and wanted to know if I could find a job for her son, since I was trying to find jobs for the Vietnamese. I told her to send him on by," Shipp said.

Col. Owens called the effort a community-wide project by individuals working together.

"I guess in the military we always want to do things with precision. We try to organize them and do them One, Two, Three, by the numbers. But there was not that kind of organization at all here.

"But it worked. I think that is the beauty of the American system. People just working together get the job done."

One of many who have helped make the resettlement work is Jack Perry, a member of First Baptist Church and manager of Star Fiberglass Systems, Inc., a six-year-old oil field-related company in Big Spring.

Perry has hired more than 35 Vietnamese refugees, and has them in the training stage. Many of them work in office, payroll and production stages of the plant. The hard work in the fiberglass plant is requiring a large readjustment for many Vietnamese.

"In their country, anybody with an education did not have to do manual labor," he said. "In our plant now, we have pilots, army officers and even one lawyer."

One young man, a former Army second Lieutenant, has been working only a few weeks, yet "not only has he made a bonus, he has led everybody in his area to receive bonuses," says Perry.

Patrick said of the resettlement project: "I feel like this is really sharing Christian grace" and "affirms once again that love is stronger than war and hatred. I think missions begins right here."

"I wish more churches would get into something similar to what we did," Shipp said, "A church can sponsor a family or two and that is commendable.

"But a church can do so much more by helping the community be involved."

Seminary Extension Helps  
Lay Ministry in Israel

By Robert O'Brien

HAIFA, Israel (BP)--Lay ministry is the key to helping the small, struggling Baptist churches in Israel grow into self-supporting status, says Ibrahim Sim'an, an Arab Baptist layman and editor here.

That lay ministry, in turn, could be strengthened, Sim'an says, through courses offered by the Seminary Extension Department of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The active and intense layman is editor of Al Jama'ah, Arabic newspaper published by Baptists in Israel, and assistant director of the Christian Service Training Center, operated by Southern Baptist mission representatives, which offers Seminary Extension courses.

Recently, Sim'an became the first person to complete the new certificate-for-diploma exchange program of the Seminary Extension Department, a Nashville-based office operated by the Southern Baptist Convention's six theological seminaries.

Sim'an had received a certificate in pastoral training shortly before the Seminary Extension Department converted from certificate to diploma--in much the same manner seminaries throughout the United States converted from the bachelor of divinity to master of divinity degree. He became not only the first to exchange for the diploma but the first to receive a diploma in the revised curriculum format.

Since that time, 67 others--who had earned one of three certificates formerly offered in pastoral training, religious education or Christian life development--have exchanged them for a diploma in either pastoral ministries or educational ministries.

Enlarging on his concepts of lay ministry, Sim'an, in a Baptist Press interview in Haifa, said he hopes that he and other laymen can develop "tentmaker" ministries by working in some secular position to earn a living but continue in church-related work on a non-salaried basis.

That might mean, Sim'an said, that he would eventually stop drawing salary for his work with Al Jama'ah and the Christian Service Training Center, but continue to do those jobs while earning his living elsewhere. That would ease the budget and help the Baptist work prosper.

Many types of opportunities would be open for "tentmakers," Sim'an says. For example, some schools in Israel need Bible teachers, Christians could earn a living by teaching and still maintain full church-related responsibilities.

Courses in both the old certificate program and new diploma program of Seminary Extension are recognized as college-level work in the United States, a fact which Sim'an feels can benefit the occupational advancement--secular or religious--of him and others in Israel.

In the United States, Seminary Extension Department courses are approved by the National University Extension Association and the National Home Study Institute and are in the process of evaluation for approval by the U.S. Veterans Administration. The courses are accepted as transfer credits into degree programs of many accredited colleges and universities across the United States.

Sim'an began working with the Southern Baptist mission representatives in 1965, assisting in translating Seminary Extension courses and other duties. The Arab layman had previously attended the Baptist School in Narareth.

A young man whose efforts have won acceptance by both Arabs and Jews in Israel, Sim'an has some definite ideas about how Christians should share their faith in the Middle Eastern environment.

"The Western mind," he said, "places great importance on theology and the fact that people are sinners. The Eastern mind, while not ignoring these things, places more importance on personal example of living and of praising God for what he is.

"In the East, Christian witnesses must have patience and live a Christian testimony, rather than just verbalize it. If evangelical Christianity wants deep roots here, it must orientalize itself."

An example he cites is the need for more oriental-type music and other art forms as aids to worship, rather than western-style versions. "A problem we have here," he said, "is that we don't have someone talented in oriental art forms to help at this point."

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**9-Year-Old Baptist Counts  
Blessings after Kidnapping**

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By Fletcher Allen

**SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (BP)**--Yorlenny Castro is a very fortunate nine-year-old, and she knows it. She's counting her blessings.

The young member of Guadalupe Baptist Church on San Jose's outskirts was kidnapped for \$250,000, yet released unharmed by her abductors. Nor was the ransom paid for her release, although the kidnappers tried to persuade her well-to-do father, Carlos Castro.

The terrifying ordeal had another positive result--a life changing experience for Yorlenny's father.

The girl, kidnapped in front of the school she attends, said some men told her she had been selected to represent her school at a Red Cross meeting. The young Baptist, an avid Red Cross member, initially went along without protest.

But when the men blindfolded her and tried to cover her mouth, she fought back. Her abductors then sought to confuse the girl by driving around awhile and eventually took her to a house, where five men guarded her for six days.

She was treated well and given food, Yorlenny noted. Occasionally, she could hear her name mentioned on a radio in the adjacent room. The men told her at first they would soon take her home but then said her father had caused delay in her release by calling in the police.

As authorities intensified the search for Yorlenny, and when Castro refused to pay the ransom, the kidnappers apparently grew nervous. Churches in the area continued to pray for the girl throughout the ordeal.

She was released six days after her abduction, about midnight, on a dark road near a coffee plantation entrance, close to the town of Heredia. Passersby notified the police, who escorted Yorlenny back to her parents.

No one could argue about the Castro's sincerity when they declared Yorlenny's release date the happiest of their lives. Friends and well-wishers, including journalists, were called in for a reunion with the girl. The churches, Baptists particularly, celebrated and "praised God."

A two-hour service at San Ramon Baptist Church, 45 miles from San Jose, was held in honor of the Castros, with the pastor Manuel Cordero and Southern Baptist missionaries Jackie Cooper and Clive Buttemore leading.

Children in the church presented Yorlenny with flowers. Mrs. Castro thanked the congregation for their prayers and "for God's answer." Presenting musical selections in the service was a visiting youth choir from San Souci Baptist Church, Greenville, S. C., Cooper's hometown.

But it was a happy time for the Castros in another way. Yorlenny's father accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour during the terrifying days of waiting for his daughter's return. He was a "new man" when they were reunited, and the entire family now belongs to Guadalupe Baptist Church.

The incident focused attention on such crimes including efforts to mete out sterner punishment for kidnappers.

But, with all the excitement and concern over her abduction, a major concern for Yorlenny during her ordeal was whether her mother had remembered to take rice to a school party, held the day she was kidnapped.

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