

(BP)
October 28, 1976**--- FEATURES**
produced by Baptist PressSBC 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
75-167**Eugene Hill--Missionary:
A Man of Unwavering Faith**

By Ruth Fowler

RICHMOND(BP)-- He was orphaned at 13, imprisoned in China during the Communist take-over and even lost four of his five children. But in the midst of these and other difficulties, Eugene L. Hill has not wavered.

After 40 years of service to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Hill will retire Dec. 31 from his present post as secretary of the department of missionary education. During the board's October meeting, he was presented with a bound volume of letters from 321 Baptist leaders, Chinese friends, missionary colleagues, co-workers and other associates. A second large volume is being prepared. The board also awarded Hill a 40-year service pin, along with a financial gift of appreciation.

"He is a man of great resourcefulness," said Baker J. Cauthen, the board's executive secretary. "I measure him as the kind of man you can put in the middle of a problem situation and it will begin to get organized...as a man who loves the preaching of the gospel...as a man who loves to teach and train workers. During those difficult years in China, Gene Hill never quailed."

Honored with him was his wife, Louise Heirich Hill, who served with him during the 20 years they spent as missionaries in China and Malaya (now part of Malaysia). The Hills are members of Richmond's Ginter Park Baptist Church and have continued a ministry to Chinese people in Richmond.

Born in Texas, Hill moved to Oklahoma with his family as an infant. His parents lived in a rural area where his mother taught him to read and write from the Bible and Pilgrim's Progress. He also read from the Foreign Mission Journal and the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger during his early years of schooling.

When Hill was 10, his mother died. Just after his 13th birthday, his father died, leaving him to help care for five younger brothers.

Graduated from high school at age 15, he was already accepted in his home church as a young leader and therefore fit for election as a messenger to the 1925 Southern Baptist Convention in Memphis. There he witnessed the organization of the Cooperative Program, the unified budget plan that was to help finance his nearly 41 years of mission service.

Young Hill, while working in the oilfields for two years after high school, led his first congregation--a crew of houstabouts who listened as he read and explained scripture during the Sunday lunch hour. Converts among his fellow employees became the nucleus of a church which still exists in north Texas.

At 17, Hill returned to school to prepare for the ministry in earnest. He was graduated from Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. He met his wife during his senior year in college and they were married two years later after she graduated.

Soon after moving to his first full-time pastorate in Horse Cave, Ky., the Hills received a phone call from C.E. Maddrey, then the executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, asking if they would accept a call to serve as missionaries in China. At the time of their engagement, they had agreed to be missionaries if God called them. They visited board headquarters in Richmond and were appointed. Three weeks after appointment they were on their way to China. Hill was 25 years old; his wife, 22.

During their first term in China, the Japanese-Chinese War began. During the war, Graves Theological Seminary, where Hill taught, remained open until the city where it was located, Canton, fell to the Japanese.

During this siege, Mrs. Hill went to safer neutral territory, in another part of Canton. Hill remained in Tung Shan, part of Canton. Each thought the other might have been killed. When Hill was able to get back to his wife, she was not at home but in the hospital. Their son had been born early. They were later separated by the war for almost a year.

The Hills lost three children in infancy and a fourth, the one born during the siege of Canton, died from a fall from a motel window. Their fifth child, also a son, lives in Montreal with his wife and three sons, and is a university professor.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Americans had to flee Japanese controlled China. The Hills went on furlough and returned to China when the war ended.

The second term in China was a period of rebuilding. Missionaries worked to reopen and reorganize the work. It was not long though before a Communist take-over of China became evident. It was during this time that the well-known Southern Baptist missionary physician Bill Wallace died in a communist prison.

Hill spent a number of hours in prison himself, being questioned about the activities of himself and other missionaries.

Some concern existed over whether or not the Hills would be allowed to leave China. Hill had made it possible for other missionaries to go by promising to accept their punishment if the Communist government discovered any crime they had committed. At last, the Baptist hospital offered itself as security, permitting Hill, his wife and son to leave soon thereafter.

Their third term of missionary service was among the Chinese people in Malaya. During this term, Cauthen contacted Hill suggesting that he accept an administrative position with the Foreign Mission Board's home office. Hill accepted. The year was 1956.

His next 20 years of service included many changes in the department of missionary education and promotion which he heads. Among them was the growth of the department to include separate offices for promotion and furlough ministries, publications, press and public relations, resources and services, program and product development, and The Commission, a mission magazine published by the board.

At the beginning of 1976, Hill will leave the board, but not the active ministry. After considering many offers of preaching and teaching and other academic positions, both on and off the mission field, Hill has decided to write a detailed account of his mission service and the advance of Southern Baptist missionary efforts.

Truely, no other man is qualified to write such an account.

October 28, 1975

75-167

Bicentennial Feature

Founding Fathers' Faith:
Was it Myth or Reality?

By Walter B. Shurden
For Baptist Press

During the first inauguration of the President of the United States on Wall Street in New York, George Washington ceremonially repeated the prescribed words.

And then, of his own accord, Washington added, "So help me, God." But that was not all. Bending over he reverently kissed the Bible held by the Secretary of State.

That illustration and numerous others lead one to respect the widely held belief that our founding fathers were men of staunch Christian conviction.

But be careful! We could over-Christianize 1776 during the Bicentennial celebration of 1976.

And we would have gone too far if we end up with St. George (Washington), St. Thomas (Jefferson), and St. James (Madison)!

After all, Washington's relationship to the Episcopal Church was nominal at best. And Thomas Jefferson, accused of being an infidel, was denied a place on the shelves of the Philadelphia Public Library as late as 1830.

James Madison was not a communicant of any church. And while our founding fathers were not always active churchmen, neither were they always considered to be orthodox in Christian beliefs.

But if we are tempted to claim too much in 1976 for the faith of the founding fathers, we may also be tempted to claim too little. They were certainly people who drank often from the Judaeo-Christian fountain. To read the story of their concerns is to see the influence of Christian ideals in the shaping of the nation.

While the founding fathers were often reluctant to accept orthodox Christian theology, they were usually eager to affirm Christian ethics.

What then was the "faith" of the founding fathers?

First, it was a faith that believed God sides with the oppressed. The Exodus event in biblical history had a powerful appeal for the young Americans of 1776. They saw themselves as the oppressed who needed liberation from the injustice of the oppressor.

Do most American Christians still believe that the Lord God of 1776 still sides with the oppressed? Then how quickly can we identify in 1976 those who need the 1776 freedom?

Second, the faith of the founding fathers extolled equality. A Philadelphia militiaman greeted July 4, 1776 by announcing, "Let us never forget we are all equal." That cry was basic to the desire for independence. But equality was not automatic. Even our founding fathers did not always live up to their noble words.

But they planted a seed that refused to die. The elimination of slavery, the enfranchisement of women, the provision of free common schooling for all, the struggle for desegregation--all of these are part of the American people striving to live out the founding experience. (BP)

-30-

Walter B. Shurden is professor of church history and Southern Baptist studies at Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn.

Over 700 Profess Faith
In Thailand Refugee Camps

CHACHEUNGSAO, Thailand (BP)--Over 700 Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees in three Thai camps have accepted Christ as their personal Savior, according to Maxine (Mrs. Robert R.) Stewart, a Southern Baptist missionary stationed here.

When Southern Baptist missionaries took food and supplies to the refugee camp at Klong Yai, they were requested to direct a worship service.

Some 300 of the 1,200 refugees gathered in the rain under a partially finished palm-leaf shelter for the service. Afterwards the camp doctor, himself a new Christian, said that between 300 and 400 people in the camp, some of whom were products of earlier witnessing, desired to be baptized.

In another refugee camp, Pong Nam Ron; 22 Christians who escaped from Pailin, Cambodia, have led 71 other refugees to Christ.

An independent pentecostal pastor in the camp has baptized another 123 Cambodians.

The only Chinese Christian to come out of Cambodia to Pong Nam Ron, Mr. Lao, now leads some 30 new Chinese Christians in regular worship services.

Through the influence of these groups, over 200 in the Pong Nam Ron refugee camp have now professed faith in Christ.

In the third refugee camp, Wat Chaman, three Christians have been witnessing among the other refugees; and the refugees have been and are still responding to the gospel. Records last August indicate that over 55 adults have made public professions of faith.

"It seems this is a people's movement toward Christianity. Perhaps many do not yet know all that is involved in following Jesus," explained Ronald C. Hill, one of the Southern Baptist missionaries helping with food distribution in the camps.

Feeling a great need for further teaching, missionaries have established regular worship services within each camp, according to Mrs. Stewart. They minister to the spiritual needs of the refugees through these services as well as on individual levels.

Lung Boot Dee, a Thai Christian of Cambodian origin, is now teaching in the camps at Wat Chaman and Klong Yai.

In Pong Nam Ron, those interested in baptism are receiving intensive biblical instruction, as much as four hours each day, from the Cambodian pastor who led his congregation out of Cambodia.

Even though the teaching process is still in progress and many of the 700 have not yet been baptized, these Christians may be the beginning of a growing Christian awareness amid the uncertainty of refugee life.