



November 11, 1975

Yugoslav Baptist Knows What
It's Like to Be Different

75-176

By Nancy Carter

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Nela Williams, a Baptist from Yugoslavia, knows what it's like to feel different.

In her homeland, a communist country since World War II, Baptists are a minority of 3,000 among 21 million people.

Now, however, she finds herself one of over 29 million Baptists in the United States. Her surroundings are even more decidedly Baptist since she lives at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here where her husband is working on his doctoral degree.

While growing up in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, she said, "I went to church but my friends didn't go, most people didn't go."

"One is free to go to church. There is no open persecution where we would need an underground movement, but it's more the psychological consequences when you grow up in a society that is mostly atheistic."

But the "psychological consequences" did not stop Mrs. Williams from being active in Baptist work in her native country. Her father has been a Baptist pastor since she was young. And although there were no girls or young women's organizations to join, she enjoyed taking part in youth groups and conferences.

In fact, it was at a Baptist World Alliance conference for youth in 1968 that she met a young student from First Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.--Jim Williams. He heard her name and hometown at the "roll call of nations" and sought her out to talk with her since he was on his way to study at the University of Zagreb.

Once he moved to Zagreb he began attending her father's church. In 1969 they were married and went to Ruschlikon, Switzerland, to study at the International Baptist Theological Seminary. While there, their two children were born, Tanja, now 4, and Krisimir, now 2.

The Williams share a deep love for Yugoslavia and for the work of Baptists there.

They are members of a translation committee of the United Bible Societies to translate the New Testament into a common language version of Croatian, the native tongue of the republic in which Zagreb is located.

They are now making application with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to return to Yugoslavia as missionaries. Currently there are no Southern Baptist missionaries living in Yugoslavia.

In the meantime, however, Williams continues to work on his doctorate in Biblical studies and serves as a graduate assistant to George Beasley-Murray, professor of New Testament interpretation at Southern Seminary. Mrs. Williams is studying Greek and linguistics.

The Williams believe their ministry, wherever they are, will be centered in teaching. He taught New Testament and she taught Greek at the Baptist Seminary in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, one year before coming to the U.S.

Williams has found the differences between Baptist churches in Yugoslavia and those here are not so great, even though in a few conservative churches there men sit on one side of the church and women on the other.

Additionally, in a small number of churches, men are not allowed to wear ties. "They think ties are too worldly," Williams explained.

How do Baptists evangelize in Yugoslavia? "We have literature which is printed, and radio broadcasts," Mrs. Williams said. Radio broadcasts are the only form of communication which canvass the entire country, she noted.

However, the major way of communicating the message of Christ, "is through private conversation--just talking," Mrs. Williams said. She noted a one-to-one witness is the most effective way of sharing the gospel message.

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Church Warned to Check
 Status of Tax Exemption

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist churches were warned here to check on the tax-exempt status of their property to avoid possible embarrassment and an unnecessary bill to pay.

"On several occasions recently," said Robert H. Kilgore, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's division of church loans, "we have had churches obtaining new loans or selling property which discovered that because they failed to file for a tax exemption they have an unnecessary bill that must be settled."

The problem, Kilgore said, is that many churches which are qualified for tax exemption fail to file for it or some file only once when they should do so each year.

A letter outlining the problem has been sent to each church having a Home Mission Board loan, but Kilgore said that every one of the Southern Baptist Convention's 34,734 churches should be aware of the problem.

"The statutes concerning tax exemption vary from state to state or from county to county within the same state," the letter warns. "In some areas, once a property is placed in the tax-exempt property files, it remains so classified unless the property comes to be used for non-religious purposes. In other areas, application must be filed periodically in order for the property to be tax-exempt. In some areas, the statutes have recently been changed to require periodic filing."

A check with the local tax assessor about the status of the exemption on a church's property could save some churches a lot of money, Kilgore said.

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Mrs. Charles McKay
 Dies in California

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PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--Mrs. Charles (Fana Ruth) McKay, wife of the former executive secretary-treasurer of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, was buried here, Nov. 10. Mrs. McKay, 67, died Nov. 7 in Riverside, Calif., where her husband serves on the faculty of California Baptist College.

Mrs. McKay and her husband are both graduates of Mississippi College and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

In 1952, they left Pascagoula, Miss., where he was serving as pastor, to move to Nashville, where he was secretary of evangelism for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

In 1956, he became chief executive of the Arizona Convention, leaving that post in 1970 to become pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Scottsdale, Ariz. He retired from the pastorate in 1974 and joined California Baptist College.

Mrs. McKay is survived by her husband; two daughters, Mrs. E. B. Myers Jr., wife of an Arizona Convention staff member, and Mrs. Alvin Wood, wife of the pastor of First Baptist Church, Anchorage, Alaska; and four grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers or other remembrances, the family requests contributions, through the Baptist loan fund of the Arizona Convention, to fund a scholarship in Mrs. McKay's name at Grand Canyon College, Phoenix.

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Bicentennial FeatureBaptists Freed After
46 Days in Prison

URBANNA, Va., Sept. 26, 1771 (BP)--Four Baptist ministers were set free after spending 46 days in prison for preaching without a license from the State of Virginia.

The ministers, John Waller, Robert Ware, James Greenwood and William Webber, were, at times, put on bread and water, and held in close confinement and were attacked and threatened by mobs. They were set free primarily because of the effectiveness of their preaching and of their increasingly large following, observers said.

Almost from their hour of imprisonment, the Baptists continued to preach, sometimes from their cells and from the prison yard. They were beset by constant disruption from persons opposed to their preaching.

Crowds, however, continued to flock to Middlesex County Jail, where the four were held, to hear the preaching. Many who heard them were said to have been converted to Christianity.

The four were sentenced on Aug., 26, 1771, to be kept in close jail on bread and water until each posted bonds of 75 lbs. and promised not to preach in the county for six months. They refused to comply and continued preaching.

They were not on bread and water long, as friends brought such ample provisions that the prisoners were giving the surplus to the needy of Urbanna.

On Sept. 10, 1771, the prisoners were allowed the freedom of the jail yard, where they preached every Wednesday and Sunday in the face of threats and opposition.

The Baptists often had to preach above the sound of a drum pounded by their opponents and were sometimes forced to retreat to their cells to escape attack.

In addition to attending preaching services and providing for the Baptists' needs, friends presented to the court a petition for the release of the ministers. The petition was filed without action.

The prisoners noted that the prison was dark, swarming with flies and generally unhealthy. During their 46-day stay, Webber became ill. Waller, thinking his friend was dying, wrote to a county officer asking that Webber be released, but the request was ignored.