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76-12

Was 'Meanest,' Now
'Nicest Man in Town'

By June King Finley
Adapted for Baptist Press

The "meanest man in town" slouched against a street sign, too drunk to stand alone.

He shook his head to clear away the cobwebs but couldn't remember why he was there. Watching the morning traffic whiz by, he wondered how he could get someone to take him to the nearest bar.

Waking unsteadily to the middle of the street, he waved his arms to stop an advancing car. The car slowed and halted.

Suddenly, "the meanest man in town" went berserk. Jerking open the car door, he pulled the startled driver out of the car. Soon, the wail of a police siren promised help for the driver who lay bruised in the street.

A few hours later, the drunk opened his eyes to see blood on the walls, the bed and the floor of his cell. He wondered who had been hurt. When he moved, he knew the answer, but he couldn't remember how or why.

His wife called to take him to the doctor, and he was released to her custody. The "meanest man in town" had once again lived up to his reputation.

That was almost 15 years ago. Today, the "meanest man in town" has become one of the "nicest man in town."

Bill Cardwell, a Baptist minister, is now the director of Harbor House in Memphis, Tenn., a halfway house for alcoholics serving a five-state area in the mid-south.

Cardwell believes God is using his own personal experience to help others fight the battle against alcoholism.

Cardwell hardly looks the part of "the meanest man in town." He doesn't even look like a former drunk. His soft-spoken ways are inconsistent with his former life as a tough-fisted, hard fighting bar-room brawler.

How did a man like Cardwell ever get the bad reputation he formerly had? He says it started when he was 12 years old. He was sitting quietly in the backseat of the car while his two brothers-in-law drove down the highway, sharing a bottle of liquor.

The two men jokingly offered the boy a drink. To their surprise, he accepted their offer as a challenge to his manhood.

By age 15 he was drinking every chance he got. By age 16, he was hooked on alcohol, he says. By age 18, it took a pint of bourbon a day to keep him safe and secure in his alcoholic world.

When Cardwell was 19, he fell in love with and married Dorothy. She came from a strong Christian family, and her background was a major factor in holding their marriage together as Bill's drinking increased. Years passed, and they had three children--Billy, Ronnie and Christopher.

During those early years of marriage, Cardwell managed to work and maintain a fairly normal family life. But part of his way of life was to buy liquor in half-pint bottles, so it could be easily hidden in his coat pocket.

By age 28, Cardwell drank seven half-pint bottles of bourbon a day. There were numerous arrests, including one for armed robbery and assault (the robbery charge was later dropped). There were lost jobs, psychiatric wards, and a tarnished reputation--all stepping stones on Bill's downhill slide into the world of alcoholic despair.

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He rightly earned the reputation as "the meanest man in town."

Then Baptist evangelist Bob Harrington, the "Chaplain of (New Orleans') Bourbon Street," came to lead a revival at the First Baptist Church in Hayti, Mo., just a few miles from Cardwell's hometown in Caruthersville. Harrington asked his radio audience to telephone him the name of "the meanest man in town" so he could pray for the man.

Cardwell's sister-in-law called and asked Harrington to pray for Bill. The next morning, Cardwell sat alone in a sleazy, third-rate motel room, suffering from a hangover. His face was unshaven. His hands were shaking uncontrollably. At the age of 30, he had fallen to the bottom of his well of self-pity and frustration.

Seeking relief from a pounding headache, he went to the front office of the motel to the refrigerator to get some beer, the only headache cure he knew at that moment. The motel owners were eating breakfast, and the radio was blaring a sermon by

"Turn that fool off," one of the owners said. "No," insisted Cardwell. "I want to hear what he has to say."

Bill's early years of church training and Sunday School lessons about a loving, forgiving God, suddenly came full force to his memory. He recalled that he had given his life to Christ at age 15. He also remembered those moments when he had felt God wanted him to be a minister.

Harrington appealed for people with drinking problems to seek God's help.

Throwing aside the empty beer can, Cardwell dressed and drove to the address suggested by the evangelist.

Harrington had just returned to his hotel room to rest before another service. When he answered the knock at his hotel room door, he found himself confronted by a tall, unshaven, shabbily-dressed man, permeating the air with the smell of alcohol.

The two men talked and prayed. That night at revival services, Cardwell walked the aisle to proclaim that God had changed his life, and he would not drink anymore.

Now, he almost regrets that he said so firmly he would never drink again. It is not that easy.

"I try to stay sober one day at a time," he said. "God gives me the grace and strength to stay away from alcohol one day at a time," he said.

He is pastor of Tomato Baptist Church, near Blytheville, Ark. Harbor House, which he directs, cares for about 35 alcoholics at a time. There is never a vacancy, Cardwell says.

The success rate at Harbor House is high. They seldom lose a man back to liquor. Recently four men came back to celebrate their first birthday with cake and candles. It was their birthday of one year without alcohol.

But Cardwell has no illusions about his past. And he knows that the road back to alcoholism for him is just one drink ahead.

"Everyday," he says, "the power to stay sober come from God." (BP)

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June King Finley is a housewife and freelance writer in Memphis, Tenn. She is an active member of Ardmore Baptist Church, Memphis.

(BP) Photos mailed to Baptist state papers

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January 19, 1976

76-12

**President Tolbert's Faith
Keeps 'Powderkeg' Cool**

By Jack U. Harwell

ATLANTA (BP)--"Liberia is one of the most stable nations in Africa but it sits on a political powderkeg. The Christian faith of its president is a major factor in keeping that keg from exploding."

That, in a nutshell, is how a Baptist pastor, just returned from a unique diplomatic mission to Liberia, summarized that visit there.

And a Southern Baptist missionary to Liberia, now on furlough in the United States, corroborated the assessment.

William L. Self and Mrs. Self of Atlanta were in Liberia the first week in January for inaugural ceremonies for William Tolbert as president. They were special ambassadors of President Gerald Ford. Self is pastor of Wieuca Road Baptist Church in Atlanta.

Tolbert became president in 1971 upon death of President William V. S. Tubman. But the 1976 inauguration marked the beginning of his first full term after his own election.

Joining the Selves as President Ford's ambassadors were Dr. and Mrs. Asa T. Spalding of Durham, N. C., and Mrs. Margaret Bush Wilson of St. Louis, chairman of the board of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Upon returning to Atlanta, Self said the most impressive things about his visit to Liberia were the overpowering person and position of Idi Amin, president of Uganda; the delicate but forceful role of diplomacy and "tight-rope walking" practiced by Tolbert and his country; and the strong Christian faith of Tolbert and his people.

"The most impressive single occasion I have attended in my entire life was the inaugural worship service at Zion Praise Baptist Church in Bental, where Dr. Tolbert is pastor," Self told the Georgia Baptist Christian Index.

"Words cannot describe the drama of seeing a nation's president so revered and honored in the small Baptist congregation where he is a faithful and loving pastor.

"People overflowed every inch of the building and all grounds around it to see Dr. Tolbert, to touch him, to hear his personal words of greeting and encouragement," Self continued.

"And when Idi Amin arrived, with 45-caliber pistols on each hip, there was an electricity and a tangible excitement like nothing I have ever known in a public gathering.

"As chairman of the Organization of African Unity, President Amin is the single most powerful man in Africa today. And the African people honor him like no other man on earth," Self said.

"One brilliant young African student told me that Amin had made the Queen of England capitulate to him and he made the United Nations quake beneath his boots, and that Black Africans are now looking to him as their leader."

He said, "In this kind of a black unity environment, Dr. Tolbert and the democratic nation of Liberia are walking on a true tight-rope of diplomatic tension. Forces of Communism, black nationalism and democracy--fused with old tribal-traditions of all forms--are pulling at Liberia from every side.

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"But Dr. Tolbert appears to be highly respected as one of the most stable and sensible leaders in all of Africa. He has a grandfatherly way about him that commands respect and a hearing from everybody. I think this is a product of his pastoral care for his people."

Besides serving as president of the country and pastor of his church, Tolbert is president of the Liberian Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention. He was president of the Baptist World Alliance from 1965-70.

Self observed: "American embassy leaders, missionaries and many others volunteered to my wife and me that the secret of Dr. Tolbert's leadership and respect is his unabashed and unabated Christian faith."

"Dr. Tolbert's official symbol of national authority is an ivory head of Jesus Christ, mounted on a polished mahogany staff. It goes everywhere he goes. He has seven pictures of Jesus Christ in his office. He proclaims and practices his unapologetic Christian faith in every facet of personal, denominational and political life. His people know this and all of Africa knows this."

Tucker N. Callaway of Atlanta was at Wieuca Road church when the Selfs returned from Liberia. He supported their evaluations. Callaway has been a missionary in Liberia for three years, after 20 years of teaching in Japan. He returns to Liberia in February as the ranking faculty member of the new Baptist seminary there.

"Baptist roots are deep in Liberia, and Dr. Tolbert is helping to strengthen those roots and expand their branches in many ways," Callaway said. "He is a deeply genuine, Christ-like individual. He is also an informal, accessible, understanding and sympathetic leader."

Callaway added that Southern Baptist missionaries in Liberia are deeply indebted to Tolbert. "Dr. Tolbert has supported our missionaries and they work closely with him in every possible way."

The missionary told a personal account of Dr. Tolbert striding into Callaway's home one morning, while Callaway was still in his pajamas and his wife in her housecoat to ask him to preach in his church that night for some speaker who had become ill.

"The next time I called on him at his home, Dr. Tolbert came out in his pajamas to greet me," said Callaway. "He wanted to show me that he had not been offended in my home."

Southern Baptists have 53 missionaries in Liberia, a nation founded in 1816 by freed slaves sent to West Africa by the American Colonization Society. In 1847 it became the first independent republic of Africa, with a constitution patterned after the U. S. Constitution.

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Baptist Unity, Diversity
Can Be Mutually Helpful

Baptist Press
1/19/76

By Stan L. Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--A prominent American church historian urged fellow Baptists here to strive for "a spirit that magnifies our agreements and seeks to learn from our differences."

C. Penrose St. Amant, president of the Baptist Theological Seminary, Ruschlikon, Switzerland, delivered the final address at the National Baptist Bicentennial Convocation, which drew over 200 participants from nine Baptist bodies in the U.S. and Canada.

St. Amant, who spoke on the subject of Baptist diversity and unity, said the two "are not merely compatible but can be mutually supportive and even mutually enriching."

The former professor of church history and dean at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., noted that Baptists have three alternatives in dealing with their diversity and unity. They can magnify either of the two at the expense of the other, or they can seek to make the two "mutually supportive."

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St. Amant warned that to choose either diversity or unity would be a mistake for Baptists. "Unity without diversity means tyranny," he elaborated, while "diversity without unity means anarchy."

"There is a unity forged from the top down that provides great rewards for conformity and severe punishment for independence," he said. On the other hand, "There is a diversity that recognizes no loyalties beyond the passing whims of individuals who make an idol of nonconformity as if freedom were an absolute value."

St. Amant also took note of the development of pluralism in the United States. During the constitutional period, he said, "It became clear that the stability of American society could be sustained without the sacral conception of society and state and, therefore, without the cement of an established church...."

He reminded his audience that Baptists pushed for such pluralism and that "it would be strange indeed for a Baptist to insist upon religious liberty and its implications for everyone except his fellow Baptists."

"Our philosophy of diversity," he went on, "is one of the threads that paradoxically binds us together."

St. Amant acknowledged that such a philosophy is difficult to sustain in actual practice. "Such a balance is fragile and requires constant nurture. Vigilance is the price of both liberty and community," he said.

"Our Baptist heritage at its best," he continued, "involves a blend of loyalty and liberty.... In this context, let us strive to bridge the gaps between our schools and churches, our theology and the secular mentality, our professors and laymen, our pastors and people, our Christian faith and culture, between Baptists and Baptists, between Baptists and those of other persuasions."

He cautioned, however, that "in our search for Baptist unity, the prophetic voice must not be muted" nor should Baptist unity be "purchased at the price of expediency."

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Nicaraguan Baptists Issue
Call for Southern Baptist Help

Baptist Press
1/19/76

By A. Clark Scanlon

GUATEMALA CITY (BP)--Nicaraguan Baptists have asked for help. They urgently need a Southern Baptist missionary to assist with a literature ministry.

During the 1972 Christmas season, Southern Baptists joined other groups helping victims of an earthquake that claimed 12,000 lives and destroyed two thirds of the Nicaraguan capital.

Teams of Southern Baptist men joined a Southern Baptist missionary from Honduras in building temporary structures for seven Baptist churches.

Partly as a result of these contacts, the Nicaraguan Baptist Convention has requested Southern Baptists to send a missionary to Nicaragua to set up a book deposit and bookstore.

Representatives of the American Baptist Churches in the USA, since opening work in Nicaragua soon after the turn of the century, have developed a hospital, two high schools and about 40 churches. An American Baptist missionary continues to work with the convention in its evangelistic activities.

Although Baptist work continues to grow in Nicaragua, it is hampered by an inadequate source of literature. The small interdenominational bookstores in town are not able to carry an adequate stock of Baptist books, much less periodicals. Churches in the provinces (states) surely need a literature supply.

Over a year ago the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board accepted the invitation of the Nicaraguan Baptist Convention to send a couple, but that couple has not been forthcoming. Although some veteran couples showed initial interest, they eventually declined.

It's critical that we send in a couple soon. First, because it would be a show of good faith to Nicaraguan Baptists who continually ask, "When will Southern Baptists send a couple?" Secondly, literature is crucial in strengthening churches and pushing into new areas, and literature needs of Baptists are inadequately cared for at present.

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Since the arrival of a Southern Baptist literature ministry in El Salvador, churches there are showing a growing missionary interest. Several Baptist churches, which formerly did not use Baptist literature, have now begun to do so.

We have a firm invitation to enter Nicaragua now. Patience may have a limit.

The missionary Nicaragua calls for should be committed to the ministry of the printed page. The individual or couple should have some sound business judgment since the assignment would entail setting up a wholesale deposit and creating some sort of mobile ministry to supply churches in remote areas with Bibles and literature needed for growth and development.

An ability to work well with others would be important since Nicaraguan Baptists have some strong and well-trained leaders with whom he or she would be working.

Living and traveling conditions will be no bed of roses, but there will be an opportunity to guide in the future of a growing Christian work.

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A. Clark Scanlon, a Southern Baptist missionary, is the Foreign Mission Board's field representative for Middle America.

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Wrapup

WMU Approves Mission Study,
BWY Campus Promotion

Baptist Press
1/19/76

By Cindy Burns

BIRMINGHAM (BP)--Plans for church-wide missions education and prayer and for a return to promotion of Baptist Young Women's (BYW) work on college campuses were approved here by the executive board of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU).

The WMU, auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), also voted in its annual promotion meeting to hold a national Acteens Conference for girls in 1979 and changed the title of its chief executive and two other officers.

Besides the church-wide missions education study, which would come during the SBC's emphasis on "Bold Missions," 1977-79, the executive board also approved the 1977-78 WMU Dated Plan. The dated plan is a 500-page document detailing every special and regular activity on the WMU calendar for that year.

Most new projects relate to the two-year denominational emphasis on missions for 1977-79. "Mission Night Out" is a plan the WMU and the SBC Brotherhood Commission will sponsor to involve a wide segment of church members in mission study.

WMU will also sponsor church-wide prayer retreats and a prayer partnership project in support of "Bold Missions" in April 1978.

For the first time, WMU set specific dates for church-wide study of Home and Foreign Mission Graded Series books and suggested that the study be pastor-promoted or taught by the pastor, backed by WMU and Brotherhood.

During the emphasis on "Bold Missions", WMU and the Home Mission Board will pilot a program to place groups of trained Acteens (girls in grades 7-12) in home mission situations. These short-term volunteer workers will conduct an informal pilot program in the summer of 1976. WMUs of South Carolina, North Carolina, California and Texas will sponsor the pilot program. Following the pilot program WMU and the Home Mission Board will finalize the plans.

WMU involvement in "North Central Missions Thrust," a special project for strengthening and increasing Baptist churches in North Central states, was outlined by the WMU board.

Plans include missions tours, prayer projects, mission action training, and teaming of North Central states with other states for special training and praying activities.

In approving the Dated Plan, WMU reinforces its earlier decision to back a \$28 million goal for the 1977 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions and \$ 13 million goal for the 1978 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions.

The 1977-78 Dated Plan will be based on a second year of WMU concentration on teaching missions.

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The decision to promote Baptist Young Women's missions organizations on college campuses came with the encouragement of SBC's National Student Ministries leaders, according to Carolyn Weatherford, the WMU's chief executive officer.

"WMU has historically had a strong missions influence on campus through its Young Women's Auxiliary," Miss Weatherford said. "Now nobody is responsible for a balanced program of missions education and missions support among collegians, but WMU is going to try to fill the gap."

WMU withdrew from promoting its organizations on campuses during the SBC's inter-program planning of the 1960's leading up to the adoption of new organization names and approaches in 1970. When Baptist Young Women replaced Young Women's Auxiliary as the missions organization for college age women it was felt that WMU should work with them in churches, according to Miss Weatherford.

"Although we urge churches to have BYW for college students among their members, the organizations were too few and too far from campus life to be affected," she said.

WMU authorized the promotion of campus organizations immediately, but said that detailed programs would not be developed for another year. WMU personnel will work with student ministries personnel in designing the plans.

The WMU board set July 24-28, 1979, in Kansas City, Mo., for the third National Acteens Conference. "The huge turnout for the second such conference, held last summer in Memphis, indicated that we should host such a gathering at least once in every Acteens generation," Miss Weatherford said.

Miss Weatherford's title was changed from executive secretary to executive director by executive board action, effective immediately. The title change also affected Catherine B. Allen, now assistant to the executive director for public and employee relations, and June Whitlow, now assistant to the executive director for planning and research.

The board also renamed the WMU promotion department, consisting of consultants for each of the WMU age level organizations. The department will return to a formerly used name, field service department.

"Studiact," the Acteens individual achievement plan, will be revised in 1977-78. The board instructed WMU staff to adjust activities and time requirements.

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Cindy Burns, a Mississippian, who has recently completed a mass communications degree at Mississippi State University, became WMU staff news writer effective Jan. 2.