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76-28

Don Randolph: Man In
The Middle of A Tempest

By Bruce Buursma

LOUISVILLE (BP)--The three-tiered trophy case at Green Acres Baptist Church in Kentucky's southern Jefferson County is crammed full of gaudy, glistening hardware symbolic of excellence in such pursuits as softball, basketball and bowling.

For the man who won most of them--51-year-old Don Randolph--athletic competition has been a brief, therapeutic excursion away from the harsh demands of the real world, in which he juggled two jobs in 1975.

He is, first of all, senior pastor of the 1,700-member Green Acres Church, which is a piece of cake compared with his part-time position as chairman of the 1975 Jefferson County Board of Education, the body that has been called upon to implement the court-ordered desegregation plan for local schools.

As chairman, Randolph has been at the center of the tempest over busing and depending on whom you choose to hear, he is a Hitler or a messiah. He has been called both.

"It was a hectic year," Randolph said during an interview in his book-lined church office. "The best word to describe the whole year is frustration, just plain frustration."

Adversity and hard knocks have never tip-toed lightly on Randolph. He was just 8 years old when his father, a deputy sheriff in Harlan County, Ky., was killed in the line of duty. His mother he said, was unable to care for the five children and they were sent to live in a Baptist orphanage in Glendale, Ky.

Randolph recalled his eight years in the orphanage with fondness, despite the death of one of his brothers there. "It was home to me," he said, "and it was my first introduction to the Baptist faith."

Twenty years ago, Randolph accepted the invitation to become the first minister of the still-organizing Green Acres Baptist Church. "When we came," recalled Mrs. Randolph, "all we knew was that there would be three members: Don, our daughter Donna and me."

Randolph first ran for the Jefferson County school board in 1972, a year in which there were anti-Catholic feelings. Just before the election, an editorial in the Western Recorder, state Baptist paper, hinted at a plot "to channel more funds into private and parochial schools." Running on an anti-merger platform, Randolph handily defeated his incumbent opponent, Catholic physician William VonderHaar.

Randolph became chairman of the county board at the beginning of 1975, and on July 1, when the city and county boards officially merged, he was named by the State Department of Education to chair the whole shebang. Randolph said he was chosen "to keep the peace" between board factions.

For his part, Randolph is convinced his involvement with the secular school board is part of a divine plan. "I think God has put me here," he said forcefully. "I have found many opportunities to witness for my Lord through this job."

Randolph cited as examples his successful reintroduction of prayer before each board meeting and his willingness to treat fairly both his friends and adversaries on the board.

As for his Christian witness to a board confronting a volatile busing backlash, Randolph said his approach has been to stand up for his beliefs (which do not include busing), and then serve as a calm conciliator.

"Too many in the religious community have stayed sanctimonious about busing," Randolph charged. "I think you have to speak up for what you believe."

Randolph's position on the busing issue clearly mirrors the will of his church members. "They are," he said, "102 percent against forced busing." Green Acres is an integrated congregation, and Randolph likes to point out that one of his deacons is a black man. "I'm for integration," Randolph said. "The busing issue is not racial as far as I'm concerned. But it's wrong to put the brunt of integration on the board of education.

"Even though I oppose busing," Randolph continued, "I'm a law-abiding citizen. I've preached on Romans 13. ("Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers," says verse one.) I can see protesting, but I can't buy burning Preston Highway, I've told my congregation that, and I lost one family because of it."

One church member who has not left is Melvin Blakeman, the 40-year-old vice president of Concerned Parents, an anti-busing group. Despite occasional differences of opinion, Blakeman said, he and Randolph remained "close to each other" during the busing controversy.

"A lot of people in Concerned Parents think Brother Don has not stood out like he should against busing," Blakeman said. "And he has had some problems with his congregation. But I think he's been helpful."

Randolph conceded that some members of his church have challenged him to lead protest demonstrations. "Some feel I ought to get out and march with them--that I ought to go to jail or resign. I tell them that's not my thing."

According to Mrs. Carlita Johnson, the Green Acres Church secretary who has arranged Randolph's schedule throughout the year, her boss "never puts the school board above the church people. I've worked for ministers before and a lot of them will hide from problems, but not Brother Don."

The resolution of the busing problem, Randolph said, must come from the Christian community. "They are the salt of the earth," he said. "They are the answer. They could have been more vocal. We at the board of education have not heard from the religious community."

The Interfaith Task Force for School Integration, an affiliated group of the Louisville Area Interchurch Organization for Service (LAIOS), has taken a consistently pro-busing stand, which is, it argues, the only Christian position.

Randolph, however, dismissed the ind denominational LAIOS group as "liberal in theology." "It bothers me," he said, "that those who become messiahs for integration are those who live in the most segregated areas of town. I'd like to know how many blacks some of those preachers have in their churches."

What is particularly distressing, Randolph said, is the deafening silence echoing from his alma mater, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "I think they have some giants there that could say more (against busing)," he said.

"I stay a Southern Baptist," Randolph said, "because I can say what I want and be accountable only to my congregation. I don't have to worry about a hierarchy."

Opinions of Randolph and his record on the school board run the full range from profound respect to gut revulsion.

"I'd like to say he's an idiot and a detriment to the board," said one board member who asked not to be identified. "I suppose he's doing his best, but he's a limited man."

At the other extreme, one Baptist leader announced that "the one real courageous figure to come out of this busing thing has been Don Randolph. He's been on a bed of nails and any lesser man might have lost his church. He's kept his cool."

William E. Summers III, pastor of St. Paul AME Church and a member of the school board, said his reaction to Randolph is "unprintable. Let's face it, our philosophies do not exactly coincide."

Said Orville Miller, another board member, "Don has had one of the most trying times in the history of Jefferson County. There are those who wouldn't have been able to handle it. I think he's done an excellent job."

Randolph said simply he has tried to be fair. The exciting thing I've found is that a witness for Christ is not always made within the four walls of the church. If there's a need for a Christian witness, it's in the educational field. That has been my contribution."



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76-28

Home Board Appoints
28 to Mission Posts

ATLANTA (BP)--Directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (HMB) here appointed 28 persons to mission posts in language and associational missions and in Christian social ministries, plus upgrading missionary positions for three others.

Career missionary appointments included: Larry and Joyce Martin will serve as director of associational missions for the Detroit (Michigan) Baptist Association. A native of Eubank, Ky., Martin has been pastor of Louisville's Lynn Acres Baptist Church since 1971. He earned the master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville (Ky.). Mrs. Martin is the former Joyce Sweeney of Waynesburg, Ky. She has been education director and day care director for Lynn Acres Baptist Church since 1973. She earned the master of religious education degree from Southern Seminary.

Alvin and Christine Loiry will serve as director of associational missions for Sante Fe Baptist Association in New Mexico. A native of Ross County, Ohio, Loiry is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Tex., and earned the bachelor of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Tex. He is also a diploma graduate of the Mexican Baptist Bible Institute in San Antonio. Loiry has been pastor of Shoal Creek Baptist Church in Whittier, N. C., since 1974 and prior to that he was area missionary in Hondo, Tex. He has been pastor of churches in Fort Worth, Sonora, Roby, Putnam and Stamford, Tex. Mrs. Loiry is the former Christine Browning of Almond, N. C. They have two children.

Houston and Sarah Walker have been appointed director of associational missions for Little Colorado and White Mountain Associations in Arizona. A graduate of Highlands University in Las Vegas, N. Mex., he earned the master of theology degree from Southwestern Seminary and has served as pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Avondale, Ariz., since 1968. A native of Farmington, N. Mex., he also served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Warren, Ariz., 1964-68, and was pastor of churches in Colorado, N. Mex. and Tex.

Missionary associates appointed were: David L. and Mary Morgan will serve as director of associational missions for Yuma Association in Arizona.

Robert Edgar and Barbara Wiley will serve as director of associational missions for Eastern Baptist Association in Indiana.

Lynn and Everell Eckeberger will serve as director of associational Christian social ministries in Lubbock, Tex.

Barbara Gay Siddle will serve as director of resources for family growth at Columbia Baptist Fellowship Center, Columbia, Md.

Peggy Wallace will serve as a student intern at Goodwill Center in Fort Worth, Tex., while a student at Southwestern Seminary.

Joseph and Enedina Valenzuela will serve as pastor of the Spanish Baptist Mission, Modesto, Calif.

Victor and Noreen Wong will serve as pastor of the Chinese Baptist Mission in Tucson, Ariz.

Jesus and Julia Sepeda will serve as pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista in Omaha, Neb., while a student at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

Harvey and Roberta Nowland will serve as catalytic missionary serving language churches in the Chicago, Ill., area.

W. C. and Helen Carrasco will serve as pastor of Jerusalem Baptist Mission, Petersburg, Tex.

Peter and Esther Wang will serve as pastor of Chinese Evangelical Gospel Church, of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), Milwaukee, Wis.

Morri Ann Finley was appointed missionary associate while her husband, Danny Finley's status was upgraded from the student category to fulltime status. Finley is assistant director of the New Orleans Baptist Rescue Mission.

Other missionary status changes included: James and Beverly Hamblen were upgraded from missionary associate to career status. Hamblen is director of associational missions in Columbia, Md.

-30-

Guatemala Survey Team
Makes Recommendations

Baptist Press
2/13/76

By Charlie Warren

RICHMOND (BP)--Two Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (FMB) officials have made several recommendations following a recent survey trip to the southern part of Guatemala where physical needs resulting from February's earthquake are critical.

"We've got to respond from the head as well as the heart," said Dr. Franklin T. Fowler, the board's medical consultant who made the trip. "In disaster situations, we must look at the needs and also look at our limitations."

Both Fowler and W. L. (Wimpy) Smith, the board's associate disaster response coordinator who traveled with Fowler, agreed that the quickness of response to a disaster is a critical factor since needs diminish rapidly during the first few days.

They praised the immediacy with which Baptist missionaries acted as well as the speed of the Foreign Mission Board's response, but recommended several things that might make future disaster response even quicker.

Fowler said that since our missionaries are already on the scene when a disaster hits, they already have the edge over most relief agencies. But they need more training to be prepared to move speedily, he said.

"Channels must be established beforehand," Fowler said. "Baptists ought to be registered with government authorities in advance so time won't be wasted making the proper contacts."

Smith suggested the board ought to rely more on other organizations who are already set up to respond. As an example, he recommended using Medical Assistance Program (MAP) International for the shipping of medical supplies.

Both men also advised the board to consider establishing a standing contract with a major airline so supplies could be in the disaster area within 12 hours.

When a disaster hits, Fowler said, "We don't have time to organize or set up free transport."

Supplies must be ready before a tragedy hits. Fowler recommends prepackaged kits of medical supplies that doctors and other people going into the disaster area could carry with them as excess baggage. He also suggested that other basic equipment should be in larger prepackaged units for immediate shipping.

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A strong evangelistic approach while meeting physical needs was also suggested. Smith, referring to the Guatemala situation, cited one example.

"There should be one Spanish-speaking, Bible-preaching member on any construction crew that goes in to help rebuild," Smith said. "All should have evangelistic training and be prepared to use evangelistic opportunities."

Commending the wisdom of setting up the medical clinic in Guatemala City's Bethel Baptist Church, Fowler explained that the church will receive credit for the ministry. He advised that "the local church should always get credit for the witness to the community."

The clinic assumed a secondary medical role according to Fowler, treating "aftershock" patients with respiratory infections, colds from exposure, diarrhea, and other less critical medical needs that government hospitals were too busy to handle.

The importance of maintaining communication was emphasized by the board staff members. In rapidly changing circumstances such as a disaster, frequent contact must be made among missionaries, the Foreign Mission Board, national leaders, other relief groups, and state Baptist conventions that sponsor volunteer personnel.

The board will study possibilities for improving the flow of communication.

-30-

ADDITION TO FEATURE STORY:

(BP) Photo will be sent to Baptist state paper editors to go along with feature story today by Bruce Buursma.