



March 16, 1976

76-48

**Sesame Street Program
Aids Literacy Training**

By Tim Nicholas
Adapted for Baptist Press

CORNWELL HEIGHTS, Pa. (BP)--Sesame Street is great for literacy training for adults or children--pass it on.

The children's educational television program figures largely in the literacy training program of Delaware Valley Baptist Association here.

The road to Baptist missions through Sesame Street programming was opened by Brenda Forlines, formerly of the Frankfort Avenue Baptist Church staff in east Philadelphia and now the association's director of Christian social ministries.

When Miss Forlines first went to Frankfort Avenue from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, in 1970, the church's pastor showed her a newspaper "advice for problems" column.

"This woman wrote that her child liked Sesame Street but couldn't watch it during the day because her husband worked nights and slept days," Miss Forlines recalled. "They couldn't turn on the television set. She wanted to know if there was any place she could take her child to watch it (Sesame Street)."

The advice column told of a Sesame Street viewing center in west Philadelphia. So Miss Forline contacted the Sesame Street people and began a viewing center at Frankfort Avenue. She has since begun one at Schuylkill Valley Baptist Church in Spring City, Pa.

At Frankfort Avenue Church, "We sometimes have 50-80 children with mothers who volunteer one morning a week. We have had workshops to train mothers as teachers. They organized themselves with a president, a curriculum planner and a secretary. I think for the first time," Miss Forlines noted, "these mothers had a part in teaching their own children."

Gay Yancey, who directs weekday ministries at Frankfort Avenue, reinforces concepts taught on the show and has added another dimension to the mothers' club. Now they're involved in making ceramics, but their relationship to the center began with the Sesame Street program.

Literacy training in the Delaware Valley Association--whose area has seven million population--actually employs other methods than just Sesame Street--at least for adults. But the television program can be a help for learning the basics of reading, such as learning letters and linking words with the objects or ideas they symbolize.

Statistics indicate there are still many adults in this country who are "functionally illiterate." In other words, they can't write. Or they can't read newspapers, magazines, shopping lists, letters, the Bible and other books.

Many are ashamed of their inability to read well, Miss Forlines said, so they hide their problem from family and friends. One man told her:

"If you call my house and my children answer the phone, don't tell them why you're calling." He was setting up a secret rendezvous--to learn how to read. The man had seen literacy expert Mrs. Mary Allred of Nashville on a local (Philadelphia) television talk show during which she explained some literacy problems.

Mrs. Allred, a major speaker for a Southern Baptist conference on literacy, had said that interested people could call the Delaware Valley Association office for help.

"We had 50 calls," Miss Forlines said, "and 40 of them asked for help in learning to read."

In the month after the television show, Miss Forlines arranged for literacy lessons for 41 of the 50 callers: "I went right to our churches for this and now we have 10 new churches involved in literacy,"

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Miss Forlines, whose administrative responsibilities involve the larger spectrum of Christian social ministries in the association, said she planned to teach one of the new students herself. Her last student recently completed a two-year course, "but he was only able to take one lesson a week.

"When I met him, he was bringing his son to our Sesame Street viewing center at Frankfort Avenue, where I directed weekday ministries (1970-73). Then he would run home and watch the Sesame Street program himself. That's where he learned a lot of his letters.

"One of his relatives first told me this man couldn't read or write. Then, after I had known him a few months, I told him I knew he couldn't read and that I would teach him.

"I remember the first letter he wrote," said Miss Forlines, "It was to his sister. He made a copy of it so I could make sure he had done everything right.

"I remember when he came to class one day and announced, 'I was able to read all the street signs on the way to work.'

"I asked him one day how it felt to be able to read. He said, 'It's just like my mind was dead, and it's alive now.'"

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Adapted from Contempo magazine

(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

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SBC Evangelists
Set Norfolk Meet

Baptist Press
3/16/76

NORFOLK (BP)--The Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists will meet here 1 p.m.-4 p.m., Wednesday, June 16, between sessions of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting.

The annual program, in Chrysler Hall of the Scope Convention Center will feature addresses by evangelists Manley Beasley of San Antonio, Tex.; Dudley Hall of Fort Worth, Tex.; and Jerry Spencer of Memphis, Tenn., and by Oscar Thompson, assistant professor of evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

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'Retirement' Doesn't Slow
Down Agnes Pylant

Baptist Press
3/16/76

BOLIVAR, Mo. (BP)--Agnes Durant Pylant, still going strong at nearly 76 after 14 years of "retirement," will receive an honorary doctorate in church recreation from Southwest Baptist College here.

Mrs. Pylant, who retired in 1962 as the first head of the church recreation department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, is still active in leading conferences, clinics and workshops on church recreation and senior adult work and serves in a part-time capacity at First Baptist Church, Palmetto, Fla.

Known as "Granny," Mrs. Pylant has authored a dozen books, nine still in print. She formerly taught church recreation at Wayland Baptist College, Plainview, Tex., and is a graduate of Texas Christian University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, both in Fort Worth.

A native of Alabama, Mrs. Pylant has assisted in the church recreation program at Southwest Baptist College, which offers a major degree in this area of church vocations, a college spokesman said.

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CORRECTION

On page 2 of BP mailing of 3/11/76, story headlined, "Lolley Urges Growth in SBC 'Moving... Living Stream," graf 2, line 2, change it to read "~~10~~ months"--(vice seven months). Thanks--
Baptist Press

Bicentennial Feature

Town Mob Ridicules
Baptists on Immersion

PEPPERELL, Mass., June, 1776(BP)--Because of abuse, threats, and ridicule from a mob led by town authorities, Baptists made three separate attempts here to finally baptize six converts in a single day.

During the second baptism attempt, a law enforcement officer told Baptist ministers conducting the service to leave town "for their own safety."

The Baptists met in a field near a river for worship and the baptismal service, but during worship the mob broke up the meeting. To ridicule the Baptists, a dog was dipped in the river as the mob laughed.

A Pepperell resident invited the ministers and congregation to his house to conduct the baptismal service in a near-by river. But the mob followed. This time two dogs were dipped, and members of the mob mocked the Baptists by dipping each other.

It was then an officer warned the ministers to leave town. They asked if their lives would be in danger if they remained, but received no answer. The second meeting was dispersed and the Baptists secretly agreed to go to a third location. This time they escaped the mob momentarily and the six candidates were baptized. Shortly after the ceremony, however, the agitators subjected the Baptists to further abuse and ridicule.

Not even war with England halted persecution of Baptists by Massachusetts authorities. Because of their opposition to the state church and their fight for religious liberty, Baptists faced bitter oppression in New England. They proved by supporting their country's cause, however, that they were as ardently devoted to civil liberty as they were to religious freedom.

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Prepared for Baptist Press by the Southern Baptist Historical Commission, Nashville