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Czech Parents,  
Son Reunited

By Charles Richardson

FORT WORTH (BP)--Thousands of miles separated seminary student Josef Solc and his parents in Czechoslovakia for seven years.

Two things, however, they have shared in common. One is a basic commitment to Jesus Christ and the other is a love for tennis.

Milos Solc, a retired Czechoslovakian Baptist pastor, and his wife were finally visiting their son, who is working on a doctor of philosophy degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here.

"It is such a joy for my wife and me to see Joe again," says the elder Solc, who served for many years as a tennis coach and pastor. At one time, he was a national champion in Czechoslovakia as was his wife.

Their son, Josef, left Czechoslovakia in 1968 to attend a Baptist convention in England. Before he could return to his homeland, the Russians invaded the Central European country.

In the confusion, he drove to West Germany and has not been home since. However, he and his parents have written often during his absence.

Since 1968, the younger Solc studied at the Baptist seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, and from there he came to the United States and enrolled at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Okla.

It's not surprising that he landed a top spot on the school's tennis team as he was the national junior tennis champion in his homeland.

Since the family has been in the United States, mother, dad and son have been doing a lot of catching up on conversation. While in Fort Worth, they are staying with their son at the home of William L. Hendricks, seminary professor of theology.

Josef rushes from class to the tennis court and his parent go along. On a recent afternoon, both Mr. and Mrs. Solc grabbed an ice cream cone and watched Josef give lessons to youngsters at Fort Worth's Colonial Country Club where he is an assistant pro.

"I understand why the Lord led me to tennis...for tennis opened for me the doors to everybody...It's very interesting for those to hear a sportsman preach," says the elder Solc.

After 14 years as a Baptist pastor, the elder Solc retired in 1971. But, he is still active in his church work and plays tennis almost every day.

The elder Solc said it is obvious that U.S. churches have received "much from the Lord. Much will be required of those who are blessed, he says. "It is our prayer for you that the Lord is satisfied with you," he reflects.

What is the situation of church life in his own country?

Solc says there are 35 preachers among Baptists in his country and "every pastor has a church..." He says that "work is very good in Czechoslovakia, but we need twice more pastors." The largest church has about 600 members, he points out, and the growth rate is slow.

He says, however, that there is a good spirit in the churches "because those who stay in the church are really Christian."

What does the future hold?

"We feel that in all our troubles, the Lord is so near and helpful," Solc replies.

"Our life for the Lord is joy, joy and joy. For after every trouble, comes a new joy."

Seminarians Left Good Jobs,  
Find Ministry Fulfilling

By Nancy Carter

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Jim Van Hood, 33, was a lawyer in Shreveport, La, until last year when he decided to leave his practice to enter seminary and the Baptist ministry.

Now a first year master of divinity student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here, he often reflects on the decision but never regrets it.

Van Hood is but one example of numbers of professional persons who in recent months and years have left other successful professional careers to study for the ministry.

Just four of his about 2,000 classmates at Southern include a college professor, a stock-broker, a businessman and an engineer, among many others. The adage that some "give up something to enter the ministry," doesn't apply here, as the five related their satisfaction in the ministry.

For Van Hood, "It was enjoyable to practice law, but it pales by comparison to what I'm planning to do. It's a lot more exciting to help people with their understanding of God than to help with their understanding of taxes and banking," he said.

Van Hood had practiced law in Shreveport eight years, where he, his wife, Jane, and sons, Jim, 7 and Alec, 5, were settled in the First Baptist Church and the community. He noted the decision to come to seminary was not a hasty one.

A classmate, Lloyd Jones, is a former engineer. On April 15--income tax day--three years ago, he decided to resign his tenured associate professorship at the University of Florida, Gainesville, to begin study for the ministry.

Now a third-year master of divinity student, the 34-year-old Jones is nearing completion of the dream that began officially that day.

Jones noted his wife and three daughters, Catherine, 13, Audrey, 11, and Jennifer, 5, supported him in his decision. He added if his wife had not stood by him, "I might not be here." In May, he said proudly, his wife will receive a diploma in religious education at the same time he receives his M.Div. degree.

Bob Calhoun, 28, formerly a stockbroker in Birmingham four years before coming to Southern recalled, "At first I was pretty happy in my work, but after awhile I knew that the work I was doing wasn't really giving me any self-satisfaction.

"I'd find myself on the way to work in the mornings driving past a church and thinking how much better it would be to be a minister," Calhoun said.

Although his work was honest and could be fulfilling to other people, Calhoun felt, "People's financial matters seemed unimportant as compared to their spiritual lives. Even when I helped someone make a lot of money, I'd wonder what good the money did them."

Calhoun said his wife, Betty, was a little surprised the day he told her of his decision, "but she rejoiced with me." His son, Robert, 4, was too young to understand the big change taking place in his father's life, Calhoun said.

Calhoun can look back on the decision he made last June and feel completely comfortable with it:

"It's the first time in my life I've ever felt fully in the Lord's will."

A sense of needing fulfillment and a searching led Jim Morrison 27, branch manager for an equipment leasing company in Syracuse, N.Y., to resign in July 1975 to attend seminary. Morrison first began considering the ministry when he and his wife, Jerolyn, moved to Syracuse in 1973.

"It was kind of amazing--here I had access to half a million dollars worth of equipment and could write checks to anyone I wanted to. I was able to do all the things I thought could create happiness--but it wasn't fulfilling," he recalled.

After questioning and searching that lasted over a year-and-a-half, Morrison made the decision to submit his application to Southern Seminary in April 1975. The Morrises, including their three-year-old daughter, visited the seminary last summer. They found a small house they could buy, Jerolyn found a job, and he received his acceptance to seminary.

"All of these things just culminated in God saying, 'This is exactly where I want you,'" Morrison said.

The "tug" or "pull" that led his classmates to enter seminary and the ministry also got to Frank Graves, who worked three years for NASA on the Saturn V program and seven years for the U.S. Army's Missile Command. Now he is a third year master of divinity student.

At age 36, with his wife, Mary and three daughters, Karen, 13, LeaAnne, 10, and Donna, 7, the decision three years ago to come to seminary was a soul-searching one. It was especially difficult because Graves enjoyed his work in Huntsville.

But in a revival held at his home church in 1973, "I definitely felt God had some place and some service he wanted me in." By January, 1974, the Graves' new life had begun.

"Financial success, identification...these things were factors that would pull a person in the opposite direction," he said.

"But also there was that tug, that pull. I realized perhaps I could do something for the Lord, since He's done so much for me."

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Lincoln's Nose  
Not 'Off Limits'

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PINCKNEYVILLE, Ill. (BP)--An 11-year-old member of the First Baptist Church here took on the Illinois Department of Conservation, and apparently has won her case.

It all started when Beth Emling, 11, and her family visited Abraham Lincoln's tomb at Springfield, Ill. On the trip to Springfield, Beth reminded her brothers, Rusty, 8, and Richie, 6, that her teachers had said it was good luck to rub the nose on the bust of Lincoln in front of the tomb.

But a guide at the tomb said "no," and Beth was almost in tears.

When Beth asked her father, Clay Emling, what she should do, he suggested writing a letter to state representative Ralph Dunn of DuQuoin, Ill. (a member of DuQuoin's First Baptist Church).

In turn, Dunn wrote some officials. And to make a long story short, Beth got a letter from state conservation director Anthony T. Dean saying there is no policy forbidding people to touch the statues at Lincoln's tomb.

Dunn also invited Beth to make a return visit to the tomb, which she may do now that Lincoln's nose is no longer "off limits".

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Guatemala--Personal Tragedy;  
Baptists--Personal Response

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By A. Clark Scanlon

GUATEMALA CITY (BP)--Guatemala's destructive earthquake has receded from the headlines of major daily newspapers, but the tragedy continues. The committed response of Guatemalan Christians and Baptists around the world also continues.

The devastation and tragedy wrought by the earthquake became personal to me in stages. A few days after the disaster two other men and I went into the mountain town of San Martin Jilotepeque, previously cut off by landslides.

When we found our friends, the Gonzalezes, they were living in temporary makeshift tents. The scene reminded me of the childhood game of playing house. The difference lay in the fact that Mrs. Gonzales' situation was deadly serious. Her home, including a room where the church had met, lay in ruins.

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The small, portly woman of nearly 60 years, greeted us warmly. Then over a glass of lemonade she related the death of four of her grandchildren and the fact her husband's hip had been broken. For the first time the widespread destruction became an intensely personal tragedy in the life of a single family.

Tomas Melendez, a dirt farmer and lay preacher who lives in Parramos (about 20 miles from San Martin), put it well when he said, "There is so much to do. I don't know where to begin." As he talked, he was standing in front of a temporary lean-to he had built to protect his wife from the cold mountain nights.

A deacon in one of the Guatemalan Baptist churches related the death of his mother. She was killed by a falling adobe wall that had simply pushed his father out of bed and onto the floor.

After our teenage daughter, Sherri, had helped in the clinic for a few weeks, she took her camera one day to record some of the destruction in the neighborhood.

One of her Guatemalan friends from the Bethel Baptist Church took her through the area. The friend would point to house after house and say, "There my cousin died. In that house the whole family was killed. A falling two-story house killed the people there."

The houses looked like so many other ruins in Guatemala City, but there was a difference. We now know the remains of each structure tells a personal story of tragedy.

Just as statistics become personalized in individual loss, so Christian response to disaster is also personal. The global statistics are impressive enough. Southern Baptists gave over \$400,000 to aid victims. They are aiding in the rebuilding of 14 church buildings and 200 homes.

Volunteer doctors and construction workers came to help even from the earliest days of the disaster. Other Baptist conventions have sent funds. Baptists in neighboring countries of Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama have all sent aid. But those global statistics were made up of individual efforts.

A nine-year-old girl in Raleigh, N.C., sent her own New Testament and 39 cents to help some Guatemalan girl. A Florida elementary school class took up a collection of \$110 to help rebuild a school in Guatemala.

Only a year earlier, Bill Kimes, Grover Parham, and Sandy McPhail, all Florida Baptist Men, had been in Honduras helping to rebuild after Hurricane Fifi. Now they were back to help in Guatemala. Each paid his own expenses for the privilege of sweating under the tropical sun. Other Baptist Men from Florida, Illinois, Texas, Alabama, Georgia, Arkansas, California, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, Oklahoma and Louisiana have done or plan to do the same.

Spanish-speaking preaches from Texas, Costa Rica and Honduras assisted Guatemalan churches in evangelistic campaigns resulting in 1,000 professions of faith and 100 baptisms in the first six weeks after the earthquake. Each of those conversions represents a personal story, also.

The long-term rebuilding of churches, homes, and individual lives goes on at a steady pace--without much fanfare. As the tragedy was personal, the response is personal, even as Jesus' coming to earth was personal.

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