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75-73

Ministerial Ball Rolls
Even at 88 for Lee

By Beth J. Tamke

The 88-year-old preacher, dressed in a gray suit and tie, sat in his living room looking at the little fuzzy poodle sleeping on the floor near his chair.

The white-haired gentleman has been slightly stooped by the years. He stood up and walked to his mantel to grasp a worn tennis ball.

"Rusty, show me what you want," the man said as the dog pricked up its ears, ran to the mantel and began jumping up and down.

Robert G. Lee, pastor emeritus of Bellevue Baptist Church, threw the ball into the dining room for Rusty to retrieve.

"Rusty doesn't really belong to me, but he stays as much over here as he does next door..."

Lee was asked about his life in retirement.

"I'm not retired," he said adamantly. "I resigned at Bellevue but I haven't stopped my ministry. I'm still busy. The main difference is I don't have the personal touch with my folks."

His "folks" are the members of Bellevue Baptist Church, which he nurtured from 1927 to 1960. During his ministry there, the congregation grew from 1,430 to 9,200.

Despite his claims of being unable to do much anymore, Lee travels and speaks more than some young evangelists in their prime. He has written 53 books and says he isn't through.

"I used to preach every day for four years after my resignation. Then I slacked up. For the last two years, I've been preaching three to four days every week. I have had a meeting every weekend this year and have quite a number next year."

The telephone rang and Lee left to answer it.

"A lot of folks still think I'm their pastor," he said as he walked across the room. "That's the reason the telephone rings all the time."

When he returned, Lee said some of his former members visit him at his home "but not a great multitude. Quite a number come, but they don't find me here enough. I'm here very seldom..."

He said he corresponds with a few ministerial friends but not many "because very few are still living."

"I get lonely since my wife went away. I lived with her for 57 years. It is a difficult adjustment to live after that. The Lord Jesus is with me and I enjoy life. I enjoy sleep when I sleep and work when I'm working. I love folks. I really love them. Some have ways I don't like, but I like folks."

He demonstrated his love of people during his ministry. He wrote personal notes to members on their birthdays. He visited fathers' waiting rooms while members' children were being born. He averaged 10 visits a day to members' homes.

He worked hard on his sermons and was known for oratorical excellence and Biblical themes. His name is now recognized throughout the United States and in many foreign countries.

His most important sermon, "Pay Day Someday" has been preached more than 18,000 times. It has been translated into several foreign languages, made into a movie and used as the theme of a sacred opera.

"It's just as fresh now as it was when I first gave it in 1919," he said. "I get tired physically now because it is one solid hour of preaching."

In recognition of his leadership, Lee was elected president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention for four terms. He served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention for three terms.

Lee still draws a crowd wherever he preaches due to his reputation for gifted delivery and inspirational messages.

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He said he does not prepare many new sermons anymore because he is always asked to repeat those that have become popularized.

"I've slacked up in recent years. I used to get up at 5 a.m. and study for three hours. Then I would pray and have breakfast and study two more hours. The rest of the day I worked at my ministry of helping folks.

"Now I get up at 6:30 and bathe and read the newspaper. I pray and read the Bible. I do a lot of praying. I pray for the troubled...I pray for myself that I will have the strength to keep going for years. I have a prayer list and call people by name for the Lord."

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

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Court Refuses Review Of Flag Burning Case

WASHINGTON (BP)-- Despite the objections of three of its justices, the U. S. Supreme Court declined here to schedule for argument a challenge to Illinois' flag desecration law.

The case has been in the courts, state and federal, for more than six years. It involves the conviction of three teenage women in Rock Island, Ill., for burning an American flag near the federal building there. They were protesting American involvement in the Vietnam war and the deaths of four students at Kent State University in Ohio on May 4, 1970.

Three of the justices, William J. Brennan Jr., Thurgood Marshall, and John Paul Stevens, dissented from the majority action, saying that they would have heard the case. Nevertheless, four justices must want to take on a case before it can be argued.

In spite of the fact that they were warned by an onlooking FBI agent, the girls set fire to the flag on a lawn adjacent to the federal building in Rock Island one day after the Kent State killings.

Their action violated the Illinois Flag Act, which makes contempt for the flag a felony punishable by a fine and confinement in the state penitentiary.

After each of the women was found guilty by a jury and sentenced to one year's probation and a \$100 fine, the three argued before a state appellate court that their conviction violated their freedom of expression as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the federal Constitution.

The appellate court disagreed with them, however, upholding the jury's guilty verdict. The women then appealed to the Illinois Supreme Court, which declined to hear the case.

This is the second time the case has been considered by the nation's highest tribunal. Nearly two years ago, the high court sent the case back to Illinois state courts for further action in light of two 1974 decisions involving other flag desecration statutes.

The Supreme Court ruled that year that wearing the flag on the seat of the pants or attaching a peace symbol to the flag are both actions protected by the free speech provision of the First Amendment.

Illinois courts, nevertheless, stood by their actions in the Rock Island case, holding that unlike those cases, the two women had mutilated and destroyed the flag.

After the Illinois Supreme Court refused for a second time to hear their arguments, the women appealed again to the U. S. Supreme Court. Its refusal to hear the case marks the end of their long legal fight.

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Southern Seminary
Honors Three Alumni

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NORFOLK (BP)--Three Southern Baptist leaders will be honored as alumni of the year by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, on June 16 at the seminary's annual alumni luncheon at the Southern Baptist Convention here.

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Recipients of the fifth annual Alumni of the Year awards are Edward L. Byrd, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Florence, S. C., a former trustee of the seminary and a leader in the campaign to endow the seminary's Billy Graham Chair of Evangelism in 1966-69; W. Barry Garrett, director of information services for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D. C., and the senior Baptist observer in the nation's capital; and Howard E. Spell, retired academic dean of Mississippi College, Clinton, Miss., and a former Southern Seminary trustee.

The luncheon is scheduled for Norfolk's new Omni International Hotel at 1 p.m. Tickets for the luncheon will be \$6 per person if purchased at the convention, but are available at \$3 per person if ordered from the seminary by May 31. Seating will be limited to approximately 1,300 persons.

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Louisiana College
Gets Exxon Stock

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PINEVILLE, La. (BP)--Louisiana College has received 1,110 shares of Exxon stock from a Shreveport woman to be used for student financial aid.

The stock, donated by the late Mrs. Nannie Perry Bunch, carries a present market value of about \$100,000 according to Robert L. Lynn, president of the Baptist school. Also included with the gift was a dividend check of \$5,550 "to be used immediately," he added.

Mrs. Bunch, who died last year, was an active member of the First Baptist Church of Shreveport. Her husband, Leo, preceded her in death in 1961. Her contribution will go into the J. Leo and Nan Perry Bunch Memorial Student Loan Fund, Lynn said.

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Disaster Precautions taken
By Baptists in Guadeloupe

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BASSE TERRE, Guadeloupe (BP)--While many on this island are waiting to see what will happen if the volcano, La Soufriere, erupts, Baptists are actively planning ways to minister to people in case of a volcano-caused disaster.

Southern Baptist Missionary Judy (Mrs. Alvin L.) Gary reports the volcano, semi-active for 20 years on Basse Terre, Guadeloupe, became active again last November when tremors caused it to issue forth vapor and smoke.

In February of this year, a tremor (registering four points on the Richter Scale) caused La Soufriere to become dangerous and alarmed many people who live near the volcano. Many evacuated to the other side of the island.

Described as perpetually in motion, but not violently in motion, the volcano has risen seven meters (almost 23 feet) since November. It's now in a limbo state, Mrs. Gary noted. Specialists say it could rest in this state for five months and if it has not erupted in six months, it will probably go back to the semi-active state for another 20 years.

Although the volcano has not yet erupted and may not, Baptists are planning ways to help if it does.

A list is being compiled of all Baptist church members who could open their homes to take in the homeless in time of disaster. Southern Baptist Missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Wayne L. Frederick's home would be used as the "Baptist Center for Emergency Help". Since their home is located on a busy highway. They would have names and addresses of Baptists where evacuees could go for a limited time. They would also have food to distribute to those opening their homes to the needy.

Though hopeful the volcano will not erupt, Mrs. Gary indicated Baptists are ready to show the spirit and love of Christ to those in need if a crisis strikes.

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