

(BP)**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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June 16, 1976

76-100

James Sullivan Named
38th President of SBC

By Jim Newton and Dan Martin

NORFOLK (BP)--James L. Sullivan, 66-year-old retired president and chief executive officer of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, was elected here president of the 12.7 million member Southern Baptist Convention in a first ballot majority vote victory.

In his first news conference, Sullivan praised the moral commitments of both President Gerald Ford and Democratic Presidential hopeful Jimmy Carter, but refused to endorse either.

Sullivan said he was thrilled with the appearance of President Ford on the Convention program the previous day, but that Ford's appearance should not be considered a political endorsement.

"He is the President of all the people, including the President of Jimmy Carter who has expressed approval of his being here, and I feel it was very appropriate," Sullivan said.

Sullivan said he had not personally decided who he would support for President, and would not do so until after the political conventions.

"I would be thrilled with either the President who was here yesterday, or the nominee of the Democratic National Convention, for I believe they both have a high moral quality," Sullivan said.

Earlier in the news conference, Sullivan called for high moral principles in the public and private lives of members of Congress and government officials at all levels.

"Morality of public officials is everyone's business," he declared. "We cannot set the moral tone of the country without it (morality among government leaders).

He disagreed with First Lady Betty Ford who has been quoted as saying that Rep. Wayne Hays (D., Ohio) is a fine man personally, and that the public needs to separate his public and his private lives.

"I do not believe you can separate private conduct and moral life from an official's public life," Sullivan said. "I would call for the highest level of moral living among government officials."

Sullivan also commented on the "angry Baptists" who couldn't get into Scope during Ford's address by noting: "I think they'll cool off. I regretted it, but I thoroughly understood the situation...."

He used the incident as a springboard into a comment on liberty. "It reminds me again that if we are to lose our liberty, it will have been crucified by people who abuse the liberty presented...the abuse of liberty destroys it. Therefore, we have got to crusade for high morality if we are going to preserve freedom in America of any kind."

Sullivan also commented on the possibility of schism in the Southern Baptist Convention similar to that which has happened in the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church over liberals and conservatives.

"I see nothing like that developing," he said.

Without directly referring to the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship, a controversial group dedicated to finding and exposing theological liberals within the denomination, Sullivan noted some of the leaders of the group were personal friends.

"And I hope they remain that way," he said.

"I think democracy cannot function without operating from a diversified base," he said.

"You have to have varied opinions. Every segment of this convention makes a contribution to it.

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"I hope we can find out what the leaders of this group (BFMF) have in mind. The only thing that bothers me is that they have incorporated into an organization that institutionalizes the movement. I hope these men, if they have a cause, will express it openly," he said.

When asked in a personal interview if his election is a repudiation of the Baptist Literature Board, a group which recently started publishing its own Sunday School literature, Sullivan said: "I don't think my election is a repudiation of anybody. I have always operated in the center of the constituency."

He also was asked directly about BFMF, and noted that he believes they "are wrong to organize formally. That's the danger."

William A. Powell of Atlanta, editor of the "unofficial" Southern Baptist Journal, the BFMF publication, asked Sullivan, "Do you believe original manuscripts of the Bible are without error?"

Sullivan replied: "Yes, certainly. But we don't have a copy. And maybe that's providential.

"We don't have the original cross, but if we did, we might end up worshipping the wood instead of Christ. And if we had the original manuscript, we might wind up worshipping the pages. Southern Baptists are Bible-believing people and Bible-loving people."

Powell earlier had been quoted as saying he would be "very, very disappointed" if Adrian Rogers, a director of BFMF, past president of the pastors' conference and pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, were not elected president of the convention. Rogers was nominated by Frank Minton of Dayton, Ohio, but Rogers withdrew.

Many interpreters saw a campaign between Sullivan and Rogers as a battle between the Baptist Sunday School Board and BLB, even though Rogers' church uses the official literature.

Sullivan also commented on race and women by noting when he became president of BSSB in 1953, it was a different world. He instituted, he said, rules in which men and women, blacks and whites would be paid the same wages for the same work. The rules, he said, were revolutionary for the time.

Asked if his relations with black Baptists might be marred by a controversial decision he made as president of the publishing board in 1971 to withhold from publication and destroy a curriculum magazine called "Becoming", because it included a photograph that was considered "potentially inflammatory" on the race relations, Sullivan sought to explain his position then, and said he felt his relations with black Baptists would be "exceedingly wholesome."

"If in my entire life I've ever done anything to hurt a black person, I am not aware of it," said the eighth-generation native of Mississippi.

He explained that the photograph in "Becoming" was aimed at the wrong age group, that the board's art department was not pleased with the reproduction, and that the content of the magazine was not consistent with board policies because it sought to "coerce" churches rather than educate them.

Asked about his goals as convention president, Sullivan said he would support wholeheartedly the current convention emphasis calling for a "Bold Missions Thrust" in the next two years.

Sullivan was elected president over a field of nominees including Kenneth Chafin, pastor of South Main Baptist Church, Houston; Clifton W. Brannon, vocational evangelist from Longview, Tex.; Steward B. Simms, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greer, S.C.; and Jack Taylor of San Antonio, Tex., who heads an evangelism ministry.

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A Matter of
Presidential Security

Baptist Press
6/16/76

By Dan Martin

NORFOLK (BP)--"Ladies and Gentlemen, the President of the United States."

As 10,500 Southern Baptist messengers rose to the familiar announcement, President Gerald Ford walked onto the stage at Scope Convention Center here.

But before Ford--or any president, for that matter--addresses a public meeting, an unbelievable amount of preparation is required.

For more than a week, Scope has been swarming with federal employees--Secret Service, press representatives from the White House, communications technicians and staff members--making sure all was in order for the presidential visit.

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The Secret Service--number and duties unknown--set up a command post in Scope manned by the G-men, as well as other federal, Virginia and Norfolk police.

"This is a presidential security matter now," said a Norfolk police official when asked details of the visit. "We have no statement to make."

Secret Service officials also declined comment on their preparations for the visit, and refused to do other than simply acknowledge that a "command post" had been established when questioned.

Most messengers, however, were aware of their presence. It was the Secret Service which ruled that only 10,500 persons could enter the main Scope arena--its capacity--but another 2,500 viewed the President's address on closed circuit in Scope's Chrysler Hall.

While President Ford was in the hall, he was unobtrusively ringed by proper, polite but firm and unsmiling men.

Most messengers also were aware of the press. In fact, many of those lucky enough to get into the arena for the address had to content themselves with watching him on television again. The press platform--24 feet long, eight feet wide and about five feet high--blocked the view of most of those on the main floor and ruined the line of sight for many in the upper floors.

What most messengers did not know is that Dave Frederickson, advance press representative for the White House, had to stay up all night to complete logistical arrangements for the press.

In addition to 250 persons accredited through the SBC press room, another 100 were accredited through the advance White House press office--a total of 52 regular White House reporters and eight in the "White House Pool" came with Ford.

"The main thing the advance work does is try to see that everything is in the right place at the right time...that everything runs smoothly," said Frederickson.

The swarm of advance men for the president won the praise and admiration of SBC advance press and logistics staffers who went through an exhaustive week of advance preparations to merge White House security, press and logistical needs with those of the mammoth SBC operation.

The President's people, SBC spokesman said were thoroughly professional, personable and flexible in efforts to take care of presidential needs without undue interruption of convention procedures.

In fact, spokesmen for both operations said they came away impressed with the cooperativeness and effectiveness of their counterparts.

Larry Speakes, assistant press secretary, said the White House "pretty well moves its press office" to a presidential speech site, including telephones, mimeograph, typewriters, stenographers and telex machines for sending reporters' copy back to their news agencies.

With the President were representatives of the major wire services, news magazines, television networks and a selection of newspapers from across the nation.

Most of the press delegation came on a chartered plane which accompanies Ford's Air Force One on such trips. They arrived at Scope before he arrived and left about a half hour after he had departed.

In addition to the press and security,communications gear was in place for the President.

"The White House Communications Agency, part of the Department of Defense, installed communications," Speakes said. "The President, as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Services must be in constant communication,whether he is in the car,on the plane or speaking."

"Thorough is the word you'd use in preparation for the trip by the President," Speakes said.

The trip was planned down to the last detail and timed to the closest minute.

And, as it turned out, Ford was probably one of the few people who had no trouble getting into Scope Arena.

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SBC Votes to Clarify
Executive Committee Role

Baptist Press
6/16/76

By Stan Hastey

NORFOLK (BP)--Messengers attending the 119th session of the Southern Baptist Convention here adopted a report from its Committee of Seven to clarify operations of the denomination's Executive Committee.

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The committee, chaired by C.R. Daley of Middletown, Ky., editor of The Western Recorder, Kentucky Baptist state paper, made twelve suggestions and five recommendations to messengers. They were all adopted without debate.

The committee's study suggested broadening the base of Executive Committee members, upgrading their orientation, improving communication between the Executive Committee and the agencies and institutions of the convention, keeping the authority of the Executive Committee in "healthy tension" with that of convention-elected trustees of the agencies and institutions, and clarifying the authority of the Executive Committee to look into the affairs of the agencies.

The Executive Committee is composed of representatives from across the country who meet between annual sessions of the 12.7 million-member body and who carry on the continuing work of the convention.

Formation of the Committee of Seven came two years ago in Dallas. The panel was charged with studying the effectiveness of the Executive Committee and a recommendation to change the convention's name.

Last year in Miami Beach, the committee recommended that no name change be considered but requested another year to complete its review of the Executive Committee. Messengers in Miami Beach overwhelmingly approved the recommendation to keep the denomination's name.

In addition, the study recommended changes in SBC Bylaw 9 which deals with the relationship of the Executive Committee to the convention and its agencies.

Besides making suggestions and presenting formal recommendations, the report also included an "affirmative appraisal" of the Executive Committee which stated that the body is "indispensable in the life of the Southern Baptist Convention."

One proposal which drew applause from the messengers was the suggestion that the base of selection of Executive Committee members be broadened, thereby reducing the likelihood "for personal favoritism and cronyism in the selection of nominees."

The report also drew attention to the ongoing problem of absenteeism by Executive Committee members. The panel suggested that more care be exercised in selecting only those willing to participate in an orientation program and "to devote the time and effort needed" for effective performance as members.

Regarding the question of authority, the report noted that the Executive Committee necessarily must have "authority commensurate with its responsibilities."

Nevertheless, the report warned that "caution should be taken to prevent even an unconscious trend toward undue centralization of authority in Southern Baptist organizational life."

In other actions, messengers adopted without dissent reports from the committee on committees and the committee on boards.

The latter group proposes trustees and directors to the denomination's agencies and institutions, while the former recommends the members on the committee on boards.

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SBC Reaffirms Refusal
To Endorse Candidates

Baptist Press
6/16/76

By Bonita Sparrow

NORFOLK (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention reaffirmed its traditional stance of refusing to endorse political candidates at its 119th annual session here.

The action came on a substitute proposal to replace a motion by pastor Bill Hale of Baker, La., asking the convention to invite Democratic presidential hopeful Jimmy Carter "to address this convention for at least 10 minutes."

Gene Puckett, chairman of the convention's committee on order of business, presented the substitute motion that the convention reaffirm its long tradition of non-endorsement of any political candidate.

"We invited the President of the United States (Gerald Ford) to speak to us yesterday," said Puckett, editor of the Maryland Baptist. He added the committee made it clear from the beginning that we did not want the vice president or the secretary of state. "We wanted the President.

"This was not a political rally," Puckett said. "It was a Christian gathering. The image of Southern Baptists has never been as high as it was this morning.

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"We were on the morning newscasts of two networks and the third gave us five full minutes of coverage. We have never had that kind of treatment. We are now recognized as a very sincere religious group in America.

"I feel an invitation to Mr. Carter at this time would be an affront. To invite him at this time would cheapen him and put him in an awkward spot," Puckett said, adding that if Carter had wanted to come, the SBC credentials would certainly have permitted him to do so.

"Therefore," he said, "I urge the convention simply to reaffirm its traditional policy of not endorsing any candidate for office."

In response to Puckett's suggestion, Hale offered to withdraw his motion. The chair ruled, however, that Parliamentary procedure disallows the withdrawal of a motion before the house in such circumstances. The substitute motion passed unanimously.

In other business, debate raged over an amendment which would have changed the convention's bylaws to require a simple majority rather than a two-thirds vote to prevent a motion dealing with the work of any convention agency from being automatically referred to the trustees of that agency.

The motion, offered by Bill Sutton of Orlando, Fla., failed on a voice vote after lengthy debate.

Under the provisions of the bylaw, any motion presented to the convention concerning the internal operations of SBC agencies are automatically referred to the trustees asking that they respond to the convention the following year. It takes a two-thirds vote to override this provision for immediate consideration by the convention.

Sutton argued against the provision, saying the convention "is capable of making decisions of sound judgment, and it's almost impossible to come to a two-thirds vote on any issue. One year is too long to wait to act."

Among those speaking against the proposed change were Herschel H. Hobbs of Oklahoma City, former SBC president, and Knox Lambert, First Baptist Church, St. Matthews, S.C.

Hobbs argued that the bylaw as it stands "has certain built-in safeguards. It is not to prevent the convention from doing what it wants but to keep us from doing something hastily we might regret later."

Lambert noted that "a majority can be as few as 51 people. The present bylaw of two-thirds vote by majority of those voting increases democracy and liberty among our group."

Debate also was prompted by a motion to extend convention aid to Southern Baptists in Canada, but the matter was referred for further study for a year with a report to the convention next year.

The convention also approved a motion asking that the SBC Executive Committee suggest ways that cooperating SBC-affiliated churches can identify themselves, and that it consider designing an identifying symbol for voluntary use by agencies and churches in the SBC.

The Executive Committee was also asked, in the motion by Roy K. Hodge of North Carolina, to study the confusion over use of the name "Baptist Church" by independent Baptist congregations not affiliated with the SBC.

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Oklahoma Pastor Almost
Endorses Carter at SBC

NORFOLK (BP)--A pastor from Oklahoma virtually endorsed presidential aspirant Jimmy Carter here in an address to messengers attending the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Bailey E. Smith, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., criticized those in the secular media who have questioned Carter concerning his personal spiritual experience.

Smith said that the nation needs a "born-again" President. He then said that "while it would certainly be improper for me to name that man, his initials are the same as our Lord's."

The Oklahoma pastor, who departed from his printed text to make the remarks about Carter, also called upon the church "to stand up for a Christian America.

"We are almost the last stronghold of democracy," Smith said. "The church stands for a free nation, and I'm not sure we can remain free unless this nation, indeed, becomes more Christian."

Besides a Christian America, Smith also called for churches to insist on Godly standards in the world and to support domestic and global evangelism.

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During Tuesday evening's session, the convention also heard reports from the Historical Commission, the six seminaries, and a multi-media presentation marking the end of Southern Baptists' celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Cooperative Program.

The report of the Historical Commission was highlighted by a dramatic presentation of Isaac Backus' famous memorial on religious liberty delivered to the Continental Congress in 1774. The Tuesday night reading was by R. Quinn Pugh, pastor of Bel Air Baptist Church, Bel Air, Md.

In addition, the commission reported that during the past year it has sponsored a nationwide history-writing contest and developed Bicentennial materials, including a pamphlet, "Suggestions for Baptist Participation in the USA Bicentennial."

This year's presentation by the seminaries featured the six presidents reading portions of their institutions' statements of faith.

Robert E. Naylor, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Tex., introduced his fellow presidents, who made brief statements regarding the Bible, Jesus Christ, conversion, freedom of conscience, the church, and last things.

During a 40-minute multi-media presentation which concluded the session, messengers saw and heard a history of Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program, the general fund which supports 19 institutions and agencies.

Produced by the SBC Radio and Television Commission, the program, "Born to Serve," featured singing by The Centurymen and narration by B. Conrad Johnston, pastor of Salem (Va.) Baptist Church.

Johnston, a member of the SBC Executive Committee, is chairman of the Cooperative Program Forum, a committee composed of representatives from Southern Baptist institutions, agencies, and state convention staffs.

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Bible Has Critics, Say
No Rivals, Sullivan Says

Baptist Press
6/16/76

NORFOLK (BP)--Long-time prominent Southern Baptist leader James L. Sullivan of Nashville urged Baptist messengers to continue to look to the Bible and the commandments of Jesus as the source of authority for the church.

Five hours after his convention address, Sullivan was elected the 38th president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"The Bible has many critics but it has no rivals," said Sullivan, recently retired president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. "It is the most talked about of all books but the least read."

Sullivan told messengers attending the 119th session of the Southern Baptist Convention the Bible must always be both the authority and the credentials for all that Baptists do. Describing the Bible, Sullivan said it's "inexhaustible, incomparable and indestructible."

The church, according to Sullivan, is an instrument in carrying out the authority given in the Bible.

"It is an instrument much like surgical equipment in the hand of a physician," he said. "The church receives its power by letting itself be molded by the master mechanic."

He noted several areas in which Southern Baptists "stand firm." The autonomy of the local church, faithfulness in discharge of the ordinances, the priesthood of the believer concept, and the preaching ministry of the church were emphasized.

"In other areas our talk is louder than our action," Sullivan said. In evangelism and in "our mission responsibility" to the world, he suggested that while much has been accomplished, much more needs to be done.

"When God has given us a message and a commandment," Sullivan concluded, "this is no time for us to be apologetic in our witness."

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Christ Was Liberator
Of Women, SBC Told

Baptist Press
6/16/76

NORFOLK (BP)--Emphasizing the importance of the role of the church in supporting family life, Alton H. McEachern, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greensboro, N.C., told messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention here that Jesus was a liberator of women.

McEachern quoted Paul about the role of women in the home to "be submissive to her husband," but qualified the statement.

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"It may not be the golden text of the woman's liberation movement, but when you consider that Paul wrote in a day when Jewish males thanked God each day that they had not been born a Gentile or a woman...this is a noble passage," he said. "The word Paul used...might be translated, 'take your proper role.'"

Jesus was the original liberator of women, according to McEachern, and has done more to elevate the status of women than any other person.

"Jesus never patronized women. He was no anti-feminist. No sermon or parable of his was told at the expense of women. He treated women as persons," McEachern said.

McEachern took this position on the home:

"The home's highest welfare is spiritual and this is the church's chief concern," McEachern said. "The church is not the enemy of the home, but its ally. Homes are for religious education and worship too."

"The Christian ideal of marriage and the home has been under fire since the first century," he said. "It is certainly taking its licks in our day. Most marriages are begun with an expectation of Hollywood-type bliss only to result in boredom or a blowout.

"We are seeing experiments with contract marriages, group marriages and no fault divorce. The church must launch a family enrichment ministry and also begin meaningful work with singles and the singles-again," McEachern suggested.

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Hultgren Warns Against
Superficial Religion

Baptist Press
6/16/76

NORFOLK (BP)--Southern Baptists were challenged in the annual convention sermon to begin communicating lasting meaning and fulfillment to other people by living Christ-like lives.

"The world is less and less impressed with the denominational nomenclature over our sanctuary doors," said Warren C. Hultgren, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tulsa. "They do seek to see if what we preach and teach is personally meaningful, ethically determinative, and spiritually transforming."

Calling for fellow Baptists to reaffirm their personal relationship with Christ, Hultgren reminded that the Christian faith can be very superficial.

"Every generation must resolve the recurrent heresy that good form, correct ritual, proper vocabulary, and orthodox theology are all that it takes to please God," Hultgren said.

The Oklahoma Baptist preacher described Christian faith as the absolute surrender to the Lordship of Christ which results in a difference in the lifestyle decision-making process and the value structure of the lives of people.

Hultgren said Southern Baptists probably have as much trouble with persons inside their congregations as they do with persons outside.

"One of the distinctive ironies and tragedies of our day is that the greatest critics of the Christian faith are not the outsiders but the insiders.

"The real confusion caused in the minds of the world is the religious leader who obscures spiritual truth by a web of words and denials of the essential doctrines which constitute the foundation-stones of our faith."

Hultgren said there was no question in his mind but that many active members of Southern Baptist churches have a subtle, secret suspicion that there must be more to Christianity than they have seen, heard, or personally experienced.

"They ask themselves if the church is just another social pressure group demanding a part of their time and a part of their money."

Hultgren urged the Southern Baptists to be realists, idealist, and optimists while reaffirming their confidence as believers.

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Children Retreat from Hectic
SBC at Mission Day Camp

Baptist Press
6/16/76

By Tim Fields

NORFOLK (BP)--More than 250 children of messengers attending the Southern Baptist Convention retreated from the congestion and harried pace at the Scope Convention Center to attend their own meeting at Lafayette Park.

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Unlike the frustrating surprises that often greeted their parents at the crowded convention hall, the children in grades one through six who enrolled in the Third Annual SBC Mission Day Camp found their agenda filled with fun and leisure.

Frank Black, Day Camp coordinator and Crusader Royal Ambassador Director for the SBC Brotherhood Commission, said the mission camp was designed to allow children to escape to their own world where they could meet and talk with home and foreign missionaries, play mission games and take part in leisure activities.

The camp frees messengers to do a better job of representing their church in the convention's business, Black pointed out.

The agenda of the three-day camp, sponsored jointly by the Virginia Brotherhood Department and the SBC Brotherhood Commission, included side trips to Norfolk Zoological Park and to historic Yorktown.

Each morning a throng of seemingly relieved parents released their young charges into a special 'corral' roped off at the front entrance to Scope. From there, the children were escorted to waiting buses for a day of fun and excitement.

At Lafayette Park, the children were divided into small groups each led by a trained counselor. Then the groups set off in various directions to make camp on picnic tables clustered under towering shade trees.

One group adopted the name 'Big Blackfoot's Group' and quickly developed their own 'secret code' of long and short whistle blasts meted out by their counselor.

Counselors for the mission camp were recruited and trained by Lloyd Jackson, Virginia Brotherhood Director and co-coordinator of the camp.

Regina Lyles, 6, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Randall D. Lyles Scotsboro, Ala., said she was excited about attending the day camp. "The missionaries taught us how people and missionaries in other countries teach about Jesus," she said.

The first grader said she enjoyed visiting the zoo, playing on the playground equipment and especially liked the hamburger, french fries and cold drinks served to mission campers.

Mrs. Terry Douglas of Shreveport, La., said she and her husband were thrilled when they learned about the camp.

"We took our daughter Dana, 8, to the Pastor's Conference Monday night and she squirmed throughout the session and was miserable.

In contrast she spent Tuesday at the mission camp and we all were happy," Mrs. Douglas said. When Dana was asked what part of the camp she like best, she responded: "All of it!"

Bill Womack, missionary to Barbados, led the children in mission studies the first day. "I could tell these kids all knew how to listen," Womack said. "They were attentive to our mission stories and were better behaved than most groups of children. They seemed eager to learn about missions."

As business sessions adjourned and parents returned to claim their children, many asked the same light-hearted question: "Wouldn't you like to keep my child a few hours longer?"

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SBC Exhibits
Win Awards

Baptist Press
6/16/76

NORFOLK (BP)--The exhibit of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board was judged the "best of show" here in exhibit-display competition at the 119th session of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Judges from the Richmond-Norfolk area said they selected the exhibit outstanding among more than 20 entered in the competition because it was easy to view, friendly, and open--getting the viewer involved, and for its use of a performing group to develop the theme and get attention.

The Home Mission Board exhibit, which also won first place in Category D (costing \$2,000 and up), was themed Bold Mission Thrust.

Other first place winners were the Baptist World Alliance, Category A (costing \$1 to \$500); Southern Baptist Convention Directors of Associational Missions, Category B (costing \$500 to \$1,000); and the Foreign Mission Board, Category C (costing \$1,001 to \$2,000).

Second place winners included Virginia Intermont College, Category A; Boyce Bible School, Category B; Samford University, Category C and Baptist Bible Institute, Category D.

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The winners received certificates at a breakfast given by the Baptist Public Relations Association, sponsor of the competition.

Ed Paxton, partner in Paxton-Higgins Designs of Richmond, headed a team of three professional judges.

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SBC Educators View
Soaring Enrolment

Baptist Press
6/16/76

NORFOLK (BP)--Southern Baptist educators painted bright pictures of soaring enrolments, capital improvements, and fund raising programs in their reports to the 119th session of the Southern Baptist Convention at the Norfolk Scope Convention Center.

Ben C. Fisher of Nashville, executive director of the Education Commission, said the 71 Southern Baptist-related educational institutions in the United States reported enrolments of 121,282 students, up more than 30,000 during the last five years.

Southern Baptist theological seminaries showed the largest percentage increase in enrolment, climbing 55 percent during the last five years to 8,790 students, Fisher said.

The six theological seminaries strategically located throughout the United States supply Southern Baptist churches with preachers and educational and music workers.

Another significant increase has been the number of vocational Christian workers enrolled on campuses of Baptist senior and junior colleges, Fisher said. He estimated the growth in this category during the last five years at almost 56 percent with 11,787 enrolled.

William G. Tanner of Shawnee, Okla., chairman of the Education Commission who also spoke to the report, said the hike in vocational Christian workers was highly significant in light of Southern Baptists' need for trained church leaders.

The SBC, largest Protestant denomination in the nation, reported the affiliation of 34,902 churches with total memberships in excess of 12.7 million.

Supporting the Education Commission's statistics was a report from the Seminary Extension Department listing enrolment at 6,702, up 20 percent from a year ago.

The report of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary at Mill Valley, Calif., cited the construction of 24 new housing units to accommodate a 10 percent increase in enrolment.

Representatives of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary at Fort Worth reported a 21 percent increase in enrolment from the previous year and plans for building 48 more housing units for married students.

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Woman Deacon Breaks SBC
Record Messenger Count

Baptist Press
6/16/76

NORFOLK (BP)--A woman deacon from North Carolina led Southern Baptists to an all-time record by becoming the 18,191st messenger to register for the annual meeting here.

Mrs. Annie Nobles Mizell, 66, of Washington, N. C., registered about mid-morning Wednesday to help Southern Baptists surpass their old record of 18,190 messengers, set in Dallas in 1974.

"I was floored, really floored," Mrs. Mizell said of her place in history.

"It was the first major convention she had attended even though she has participated in her local association annual meetings.

"I didn't know what to expect," she said. "It was all so new to me."

Mrs. Mizell was ordained a deacon in 1965, and has since served as a deacon for Pactolus Baptist Church twice. She said the church is a "small country church with about 100 members."

"My daughter-in-law (Dabbie Mizell) is also a deacon and she nominated me to attend the convention as a messenger," Mrs. Mizell said.

While Mrs. Mizell took being a deacon matter-of-factly, others in the convention weren't so blase about it. However, North Carolinians said women deacons in Southern Baptist churches are "very common" in the Tarheel state.

Being a deacon, she said, has "done me a lot of good."

Her pastor, Tommy Payne, touted Mrs. Mizell not only as a good deacon but as a good cook.

"Her best is caramel cake," he said.

The thing that impressed her the most about the SBC in Norfolk is "the bigness...I didn't know there were so many Baptists."

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