



FEATURES
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SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

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Visit to Russia is
An Emotional Event

By Indy (Mrs. Charles W.) Whitten

MOSCOW(BP)--The seat belt sign flashed on in Russian and in English. I felt excitement, anticipation, plus a little anxiety as the Soviet Union airliner touched down.

The first stop was Leningrad. During a tour, our guide, a young Russian woman of Korean descent, explained the history of the city, calling it the cradle of three revolutions.

Later, the three of us--my husband, myself and our 15-year-old son--looked out our window at the street behind the hotel. We became excited each time a Russian-looking person came into view, especially when we saw a family with a baby carriage and two children pulling at their mother's skirt. We saw as much as we could in Leningrad on the planned tour, but when Sunday came we were determined to be in the Leningrad Baptist Church.

The church building, given to the Baptists, was small and cathedral-like, once belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church. In the churchyard people were standing together in groups, rejoicing in each other's presence. We met the pastor and several other smiling happy people. They spoke no English and we no Russian, but soon an interpreter was found.

The Christian people in the Soviet Union are truly a "colony of heaven" in an atheistic society. Their appearance and actions are different and they love differently. The church has 3,000 members and must hold three services each Sunday to accommodate the people, each service lasting more than two hours.

During the singing, special music and three sermons, the people pass forward written prayer requests. Twice I saw the pastor raise these pieces of paper above his head and ask God to respond as he knew best.

There was no aisle. The whole church, wall-to-wall, was full of people. The balcony was packed. People spilled over into the street. At first, I thought those standing must be tired, then I saw them rotate; with a smile and a nod those standing took a seat and those seated stood.

They didn't have enough Bibles and hymn books. Several people were trying to keep up with the scripture passage, writing it down as quickly as possible. When the choir director sang "Saved" in Russian, I wept to see a woman writing desperately to capture all the words.

The Moscow Baptist Church, with 5,000 members, also has several long services each Sunday and three services on weeknights, choir practices and youth activities. We were surprised but pleased to learn that 18 to 20 percent of the congregations are young people.

Sergel Nikolaev, associate pastor of the Leningrad church, told us there are 550,000 members in 5,000 churches in the U.S.S.R. and six officially recognized "house churches" in Leningrad and 16 in Moscow.

We also spoke with Valentina Ryndina, interpreter of the international department of the Moscow Baptist Church. Miss Ryndina and Nikolaev said nothing about government restrictions, however officially registered churches in the U.S.S.R. continue to operate under government regulations so their proclamation of the gospel will not be hampered.

In theory they are allowed to ask permission to print Bibles and hymn books, but there are many obstacles. "A tourist can bring in one Bible, one New Testament, and one hymn book with no complications," they said. "If they do this, we are always glad and thankful because we do not have enough."

Our tour guide in Moscow told about her religion. "I am in the youth group of the U.S.S.R. and we have no religion. I have no faith. If I want to do something of this type, I just go to the tombs of our national heroes."

Many others feel the same. Long lines waited to see the mausoleum of Lenin in Red Square. We saw many young couples come to that area to leave their wedding flowers at the tomb.

In philosophy and practice, I've never been so far from home. If we had not met and worshipped with the Baptists there, we would have come away under a heavy burden of sadness and pessimism.

My hope for the future is in the God many people in the U.S.S.R. still love and serve. It may be only a remnant, but what a remnant.

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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

BUREAUS**ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041**DALLAS** Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996**MEMPHIS** Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Gomer Lesch, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 254-5461**RICHMOND** Richard M. Styles, Acting Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151**WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

September 21, 1976

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Tennessee Baptists Elect
Al Shackelford As Editor

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP)--Alvin C. Shackelford, editor of the Indiana Baptist for the past 11 years, was elected here as editor of the Baptist and Reflector, 141-year-old weekly news publication of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, effective Nov. 1.

Mrs. Eura Lannom, a Baptist and Reflector staff member for 33 years, has served as acting editor of the paper for the past three years, following the resignation of James A. Lester.

A native of Georgia, Shackelford, 44, also served as director of public relations for the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana.

Before coming to Indiana he was technical director in the public relations department of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas, 1961-65, and editor of The Beam, then published as a magazine by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Radio and Television Commission, Fort Worth, 1957-61.

During college and seminary study, Shackelford also served part-time as a printer at the Radio and Television Commission, 1955-57, and a sportswriter for the Fort Worth Star Telegram, 1955. He was pastor of Glenloch Baptist Church, Franklin, Ga., 1951-52.

He attended Auburn (Ala.) University and earned a bachelor of arts degree from Mercer University, Macon, Ga., a bachelor of arts degree in journalism from the University of Georgia, Athens, and a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

Shackelford is a member of the Southern Baptist Historical Society and previously served on the board of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission. He is former chairman of the Public Relations Advisory Committee of the SBC Executive Committee, former secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Press Association and former president of the Central Indiana Chapter of the Religious Public Relations Council.

He is married to the former Tommye Griffith of Fort Worth and has two children.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers.

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Reid Jogs Off
Pounds and Miles

ALBEMARLE, N. C. (BP)--Missionary Orvil Reid is jogging off the pounds along with the miles.

Now near the mid-point of his 560-mile "Run For Life" between Atlanta and Richmond, Reid has already lost eight pounds, according to Eugene Greer of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, general coordinator for the run.

Physically, Reid is in good condition, Greer reported, but his weight has dropped from 153 to 145 pounds.

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"He's trying to eat a lot and is taking two vitamins daily to keep up his strength," Greer said.

Reid, a 68-year-old missionary to Mexico, was 18 miles ahead of schedule when he arrived here. He plans to reach Richmond in time to be honored by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in ceremonies for retiring missionaries Oct. 11.

He left Atlanta September 3, after a ceremony at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, and jogged 150 miles through South Carolina and headed into North Carolina on the 13th day of his run.

Reid said he is feeling good and is "thrilled over the results" thus far in his efforts to win 1,000 people to Christ and raise some \$60,000 for world relief.

He is listed for 50 appearances during the 15 days he'll be running through North Carolina, according to Dave Langford, associate in the Brotherhood department for North Carolina Baptists.

After reaching Charlotte on Sept. 17, Reid spoke and gave demonstrations of his physical prowess at the regional correction center. Thirteen made professions of faith.

In rallies in Atlanta before he left, more than 50 accepted Christ.

Mrs. Reid, who is keeping in touch with her husband by phone from their home in Greenville, S. C., said Reid reported 21 professions of faith in Concord, where he spent Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 18-19.

"I told him not to overwork," Mrs. Reid explained by telephone. "He's just so thrilled over the results and over the way everybody has cooperated in making all this possible."

No figures were available yet on the total decisions made or money collected for relief during the first half of the run.

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Privette Defeated In N. C.
Gubernatorial Runoff

Baptist Press
9/21/76

RALEIGH, N. C. (BP)--Coy Privette, president of the North Carolina Southern Baptist State Convention, was defeated in a runoff in the primary election for the Republican nomination for governor.

Privette, who lost to David T. Flaherty, a former North Carolina secretary of human resources, resigned his pastorate at a church in Kannapolis to campaign for the nomination, but he retained the presidency of the Southern Baptist state convention.

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