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'War Stories' From Lebanon
Told By SBC Missionaries

By Ruth Fowler

RICHMOND (BP)--The exchange of old war stories had an evangelistic tone, probably because missionaries--not soldiers--had gathered to tell of their experiences in the Lebanese civil war.

With the sound of guns far behind them for a little while, Southern Baptist missionaries from Beirut gathered in Jordan for a few days of rest recently before returning to the Beirut Baptist School and other ministries.

William T. (Pete) Dunn and several other missionaries had been at the Beirut Baptist School in a leftist-controlled area when the Tel A'Zataar Camp fell on Aug. 12. Muslim retaliation began immediately, and everyone was confined to his home by the shooting. One main target of the Muslim reprisal was the Syrian church across the street from the Baptist mission building.

"They began kidnapping people from building to building," Dunn said. "They took 62. Some of them were our Baptist men. The Lord did intervene in a very realistic way. All of the Baptists are safe. They have been released."

Dunn's house was occupied by soldiers who stored their ammunition there and came back each night to celebrate. Dunn witnessed to the young leader of the group, missing no opportunity to spread the word of Christ.

Almost a week after the Tel A' Zataar camp fell, the missionaries packed to leave the area. Stopped at a check point, they were told they could not take baggage out of there without special permission. After seeking permission at several places, the missionaries returned to the checkpoint. They didn't have official permission, but the guard who had stopped them was not at the checkpoint, and they drove on through.

At the next checkpoint, a guard recognized them as the people who taught his children and convinced the other guards to let them through.

Safely through no man's land (between Muslim-controlled and Phalangist-controlled areas), the James K. Raglands left for the United States on leave, and Mabel Summers decided to stay in Beirut with friends. Dunn and Emma Cooke headed for Syria on their way to Jordan. At the final checkpoint on the Syrian border, the two missionaries were waved through in a few minutes. It had taken William O. (Bill) Hern, another missionary, four days to get across.

"You can't convince me any other way, but that it is a miracle of our Lord," Dunn said. "I accept it as such. I had Emma sitting beside me praying for us."

"I've had a ringside seat for the war," Miss Cooke said.

Then as calmly as she would report a day at school, the missionary told of seeing fighting in the streets beneath her sixth floor apartment window, of being awakened by rockets hitting the building, of being sent home from the market by armed men and even of injuring herself while cleaning up broken glass from windows of her apartment.

"I had wondered what my reaction would be when I was in real danger," Miss Cooke said. "When the rocket came into my building I experienced an unusual sense of calm and peace. The verse came to me from Isaiah--'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.' So God really does give us a sense of peace."

Hern also has had his share of narrow escapes and opportunities to witness during the war.

He was going to the other side of Beirut recently to pick up his wife Nancy and daughter Vera after Vera's school term ended. Hern was alone in the car and became separated from the missionaries travelling ahead of him. An armed man decided to ride with him. It is dangerous for a man to travel alone in Beirut because he is an open target for kidnapping.

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The armed man accused Hern of being the enemy, but Hern witnessed to him of a God who loves all men. The armed man told Hern to drive to his military group's headquarters, but Hern refused.

"No," said Hern. "If you are going to shoot me, shoot me here."

Hern stopped the car. The armed man became very nervous and left. Unknowingly, Hern had stopped in front of the unification headquarters of seven military groups. If the leaders of these groups had seen this man harrassing an American they would have killed Hern's abductor.

On the way back, Hern and a school teacher rode in one car, and his wife and daughter in another. As they entered "no man's land," shooting began all around them. Hern couldn't see his wife's car in the rearview mirror, but the soldiers forced him to continue driving.

Just as Hern stepped out of the car to go back to get his wife, her car appeared. "This may be no man's land," Mrs. Hern said, "but there's no such thing as 'no God's land.'"

The HERNs stayed in their home a week before an anti-aircraft shell hit a door jamb next to where Mrs. Hern was standing. Hern decided then the time had come to leave Lebanon for Jordan. Two weeks after they left, their home was destroyed by five direct hits, but the HERNs were safely out of the country.

An occupied home, an injury, a destroyed home--none of these kept the Lebanon missionaries from their task of telling others about Jesus. Many of them are back in the country again, including the David W. Kings, Emma Cooke, Mabel Summers, James K. Ragland and the Finlay Grahams.

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\$110,000 Research Contract
Goes to Baylor University

Baptist Press
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WACO, Tex. (BP)--A \$110,000 research contract to study the productivity of two Texas reservoirs was awarded to Baylor University, a Baptist school it was announced here.

The project, to be jointly-funded by the Waco-based school and the United States Department of the Interior's office of water research and equality, will be a three-year study to focus on Lake Waco and Sam Rayburn Reservoir in southeast Texas. Owen T. Lind, associate professor of biology at Baylor, will head the project.

Lind and his team will study primary plant productivity of the lakes at all biological levels to see how much plant life (or algae), fish food and fish life are produced in the waters and will search out environmental factors governing productivity.

Study results will be used in aiding reservoir management around the country. Lake Waco was chosen because it resembles the majority of hard water reservoirs in the central U. S., and Sam Rayburn Reservoir because it is typical of soft water lakes in the Southeast U. S., Lind said.

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October 11, 1976

76-170

Criswell Preaches to Ford,
Carter to Black Baptists

DALLAS (BP)--President Gerald R. Ford visited First Baptist Church here, largest congregation in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), and got what many regular attenders complain about--a sermon on financial stewardship.

But the President, an Episcopalian, who was in Dallas for the Texas-Oklahoma college football game and the Texas state fair during the Oct. 9-10 weekend, also got the presidential endorsement of Pastor W. A. Criswell over his fellow Southern Baptist, Jimmy Carter.

A request to the Carter headquarters in Atlanta for Carter's church plans for the weekend, following the advance publicity of Ford's visit to First Baptist Church, drew this response: "We'll be glad to find out for you, but Gov. Carter doesn't want to make a media event out of his church attendance."

Carter, over the weekend, as it turned out, was speaking at Notre Dame University, South Bend, Ind., and at Tabernacle Baptist Church, in Chicago's Southside, where he addressed a predominantly black audience of 2,000. He was accompanied by Mayor Richard Daley.

Criswell told Ford on the steps of the 19,000-member church at the close of the service, "I hope you win in November."

The President had sat through the entire worship service, which included a 15-minute invitation at the end when several persons made professions of faith in Christ and others came forward asking membership in the church.

After the service he was escorted from the church sanctuary by Criswell. A reporter asked the pastor as they emerged from the sanctuary if he were endorsing Ford for the presidency.

Criswell smiled and hesitated for a moment and then turned to Ford and said, "I am for you! I hope you win in November." Ford, carrying a Bible given to him by Criswell, responded with a smile and said, "Thank you very much. I am gratified by your support."

Earlier, Criswell, a former SBC president, told a packed auditorium, hundreds more watching closed circuit television in an adjacent auditorium, and a Dallas area television audience that he felt great "admiration and gratitude" for Ford.

He said he had been in Washington with a group of religious broadcasters a week earlier for a White House conference with the President and had been impressed with the spiritual atmosphere there. While in Washington, he invited Ford to attend the church during the President's visit to Dallas.

Criswell, in his pre-sermon remarks, took a slap at Carter for his widely publicized interview with Playboy Magazine, labeling the magazine as "pornographic" and "salacious" and lauding Ford for turning down an interview with the publication.

Later, he said he was grateful for Carter's Christian faith and commitment but did not believe in his social program.

Earlier that weekend, in another setting, another prominent Southern Baptist pastor also commented on Carter and Playboy--but not in condemnation.

Buckner Fanning, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, San Antonio, told 5,500 college students at the annual Texas Baptist Student Convention in Houston that he compared Carter's Playboy interview with Billy Graham's appearance on Johnny Carson's Tonight Show.

"I approved of Graham being on the Carson show, even though it is one of the most racy, suggestive and beer-sponsored shows on television. By the same token I approved of Jimmy Carter utilizing the pages of Playboy and saying a positive word about Christ and marital fidelity."

The students responded with enthusiastic applause.

Fanning said the United States has allowed the rise of Soviet power during the past 30 years and has recently ignored "the voice of the prophet of God, (Soviet exile) Alexander Solzhenitsyn."

Solzhenitsyn was "tragically" snubbed by President Ford, Fanning said, and now "we understand why Ford's statement during the debate . . ., in which he indicated Russia does not dominate Eastern Europe, explains why Soviet power and domination continue to expand.

"Such a naive statement is tantamount to the betrayal of freedom for millions of people," Fanning claimed.

Criswell, in his sermon on "The Riches of Liberality," urged that the church subscribe a budget of \$6.8 million.

His three-point sermon from II Corinthians 8:1-9 asked for members to make sacrificial gifts to God, dedicate their lives to God, and give with a grateful heart.

Criswell said he had been asked when it was announced that Ford would be in the audience if he were going to stick to his plan to preach on giving.

After pondering about it a long time, he said with a smile, "I said 'yes,' maybe we can get a pledge card from him."

But he added that he didn't want to change plans for the service because he wanted the President to see the church "as we are" and "because President Ford would be most sensitive to and familiar with our need for fiscal responsibility."

Criswell used the opportunity to let Ford know he disapproved of any attempt to tax church property and to acknowledge Ford's announced position against any such action.

He said he was disturbed by the "specter on the government horizons that brings dread to my soul--the taxation of the churches."

Church owned schools, hospitals and other agencies are the church in action, he said, and to tax them is to tax the church and offers the opportunity to ultimately destroy the church.

"But, I heard Gerald Ford, our President, say boldly and courageously that he would interdict any such movement," Criswell said.

Hundreds of persons lined the sidewalks around the church before and during the service and many shouted encouragement to the President as he arrived and left the church.

Ford's appearance at the church, was the second by a US President. Criswell said in his opening remarks that President Woodrow Wilson had spoken there in 1917.