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Boat Broken Down in Bayou
Led to Founding of Church

By Jon Pederson

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--At the beginning of the "Great Depression," after the stock market crash of 1929, St. Clair Bower kissed his girlfriend, Annie (now his wife), goodbye and set out for New Orleans to attend the Baptist Bible Institute (BBI).

"I didn't want to go to the Bible Institute," Bower told students at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary here. "My plan was to go to Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., then come back to Alabama and be pastor of a big Baptist church..." (BBI became New Orleans Seminary in 1946.)

Had Bower not gone to New Orleans and the Bible Institute, he might have missed what became for him a career as a home missionary to the French-speaking people of the Louisiana bayou country. He retired in 1973.

"I had very little money to go to seminary," he recalled, "but an offer of a scholarship to the Institute was made available and I took it. I came to New Orleans, and the more I saw the less I liked it.

Bowers recalled that he "didn't like South Louisiana, and I didn't like to hear people speak in a language I couldn't understand. I didn't like chicory coffee and I didn't like mosquitos.

But the fledgling minister found plenty to do in New Orleans. "There were hardly any churches down here..."

Bower spent several months preaching on the streets of New Orleans before a preaching opportunity opened at Maringouin, a small French settlement whose name means, "Big Mosquito," in French.

In a 40-mile stretch, up and down the bayou, he found 12 Baptists and they organized the First Baptist Church of Maringouin.

"We preached outdoors in those days and I hadn't been there long when I met a great lady. She was the mother of French missions in our area, really, Mrs. Mary Lou Jenkins. Mrs. Jenkins said she had a dream of a boat missionary on the Atchafalaya River basin and she wanted me to be that missionary.

"Well, what boy doesn't like a boat. So I said, 'Sure I'd love to have a boat.' So she gave me a boat and I was the 'Boat Missionary.'"

The boat enabled Bower to establish another church at Krotz Springs 25 miles away by land, 110 miles away by water. He was serving as pastor on a rotating basis of both First Baptist Church of Maringouin and First Baptist Church of Krotz Springs while attending the Institute.

"I painted my boat red," he said, "for two reasons. First, I like red. Second, in those days they shot revenueurs on the Atchafalaya River and I didn't want to be slipping in anywhere. In fact, every time I would stop my boat I would grab the trumpet and start playing, 'What A Friend We Have In Jesus.'"

One summer day, Bower decided to take a day off for some fishing. As he swept around a bend in the bayou, "having the time of my life, my boat broke. I had vibrated the tank completely off the motor...I put my head in my hands and said, 'Lord, why did you have to let this happen to me? Of all the days I would have a good time was today...'"

Bower pulled over to the bank and set up his cot and stove, then decided to walk over to the other side of the bayou "to find someone to talk to." He spied an elderly woman sitting in a rocker and a teenaged boy playing in the yard.

"The boy saw me and kind of looked me over and asked who I was. I told him that I was a preacher. He looked me over again and saw that I was wearing khakhis.

"He'd never seen a preacher that didn't have his collar on backwards and was wearing a black suit, so he said:

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"'You ain't no preacher.' I said, 'Look here, young fellow, I am so a preacher.' He said, 'If you're a preacher, then preach.'

"You might as well say, 'Sic em,' to a bull dog as to say, 'Preach' to a preacher. I said, 'Alright, you come back to my boat with me, and I'll get my Bible and I will preach...' So we walked back to the boat, and he began to tell me how mean he was... His name was Eddie, and he was tough, and that was the meanest place on the bayou--where the boat broke down.

"When I had gotten my Bible we went back. I kneeled down on my knees by that little woman in the rocking chair. And I said, 'Have you ever read the Bible?'

The woman had never seen a Bible and told Bowers, "'If I had one, I couldn't read it.'" Bowers recalled, "I was shocked. I asked if she would let me read the Bible to her. She agreed, and I read John 3:1-18.

"When I had finished reading, the woman had great big tears coursing down her face and she was beating her breast. She said, 'All of my life I have wanted to know that God loved me, and I never knew it until today.'

"That day the lady was saved and so was her son, and soon there were enough to start a church. We had been meeting on someone's land. When I told him that I planned to start a church on the bend where the boat broke down, he thought I was crazy and warned me how mean the people were...

"But he told me that if I could get enough people together he would give me the land and materials to construct a church house.

"The land he gave us," Bowers concluded, "was the very same bend in the bayou where the boat broke down."

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Baptist Hospital, Nashville
In \$2.6 Million Construction

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Construction and renovation work estimated at \$2.6 million is underway here on Baptist Hospital's Progressive Care Center, at the former site of St. Thomas Hospital.

The work is expected to be completed by October 1977. The Center will house 100 beds in both private and semi-private accommodations, a hospital spokesman said.

St. Thomas Hospital, owned and operated by the Daughters of Charity, a Roman Catholic order, is in a new facility in another part of the city.

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**Baptists Set Two-Year Drive
To Evangelize Hong Kong**

RICHMOND (BP)--A major city evangelistic penetration and saturation program has been planned for Hong Kong for the next two years with specific campaigns and activities for each month.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's department of evangelism and church development is working in cooperation with the Hong Kong Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist missionaries to conduct the evangelism project to win Hong Kong's almost five million people, according to James W. Cecil, Southern Baptist missionary associate currently under assignment in the board's evangelism department.

"We expect the most significant growth in church membership among existing Baptist churches that the British crown colony has ever experienced," Cecil said. Furthermore, he anticipates that house churches will set a new pattern for centers of worship in the colony.

Planning sessions were held during the latter part of 1976 when the calendar of major events was projected by convention leaders and Southern Baptist missionaries with the assistance of Joseph B. Underwood, the Foreign Mission Board's consultant in evangelism and church development and author of the Major City Evangelization Plan that the board uses.

The Hong Kong Convention has elected 12 Major City Evangelization committees that will function during the two-year emphasis. They will serve in areas such as special events, stewardship development, music development and publications. Programmed guidebooks to assist these committees in carrying through their various areas of responsibility are being prepared now, according to Cecil.

Daniel Y. K. Cheung, pastor of the Chinese-language Kowloon Baptist Church, is chairman of the Major City Evangelism steering committee for Hong Kong. He anticipates all of the 56 churches and chapels in the convention will participate, Cheung said.

The Hong Kong Convention is developing a logo to be worn on clothing and used on letterheads, magazines, books and bulletins to serve as prayer reminders and conversation starters.

In March, Baptists will be enlisted to open their homes to Bible studies. "They hope to have 2,000 homes having weekly studies within a year," Cecil said. The convention hopes many of these will become house churches, especially in high rise apartments where most of them will be established, he added.

The Major City Evangelization strategy also includes mass distribution of scripture portions, leadership conferences, evangelism conferences, Witness Involvement Now (WIN) schools in every church and mutual interest clubs. The interest clubs, Cecil said, would "provide avenues for Christians to witness to non-Christian participants."

In July 1978, the Ninth Baptist Youth World Conference will be held in Hong Kong. A significant number of youth will participate in personal witnessing at that time. Baptist World Alliance officials expect about 6,000 young people to participate in the youth congress, according to Cecil.

A city-wide crusade will be conducted in October 1978 followed by simultaneous crusades in every church of the convention.

- MOSHI, Tanzania (BP)--A total of 1,585 people made professions of faith during recent evangelistic campaigns held in 115 churches in Tanzania.

The campaigns were organized as part of the work of the evangelism and church development office of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and were a cooperative effort of Southern Baptist missionaries and Baptist nationals.

During the month-long campaigns 14 pastors and two ministers of music came from the United States to lead the worship services. Each team of seven pastors and a minister of music stayed two weeks.

"I do believe that a great majority of those making professions will be baptized," said Southern Baptist missionary Carlos R. Owens, head of the special revival committee.

In the association with the most professions of faith in Jesus Christ, 482, the missionary said between 600-700 persons were attending follow-up meetings, designed for those who made professions of faith only. Church members were attending too, which indicated "keen interest" on their parts, he said.

At last report, 10 percent of those who made professions of faith had been baptized.

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Ford--In and Out on
The Wings of Prayer

By W. Barry Garrett

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WASHINGTON (BP)--President Gerald R. Ford began and ended his administration in the spirit of prayer.

In his State of the Union message to Congress on January 12, Ford reminded the nation of the conditions that existed when he became President on Aug. 9, 1974. He then said, "I asked for your prayers, and went to work."

At the end of his "farewell message" as many have chosen to call his speech to Congress, Ford said, "My fellow Americans, I once asked for your prayers, and now I give you mine." He then read the following prayer for the nation.

"May God guide this wonderful country, its people, and those they have chosen to lead them. May our third century be illuminated by liberty and blessed with brotherhood, so that we and all who come after us may be the humble servants of thy peace. Amen."

Ford, in his State of the Union message, described the post-Watergate conditions that existed when he became President and that made him realize the necessity of prayer for his administration. He said:

"Our nation was deeply divided and tormented. In rapid succession, the vice president and the President had resigned in disgrace. We are still struggling with the after-effects of a long, unpopular and bloody war in Southeast Asia. The economy was unstable and racing toward the worst recession in 40 years.

"People were losing jobs. The cost of living was soaring. The Congress and the chief executive were at loggerheads. The integrity of our constitutional process and of other institutions was being questioned. In the grave situation which prevailed in August 1974, our will to maintain our international leadership was in doubt."

In his message to Congress in 1975, Ford declared "that the state of the Union was not good. In 1976, he reported that "the state of the Union was better--in many ways a lot better--but still not good enough." Then in 1977's message he affirmed that the state of the Union is good.

At his inauguration as President, Ford asked for the prayers of the American people. He said, "I am acutely aware that you have not elected me as your President by your ballots. So I ask you to confirm me as your President with your prayers. And I hope that such prayers will also be the first of many."

"As we bind up the wounds of Watergate, more painful and poisonous than those of foreign wars," the new President appealed, "Let us restore the Golden Rule to our political process, and let brotherly love purge our hearts of suspicion and hate."

Ford put the Golden Rule into practice as he closed out his administration and turned the presidency over to President-elect Carter. He told Congress, "The current transition is proceeding very well. I was determined that it should; I wanted the new President to get off to an easier start than I had." He then urged "members of my party in the Congress to give the new President loyal support" in a bi-partisan foreign policy that would result in a "better world" for all people.

President Ford has been a deeply religious man for many years. He regularly attended an Episcopal church in Alexandria, Va. when he was a congressman. He met regularly with other members of Congress for Wednesday prayer meetings. Although during the first part of his presidency he dropped the regular prayer meetings to avoid a show of religiousness, he quietly and without publicity resumed private prayer sessions with his colleagues during the past year.