



# FEATURES

produced by Baptist Press

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

February 18, 1977  
BWA Project Helped  
To Kill Smallpox

77-31

By Cyril E. Bryant

WASHINGTON (BP)--Smallpox, the dread killer that has plagued the human race since ancient times, has been eradicated.

Newspapers announced the good news shortly before the end of the old year, detailing how the World Health Organization (WHO) has successfully immunized men, women, and children in all disease-threatened areas. Three cases of smallpox at Magadishu, Somalia, in East Africa were believed to be the last.

The story of the eradication of smallpox began in 1958, when the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) sponsored a medical mission survey headed by Dr. Robert A. Hingson and financed by W. Maxey Jarman of Nashville.

Both Hingson and Jarman are Baptist deacons. They met through Robert S. Denny, who had joined the BWA staff two years earlier and who served as project coordinator.

Dr. Hingson was the developer of a jet immunization gun that vaccinates without a needle. He and his colleagues tested the device during their 1958 survey in Asia, Africa, and Europe. They came back convinced that they had a tool that could rid mankind of disease. He called it a "peace gun."

"The world is sick," Dr. Hingson told an audience of medical men and government officials at the BWA headquarters building in Washington, D.C., in November 1958. "There are not enough doctors to cure all the people who are sick. Preventive medicine is the answer."

International health authorities were slow to listen. The idea of immunizing vast populations appeared beyond reason. Dr. Hingson believed that, "with God all things are possible."

In 1962, again under sponsorship of the BWA, Dr. Hingson sought to prove his theory by leading a team of medical personnel to Liberia, where he had the cooperation of President William R. Tolbert, Jr. a Baptist minister and former BWA president. There had been 2000 cases of smallpox in Liberia in 1961.

The team vaccinated people in city centers, at sports stadiums, at highway intersections. They flew by helicopter to rural areas where the government had asked people to assemble on landing strips. Within two months they vaccinated 80 percent of Liberia's citizens.

When Dr. Hingson returned to Liberia in 1963 and made his way to Monrovia's smallpox hospital, the 120 beds, which had overflowed with patients in 1962, stood against the wall.

A nurse saw Dr. Hingson and observed with a smile, "Thank you. Thank you. Smallpox is plenty dead." Dr. Karl Franz, the medical director of Firestone Hospital, verified the observation. "We have not seen a case of smallpox in four months," he said. "It has died out in Liberia."

This pilot project in Liberia was the key that led WHO to its 10-year program. Now smallpox is "plenty dead" throughout the world.

Actually the story began even earlier than 1958. It started in a Sunday school class in Oxford, Ala. Bob Hingson was a lad committed to memory the two great commandments--love for God and love for one's neighbors. He made them a rule for his life, and chose a career in medicine to help his neighbors. The death of smallpox is only one evidence of his success.

Dr. Hingson now presides over Brother's Brother Foundation, an interfaith, interracial benevolent society which grew out of the 1958 project. While WHO was immunizing people in Asia and Africa, Brother's Brother teams used the peace gun to rid the Middle Americas of several diseases that plagued those lands.

In recent years, once the health problem was largely controlled, Brother's Brother has moved in to help in times of natural catastrophe, like the earthquakes in Peru, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, and hurricanes in Honduras.

-more-

They also have provided tons of vegetable seeds, tools for gardening and building projects, and other equipment to uplift the capability of people in these lands. The motivating factor in all the work they say, is Jesus' commandment that we love our neighbors.

Brother's Brother Foundation at 824 Grandview Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15211, is presently seeking schoolbooks for Liberia's public schools, working at the invitation of President Tolbert.

President Tolbert and Dr. Hingson estimate the need at 300,000 books--preferably in sets of at least 30 identical volumes, such as new surplus and as editions replaced by school systems.

"President Tolbert will celebrate his 64th birthday on May 13." Dr. Hingson said: "Baptists throughout the world who appreciated his tremendous leadership of BWA, 1965-70, could give him a worthy birthday gift by cooperating in this school book program."

-30-

Baptisms up 20% for Calif.  
Churches in Renewal; Study

Baptist Press  
2/18/77

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--Baptisms are up an average of 20 percent among Southern Baptist churches involved in lay renewal evangelism in California.

That's the report of Harry Williams, director of evangelism for California Southern Baptists, who has just completed a three year study of baptisms among the 900 churches in the state.

Williams said the churches participating in renewal reported an increase in baptisms of 21.4 percent the first year, 17.5 percent the second, and 22.7 percent the third.

By contrast, churches not in renewal reported an average increase in baptisms of 2.7 percent during the same period, Williams added.

Delving deeper into the study, Williams reported churches which did not change pastors during the renewal emphasis showed an even greater increase. Baptisms in those churches were up 25.4 percent the first year, 23.6 the second, and 40.5 the third.

Fifty-five Southern Baptist churches in California began participating in renewal the last three years, Williams said.

Another 35 churches will begin similar evangelistic efforts this year, he indicated.

"Nothing else I'm doing is getting this type of increase in baptisms," Williams declared.

Williams attributed the increase in baptisms to a continuing intensive Christian witnessing effort by lay people.

"Lay people are making a deeper commitment to themselves, to other Christians, and to the Lord. That's opening these persons up to a normal and natural Christian witness.

"The general health of the church improves. People start getting along with each other better."

In renewal, the pastor serves as a resource person, an equipper, Williams said.

Renewal, known as "The Journey into Lifestyle Evangelism and Ministry," is sponsored by the Brotherhood Commission's department of lay renewal and the evangelism section of the Home Mission Board, in cooperation with state Baptist conventions.

Churches generally begin their "journey" with a lay renewal weekend when visiting Christians seek to commit congregations to an examination of their spiritual condition and to spiritual growth.

Following several months of relational Bible study in small groups, the renewal program offers a ministry evangelism weekend which relates Christians to lay ministries in the church and community.

As a result, many churches are conducting lay renewal and ministry evangelism weekends, instead of revivals, Williams said.

The report did not include churches involved in renewal programs sponsored by other organizations, Williams said.

-30-

**Mrs. LBJ Lauds Broadcasters  
During Abe Lincoln Awards**

**FORT WORTH (BP)--Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson**, former First Lady of the United States, told leading industry broadcasters from across the nation gathered here that communications "in the broadest sense" has been a major thread in the pattern of her days.

She was awarded the Southern Baptist Radio and Television's Distinguished Service Medal at the Eighth Annual Abe Lincoln Awards for broadcasters, sponsored by the commission.

Mrs. Johnson, the first woman to receive the medal, was cited because of her ability to communicate her continuing concern for the people of this country, an agency spokesman said.

Mrs. Johnson said she indulges herself somewhat these days with "more time for her children and grandchildren." But she is not about to give up her civic activities:

"Lyndon taught me to always be active. Life is so full, and there is so much work to be done."

Of President Carter's wishes to take some of the pomp out of the White House, Mrs. Johnson said the President sets his own style.

"My heart was in my throat everytime I heard the trumpets blow to welcome a chief of state. But it is the quality of work that is done that is of real importance.

"Just as we introduced the Southwest's barbeque style of living, the country is now becoming acquainted with Jimmy Carter's magnolia South, and that's not a bad accomplishment for a President."

Speaking at the awards ceremony, she said broadcasting is an industry which has "vastly widened the horizons for us all."

She entered the industry in 1942 with a Austin, Tex., radio station "housed in three dusty upstairs rooms with nine employees and,--as soon as it was possible after World War II to get steel for the tower"-- in 1952 built and put on the air a television station, also in Austin.

Alluding briefly to her life in the White House, she said, "As a congressional wife I had always been in awe of the White House. But when I found myself living there and having that podium, one of my main desires was to communicate to the public my concern about the environment.

"If there are more green spaces today in our cities, less polluted air and water, cleaner highways, more parks and wilderness areas for recreation and self-renewal, the communications industry deserves much of the credit.

"Your documentaries and news shows helped move the problems from the theorists to the activists, and I want to take this occasion to thank you."

Referring to the Johnson Presidential Library in Austin, she said such a library is "visual adventure in the history of the recent past. It communicates in pictures, film and displays of rare documents and in the raw materials of history. Television and radio are vivid purveyors of history. No one can underestimate the power of such communication."

Grand Ole Opry comedian Jerry Clower, a Baptist layman from Yazoo City, Miss., was awarded the commission's Christian Service Award for "using every forum afforded him, on stage and off, to represent Christ effectively and without reservation." Clower declared, "I'll do everything I can to keep on deserving this award. I'll try to make the Lord and you proud of me."

Frank U. Fletcher of Washington, D. C., accepted the commission's Abe Lincoln Railsplitter Award for his father, A. J. Fletcher, a Baptist layman from Raleigh, N. C.

Fletcher was cited for his pioneer efforts in broadcasting, for his leadership in truth in advertising, and for contributing to the "highest standards in the industry."

Mrs. Grover C. Cobb of Falls Church, Va., accepted the commission's first Vicent T. Wasilewski Founder's Award, presented posthumously to her husband for his contributions to improving broadcasting's image in the eyes of the public.

Wasilewski, president of National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), for whom the Founder's Award is named, noted the effectiveness of the Abe Lincoln Awards program in the broadcast industry:

"When the Baptist Radio-TV Commission established these awards to spotlight good things in the industry, it also established the commission's credibility with us. Now because of this credibility, when Paul Stevens, Radio-TV Commission President, raises a serious objection to something within the industry he is more readily heard."

Wasilewski, Federal Communications Commissioner (FCC), Robert E. Lee, and Willard Walbridge of Capital Cities Communication, Corp., in Houston, Tex., were three of the leading broadcasters who first supported the Abe Lincoln Awards program nationally.

Robert A. "Bob" White, vice president and station manager of KIII-TV, Corpus Christi, Tex., received the top Abe Lincoln Television Award. Elmo I. Ellis, vice president and general manager of WSB-Radio, Atlanta, received the Abe Lincoln Radio Award.