



February 21, 1977

77-32

Chaplain & Wife Turn Hobby  
Into National Bible Museum

By James Lee Young

GATLINBURG, Tenn. (BP)--A retired U.S. Air Force chaplain and his wife turned a 24-year hobby into a ministry that has resulted in a first of its kind National Bible Museum in this East Tennessee mountain tourist mecca.

Lewie and Edith Miller opened the museum to visitors in River Oaks Center in May, 1976. The Southern Baptist couple has 300 volumes of the Bible in 120 languages on display for a nominal charge.

The Millers' ministry and museum differs from some non-denominational efforts. The money coming into the museum, from the admission fee above operational expenses, is directed specifically into Bible distribution programs.

In fact, they recently launched a drive to ship used King James Version Bibles to Africa for Asian Indians there who read English but cannot get that version. It isn't being printed in their part of the world at present.

Churches have responded by donating Bibles that have been gathering dust on book shelves and in corners, either in homes or in the church buildings. They send one dollar to cover postage costs to Africa along with each Bible.

The museum's income is not from funds that would normally be fed into missions or church programs by Christian people.

Rather, "We reach a wide cross-section of people, including some who may be interested in the Bible but have no church affiliation," said Miller.

"It's an entire new avenue of raising money for the kind of supportive mission work we have tried to participate in over the years."

The Millers actually began their Bible collection some 24 years ago when he was stationed as an Air Force chaplain in Vienna, Austria. The former B-17 bomber gunner and his wife now have well over 700 Bibles, many rare and all insured.

The museum is a division of Bible Displays and Lectures, Inc., Miller founded in 1969 to provide a channel for funds to be used for Bible translation and distribution overseas. Both are non-profit organizations.

Among the many Bibles, along with artifacts which date from 1500 B.C., are early editions of the "Geneva Bible," a "Bishops (1st edition) Bible" and "King James (1st edition) Bible" all printed between 1569-1611. Still earlier printings of the Latin Vulgate (1535) and a German Bible (1556) are included.

A facsimile of the Gutenberg Bible, the first Bible printed using movable type is also on display, along with exhibits such as the papyrus plant and steps in its development into writing material, used to make Bibles in ancient times.

The smallest book in the world, printed and bound (5 cm), contains the Lord's Prayer in seven languages. A handwritten Bible page on Vellum (1270 A.D.) and tablets of clay also illustrate early writing materials.

Two artifacts sure to be of interest are a lamp dating back about 3,500 years--believed to be the time of Abraham--and the handle from a clay jar in which one of the Dead Sea Scrolls was stored.

Visitors to the museum are given a "talking tour" of the 15 tables that may last an hour, longer or shorter, depending on individual or group interest.

The Millers spent 20 years with the Air Force chaplaincy which gave them a means of working directly with Southern Baptist missions. Miller's brother, Paul, is a Southern Baptist missionary and is registrar and a professor at Nigeria Baptist Seminary in Ogbomoso.

Mrs. Miller's father, John Duff of Chicago, gave the funds for a classroom building at Sakeji School for missionaries' children in Zambia, some 25 years ago. The school recently celebrated its 50th anniversary with an alumni gathering, with former students returning from the U.S., Australia, Europe, and various parts of Africa. The Millers were invited guests.

Miller is considered an authority on Bible background and lectures throughout the world. The couple still travels extensively and maintains international contacts with missionaries and others they have met and continue to meet.

They are hoping and praying that the beauty of Gatlinburg and the Great Smoky Mountains will help to attract more visitors, individuals and groups, not only to visit the museum but to come here for Bible-related conferences and study seminars, using the Millers' facilities, library and expertise on Bible background and history.

The couple regularly receives frequent requests from persons around the country who want specific, hard-to-find information concerning Bible history and specific volumes.

The Millers aren't strangers to "grass roots" missions. When they were stationed in Vienna with the U.S. Air Force, Austria was then behind the Iron Curtain. This gave Miller the distinction of preaching the first Easter Sunrise service broadcast behind the Iron Curtain after World War II.

"It was over the Armed Force Radio Network, and we were in the Russian zone of Austria," Miller recalled.

Then, a few years ago, when Miller was in Saigon, Vietnam, he felt a strong desire to help the Vietnamese. He visited the United Bible Society's headquarters in Saigon and learned that 10,000 Bible portions were needed for the Bu Nong tribe, some of the Montagnard people in the Vietnam highlands. He asked his U.S. Air Force congregation at Tan Son Nhut air base to help with an offering, and \$755 was given, which was \$5 more than they needed to have the 10,000 scripture portions printed.

Over the years, they have given aid to displaced Lutherans, helped Plymouth Brethren missionaries, worked with Bible translators, given support to a French-based Christian broadcast into Romania, along with their primary duties--until 1971--of ministering to and with Air Force personnel and dependents.

Theirs has been a lifetime of ministry, and one the couple wants to share with visitors who come to Gatlinburg.

-30-

(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

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Executive Secretaries,  
Editors Name Officers

Baptist Press  
2/21/77

CHARLESTON, S.C. (BP)--James H. Landes, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and Jack U. Harwell, editor of The Christian Index, weekly Baptist state paper in Georgia, were named presidents of the State Executive Secretaries Association of the Southern Baptist Convention and of the Southern Baptist Press Association, respectively.

Other officers named during the concurrent meetings in Charleston of the two groups were:

Executive secretaries group--Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention, vice president, and Joe L. Ingram, executive director-treasurer of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, secretary-treasurer.

Press Association--John E. Roberts, editor of the Baptist Courier, weekly news publication of South Carolina Baptists, president-elect; and R. Gene Puckett, editor of the Maryland Baptist weekly news publication, re-elected secretary-treasurer.

-30-

(BP) Photos mailed to Baptist state papers

**BAPTIST PRESS**

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February 21, 1977

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**Sunday School Enrollment  
Tops 1976 SBC Statistics**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Sunday Schools recorded the largest enrollment increase in 17 years during 1976, while total receipts, mission expenditures and church membership continued to set new Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) records, according to the annual statistical report compiled by the research services department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

The report also indicates slight increases in Woman's Missionary Union, Brotherhood and church music enrollments.

Decreases in 1976 were in baptisms and Church Training enrollment, according to reports received from approximately 34,600 Southern Baptist churches.

More than 7,458,000 people were included in the ongoing Sunday School enrollment in 1976, an increase of 2.4 percent over 1975. It is the fifth consecutive year Sunday School enrollment has increased, and this year's gain of 176,843 members is the largest enrollment increase since 1959.

A. V. Washburn, secretary of the Sunday School department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, attributed the increase to "a continually growing commitment in our churches and denomination to the importance of reaching more people for meaningful Bible study."

Washburn said that the enrollment growth also was stimulated by ACTION, a reach out enrollment plan for Sunday Schools which has been utilized by more than 1,700 churches.

"It is also significant," Washburn commented, "that for the first time in many years, the increase in Sunday School enrollment almost paralleled the growth in church membership. This is most wholesome, and if it continues, larger gains in baptisms, Christian growth and discipleship should follow."

Total SBC receipts climbed to a new high of \$1,645,959,837 in 1976, an increase of 11.5 percent over last year's total of \$1.47 billion.

Mission expenditures jumped 10.4 percent for a total of \$262,373,823 in 1976. Last year's figure was \$237,617,406. The average mission expenditure in 1976 was \$20.30 for each church member, compared to \$18.66 in 1975.

Church membership gained 186,942 members for a total of 12,922,605, an increase of 1.5 percent over the 1975 total of 12,735,663.

The number of baptisms in 1976 fell below 400,000 for the first time in five years with 384,496. The 1975 total of 421,809 baptisms was the third highest figure in SBC history.

Church Training's ongoing enrollment dropped 1.9 percent in 1976 to 1,850,406, compared to 1,886,177 last year. The 1976 figure does not include more than 347,000 persons involved in New Member Training, Church Leader Training and short-term member training projects.

Both Church Training and Sunday School reported significant increases in the number of young adults enrolled.

Woman's Missionary Union (WMU--for women and girls) added more than 5,400 members to its ongoing enrollment in 1976 for a total of 1,139,034.

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The ongoing Southern Baptist Brotherhood (for men and boys) enrollment gained 2,979 members for a total of 478,981. An additional 12,000 persons were involved in short-term missions projects during the year.

Church music's ongoing enrollment reached 1,372,598 in 1976, an increase of 1.3 percent over the 1975 total.

A total of 394 new or reorganized churches was reported in ~~1976~~<sup>1976</sup>, compared to a loss of 223 churches. The net gain of 171 increased the total number of SBC churches to 35,073.

In a new category included in this year's statistical report, more than 2,880 Southern Baptist churches reported memberships comprised of blacks and whites.

In other new categories, more than 9,400 churches reported that the pastor has employment apart from the church. A total of 786 churches reported the operation of Christian day schools for a combined enrollment of more than 96,800 students.

More than 3,370 mission Sunday Schools were operated by 1,865 churches in 1976, according to a projected figure based on a sample of churches.

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Edwards Resigns Plains  
Baptist Church Pastorate

Baptist Press  
2/21/77

PLAINS, Ga. (BP)--On what Georgia State Sen. Hugh Carter called "the bloodiest, blackest day in the history of Plains Baptist Church," Bruce Edwards resigned his pastorate here after a segment of the church apparently maneuvered to fire him.

Edwards said the move was generated by those who never accepted his efforts to drop racial barriers at the church after blacks sought admission to the church during the presidential campaign when the church's most prominent member, Jimmy Carter, now a member of First Baptist Church, Washington, was seeking office.

He told Baptist Press he will be on a salaried leave of absence until April 30. He has no immediate plans about his future course of action, although he says he is "still committed to the pastorate."

"I had no intention of resigning when I went into that meeting," the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary graduate said. "It was a special conference the church called to deal with another matter--an outstanding debt."

He said his resignation came after what he called "a long and bitter discussion," which followed an unexpected but apparently carefully planned motion that he be fired. He said no charges were brought against him but that he was told he had lost his effectiveness.

"I finally decided to just hang it up, and I gave my resignation," Edwards said. "I doubt that I would reconsider even if the church asked me to. There's just too much ill will. But I do think the church does need to act to reverse it so it won't let a handful run the church. That's what happened Sunday."

He said he did not feel the action represents the feelings of most of the church. He said many members were absent and that the opposition had brought in a number of members who had moved away--people he had never seen during his two years as pastor.

"It was definitely a calculated move on the part of a certain section of the church," he said. "In November when 200 members were present, I was sustained and the 1965 resolution barring blacks was overturned. Sunday, with just over 100 members present, the motion was made to fire me."

Hugh Carter, President Carter's cousin and a deacon at the church, commenting to the press on the meeting, said, "This is by far the worst split that I have ever seen in any church anywhere in my lifetime, and frankly, I think the damage that has been done is irreparable. In my opinion, the people behind the movement to dismiss the minister crucified him, with no one giving any reasons or charges as to why he was being asked to resign."

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The 1965 resolution barring "Negroes and other civil rights agitators" was voted down by the church, Nov. 13, 1976, by a vote of 120-66, in the aftermath of efforts by black activist minister Clennon King to join the church. At the same time the church voted 107-84 to retain Edwards. Later King, a non-resident of Plains, and two other non-resident blacks, were denied membership on grounds of their distant residence and failure to cooperate with the church's membership.

In Washington, the White House said Jimmy Carter, who has strongly supported Edwards and his racial stance, would have no immediate comment on the resignation.

-30-

Ambassadorship Would Be  
Challenge, Says Cooper

Baptist Press  
2/21/77

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Former Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Owen Cooper, 69, indicated that if he was asked to serve as Ambassador to India, he would view it as a challenge and chance to be of service "to help human need wherever it occurs."

Cooper, a Baptist layman and retired president of Mississippi Chemical Corp., responded to a report in the Jackson Clarion-Ledger that he was being considered as a candidate for the ambassadorial post:

"I don't know what's happening, and I'm not trying to be coy. Ambassadorships usually go to folks making \$100,000 campaign contribution, but they don't do that anymore," indicating that people don't get ambassadorships for making contributions anymore.

"I'm interested in trying to help human need wherever it occurs, and if the opportunity for such service were to become available through me to India, it would be a challenge," he told the Mississippi Baptist Record.

Cooper was named in November, 1976, to a committee of prominent citizens to advise then President-elect Jimmy Carter on potential governmental leaders. The Baptist deacon told Baptist Press at that time that he did not anticipate taking a federal job.

Cooper, who was president of the 12.7 million-member SBC in 1973-74, said he had heard nothing from the White House or U. S. State Department as of Saturday, Feb. 19, 1977. He said that apparently a friend or friends had recommended him, but the retired industrialist noted he had not sought the position of ambassador.

The Feb. 17 Clarion-Ledger account by Stephanie Saul quoted a Mississippi state Democratic leader as saying that Cooper was in consideration for the ambassadorship.

The paper quoted a White House spokesman as saying that ambassadorial appointments were in the preliminary stages and that it was premature to make any announcements. The spokesman said she could not take Cooper's name out of "contention," however, the paper said.

Cooper said he would probably be in Washington the week of Feb. 21, to talk to a State Department official, but he declined to say who the official was and who had recommended him for the ambassadorship, the paper said.

Cooper, who endorsed President Carter's candidacy, has a longtime interest in Indian affairs, has travelled to India several times, and helped build a fertilizer plant in that country.

The Mississippi layman was SBC president in 1973-74 and is a former vice president of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

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Baptist Editors Decry  
IRS Auxiliary Ruling

Baptist Press  
2/21/77

CHARLESTON, S. C. (BP)--Southern Baptist editors from across the nation passed a strongly worded resolution in their annual meeting here urging the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to withdraw a recent ruling on "integrated auxiliaries of a church" which the editors declare is unconstitutional.

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The resolution of the Southern Baptist Press Association, made up of Baptist state editors and Baptist Press personnel from coast to coast, noted the IRS published the ruling in the January 4, 1977, *Federal Register*, attempting to define the role of a church.

The IRS defined an "integrated auxiliary (organization) of a church" as one which is exempt from taxation, affiliated with a church, and has an "exclusively religious" principal activity. It went on to describe what was "exclusively religious," noting that those organizations not "exclusively religious" would have to file Form 990 with IRS, making extensive financial information available.

The IRS said an organization would not be declared "exclusively religious" if its activity "is educational, literary, charitable or of another nature (other than religious) that would serve as a basis of exemption under section 501 (c) (3)" of the Internal Revenue Code.

The editors' resolution charged that the IRS "ignored the earlier testimony of the churches and issued a rule that arbitrarily arrogates to the IRS the power to decide which activities in church agencies are 'exclusively religious.'"

The resolution further declared that action puts the IRS in an unconstitutional role. "Principles of religious liberty and American constitutional law dictate that the role and mission of the churches are to be determined by each particular faith and not by government intervention," the statement said.

The editors' expressed disapproval of the ruling, urged the IRS to withdraw it and noted that "if future attempts are made to formulate such a definition "the IRS should "consult with the churches to arrive at a definition that adequately protects the 'free exercise of religion.'"

The resolution also commended the activities of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington for "alerting us to these issues and for its efforts to persevere our religious freedoms and to maintain proper church-state relations in the United States. . ."

The statement further pledged "our continued efforts to persevere for the churches the right to define for themselves their role and mission in the world without interference from government or its agencies."

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Sunday School Board Responds  
To \$800,000 Suit

Baptist Press  
2/21/77

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention's Sunday School Board has labeled as "ridiculous" a charge by a company in Roanoke, Va., that the board is mislabeling choir robes.

Bentley & Simon, a manufacturer of choir and pulpit robes, has filed an \$800,000 suit against the Sunday School Board, according to news reports.

The suit in U. S. District Court in Roanoke alleges that the board, although it ceased buying Bentley & Simon robes in 1976, still advertises them as such. It further alleges that the board, by using the phrase "quality tailored by Bentley & Simon," is "defrauding and misleading the public by palming off unauthorized robes not tailored by the plaintiff."

Bentley & Simon legal action asks that the board be forbidden to advertise robes as made by the plaintiff, withdraw all such references in church supply catalogs, and remove all Bentley & Simon labels from products in its inventory.

Sunday School Board President Grady C. Cothen, commenting that the board's "knowledge of this entire affair has been derived from the public press and by our attorney from their attorney," had this comment:

"The Sunday School Board for years purchased robes from Bentley & Simon until the company was acquired by the Oak Hall firm.

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"By agreement with Oak Hall, we were to sell our remaining stock with the Bentley & Simon label in the robes. No robes of any kind have been sold by the Sunday School Board except with the label intact.

"If the Bentley & Simon robes are inferior, as reportedly charged in the complaint, it is the responsibility of the manufacturer. It is ridiculous to imply that the Sunday School Board would mislabel choir robes," Cothen continued.

"In editing copy of the catalog of one distributor, the editor failed to delete two mentions of the Bentley & Simon name. Insofar as we are able to ascertain, this represents an error of the Sunday School Board. The charge of fraud as reported by the public press is preposterous," Cothen said.

He said the board had "not been served with a complaint" as of Feb. 21.

A hearing on the suit, which alleges violations of common law and U. S. trademark laws, will be held before Judge James Turk at an undetermined date in Roanoke. An earlier announced date of March 2 has been postponed, a board spokesman said. Bentley & Simon is seeking \$200,000 in compensatory damages and \$600,000 in punitive damages.