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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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June 28, 1977

Washburn Retirement
'End of an Era'

By Jim Lowry

77-115

NASHVILLE (BP)--A. V. Washburn, "Mr. Sunday School" to Southern Baptists for the past 20 years, will retire as head of the Sunday School Board's Sunday School department, Aug. 1.

Washburn, a board employee of 44 years, has invested his life in promoting Bible study because of a conviction that "reaching people for Christ is a tremendous challenge."

He has worked with many outstanding Southern Baptist leaders, including four presidents of the Board, I. J. Van Ness, T. L. Holcomb, James L. Sullivan and Grady Cothen.

Sunday School leaders with whom he has worked include Hight C. Moore, Prince E. Burroughs, Arthur Flake and J. N. Barnette, the only other person to head Southern Baptists' Sunday School program, which now has almost 7.5 million members enrolled.

As a boy in North Carolina, Washburn was a member of the same church as Barnette, who served as Sunday School director of the church. Consequently, Double Springs Baptist Church, near the railroad's Washburn Switch, has provided Southern Baptists with the only two men ever to lead the Bible study program.

When Barnette left Double Springs Baptist Church, Washburn's father took over as Sunday School director. His parents' strong commitment to Southern Baptists and the association with Barnette in those early years, made moving to the Sunday School Board in 1933 a "natural thing," according to Washburn.

His first position at the Sunday School Board was superintendent of young people's work, which he assumed two months after he was graduated from Wake Forest University.

After a three-year stay in the U. S. Naval Reserves from 1943-1946, Washburn returned to the Sunday School Board as secretary of teaching and training in the Sunday School department and associate editor of the "Sunday School Builder."

He was named secretary of the Sunday School department when Barnette retired in 1957.

Washburn's theory of operating for his years in Sunday School work probably is best explained in his paraphrase of one of Barnette's sayings:

"If you will work to grow a great Sunday School, in that process, you will have already developed a great church, because the basic element of reaching people and teaching them the Word of God is what Sunday School work is all about."

Several opportunities have arisen during the past years to leave the Sunday School Board to work in a church, or a state convention, but Washburn said he "always felt led to remain at the Sunday School Board, because the mission of the board is right at the heart of New Testament churches--which thrills me.

"The outlook for Southern Baptist Sunday Schools is very bright," according to Washburn.

"There have been periodic detractors," he said, "but we have continued to re-assess essential functions of the church and what a Bible teaching program can perform.

"Sunday Schools have always played an important role in establishing new churches," he said, "and the cooperative spirit that exists now between Southern Baptist agencies as related to establishing new congregations through new Sunday Schools is one of our most exciting prospects for the future.

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"Growing momentum in the numerical growth of Sunday School enrollment and attendance, plus current reports of churches using the ACTION Sunday School enrollment plan to increase enrollment and attendance are two of our most encouraging signs of things to come," he added.

"However," Washburn injected, "I believe the most promising point for the stability and continued growth of Sunday Schools is the strong emphasis on improving the quality of Bible teaching and learning."

A total of 44 Bible-Teaching Learning Workshops were conducted in the spring of this year to help state conventions prepare Sunday School workers. Washburn attended over 30 of them.

After his retirement, he expects to be at least as busy as he is now.

First, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has offered Washburn and his wife, Kate, the opportunity to work in Scotland for a year, beginning in April 1978. While there, he will serve as a general consultant to the Baptist Union of Scotland in the field of religious education.

He also has received numerous offers from state Baptist convention executive secretaries and Sunday School secretaries to work with them in establishing new Sunday Schools and conducting ACTION campaigns.

Several associational directors of missions have asked Washburn to work with them to improve the quality of Bible teaching in their particular areas.

Working in areas where Southern Baptist work is still in the pioneer stage particularly appeals to him, possibly living in his trailer in an area where no church exists.

A number of writing assignments will be taken care of during the early spring months while the Washburns are preparing to go to Scotland.

Washburn says that he looks back with "a great deal of gratitude for the privilege" of serving at the Sunday School Board, and with his fellow workers.

"In the future, there surely will be greater achievements for Southern Baptist Sunday Schools," he concluded.

Washburn, a believer in Bible study for everyone, may now retire to do what he has done faithfully across the years, tell more people about Bible study.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers.

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R fug e Work In Thailand
Also Directed to Thais

By Irma Duke

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RICHMOND (BP)--Relief efforts by Southern Baptist missionaries in Thailand are not directed just to Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees but also to displaced Thais.

In April, four Southern Baptist missionaries were granted permission by the Thailand government to visit Thai refugees at two public relief centers, according to Maxine (Mrs. Robert R.) Stewart, Southern Baptist missionary press representative who was among the group.

Since that time, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has appropriated \$8,000 for relief efforts with the Thai people.

The refugees left their homes along Cambodian borders because of raids by Cambodian soldiers, according to William R. Wakefield, the board's area secretary for Southeast Asia.

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Ban Laem was one of the villages attacked by the soldiers, previously known as Khm r Rouge.

"It appears the intruders were seeking food as they shot and stole the water buffalo and chickens," Mrs. Stewart said.

The homes were ransacked, she said, and 20 of the some 100 houses were destroyed by fire and others left almost bare.

The villagers had been harassed by the soldiers for a long time, reports noted. They share a canal between Thailand and Cambodia. The canal served as the village's main water supply during the dry season. Several times, the soldiers plugged or dammed the water supply to prevent villagers from having water from it, Mrs. Stewart said.

The missionaries learned the villagers' greatest physical needs were rice, dried fish, fish sauce and clothing. In their rush to leave, most had only the clothing they were wearing at the time of the attacks.

"Through this act of kindness the door is opened for friendship," she said. "Through friendship, we hope to have an opportunity to offer them the Lord Jesus Christ."

A government official was impressed that Baptists came offering help, Mrs. Stewart said.

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Ches Smith: 'Abandon
Wagons for Rockets'

By Jack U. Harwell

Baptist Press
6/28/77

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)-- A South Georgia pastor who was re-elected here as chairman of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee is committed to the thought that "Baptists need to abandon wagons and launch some rockets."

W. Ches Smith III, pastor of First Baptist Church in Tifton, Ga., the past 12 years was named to a second term during SBC sessions here in June.

The Executive Committee was given "strong administrative leadership" in promoting and coordinating all aspects of Bold Mission, Southern Baptists' effort to evangelize the world by the year 2000.

And Convention "messengers" asked the Executive Committee's chairman, Smith, in this case, to appoint the committee to give the leadership they asked for.

Bold Mission "may easily become the most significant single missionary endeavor in Southern Baptists' history or any other organized religious body," Smith reflected following his re-election in Kansas City.

"I feel a deep need for prayer as we contemplate the personnel, structures, finances and scope of Bold Mission among Southern Baptist churches and agencies.

"The first five years will be crucial. If we can capture the excitement and zeal I feel all across the nation, and give it workable tools for involving Mr. Average Baptist in Bold Mission, the dimensions are beyond our imagination."

He added, "Just the thought of doubling total Cooperative Program (unified budget) gifts by 1982, and doubling them two more times by the year 2000 is an energizing thought. Think what our mission boards and state conventions and SBC commissions could do if their present resources were doubled in five years."

Smith's talk of commitment to Christ through Bold Mission is more than just talk, even on a family and personal level.

"My family and I," Smith continuing "will make a prayerful personal commitment. We are going to double our family giving to the cause of Christ in the next five years--and that won't be easy with two girls in college," he said:

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"And I am going to give everything I've got to lead my church and my state convention to double their giving to the Cooperative Program by 1982. I believe in Bold Mission with my whole being."

The Tifton pastor added: "I was deeply moved when SBC messengers in Kansas City gave their warmest ovation to Bill (William) Self of Atlanta when in his convention s rmon he passionately called on all SBC agencies to be bold, innovative, daring and risky in devising new programs for world missions.

"This response spoke volumes to me. Our people are eager to get on with Bold Mission and they are hungry for their leadership to tell them how to be bold in getting it done."

"This innovation I am talking about doesn't mean putting new wheels on an old wagon, as far as I am concerned. It means getting out of the old wagon and launching some rockets for the gospel. We live in a jet age; let's reach that age with the relevant, current, timely demands of the Eternal Gospel of Jesus."

This kind of "wagon-rocket" analogy in his ministerial vernacular gives a clue to Smith's Baptist heritage.

He was raised in Druid Hills church in Atlanta, son and grandson of two of that church's "patron saints" and a prime protege of Louie D. Newton, "Mr. Baptist" to many in the Baptist world.

"Dr. Louie's influence in my life is inestimable," he admits. "One can't sit under his preaching and counseling for 50 years (Smith will be 50 this year) without having the world in your heart and Baptists in your blood.

"He fed me a diet of Baptist cornbread all of my young life. I don't plan to change that menu today or any other day.

"Baptists have been good to me and my family. We hope to return some of that generosity-- maybe my involvement in Bold Mission will help us do that.

"Dot (Dorothy, Mrs. Smith) and I may go ourselves as volunteer missionaries wherever God leads."

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers.

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Ohio Parochial Ruling
Has Far-Reaching Effect

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By Stan Hastey

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Supreme Court's recent decision upholding most parts of an Ohio plan to aid parochial schools will also have impact on similar plans in two other states.

In two brief orders, the high court announced here that it is sending back to lower federal courts three separate cases from Minnesota and New York in which state laws similar to Ohio's are at stake. The lower courts are under orders to decide those cases in light of its Ohio reasoning.

The Minnesota law provides for lending textbooks and providing other instructional materials to pupils enrolled in nonpublic, mostly sectarian, schools.

According to the Supreme Court's Ohio ruling, textbooks may be provided as stipulated in the Minnesota law, but most other instructional materials may not.

The U. S. District Court for Minnesota upheld the entire plan last November.

In New York, the challenged law calls for public reimbursement to parochial schools for expenses incurred in state-mandated pupil testing and recordkeeping.

Similar provisions in the Ohio statute were upheld in the recent high court ruling.

In both New York cases, the Committee for Public Education and Religious Liberty (PEARL) brought suit against the state law. The organization is a coalition of religious bodies, civil liberties groups, and educational associations, including the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

In its Ohio ruling, the high court held that providing textbooks, standardized testing and scoring services, and diagnostic and therapeutic services for pupils in nonpublic schools does not violate the "no establishment" clause of the First Amendment.

The decision is seen as a major defeat for advocates of separation of church and state.

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High Court's Decision
'Blow at Public Schools'

SAN ANTONIO, Tex. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Jimmy Allen decried here a U. S. Supreme Court decision which upheld most parts of a controversial Ohio plan that includes public funding for textbooks and other services for parochial schools, calling the action a "fierce blow at the public school system."

Allen, recently elected SBC president in Kansas City, Mo., expressed regret for the high court's decision which is said by some observers to be a major defeat for separation of church and state.

In its decision, the court ruled that Ohio did not violate the "no establishment" clause of the First Amendment by enacting a law providing state funding for textbooks, standardized testing and scoring, diagnostic and therapeutic services in parochial schools.

The decision is viewed by observers as the court's most complicated analysis to date of the constitutionality of state funding of parochial schools.

At the same time, the court struck down two parts of the Ohio law that had called for providing instructional materials, equipment and field trip transportation.

Allen, in a telephoned statement to Baptist Press, said:

"I regret that the U. S. Supreme Court relaxed its tension toward a consistent application of the principal of separation of church and state in its recent hairsplitting decision of parochial in the State of Ohio.

"However," Allen said, "Baptists have always been more concerned about what is right than about what is legal. I believe that persons committed to religious liberty will continue to press in their communities toward maintaining public funds in public channels for public purposes.

"Historically," Allen said, "we have opposed taxing one taxpayer to pay for the propagation of another's faith.

"The rhetoric in this Ohio decision," he continued, "is far from being realistic. On the one hand, the court has declared that furnishing textbooks, standardized testing services and diagnostic services to parochial schools is allowable.

"On the other hand," Allen said, "furnishing instructional materials and equipment is disapproved. At the same time, the court upheld separation of church and state by mandating that there be 'no excessive entanglement' between church and state in the field of education.

"The very machinery for monitoring this complicated decision will constitute 'excessive entanglement,'" he said.

"The deepest tragedy of this decision, however, is that it strikes a fierce blow at the public school system in a day when public education is struggling for economic survival. It will multiply sectarian political pressures on already beleaguered state legislatures.

"Sectarian strife is tragic in a time when Christians of various backgrounds are learning to work together sharing the gospel in a secularized age," Allen said.

The Supreme Court decision on the Ohio plan will also have impact on similar plans in at least two other states, observers say.

The high court announced it was sending back three similar cases from Minnesota and New York for lower courts to decide in light of the Ohio decision.