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Grubbs and Wennerberg: Men
With An 'Eye' For A 'Halo'

By Charlie Warren

NASHVILLE (BP)--A blind man here and an optometrist in Florida have teamed up, along with other ham radio operators, to help others "see" a vision of mission needs.

Ralph Grubbs of Nashville and Dr. Don Wennerberg of DeFuniak Springs, Fla., are two key links in a ham radio chain known as the "halo" missionary network.

Both men are dedicated Baptist laymen who feel that what they are doing is their own personal ministry to support missions.

Every day, from 2 to 3 p.m. Central time, Wennerberg acts as the network's controller while Grubbs stands by as a "helper station." They talk with missionaries all over the world from many denominations, but the majority are Southern Baptist missionaries from throughout Latin America.

Both men recently helped set up a connection that allowed two Southern Baptist missionaries speaking from their stations in South America, to address about 16,000 messengers meeting in Kansas City for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting.

While the two ham operators have talked to each other countless times, they have never met face to face. And yet, both agree that their "daily meetings" on the radio waves are their most fulfilling and significant contributions to world missions.

Although Grubbs, whose brother, Tommy Grubbs, works for SBC Executive Committee in Nashville, became interested in ham radios as a youth in Nashville, it wasn't until blindness forced him to retire from accounting and bookkeeping that ham radio became really important to him.

The eye problem began with a detached retina and cataracts. After having the cataract removed, he suffered hemorrhaging that caused partial blindness.

Forced to give up his job, he tried selling real estate, but after six months he realized he couldn't work. Vision is now 85 percent gone. But his attitude of despair gradually turned to hope.

"I'm not afraid to lose my sight," Grubbs said. "The light of the world is Jesus and I see Him through my heart, not through my eyes."

He began looking for something constructive to do. More and more time was spent at the ham radio transmitter.

"By accident, I ran across the missionary traffic nets," Grubbs explained. "I had to listen to them for a week just to figure out what was going on."

But he figured it out, and now he handles about 150 to 200 telephone patches each month connecting missionaries with families, friends, or businesses.

"During the last two or three years, my time has been spent in a more worthwhile way than at any other time in my life," said Grubbs, a member of Hillhurst Baptist Church in Nashville. "I've found what I can do and how I can help. It just took a while to find it."

Grubbs had high words of praise for Dr. Wennerberg.

"If anyone needs medicine, glasses, you name it--Don will get it," Grubbs said. "Don runs the net and helps people get together on the frequency they want to talk on. He doesn't let them take time to talk on the net itself."

According to Grubbs, Wennerberg opens the net each day with the words, "Christ is the answer," in Spanish, Portuguese and English, and then follows with prayer requests.

After years as a ham operator, one day it dawned on Wennerberg that "I had never heard the Lord's name used on ham radio."

Not long after that--about 10 or 15 years ago--he made radio contact with a couple of Southern Baptist missionaries and they began to make regular contacts. He would handle phone patches for them with the Foreign Mission Board headquarters in Richmond, Va., and other places.

"It was decided between us, with the Lord leading, that we would start a Southern Baptist missionary network," he explained.

What started out as a Southern Baptist network ended up as an interdenominational thing. And as it grew and became more organized, helper stations, like the one Grubbs operates in Nashville, became a necessity. Also, a daily time for "meeting" seemed wise.

The middle-of-the-day break in his businesses makes the optometrist rather busy. To compensate for the loss of office time, he has to go in early and stay "later at night than I should," but he still finds time to be active at First Baptist Church, DeFuniak Springs.

A strong believer in Christian stewardship, Wennerberg believes Southern Baptists have fallen short of what they should be doing for missions financially. He has a simple plan to help remedy the situation.

He says that if less than half of the 12.9 million Southern Baptist church members--six million of them--would devote themselves to a daily family prayer time for missionaries and give one penny a day over and above the Cooperative Program and the missions offerings, the financial picture would brighten up considerably.

Using this plan, Dr. Wennerberg, who also has personally taken overseas mission trips to fit glasses and tell others about Christ, feels three things would be accomplished.

"Prayer would open the doors for missionaries like nothing else could," he said. "Secondly, you'd be educating your children about missionaries and teaching them that God answers prayers. And third, if just half of all Southern Baptists would get together, you could almost double the foreign mission offering in one year.

In the meantime, a blind man and optometrist are going to continue a ham radio ministry, while praying that others will "see the vision" that they "hear" every day.

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Adapted from September, 1977 World Mission Journal.

(BP) Photo mailed to state Baptist editors.

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Former Pastor Convicted
Of Rare Book Thefts

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GILMER, Tex. (BP)--A district court judge has sentenced Craig D. Lacy, former pastor of First Baptist Church of Big Sandy, Tex., to two to five years in prison in the theft of rare books and documents valued at \$75,000.

Lacy pleaded guilty to "exercising control" over the rare items taken from 100 bookstores, libraries and museums in Texas and Oklahoma.

He has been detained in the Upshur County Jail since March 10 when he was arrested by police investigating an informant's tip. They discovered the books and documents neatly stacked with names of the owners noted. Some of the materials had been taken from libraries at Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The former pastor said he had gained access to the rare materials by posing as a researcher.

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New Orleans Seminary
Adds Five Faculty

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has appointed five new faculty members to fill vacancies in its theology, religious education and church music divisions.

The seminary's board of trustees named Joe Cothen, pastor of the Oak Park Baptist Church, New Orleans, as associate professor of pastoral work; Mrs. Ann Daniel Carlino, a social worker at the Sellers Baptist Home and Adoption Center, New Orleans, as assistant professor of social work; Talmadge Butler, music editor for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's music department, Nashville, as assistant professor of church music education and administration.

Also appointed were Bernard Spooner, minister of education and administration at the Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Tex., as associate professor of administration; and Al Washburn, minister of music and organist for the Highland Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky., as associate professor of church music organ.

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10 National Groups File
Brief on Behalf of Pastor

By Stan Hasteay

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs (BJCPA) here has joined nine other national groups in asking the U. S. Supreme Court to declare unconstitutional a provision in the Tennessee state constitution forbidding ministers from serving in the legislature.

Paul A. McDaniel, pastor of the Second Missionary Baptist Church, Chattanooga, who filed and won an election as a delegate to the state's Constitutional Convention this summer, was challenged by one of his opponents, Selma Cash Paty.

Paty cited Article IX, Section 1 of the Tennessee constitution, which states that "No minister of the gospel, or priest of any denomination whatever, shall be eligible to a seat in either house of the legislature." The Tennessee legislature passed a law last year which applied state constitutional requirements to candidates for the special Constitutional Convention.

In recent weeks, U. S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart stayed a ruling by a Tennessee court which had denied McDaniel his seat. The stay allowed McDaniel to take his seat, Aug. 1. The high court will decide the case sometime in the fall.

The legal brief filed jointly by the BJCPA and other religious and civil liberties groups and written by famed church-state attorney Leo Pfeffer, urged the high court to strike down the Tennessee requirement on grounds that it violates the free exercise of religion guarantee of the First Amendment.

Joining the BJCPA in filing the brief on McDaniel's behalf were the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Ethical Union, the American Jewish Congress, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, the National Council of Churches, the United Church of Christ, the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and the Unitarian Universalist Association.

In asking the justices to accept the brief, Pfeffer noted that the combined membership of the 10 groups exceeds 65 million Americans and stated that "what brings them together in this brief is a deeply-held commitment to the principle of freedom of religious belief and their conviction that disqualification of a person from public office because of his belief or his profession of that belief as a clergyman of a particular faith violates the free exercise clause."

The brief also argues that although the free exercise of religion is not an absolute right, "the burden is upon the State of Tennessee to establish the presence of a compelling interest that justifies infringing upon the citizen's right to the free exercise of his religion."

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Another point advanced by Pfeffer is the fact that Tennessee is the only state which still forbids clergy from holding public office. At one time, early in the nation's history, 13 states had similar provisions.

Pfeffer refuted the state's argument that the religious beliefs of ministers might unduly influence their position on public issues and thereby violate the federal constitution's ban on an establishment of religion.

Pfeffer asked: "Should not then all citizens having strong feelings in respect to religion, from pietist to atheist, be disqualified, leaving the franchise to those, if there are any, who are completely neutral in respect to religion? This conclusion may be absurd, but it is the only one that can validly sustain the constitutionality of the challenged law."

McDaniel's case came to the nation's high court after the Chancery Court of Hamilton County, which had ruled in his behalf, was overruled by the Tennessee Supreme Court.

That court held in its ruling that seeking public office "is purely a secular act" and the prohibition against ministers' running for office "simply does not impose any burden... upon religious belief or religious action."

The 3-1 decision went on to observe that "it is not religious belief, but the career or calling, by which one is identified as dedicated to the full-time promotion of the religious objectives of a particular religious sect, that disqualifies."

The case will be heard by the U. S. Supreme Court sometime after the justices convene for the court's new term in early October. No specific date for oral arguments has been set, but it is unlikely that a final decision will be forthcoming until late this year or early 1978.

Allen Praises Career Force,
Sees Corps Adding "Muscle"

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GLORIETA, N. M. (BP)--Thirty-eight new missionaries, appointed here during the August meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Foreign Mission Board, were praised by SBC President Jimmy R. Allen as key people "who give themselves in a strategy of a lifetime of service."

He described the new missionaries and others who make up the Southern Baptist career missionary force as "the skeleton of the body of mission witness."

Allen said new auxiliary programs now being organized, such as the SBC's proposed Mission Service Corps for 5,000 short-term missionaries, are designed to add "muscle and tissue to the skeletal body that will reach out and share the good news of Jesus Christ with a desperate world."

The pastor of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Tex., said he knows of no one seriously involved in the missions endeavor who is thinking of substituting short-term commitment for the long-term career efforts of people who have given themselves to a lifetime of service.

But Allen hailed the fact that "we're seeing a new awareness of mission challenge like we have not seen in my lifetime as a Southern Baptist Christian."

He said he is sensing a new surge of spiritual power coming to our land. The "preacher in the pew," the layman, is ready to articulate his faith and is saying, "I am ready to take myself, my skills, my abilities and invest them in sharing this good news around the world," Allen said.

Allen was the major speaker for a service here in which 17 couples and two single women were appointed as career missionaries, and another couple was employed as missionary associates. These missionaries will serve in 13 different countries or areas.

Personnel Secretary Louis R. Cobbs said appointments made at the board meeting bring to 202 the total appointed or commissioned during 1977. The total includes 94 missionary journeymen commissioned in July. Journeymen are college graduates under 27 years of age who serve two years overseas.

But, Cobbs noted, the 202 are only the beginning of the number needed to fill approximately 11,000 requests for new missionaries received this year from the mission fields.

The appointment service highlighted the annual Foreign Missions Conference here. Ten of the couples appointed will do general evangelism work, which the board's executive director, Baker J. Cauthen, pointed out as the area in which the board now faces its greatest need for additional personnel.

Other appointees will be involved in medical work, teaching and theological training, school administration, business management, publications work, religious education promotion, and service as dormitory parents for missionary children.

Those appointed for general evangelism were Mr. and Mrs. C. Joe Barrow, both of North Carolina, for East Africa; Mr. and Mrs. Don R. Bradley, both of Texas, for Panama; Mr. and Mrs. Darryle W. Dunks, both of Texas, East Africa; Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Horner III, both of Alabama, Chile; Mr. and Mrs. Richard F. Lemaster Jr. of Maryland and Missouri, respectively, Benin.

Also, Mr. and Mrs. John E. Norton of Alabama and Florida, Japan; Mr. and Mrs. Charles V Orange of Kentucky and California, East Africa; Mr. and Mrs. Dan E. Rorabaugh of California and Kansas, East Africa; Mr. and Mrs. Michael W. Stroope, both of Texas, Indonesia; and Mr. and Mrs. Robert P. Sugg Jr., both of Mississippi, Taiwan.

Dr. Martha C. Myers of Alabama will be a physician in Yemen, and Dr. and Mrs. John L. Tarpley, both of Tennessee, will serve in Nigeria where he will be a surgeon.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Bruce Muskrat of Oklahoma and Missouri will teach music at a seminary in Argentina and Mr. and Mrs. B. V. (Joe) Powell, both of Oklahoma, will be assigned to Venezuela, where he will teach theology.

Employed as missionary associates were Mr. and Mrs. Frank H. Hendrickson of Pennsylvania and Nebraska. They will serve in East Africa where he will be a school administrator. Missionary associates are employed for a four-year period but often serve more than one such term.

Rebecca L. P'pool of New Mexico will teach on the secondary level in Japan. Mr. and Mrs. William D. Williams Jr., both of Georgia, will go to Colombia where he will be business manager for the organization of missionaries. Mrs. Williams' parents, Mr. and Mrs. Irvin L. Northcutt, are missionaries in Peru.

Mr. and Mrs. Gary L. Baldrige, both of Texas, will do publications work in Zambia.

Mr. and Mrs. William B. Clark of Georgia and Arizona were appointed for Chile, where he will promote religious education. Mr. and Mrs. Richard L. Harper, both of Texas, will be dorm parents for missionary children in Argentina. Harper's father, Wimpy Harper, drowned in 1958 while serving as a pioneer missionary to East Africa.

In a separate recognition during the board meeting, Cornelia E. Synco of Alabama was employed as a special project work to serve as a medical technologist in Gaza.