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Prison: God's Training
Ground for Dr. Cannata

By Toby Druin

WACO, Tex. (BP)--Sixteen days of imprisonment in Ethiopia were simply "training for reigning" and a part of God's plan to prepare His people, according to Southern Baptist missionary physician Samuel R. J. Cannata.

The physician spent 16 days in jail in Addis Ababa last April on a firearms technicality during a general move against foreign interests in the African nation.

He was released on April 19 and all charges dropped after news of his plight drew the interest and prayers of Southern Baptists and other Christians around the world.

All Southern Baptist missionaries have since left Ethiopia until the political unrest subsides. The Cannatas took a leave of absence to return to the United States to assist their oldest son in getting settled in college and to write a book about their experiences. They plan to return to Kenya in December.

Looking back on the Ethiopian incident, they feel it was a part of God's plan to prepare His people for fellowship with Him--"training for reigning"--to unify Southern Baptists and to underscore the resources available to Christians through prayer.

"We learned many important lessons during the incident," Cannata said, "and one is that of the importance in God's economy of the Body of Christ, the church, and how God is committed to the prayers of His people."

"God wants to do great and mighty things," Cannata said, "and is waiting for His people to come together to pray."

He is convinced it was the prayers of people around the world that brought his release.

Cannata and his family--his wife, Ginny, and their three children, Michael, 18, Stanley, 16 and Cathy, 13--were arrested on April 3 at their home in rural Alem Ketema in northern Ethiopia.

They were suspected of a firearms violation, although the guns they owned and used against marauding animals were registered with the government.

However, Cannata had recently purchased a reloader from a Lutheran pastor which he feels probably was the basis for the charge.

"I hadn't even looked at it--hadn't even made a bullet," he said. "I bought it with the idea that the boys might use it sometime for hunting." The reloader, however, turned out to contain several hundred rounds of ammunition.

The Cannatas were loaded into a van under armed guard and driven to Addis Ababa, the capital.

Cannata was the only one of the family detained. The rest were allowed to go on to the guest house maintained by the Southern Baptist missionaries in the city.

He was at first placed with a dozen other men in a single cell. "The room was only about 10 feet by 10 feet," Cannata said. "There was not enough room for all of us to stretch out that night without crossing legs or arms with another person."

It really was the only bad night of his confinement, Cannata said.

The story of Jeremiah's stay in a pit (Jer. 38:6) occurred to him and he compared it with his confinement. Later, when his Bible was returned to him by the police he read and reread the story.

"The Lord showed me that this was what His Son had done for us," he said. "It was a bad night, but only of my own making. He took me down low so He could bring me up high."

The next day the police, whom Cannata says never mistreated him or used any violence, moved him to a different place of confinement, this time the telephone room. He was given the bed of the guard who usually slept in the room.

He was interrogated and the rest of his belongings returned to him, including his Bible. "It's wonderful to be in jail for awhile," he said. "I read and prayed as I had never prayed before."

Mrs. Cannata was given free access to visit him and brought him all his meals. She also used it as an opportunity to bring in Bibles and other Christian reading materials.

"At first I thought I might smuggle them in," she said, "but then the policemen began to ask for them. They even helped me carry the boxes."

"The nights were the worst time," she said. "I was afraid they would take him off during the night. When I would take his breakfast to him, I would be afraid he wouldn't be there."

"I knew it all had a reason, the Lord was teaching us," she said. "Finally I got a real peace that the matter was in His hands and Sam would get out when the Lord wanted him out."

On the Saturday before his release on Tuesday a cable came with the news that the Castle Hills Baptist Church of San Antonio was praying for Cannata. And on Sunday morning one of the members at Christ's Chapel, the congregation the missionaries attend in Addis Ababa, stood and said she felt the church ought to pray around the clock for his release.

"They worked it out for 48 hours," Cannata said, "although they were willing to pray until I was out."

"When I got the news of those who were praying for me," he said, "the greatest peace came over me. 'I'm out,' I thought."

On Sunday he was so convinced of his impending release that he began to write down hurriedly all the things he had learned from his imprisonment.

Monday came and still no release but when he awoke on Tuesday he prayed, bathed and rolled up his bed. He placed all his belongings in a bag and got ready to leave.

"The telephone operator asked me if I had talked to someone," Cannata said. "I told him I had talked to the Lord."

Mrs. Cannata, in the meantime, had located the report on her husband and had found an Ethiopian colonel--Ebedmelech in the Jeremiah story, says Cannata--who said he would get her husband's release. By then, however, it was late in the day and he said there was not time, that the offices would soon be closed and he would need a paper signed by Cannata's interrogators.

Almost miraculously, they said, the interrogators walked into the colonel's office with the release paper.

As news spread that he was being released, many of the police came to his room. "We had prayer together," Cannata said. "I thanked the Lord for their friendship and asked Him to bless their lives."

Cannata, his wife and fellow missionaries Ed Mason and Jerry Bedsole, who had come to the police station to obtain his release, arrived at the mission station in the last two minutes of the 48-hour prayer vigil.

The Cannata children had participated in the vigil. "No one will ever be able to convince them there is no God," Mrs. Cannata said. "They have seen Him at work."

Marian Grant: A Christian
Activist Who Gets Things Done

By Johanna Seltz

RALEIGH, N. C. (BP)--Once at a women's forum, Marian Gibbs Grant introduced herself as "a woman who worked at home but not always as a housewife."

"Oh no, you are a citizen activist," corrected Elizabeth Koontz.

"I would rather be called a Christian activist, but that was great," Mrs. Grant said with a chuckle as she told the story.

A small, blonde, vivacious woman, she sat in her kitchen surrounded by newspaper clippings, pictures of her three daughters and bags of church bulletins (she reads 700 to 800 a week to keep up with local church news). She sipped a cup of tea while she talked about her active life which she proudly says she loves.

Mrs. Grant comes from a family of activists. Her great-aunt, Granny Harris, lives alone on Footprint Island in Yankeetown, Fla., and was the oldest WAC in the service. She performed magic tricks for the troops.

Her father, at 76, "plans like he's going to live forever." About three years ago he bought a house with five chicken barns and proceeded to fill them with antique cars. For awhile, he built pipe organs and gave them to churches, and about 10 years ago he invented a steam engine.

Mrs. Grant has been equally busy. She writes a weekly column for the North Carolina Southern Baptist newspaper, Biblical Recorder, which her husband, J. Marse Grant, edits. She and he travel almost every Sunday to churches around the state. Sometimes he'll speak at the church and sometimes she will.

In between writing, traveling and visiting with her family, Mrs. Grant sits on several state advisory committees. And she was just elected the first woman chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention's Committee on Order of Business, which plans and runs the programs for annual national convention meetings.

"I have never been tied to the house," she said. "I like being a homemaker, but I don't spend lots of time scrubbing the floor."

Born Oct. 10, 1921, in Commerce, Ga., the oldest of seven children, Mrs. Grant moved to Greensboro, N. C., when she was two years old. She started teaching Sunday school at a Methodist church when she was a teen-ager.

During the Depression her father had severe ulcers, and the family doubted he would live. Since she was the eldest child, Mrs. Grant knew she would have to go to work if her father died, so she took the business course at school, even though she wanted to go to college. Her father is still living, after much surgery through the years. After high school, Mrs. Grant went to work as a secretary to two lawyers and later as an assistant to the pastor in her Baptist church.

She became a Baptist in Gastonia, after she and her husband worked a year in the Methodist church in youth programs they directed. The Grants are members at Crabtree Valley Baptist Church in Raleigh where she teaches the adult woman's class.

"The strong barrier (to becoming a Baptist) was baptism," she said. "I believe in it, but when I was 16 I had to be pulled unconscious from a swimming pool and I had a terrible fear of water. It was a good religious experience but going under the water was hard. I'm glad we don't have to do it every year!" She has remained a faithful Baptist and volunteer church worker ever since.

She began denominational writing when her husband became editor of the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina publication, "Charity and Children." Her husband's work and home life are so intertwined that it was just natural that she become involved in writing and editing, she said.

Mrs. Grant was plunged into taking over the entire "Charity and Children" operation in 1955 when Grant went to Europe for six weeks and his replacement had to drop out. Grant gave her a crash course in newspaper management, wrote out seven steps for using the big Speedgraphic camera and left.

She carried the piece of paper with the directions and the heavy camera with her everywhere and put the paper to press. Some of her pictures were used in a book, "Love in Action," on the childrens home written by the late superintendent, W. C. Reed.

Mrs. Grant now writes a weekly column and has acquired "quite a following," she says, based on correspondence she receives. Her column often talks about the handicapped. Her daughter Carol, 24, was born with Thalidomide-like birth defects. Carol is now a rehabilitation counselor for three counties. She and her mother and father have traveled widely speaking about the need for medical research on birth defects.

"I'm writing a book about our experiences with Carol," Mrs. Grant said. "The title is 'Don't Cry for Carol.' We've always had the desire that people know that people like Carol are not to be pitied. People with bitter, twisted hearts are much worse off than Carol, who has a visible handicap."

The draft copy of the book was buried in rubble when the Grants' house burned two years ago. Mrs. Grant saved the charred pages, but has not worked on the book recently. But she will, she says. It's on her long list of things to do.

"I have a quote Scotch-taped to my typewriter that says 'I wondered why somebody didn't do something, then I realized I was somebody,'" she said.

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Johanna Seltz is staff writer for the Raleigh (NC.) News and Observer. This article on Marian Grant was adapted from the paper's "Tar Heel of the Week" section.

(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers by the Biblical Recorder.

More Than 600 Decisions
In Zambia Youth Rallies

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LUSAKA, Zambia (BP)--The second phase of the 1977 Zambia Baptist crusades has been completed with 643 decisions for Christ recorded, including more than 300 professions of faith.

Sixty-three youth rallies were led by 75 Zambian Baptist youth and 11 students from Baptist Student Union organizations in Texas, Arkansas and Mississippi, according to Franklin A. Kilpatrick, Southern Baptist missionary press representative. Fred M. Allen, a Southern Baptist missionary assigned to music and youth work in Zambia, directed both teams.

The two groups combined to sing, give testimonies, preach sermons and engage in personal witnessing in churches, schools, colleges and public places. They visited four different provinces during the month-long project and sang on radio and TV programs, in addition to making cassette recordings for distribution to churches.

Sunday School leadership clinics were conducted during the first phase of the 1977 emphasis, and the third phase will be revival meetings during September in all 80 Zambian Baptist churches, with guest evangelists and musicians from the United States and other African countries taking part.

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