



-- 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
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

July 6, 1978
Unusual BSU Escape
From 'Aluminum Womb'

78-109

By Celeste Loucks

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (BP)--After five rigid 14-hour days of training at the United States Air Force Academy, cadets flock to an unusual Baptist Student Union center in nearby Colorado Springs to escape the automated routine of military life.

The center offers all the comforts of a Christian home--counseling, Bible studies, home-cooked meals, and above everything, a family complete with a mother, father, sisters and brothers.

Co-directors of the BSU, Don and Lynne Gurney, and the Gurney children, share the basement and the first floor of their gracious three-story home with the cadets who come looking for Christian friendship and guidance, a social outlet, or merely to get away from the academy.

"You don't have to worry about saluting or sounding off," remembers a graduate. "It is a weekly chance to go home."

Each weekend, cadets and students from five other schools in the vicinity, plus soldiers from nearby Ft. Carson, wander in and out of the BSU center.

"The cadets call Mother 'Mom' and Dad 'Don,'" says daughter Beth Gurney. "It's kind of like a family--with a million kids."

Sunday after church 70-75 students crowd the tastefully decorated living room or scatter on the lawn for dinner. Afterward, the students help clear the leftovers.

The BSU choir, Gurney's God-inspired dream come true, practices after Sunday dinner. The choir, important to cadets, helps them re-define and communicate their Christian commitments through music.

The 22-40 member choir became a ministry for the cadets--"our outreach," says choir member Mike Wise. "It's also an inreach," he says. "While we sing, it seems like the spirit of God would be flowing...something that we could hear with our ears and see with our eyes."

As Sundays wind to a close, the Gurneys may be found sitting at a window seat with a troubled young person, listening, encouraging, advising.

With students welcome day and night on weekends, it's hard to tell where the Gurney family ends and the BSU begins. The unstructured approach is a well-needed break from the academy.

Cadets refer to the 18,000-acre campus as the "Blue Zoo." During bleaker moments they have called it the "aluminum womb."

Regimentation is rough. Rules of precision govern the cadet, from the way he marches to the way he folds his socks. "If you don't consider quitting once or twice a day, you're weird," concedes an upperclassman.

The Gurney home is a safety valve, offering a warm family-like atmosphere where cadets can relax and be listened to. It's a home where they can get advice and counsel from a substitute mother and father.

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Often students come to the Gurneys for approval of behavior, achievement, even of prospective mates. While they may not always like the advice, there is an overriding sense of respect.

Opening the doors of your home to a host of military students could have chaotic results, but the Gurneys have overcome many obstacles and their own children have received abundant love. Now their home is viewed as an oasis for cadets.

James E. Townsend, command chaplain at the academy, feels that military training "drives people apart. What the kids need are caring, loving, supportive friends. They need spiritual and human support systems. This is what the Gurneys provide."

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Adapted from "And a Cast of Thousands." Copyright 1978, Home Mission Board, SBC. Used by permission.

(BP) Photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta Bureau of Baptist Press.

Indonesians, Missionaries
Agree On Theological Program

By Anita Bowden

SEMARANG, Indonesia (BP)--After nearly seven years of negotiations, the Association of Indonesian Baptist Churches and the Indonesian Mission (organization of Southern Baptist missionaries) have agreed on a combined program of theological education.

The agreement, signed June 17, calls for one program of theological education, according to Avery T. Willis Jr., a missionary in Indonesia for 14 years, who served most recently as president of Indonesian Baptist Theological Seminary, Semarang. As of Aug. 1, Willis will become church training supervisor at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, Tenn.

Both on-campus work in Semarang and extension work in the approximately 50 current teaching centers throughout Indonesia will have the same curriculum and quality of education, Willis said.

Indonesian Baptists and missionaries have attempted to agree on a combined theological program since 1971, when missionaries voted to phase out the seminary campus program in Semarang in favor of an extension program called Theological Education by Extension (TEE). The decision was made after missionaries realized the campus approach was "westernizing" Indonesian students to the point that they often were unwilling to return to their villages, Willis said.

The seminary disagreement was part of a larger conflict between Indonesian Baptists and missionaries over the best way to develop Baptist churches which can thrive in the Indonesian culture. Relations with Indonesian leaders worsened until, in 1975, the executive committee of the union voted to "freeze" all cooperation with the mission. The new agreement on theological education is evidence of a new spirit of cooperation between the two groups.

A board of three missionaries and three Indonesian Baptists, chosen by their respective groups, will oversee the program. Board members, plus academic and administrative deans, will be chosen soon. A missionary will serve as academic dean, responsible for designing the curriculum and monitoring its effectiveness, and an Indonesian will serve as administrative dean for both campus and extension programs.

Those students already enrolled in extension courses will continue their present study with minor adjustments in curriculum, Willis said. The program for campus students is scheduled to begin January, 1979.

Indonesian Baptists and the mission will share expenses of the program, although the mission will bear a heavier portion initially. "Ideally the convention will be taking more and more of the financial responsibility," Willis said. "Eventually, the program will

move more towards Indonesian control and financing, but for now we feel like this plan of both groups sharing responsibility is a good transition step."

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Baptist Pastor In U.S.S.R.
Says World at Crossroads

By Bracey Campbell

Baptist Press
7/6/78

RIDGECREST, N. C. (BP)--Pointing to uncertain conditions, the pastor of the largest Baptist church in Latvia in the U.S.S.R. said the world is at a crossroads of human history.

Arvids Vaskis, pastor of St. Matthews Baptist Church in the Baltic Sea state of Latvia, spoke about Baptist work in the Soviet Union on missions night during Bible Preaching Week at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

"I feel we are at a crossroads of human history," he said. "Many people in our part of the world are looking to us as Christians, seeking a message of hope."

Vaskis came to Ridgecrest only a week after arriving in the United States to visit his brother, William Vaskis, pastor of Rolling Hills Baptist Church in Clarksville, Md.

He spoke to participants at the conference, sponsored by the church administration department of the Sunday School Board in Nashville, in the native tongue of his country. His brother, who remained in America after coming over for study more than 40 years ago, interpreted his message.

The minister said the conditions in Latvia bring back memories of World War II, when fighting by the German and Russian armies devastated his town and church.

"To stand in the remains of my little church after it had been wrecked by air attacks was a heartbreaking experience," he recalled. "But as I looked over the church, I realized the only untouched wall was the one supporting the cross like the one on which my Lord Jesus died.

"At that moment there came a new dedication in my life to preach Jesus Christ as fervently and as often as possible," Vaskis said, his enthusiasm mounting.

He said one thing of certainty in Latvia is that Jesus Christ died on the cross for the sins of all the people of the world. "I am deeply grateful to the Lord that he has allowed me to preach his word for 45 years," said Vaskis, 66.

Vaskis, who had attempted for 10 years to obtain a visa to visit his brother, said he was delighted to report that after a number of years of delays his government had finally this year approved the use of the "Baptist Hymnal" in church services.

"Please pray with us that we will soon get the same approval for distribution of the Bible," he said.

Vaskis, in an interview following his message, discussed the shortage of Bibles in Latvia, noting that visitors may bring a copy or two with them for friends on visits.

Reports indicate that no Bibles are available for sale there, although the Lutherans printed a New Testament several years ago.

The Latvian pastor said his country contains 62 Baptist churches with a membership of 6,500. His church has 600 members and a choir of 150, which he likes to brag about. "My greatest wish is that I could have my choir here to sing for you at Ridgecrest."

The broad-shouldered minister reported that there is a "great awakening and thirst for God, particularly among the young people."

He said 16 persons were baptized in his church at the last service before his departure for America, and 10 of those were young persons. He said persons who become Christians are not pressured or harassed by the government in Latvia.

"Our relationship to the state is better than I can remember."

Vaskis, who received a standing ovation and had numerous requests for autographs after speaking, said he was delighted with reports of the Southern Baptist effort to share the gospel with the world by the year 2000, known as Bold Mission Thrust.

He said being at Ridgecrest was "the closest I have ever been to heaven. For 44 years I have ministered. I have given, given and given. Here for the first time I am able to receive inspiration through message, study and song. I will never forget it."

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Reginald M. McDonough, conference director, said the Vaskis brothers have agreed to share their message again on Monday night, July 17, with participants in the Bible Preaching Conference at the Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

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Rhodesia Missionaries Decide
To Stay, Continue Ministries

Baptist Press
7/6/78

GWELO, Rhodesia (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries will keep all of their Rhodesian ministries open, though some adjustments will be made because of increased guerrilla activity in some mission areas.

Davis L. Saunders, area secretary for Eastern and Southern Africa for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, met with 38 Rhodesian missionaries, July 5, and reported the results of that meeting by telephone to board headquarters staff.

The missionaries represented all but four currently on the field, including those recently evacuated from Sanyati Baptist Compound, following the stabbing death of Archie G. Dunaway Jr. in a guerrilla attack, June 15.

The hospital and school at Sanyati will remain open, the missionaries decided, with Dr. Maurice L. Randall acting as hospital supervisor and area evangelist. Dr. John W. Monroe will be administrator of the hospital and station manager. Neither of the men will live at Sanyati. When necessary, Randall will commute, traveling by road, from Gatooma, as will Monroe from Salisbury.

Several of the missionaries are considering possible changes in ministries, but will work out the details before announcing plans. The majority will continue in their jobs, Saunders said.

Dunaway's colleagues evacuated the Sanyati compound the same day his body was discovered near the hospital. He had served as a Southern Baptist missionary, first in Nigeria and then in Rhodesia, for 31 years.

He was the 28th missionary killed by guerrilla activity in Rhodesia and the only Southern Baptist missionary killed. Since his death, 10 other missionaries and four children have been murdered in guerrilla action.

The guerrilla activity is largely confined to outlying and isolated areas, and Southern Baptist mission work is concentrated in heavily populated, urban areas.

Saunders pointed out that there has been a gradual restriction of travel into outlying areas, but that travel is still permitted within the African sections of the cities and towns. "These sections provide plenty of opportunity for evangelistic work," Saunders said, indicating missionaries would continue efforts in these areas.

One other change in the status of mission work affects the seminary in Gwelo. Government officials have asked missionaries at the seminary, located some 14 miles from the city, to move into the city. They will go to the seminary for daytime classes, which will continue as usual, and return to the city at night.

Missionaries on furlough from Rhodesia will make individual decisions about returning to the field, according to the decision of the organization of missionaries there. Most of the furloughing missionaries, however, are expected to return on schedule. But the mission did advise against new personnel coming to Rhodesia, at least for the next six months.

"The general tone of the meeting was very positive," Saunders said, "and the Rhodesian Baptist Convention plans to meet as usual, in July."

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LYNN MAY
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127 9TH AVE NO
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