



-- FEATURES

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460 James Robertson Parkway
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(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

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79-06

Bible Drill, Speakers
Tournaments Help Skills

By Jerilynn Wood

BRYAN, Texas (BP)--In five seconds, 16 arms fly through the Bible and eight fifth and sixth graders step forward with the designated passage.

Amos Ball calls on one to read the scripture reference. He smiles, nods his head and again gives the command...Attention!

Amos Terrell Ball, a 72-year-old layman at First Baptist Church, Bryan, Texas, has worked with the youth since 1930. Five years ago he began two new programs, sponsored by the church training department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, called Bible drill and speakers' tournament.

"I was interested in the programs from the beginning because through them the young people could become more familiar with the Bible and its wisdom and insight," says Ball, a semi-retired lumber yard owner.

Bible drill, for fifth through ninth graders, develops the skill of locating scripture references, memorization skills, and the ability to identify and locate scripture verses on the basis of clues given by the leader.

Speakers' tournament, for 10th through 12th graders, is designed to stimulate growth toward Christian maturity and assist youth in developing the skills to express his commitment verbally with ease and confidence.

"My first year I had trouble recruiting anyone to the programs but I did interest one high school girl who participated in speakers' tournament and won state that year," Ball said.

"After winning, Caroline Fife and I began touring Texas, promoting and informing churches about speakers' tournament. When it was all said and done we had been to 64 churches in two years."

At first, Ball had trouble getting young people to church to practice for Bible drill. But he solved that by picking them up at school and taking them home afterwards.

Ball's dedication and long hours of work have resulted in 42 young people now participating in Bible drill and the speakers' tournament and putting several finalists in competition.

Ball also takes 19 of the young people to churches in Texas, New Mexico, North Carolina, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Kansas giving demonstrations and encouraging youth to participate in the programs. In the past five years he has visited more than 130 churches.

"I give my time and effort to these programs because I've seen what it has done for our young people," Ball says. "Through both programs youth become better church members and leaders as well as develop more self confidence and Bible skills."

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(BP) photo mailed to Baptist state newspapers by Sunday School Board Bureau of Baptist Press.

Palm Beach Atlantic
Receives Big Trust

Baptist Press
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WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (BP)--Victor E. Moore of Palm Beach, Fla., has given a \$600,000 trust to Palm Beach Atlantic College, a four-year liberal arts Baptist college. The deferred gift more than doubles the school's endowment fund.

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NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355

W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
Norman Jameon, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041

DALLAS Richard T. McCartney, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996

MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461

NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) L. Bracey Campbell III, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2798

RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

WASHINGTON Stan L. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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Bold Mission Thrust, Growth
Typify Eastern South America

By Jennifer Hall

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust holds the possibility of great hope--or disappointment--for missionaries in eastern South America.

"They are expecting to see qualified pastors hear God's call to foreign missions and to come help them preach the gospel," said Thurmon E. Bryant, Foreign Mission Board secretary for eastern South America, in a report at the board's first meeting of 1979.

Bryant, who was out of the country and had his report distributed at the Richmond meeting, said in the report that the 435 missionaries in his area expect stateside pastors to meet many of the almost 80 requests from eastern South America for general evangelist missionaries.

But the missionaries "will be disappointed if their renewed effort in world missions does not result in an increasing number of mission volunteers coming to aid them in their task," the report noted.

Noting Southern Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust effort to win the world to Christ by the end of the century, Bryant said Brazilian Baptists are involved in their own bold mission thrust, known as PROIME, the Portuguese acronym for an integrated program of missions and evangelism.

"They believe they can step up their annual percentage growth between now and 1982--the year of the centennial celebration of Baptist work in Brazil--to assure them of reaching the one million membership goal," the report said.

PROIME goals include tripling the number of churches to 6,000; more than doubling the present 450,000 church members to one million; and doubling the number of pastors, home and foreign missionaries.

Bryant also reported that during 1978 an estimated five million people in Argentina viewed specially prepared films focusing on news items about Baptist missionaries. The films were shown in 500 theaters.

"A special tract was distributed by members of Baptist churches as moviegoers exited to share with them the message which Baptists preach and the ministry which they carry on in Argentina," Bryant said.

Bryant's report highlighted Baptist growth in Argentina, Uruguay, and Equatorial Brazil, noting that missionaries in Uruguay believe a "breakthrough" has come for the gospel there since recent evangelistic campaigns. Church attendance has "dramatically increased" and bookstore sales in Montevideo have tripled since 1975, he said. "This remarkable growth reflects the increasing interest of Uruguayans in spiritual matters," Bryant's report said.

He added that "since last year there have been 18 churches organized in Argentina and 1,000 members added to their churches. Although inflation has taken a sizable toll, a substantial increase of \$30,000 in contributions is reported by their churches."

Bryant termed growth in Equatorial Brazil as "remarkable" and "phenomenal." He cited growth in almost all categories from Sunday School enrollment to baptisms to financial contributions.

Students Plunge Into
The City Classroom

By Rex Hammock

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Some students at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary are learning to be ministers by plunging into a night on the town.

"A night," explains their professor Larry McSwain, "during which the students get a perception of the city they would never have from just reading a book."

The students, members of McSwain's evangelism and community ministries class, begin the evening with only 50 cents in their pockets. Dressed in their oldest clothes, they spend 24 hours in downtown Louisville on what has come to be known as the "plunge."

It's been nine years since McSwain, associate professor of church and community, began sending students on plunges. He admits that he, too, has learned many things along the way.

"The first time," he recalls, "we didn't take all of the precautions that we do now. It was more a walking tour. As a result, one of the students was robbed at gun point."

McSwain says that he and the students have learned over the years that "the city is a threat only if you have something worth taking. Now instead of wearing college letter jackets and carrying wallets, the students try to blend in as well as possible."

The students have no specific assignment when they begin the plunge. "Most of the time," explains McSwain, "they spend just trying to find some food or a warm place to lie down."

What do the students learn from the day and night of experiencing the city?

"It provides a very real basis for understanding urban life in the context of ministry," says McSwain. "The students develop some idea of what ministry there is in the city and what ministry there could be. Believe me, they experience what churches in the city do and don't do. They learn quickly what is effective and what is not."

Students, he says, usually lose their fear of the city after taking the plunge.

"All of the students have learned first hand that there are always people in the city who will help...and most students say that those who will help the most are usually the ones who have the least to give."

And the student who was robbed during the first plunge? He's an inner-city social worker appointed by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

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There's Hope
At New Hope

PETERSBURG, Ill. (BP)--The future looks brighter for New Hope Baptist Church.

Attendance at New Hope, which dates from the 1840's, had fallen to as few as five. Then the members met to discuss their future, and even considered disbanding or merging.

Instead, they decided to call a pastor and try again. They called James Wolfley, a bivocational pastor who is also custodian for Springfield Southern Baptist Church.

In recent Sundays, attendance has climbed to 14, then to 20, 35, 55, and a high of 58. Now the new hope at New Hope is more than a name.

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Relief Meets Urgent Needs As Part of Total Ministry

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Upper Volta's drought-stricken people needed grain. Southern Baptists helped deliver 6,100 metric tons of it to the country's interior villages.

But Southern Baptists provide much more than grain in Upper Volta, and it's the way relief ministry ties in with all other Baptist work that makes the difference.

John E. Mills, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board secretary for west Africa, and W. Eugene Grubbs, the board coordinator for hunger relief and disaster response, pointed to the Upper Volta work recently completed as an example of early warning and total planning.

The organization of missionaries there named Norman L. Coad to direct the relief program and asked for a volunteer to do a lot of the "leg work." Mac Bethea, a seminary student from Kentucky, spent a year in Upper Volta, supervising the actual grain distribution.

"The missionaries were alerted a long time ahead concerning the crop shortage," Grubbs said. They found that grain would be available, but there was no distribution system, so they offered to provide it. Enough grain to provide adequate nourishment for 420,000 people for four months was distributed.

Southern Baptist relief funds rented warehouse space and bought a vehicle for distribution, but the grain itself was provided through other relief organizations working cooperatively with Southern Baptists.

"All of the grain was counted out of the warehouse, loaded on trucks and delivered to 204 distribution houses around the country," Grubbs said. "Some of these were warehouses and some were church buildings."

Now the four-month feeding program is over. And recent rainfall has been good enough for the people of the drought area to expect crops this season.

But the relief needs of Upper Volta are not over. Both Mills and Grubbs are looking toward relief projects that strike at the causes of poverty and hunger, not just the symptoms. Missionaries also want to be sure that the relief work done is part of the total ministry of Southern Baptists in Upper Volta. "Relief work has got to be a part of an overall ministry," Mills said.

This relief project strengthened existing churches, according to Mills, and was part of a total effort on the part of Baptists to improve the living condition of the people of Upper Volta.

Mills pointed specifically to ongoing work that trains villagers in better agriculture methods, in hygiene and nutrition, and in church leadership which allows them to have a spiritual fellowship in remote areas missionaries might never reach.

Both Mills and Grubbs recognize that drought and food shortages are a way of life in Upper Volta as in all of the Sahel region of west Africa. They hope even that can be changed through adequate relief efforts.

The government of Upper Volta and Southern Baptist missionaries plan to cooperate on a dam feasibility study. Soil conservation and reforestation education is also planned. Grubbs even points to solar energy as a possibility for heating and working in the semi-arid regions of west Africa where the tree cover has been used for firewood.

This relief project has ended, but in terms of changed lives and future possibilities, it has only begun.