



7-10-79

Baptist Pastor  
Was Superman

79-115

By Jim Newton

URBANA, Ill. (BP)--Look! Up in the sky. It's a bird. It's a plane.

It's SUPERPASTOR!

Charles Chandler doesn't claim ability to leap tall buildings in a single bound or fly faster than a speeding bullet, but he's probably the only Baptist pastor to play the role of Superman.

Chandler was pastor of First Baptist Church, Metropolis, Ill., when the Metropolis Chamber of Commerce mounted a campaign in 1972 to make their Southern Illinois town the nation's center of Superman memorabilia--and picked him to be the first Superman.

Metropolis, located across the Ohio River from Paducah, Ky., is the only town in the world with the same name as the home of Superman, who came to earth from the planet Krypton.

There have been other Supermans since, and Chandler moved three years ago to Urbana, Ill., where he is pastor of Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church.

Every time he makes a telephone call, Chandler is reminded of his role as Metropolis's first Superman.

In his family room stands a phone booth, given to him by a friend who worked for the phone company in Paducah who felt "Clark Kent should have a phone booth."

"But don't let anyone kid you about changing clothes in a phone booth," Chandler told the Associated Press recently in a story prompted by the current Supermana generated by the movie.

Clark Kent couldn't have changed into Superman in a telephone booth, Chandler insisted. "It took all of us in a 15-15 foot room to get me into that outfit."

Chandler first played the role of Superman on Jan. 21, 1972, when Metropolis staged its "Superman Homecoming" ceremony at Washington Park in Metropolis. Superman adopted Metropolis as "Hometown, U. S. A.," and Metropolis adopted Superman as a "native, distinguished son."

Superman (Chandler) arrived in a police car with special police escort, received the key to the city from Mayor J. P. Williams, and gave a brief speech saying how great it was to be in "the real Metropolis, U. S. A."

During the rally program, a parade of speakers praised Superman for his crusades against crime, injustice and inequality. The speakers unanimously predicted, "Superman is going to put Metropolis on the map."

Following the ceremony that day, several of the deacons at his church came up to Chandler and told him they'd decided to take up a collection to buy him a girdle.

"I'll have you know I already had on a girdle," Chandler responded. "You should have seen me before I put it on." Chandler, who stands 6-1 and weighs 210, confided the Superman suit was "a little snug."

He added that he had real reservations about accepting the role. "I'm not a sensationalist," he insisted. "I tried to keep everything in good taste in my church."

But when the Chamber of Commerce insisted he was the man for the part, he agreed to do it, with the understanding that it would all be done in good taste, and "I wouldn't be going on any parades."

In his role as Superman, Chandler made about 35 public appearances, most of them in elementary schools where he gave a brief "God and country" speech extolling the importance of "truth, justice and the American way."

One of the most rewarding experiences was to speak during the Special Olympics at Carbondale, Ill., for retarded and handicapped persons.

"They all wanted me to fly and let them ride," he recalled. "It was quite a predicament to try to explain to the mentally retarded that I couldn't do that when they knew Superman could do it because they'd seen him fly on TV."

His stock reply in such situations at schools was to say that his earthly parents had told him never to use his extraordinary powers unless it was to help someone in an emergency.

He also appeared on the TV show, "To Tell the Truth," and won \$50 when one of the four panelists failed to guess he was the minister who played the role of Superman. That was the only money he received personally for his role and appearances as Superman.

He said he was always quite comfortable in his dual role as minister and Superman, for he strongly believed in "truth, justice and the American way."

Some of the young people at First Baptist Church, Metropolis, were just bursting with excitement about their pastor's new role, but they didn't know what to say at first, Chandler said.

At the first youth event after his appearance as Superman, Chandler told them, "I know it's a little confusing for you to see me in different roles.

"You need to understand that I am first of all your pastor," Then he quickly added with a twinkle in his voice, "I want it to be clear that there will be absolutely no flying in church."

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Adapted from World Mission Journal, June 1979.

John Green Dies  
In Louisiana

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PINEVILLE, La. (BP)--Funeral services were to be held July 10 for John Green, director of public relations for the Louisiana Baptist Convention, who died July 9 in Alexandria.

Green, 62, a native of Bernice, La., had been admitted to a hospital in Alexandria, La., July 4, after suffering a severe heart attack.

Burial was set for Rocky Branch Cemetery, West Monroe, La., after services at Hixon Brothers Funeral Chapel, Pineville, La.

A graduate of Louisiana College, Pineville, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Green served as pastor of churches in Mississippi and Louisiana before assuming the job as director of public relations in 1968. He also formerly coached and taught.

He is survived by his wife, Robbie Grey Miller Green, one son and two daughters and four sisters.

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July 10, 1979

Nome Not  
Like Home

By Judy Touchton

NOME, Alaska (BP)--On Patti Boyd's first day in Nome it was warm--six degrees below zero.

And it was a sunny day--but windy. As Patti and missionary Bill Webb drove back to town, snow blew so hard visibility was only five feet. As a result, they ended in a snow drift.

"Fortunately," Patti recounts, "a snowplow came by and pulled us out. I knew the Lord had not sent me to Nome to die--but I certainly was worried for about 15 minutes."

Patti, a 27-year-old Fort Worth, Texas, registered nurse, is a Mission Service Corps volunteer in Nome, a mining town on the Bering Sea, sometimes called Gold Rush City.

"It was real culture shock. Nome is nothing like anything," Patti insists. "No trees, lots of telephone poles, lots of wind storms. Anchorage is like cities in the Lower 48. Nome is different."

Patti lives in one of two apartments, known as the Nome Baptist Group Home, three miles from the city.

"I never knew I would consider sewers a luxury," Patti says, "but they are. Because of the permafrost, certain areas cannot be given sewage lines. To compensate, they have the 'honeybucket' service. The apartment I'm in has sewers and I thank the Lord for that frequently."

Patti always was interested in missions. A girl friend who volunteered for missions in Chile one summer fascinated Patti with stories of her experiences.

And when Patti attended a missions service and heard about Mission Service Corps, a plan to place volunteers beside career missionaries for one or two years, she applied.

In Nome, Patti is a houseparent in the group home, a temporary or permanent home for teenagers with no place else to go--abused children, troubled youngsters, orphans, handicapped children whose parents cannot care for them.

She is paid with state funds through Nome Baptist Ministries. Her home church, Birchman Avenue in Fort Worth, also provided some money for her move.

During her 48 on-hours as relief houseparent, Patti tries to teach the children some principles for living--including discipline. Living in Nome requires lots of discipline.

"The cost of living is much higher than in the Lower 48," Patti reports. "Regular gasoline costs 99¢ a gallon; white bread is \$1.89 a loaf; whole milk is \$6.40 a gallon. Rent for a simple one-bedroom apartment is about \$500 a month."

The city has a high percentage of alcoholism among its 3,000 residents, most of whom work in untraditional jobs--ivory carving, hunting, jade mining.

Nothing in Nome is like the rest of the country.

Anyone who dies in the winter cannot be buried until summer. The permafrost prevents digging a grave. So the people have a memorial service at the time of death, place the body in a special holding house and then hold graveside services in the summer.

Although Patti's first winter was warm--for Nome--it included 19 blizzards. The coldest temperature was 20 below; with wind chill, nearly 45 degrees below.

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In February, Patti wrote in a newsletter Nome had 7 hours and 54 minutes of sunlight that day. "We gain 7 minutes a day," she added, as if every minute was precious.

Nome lacks lots of things precious to Patti--including good Southern food. "The Eskimo food..." Patti says, trying to be courteous and diplomatic, "is terrible--walrus roast, seal ribs, dried fish, and muk tuk (whale blubber). These are dipped in seal oil to enhance the flavor."

Once when she had lunch with some Eskimo friends, she tried some of everything. "But I was grateful they didn't have time to make dessert. It would have been whipped seal oil and berries. They call it ice cream. I equate it to eating Crisco."

Everything is unusual to Patti. "Can you imagine driving down the street and seeing a dog team go by? They say a dogsled and team have the right-of-way--for what that means."

And at 5 feet 7 inches, Patti towers over most Eskimos. Her nearly black hair blends in, but her blue eyes stand out. Never married, Patti has no children of her own. But in Nome, she mothers a brood.

"I'm a nurse, so I have the medical background and good information on kids from a physical standpoint. But no personal experience. That's been hard for them...and me."

During time off, Patti works with semester missionary Tina Toliver and youngsters at Nome Baptist Church. They hold four Bible clubs, three for older kids, one for preschoolers. In seven weeks, the clubs grew to a total of 47, mostly boys, but about half Eskimos.

"Up here if you do something for an Eskimo child, the adults think you are great, so they are encouraging. And the kids keep bringing more kids every week," Patti says.

But sometimes communication is a problem. "Once we asked who wanted to say the prayer before snack. One little boy raised his hand--volunteering. But then he asked, 'What's a prayer?'"

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South Carolina Ministry  
For Aging Accepts Property

By Fletcher Allen

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LAURENS, S. C. (BP)--South Carolina Baptist Ministries for the Aging has accepted 11 acres near downtown Laurens, S. C., and \$300,000.

The land and money came from the Christian Retirement Center, a fledgling group planning a retirement home for missionaries, which will be incorporated into the South Carolina Baptist Ministries for the Aging.

Martha Franks, a retired Southern Baptist missionary to China, has led the efforts of Christian Retirement Center. A native of Laurens, she lives on the property and donated it and its assets to South Carolina Baptists.

Plans are underway to purchase and develop 41 acres surrounding the property and to purchase several homes on the 11-acre site, including two now under construction.

A 100-year-old Italian-style villa, now occupied by a Laurens family, is focal point of the property. Plans call for eventual renovation of the building into a library, canteen, lounge, reception area, prayer room, administrative offices, craft room and work area.

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