



July 26, 1979

79-126

Linda K. and D.J.
Are Quite a Show

by Julie Poole

HARRISON, Ark. (BP)--Lil' Abner and Daisy Mae walk the streets of Dogpatch U. S. A., speaking to and joking with visitors.

Most visitors to the amusement park expected to see Al Capp's famous cartoon characters, but perhaps another, D. J. Johnson, caught them by surprise.

D. J. is six years old, an energetic little fellow quite sharp for his age. He shares his lively testimony with his big sister, Linda Johnson.

She's a vivacious, 18-year-old ventriloquist; he, dark-haired and freckle-faced, is commonly known as a "ventriloquist figure." Together they're "Linda K. and D. J."

Linda, a sophomore at St. John's River Community College from Palatka, Fla., is a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board student summer missionary. Traveling around the United States to resort areas, she introduces campers and vacationers to two of her favorite people--D.J. and Jesus Christ.

"In my show I like to do more than entertain," Linda says. "Four years ago I committed my talent to the Lord. He gave it to me, so my purpose is to give it back to him by sharing what Jesus has done for me."

Linda has been a practicing ventriloquist for seven years now, since she was in the sixth grade. "I say my ability to ventriloquize is a gift from God because I didn't have to take lessons or practice a lot--I just kind of discovered this voice," she says.

Before she got D.J. in 1975, Linda had another figure, Ricky. "He didn't resemble me like D.J. does," Linda says. "D.J. was designed to look like my little brother--with dark hair and my skin coloring."

Linda usually begins her act with something funny, either about someone in the audience or herself, then links it with a serious thought about Christianity. "I have to be careful when I'm joking with the audience--I may hit a sensitive spot."

D.J. sits on Linda's lap, looking around at the audience as if analyzing each person. He asks a big man on the second row to come and sit next to him so he can sing a song in honor of his new friend.

Then D.J. sings: "The rain makes everything beautiful--the trees, the flowers too. The rain makes everything beautiful; I hope it rains on you."

The audience chuckles. Linda scolds D.J. for being "not very nice" to the man, and ventures to relate the song to a life touched by God.

-more-

"Just as the rain touches the trees and flowers and makes them alive and beautiful," she says, "God can touch our lives through Jesus and make us grow into beautiful people."

Linda says the more she can talk about Jesus in her performances, the better. She "plays it by ear" according to the composition of the audience--she likes to perform for adults as well as for children.

Dogpatch is one of many stops for Linda this summer. After performing for Arkansas student summer missionaries at a mid-summer retreat, she was scheduled to go to Grand Canyon, Ariz.

She also will visit Lake Tahoe, Nev., Vail, Colo., Myrtle Beach, S.C., Virginia Beach, Va., Lake Placid, N.Y., and finish her 10-week term at Student Week at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center in North Carolina.

-30-

Miss Poole is a summer mission intern at the Home Mission Board.

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

Iowa Southern Baptists
Adopt Four Year Goals

Baptist Press
7/26/79

DES MOINES, Iowa (BP)--The Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship has defined its priorities for the next four years to be establishing new work and strengthening associations of churches.

Iowa Baptists plan to have 104 churches and chapels with a Sunday School enrollment of 8,078 by 1983, up from their current 64 churches and chapels and 6,679 in Sunday School.

Other goals adopted by the fellowship's executive board include a 10 percent increase per year in baptisms, from 452 in 1978 to 662 in 1982. That would mean a total of 2,308 new converts baptized in 1979 through 1982.

Financial goals call for \$200,000 annually for mission work through the Cooperative Program by 1982, up from \$115,000 in 1978. The board also hopes to employ two more associational directors of missions. Two directors now serve the Iowa Fellowship's four associations.

-30-

Culture, Not Bible
Defines Success

Baptist Press
7/26/79

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--The average American Christian's idea of success is defined more by his culture than his Bible, according to a Southern Baptist ethicist.

"Success today is measured by the number of people you control and the amount of power you possess," claimed Daniel B. McGee, associate professor of religion at Baylor University. "Servanthood, which is the Bible's idea of success, is viewed as a sign of weakness."

-more-

Pointing out that Christ's attitude of servanthood was "a scandal, an outrage to the cultural view of leadership in his day," McGee called for a return to the biblical concept of servanthood and its implications for the Christian lifestyle.

"In a world of climbers, Christians are taught to descend with Christ to servanthood," he said. "In a sense, the Christian journey ought to be a trip down the success ladder."

McGee gave one of 15 presentations on the Bible and Christian ethics at a conference at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Servanthood was one of six qualities which McGee outlined as basic characteristics of the Christian lifestyle. The list, headed by "singlemindedness," which McGee defined as a "singleness of commitment to God" which "clears the deck of all the other competing loyalties in our lives," also included simplicity, commitment to justice, mutuality and activism.

In his discussion of the importance of mutuality, McGee claimed that today's "Lone Ranger culture," which idealizes absolute independence, has infiltrated many churches, robbing the Christian's sense of dependence on others.

"This Lone Ranger concept is pounded into our consciousness very early in life," McGee said. "Little League exists to teach little boys to be independent and competitive. Our culture teaches our children that relating to others is really learning how to use others."

McGee also stressed that a simple lifestyle does not preclude social activism. "Some people," he said, "seek to protect the Christian life by locking themselves away in their hearts or in their churches, sheltered from the 'threats' of life."

"Christ," he added, "doesn't need cheerleaders; he needs followers."

-30-

R-TV Energy Spots
Quickly Effect Need

Baptist Press
7/26/79

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--When President Carter called the energy crunch a crisis over network television recently, at least one religious group believed him.

And when he sounded a double call for the nation to tighten its belt to save energy and to return to the values that made America great, the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission turned off its television sets and turned on its "think tank."

As a result, the broadcast arm of the nation's 13 million Southern Baptists has produced and distributed eight radio and four television spot announcements on energy.

"The Kid," a series of 30-second spots produced in the commission's studios, was distributed to 8,000 radio stations and 500 television stations. Commission personnel personally delivered them to 207 television stations in primary markets.

The series features a young boy caught between reaction from his family to the energy crisis and comments on morality from his Sunday School teacher.

-more-

Initial reaction to the spots has been good, Baptist officials say. Traditionally, August is a slow month for commercial announcements. The spots were the first on energy responding to the current crisis, by a religious agency, and they come directly on the heels of a National Association of Broadcasters resolution urging member stations to provide necessary air time for energy saving public service announcements.

Nonpolitical in nature, the spots were "designed with the average American in mind," according to Harold E. Martin, executive vice president of the Radio and Television Commission.

Martin said the Radio and Television Commission's efforts fit the bill for a local campaign since the spots were produced by an agency supported (through the denomination's Cooperative Program of giving) by more than 35,000 individual Baptist churches in local communities in all 50 states. Stations across the country indicate they will use them.

Edwin Pfeiffer, general manager of WDVM-TV in Washington, D.C., said, "We were enormously impressed by the fact your organization was alert enough to react quickly, responsive enough to understand the community needs and talented enough technically to produce the spots in one short week. We thought it was incredible and will run them with pleasure."

"You all really are in the miracle business," marveled Lorenzo Clark, public service director of WDSU-TV, New Orleans, when told of the production time of only one week.

Cathy McWhorter, director of community affairs at WAPI-TV, Birmingham, called the spots "down to earth" and said they "really hit home."

Kit Newburey, promotion and public service director at KWTX-TV in Waco, Texas, praised the approach taken by the announcements and said the station will begin using the spots immediately and will "run them indefinitely."

Calling the freckle-faced youngster in the spots a "stupendous attention factor," Ms. Newburey said the slant of the series is "a fresh approach to the energy problem."

-30-

Nicaragua Center Reopens;
Looting Reports Prove False

Baptist Press
7/26/79

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (BP)--The Baptist Culture Center in Managua, Nicaragua is open and serving the public on a limited basis after being closed five weeks because of the civil war which has torn apart this Central American republic.

In a telephone conversation with Stanley D. Stamps, Southern Baptist missionary to Nicaragua, presently in Honduras, Miguel Garcia reported that the center was intact and suffered no damage during fighting between national guard forces and guerrillas of the Sandinista National Liberation Front. Garcia is assistant director of the center which houses a Baptist bookstore and deposit from the Baptist Spanish Publishing House. He and another employee, Ramon Obando, reopened the store when a temporary calm returned to the city.

An earlier but unconfirmed report received in Tegucigalpa that the bookstore had been looted proved to be wrong. Another evangelical bookstore in Managua did suffer loss of about 50 percent of its stock when looters broke in.

-more-

The Baptist store had been closed since June 5 when a nationwide strike and fighting brought all normal activities to a halt.

Garcia and Obando hope to continue to operate the center on a limited basis to supply Sunday School literature, Bibles and books to churches and the few clients who have funds on hand. Stamps instructed the employees to see that the dated Sunday School literature was distributed to regular customers who had made reservations and to give away that which could not be sold.

In another telephone report from Managua, Stamps was told that Sunday School attendance in Managua's First Baptist Church on a recent Sunday was over 200 (normal attendance is 300 or more). A number of casualties have been reported among Baptist church members but the total is not known. Jairo Gutierrez Flores, employee responsible for the book deposit in Managua, was wounded when fragments from a rocket blast penetrated both thighs. No ligaments were severed and no bone damage resulted, although there was considerable damage of leg muscles. He had been working with Stamps since the book deposit was set up in September 1976.

For now, the two Southern Baptist missionary families assigned to Nicaragua are temporarily assigned to Honduras. Missionary journeymen Steve and Paula Baumgardner will help in mission accounting and secretarial responsibilities and Stanley and Glenna Stamps will be involved in field evangelism and relief work among the more than 40,000 Nicaraguan refugees in southern Honduras.

-30-

Stamps is a Mississippi native and Mrs. Stamps is from Texas. Baumgardner is from New York and Mrs. Baumgardner is a Florida native.

Bush Assumes Penn-Jersey
Newspaper Production Role

Baptist Press
7/26/79

HARRISBURG, Pa. (BP)--Ellis M. Bush, executive secretary-treasurer of the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey, and editor of the convention's newspaper, will assume production control of the newspaper beginning with the August issue.

The Penn-Jersey Baptist, official publication of the convention, has been produced in Lutherville, Md., since it was founded in 1971. It was distributed monthly as the first two and last two pages around the Maryland Baptist and produced by Maryland Baptist editor Gene Puckett. Puckett had a similar arrangement with the New York and New England publications.

In assuming control of all aspects of the newspaper's production, Bush, who has been executive in Penn-Jersey for a year, said he needed more space and "This is another step forward in assuming responsibility for communication with our constituents and expanding the media services of the convention office."

The Penn-Jersey Baptist will be produced as an eight-page tabloid 11 times a year with a combined June-July issue. Bush's editorial in the first issue over which he has production control, will be a tribute to Puckett, who recently resigned to become executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Peggy Masters, director of Woman's Missionary Union and Christian social ministries for the convention, will assist Bush. Information and pictures for the newspaper should be directed to Bush at 900 S. Arlington Ave., Room 121, Harrisburg, Pa., 17109.

-30-