



BAPTIST PRESS

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Baptists Aid Thai Refugees
With Food, Medical Teams

By Martha Skelton

ARANYAPRATHET, Thailand (BP)--Special Baptist medical and food distribution teams in Thailand have joined overall efforts to treat the malnourished, homeless thousands of Cambodians now streaming across the eastern border of Thailand.

Assignment of the teams came 24 hours after a meeting held by Prime Minister Kriangsak Chamanan, Oct. 19. Ronald C. Hill, Southern Baptist missionary administrator of the Thailand Baptist Mission, was among international agency representatives invited to the meeting.

The Thai leader announced a change in his government's policy, declaring that all refugees arriving by land or sea will now be accepted into Thailand. He attributed the change to the support for refugee work coming from the international community. Officials estimate the border opening could result in as many as 200,000 to 300,000 refugees entering in the weeks to come.

The specific responsibilities given to the Baptist Mission are three-fold, encompassing immediate and long-range medical care and food distribution: (1) An emergency medical team at the temporary refugee center on the Thai border; (2) A team to distribute food stuffs stocked along the border by the United Nations food organization, World Food Program; (3) A Baptist medical team from the U.S. to stay three to six months.

The emergency medical team, working out of Bangkla Baptist Hospital, provided the five-day emergency medical assistance requested, but they could not be spared long from a heavy schedule at Bangkla.

Team members included Dr. Jerry W. Jackson, special project physician from Birmingham, Ala.; Dr. William T. Grimsley and his wife, Esther, a nurse, both on special medical assignment in Thailand from Greensboro, N.C.; Dr. Sumalnop Somporn, Thai medical director of the Bangkla Hospital; and missionary Jerry Hobbs, evangelist assigned to the hospital, who served as interpreter for the Americans.

The Thailand Baptist Mission acted immediately to request a long-range medical team from the United States. The Thai government has announced plans to move the refugees (approximately 70,000 of them south of Aranyaprathet) inward about 30 miles to a more permanent holding center near the town of Sa Kaew, where Southern Baptist missionaries are already doing Thai work. The Baptist team from the States is expected to be assigned there.

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The Baptist food distribution team is comprised of Thailand Southern Baptist missionaries Daniel R. Hill of Atlanta, Ga., and Douglas G. Ringer of Oklahoma City, Okla., and volunteer William J. Peeler of Miami, Fla. They were assigned to work in the Sa Kaew area, about 120 miles east of Bangkok, beginning Oct. 24 when Thai officials were to start moving some 80,000 Cambodians there from border areas.

"There's plenty of food, but we need to get it to the people," says Ronald Hill. "Baptist funds will not be needed for basic food, but for supplemental things, like milk, protein biscuits, vitamins."

The U.N. World Food Program stockpiled 8,000 tons of food in 12 locations along the Thai-Cambodian border in past weeks. However, 3,000 tons had been distributed by Thai soldiers in refugee areas before the prime minister's meeting, leaving 5,000 tons in need of distribution. They estimate the 5,000 tons will last one month. The Thai government wanted its soldiers freed from food distribution activities for security reasons.

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Ms. Skelton, editorial assistant of The Commission magazine of the Foreign Mission Board, is on special assignment in Thailand.

'Missionary Mechanics'
To Help in Texas

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DETROIT (BP)--In a move that could signal a new trend in Southern Baptist lay missions, a volunteer "missionary mechanic" team will travel from Detroit to south Texas in November to repair church buses and witness in local communities.

The team, a group of ten skilled mechanics employed by Detroit auto manufacturers, will travel more than 1,300 miles in vans and campers to the Rio Grande Valley, wedged between Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico in southernmost Texas.

All members of Bray Road Baptist Church near Detroit, the mechanics will use vacation time and pay their own expenses during the excursion, according to Dwain Laramore, director of missions for the Genessee Baptist Association near Detroit.

"This is a 'man bites dog' item," Laramore said. "Michigan is still pioneer territory for Southern Baptists, yet we're sending a mission team to Texas, the strongest state in the Southern Baptist Convention. That's exciting to me."

Tom Craighead, pastor at Bray Road church, said his men are excited about it. "We're growing out of the idea that missions is something you get and learning that missions is something you give," he said.

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Roy Jennings Named
Communications Director

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10/24/79

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Roy Jennings, administrative assistant at the Brotherhood Commission, was named director of the agency's communications section at the quarterly meeting of the executive committee of the Southern Baptist agency.

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Speaking to the recommendation of the agency's administrative committee, Executive Director James H. Smith said he needed a communications section director to help him administer the work.

"I see all of my section directors as administrative assistants within their area of specialization," Smith explained.

Jennings has served as interim director of the communications section since the death of former Executive Director Glendon McCullough 14 months ago.

Jennings also serves as chief of the Memphis bureau of Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Since joining the commission in April 1959, Jennings has filled the positions of director of the editorial division, program manager, executive assistant and administrative assistant.

A 1949 journalism graduate of the University of Oklahoma, Mr. Jennings was employed by The (Memphis) Commercial Appeal for 10 years as a reporter and night city editor before joining the commission.

Major functions of the communications section include public relations, customer services, art services, and development.

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(BP) photo will be mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Memphis bureau of Baptist Press.

Eight Baptist Organizations
To Sponsor Aging Conference

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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Eight Southern Baptist organizations are joining forces to sponsor the second Conference on Aging April 28-May 2, 1980, at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center here.

Trends and needs in church ministries with older persons will be a focus of the four-day conference for pastors, church staff members and lay leaders of senior adults.

Participants also will include representatives from the sponsoring organizations-- Southern Baptist Annuity Board, Sunday School Board, Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission, Christian Life Commission, Woman's Missionary Union, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Southern Baptist Association of Ministries with the Aging.

In addition to workshops on aging issues, conference participants will draft recommendations for possible submission to programers of the 1981 White House Conference on Aging and to denominational agencies, according to W. L. Howse III, conference coordinator and director of the Hurt Gerontology Center, Culpeper, Va.

Recommendations to denominational agencies from the first conference in 1974 resulted in the commitment of additional personnel and resources to the field of senior adult ministry, Howse said.

"I would hope that we would call attention to the positive developments in our convention in the field of work with senior adults," said Howse. "We will also be looking to the coming decade for additional progress in our denomination and in the nation."

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Conference speakers will include Robert N. Butler, director of the National Institute on Aging, Washington, D.C., and William Pinson, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.

Total cost for the conference, including registration, room and meals, is \$115.25, based on double occupancy. An advance registration fee of \$25 should be mailed to Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, Box 28, Ridgecrest, N.C. 28770, a spokesman said.

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Pain An Element of Truth,
Says Humorist Grady Nutt

By Norman Jameson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--For a funny man, Grady Nutt sure cries a lot.

Nutt, a Southern Baptist preacher, humorist and latest star on the syndicated television comedy "Hee Haw," makes a comfortable living interpreting life in the language of laughter.

But he's frequently moved to tears when remembering especially sad or tender moments. He misted up during a radio talk show while in Nashville recently to film segments of "Hee Haw" and his autobiographical account "So Good So Far" is filled with times of tears.

"You can't be authentically sensitive to the fun in life if you're not simultaneously sensitive to the pain," says Nutt, who insists the second "t" in his name is important-- "without it, I'm just like the rest of you."

"I'm not above pain," he says. "I've had struggles with my children occasionally. My wife and I have had arguments. We almost blew our marriage one time." Even as he hammed for the cameras in Nashville, he was living through death and illness in his family.

Pain, says the tall-boned Texas native, is essential in pursuit of truth. As a minister, he has strong words for fellow preachers who try to lead congregations without sharing their personal pain.

"To speak the truth genuinely means to talk out of my own struggles, my victories, my hopes and my joys," he says. "I think ministers would be more honest with themselves if they would quit trying to speak out of expertise and marvelous victory and glorious challenge and how with God every day is a wonderful day.

"I want to see him when he's got gas. How do ministers handle the fact that their kids also get picked up for traffic violations? They also cheat on tests in school, their daughters get pregnant and their sons impregnate. Why is it that they're not human?"

Nutt refers to the pain of Jacob in the Old Testament as he wrestled with God near the river Jabbok. When God did not prevail, he put Jacob's hip out of joint, and gave Jacob the new name Israel.

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"Jacob wrestles all night with the angel and will not turn loose until he knows the truth," Nutt explains. "He finally gets a new name and a crippled hip. If you're going to risk wrestling in the ministry, you're also going to have to risk walking crippled. Is it worth a crippled hip to know the truth? Is it worth a crippled hip to get in touch with reality? Okay, then limp. But limp with a grin.

"What I say about my life, in "So Good So Far," it's been worth all the wrestling by the river and all the limping I've done to get in touch with my name, to know who I am."

Nutt was pastor of Graefenburg Baptist Church in Kentucky for two years before becoming assistant to the president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1964 to 1969.

That pastoral connection could be an entree to many forums to someone who would use it, but Nutt says, "I'm not willing to trade on the fact that I'm an ordained minister in order to get an audience or in order to justify not being pastor of a church. I feel that without any question I'm precisely where God designed me to be."

He has since been asked to consider other pastorates and insists that if he were to become a pastor again, he would completely give up entertaining. "I'm just turned off by preachers who've got to be pastor of a local church and minister to the rest of the universe and just let the church be home base," he says. "That's wrong. I don't go for ministers who are invincible in the pulpit on Sunday and invisible the rest of the week."

Nutt is often introduced as a preacher and must answer many questions of theological consequence and he doesn't mind that. But, he says, "I don't like for people to think that I'm running around all the time being the minister, the minister, the minister, when I really see myself as an entertainer. I happen to be a Christian and that makes all the difference in the way I entertain."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers.