



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Medical Team Stunned By Refugees' Plight

By Maxine Stewart

KAM PUT, Thailand (BP)--Malnutrition beyond imagination....Living conditions worse than any seen before....

These are some of the impressions of trained, seasoned doctors and a nurse, members of the first medical team sent by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to work with the recent wave of Cambodian refugees in Thailand.

The team, organized at the request of Thailand's prime minister and the Thailand Baptist Mission, arrived in Bangkok Nov. 8. In orientation the next day, they heard about the refugees' conditions, available medications and Thai cultural taboos during a morning lecture. That afternoon they went to work with the refugees at the camp at Sa Kaew.

These dedicated medical people thought they were prepared for what they would see. But they weren't.

About 35,000 refugees live at the Sa Kaew camp under multicolor sheets of plastic on bamboo poles. The whole camp is surrounded by barbed wire. Flies are everywhere. Sanitation facilities are primitive.

"The whole thing is really overwhelming," said Dr. Robert J. Adams, family practice resident at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Gadsden, Ala. "It looks like it was staged for a movie. I have never seen human beings alive in such terrible conditions. I couldn't believe people could live like that."

Dr. Daniel E. Thor, medical director for the team, physician and professor at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, said he had never seen that many people so critically ill. "There are very, very few of them who are not starved. That's the most severe kind of malnutrition," he said.

Sa Kaew served only as an orientation camp for the team. When representatives of the various volunteer agencies met to decide where each group should concentrate efforts, the Baptist medical team was asked to work at the already established Kam Put camp, farther to the southeast.

Shortly after they arrived at Kam Put, where the International Red Cross already had established a hospital, a wave of refugees crossed into Thailand, fleeing Vietnamese forces. Besides dealing with malnutrition and resulting diseases, the team, which set up in the border village of Ban Laem, also treated war wounds.

Although some of the refugees weren't sure who they could trust, others were eager for help.

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"Some of them were willing to receive vitamin and iron injections right there," said Dr. L. William B. Rasberry, obstetrician and gynecologist from Bryan, Texas. "Although not as much as the refugees at Sa Kaew, the people were malnourished and quite anemic. Many had malaria. Some had filled their little bamboo water containers to boil their rice from a small creek of stagnant water nearby.

"Some who said they had been fighting looked like they were nine or ten years old, but I learned they were 15. They just stared off into space, hardly noticing the surroundings," Dr. Rasberry continued.

The team established an outpatient clinic in Ban Laem and began what was to become a daily routine of treating starvation, anemia, malaria, respiratory diseases, dysentery, leprosy, cholera and tuberculosis. The sickest were sent to the Red Cross Hospital at Kam Put.

The team members' first day at the border exposed them to one of the saddest situations the refugees have to face. Two Thai soldiers came rushing into the camp carrying a bamboo pole hammock with a tiny little knot wrapped in a blanket. The "knot" was an emaciated little girl they had found all alone in the forest.

Because mothers cannot run well while carrying babies or small children and because their crying alerts the enemy to the group's location, many babies are left behind or killed.

This little girl was rushed to the Red Cross Hospital after Rasberry located a vein to start her on intravenous feedings. The next morning, on their way to the border, the team stopped by the hospital to check on her. She was sitting up in bed, eating. She is one of the lucky ones.

The first team was to arrive back in the states Dec. 19. Another medical team, organized by Harold E. Hurst and consisting of seven physicians and four nurses, is scheduled to leave for Thailand Jan. 6 for a six-week stay. Hurst is the Foreign Mission Board's associate consultant for health care ministries.

In the interim Dr. and Mrs. Harlin Willis from Brownsfield, Texas, will join Dr. and Mrs. William Grimsley, volunteers already in Thailand from Summerfield, N.C., to carry the medical load. Both wives are nurses.

Members of the second medical team are: Helen Roller, nurse, from Amarillo, Texas; Dr. Andrew White, Dr. and Mrs. Marquard Gorton, and Dr. Steven Tate, all from Charleston, S.C.; Drs. Steven and Marian Way, and Dr. Joseph Greer, all from Mount Pleasant, S.C.; Wanda Jones, a nurse from Greenbelt, Md.; Dr. Marvin Raley, Columbia, S.C.; and Joan May, a nurse from Bolivar, Mo.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Schools Face Difficulties
Baptist Educators Told

By Rex Hammock

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ATLANTA(BP)--Warning that increased government influence is creating special difficulties for church-related schools, a former U.S. congressman urged Southern Baptist educators here to "lobby" for Christian higher education.

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John Dellenback, president of the Christian College Consortium and Coalition and former congressman from Oregon, told educators attending the mid-year meeting of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools that they should "make it (their) business to be involved with government."

Citing recent legal cases brought against church-related schools, Dellenback warned, "You can't wash your hands of involvement with the Department of Education (formerly HEW)."

One of the cases cited involves Mississippi College, a Southern Baptist-related school. The issue of the case, explained Dellenback, is the question "Can a Christian college insist that its staff be Christian?"

"If the decision does not come out on the side of Mississippi College," he warned, "there will be ramifications for all church-related schools."

The former lawmaker suggested that college leaders get to know their senators and congressmen. "Help them understand the problems and issues relating to Christian higher education," he said. "That's lobbying at its best."

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ABC Special on Jesus'
World Set for Dec. 23

Baptist Press
12/17/79

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The story of the nativity and Christ's early years will be told through art and music in a special hour-long segment of ABC-TV's "Directions" on Sunday, Dec. 23.

"The World of Jesus Christ: A Christmas Celebration" was produced in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, the National Council of Churches and the United States Catholic Conference. It will air on the network at 12:30 p.m. EST, but times may vary in different areas.

In the special, art works and music from the last 1,000 years are combined with narrative taken from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible to portray the coming and teachings of Jesus Christ.

The program, narrated by British playwright and actor Emlyn Williams, will preempt the regularly scheduled segment of "Issues and Answers."

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Sutton To Head
WMU Field Services

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12/17/79

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Beverly Sutton has been named director of the field services department of Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to Southern Baptist Convention.

She was promoted to the position after serving four years as consultant for the Acteens missions education program for girls in grades 7-12. Miss Sutton will be replaced in the Acteens job by Marti Solomon, who has been minister of youth at First Baptist Church, Kilgore, Texas.

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Miss Sutton has directed two National Acteens Conferences reaching more than 20,000 girls. She instituted the National Acteens Advisory Panel and wrote the major manuals and handbooks for Acteens.

A native of Austin, Texas, Miss Sutton was graduated from Mary Hardin-Baylor College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and has done post-graduate study at the University of Alabama in Birmingham. She taught school in Colorado and Texas, directed student activities at Hendrick Memorial Hospital in Abilene, and was youth director at First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas.

As director of WMU's field services she will help frame programs for church and associational WMU work. She will coordinate the work of six consultants in interpreting WMU.

Miss Solomon is a native of Arkansas who grew up in Vicksburg, Miss. She is a graduate of Mississippi College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. She was minister of youth and activities at Woodland Hills Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss. She was listed in Outstanding Young Women of America in 1978.

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Clergy Appeal to Khomeini
To Free Iranian Hostages

Baptist Press
12/17/79

NEW YORK (BP)--Twenty-two clergymen, representing 11 Protestant denominations, gathered at the Statue of Liberty here to appeal to the Ayatollah Khomeini to release the 50 hostages held in the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

The group, including six Baptists, conducted an interfaith prayer service at noon on Dec. 13, appealing as people of religion to a religious leader.

John Walsh, co-leader of the coalition and Southern Baptist chaplain at Princeton University, called on Khomeini to "show patience and restraint" in the name of God. "We pray that you will release the hostages as an act of justice and mercy--an act consistent with the teachings and traditions of Islam," Walsh said.

William Elder of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, Nashville, Tenn., who led the group in prayer, said, "What makes the Iranian crisis so difficult to handle through ordinary diplomatic mechanisms is the fact that we are confronted not merely with a secular political act but with a cause that is perceived to be sanctioned, indeed mandated, by God."

"To those Iranians who act out of religious conviction, we must make our appeal for the release of the hostages based on the tenet shared by all of the great religions of the world that the spirit of true religion eschews oppression, seeks to alleviate suffering and refuses to take the path of injustice, even in pursuit of final justice," Elder said.

Baptists at the prayer service besides Elder and Walsh were Jimmy R. Allen, newly elected president of the Baptist Radio and Television Commission and immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Convention; Jack P. Lowndes, executive secretary of the Baptist Convention of New York; Quinn Pugh, director of associational missions, Metropolitan (New York) Baptist Association; Charles Kimball, an Islamic specialist and doctoral student at Harvard; and V. Carney Hargroves, a past president of the Baptist World Alliance. Lowndes spoke on behalf of Harold C. Bennett and Brooks Wester, executive secretary and chairman respectively of the SBC Executive Committee.

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