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Bailey King Seeks Freedom  
From Poverty's Bondage

By Phyllis Thompson

QUENTIN, Miss. (BP)--Until 18 months ago, Bailey King had worked almost every day of his life at everything from farming to logging and shoveling sawdust--all backbreaking, sunup-to-sundown labor.

"I'm 62 years old and I ain't got no more than when I was five," he says. The most he ever made was \$2.10 an hour. The least, 50 cents a day.

He started working when he was five, but he has little to show for it. It has been all he can do to make enough to provide food for his wife and 13 children.

King, a poor but proud Baptist layman, can't work now. Doctors say he will never work again.

A year and a half ago, he was hospitalized for six months. His doctors said it was meningitis and a mild stroke. But King's friends observe, "It weren't that. His body was just plumb wore out."

At 62, King is gaunt-cheeked, stoop-shouldered. He can't raise his arms to comb his hair. He can't reach to pull off his boots.

Although he has not been able to attend services since his illness, King is a member of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, a 90-member congregation, where his children go every Sunday.

All his life, King has tried to work hard enough to pull himself out of the poverty cycle. Despite lack of education, he took menial jobs and never missed a day of work until his illness. But King wants better for his children. His two older daughters married young. His older sons quit high school. Two joined the Army, and now one works for a logging mill and the other for an offshore oil crew. They earn more than their father ever has.

Nine of the King's children still live at home, crowded into the five-room clapboard house at Quentin, Miss., about 70 miles southwest of Jackson and 30 miles east of Natchez.

The house is uninsulated, drafty, damp. The roof leaks badly. The whole house sags. Unpainted walls and floor look the same inside and out.

There's no bathroom, not even an outhouse. The only running water comes from a kitchen faucet connected to a nearby sawmill's cistern. On warm days, the Kings bathe in McColl Creek, half a mile away. Warmth comes from the house's single fireplace.

King's wife, Luvenia, washes clothes every day. Her red hands wring each piece of laundry, because the ancient wringer machine "ain't never worked right." She hangs the clothes outside to dry.

Planning family meals is often depressing for Luvenia. When the money runs out and there's no food in the house, she stares out the window, worrying about how she will feed her family.

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Social Security checks, \$425 a month, buy food stamps and everything else. Since that's not enough to live on, the family depends on vegetables King plants every spring in a half-acre garden. He can make anything grow.

"That's the talent I was born with," he says. "Plantin' thangs and messin' with animals. I always said I coulda managed a little farm right well. Only I ain't never had one to manage."

When King returned from the hospital unable to work, he was determined to continue farming. Every day he had someone carry him to the garden to chop weeds. He would sit propped up, useless legs straight in front, chopping weeds, using his arms and shoulders.

He retaught himself to walk, and soon he was plowing behind Molly and Saturday, the Shetland ponies he bought for \$50.

Last spring, King unexpectedly received \$3,000 disability compensation. He saw the money as a chance to fulfill his lifetime dream. "All I ever wanted in life was a little place o' my own--a little house on it, enough room for a cow, some chickens, a patch o' land to grown corn on."

He bought five and one-eighth acres. If low housing loans come through, he will build a house. But King is frightened. He doesn't understand loan principles or interest rates. He's afraid the \$40 per month loan payments will be too much. "I never borrowed a penny in my life I ain't paid back."

The fears grow with each step. He needs house plans, a land survey, fencing. He's even considering going without lights or heat or building the house himself.

He doesn't want a handout to fulfill his dream, but time is running out. The longer he waits, the greater the chances his dream won't be completed.

Yet all his life, King, who puts his faith into practice in his daily life, has given whatever he could to help others less fortunate than himself.

He has always given produce from his garden to people who were hungry. He once gave his wagon to a friend "cause he needed it wors'n I did."

"The Bible don' say one o' us is supposed to have more 'n the other. I believe in Heaven we're all gonna be balanced--no rich and no pore!"

Phyllis Thompson is assistant editor of "Home Missions" magazine. This story was adapted and condensed from the December issue of "Home Missions."

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

Friends, Scrounging  
Yield Blood Bank, Lab

BAN LAEM, Thailand (BP)--Some people say that necessity is the mother of invention. But Dr. Daniel E. Thor learned that having friends in the right places and being able to scrounge doesn't hurt either.

Thor, a San Antonio, Texas, physician, recognized a need for a laboratory when he discovered some of his Cambodian refugee patients had hemoglobin counts of just barely over two grams (12 to 14 is normal).

He and the medical team--the first Baptist volunteer medical group to work with the recent flow of Cambodian refugees--had not brought materials with them to set up a lab. But Thor soon learned that missionaries often have friends in just the right places.

Missionary Daniel R. Cobb, who has worked in refugee relief since 1975, knew Mrs. Morton Abramowitz, wife of the American ambassador to Thailand, who is actively involved in refugee work. She invited Thor to share his ideas about a blood lab and bank at a meeting of representatives from various volunteer agencies working with refugees.

A Baptist woman from Australia, who was representing several agencies and had a sizeable amount of money to donate, thought the blood bank sounded like a good way to use the money.

Now a mobile unit goes to various embassies, business and professional communities and to several churches to collect blood. Also, any reporters or visitors who come through the camps are asked to donate blood.

Gathering equipment for the laboratory was a bit more difficult. But Thor soon had a microscope from Cobb, test tubes from the Norwegian Red Cross and various other items from a doctor at the American Embassy, the Thai Red Cross, the International Red Cross and the World Health Organization.

Putting everything together, Thor came up with a lab that can type and cross match blood, do white blood counts, hemoglobins, urinalyses and tests for malaria. Some of the Cambodian refugees had been swelling up and dying, for no known reason, according to Cobb. He and other refugee workers hope the lab will be able to offer some clue to help prevent other deaths.

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Avoid One-Sided Emphases  
In Iran, Texas CLC Says

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DALLAS (BP)--The Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission has called on the religious community in America to see the Iran crisis as a religious issue and to avoid one-sided emphases.

"While others speak freely of vengeance and hatred, Christians must speak differently," says a resolution adopted by the 15-member commission at their quarterly meeting.

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Stating that one-sided emphases "drive us ever further from the safe release of the hostages," the commission acknowledged "the Islamic revolution in Iran as a religiously-motivated people's revolution.

"We emphasize both the futility of political negotiations devoid of religious understanding in dealing with the revolution's leaders and the ineffectiveness of economic sanctions and force against those who seek martyrdom," it added.

The commission said it joins "all responsible peoples in condemning every use of kidnapping and terrorism to secure political and retributive ends."

But at the same time it said, "We prayerfully uphold and sympathize with the many thousands of Iranians and their families who have brutally suffered and died at the hands of SAVAK" (the secret police of the deposed Shah of Iran).

The resolution also struck at the "prejudicial and wholesale hatred of Iranians in the United States."

It said, "Particularly, we join Dr. William Tanner of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in calling on all Christians to minister to bring the spirit of Christ to a bitter and hostile climate."

It encourages Christians "never to succumb to weariness as the captivity prolongs and to continue in prayer and fellow suffering with the hostages and their families."

Also it implores "the captors to remember their Islamic traditions of mercy and freedom and to release the hostages. Because the Iranian revolution, which serves as the ground of the hostage situation, is so thoroughly religious in nature, it is the special calling of the churches and their leadership to respond with great sensitivity and care," the commission said.