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80-63

Sam Lawson Returns to His
Roots, Gives of Himself

By Dan Martin

ATLANTA (BP)--Sam Lawson, who grew up on a "four-horse farm" in rural Georgia, wanted to do something to express his appreciation to his co-workers at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

So the 60-year-old stroke victim donated \$100 to help in the relief of hunger.

Lawson, who retired from the board's maintenance staff in October following the stroke which paralyzed his arm and leg, presented the \$100 check to William G. Tanner, executive director-treasurer; Edna Shows, a member of the committee on hunger; and Howard Cockrum, board president.

"I thought when I came out of the hospital that we wanted to do something to let the people at the board know how much we appreciate them," Lawson told Tanner. "My wife and I couldn't think of anything better to do than give \$100 to help feed the hungry little children."

Lawson, a gold tooth winking, said his desire to do something to help with world hunger came from a time when he was a "kid, back in the country."

"Back in those days," he said, "when somebody had problems, everybody would try to help. I remember when there was sickness in one family, all of the other families would do a day's work to help out. I didn't understand it then, but when anybody needed help, my mama would fix food, put it in a basket and take it over to where it was needed."

"And when my dad butchered a yearling, he would get in the buggy and go around to the people in need and give them what we called a 'mess of meat.'

"Sharing has always been a part of me," Lawson said simply.

Lawson, who worked for the Railroad Express Agency for more than 30 years before REA went bankrupt in 1976, worked for the Home Mission Board from March of 1976 until October 31, 1979, the day he had the stroke.

He now walks with only a little help from an intricately carved cane, a gift from a co-worker at the board.

"The only place in the whole Bible where God told his people to open their hands wide was to the poor. He told us we should give to the church, but the only place he told us to open our hands wide was to the poor," Lawson declared.

"If we do that, then one day he will look down at us and say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant,'" added Lawson, a deacon at Union Baptist Church in Atlanta.

Shows, secretary of the board's directors and a member of Atlanta's Wieuca Road Baptist Church, told Lawson: "This \$100 is only the beginning of what is going to be done because of your gift. Your gift is going to influence others."

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Tanner added: "I wish we had 13 million Sam Lawsons in the Southern Baptist Convention. This kind of a gift is a very moving and very touching thing. It's important because it started when Sam gave of himself."

Lawson, who usually gets in the last word, commented: "We don't know what's going to face us in this life, but if we walk along with the one who does know, then it is all going to come out all right."

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

BWA Taught Duke
McCall a New Way

By Carol Franklin

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Nearly 50 years ago a young southerner went to Prague for a youth meeting of worldwide Baptists. There he discovered a whole new way of thinking about the world.

"The Germans had just been defeated," Duke McCall reminisced. "And yet, there was an Englishman who had lost an arm in World War I embracing a German."

"For the first time, this provincial southern boy saw the love of Christ at work in a way he'd never seen before," McCall continued. "Those men and others showed me a new way of looking at people and the world. They became my heroes. Not to imitate, but to understand the love of Christ on a much broader scale than I had ever imagined before."

Today that young man is president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and nominee for a five-year term as president of the Baptist World Alliance. The BWA's General Council will nominate him at the 14th Baptist World Congress, July 8-15, in Toronto, Canada.

"From the time of that trip," McCall said, "I have remained involved with the BWA. That was where I made my first speech. Until 1947 it was just emotional involvement. Then I was put on a commission of the BWA and have been active ever since."

McCall, who will be 66 in September, says he never had any thought of being president of the BWA. "I had sometimes thought that I might possibly be a vice president," he acknowledged. "After all, I've been on so many committees they might eventually feel compelled to give me a title! But president, no."

"I've never sought titles," he went on. "I really am more interested in the function that a role could allow me to perform. I've been secretary or vice chairman of more things than I can remember," said McCall, who served as chief executive of the SBC Executive Committee, the Southern Baptist Foundation and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary before becoming president of Southern Seminary in 1951.

"Substantive goals are what interest me," he said. "I'll recruit someone else, someone with a longer time to serve and more to contribute for the top position."

McCall displays enthusiasm for the role of the Baptist World Alliance can play in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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"My own Southern Baptist Convention needs the evangelistic vision of other Baptist bodies who are in the thick of the fight," he said. "The Baptist World Alliance can serve as the mechanism for whomever is doing the best job of evangelizing, educating and ministering to share their vision, enthusiasm and methods with the rest of us. The BWA is not an alternative for the mission boards of each group. It is complementary to their task."

McCall stressed his roots as an American and a Southern Baptist. "I'm proud of where I come from, but I recognize the limits that imposes. I need to share with my brothers around the world."

While upholding the value of fellowship in the BWA, he sees the need for closer cooperation. "We need to talk with each other, learning where we can share. "Some of us need to be able to hold out our hands and say, 'Help us,' instead of trying to do all the giving."

McCall would like to help establish linkages between smaller units of Baptists. "Sister church relationships can be extremely meaningful," he said. "This can help bridge the cultural gaps between us."

"I have finally learned the difference between cultural differences and ethical issues," he continued. "The way you do something may offend me and still be right. It's okay to have a hard-hitting debate as Christian brothers over any issue. It's not okay to count each other out of the fellowship."

In an apparent change of subject, McCall abruptly said, "I have to say something about Gerhard (Claas, nominee for BWA general secretary). I would be delighted to work with him. We don't always agree on every detail but we hear the same drummer."

McCall admitted there's little one person can do in such a large arena as the BWA's, which includes 29.7 million members in 115 member bodies.

But he declared: "I hope I can precipitate some action, some movement. Every member body of the BWA is equal. Every convention in the BWA has an equal voice. And every voice is needed. Each has something to share."

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Carol Franklin is minister of education at First Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

James Clark's Father
Dies in Texas

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GREENVILLE, Texas (BP)--Ray Calvin Clark, 79, father of James W. Clark, executive vice president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, died April 16 in the Greenville (Texas) Nursing Home.

Funeral services were held April 18 at Tapp Funeral Home chapel, Sulphur Springs, Texas, with burial in Seymore Cemetery.

He is survived by his wife, Sina; a daughter, Mrs. Edith Dibble of Washington, D.C.; a sister, Hazel Bynum of Odessa, Texas; nine grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

His first wife, Beulah Seymore Clark, died in 1936.

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No Special SBC
Transportation Available

ST. LOUIS (BP)--No special transportation system has been planned to transport messengers to and from hotels to the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis, June 10-12.

"As we noted earlier on the SBC housing forms, we cannot provide a transportation system this year," said Tim Hedquist, convention manager. "The cost of buses would have equalled the rest of the cost of running the convention."

"Persons out of walking distance--especially those in the airport area--need to take that factor into consideration," Hedquist said.

Hedquist said, however, that parking will be available and that messenger packets will include maps.

He reiterated that the original block of hotel rooms have been sold out but that the SBC Housing Bureau is working to secure rooms for those who send in their forms. Only after May 8 will the housing bureau take reservations by telephone.

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Salvation Means Sacrifice
For Baptists in Arab Lands

By Jim Lowry

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Among differences between Baptist churches in the United States and Arab countries, perhaps none is as marked as participation. Active involvement in Arab churches averages three to four times the membership total.

The Southern Baptist Convention average Sunday school attendance, in contrast, runs just over 50 percent of Sunday school membership.

In Arab countries, it's not a small matter to change from the Muslim faith to another religion. There are legal considerations in addition to a personal decision, according to three Arab Baptists visiting the United States from Israel, Jordan and Lebanon.

Many people say they are born-again believers, but do not join the church through baptism because of the fear of persecution, they said.

Ghassen Khalaf, pastor, professor and Baptist editorial worker in Beirut, Lebanon, said the decision to follow Christ is the most crucial, sacrificial decision in the life of an Arab.

Consequently, people who are listed as members of Baptist churches are "strong believers, ready to pay the cost of persecution from family, society and friends to follow Jesus Christ and be a disciple," Khalaf explained. "You can multiply the number of members by four to know better how many believers are in the families of members."

A prevalent myth which the three men were eager to dispel is that all Arabs are members of the Muslim faith. They estimated that Christians in Arab countries total eight or nine million out of a total population of 100 million.

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These Christians, however, have not all had a personal experience of salvation the visitors explained, but are born into families who are historically Christian. The men said one of their greatest challenges is leading these people to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ.

In Nazareth, Israel, Fuad Hadad is the assistant headmaster in the Nazareth Baptist School, where he teaches English and general history and is a deacon in the church of 85 members which operates the 600-member school.

Fawaz Ameish, pastor of Amman Baptist Church, Amman Jordan, for eight years, also is treasurer and evangelism director for the Jordan Baptist Convention. His 85-member church is the largest Baptist church in Jordan.

In Arab countries, Sunday school is not as diversified as in Southern Baptist churches because Bible study there is considered primarily for children. Adults study the Bible, but usually in evening sessions. Incidentally, Sunday school is held in Arab countries on Friday since that's the Muslim sabbath and schools, industry and government offices are closed that day.

One area which all three men said they hope to expand when they return to their churches is deacon ministry. Charles Treadway, deacon ministry consultant in the church administration department of the Sunday School Board, shared information about deacons accepting responsibilities for part of the workload of the pastor, to increase the pastor's effectiveness in ministering to church members.

Khalaf said he felt it was a privilege to visit the board and other Southern Baptist organizations to enrich his ministry. "I am anxious to return home and help our people. After seeing the training here, we will be happy to help churches in our area" as they attempt to improve their ministries.

Each of the men also expressed thanks to the Foreign Mission Board for initiating the effort which brought them together in the United States.