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Summer Missionary
Ministers With 'Magic'

By Tami Wilson

ATLANTA (BP)--Nothing happens when the magician slides a foot-long needle through the large, white balloon. No sounds are heard other than spectators whispering, "How's he do that?"

He doesn't reveal his secret, but the 18-year-old magician applies a Christian theme to the trick.

"With Jesus Christ in our lives, sin can no longer destroy us," he explains as he safely pushes the needle through the balloon. Then, lightly touching the needle against the delicate surface, "Without Jesus, sin can destroy our lives like a needle can destroy this balloon." The balloon explodes.

Some spectators call him "Mike the Magnificent," or "Magic Mike from Mississippi," but many tourists know him as Mike Parker--Southern Baptist Home Mission Board student summer missionary.

Every week Parker moves to a different resort, supplementing mission work, entertaining and ministering with "magic." He uses tricks to illustrate Christian values, but he emphasizes he doesn't have "magic power."

"There are a lot of magicians claiming they have magical power. All of my tricks have logical explanations," he stresses. "I don't want to confuse anybody and make them think I have any power; what I do want to get across is the power of God."

Most of the Christian applications in Parker's shows are original. He develops his own themes because tricks with gospel applications are hard to find, he says.

"I don't think 'magic' itself has any correlation with Christianity, but it's an excellent tool for teaching Christian principles," Parker says. "It keeps people's attention, it's interesting and you can really say something through it."

The summer missionary's performances attract people for different reasons. Some seek entertainment, others come because of curiosity. "Magic is something different; you don't see it everyday. Besides, people like to be fooled," Parker says.

Many times the audience believes they have a trick figured out, only to discover Parker outsmarts them.

"I've been fooled by magicians too, but it's really bad when we let Satan fool us. He wants to deceive us. Let magicians fool you, but let Jesus lead your life," Parker advises.

Response to his unusual talent and the incorporation of Christian themes has been good. "I'm sure not everybody agrees with what I'm doing, but nobody has really come out and told me," he says. "The only ones who approached me had good things to say."

Parker says moving nine times in 10 weeks is strenuous but his biggest frustration is not staying in one place long enough to see any results. His greatest reward "would be to see someone accept Christ."

Parker, from McComb, Miss., will attend Mississippi College in the fall. He plans on seminary and perhaps later do some kind of mission work.

But he says he will always hold on to magic tricks, because "no matter what setting I'm in, I think they're always appropriate."

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Tami Wilson is a Home Mission Board Summer Intern.

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

Society Will End
When Family Does

By Tim Fields

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--"The abolition of families is a biological, psychological and theological absurdity," according to David Sapp of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. He told participants during home missions week at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center that human society will end when the family does.

Sapp said the idea of the disintegration of the family is perpetrated by those who defy the philosophy of "do your own thing" and see participation in a nuclear family as a surrender of individual freedom.

"At the same time, the disintegration of the family is an idea which will continue to rear up its head and threaten us as long as we use our family relationships as chisels with which to shape each other in our own images, and not as channels through which we nurture each other to grow freely in the image of God," warned Sapp, director of organization for the commission.

"We simply must live with the fact that some of the people who have been oppressed with unwholesome family life will continue to cheer for the demise of the family."

Sapp said some family experts don't believe the family will disappear but that it will emerge in radical new forms. He said homosexual, group, temporary, and trial marriages should be repugnant to anyone with "an ounce of Christian morality." But he said they are relatively rare occurrences and are not a dominant trend.

Sapp said the family is God's institution and warned against making it a fortress which must be constantly defended. "Throughout Christian history we have probably rendered our least distinguished service to the kingdom of God when we have tried to defend God's institutions," he said. "The world has tried to push the church under, but it won't submerge and neither will the family."

Sapp said that some of the most challenging frontiers of family life are aging, the energy and economic crisis, single adults, the role of women, and parenting.

"The increasing number of families with elderly members stand to be blessed by the opportunities of this new frontier far more than they are burdened by its hardships,"

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Sapp said. "Perhaps we are about to have a whole new world opened to us in which we can once again benefit from the wisdom, experience and love of our elders."

Sapp said the current economic crisis will continue to bring change to the family. Affluence has changed most families from units of economic production into units of economic consumption with goals centered on houses, cars, boats, clothes, piano lessons, sports equipment, and club memberships, he said.

"If because of the energy and economic crises wealth becomes less accessible, and materialism loses some of its lure; and if the energy crisis keeps us home and forces us to relate to each other more, perhaps we will discover the family as God's nursery where he nurtures us to become fit citizens for this world and for the kingdom of God," Sapp said.

He told the Southern Baptists that families must give greater attention to single adults and should not think of singles as those who do not have families. Single adults are not rejects of society, he said, and churches are finally learning what fantastic contributions singles can make.

Sapp said the role of women and parenting are among the most crucial issues families will face in the future. While there is a growing appreciation of the role of the full-time housewife and mother, many fathers are taking greater part in raising their children and are rejecting the idea that their role is limited to provider and disciplinarian.

Sapp said there is growing interest in society in the whole child-rearing process and he predicted there will be an increasing number of parents who approach their responsibility with a new degree of sophistication and commitment. He said the church must be ready to help them.

"The shape of the future of the family is really up to us," Sapp challenged. "We can draw back in fear from the threatening frontier and live quivering in its shadow or we can seize it as an adventurous opportunity and build a better world for ourselves and our children."

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Burglars Hit Baptist
Building in California

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FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--Burglars stole a small amount of money and did minor damage to one office of the headquarters building of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California July 29.

Police theorized the burglars had a key to the outside door. Once inside, however, they pried open one office door and several desk drawers. They took about \$70 from the soft drink machine and petty cash from the press manager's desk.

David Oglesby, convention business manager, said the cost to repair the damaged door and desk will exceed the actual amount of money stolen. All outside locks have been changed.

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Gifts Falling Short Of Challenge Budget

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--With two months left in the 1979-80 fiscal year, contributions to the national Cooperative Program are on a schedule that will meet the \$71 million basic and capital needs budgets and edge about \$1 million into the challenge budget of \$12 million.

July's undesignated contributions of \$5,690,049, up 3.4 percent over last year, bring the year to date contributions to \$59,490,755, a 12.2 percent increase over the same period last year.

Designated contributions for July were \$1,795,112, a 6.3 percent increase. For the year, designated contributions total \$60,930,791, or 14.7 percent ahead of last year.

Gifts received for disbursement by the SBC Executive Committee, both designated and undesignated, were \$7,485,162 in July to bring the year's total to \$120,421,547, a 13.5 percent increase over last year.

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Hurricane Causes Damage at College

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FORTESCUE, Barbados (BP)--Hurricane Allen's 125-mile-an-hour winds ripped off roofs at the Baptist Theological College for the Caribbean in St. Phillip, and heavy rains accompanying the Caribbean's first major storm of this season caused extensive water damage.

Southern Baptist relief efforts are underway and John R. Cheyne, relief ministries consultant for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, reports that damage to the college should be repaired in time for classes to begin on schedule in September.

"Our mission family on Barbados is well and although some of their homes took on a little water, all property except the college is intact," said Cheyne.

Missionary Bill Womack reported that storm damage to the crops appears to have been minimal and no major food shortage should occur as it did on several islands following last year's hurricane season.

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Kentucky To Propose CP Giving As Test

By Norman Jameson

Baptist Press
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MIDDLETOWN, Ky. (BP)--A study committee will recommend to the Kentucky Baptist Convention in November that contributions to the Cooperative Program be one test of membership to qualify a church for the maximum 10 messengers to the state convention.

Each Kentucky Southern Baptist church with 100 members or less would qualify for a minimum of two messengers, as in the past, if it is in "friendly cooperation" with the convention, is "sympathetic" with its purpose and has been a "bona fide contributor to the convention's work."

The proposed changes make it harder for a church to qualify for the maximum number of messengers on the basis of membership. It raises from 200 to 250 the additional members required for each additional messenger. A church would need 2,100 members to meet the maximum requirements on the basis of membership.

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But since 60 percent of Southern Baptist churches have membership of 300 or less, most churches which qualify for the maximum number of messengers do so on the basis of their contributions, which until the proposed change, could be made simply to the "work of the convention."

The Baptist Convention of Maryland is the only state Baptist convention with a similar stipulation for contributions to the Cooperative Program. Because Maryland allows additional messengers for every 50 members up to 30 maximum, a Maryland church would need 1,400 members to qualify for the maximum representation on that basis. Executive Director Roy Gresham says there are only about a half dozen churches in his convention that would qualify.

This will be the third year the Kentucky Committee on Constitutions and By-Laws has brought a recommendation on membership before the convention for the first of two required readings. Last year's proposal made contributions to the Cooperative Program a stipulation for a church to have even one messenger.

C.R. Daley, editor of the Western Recorder, Kentucky Baptist newspaper, said there was strong sentiment on the committee to leave the requirement in the proposal, but a feeling that it would cause divisiveness and a floor fight at the convention in Bowling Green prompted the change.

Daley, who was a resource person on the committee, said without the compromise, 300 to 400 of Kentucky's 2,200 Southern Baptist churches would be denied representation at the state convention.

"I'd hate to see any program, even the Cooperative Program, become a test of fellowship," Daley said.

It was Daley's challenge of two Kentuckians as messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in June that has brought attention to the vague membership requirements of state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. He challenged Tom and Claudia Riner's right to be messengers on the basis that their church, Logos Baptist of Louisville, was not "in friendly cooperation with" the Southern Baptist Convention.