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Lost Tribe of Mindanao
Finds Christ in Crusade

By Chuck Morris

TUMAGOK, Philippines (BP)--I was the first white man to reach this spot.

I had forded rivers, balanced on logs and walked two half-inch cables 70 feet above a crocodile infested river. I had burrowed through 10-foot high jungle grass, slid down 45-degree mountain slopes and crept through dark jungles.

It had taken me three days to walk 30 miles to reach Tumagok, the most remote spot of the lost tribe of Mindanao--the Manobos.

Soon after I arrived I met the "pakell-lok-esen," the woman leader of the primitive religion of the Manobos. Her beady eyes followed my every movement. Her dress and unique beads identified her as the one "experienced in keeping the traditions and laws of the tribe."

She knew I was there to tell her people about Jesus Christ. I wondered what she was thinking, what she was planning.

It was past midnight and the full moon was reflecting off the frothy Maridajao River. A strange sound jerked me awake. The old woman was squatting on her heels chanting in a tongue I hadn't heard. The noise went on for an hour.

The next day I learned I had heard the "prayer language" of the religious leaders. The Manobos believe they descended from the biblical tribe of the Hittites. Tradition says they received their language at the Tower of Babel when God gave it to the first Manobo, Ajirio. The language is passed on today to a select few. Most Manobos don't understand it and cannot speak it.

I learned they believe in one god who sent a spirit to give them commandments to live by, such as don't kill, don't steal, don't commit adultery and don't backbite. To violate these leads one to the "lake of fire;" to keep them brings one to heaven.

They also believe that goddesses rule over certain areas, such as rain, wildlife and harvest. And they sacrifice to the spirit of agriculture at planting time and harvest.

But the souls of these noble people are uneasy. Threatened by rebels from several sides, starving from lack of food and 98 percent illiterate, they cling to traditions and commandments which have no future.

The second night after I had shared the good news of Jesus Christ, the old woman I had heard praying said, "I never thought I would live long enough to see someone come this far to tell us about God. Will you give me permission to pray that tomorrow our people will come down the mountain to hear this message about Jesus Christ?"

About midnight I again heard her praying. Morning light revealed the tribe flowing down the mountain, some having walked two hours. Soon the little hut was packed with 35 adults and three times that many children and young people.

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For one and one-half hours I told them about Jesus, over and over again the same story. When I invited them to accept Christ the old woman was the first to stand.

An 80-year-old man who was hearing the news for the first time, stood to say, "Put my name down as one who accepts." A division chief who had walked six miles to hear, believed. Another 84-year-old chief said, "We have not known. We now believe. I will be baptized. I will give a piece of land for a church site."

I asked those who had stood making decisions to sit down and I carefully explained the meaning of what they were doing. I taught them about baptism and the need to witness their belief about Jesus. Then I went to the river. Soon 25 adults and older young people had streamed down the hill to witness their faith by baptism.

Like chickens flocking for food they came; they heard; they believed; they went away satisfied. In 14 days, 125 people accepted Christ.

At the last service, the translator said to the people, "We have been called the lost tribe of Mindanao. This can't be said any longer. Since Brother Morris has brought the gospel to our tribe God has found us."

As I turned to start the long walk back out of the mountains, the old woman crossed her arms, took both my hands in hers and raised her hands toward heaven in an act of benediction and prayer for me. Taking my hands again, she kissed them, and weeping said, "You have become my brother."

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

Chuck Morris, a Southern Baptist missionary living in the Philippines, was a participant in the recent New Life crusade on the island of Mindanao.

Final Wrapup

Reality, Danger of Power
Explored at CLC Seminar

Baptist Press
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DALLAS (BP) -- "Power is a reality which cannot be escaped, abdicated or ignored," W. David Sapp told more than 400 participants at a Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission-sponsored workshop.

For two days, the realities and dangers of power were discussed, with issues ranging through theology, politics, sexual politics, nuclear war, economics, sociology and the church.

"Power is a dangerous tool and church persons by and large have been poor stewards of power whenever we have managed to get our hands on it," Sapp said as he summed up the meeting. "Questions about power always raise questions about freedom. Power gives a kind of freedom to those who hold it, but it tends to possess its holder, and when it does, the freedom is gone.

"Power also shackles those against whom it is used and so often enslaves both the powerful and the powerless. But power may be used to free us all. For power frees those for whom it is used, and it also frees those who are willing to use it for others."

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During the three-day meeting, participants from across the nation heard major addresses by Andrew Young, former ambassador to the United Nations; Robert Bratcher, one of the main translators of "Good News For Modern Man;" television humorist John Henry Faulk; and civil religion expert Robert Bellah.

Also featured was a confrontation between John Buchanan, a former eight-term Alabama congressman, and Gary Jarmin, leader of the new religious right group, Christian Voice, which worked for Buchanan's defeat.

Sandwiched in were sermons by pastors Daniel Vestal of Midland, Texas, and Roger Lovette of Clemson, S.C., and former pastor Ernest Campbell of New York City; a presentation by Little Rock, Ark., housewife Minette Drumwright; a discussion by theologian William L. Hendricks of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif.;

A series of sermons by L.D. Johnson, chaplain at Furman University in Greenville, S.C.; an exposition of church-state issues by James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D.C., and an address by policy planner Richard Barnet of Washington, D.C.

Young called on churches to become involved in international economic justice as part of the continuing quest for racial desegregation and integration. "We have desegregated our society, but we have not quite integrated our society," he said.

Bratcher, a former Southern Baptist pastor and foreign missionary, criticized biblical inerrancy: "Only willful ignorance or intellectual dishonesty can account for the claim that the Bible is inerrant and infallible. To qualify this absurd claim by adding 'with respect to the autographs(original manuscripts),' is a bit of sophistry, a specious attempt to justify a patent error.

"No truth-loving, God-respecting, Christ-honoring believer should be guilty of such heresy. To invest the Bible with the qualities of inerrancy and infallibility is to idolatryze it, to transform it into a false god."

Faulk, a native-born Texan who is now a regular on the syndicated "Hee Haw" television series, told of his experiences when he was blacklisted by witch-hunting communist groups during the McCarthy era of the early 1950s.

He said there is the possibility such an event will reoccur unless Americans truly understand First Amendment freedoms. He noted the lives of many of his friends were ruined because some self-appointed communist hunters had a "Jerry Falwellish attitude of asserting power with arrogance" to smash people's lives.

Robert Bellah, professor of sociology at the University of California at Berkeley and expert on civil religion, told participants the Reagan administration is "not simply a change in administration or a change of party, but a change of regime."

He said it marks a "counter-revolution" from the moral revolution which has been occurring in the country since 1932, and which emphasized social policies, the needs of the working class, the poor, the blacks and others.

The exchange between Buchanan and Jarmin featured the Christian Voice "Christian/moral" report card of Buchanan's voting record. In the exchange, Jarmin admitted his organization is "a" Christian voice, not "the" Christian voice, and said persons can be Christians and disagree with his definition of conservative.

Buchanan, who now is an independent consultant based in Washington, D.C., where he works with several groups including the Christian Life Commission, disagreed with the Christian Voice issues, and said if he were to draw up a Christian report card "it would be very different" and would not include such issues as defense and the Panama Canal, but would center on civil rights, women's rights and world hunger.

Vestal talked of the church's power to influence community, and said pastors should encourage members to take an active role in community affairs, serving in local government, service organizations and school activities.

Lovette said people of all ages have time and again found themselves powerless in the situations of their lives. "Even though there is a powerlessness on the part of all of us in society, we are able to find a new dimension in the power of God...that wherever we go, we know that God is able."

Campbell bemoaned lack of prophetic preaching and said some Christians avoid speaking on controversial social issues because they have an inherent fear of conflict and have learned truth is a high-risk, low-return endeavor.

Drumwright voiced concern because "the Lord is calling women to serve him vocationally. They walk the aisle of decision for church-related vocations...they get training in our seminaries and then the places of service for them are so limited that they either go unemployed or underemployed."

Hendricks commented that too often church groups seeking to use power to influence government claim they are using power prophetically when actually they are using it for self-serving ends.

"Religious claims, when they speak as God instead of for God, may be idolatrous at best and blasphemous at worst," Hendricks said.

Johnson preached a series of six sermons, and in them lashed Christians who say they cannot have fellowship with other Christians unless they agree. He criticized trends in the Southern Baptist Convention demanding agreement as a test of fellowship.

"Where power is used to compel agreement, to coerce disagreement into silence, or to enforce one point of view, it has not only ceased to be Baptist and Christian, it has become demonic," he said.

Richard Barnet, director of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., decried predictions by Reagan administration officials that confrontation with the Soviet Union is inevitable, and said it is "nonsense to believe the way to preserve peace is to prepare for nuclear war."

He said the decision by the new administration to escalate the arms race in order to prevent nuclear war "is the most dangerous illusion and fantasy in history."

Dunn warned that current anti-abortion efforts to pass a human life amendment to the Constitution could bring government into the doctor's office and the bedrooms of the nation.

If the amendment is passed, he said, "the IUD would be unconstitutional. Taking a morning-after pill would be murder. Every miscarriage would have to be federally examined. Every 'd & c' would bring the obstetrician-gynecologist under the scrutiny of constitutional law," he said.

The 1982 annual meeting of the Christian Life Commission will be held in Atlanta, Ga., March 22-24.

Role of Bystander
Not For Minister

By Fletcher Allen

AIKEN, S.C. (BP)--The role of a bystander in a time of crisis just wasn't for Dan Rose, minister of activities and youth at First Baptist Church here.

"There was a need and I felt there was something I could do to help," Rose said after he plunged repeatedly into cold water to help rescue two women and a baby from their submerged automobile.

"It just never crossed my mind not to help," he said. "I just wasn't brought up to take the bystander role."

Rose was driving toward Augusta when he noticed a car nearly submerged in a pond. "I could see people moving around inside. I parked my truck and went to the bank, thinking they would climb out."

But before they could, the car sank. Rose was the only potential rescuer, so he jumped in and swam out. "I reached in and located one of the women's arms," he said, adding he pulled her out and to the bank.

He plunged back into the icy water, and was joined by another motorist who stopped to help. The second rescue took at least 10 minutes.

"I felt tremendous frustration and apprehension," Rose said. "I was just praying we could find her. I really did some serious praying out there."

After both women were pulled from the car and revived, rescuers were told a baby still was in the car. They found the infant, but it was too late; the baby did not survive since it had been under water for so long.

The women, however, were released after treatment at a hospital.

"I feel good that I could do something," Rose said, adding, "I would do it again tomorrow. This is what we're supposed to do--help out when we can."