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Bill Murray Rejects
Atheist Mother's Life

By Wilmar Thorkelson

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. (BP)—When Madalyn Murray enrolled her son, William, in a Baltimore junior high school in the early 1960s, she was scandalized to discover that prayers were being said in the school.

She filed suit and became America's best-known atheist when the United States Supreme Court outlawed the practice in 1963.

Now, almost 18 years after her successful legal action, her son, William Murray, is seeking to restore prayer in the schools and to undo his mother's victory.

Raised an atheist, and for a time his mother's main associate in running her atheistic organization, Murray has become a born-again Christian dedicated to fighting secular humanism, which he said is the same as atheism.

He described his conversion during a revival service at Southtown Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist church in Bloomington, Minn.:

His mother, now Madalyn Murray O'Hair, telephoned him in 1975, after he had seen little of her for 13 years, and asked him to come and help her. She told him both her atheist organization and her husband, Murray's stepfather, were dying, her employees were gone and her printing operation was in a shambles.

Murray said he helped put the organization on its feet, bought an office building for it, installed a computer and helped increase its income substantially.

But, after three or four years, he said, life with his mother became intolerable and he "walked away" and opened a bookstore in Phoenix, Ariz. One day he read a book he had not ordered, "Dear and Glorious Physician," by Taylor Caldwell, a fictional account of the life of the apostle Luke.

That led him to read the Bible and to a realization of "who Jesus Christ was, and what he had done for Bill Murray," he said.

"Once I realized that, I was able to get down on my knees and accept Jesus Christ as personal savior."

Murray told the capacity congregation, "The power of the Lord is unbelievable." He formerly smoked three packages of cigarettes a day and drank heavily, but no longer has a desire to do either, he said.

For a year he said nothing publicly about his conversion, Murray said, but his pastor apparently told a congressman, who invited him to Washington to tell others about his experience.

He said he had learned that "you have to share your faith in order to keep it."

He has formed the Murray Faith Foundation, a nonprofit organization with headquarters in Houston, to support his ministry and his efforts "to tell of Jesus in personal appearances and media releases."

He portrayed secular humanism and atheism as self-centered and without absolute values. "I was indoctrinated in this for the first 17 years of my life," he said.

Murray said he still loves his mother and prays for her. He calls reports that she had been driven into hiding by Christians "totally fabricated."

"She is hiding from her own supporters, members of the atheist organization, who have given her money for the association that she recently spent on a \$400,000 home in Austin," Murray was quoted in his newsletter as saying.

In his talk, Murray said his mother had always been "a dissident—a leftist." She was active in the Socialist Labor and Socialist Workers Parties and in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, he said.

When she sought to leave this country in 1959, both France and Germany refused her residency permits, Murray said. She also was barred from the Soviet Union, he said, because "the communists didn't want troublemakers either."

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Thorkelson is religion editor of The Minneapolis Star.

Four Churches Recognized
For Sunday School Growth

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Churches in Florida, California, Texas and Washington have been cited in the second annual Fastest Growing Sunday School Recognition.

Sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday School department, the churches were selected from those earning state recognition for increases in numerical enrollment and average attendance and percentage enrollment and average attendance.

First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., was recognized for the largest Sunday School numerical enrollment increase, from 9,592 to 11,000, a net increase of 1,408. Homer G. Lindsay Jr. is pastor of the church which earned the recognition for the second consecutive year.

Prestonwood Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, was cited for the largest average attendance increase, 408, from 205 to 608. Bill Weber is the Prestonwood pastor.

The highest percentage enrollment increase recognition went to First Southern Baptist Church, Florin, Calif., which registered a 251 percent growth, from 65 to 228. Bud Barrier is the pastor.

Trenton Avenue Baptist Church, Bremerton, Wash., showed a 391 percent increase in average attendance, from 11 to 54. Ollie "Hank" Ford is pastor.

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Dunn, Others Attack Cuts
In Alcohol Abuse Programs

By Stan Haste

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Three more religious leaders, including a Southern Baptist executive, have joined a growing chorus of protest against President Reagan's budget proposal to dismantle a federal alcohol abuse agency.

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James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, was joined in protesting the proposal by Robert F. Drinan, a Jesuit priest for 10 years who was a member of Congress before being ordered last year by Pope John Paul II not to run again, and Beverly Roberson Jackson, of the Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church.

In a statement released on the day the House of Representatives was scheduled to take a final vote on the overall Reagan budget, the three religious figures said the proposed slashing of funds to the National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (NIAAA) "could mean the end of federal alcoholism programs."

They said several programs serviced through NIAAA "cannot be duplicated at the state level" and assailed the Reagan push to trim \$123 million from the Rockville, Md.-based agency and send the funds instead to states as part of a huge "block grant" appropriation.

"We dare not turn back the clock denying 20 years of progress in dealing with alcohol education, counseling and abuse," they declared.

Alluding to Reagan's repeated pledge not to hurt the "truly needy" with his budget-cutting proposals, the trio said "No mandate to control inflation includes authorization to ignore millions of suffering families" and argued that "many alcoholics are among the 'truly needy.'"

Although the much-publicized House budget vote fixed overall budget ceilings, congressional committees now face the task of recommending funding within those limits for specific programs.

The NIAAA budget will be considered by the House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, chaired by William H. Natcher, D-Ky.

In a letter to the veteran Kentucky chairman, Dunn praised the record of NIAAA over its 20-year history, saying that its programs "have a record of accomplishment which needs to be continued and supported."

Dunn told Natcher that approval by the subcommittee of the Reagan block grant proposal "would mean the extinction of federal leadership in this country's ability to deal with alcoholism and alcohol abuse. I do not need to repeat to you the dreadful social and economic costs of alcoholism in this country as a major public health menace."

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Southern Elects Four,
Establishes Mission Chair

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Trustees of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, meeting in annual session, named a new dean of the seminary's school of church music, elected four new professors, named the missions department in honor of benefactor Ida M. Bottoms, and chose Wayne Dehoney, pastor of Kentucky's largest church, as the new chairman of the trustee board.

S. Milburn Price, chairman of the music department of Furman University, Greenville, S.C., since 1972, will become dean of the 350-student school of church music Aug. 1, after the retirement of 29-year veteran dean Forrest H. Heeren.

Price, a graduate of the University of Mississippi and Baylor University, holds a doctor of musical arts degree from the University of Southern California.

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John N. Jonsson, professor of history of religions at the University of Natal, South Africa, will become professor of Christian missions and world religions Aug. 1.

Jonsson earned a doctor of philosophy degree from the University of Natal, and is a graduate of Spurgeons College in England and the University of London. He is chairman and cofounder of Treverton College, South Africa, and foundation member of the International Association for the Study of Prehistoric and Ethnological Religions.

He is the son of Scandanavian missionaries who worked among the Zulu-speaking people of Africa, and grew up speaking a number of African dialects. He is proficient in a dozen languages.

John D. W. Watts, president of the International Baptist Seminary at Ruschlikon-Zurich, Switzerland, 1964-70, was elected professor of Old Testament Interpretation, effective Aug. 1.

Watts was a professor at Serampore College, India, 1972-75. He has been professor of Old Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif., since 1976.

He is a graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and holds a doctorate from Southern Seminary, where he was a visiting professor in 1970-72.

Elizabeth Ann Bedsole and William Steven Owens were added to the faculty as assistant professors of church music.

Bedsole, a consultant in the church music department of the Baptist Sunday School Board, is a graduate of Stetson University and Southwestern Baptist Seminary. She is a former member of the staff of the 20,000-member First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas. She is a specialist in children's music education.

Owens, a graduate of North Texas State University and Boston University, received the doctor of musical arts degree from Southern Seminary in 1980. He has performed with the Louisville Orchestra, Kentucky Opera and Louisville Bach Society, and is the founder of the New Louisville Woodwind Trio. He has been minister of music for churches in Texas, Massachusetts and Kentucky.

In appreciation for a recent \$2 million bequest from the estate of Mrs. Ida M. Bottoms of Texarkana, Ark., the trustees designated the teaching area of missions as "The Ida M. Bottoms Department of Christian Missions."

That department, founded in 1900, is celebrating its 80th year as the oldest teaching department of missions in any seminary.

With a portion of the Bottoms endowment, the trustees established the "M. Theron Rankin Chair of Foreign Missions," and named professor W. Bryant Hicks to be its first occupant. Hicks, a former missionary to the Phillipines, joined the faculty in 1965. Rankin was Baker James Cauthen's predecessor as executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Two other faculty members were named to endowed professorships by the trustees. James W. Cox will become the first Victor and Louise Lester Professor of Christian Preaching, and John Joseph Owens will succeed Clyde T. Francisco who retires Aug. 1 as the John R. Sampey Professor of Old Testament. The Lester Chair was established by the Martinsville, Va., couple during the seminary's recent \$10 million endowment campaign.

Trustees designated the new maintenance and supply facility now under construction on the seminary campus as "The T.R. Allen Central Services Building," in honor of the school's

long-time superintendent of buildings and grounds, who died in 1975. He served from 1939 to 1972.

For the coming fiscal year, which begins Aug. 1, the trustees adopted an operating budget of \$8,567,453, a 10.8 percent increase over the previous year, and a capital budget of \$283,462. They also granted an average 10 percent increase in compensation for members of the faculty and administrative staff.

Wayne Dehoney, pastor of Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville, was named chairman of the 62-member board of trustees, succeeding T.T. Crabtree of Springfield, Mo. New vice chairmen will be William K. Weaver, president of Mobile College, Mobile, Ala., and Ben C. Murphy, vice president of the Tyler Corporation, Dallas, Texas.

Faculty members Ronald Boud, associate professor of church music, and Raymond Bailey, associate professor of communications, received tenure.

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Radio-TV Commission Show
To Air Again on NBC

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--"Return To Freedom," a television documentary telling how a black couple was helped by friends to escape from a cult in Israel, will be aired again on the NBC network June 7 at 1 p.m. EST.

The program, produced by NBC-TV in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, was initially aired by NBC last November.

"Return To Freedom" shows how easily people can be taken in by cults.

It details how Hazel and Tommy Whitfield of Chicago Heights, Ill., were caught up in a Black Hebrew cult whose members follow a self-appointed messiah and taught that they, instead of Israel's citizens, are the actual chosen people of the promised land.

Whitfield is a musician who played with B.B. King, James Brown, the Pharaohs, and with the musicians who later formed the group Earth, Wind and Fire.

The couple became Christians as a result of help given them by Southern Baptist missionaries at the Baptist Village at Petah Tikvah near Jerusalem.

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Gardner-Webb
Receives Grant

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BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. (BP)--A grant of \$100,000 from the Dover Foundation of Shelby, N.C., has been given to Gardner-Webb College to establish the Charles I. Dover Independence Scholarship Fund.

Gardner-Webb accepts no direct government funds. The Dover Foundation grant will be used to offset the gap in financial aid resulting from President Reagan's budget cutbacks. Charles I. Dover, president-treasurer of the Dover Textile Group, said, "We have a commitment to making a Gardner-Webb College education accessible to truly needy students. I believe the private business community needs to take an active role in an educational program which reflects our own belief in the free enterprise system."

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