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'Lack of Time' Pushes  
Seamen's Missionaries

By Marv Knox

PORTLAND, Ore. (BP)—Mark and Cathy Spain never have enough time.

They minister to seamen on grain freighters anchored at docks in the Portland/Vancouver, Wash., area. But the ships only stay from two days to slightly more than a week—not much time to overcome language and cultural barriers, build friendships and share spiritual truths.

That is frustrating, say the Spains, US-2 missionaries appointed by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (for two year's service in the U.S.). "We just get to know somebody, and they're gone," Cathy explains. "Maybe they'll never come back."

But when the seamen are in port, the Spains' work is individual and intense.

When crews are busy, Mark hangs around the freighters to talk. During slower times, when the seamen can get away, Mark and Cathy lead excursions to the zoo, the Columbia River Gorge or a shopping mall. Cathy sometimes prepares food to host the seamen in their apartment, or they open up the Baptist Seamen's Center for a time of games and refreshments.

As Mark gets to know the seamen, he tries to "single out different ones and talk," saying those are the times when conversation gets beyond superficial niceties.

Through their words and actions, the Spains want the seamen to "know we love them," Mark says. "Then we want them to know why we love them. That's because of Jesus, and we always express that to them, explaining what he can do for them."

Results of their compressed-time ministry are hard to measure; sometimes they seem non-existent. Yet there are signs of progress. Mr. Mun, a Christian from Korea, wept for joy the first time he attended church with them. Mr. Han, a professed agnostic and also a Korean, sent them a letter expressing his hope to "join your believer's country," a reference to Mark's explanation that he must believe in Jesus to receive salvation.

The significance of such successes stretches beyond the seamen the Spains minister to, making them foreign missionaries on U.S. soil, claims Harold Hitt, director of language missions for the Northwest Baptist Convention.

"International seamen potentially are the greatest missionary force in the world," Hitt explains. "There are literally hundreds of thousands of them always on the move, going from country to country at no cost to any mission board. Not only can they spread the gospel from one place to another, but they can take it back to their own countries."

While the Spains consider it a "privilege" to serve in such a capacity, they're a bit frustrated because they're running out of time. Their two-year term will end late this summer, and Mark will concentrate on seminary. But the seamen's ministry is going to "die" if people aren't geared to follow up on a volunteer basis.

"A lot of people seem interested, but they're afraid of possible language barriers, scared of the unknown," says Mark.

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To prevent calamity when the couple's term is up, Mark is looking for people to take over the ministry. He thinks either seminary students or retired people would be ideal leaders, and he believes committed families who support the work can make it thrive.

"We've fallen in love with these people and this work," Mark says. "This experience has taught us that...we'll be working with internationals for a long time to come."

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

'Ministry of Must'  
Ignored for Years

By Marv Knox

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ATLANTA (BP)--Blind people merit a "ministry of must," but Southern Baptists have long ignored them, the SBC leader of blind ministry charged.

Cecil Etheredge said 1.7 million persons in the United States are legally blind, suffering from at least 80 percent loss of vision. Another 600,000 people are totally blind.

Yet very few churches within the Southern Baptist Convention have started viable blind ministries, said Etheredge, national consultant for blind ministries, working through the SBC Home Mission Board.

Etheredge claimed the SBC does not have an extensive ministry with blind people because "we don't know what to do or how to do it." He added that Baptists haven't learned how to minister among blind people because such work has not been a priority in churches.

"A part of our failure to minister to them has to do with the 'success syndrome' of reaching large numbers of people," he explained. "It also has to do with the idea of reciprocal utility; we go after people who can minister to us."

Even more fundamentally, Southern Baptists have related to the blind as they have to blacks, Etheredge said. "We've made both of them second-class citizens," he claimed. "We've overlooked the blacks in our communities all our lives. And the blind are easily overlooked, because they are basically out of sight."

Etheredge recently completed a 17-month pilot project designed to help churches understand how they can better serve blind people. He then developed a model for ministry based on four principles.

First, such an endeavor must be "church-owned," he said. The ministry cannot be run exclusively by a committee and supported by a handful of people. The pastor and staff must wholeheartedly support it, and the church must get behind it.

It must also be a ministry of inclusion—"both with and to blind people," he explained. People must be able to give as well as receive for a blind ministry program to reach its potential.

Blind ministry also must start carefully and build slowly, he cautioned. "Churches should be careful not to overextend themselves," he said. "If volunteers are overworked, they'll drop out, and if blind participants are not helped, they'll get discouraged. Churches should start slowly, plan for only the ministry they can handle and grow from there."

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And blind ministry must be operated by shared leadership, so that workers are not committed for unreasonable tenures, Etheredge said. He claimed shared leadership will decrease frustration among workers and allow a ministry to remain "alive and vital."

He urged sighted people who work in blind ministry to always "treat the blind as people."

"Sighted people must understand that a person's mind still works, even though he's blind; that blindness doesn't affect a person's hearing," he said. "People will often treat a blind person as if he's not even there, or they will raise their voices when speaking to blind persons. Overcoming these actions requires education about the nature of blindness and capabilities of blind people."

Etheredge said churches should not wait until they can have a "full-fledged" blind ministry to start. "Find the blind in your community that need a ministry, and start there with a ministry of love and inclusion," he urged.

"Remember, the one you can minister to today is more important than the six you might minister to someday."

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Shelby Association  
Opposes Redefinition

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The executive board of the 118-church Shelby Baptist Association adopted without dissent a resolution opposing a proposed change in the constitution of the Southern Baptist Convention which would redefine membership.

Wayne Allen, pastor of East Park Baptist Church and immediate past moderator of the association, offered the resolution which said the proposed change of Article Three of the SBC Constitution is "unbaptistic, illogical and may indeed be injurious to our fellowship and world mission causes."

Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church and immediate past president of the SBC, spoke in favor of the resolution, saying the proposed change "could be one of the most disruptive things which could occur in the convention."

The proposed redefinition of the method of qualifying messengers was approved by the Southern Baptist Executive Committee in February for recommendation to SBC messengers in June in Los Angeles.

Currently, each church "in friendly cooperation with and sympathetic with" the work of the convention is entitled to one messenger. Others, up to a total of 10, are qualified for each \$250 in contributions to the work of the convention or each additional 250 members.

The change would allow each church one messenger on the same basis, but would qualify additional messengers, up to a total of 10, on the basis of contributions through the Cooperative Program. One would be allowed for each two percent of undesignated contributions or \$10,000.

Allen, who served in 1980 as Rogers' resolutions committee chairman, contended the proposed change would almost make the Cooperative Program a creed for Southern Baptists.

Besides that, the change would infringe upon the autonomy of the local church, Allen claimed.

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When a pastor asked to hear the other side, Rogers said the genesis of the proposed change is that some persons feel there are in the SBC fellowship people who don't love the convention and shouldn't have much to say about it.

"I think it is a very poor and foolish way to try to accomplish something," Rogers said.

The former SBC president predicted the proposed change if enacted would encourage churches now on the fringes to leave the convention and go independent.

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Brazilian Baptists Kick Off  
Centennial Year Marathon

By Erich Bridges

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RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil (BP)—On a clear, starlit night one hundred years ago, a small wooden ship floated into Rio de Janeiro harbor after 48 days at sea. A weary traveler on board wrote a letter to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board that night, fervently expressing the hope that Christ's gospel would "fill this land from north to south, and from the Atlantic to the Andes."

The writer was William Bagby, Southern Baptists' first missionary to Brazil. When Bagby and his wife Anne arrived in Rio, not a single Brazilian called himself Baptist.

Today more than half a million Brazilians worship in nearly 3,000 Baptist churches scattered over the immense nation, constituting the seventh largest Baptist body in the world.

Brazilian Baptists recently celebrated that fact in a praise and thanksgiving service at First Baptist Church, Rio. The service was the first of a series of centennial commemorations that culminate on Oct. 15, 1982, when Baptists nationwide observe the founding in 1882 of First Baptist Church, Salvador, Brazil's original Baptist congregation.

The Bagbys helped organize both the Salvador and Rio churches. Many more followed, despite widespread Catholic opposition to evangelical work at that time. By 1907, when the Brazilian Baptist Convention was formed, 84 churches dotted the vast Brazilian landscape.

The years since have seen the growth of several thousand more churches, 22 state conventions, numerous seminaries and Bible institutes, an evangelism board, a home mission board, and a foreign mission board supporting missionaries in 11 countries.

Nearly 300 Southern Baptist missionaries serve in Brazil, by far the largest group of missionaries assigned by the stateside Foreign Mission Board to a single country.

The 1982 centennial will also mark the climax of a 10-year effort by Brazilian Baptists to double both church membership and total number of churches, double home and foreign mission forces, strengthen Christian education, reach total self-support through the Brazilian Cooperative Program, and evangelize the nation's 120 million people.

The doubling goals are unlikely to be reached by the 1982 deadline, and though many state conventions and institutions are now self-sufficient, expansion itself has made self-support harder to reach.

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But educational goals have already been surpassed, and two national evangelism campaigns mounted since 1970 have brought the gospel to perhaps 100 million people through personal witnessing, major city crusades, door-to-door campaigns, radio-TV and literature.

That translates to a five percent growth in church membership over each of the last 10 years, and a three percent annual jump in the number of churches.

Meanwhile, a partnership with Texas Baptists initiated in 1978 has brought a thousand Texas volunteers to Brazil, with as many as 2,500 more promised by the end of 1982. Texas evangelism teams working alongside missionaries and Brazilian Baptists have produced more than 20,000 decisions for Christ to date.

Obstacles to growth persist, however. A booming economy and population, coupled with recent high oil prices and recession, have produced hyper-inflation rates (104 percent in 1980) and growing social unrest. Baptists find it almost impossible to buy land and build churches. Missionaries and institutions are strapped with soaring costs.

Various forms of spirit worship claim the minds of 20 to 40 million people. A blend of spiritism and Catholicism attracts many more.

But regardless of difficulties, Brazilian Baptists believe the 1981-82 centennial is the time for evangelism. Says Southern Baptist missionary Edgar Hallock, "We could see hundreds of thousands accept Christ."