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Little Girl's Heart Condition
Makes Heart Of Missions Live

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Little Alva Consuela Navarrete's need for a life-saving operation brought the very heart of Bold Mission Thrust to life for members and friends of Woodmont Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn.

Alva, a native of El Salvador, was discovered in Mapalaca, Honduras, by Nashville dentist Bill Ford and his wife Shirley on a dental missions trip to the Central American country. This was Dr. Ford's third volunteer medical missions trip under Woodmont's sponsorship as part of Bold Mission Thrust, the Southern Baptist Convention's goal to share the gospel with everyone in the world by the year 2000.

The 14-year-old girl, whose family fled war-torn El Salvador to neighboring Honduras, suffered from a life-threatening heart valve defect that allowed blood to flow full speed all the time. It caused shortness of breath and a rapid heart rate if she became physically active or emotionally upset.

Doctors estimate Alva could have lived only 10 years at the very most if the condition was not corrected.

On their last day in Mapalaca, the Fords met Alva, who lived just three doors from the temporary clinic. Dr. David Harms, Southern Baptist medical missionary to Honduras, introduced them because he knew of her special need.

Immediately, the Fords asked if they could bring Alva home with them for surgery. That request began a rather miraculous chain of events which culminated with successful surgery on Alva at Nashville's Baptist Hospital in May.

Alva and her family were illegal refugees in Honduras. She, her mother, father and five brothers lived in two rooms in an old barracks in Mapalaca, just 200 yards from the El Salvador border. Her illegal status made it even more difficult to bring her to the United States because of the added problem of obtaining a passport or medical visa.

The major obstacle was obtaining Alva's birth certificate, absolutely essential in light of her other legal problems to get a visa to the U.S. It was still in her home in El Salvador.

Julio, Alva's 12-year-old brother, had the birth certificate in Mapalaca by noon the next day despite overwhelming odds. To get it, he swam the Limpi River, dividing Honduras and El Salvador, and traveled 10 miles into El Salvador. Earlier that week, eight El Salvadoran guerrillas had been killed by Honduran soldiers very close to where Julio swam the river.

While the Fords spent the second half of their mission journey treating patients in Aluheren, Dr. Harms obtained a medical visa for Alva from the American Embassy in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, after an initial refusal from the El Salvadoran Embassy.

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In Nashville, medical personnel at Baptist Hospital confirmed Dr. Harm's diagnosis. Surgery was necessary, or Alva would literally suffocate in a few years from lack of oxygen. Doctors and other medical personnel who are members of Woodmont church started action to insure a speedy operation for Alva. Following the successful surgery she is recuperating in the Ford's home prior to returning to Honduras, where her parents have been notified of their new status as legally registered refugees.

Neither of the Fords speaks Spanish, reducing communication between them and Alva to little more than sign language. Some church members, fairly fluent in Spanish, volunteered time to translate. Others donated money for her plane ticket and medical expenses. While Alva waited in the hospital, a message of hope in Spanish was delivered her during Woodmont's televised Sunday service. Viewers sent cards and donations.

"I think the Lord was in it," Mrs. Ford said. "I had faith that the church and the people in the church would have enough love to help this little girl. I rely a lot on the Woodmont family."

Additionally, Dr. Ford's mother has been seriously ill for some time, so bringing Alva back meant another responsibility in time and money. No one was consulted to see if help would be available. The Fords acted on faith and returned from their mission journey with another mission opportunity for Woodmont, which has sponsored 158 people to go to 17 foreign countries in the last five years.

"When we found out about her situation, we wanted to help her," Dr. Ford said. "We didn't ask if she was a Baptist. If you put God first, family second, others next and self last, it will work out."

"God gave me the gift of dentistry, and gave others different gifts, each one important. It's like an orchestra, with every part important, and all have to play. We've got to be a team."

That team spirit was evident in the way members of Woodmont church and the Nashville medical community cooperated to care for Alva. All medical services for Alva's surgery were without charge. Donations were applied to other costs. Baptist Hospital even provided a Spanish-speaking person whenever needed, but especially in the operating room.

As might be expected, the Fords already are nervously anticipating the return trip to reunite Alva with her family. Dr. Ford is training Alva to assist him while he is there, since he plans to carry his dentistry tools when he returns in midsummer to treat more people.

"Alva is not a burden," Mrs. Ford said assuringly, "because if you enjoy what you are doing, it is not a burden. Sure, I am tired, but I'd go back next week."

"When we take Alva to be with her family we will take back a mended heart. We will miss her so much, however, I'm afraid we'll leave Honduras with two broken hearts."

Neglect Can Ruin
Christian Marriage

By Charles Willis

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—"More marriages are ruined by neglect than by any other cause," Southern Baptist author Deana Blackburn told more than 300 persons at a Married Young Adult retreat.

Co-author with her husband Bill of "You TWO Are Important," a marriage enrichment book published by Convention Press, Blackburn of Dallas, Texas, blames false assumptions for many broken marriages.

"We assume that if we prayed for God to direct us in the choice of a mate, then that's all we needed to do," she said. "Because we have Christian marriages, we assume that there won't be problems and within the church there is a tendency to keep up a facade of 'no problems.'"

The difference in a Christian marriage, she said, is that Christians have special resources to meet their problems. "We should acknowledge our problems and see them as growth points," she said.

"The two most important goals in a marriage should be intimacy and communication, but many times our attention after marriage goes elsewhere," she claimed. "When courtship stops, the spark in marriage diminishes, and inattention replaces love."

Another barrier to marital happiness can be unrealistic expectations, she said. Efforts to duplicate the marriages of parents or to pursue the standards set by an authoritative figure are among hindrances to a mutually satisfying relationship.

"Nurturing love opens the doors for the intimacy that makes love grow," she said. "When love is ignored, a distance naturally develops that is increased by activities and responsibilities that draw our attention elsewhere."

Conversations between mates that major only on the routine events of life also contribute to the widespread problem of stale relationships, she feels. Real communication should help couples direct their lives through sharing ideas, feelings, hopes and needs.

"Each marriage is a gift from God," she said. "The most precious thing we can give to God and our mate is ourselves."

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Resettlement Rate Drops,
Economy, 'Mindset' Blamed

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ATLANTA (BP)--Refugee resettlement in the United States has declined in 1981, and Southern Baptist efforts have decreased more drastically than the national trend, recent reports by resettlement officials show.

Southern Baptists have settled less than one-third of the 1,555 they helped in the first four months of 1980 said Donoso Escobar, manager of the SBC refugee resettlement in Atlanta. Southern Baptists settled only 593 refugees through April 1981.

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Meanwhile, nationwide resettlement for the same period fell more than 48 percent—from 57,686 to 38,928, said Linda Gordon, chief data analyst for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' refugee resettlement office.

The slowdown started last September, when English language and U.S. culture orientation classes were started in Indochinese refugee holding camps, Gordon claimed. The classes detained refugees in their camps longer. Too, fewer refugees, especially Indochinese, are eligible and willing to resettle in the United States.

But SBC officials noted the United States still is not meeting its quota of eligible refugees and blamed the resettlement slowdown on stateside factors.

"Resettlement has slowed down basically because of economic reasons," said Randy Cash, SBC refugee resettlement coordinator. "With inflation the way it is, folks are a lot more careful how they spend a dollar these days."

"Also, adverse publicity from the resettlement of Cubans has hurt us," added Hubert Hurt, director of transcultural outreach for the SBC Home Mission Board.

"Problems were blown completely out of proportion, scaring away many people who might otherwise be willing to sponsor some refugees," he said.

"And a major factor in the slowdown is the current mindset of America," Hurt continued. "People seem to be withdrawing. They're looking out for their own interests and aren't showing as much concern for other people."

Hurt noted, however, that "for the most part" SBC resettlement workers have received positive reports from churches and groups who have sponsored refugees.

"Most sponsoring groups say they're not out that much money, since they spread the costs between several people and many refugees get on their feet quickly," he said.

Hurt said sponsors for refugees from many countries still are actively sought. Interested persons can contact the SBC refugee resettlement office, 2715 Peachtree Road, N.E., Atlanta, Ga. 30305.

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Church-run Schools Exempt
From Unemployment Taxes

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that church-related schools having no legal existence apart from a church or association of churches are exempt by statute from paying unemployment compensation taxes.

The high court's unanimous decision reversed the judgment of the Supreme Court of South Dakota upholding application in that state of a Department of Labor ruling that a 1976 amendment to the Federal Unemployment Tax Act rendered such schools subject to the tax.

Then-Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall's 1978 ruling resulted in a number of conflicting federal and state decisions on the issue, leading to the Supreme Court ruling.

The South Dakota case involved an elementary school owned, supported and controlled by St. Martin Evangelical Lutheran Church and Northwestern Lutheran Academy, a secondary school operated by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

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Justice Harry A. Blackmun, writing for the court, noted that both schools are "not separately incorporated" from the church in the case of St. Martin, or from the synod in the case of Northwestern.

When South Dakota sought to tax the schools, they appealed to a state department of labor referee who ruled them not eligible for the exemption. A circuit court overturned the referee's ruling, but a divided state supreme court, in turn, reversed the judgment of the circuit court.

The high court held that the "only reasonable" interpretation of the tax law in this case "is one that exempts petitioners' church-run schools, and others similarly operated, from mandatory state coverage."

Agreeing that the language of the tax code exempted the church-related schools from unemployment tax coverage, the justices found it "unnecessary" to consider the First Amendment issues raised by the Lutheran schools.

The schools had argued that they were exempt on both statutory and First Amendment constitutional grounds.

Arguing that mandatory payment of unemployment taxes would require excessive entanglement of the state in church affairs, the church-run schools contended that Marshall's ruling violated both the Free Exercise and the Establishment Clauses of the First Amendment.

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Convention Emergency
Message Number Given

Baptist Press
5/27/81

LOS ANGELES (BP)--Pacific Telephone Co. will not list through information the temporary telephone numbers assigned to the Southern Baptist Convention, June 7-11.

According to a company spokesperson, the telephone numbers will not be available to persons seeking to reach messengers and other participants.

For emergencies, the message number is (213) 741-2129.

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FMB Ships Vaccine
To Aid Polio Fight

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Ten thousand doses of polio vaccine have been shipped to the Baptist Hospital in Barranquilla, Colombia, to help fight a polio outbreak there.

As of May 27, 12 deaths and 150 other cases had been reported in the two-week-old outbreak.

The Baptist Hospital had 177 doses of the vaccine, but it was gone in one day as people clamored desperately to have their children vaccinated, said Bryan Brasington, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's director for western South America.

In a phone conversation with Brasington, Jeni Hester, missionary nurse in Barranquilla, reported that the people were "nearly knocking the doors off the hospital to get their kids vaccinated." No vaccine is available locally, she said.

Cost of the vaccine and shipping it air freight is about \$14,000, Brasington said. The money will come from general relief funds contributed by Southern Baptists.

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Carter To Pass Up SBC/L.A.,
Has No Presidential Ambition

Stan Haste

PLAINS, Ga. (BP)--Former President Jimmy Carter says he has no ambition eventually to become president of the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

In an interview with Baptist writers at Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains following services May 24, Carter also downplayed the current controversy in Baptist life over scriptural inerrancy, stating that in the eyes of most Americans, all Southern Baptists are fundamentalists. Even the so-called "moderates" in the denomination are so perceived, he elaborated, because Southern Baptists "believe in the Bible."

"I don't have any real concern about what is going on in the Southern Baptist Convention as a threat to our denomination," Carter said. "Our God is certainly strong enough to accommodate human differences and still love us."

Responding to questions concerning his personal plans in denominational life, the former president said he will spend the first year out of office writing a book on his presidency, setting up offices in Plains and Atlanta, and organizing his papers for a presidential library.

"After that, I expect to have an expanded life as a Baptist layman, as I did before," the 56-year-old Carter went on. Recalling his previous service as a trustee on the SBC Brotherhood Commission, he said he "would consider" similar service to a denominational agency in the future.

Carter declined an invitation from the SBC committee on order of business to speak at the upcoming meeting of the convention in Los Angeles, but says he looks forward to "doing it in the future." Carter was invited by the committee after President Ronald Reagan declined the same time slot.

Asked if he would some day allow his name to be placed in nomination for SBC president, as recently suggested by Editor Marse Grant of North Carolina Baptists' Biblical Recorder, he answered: "I don't have any ambitions along that line."

On another matter, Carter said that while taking a Southern Baptist mission tour is a possibility, that full-time missionary work is not in his plans. He said that a comment he made while in the White House about such a possibility "has been greatly exaggerated."

The comment was made in May 1978 at a meeting in Washington in which top denominational leaders, including then-SBC President Jimmy R. Allen, put on a successful Mission Service Corps fundraising dinner for wealthy Southern Baptists from across the nation. Earlier the same day the group were guests of President and Mrs. Carter at the White House at a gathering which drew criticism from some quarters.

"I thought a lot about the propriety of it and didn't see any inherent conflict in my role as leader of this nation and my role as an interested active Baptist layman," he explained. "Rosallynn and I were pleased to see the program launched." The Carters, he said, have continued to support a Mission Service Corps volunteer.

The former president's comments on current SBC controversy also included some general observations about fundamentalism. "I think there is a trend toward fundamentalism" in the country, he said, adding that generally, "I favor the trend" insofar as it represents a return to "fundamental commitments, fundamental issues."

But the fundamentalist should remember Christ's admonition not to judge others, he warned, adding that the tendency in fundamentalism toward "human condemnation of other humans" is contrary to Jesus' teachings.

Carter also said that he, Mrs. Carter and daughter Amy have had little difficulty readjusting to life in tiny Plains after the glamour of White House living. He described last Jan. 20, the day of Ronald Reagan's inauguration, as "one of the happiest days of my life" because of the release just hours after he left office of the 52 American hostages in Iran. Their release, he said, was an answer to prayer.

"So I didn't go out of office at all with a feeling of despair or anguish or even of thanksgiving for the relief of burdens," he declared. "I enjoyed the presidency and I appreciated every day the chance to serve."

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Baptists, Muslims Dialogue,
Agree on Almighty Creator

Baptist Press
5/27/81

POMONA, Calif. (BP)--A score of Baptists and Muslims discussed in detail their differences and common beliefs during a Muslim-Baptist dialogue, focusing on their common beliefs in one Almighty Creator and their differing views on Jesus Christ and the prophet Mohammed.

The dialogue was jointly planned and sponsored by the interfaith witness department of the Southern Baptist Convention Home Mission Board and the Islamic Center of Southern California with sessions at the Kellogg West Center of California Polytechnic University in Pomona.

Akbar Muhammed, associate professor of history at State University of New York, called the dialogue "another landmark in the long road to mutual understanding and respect."

"In view of the past hostilities between our two groups, it seems that our optimism must be tempered by historical and religious realism and with patience and forbearance," Muhammed said.

Former Southern Baptist missionary to Iran George Braswell observed that the dialogues had accomplished a lot in mutual respect and understanding.

"Patience allows us to both seek and listen, to agree and disagree, to search and to find, and to actively wait upon the other in openness to the truth in our religious traditions and experiences," said Braswell, professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.

Glenn Igleheart, director of the interfaith witness department for the SBC Home Mission Board, said he felt the meeting, the first of its kind, resulted in significant agreement, yet open disagreement, and an honest willingness to deal with the differences.

Maher Hathout, a medical doctor and chairman of the Islamic Center of Southern California, said that during the opening sessions of the dialogue, he was apprehensive and fearful the 10 Muslims and 10 Southern Baptists invited to attend would not be honest in sharing their disagreements.

"Any such meeting without disagreement would be a total waste of time, because we would look silly if we claimed you are Baptist for no specific reason and I am Muslim for no different

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reason," he said. "In any interfaith dialogue, the bottom line should be that we disagree for the real reasons, not the imagined ones."

Most disagreement centered around the Muslim's view of Christ and the Baptist views of Mohammed.

"Muslims believe Jesus was a prophet whose mission was to the Israelites (Jews), but that he was no more than a messenger," said Muhammed. Muhammed based his views primarily on the passages from the "Qur'an" (Koran) and Hadith (sayings attributed to the prophet Mohammed).

Muslims believe Jesus could perform miracles, but he was neither killed nor crucified. Instead, another person was substituted for Jesus on the cross and it was made to appear that he was crucified, he said.

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary professor William L. Hendricks compared the chronology of Mohammed's life to that of Jesus.

Mohammed performed few miraculous events, while Jesus' life was full of the miraculous, Hendricks said. Mohammed had a long life, Jesus a brief one. Mohammed was a political leader, Jesus was not. Mohammed claimed to be a prophet, while Jesus claimed to be uniquely related to God. Mohammed married and had children, while Jesus did not. Both Jesus and Mohammed sought improved social conditions for the disadvantaged. Mohammed's death was due to natural causes, but Jesus was executed as a criminal and was resurrected from the dead, Hendricks said.

In an address on "Who are the Southern Baptists," Igleheart outlined Baptist beliefs and practices, emphasizing the centrality of Jesus and the Scriptures. He added, however, that the real significance of the meeting was not in the prepared papers, but in the informal dialogue between participants.

Two of the Muslims had converted to Islam from Christianity, and two of the Baptists present were converted Muslims. Muhammed, however, spoke for most in the group, said Igleheart, when he said he did not wish to turn the meeting into a session for the conversion of one side to that of the other.

"I would like for us to think of this being branches of a common tree, receiving sustenance from a common source, and determine to spend these days in peace, tranquility and mutual respect, despite our apparent differences," said Muhammed.

In his closing evaluation, Hathout pointed out that Muslims are in America to stay, and Christians should face that reality. "We are not planning to be a Muslim minority in America, for we reject the minority mentality," he said. "We want to relate to others with mutual respect and love and understanding."