



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

## -- FEATURES

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Mrs. B. B. McKinney,  
Pack Rat of Memories

By Norman Jameson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Mrs. B. B. McKinney is a pack rat.

"A bad thing to be," says the 91-year-old widow of Southern Baptists' most revered hymn writer. Yet she admits to carrying in her purse copies of her favorite song, a 1926 letter from a missionary friend in Nigeria, and the first note Baylus Benjamin McKinney ever wrote her.

After services at a church she visited, McKinney wanted to meet the demure lady with the bright eyes who sat entranced by his songs. "He liked my looks," she says. "He liked the fact I was teaching at Mary Hardin-Baylor and for what that said about me."

What does the note say? "I never have shown it to anybody," she says firmly.

B. B. McKinney, former seminary instructor and music minister at Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, moved to Nashville, Tenn., in December 1935 to rejuvenate the Baptist Sunday School Board's music department. "People were not buying. They were not in sympathy with the Sunday School Board," says Mrs. McKinney. "Mac was the kind of person who could make friends."

She followed him to Nashville in January 1936, arriving at 10:30 one freezing Friday night with their two teen-age boys and a dog. The next morning the family moved into the house where she still lives. On Sunday they joined First Baptist Church where she is still active, working with preschoolers in Sunday School, as she has for 18 years.

She drives herself there in a Volkswagen.

Leila McKinney is a worker. She visited Sunday School class two Sundays when she joined First Baptist but has worked in a class ever since. Once, when in her 70s, she had to give up teaching a young marrieds class to take a prolonged trip.

"When I came back, I thought I'd have to join a graveyard class," she says, laughing, then amends that to "older adult" class. Instead, she went right to work with preschoolers.

She has always been a worker, directing church training at Travis Avenue and First Baptist Church. Her greatest labor, though, has been her prayer and letter ministry. In the days preceding and during World War II, young soldiers in area training centers spent free weekends in Nashville. The towering steeple over Broadway drew many to First Baptist.

"They longed for attention," says Mrs. McKinney, so she was at church early for every service to greet them. She says God gave her a tremendous capacity to remember names during that time, and she called every one by name after his first visit.

She wrote the parents of every first-time visitor to tell them their son was in church. And when the boys shipped out, she maintained letter contact with them all, often staying up past midnight to write.

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Even then, she was in her 50s and was a grandmother to many of them. Additionally, she sent each a monthly five-page mimeographed newsletter detailing happenings at church.

After services, many of the boys had little to do. But the young ladies of the church went elsewhere for entertainment. So Mrs. McKinney, against some resistance from deacons, organized a refreshment hour. "The girls stayed when they saw all those handsome boys," she says.

At her busiest, Mrs. McKinney maintained at least monthly contact with 500 men in service. Even today, though arthritis prevents her from typing, she corresponds with hundreds of persons.

"My stamp bill is horrible," she laments, through a smile. "I do without a new dress and buy stamps."

She received Christmas greetings from 21 states last year. Each December she buys a new address book at Kress department store in which she keeps her birthday prayer list of over 800 names.

"Prayer is really the heart of my ministry," she says. "Without prayer, there would be no special purpose to compel me to write. Many of these hundreds on my list are phoned if they live in Nashville."

Has there ever been a day when she didn't mail a letter? "I believe there was one."

She was nearly 28 when she married B. B. McKinney in 1918. That was old for the time, but "there were some people along the road I decided I'd better say 'no' to," she says. The man she earnestly calls the "dearest person and the finest Christian I ever knew" was killed in a car accident in 1952.

A very abbreviated list of his contributions to Baptist hymnology includes: Have Faith in God, Mrs. McKinney's favorite, and the motto by which she lives; The Nail-Scarred Hand; Wherever He Leads I'll Go; Breathe on Me; Let Others See Jesus in You; Lord, Send a Revival; Lord, Lay Some Soul Upon My Heart; Serve the Lord With Gladness, and many others. His hymns are included in books in several languages.

Mrs. McKinney was only six years old when her father died. She was 21 years old when her nephew, Porter Routh, was born. Routh retired in 1980 as executive secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee.

Her mother was an excellent manager. One year she gave Leila a dollar to buy Christmas presents. When Leila spent 85 cents on a favorite cousin and went back to her mother for more money, "I didn't get it," she says. "Mother told me I have to learn to buy with what I have."

Her sons, B.B. Jr., a retired air force colonel, and Gene, who teaches at Trinity University, live within a block of each other in San Antonio, Texas.

## Hannibal-LaGrange Elects Larry Lewis

HANNIBAL, Mo. (BP)--Larry Lewis, pastor of Tower Grove Baptist Church of St. Louis, has been elected president of Hannibal-LaGrange College, a 430-student school affiliated with the Missouri Baptist Convention.

Lewis, 46, becomes president-elect Aug. 1, and will succeed Gerald Martin as president Sept. 1. Martin, who was president eight years, steps down because of health reasons. He will become chancellor for external affairs, devoting most of his time to financial development.

At a press conference called to announce the election, Lewis said he was "challenged by the future of Hannibal-LaGrange or I would not leave a church with 5,000 members to come here."

He added: "All I can say after many hours of prayer and soul searching is that I came to firmly believe this is the will of God. It is hard to rationalize it at this moment, but I believe in five or 10 years I can give you thousands of reasons why it was the will of God for me."

Lewis, who has taken a prominent role in the biblical inerrancy debate in the Southern Baptist Convention, said he told trustees that he "had projected a rather controversial posture as a strong conservatist and inerrantist," but also noted he believes his stance will "be more of an asset than a hindrance."

In an interview with Baptist Press, Lewis said: "I am a fundamentalist, but I am a 'Christianity-Today-type of fundamentalist' and not a 'Sword of the Lord-type of fundamentalist.'"

"I believe a condemnatory, censorious, arrogant spirit is unworthy of any community of Christians. My love for my brother in Christ is not predicated on his agreeing with me on every issue. I hope that is the spirit I have conveyed."

He added he wishes to have a "good relationship with our sister colleges in the state," all of which he said are outstanding.

Of Hannibal-LaGrange, Lewis said: "It is a college that has a history not only committed to academic excellence but firmly committed to moral integrity and doctrinal integrity on the campus. Every teacher believes in the inspiration of the Scripture and the inerrancy of the Scripture...The college is firmly anchored."

HLG enrolled 432 students in the fall of 1980, and Lewis anticipates a "head count" of 500 for this fall. The school offers baccalaureate degrees in theology, church music and religious education. Other programs currently are two-year courses of study.

Lewis said one of his goals will be to obtain necessary approval to go to full four-year senior college status, and to offer bachelor of science degrees in music, accounting, business administration and secondary education.

He will meet with a committee of the executive board of the Missouri Baptist Convention later in July to discuss obtaining approval. He said he has no desire to move without approval of the MBC, which names all of the 25 trustees and contributes some \$270,000 to the \$2 million annual budget of the college.

Lewis has been pastor of Tower Grove since July 1974, and during that time has seen average attendance increase from 844 to 1,210, receipts more than triple and baptisms average 270 persons per year.

He is a native of Centralia, Mo., and graduated from HLG in 1954. He also is a graduate of the University of Missouri and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, receiving both the bachelor of divinity and master of religious education degrees. In 1978, he received a doctor of ministries degree from Luther Rice Seminary.

He was vice president of the SBC Pastors' Conference in 1980, and served on the 1980 resolutions committee at the SBC in St. Louis.

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Hays Suffers Heart Attack;  
Hospitalized in Hong Kong

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HONG KONG (BP)--George H. Hays, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board director for work in east Asia, suffered a severe heart attack July 8 in Hong Kong.

He is being treated at the Baptist Hospital in Hong Kong where he is expected to be hospitalized for at least six weeks and remain in Hong Kong for three months. His wife, Helen, is with him.

Southern Baptist missionary physician Lewis Smith is attending Hays.

Hays, 60, has been in his present post since 1975. He and Mrs. Hays were missionaries in Japan from 1948 to 1975. He is a native of Clark County, Mo.

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O'Connor Nomination  
Condemned, Applauded

By Stan Haste

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WASHINGTON (BP)--President Reagan's nomination of Sandra Day O'Connor as the first woman on the U.S. Supreme Court is provoking unexpectedly fierce debate, not over her gender, but because of her views on two of the most volatile issues facing the nation--abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment.

Ironically, that pair of emotional women's issues threatens to dominate debate during the 51-year-old Arizona court of appeals judge's confirmation process by the U.S. Senate. If confirmed, O'Connor, an Episcopalian, would be the first woman to sit on the nation's high court in its 191-year history.

Initial reaction to Reagan's announcement of his intention to send O'Connor's name to the Senate Judiciary Committee for hearings before the nomination is taken up by the full Senate was mixed, with new right groups attacking it, while old-line conservatives and liberals applauded.

Jerry Falwell, president of Moral Majority, pronounced O'Connor's nomination a "disaster." He also said: "Either the president did not have sufficient information about Judge O'Connor's background in social issues or he chose to ignore that information."

Falwell revealed that on July 7, the day Reagan announced the nomination, the president called the Lynchburg, Va., preacher and talked to him for nearly an hour about O'Connor.

Reports of that telephone call brought severe criticism from heads of two national organizations specializing in church-state relations.

James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said Reagan is misreading political realities if he believes that "Jerry Falwell has to be consulted or pacified" before making significant appointments.

"The president's call to Falwell doesn't make sense," Dunn declared. "At a time when by his own admission Falwell's broadcasting empire is teetering and his fund-raising appeals are sounding more and more desperate, a lengthy call from the president of the United States concerning his appointment to the Supreme Court only lends undeserved dignity to the country's most notorious exponent of an unconstitutional entanglement of church and state."

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R.G. (Gene) Puckett, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, likewise criticized the president's courting of Falwell: "I deeply regret that the president of the United States found it necessary to discuss at length a nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court with a well-known television preacher who has made a marriage of far-right politics and religion," Puckett said.

Although O'Connor's church-state views are not widely known, and while both Dunn and Puckett say they are reserving judgment on the nomination until the confirmation hearings, Puckett said that "if there is a church-state angle" thus far, it is Reagan's "sensitivity" to the views of leaders of the religious right.

Besides Falwell's criticism, other new right leaders also protested the nomination. Among them, fund raiser Richard Viguerie announced he was mounting a direct mail campaign against the nomination, an effort designed to deluge U.S. senators with anti-O'Connor mail.

J.C. Willke, president of the National Right to Life Committee, said the nomination represented a "repudiation" of the Republican platform adopted last summer in Detroit before Reagan's own nomination as a presidential candidate. The GOP abortion plank declared: "We support the appointment of judges to all levels of the judiciary who respect traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life."

Opposition to O'Connor on the abortion issue stems from a series of votes during the period of 1969 to 1975 when she served in the Arizona State Senate. During a 1970 party caucus she voted in favor of a bill to legalize abortion in the state.

In 1973, the year of the Supreme Court's landmark decision outlining the right of women to seek an abortion under certain circumstances, O'Connor cast her vote in Arizona for a bill giving doctors and nurses the right to refuse to participate in abortion procedures. But she also further alienated anti-abortion advocates that same year by sponsoring a family planning bill that would have made birth control information available to minors without the knowledge of their parents.

A year later, she voted against an amendment to a bond issue for a football stadium at the University of Arizona that would have barred abortions at the university hospital. Also in 1974, according to anti-abortion activists, she voted against a resolution in the state senate judiciary committee calling on Congress to pass a human life amendment.

But presidential spokesman Larry Speakes downplayed the criticism during a White House press briefing, saying O'Connor had satisfied the president with her views on abortion. Speakes said O'Connor had told the president during a July 1 interview that "she is personally opposed to abortion and that it was especially abhorrent to her. She also feels the subject of the regulation of abortion is a legitimate subject for the legislative area."