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81-115

Food Poisoning Strikes
250 at Ridgecrest

By Linda Lawson

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Approximately 250 persons were stricken with food poisoning at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center Saturday night, July 25.

About 50 persons were hospitalized in five area hospitals, with 200 others treated and released. Only 15 remained hospitalized Sunday, none in critical condition.

Approximately 2,400 persons had checked into the conference center Saturday for a week-long Sunday School Leadership Conference which opened Saturday night.

Following dinner at 5:30 p.m., conference center manager Ken McAnear said the first report of illness came at 7:30 p.m. The last person was taken to a hospital at 12:20 a.m. Sunday.

McAnear said all emergency vehicles from the Buncombe and McDowell County rescue squads, and ambulance services were used to transport people to hospitals in Asheville and Marion, N.C.

McAnear said an investigation started immediately to determine the cause of the food poisoning, and is being conducted by conference center and Buncombe County health department officials.

"We deeply regret this incident and will pursue all avenues to determine the cause and then take measures to be sure it doesn't happen again," the conference center manager said.

McAnear praised the Black Mountain Rescue Squad and the local Civil Defense Unit, headed by Capt. Jerry VeHaun, for doing "a superb job" in coordinating the ambulance service.

At one point Interstate 40 in front of the conference center was blocked to allow ambulances to enter and leave the conference center more quickly. In Asheville, streets were blocked to enable emergency vehicles to proceed to the three hospitals receiving patients.

At the conference center, an emergency plan was activated. Persons who became ill were taken to the infirmary where they received preliminary treatment before being taken to a hospital.

Residence hall hostesses and staffers conducted room checks to locate persons who needed treatment.

As people received treatment at the hospitals and were released to return to Ridgecrest, McAnear said they were transported by a conference center bus, a bus provided by First Baptist Church, Black Mountain, N.C., and vehicles made available by guests.

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"This was an all night process," said McAnear.

Harry Piland, director of the Sunday School conference which began Saturday night, said, "The emergency plan worked superbly. The volunteers on the grounds and the rescue squads were helpful and competent."

Despite the overnight illness of many people, the experience "has had the effect of bringing us together."

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1982 SBC Block Room
Assignments Are Made

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Block room reservations priorities for the 1982 Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans have been assigned by random drawing.

Tim A. Hedquist, convention manager for the SBC Executive Committee, said the system of drawing to establish priorities for assigning blocks of rooms was established last year.

"Under the policies, people may request blocks of rooms in writing before July 15, and a drawing will be held immediately to determine the priority of assigning the rooms," he said.

Hedquist explained the policy was necessary because there are more requests for blocks of rooms than there are rooms available.

Under convention arrangements, a number of rooms are reserved in the convention city for use when the SBC comes to town. Usually, such arrangements are made three or four years in advance.

At New Orleans, about 6,000 rooms have been reserved for the SBC, working through the New Orleans Convention Bureau.

Under policies adopted by the Executive Committee, only 40 percent of those rooms are available for block reservations, and there is a limit of 50 rooms per individual or group.

In the drawing for New Orleans assignments, some 91 individuals or groups made requests for block rooms. "We will be able to provide blocks of rooms to only 35 or so of the requests," Hedquist said, explaining the necessity of the draw.

Last year, the first year we held a drawing, we had 50 requests and were able to satisfy 30 because there is a limit to the blockable rooms," he added.

The system was started because the previous system favored established groups such as travel agents and discriminated against individuals or associations, he said.

"For instance, we worked on a first-come, first-served basis, and some groups were making requests four and five years in advance. This eliminated a pastor or association who decided nearer to the convention to seek a block of rooms for a group," he said.

The convention arrangements procedures, Hedquist said, allow 40 percent of the rooms to be reserved in blocks, and 60 percent to be reserved on an individual basis.

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The block room arrangements allow such groups as state conventions, travel agencies, associations and others to request a group of rooms even if they do not know specifically who will occupy them.

When individual room requests begin Oct. 1, they must be assigned for specific individuals and cannot be transferred, Hedquist added.

"The system really was devised to make the system fair to all," he added.

Of the 91 requests received by the deadline, 89 were involved in the random draw. The other two were put at the end because they did not use the required two-thirds of their blocked rooms in the 1981 convention, and are prohibited from being included in the draw for 1982.

Of the requests, Hedquist said 39 were from Texas, 13 from Tennessee, and the remainder scattered across the United States.

"We do not know who the requests are from, but they are randomly drawn to prevent favoritism," he said. "We have started down the list, calling those people in order of the priority."

"We will assign as many blocks of rooms as are available," he added.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers.

Mrs. Clifton J. Allen
Dies After Long Illness

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Hattie Bell McCracken Allen, 85, a Baptist educator and writer, died Friday, July 24, in Winston-Salem, N.C., after a long illness.

Mrs. Allen lived in Nashville more than 40 years until 1972 when her husband, Clifton J. Allen retired as editorial secretary of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

She became one of the first women in the Southern Baptist Convention to serve as a minister of education on a church staff when in 1924 she was called to the staff of First Baptist Church, Hartsville, S.C.

In 1926, Mrs. Allen moved to Nashville to become an assistant editor at the Sunday School Board, for which she worked until 1947.

Mrs. Allen, a native of Columbus, Miss., earned the B.S. degree from William Carey College, Hattiesburg, and the B.A. and M.A. degrees from Peabody College in Nashville.

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Mission Volunteer Turns
Spinal Injury Into Witness

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7/27/81

SALZBURG, Austria (BP)--Spending most of her summer mission term in Salzburg, Austria, in a body cast wasn't the way Denise Duck had envisioned sharing her faith.

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On July 14, the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary student awoke to the odor of smoke in her apartment, jumped from her second story bedroom window and suffered a spinal injury. She is expected to be in her body cast eight weeks.

Later, as she lay in her hospital room and reflected upon her experience, Duck told an Austrian newspaper reporter, "I thank God for saving me."

A picture of the Fort Worth, Texas, woman, the fire story and her witness appeared the next day in the Salzburg area newspaper, New Kronen Zeitung.

Candy Wagner, an MK (missionary kid) and a physical education major at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, was spending the night with Duck when the fire broke out. Wagner first jumped to safety without injury, but Duck apparently struck a concrete walk as she jumped.

Barely a month into her term when she was injured, Duck, 24, had come to Salzburg as a secretary for Salzburg International Baptist Church and for the MK's father, Bill Wagner, consultant for evangelism and church growth for Europe and the Middle East for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

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Medical Consultant Recovering
From Coronary Bypass Surgery

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7/27/81

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Franklin T. Fowler, medical consultant for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, is recovering from double coronary bypass surgery performed July 24.

Fowler suffered an allergic reaction following surgery, but doctors say his condition is stable. Fowler entered the hospital a week before surgery after experiencing chest pains.

The former missionary to Paraguay and Mexico is responsible for the health care of more than 3,000 missionaries worldwide and assists the board's office of overseas operations in developing health care ministries overseas. He has been medical consultant since 1961.

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'Cousins' Find Family
At Oklahoma Baptist

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SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP) — Jimmy Westmoreland and 56 of his cousins attend Oklahoma Baptist University.

Their families are scattered throughout the world, so many of the cousins had not met before coming to OBU. In fact, the cousins are not related, in the traditional sense, but they become closer every day.

Westmoreland is on the executive committee of Cousins, an organization for missionaries' children (MKs, for missionary kids) at OBU. The title comes from MKs calling other missionaries aunts and uncles.

Cousins is not a social club for MKs. It was organized to address their special needs.

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"Imagine your first few days in a foreign country, the language and cultural differences," explains Truman Smith, missionary family consultant for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. "That is what it's like for some MKs. They know only as much English as the textbooks have taught them, and though they are expected to be a part of American society, some just can't make it."

Dick Rader, OBU assistant professor of religion and former missionary to Zambia, is the group's sponsor. "The kids are sometimes so awed by the difference in American culture that they are unable to seek an understanding person," he says. "That is where Cousins helps."

Westmoreland, whose parents serve in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, agrees that the biggest benefit of the group is that it lends MKs a sense of identity.

"When there's no one close by that gives you a family-type relationship, Cousins is there," says Westmoreland, a senior at OBU. "To celebrate my birthday, for instance, we all got together for a breakfast. The group is very important on those occasions."

The group meets informally, usually at meal times, to discuss problems with finances, well-meaning relatives who become overbearing and practical matters such as where to get a contact lens replaced. But the biggest obstacle for MKs to overcome is the difference in culture.

"The pace in the United States is so much faster," says Westmoreland. "People appear to be so busy with themselves and their non-stop world that they don't take time to care. That is a generalization, but that's what MKs see at first."

James Warren, whose father is a statewide missionary for Internationals for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, is one of few Cousins whose parents are associated with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. His self-assumed role is that of liaison for America.

"I try to help other MKs understand what's going on in this country," says Warren, also a senior. "MKs are much more sensitive to the resources America has in abundance. The waste of food, for instance, is appalling to them."

Rilda Smith, a junior whose parents serve in Tanzania, East Africa, agrees.

"People use something halfway and throw it away," comments Smith. "In Tanzania, we used foil and plastic bags until there were too many holes in them to be of value. No one thinks of conserving, it seems, especially easily available items like foil and plastic bags."

"People act as if their own part of the United States was all that existed in the world. Those problems are what we bring to Cousins."