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Carl Kerr: Volunteer
For Ev ry Season

By Gigi Schrader

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP) — Carl Kerr does more things to serve God than you can shake a stick at. When something needs doing or someone needs help, he is not far behind.

When the Hyatt Regency Hotel tragedy struck in Kansas City, Kerr was at the scene answering phones for the Red Cross until 5 o'clock the following morning.

Kerr is a member of the Southern Baptist disaster relief team in the metro Kansas City area. He is also a head chaplain in Missouri's Civil Air Patrol. He's been to Brazil twice to help Southern Baptist missionaries and is a member of Campers on Mission, a group of Missourians who spend their vacations ministering to campers across the state.

He has been pastor of four Missouri churches and he started a prayer group at TWA that has grown to include 300 employees.

He is a member of Park Hill Baptist Church in Kansas City and according to pastor Craig Tally, has established a "very aggressive" Royal Ambassador program.

And those are just the major things he's done. Who knows what else he's volunteered for?

Kerr is a full-time mechanic and electrician for TWA. Two of his three children were adopted from the Missouri Baptist Children's Home.

"Everytime I turn around Carl is volunteering," says John Dowdy, director of missions for the Missouri Baptist Convention.

"And I am doubly impressed because of the kind, loving way he does it. He doesn't brag and is very humble. It is refreshing to find that kind of Christian attitude."

Why does he give so much of himself to help others? Kerr answers that question with a story. At a little league baseball game, one little boy would close his eyes every time the pitch crossed the plate. He never swung the bat. Most of the time he would strike out and walk away with tears in his eyes.

Soon Kerr felt sorry for him and went to talk with him. He found out the little boy prayed for four balls because he was afraid he would miss if he swung the bat.

Kerr explained to the boy that God didn't want him to strike out either, but that maybe the pitcher had been praying for three strikes. And he began to teach the boy how to bat.

"That's when I realized that if we are going to reach the world, we have to go to them," Kerr remembers. "That little boy knew the church was on 1st and Main, but where were we when he needed us?"

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So Kerr goes to the people .

As part of the disaster relief team in Kansas City, he helps people whose homes have burned or flooded or consoles friends and relatives of the injured in major disasters like the Hyatt Regency tragedy.

He gives moral direction to youth, ranging in age from 13 to 21, as a chaplain in the Civil Air Patrol. As wing chaplain, Kerr directs the chaplaincy program in the state.

"It's a great opportunity for ministry outside the church," he stresses, noting that 50 percent of the cadets have no church background.

It's an understatement to say that Kerr takes advantage of ministry opportunities outside the church. He takes advantage of opportunities outside the country, too.

Kerr had been attending a class on missions at Midwestern Seminary taught by missionary to Brazil and visiting professor Raymond L. Colb. When Colb told his students of the trouble missionaries in Brazil were having with their generators, Kerr jokingly volunteered to repair them.

Soon Kerr and two others were on their way to fix them—all at their own expense. Not only did he fix the generators in three cities in the interior of the country, he preached in several small villages also. This trip to Brazil led to another to renovate a house and establish it as a mission in a poor area of Petropolis.

The list about Carl Kerr could go on and on—the four Missouri churches he has led, the prayer group he helped start at TWA that has grown into 10 groups, the dynamic RA program he developed—but questions still remain unanswered.

How does he do it? What about his family? Kerr will be the first to say that if it hadn't been for his family he wouldn't be involved in all this volunteer work. He does it because his family does too.

His wife, Carol, works with GAs and is in Campers on Mission. His son and daughter-in-law, Bill and Sara Kerr, are both on the disaster relief team and in Campers on Missions. And Kerr got involved in the Civil Air Patrol 13 years ago when his son joined as a cadet.

"I like to be with my family so we spend time together in volunteer work," he explains. "I couldn't have done it if my family hadn't been. I just wouldn't have had the time."

John Dowdy sums up Kerr's work: "You just cannot put your finger on one thing he's done. It's all the things together. They begin to mushroom and build a picture of someone who has a deep spiritual personal life and helping flows in a natural way.

"He makes people think, 'Man, I can do that, too.'"

Baptists Seek Ways To Help
In Case of Floods Or Strife

By Bill Webb

LAKE YOJOA, Honduras (BP)--Baptists in Honduras made plans to minister in any disaster—even civil conflict—at their first national disaster response conference in late July.

Deeply aware of the civil unrest and violence experienced in recent times by their neighbors—El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala—pastors, deacons and laymen voiced concern over what their response should be if turbulence erupts in Honduras.

They considered what they would do in the event of a hurricane like "Fifi" that killed thousands in 1974 or in the event of heavy flooding like that recently on the north coast. But they concentrated their planning on their response in the case of civil conflict.

They posed questions to each other and to Southern Baptist missionaries participating in the four-day meeting.

"What we need to know is, what do we do if our pastor is held hostage for ransom by guerrilla forces," said Maria de Saucedo, regional WMU president. "Should we pay or fight?"

"Neither" was the response suggested by David Harms, medical evangelist for nine years in Honduras. "When we all turned our lives over to Jesus Christ to serve him, we knew that the Bible spoke of these risks. Christians then were willing to die for Christ; we today as pastors and missionaries must be willing to do the same.

"If you were to pay the ransom you would put every pastor in the country under the danger of being taken hostage," he said. "The guerrillas would have found a gravy train."

The conferees decided they could respond positively in several ways in the face of civil conflict:

--Pastors would continue to preach the gospel, though they would hold all services during daylight hours.

--They would pray for confidence and then demonstrate it by their lives in troubled times.

--If needed, they would set up first aid stations and clinics in their church buildings, evangelize the wounded, care for orphans and feed the hungry.

They were advised not to align themselves or their churches with any group, either political or ecumenical.

One conferee suggested, Honduran Baptists "show whose side you are on. We belong to Christ. Let us demonstrate his love and works."

Honduras has lived in peace since its war with El Salvador in 1969, but as the nation faces national elections in November, the Baptists admonished each other to "please pray for peace."

McCall Pinpoints
Spirit Movements

By Beth Sayers Wildes

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--The great spiritual movements among Baptists of this decade are taking place in the Soviet Union, Central Asia and West Africa, according to two Southern Baptist leaders who spoke during the Woman's Missionary Union leadership conference.

"There's a great explosion of spiritual power in these areas," said Duke McCall, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and of the Baptist World Alliance.

"God is adding to the church daily. I'm not even sure they can keep up with the numbers."

McCall cited the experience of a visiting evangelist who preached in India's Nagaland for two days: "The man had to stay three more days to baptize the converts. There were more people converted there than at Pentecost."

Earlier, John Mills, area director for West Africa for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, called opportunities for witness in French-speaking West Africa "unbelievable."

He said the only obstacle is that "there are not enough people or resources to do the work that Jesus beckons us to do."

Mills reported that the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has been unable to fill certain types of missions jobs in the past five years because no qualified people have volunteered.

Among the jobs he listed were business managers, accountants and preachers.

Mills said only five percent of preachers educated in the United States leave the North American continent to preach, and added: "I can't understand how the enrollment in our seminaries is running over, but we can't find preachers to go and start churches in these countries."

He urged the women to "pray into existence people to go and meet these needs."

Another Baptist leader predicted future missionaries will not necessarily be those appointed by mission boards.

"They will be those who move across the earth in their daily businesses, witnessing effectively in behalf of Jesus," said Oscar Romo, director of the Home Mission Board's language missions division.

Romo also said that the Home Mission Board is working with Brazilian Baptists and with the Foreign Mission Board to bring missionaries from Brazil to work with Portuguese-speaking people here.

He also predicted that Southern Baptists will have started 900 new Korean missions by the end of the 1980s.

If the goals of Bold Mission Thrust are reached, Southern Baptists must "get off the sidelines and get involved," said Dorothy Sample, president of WMU, SBC.

"It's going to take bold dreaming, bold living, and first of all bold listening to our God. We can only do this if we, like Isaiah, get a real vision of who our God is," she said.

Eye Infection Affects
Thousands in Honduras

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (BP)--An apparent viral eye infection is affecting "tens of thousands" of Hondurans as it spreads rapidly across the northern coast.

Southern Baptist missionary physician David Harms flew to Atlanta at the expense of the Honduras Baptist Convention with blood samples and eyelid scrapings for identification of the virus at the Center for Disease Control.

Harms believes the virus may be "epidemic hemorrhagic conjunctivitis," an illness that causes the vessels of the conjunctiva (the membrane lining the inner surface of the eyelids and covering the whites of the eyes) to bleed.

The infection, which runs its course in three to eight days, is characterized by itching, a feeling of sand or grit in the eyes, pain in eye movement, eyelid swelling and excessive tearfulness, he said. The illness itself apparently does not cause permanent damage.

In Atlanta, Harms hopes to find an effective method of treating the painful virus. Many affected Hondurans are resorting to rinsing their eyes with sea water, lime juice and other home remedies for relief, he reported, adding such remedies frequently result in secondary bacterial infections.

Missionary Larry Elliott, mission coordinator of Christian social ministries; the executive committee of the Honduras Baptist Mission; and representatives of the national convention are working together to help those affected by the illness.