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Editor Finds Waltons
Really Are Baptists

By Robert J. Hastings

SCHUYLER, Va. (BP)--"How'd you like to drive over to Schuyler and see Walton's Mountain?" asked Dennis Hester, pastor in Roseland, Va. "I met Earl Hamner's mother at a wedding in our church, and she invited me over any time."

Hamner grew up with seven brothers and sisters in Schuyler, a remote village in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. From his experiences he wrote "The Homecoming," the book on which the popular television series "The Waltons" is based.

His mother, 77, still lives in the house she moved to 50 years ago "so Earl Jr. could walk to school."

The famous red hair of the Waltons finds its root in Mrs. Hamner's, still bright, though streaked with gray.

"All my kids had red hair, like my Irish mother," she joked. "And when Earl was selecting the cast for 'The Waltons,' he screened 300 youngsters, all red-headed! I'm looking forward to the re-runs this fall, for I've forgotten some of the episodes."

"John-Boy's been here to see me, as well as the late Will Greer, who played the part of Grandpa," she recalled. "And Ben and Jason from the series once spent a week with me."

Of course, there is no "Walton" family in Schuyler, just as there is no Walton Mountain. But a mountain family of eight red-headed children did grow up here together, there is a nearby Rick Fish River, there is an Ike Godsey Store, and there is a Baptist church, which surfaces in several of the Walton episodes.

Schuyler Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist congregation, sits just down the street from the Hamners. Ralph W. Hyder is pastor.

"Although I'm not too well and don't get to church like I once did, I went every Sunday and carried all eight kids when they were growing up," Mrs. Hamner said.

"All of my children joined the Baptist church here except Earl Jr., who became an Episcopalian during college, while living with his grandparents in Richmond.

"And in August of 1924, my husband as well as my father were baptized the same day in Rock Fish River, at the end of a revival. Earl Jr. was just a baby, and I couldn't go, but it was a red-letter day for us!"

"My son, James (comparable to Jim-Bob in the series), who is 45, still lives at home," she continued. "He commutes to Charlottesville, where he works at University Hospital. Each December, he directs the children's Christmas programs and plays the piano at both the Baptist and Methodist churches. And I have a daughter in Roanoke who teaches in a Baptist Sunday School."

When it was suggested Mrs. Hamner must have provided a wonderful influence on her family, she replied, "I just hope I did. I know I tried. Home and church were very important."

Need for Hunger Giving
Still Great, Says Strickland

By Orville Scott

DALLAS (BP)--Phil Strickland, director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, has expressed concern over the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's report that more than \$4.5 million in world hunger and relief gifts is still unallocated.

"I'm concerned that it might leave the impression that there's more than enough in the cupboard to take care of the needs," said Strickland, who has visited refugee camps in Cambodia and other nations in his responsibilities to help inform Texas Baptists of world hunger needs.

"Since Oct. 11 is World Hunger Day across the Southern Baptist Convention, it would be tragic for Baptists to get the impression that their gifts for hungry people are not needed," he said.

"The cupboard, in fact, is nearly bare. We are facing massive food shortages in many areas of Africa. Jesus commands us to deal with these as well as to find creative means of meeting the entrenched, habitual hunger needs existing in many other areas."

Southern Baptists gave more than \$5.6 million for world hunger and relief last year and through July 31, have given more than \$1.8 million in 1981.

Cutting into the backlog, the Foreign Mission Board has disbursed more than \$2 million for hunger and relief ministries in 1981.

"The solution is not for Southern Baptists to decrease giving but for the board to enlarge the funnel through which world hunger funds flow," said John R. Cheyne, consultant for relief ministries.

Strickland underscored the statement of the Foreign Mission Board's vice president for planning, Winston Crowley, that the number of career missionaries committed to and trained for world hunger ministries must be multiplied.

It's true, said Strickland, that the Foreign Mission Board must exercise care that new appointees on the field and in Richmond be trained for and committed to world hunger ministry, as well as evangelism and church planting.

"Hopefully these are first steps in moving rapidly to create what can be the most effective and compassionate delivery system on earth for world hunger funds," he added.

"We have enormous potential to demonstrate and validate our Christian compassion, but an effective world hunger program has to do more than meet immediate needs. It has to teach people how to fill their own cupboards.

"This effort of the Foreign Mission Board should be just a beginning. We must be good stewards in moving rapidly to create an even more effective ministry, since Baptists are going to continue to accelerate their response to world hunger."

Allen Assures Begin
Of Prayer Support

By Bonita Sparrow

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptist leader Jimmy R. Allen has assured Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin of continued prayerful support for Israel from the majority of Southern Baptists, but warned Begin he perceived some "erosion of support during the period of confusion of Israel's role dealing with rights in the country."

Allen, president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, and nine other religious leaders met with Begin in an hour-long conference at New York's Waldorf-Astoria, following the prime minister's meeting with President Ronald Reagan, and preceded a trip to Plains, Ga., to visit with former president Jimmy Carter.

In his remarks to the group, Begin cited Israel's normalization of the process to negotiate autonomy for citizens as well as progress in his conversation with President Reagan about mutual action against Soviet aggression in the Middle East.

Begin recalled the visit he and Allen had had in connection with that country's anti-bribery law hearings (at one time a matter of major concern between Baptists and Israel) and defended it as "morally right" but said it would not be used to deny other religious groups their rights in Israel.

"I told Mr. Begin I was aware of his concern that Israel communicate to the world the image of a champion of liberty," Allen said. "He assured me of Israel's commitment to religious liberty for all its citizens."

In this assurance Allen said Begin cited some of the emotionally-charged religious groups in Israel with whom he must deal continuously as a part of the democracy that exists there.

"He said he had been involved in controversy with his militant Orthodox Jewish rabbis over archeological digging in the City of David but declared he would do his best to protect the rights of everyone in Israel," Allen said.

In his remarks to the group, Begin expressed appreciation for the supportive prayers he has experienced from the American Christian community and Baptists in particular.

Franklin Littell of Philadelphia, president of the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel, presided during the session.

In addition to Allen and Littell, those attending the session included David Simpson of New York, director of the office of Christian-Jewish relations, National Council of Churches; Arch Buffkins of Washington, director of programs for minority groups, John F. Kennedy Center; Hilton Sutton of Houston, president, Mission to America; Ann Gillen of Chicago, Interreligious Task Force for Soviet Jewry; Eugene Fisher of Washington, executive director of the Jewish-Christian relations department of the Catholic Bishops Conference; Ernest Flannery of Our Lady of Providence Seminary, Warwick, R.I.; Mike Evans of Bedford, Texas, president, Lovers of Israel; and Kenneth Kantzer, editor, Christianity Today.

Mission in Context Ends
With Strategy Emphasis

By Jim Newton

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--After taking a long hard look at 1980 census data and Bold Mission Thrust plans for the denomination, more than 940 associational, state and national Southern Baptist leaders began to struggle with developing mission strategy on the associational level.

Mission in Context, described as a "once-a-decade" national conference for associational directors of missions, ended with pleas from the director of missions for Atlanta Baptist Association and the president of the SBC Home Mission Board urging a new role for the association as a base for mission strategy.

"The association is being called forth to a different kind of mission," said Eddie Gilstrap, director of missions in Atlanta. "We must become mission strategists where we are."

The Baptist association is best equipped to plan mission strategy because it is the closest organizational unit to the local church, Gilstrap insisted. The association must be a full partner in the denomination in planning mission strategy, rather than simply being a "conduit" through which state and national Baptist bodies channel their plans, programs and strategies.

In the final message of the three-day conference at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, Home Mission Board President William G. Tanner urged the associational leaders to plan their own strategy in the context not only of their own association, but in the context of the whole world.

"There is a danger, I fear, of a creeping neo-isolationism, 'a me-ism,' in America as we tend to turn inward and look more at our own personal concerns, rather than looking at the whole world Christ died to redeem," Tanner said.

"We must not forget...the whole world today is a global village," Tanner said. "What you do today in Littlefield, Texas, can have an immediate effect in Ouagadougou, Upper Volta."

Tanner also warned that Baptist mission strategy must be planned within the context of the whole religious world: "We'd better not forget that God works through his whole body (the church), not just through one of his little fingers called Southern Baptists."

In a closing evaluation, the chairman of the Mission in Context steering committee, James Nelson of the Home Mission Board's associational missions division, observed the facts and data from the census report compared to Baptist church growth have been "rather pessimistic."

"But as redeemed people of God, we go with our theology. In Jesus Christ, we leave with a positive note."

During a presentation of data from the 1980 census, Home Mission Board research division director Orrin D. Morris said the data indicates Southern Baptists will lose the South and the cities if they do not focus more on reaching blacks and ethnics.

Morris pointed out Baptist church membership did not keep pace with the population growth in the South where Southern Baptists are strongest between 1970-80, and predicted reaching the large cities of the South will present the most formidable challenge to Baptists in the decade of the 1980s.

In another major address, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Duke K. McCall said the most crucial question Southern Baptists are facing is, "how much diversity can Southern Baptists tolerate?"

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"We may splinter Southern Baptists because of our intolerance of diversity that God created in the first place," McCall said.

He added, however, that "God isn't listening to our predictions. The Holy Spirit has moved in the face of all the trends, winning people to Jesus Christ. He is going to continue until the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of God."

An entire day during the conference was spent in workshops and presentations introducing detailed Bold Mission Thrust plans for the SBC for 1982-85, including nine projects under three priorities: "Reach People, Develop Believers, Strengthen Families."

Following the intense look at statistics and plans, SBC Sunday School Board President Grady C. Cothen warned the Baptist mission leaders against looking only at numbers, challenging them instead to see people in need and in spiritual poverty.

Statistics are only numerical illustrations of human misery, Cothen said. "We are not talking about trends; we are talking about human beings suffering spiritual misery because they've got their lives all mixed up."

Cothen warned that Satan is doing everything he can to thwart Bold Mission Thrust. "He is dividing the churches. He is confusing the denomination, he has attacked every facet of Bold Mission Thrust."

In the conference's opening address, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary President William Pinson warned that Bold Mission Thrust will be costly, for it will require Baptists to struggle with controversy and sacrifice time, money and comfort.

Bold Mission Thrust will be throttled until Baptists learn the Bible teaches Christians must save all they can from what they earn so they can give all they can to world missions, Pinson predicted.

The conference was jointly sponsored by the SBC Sunday School Board, Home Mission Board, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood Commission.

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Campbell Professor
Nominated as Ambassador

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BUIES CREEK, N.C. (BP)--David B. Funderburk, professor of history at Campbell University, has been nominated by President Reagan to be ambassador to Romania.

Funderburk, 37, would be one of the youngest ambassadors of the U.S. State Department. A vote on his nomination is expected by early October.

He and his wife have spent time in Romania over the past several years and he plans, upon confirmation, to affiliate with a Baptist congregation in Bucharest, where the American embassy is located.

He is familiar with Romania, having spent 1971 and 1972 there as a Fulbright student doing research and in 1975 as a Foreign Service staff officer. He was also there in 1976-77.

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