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Peruvian 'Foot Soldier'
 Walks Through Ministry

By Bill Webb

CHUGURRPAMPA, Peru (BP)--A 30-year-old home missionary in the mountains of Peru is a foot soldier in the Lord's army.

Mercedes Gamboa usually walks whenever he visits one of the churches or missions in the breathtaking Andes mountains.

His preaching points are 30 minutes to eight hours away by foot and he visits each at least once a month.

Gamboa's faithfulness has paid off.

The area had only two churches and three mission points when he was called there as a missionary in January. Now there are seven more missions and another organized church.

Not one to adopt insignificant goals, the young missionary set 200 baptisms as a target for his area in 1981. By the end of September, 124 had been baptized and 30 more were enrolled in orientation classes preparing for baptism.

Often his wife Hilda walks with him. She has completed some seminary correspondence courses and goes along to help motivate the women in each community.

Gamboa's ministry actually began about 10 years ago. When he heard a preacher in Chugurpampa preach about God's love and salvation, the 19-year-old mountain farmer responded. Within a week he felt a call to preach the same message to others. The people from the Chugurpampa mission asked him to be their pastor just six weeks after his conversion.

The work prospered under Gamboa's inexperienced leadership but he realized he needed training.

At the Baptist Theological Seminary at Trujillo (13 hours away by foot) he learned he could take courses by correspondence. His pattern was to study at home, then return to Trujillo to take exams and pick up new courses.

Seven years later, he became the first student ever to graduate from the seminary by correspondence.

The process was anything but easy. During his last two years--1978 and 1979--there was a serious drought. For Gamboa and other farmers, that meant no work, no crops, no money and at times, very little food.

Once, when it was time to take another exam and get materials to start a new course, "There was only money in the house for me to pay for my n w course and books," he said. "My mother sold two rabbits to help me save that much."

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Still without money for bus fare to Trujillo, he prayed. Assured that God would enable him to walk all the way, he started at 4 a.m. one day with a small lunch. At 5 p.m. he arrived at the seminary.

Gamboa took his exam and paid for his new course. The next morning he went to visit his sister in Trujillo before starting the long walk home. To his surprise, she repaid a loan of three years earlier--just enough for transportation back to Chugurpampa.

Today, he earns about \$75 per month as a home missionary, with a third of his support coming from the Evangelical Baptist Convention of Peru and the rest from his churches and missions. Next May the churches and missions will assume full support.

As for the Gamboas' status as foot soldiers, Southern Baptist missionary evangelist Karl Wallace, for one, is praying that God will promote them to his cavalry by providing them horses for their extensive mountain travel.

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House 'Church' Loses
High Court Tax Appeal

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Individuals hoping to avoid property taxes by declaring their houses as places of worship received a legal setback as the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the appeal of a Minnesota couple who tried the ploy.

Douglas and Carolyn Page, of Eden Prairie, Minn., applied for property tax exemption in 1978 on their single family dwelling after Page was "ordained" as a minister in the Basic Bible Church of America. The church's head, Pope Jerome Daly, a disbarred attorney convicted of selling marijuana, also inducted Page into his "Order of Almighty God."

After the Hennepin County tax assessor denied the application for the exemption, the Pages took him to court. But after a trial, the Minnesota Tax Court upheld the ruling, a decision later affirmed by the state supreme court.

The Pages' attorney asked the nation's high court to review the case, arguing that his clients' free exercise of religion had been denied.

But attorneys for Hennepin County countered that "there is no constitutional right to have one's home granted a real estate tax exemption simply because one worships in it."

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Dreaming in Portuguese:
Missionary Language School

By Erich Bridges

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CAMPINAS, Brazil (BP)--For rookie Southern Baptist missionaries in Brazil, preaching the gospel in a nation of 120 million is challenge enough. Attempting to preach in understandable Portuguese can be overwhelming.

That's where Billy and Lee Ann Gilmore come in. Before venturing into the field, every new missionary assigned to Brazil spends a rigorous year at the Gilmore boot camp, better known as the Portuguese Language and Orientation School.

The Gilmores, missionaries with 19 years of experience in Brazil, came to Campinas in 1970 to direct the language school, a division of the radio and television board of the Brazilian Baptist Convention.

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A tall, husky Texan with appropriate lingo, drawl and cowboy boots, Gilmore is an unlikely specialist in Brazilian language and culture, but any doubts new pupils may have about his expertise quickly evaporate in the heat of intensive Portuguese studies.

"We put'em through two semesters, five months each," explains Gilmore. "Four hours a day, five days a week, 40 weeks. Friend, that's a lot of Portuguese."

"When you get to where you dream in Portuguese, you've got it."

Missionaries at the school, like many other Southern Baptist missionaries who attend language schools in various parts of the world, saturate themselves not only in language, but culture, geography, economics and "survival" skills--shopping, banking, travel.

Guided by 12 Brazilian teachers, they study one-on-one and in small group classes (husbands and wives are separated to prevent competition and tension). From the outset, instruction is in Portuguese.

Gilmore believes that the language school experience produces a kind of regression to childhood for fledgling missionaries. "You are led again, when you've been used to leading," he says. "In a year's time, you try to pull together what a native speaker learns from birth through high school about language, communication, culture."

Even for gifted students, progress can be agonizingly slow. At language school, doctors of theology may shed tears of frustration.

Lee Ann remembers one examination day: "The teachers had just started testing, but I saw one of the missionaries run past my door. I quietly followed and found him down the hall in an empty room, his head in his hands. 'I knew the material. I knew it,' he kept sobbing, over and over." His mind had gone blank.

But experienced Brazilian instructors relieve the rigors of study with patience, compassion and genuine friendship, according to Lee Ann. "The teachers all consider this a ministry," she says. Several, like Zilda de Oliveira, have taught missionaries for more than two decades. They also develop most materials used in class.

Students and instructors worship together, eat together, and socialize after school hours, providing new missionaries a continuous contact with native Brazilians.

Another plus is Campinas itself, an attractive, modern city in the state of Sao Paulo. Gilmore calls it a good "decompression zone" for missionaries preparing for field service. City-bound missionaries learn what it is like to live in a Brazilian urban center, and those headed for rural regions get a chance to absorb a new culture before plunging into the interior.

It's a crucial year. "This is the key to effective ministry," Gilmore contends. "What's one year for 25 of better communication?"

The payoff, he and Lee Ann believe, comes every time a Southern Baptist missionary wins a Brazilian to Christ. Until convinced otherwise, they'll keep the Gilmore boot camp oiled and running.

Wisconsin Parents Lose Parochial Busing Appeal

WASHINGTON (BP)--An 11-year battle in a Wisconsin school district over transportation of parochial school pupils ended when the U.S. Supreme Court let stand lower court rulings that the state has no constitutional obligation to bus such pupils beyond a five-mile limit authorized by the legislature.

John and Jeanne O'Connell claimed throughout their lengthy legal fight that Mukwonago school officials denied them equal protection under the law by refusing to provide transportation for their children to Catholic Memorial High School in Waukesha, Wis., a distance of just over five miles.

School officials argued that the law was applied uniformly to all families in the district and did not violate the O'Connell's constitutional rights.

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November CP Enjoys Jump

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--November contributions through Southern Baptists' national Cooperative Program jumped 18.5 percent over November 1980.

The \$7,024,465 received in the second month of the fiscal year pushed undesignated year to date receipts to \$13,862,275, up 17.7 percent over the same two months last year.

Designated receipts, down 46.5 percent in October, rebounded to a 38.4 percent increase in November with contributions of \$1,314,452. That puts year to date designated receipts at \$2,281,306, still down 17.3 percent.

Combined designated and undesignated receipts for November of \$8,338,916 are 21.3 percent more than November 1980. Year to date, combined receipts total \$16,143,581, up 11 percent over the same period last year.

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