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Bill Moyers' Roots:
As Baptist As Texas

By Stan Hasteley

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NEW YORK (BP) -- Perhaps only a handful of the 20 million Americans who watch CBS Evening News know that the pulpits of Baptist churches in places like Brandon and Weir, Texas, and Loco, Okla., have anything to do with the commentator's chair in a network studio.

What they hold in common is that Bill Moyers has occupied them all.

Although understandably reluctant to talk in depth about his personal religious views, the 47-year-old successor to CBS's Eric Sevareid makes plain that his Baptist roots in Texas and Oklahoma mean much to him.

"I'm a journalist," he says. "I don't know to what extent Brandon or Weir or Loco or Southwestern Seminary made me what I am today, although I would be a fool to think that they didn't leave a lot of valuable sediment...."

It is, in fact, Bill Moyers, the journalist, who is known by a loyal and growing audience. Along with anchor Dan Rather, Moyers is helping reclaim ratings which went down following the the retirement last year of Walter Cronkite.

But Moyers the citizen and churchman--and, above all the person--comes through when he reflects on his background.

"I learned about democracy in a Baptist church, I learned about the freedom of the individual in a Baptist church, I learned about the inviolability of the conscience in a Baptist church," he reflects. "I learned how to scheme in a Baptist church, I learned how to compromise in a Baptist church, I learned how to negotiate in a Baptist church, I learned how to listen in a Baptist church, I learned how to speak in a Baptist church, I learned about caring from a Baptist church."

When Moyers graduated from Southwestern Seminary in 1960 and immediately joined the staff of then-U.S. Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, some questioned his vocational commitment. But he didn't. "My choice back when I decided to go to seminary was widely interpreted as being the pastorate. But I never put that interpretation on it. I really thought all the time that I would be a teacher."

Furthermore, his seminary student student pastorates helped him realize his calling lay elsewhere. "I'm awfully glad," he says, "that most of my colleagues went on to teach or to preach or to be counselors. But I am awfully glad that something--whatever it was--spared me for what I can do best."

What led him, then, to go to seminary in the first place?

"I had a normal religious experience," he answers. "'What is that?' I don't know, but I had a normal religious experience. And for a spell I interpreted it in the most dramatic terms available to a kid in East Texas who had grown up in a Baptist church; that is, I would dare to be a preacher."

With a chuckle, he adds: "But the Lord in his wisdom knew that was a course that would have unsettled many a soul, had it been pursued to its end."

Yet he readily acknowledges the contributions to his own life of those to whom he ministered as a student pastor. "When I look back, the people to whom I am most indebted are those warm, patient and loving people at Brandon and W ir and Shiloh and Loco, who could, despite what I said between 11 and 12 o'clock, have me to dinner at 12:30, and still be a friend."

Regarding his own journey, he adds: "I'm still on it....I don't know wher I am right now. All I know is where I'm going."

Moyers remains an active, committed church member, though not in a Baptist congregation. Along with his wife, Judith, and 17-year-old son, John, Moyers belongs to a United Church of Christ congregation in the Long Island community of Garden City, N.Y., where the family lives. Daughter Suzanne, 19, is a sophomore at Wake Forest University, while older son, Cope, 22, is working with his father on a special series on major events of the 20th century.

He also emphasizes that his desire to teach, interrupted as it was by Lyndon Johnson's beckoning to Washington and the political trenches, has been fulfilled in his post-government years. Among his prize possessions, he notes, is a letter from Harvard Constitutional expert Raoul Berger with the observation that perhaps no one in the country today has as large a classroom as Moyers.

At the same time, he says he is awed by the size of the class, and gratified by viewers' response to his commentaries on Evening News. While he believes in "personal journalism, that is, journalism with a point of view," he declares emphatically, "I don't believe in a cult of personality," a cult he sees as pervasive in television.

"My personality is the least important thing," he explains. "My personal views are the least important thing. What is important is my work, what it speaks to and what it stands for and what it represents to the people who are on the receiving end of it."

"I never finish a commentary that I don't, on the way home, have doubts that I said the right thing, or that I said it with the subtlety that emotional and intellectual dexterity required."

He is concerned about the sheer power of television news and fearful that television is losing too many teaching opportunities. "Television is to be damned for its omission rather than its commission," he puts it, "for not devoting more time to the issues, for not allotting opportunities for debate." Television fails "in limiting itself on the Evening News to only 22 minutes of information and from overdosing us on banal entertainment at the expense of rigorous discourse."

What is at stake, he insists, is the "civic self" of every citizen. People may be reading and assimilating more information than ever before, he believes, but what is steadily eroding is the "common data base" which any society "must perceive collectively in order to make decisive value judgments about the ends of society."

Too many people "are just plain lazy" in the exercise of citizenship, he says, adding that he is intrigued that so many immigrants coming to the United States appear to take their citizenship so seriously when compared to those "who were born into it as a natural right." Moyers' solution? "I sometimes think we ought to require the equivalent of a profession of faith in a Baptist church--a confession of citizenship, an oath of office...because citizenship is an office."

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✓ That natural blending of theological and civic language is a trait of Bill Moyers, as any regular viewer knows.

It speaks volumes about who the man is, where his values lie, what his dreams are for humankind.

And it says a lot about his sense of comfort with his roots--in places like Brandon, Weir and Loco. "I haven't moved beyond my Baptist origins," he concludes. "I am indebted to those people."

Ohio WMU Chooses
Foreign Born Head

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DAYTON, Ohio (BP)--Women in the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio have elected Akiko Wolford president of the state Woman's Missionary Union.

Wolford, a Japanese woman who married an American GI after World War II, is believed to be the first foreign born president of a WMU organization.

Wolford is on the national WMU Starteam for enlargement and will lead a conference at the national WMU meeting in New Orleans in June on enlistment and enlargement.

She became a Christian when women of First Baptist Church, Waynesville, Mo., visited her when she and her husband, Jim, were stationed at Fort Leonard Wood.

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Black Baptist Students
Elect National Leaders

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP) -- More than 1,800 black Baptist students gathered "for the only meeting in the country designed and planned by and for black college students" at the Birmingham Civic Center.

According to John Corbitt, director of the National Baptist Student Union Retreat and ethnic consultant with National Student Ministries of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, the meeting is held "because we feel that the black Christian students ought to get together to share resources."

During the retreat the students--who came from 120 campuses across the nation--elected officers, named a "Miss BSU" and participated in an annual gospel choir contest.

Milton Williams Jr., a junior at Virginia State College in Petersburg, Va., was named president. Other officers are: Cheryl Clayborn, a third-year student at Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., vice-president; Donna Whitman, junior, Howard University, Washington, D.C., secretary, and Carl Lavallais, junior, Jackson State College, Jackson, Miss., treasurer.

Selected from a field of 30 contestants, sophomore Jackie Long from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Okla., was named "Miss BSU."

Three choirs received top honors in their division during the gospel choir concert. Winners were: small choir division--United Voices of Inspiration, Texas Wesleyan College, Fort Worth, Texas, Ricky Walters, director; medium choir division--The Gospel Choir of the University of Montevallo, Ala., Kaye Lewis, director; and large choir division--Angelic Voices of Faith of Alabama A & M University, Normal, Ala., Nancy Milsap, director. Twenty-three choirs were entered in the competition.

The four-day retreat was co-sponsored by the department of black church relations of the Home Mission Board and National Student Ministries of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Baptist Sunday School Board.

Southwestern Trustees
Adopt Budget, Elect Faculty

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FORT WORTH, Tex. (BP)--The naming of two major campus buildings, the adoption of a record budget and the election of three new faculty members were highlights of the spring trustees meeting at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The seminary's Recreation/Aerobics Center was named for Myra K. and J. Roy Slover of Liberty, Texas, who gave property valued at \$1 million in February 1979, the largest single gift in Southwestern's history.

The board also voted to name the Memorial Building complex for B.H. Carroll, founder and first president of the seminary. The complex includes Scarborough Hall, Truett Auditorium and Fleming Library, which will retain their original names.

The board adopted a record \$14 million operating budget for the 1982-83 academic year, representing an 18.2 percent increase over the 1981-82 operating budget of \$11.9 million, according to Russell H. Dilday Jr., seminary president.

In presenting the budget Dilday noted that \$5.6 million in funding from the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program, and a 35 percent increase in endowment earnings and 39 percent increase in gifts and grants allowed the substantial budget increase.

Major increases included utility expenses, general salary increases for faculty and staff and operating expenses for several new programs previously approved.

The board approved an increase in the student matriculation fee to \$225 per semester effective in the fall of 1982 as part of the budget. The increase is concurrent with a standard increase approved by the five other Southern Baptist seminaries.

Earl R. Martin, 54, Southern Baptist missionary to Rwanda, was elected professor of missions and world religions effective June 1. Martin is a graduate of Maryville College (Tenn.), Southwestern and Southeastern seminaries and the University of Nairobi, Kenya. In addition to duties as a general evangelist in Kenya and Rwanda, he was on the Baptist seminary faculty in Arusha, Tanzania, for 11 years.

Malcolm McDow, 46, director of evangelism for the Tennessee Baptist Convention since 1977, was elected associate professor of evangelism effective May 1. McDow previously was a pastor in Memphis and on church staffs in Rayville, La., and Houston. He is a graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern and New Orleans seminaries.

Doyle L. Young, 29, of Weatherford, Texas, was elected instructor in church history effective May 1. He currently is Baptist Student Union director and Bible instructor at Weatherford College and an adjunct teacher in church history at Southwestern. Young, a native of Temple, Texas, is a graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern.

Justice C. Anderson was named Bottoms Professor of Missions, effective Aug. 1. He will continue as director of the World Mission/Church Growth Center.

James Eaves was named to the George W. Truett Chair of Ministry for the 1982-83 academic year. He will be a teaching liaison for the evangelism, pastoral ministries and missions divisions and be responsible for Pioneer Penetration, an annual week of revival emphasis across the United States involving Southwestern students.

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Promotions were voted for Tommy Brisco to assistant professor of biblical backgrounds and archaeology; Bruce Corley to associate professor of New Testament; Lorin Cranford to associate professor of New Testament; Al Fasol to associate professor of preaching; Scotty W. Gray to professor of church music; Sue Biggs King to associate professor of voice; Elizabeth R. McKinney to associate professor of piano; Robert C. Smith to assistant professor of piano, and William A. (Budd) Smith to assistant professor of foundations of education.

Changes in titles were approved for three persons in the School of Church Music, including Robert C. Douglass to associate dean for advanced studies; C. David Keith to assistant dean of the performance division, and Gray to assistant dean of the academic division.

Tenure was granted to seven faculty members, including Bobby E. Adams, associate professor of Christian ethics; Darrel Baergen, professor of communication arts; James A. Brooks, associate professor of New Testament; William G. Caldwell, associate professor of church administration; Harry B. Hunt, assistant professor of Old Testament; Corley and Cranford.

R. Cal Guy, Bottoms Distinguished Professor of Missions and founding director of the World Mission/Church Growth Center, was honored for 36 years of teaching at Southwestern. He will retire July 31.

Tennessee Baptists Get Dam
Ready for Next Rainy Season

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By Patsy Eitelman

RB

Baptist Press
3/26/82

OUAGADOUGOU, Upper Volta (BP) -- Tennessee Baptists have finished two-thirds of an earthen dam for the Diabo Circle region of Upper Volta, enough to hold the next season's rains even if the dam is not complete.

In spite of mechanical breakdowns, scarcity of spare parts, and shortages of equipment and workers, the Tennessee volunteers have worked for more than five months--hauling, dumping and packing tons of rock and dirt--in an effort to finish the dam before the rainy season starts in late May.

The dam for a 55-acre lake is only part of a total development project embracing 17 villages in the Diabo Circle region of this West African nation. Besides developing water resources, Southern Baptist missionaries and Tennessee Baptists have joined in a three- to five-year project aiding villagers with agricultural, health, educational, environmental and evangelistic development. The Foreign Mission Board considers the project a pilot for future developmental work in other areas, also to be financed primarily by hunger relief funds.

A water shortage threatened to put the dam behind schedule. By mid-February the small lake, dug as a water source for packing the dam, was almost dry. Workers built a road to another lake, but hauling water consumed precious time.

Then a rare rain fell and filled a pool below the dam, providing water for packing the dam and relieving the water shortage of villagers who had been having to draw water from a deep well dug for the volunteer camp. Before Baptists dug that well, women had to walk as far as three miles in search of water for their families.

The development project already has had an impact on the volunteers and on churches in the Diabo Circle area. During 1981, 63 Tennessee volunteers assisted with the project, and Tennessee Baptists designated more than.

"For the first time, I saw myself as a goer instead of just a sender," says Gene Williams of Church Hill, Tenn., who went twice to Upper Volta. The second time, he brought his wife, who did literacy work while he helped with construction.

During December and January, 165 people were baptized into churches in the immediate area around the dam site and 184 were baptized in the nearby village of Tangaye. Baptist churches in the area resulted from an earlier well-drilling project carried out by Southern Baptist missionaries.

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Eitelman is Southern Baptist missionary press representative for Upper Volta.
(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.