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82-53

Keith Parks, Wife Visit
El Salvador, Guatemala

By Bill Webb

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) -- Just back from visits to El Salvador and Guatemala, R. Keith Parks said he was impressed with the quality of Baptist outreach in those two Central American hotspots and six other Latin American countries he visited.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board president and his wife, Helen Jean, visited the two nations plus Belize and Barbados on the first leg of their trip. They were accompanied by Don Kammerdiener, director for Middle America and the Caribbean, and his wife, Meredith. The Parks also visited Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil.

Making the trip to keep a "field perspective" as the board's top administrative decision maker, Parks praised the missionaries for overseas service despite tensions and problems on the field.

In Guatemala, where the two couples visited less than a week before the recent coup, Parks said he could sense certain pressures gnawing at some of the 22 missionaries.

"If you probe them a little bit, some of them will begin to identify some of their anxieties and uneasiness and discomforts and problems and frustrations," he said. "Then, after you've scraped all that away, they come back and say, 'The Lord has called us and this is where we're going to be 'til he directs otherwise.'"

In El Salvador, Southern Baptists' only two missionary couples are engaged in a rapidly expanding literature ministry. Reacting to political and economic uncertainties, middle class as well as poorer Salvadorans are searching for truth in religious books, new churches are springing up and church attendance is increasing, Parks reported.

He acknowledged the risk factor in serving in places like El Salvador and Guatemala. But, he affirmed, "The whole basic thrust of the Christian theology says to me that the souls of people are worth the risk of living in an uncertain and maybe dangerous environment."

Still, he and Kammerdiener stressed to missionaries, the choice to leave the field can also be a legitimate expression of God's leading.

Parks challenged missionaries to work in such a way that, should they have to leave on short notice, mature national leaders would be able to continue without a missionary presence. "A realistic look at the world in which we live would say to every missionary, 'We really need to have that kind of strategy,'" he said.

That quality of leadership was epitomized for Parks and Kammerdiener by Juan Mael Nunez, only in his mid-20s but already president of the Baptist Convention of Guatemala. Young Nunez accepted his role at a time when the convention threatened to split, but he has overcome obstacles to bring unity among Baptist leadership, Kammerdiener said.

At a meeting where Kammerdiener and Parks met with missionaries and national Baptist leaders in Guatemala, Nunez "conducted the entire meeting with a sense of grace and calmness about him that just infused confidence," Kammerdiener added.

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Nunez credits missionary Yvonne Helton of California, who trained him intensely for a year, with helping pr par him for his heavy convention responsibilities.

"I feel in El Salvador and Guatemala the Christians had a sense of urgency about them that we don't have here," Parks said. "I was very pleased with the growing vision, desire and commitment (of national Baptist leaders) to get out and reach the world."

Southern Baptists can help support the work in El Salvador, Guatemala and other countries around the world by praying that the "Lord would give wisdom to national leaders like this young man (Nunez)," he suggested, and that they will be enabled to assume leadership "more rapidly than we sometimes think they can."

"And pray for the Christians that no matter what happens they will be strong enough to continue to grow."

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Baptists 'Wait and Pray'
After Avalanches Strike

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TAHOE CITY, Calif. (BP) -- Southern Baptists are "waiting and praying" for word of the fate of friends missing since March 31 when avalanches smothered a ski resort in nearby Alpine Meadows, 7,000 feet up in the Sierra.

Dan Holzer, pastor of 80-member First Baptist Church of Tahoe City, said some resort personnel who have assisted with the church's ski slope ministries during the past nine years ar lost and feared dead after a roaring ridge of snow three-quarters of a mile wide struck an A-frame ski school and slammed it into the 70,000-square-foot ski lodge.

Five were rescued and six bodies have been recovered from beneath 25 feet of snow, but as many as 13 employees and some vacationers were at the resort when the disaster hit. Efforts to evacuate Alpine Meadows' 800 residents have been hampered by the slides.

Another avalanche struck Squaw Valley, nearby site of the 1960 Winter Olympics, and buried two houses. One home was owned by a member of his church, Holzer confirmed, but was occupied by a tenant. No injuries were reported.

The avalanches were triggered by 12 feet of light, powdery snow fallen in four days, Holzer explained. "The crews that normally dynamite the slopes every morning to control avalanches were unable to get out there in those blizzard conditions."

Holzer noted the heavy snowfall kept most skiers off the slopes. "Usually there are as many as 8,000 skiers at Alpine Meadows, but the mountain had been closed and only one lift was operating."

"It was the locals--the ski patrol and maintenance workers--who were caught," he reported. Chances of their surviving under the snow were "remote," Holzer admitted, "unless they happened to have been caught in their cars."

Southern Baptists are not yet able to attempt any rescue ministries because the area is sealed and accessible only to search crews on snow tractors and skis. Holzer said, "Right now, all we can do is stay near the phone and be available for the families."

Each Sunday 21 laypersons normally hold worship services on seven ski slopes in this popular resort area, as well as puppet shows for children in the resort daycare facilities. "The people here have always helped any way they could, like putting up our crosses at each worship site on the slopes," Holzer said. "They've really become friends."

This is the third time the area has had snow-related tragedy. A Squaw Valley ski tram fell in 1978, killing four persons, and three skiers were lost four years ago near Alpine Meadows.

Holzer explained, "It's not that anyone is careless, people here are used to lots of snow. Just not this much of it all at once."

Continuing the search for victims may be hampered if snow continues to fall as predicted, Holzer feared. "I'm afraid we're going to have to prepare...for holding some funerals."

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Valentine, Others Score
Reagan on Social Cuts

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (BP) -- Protestant, Catholic and Jewish leaders--including Southern Baptist ethicist Foy D. Valentine--have rejected the Reagan administration's expectation that private charity can and will assume primary responsibility for solving human problems of poverty, hunger and unemployment.

Valentine, who heads the SBC Christian Life Commission, joined the other leaders in describing that expectation as both "unrealistic" and "inappropriate."

"The charity of the religious community can only ease the burden of last year's budget cuts on the poor; it cannot resolve it," a joint interfaith statement charged.

Citing examples of increased efforts in the religious community to respond to the needs, the religious leaders said their charitable efforts would continue.

"The stark reality," the statement declared, "is that the available resources of the churches and synagogues, or of the entire private sector, simply will not be sufficient to replace federal human needs programs."

Their statement questioned the ability of the religious community to respond adequately to increased human needs, and insisted it is a legitimate function of government to deal with those needs.

"The very reason for the existence of government is to promote the common good by protecting these human rights," they declared. "When people are without employment, food, shelter and health care, it is not only proper, but required that government intervene to assure these necessities."

The statement further resisted the President's effort to describe the religious community's role.

"In the United States it is not the responsibility of government to define the task of religious bodies," it stated. "If anything, it is the responsibility of religious bodies--as it is of other citizens' groups--to define the task of government."

In addition to Valentine, signers of the statement included Daniel Hoyer, general secretary of the U.S. Catholic Conference; Bernard Mandelbaum, executive vice president of the Synagogue Council of America; Claire Randall, general secretary of the National Council of Churches; and Ronald Sider, president of Evangelicals for Social Action and professor at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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Home Mission Board
Sweeps BPRA Awards

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KANSAS CITY (BP) -- The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board took 17 awards during the 1982 Baptist Public Relations Association awards competition.

The Foreign Mission Board collected nine awards and the Baptist Sunday School Board garnered six.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas collected three awards. Six organizations won two: Baylor University, Baptist Memorial Hospital of Memphis, Tenn., Southern Baptist General Convention of California, Radio-Television Commission, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and the Baptist Message, journal of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

HMB staffers Wayne Grinstead and Mark Sandlin captured two of the top three special awards, Grinstead the M.E. Dodd Award for best audio-visual production, and Sandlin the Fon H. Scofield Award for best photography.

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Johnni Johnson Scofield of the FMB won the Arthur S. Davenport Award, for best in total publications or public relations categories.

HMB first place awards: Margaret McCommon and Karen Mitchell, total development program; Walker L. Knight, magazine; Everett Hullum, special publication; Phyllis Thompson, feature article; Paul Obregon, news photography series and single feature photograph; Sandlin, feature photography series, and Grinstead, film and slide or filmstrip production.

HMB second place awards: Knight, total publications program; McCommon, newsletter; Patti Stephenson, special publications; Hullum, feature article; and Sandlin, single feature photograph and feature photography series.

Foreign Mission Board awards: Firsts—Harold R. White, poster; Kenneth R. Lawson, single news photograph and Irma Duke, news series. Seconds—Duke, feature series; Bob Stanley, news story; Lawson, film, and Don Rutledge, single and series news photography.

Sunday School board winners: Firsts—Charles Willis, newsletter, and Donald Whitehouse, single advertisement. Seconds—W. Howard Bramlette, general information brochure and magazine; Don Fearheiley, radio-tv production and single advertisement.

Texas Baptists captured two firsts—Lynda Kokel, annual report, and Thomas J. Brannon, advertising series—and a second—Looie Biffar, total public relations project.

Other multiple award winners:

Eugene W. Baker, Baylor University, first in total publications program and second in annual report; Maurice W. Elliott, Baptist Memorial Hospital, firsts for total public relations project and general information brochure; Donald S. Hepburn, California convention, first for letterhead, second for total development program;

Bob Taylor, first, radio-tv production, and Greg Warner, first, news article, both of the RTVC; David Wilkinson, first, catalog, and Marv Knox, first, feature series, both of Southern seminary; and Lynn Clayton, editor of the Baptist Message, first and second for editorial writing.

Other first place awards: Ray Furr, Annuity Board, development brochure; Mark Smith, Golden Gat Baptist Theological Seminary, direct mail campaign, and Al Shackelford and Charlie Warren of the Baptist and Reflector, journal of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, news publication.

Other second place awards: Joe Westbury, Union University, development brochure; Tim Fields, Christian Life Commission, catalog; Kim Bracken, Southwest Missouri Baptist University, letterhead; Stan Hastey, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, news series; Rick Stegall, North Carolina Baptist Children's Homes, poster; Mark Jeffcoat, South Carolina Baptist Convention, filmstrip; Reinhold Kerstan, Baptist World Alliance, advertising series, and James H. Cox, of the Western Recorder, journal of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, news publication.

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Role of Women Decreases,
Christine Gregory Charges

By Everett Sneed

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NORTH LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)—"The role of women in Southern Baptist life has decreased substantially in the last 10 years," said Christine Gregory, first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention. "I really could get discouraged about it."

The problem, she said, is compounded by the fact that a host of women are graduating from our seminaries who want to be involved in ministry, but have no place to go except into home missions or foreign missions. "This may be good," she said, "because it may be the Lord's way of leading us to get more people into mission service."

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Gregory feels there are a number of ways of increasing involvement of women in Southern Baptist life. "The WMU offers one of the best opportunities for involvement of women," said Gregory, who was SBC WMU president for six years.

"Women need to see that one of their gifts is that of affirmation. We could help a lot of pastors desiring to delegate responsibility in mission education. It's easy for me to see how WMU gets to be a woman's thing. A woman doesn't normally go to her husband to ask, 'Should I buy a pair of shoes for our child?' We just go to buy the shoes. So it is natural for a church WMU director to just take something and run with it. Perhaps, in the past there have been too many times when the WMU director has not been working closely enough with her pastor."

"On the other hand," Gregory said, "I don't think that women should be apologetic about the gifts God has given to us. I see too many women just copping out. I know what my gift is and I don't mind telling anyone what it is. I really get perturbed when women begin to put themselves down. We are denying what God has given to us. If God created us, breathed into us the breath of life and then gave us gifts, we are to acknowledge these gifts and to use them."

Gregory feels women need to be really serious about using their God-given gifts, adding: "When we get serious about the gifts that God has given us, then perhaps other people will take us more seriously."

Gregory feels that one of the main problems for women graduating from seminaries is the fact that men feel insecure. She said, "There are two ways that we can make men feel more secure. First, we don't demand things. And second, we need to let men know that we want to work along beside them. We are not trying to take away their places of service."

Churches ought to be encouraged to take seriously the gifts that young women have, need to be encouraged to look at young women who are graduating from seminary for staff positions, Gregory added.

Gregory believes Baptist editors can do more than any other group to encourage churches to utilize the gifts of women. She said, "I believe that Baptist editors are some of the strongest opinion makers in Southern Baptist life. They need to speak out on churches using the gifts of women. I don't mean cooking the church supper. Women are willing to do this. But I am referring to using the gifts of women in relating to other people."

Of herself, Gregory said, "I never felt called to religious vocation, although, I served a church as a religious education director for one year and then later served on a parttime basis for two years." After her marriage to A. Harrison Gregory, she started working in the church WMU, later in the association and then in the state. In 1975 she was elected as the SBC WMU president.

Gregory feels that the WMU is at one of its strongest points in history right now. She said, "The WMU has led the way in promoting 'the life-changing commitment.'"

She adds that in order to reach people we must sometimes change our own lifestyles. "You can't change people into your own image," Gregory said, "but you must start where they are. This often means changing your own lifestyle so that you can bring them to Jesus."

In commenting on her year as first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Gregory said, "I have never worked harder in my life and I have missed the WMU expense account. One of the things I hope to get done as I go out of office is to get an expense account for the vice presidents." Gregory feels that one of the reasons vice presidents in the past have not had expense accounts is that most of them were pastors of churches and their churches which provided for these expenses.

Gregory is very complimentary of her husband. She said, "My husband has been a real affirmer during my years of president of the WMU and first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Without his help it would have been impossible for me to serve as I have."