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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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June 25, 1982

82-93

Secretary's Harassment Lawsuit Against Brotherhood Is Settled

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP) — A federal district judge has ruled that a sexual harassment lawsuit against the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission has been settled.

Odell Horton, judge of the United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee, ruled June 18 that "a complete and binding settlement agreement has been negotiated among the parties in this cause."

Barbara (Mrs. Robert) Minor, 44, a nine-year employee of the Brotherhood Commission, filed suit April 9, 1981, against the commission, three of its executives and the Southern Baptist Convention, charging sexual harassment and defamation of reputation and asking \$3 million in damages.

Named as defendants were James H. Smith, commission executive director; Norman Godfrey, associate executive director, and David Haney, who was director of the Baptist men's division, but has since left the commission to open a consulting firm in Memphis.

Horton's ruling orders that a settlement reached Aug. 4, 1981, is to be enforced.

Court papers indicate the settlement includes eight months of salary for Minor, up to \$1,000 for medical expenses, a flat \$5,000 fee for her attorney, Lillian E. Dykes, and other incidental expenses, for a total settlement estimated at \$14,000.

Minor contended a settlement was not reached, although she admitted she signed a letter which set out the terms of the agreement, which was negotiated by Dykes and Ernest G. Kelly Jr., attorney for the Brotherhood Commission.

Horton wrote in his order: "The Court, after careful consideration, discredits that part of Mrs. Minor's testimony where she states that she thought she was simply signing the letter to show that she had read it. That part of her testimony is just totally inconsistent with her conduct throughout the settlement negotiations.

"The Court therefore concludes that this settlement, fairly arrived at, with understanding, fully agreed to by Mrs. Minor, constitutes a binding agreement and should be enforced."

He further found that Minor "did authorize, agree to and approved the terms of the settlement" and that the "terms of the settlement agreement were freely, voluntarily and understandingly consented to by Mrs. Minor."

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In her suit, Minor contended that Haney declined to promote her to division level secretary in 1980, after she refused to respond to what she described as a request for sexual favors on behalf of an associate. It further alleged that Haney, Godfrey and Smith made public statements questioning Minor's mental stability and morality, causing her grave embarrassment and humiliation.

The suit further alleged the "defendants are employed by the Southern Baptist Convention in various positions at the Brotherhood Commission and that the defendants are officials, representatives, agents, servants or employees of the Southern Baptist Convention."

SBC attorney James Guenther of Nashville, said the SBC, "as a defendant, contributed nothing to the settlement. From the very first, we took the position that the SBC should not be a party to this suit."

Horton's ruling, however, did not speak to that issue.

The ruling, did, however, make permanent an injunction prohibiting parties to the lawsuit from making any public statement on the merits of the case.

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Charles Richardson
Returns to HSU

Baptist Press
6/25/82

ABILENE, Texas (BP)--Charles R. Richardson, assistant editor of the Biblical Recorder, journal of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, has been named news director for Hardin-Simmons University, according to Darrell Wood, director of communications at HSU.

Richardson previously worked as HSU director of public information from 1965-67 and 1968-73.

He has also served as assistant editor for the Baptist Standard, newsjournal of the Texas Baptist Convention; director for Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, and as press representative for the Texas Baptist Executive Board. While a college student, Richardson worked as a reporter for the Brownwood Bulletin and as city editor for the Brown County Gazette. He was also a reporter for the Abilene Reporter-News.

Richardson holds a master of science degree in journalism from East Texas State University, Commerce; a master of arts in history/education from Hardin-Simmons; and a bachelor of science in history/education/journalism from Howard Payne University, Brownwood.

Richard and his wife, the former Karin Kay Dean of Abilene, have two sons--Timothy Clark, 17, and Zachary Charles, 15.

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Floods, Vandalism Leave
French Church Undaunted

By Bill Webb

Baptist Press
6/25/82

BORDEAUX, France (BP)--The Baptist Church in Bordeaux, France, hit twice by flooding and once by vandalism in a four-day period, is reaping spirit benefits from the situation.

Southern Baptist missionaries Gene and Jackie Phillips discovered water had poured into the building June 1, the day after a violent thunderstorm struck northern Bordeaux.

Torrential rains left hundreds of homes and businesses four feet deep in water and Bordeaux and nine outlying communities were declared disaster areas.

The church was thoroughly cleaned and the carpet dried but two days later, another storm brought more flooding the day before weekend revival services, featuring journeyman Scott Sontag. The carpet was still damp when 50 worshippers arrived for the Friday evening service.

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"The small, storefront church was filled to capacity and there was a great outpouring of blessings from God so no one noticed their wet shoes," Gene Phillips said.

About 3 o'clock the next morning, vandals smashed the church's plate glass window but apparently didn't try to enter the building. Some of the French people believe the incident might have been linked to an anti-American protest held the same night in downtown Bordeaux, Phillips said. The protest came while President Reagan attended an international economic summit in Paris.

Other Baptist churches in France--including those in Waux-En-Velin, Saint-Quentin and Orleans--also have been hit by window-breaking vandals.

Encouragingly, the floods and vandalism have motivated the Baptists of Bordeaux to provide an even greater Christian witness in their community, the Phillipses believe.

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Reagan Sends Lawmakers
Tuition Tax Credits Bill

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)--Making good on an April pledge to Catholic educators, President Reagan has sent Congress a tuition tax credit bill designed to help parents who send their children to non-public elementary and secondary schools.

In a June 22 letter to Vice President George Bush and speaker of the House of Representatives Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill Jr., Reagan said "parents who, for whatever reason, are not satisfied by the education available in their local public schools should be able to seek an education better suited to their children elsewhere."

Such parents, the President said further, currently bear a "double burden" of paying tuition to private schools while paying taxes for public schools.

Reagan's announcement that he was sending the bill to Capitol Hill came during a White House meeting to which about 20 advocates of tuition tax credits were invited. The one Southern Baptist in the group was Edward E. McAteer, president of the Religious Roundtable, a New Right organization which has lobbied heavily for tuition tax credits, prayer in schools and other conservative causes.

Reagan's bill, "The Educational Opportunity and Equity Act of 1982," faces an uphill battle in Congress, where a 1983 budget projecting a deficit of more than \$100 billion was passed June 23. Many members of Congress who have supported the President in his budget and tax cuts have served notice they will not go along with tuition tax credits.

The main reason cited by opponents of the measure is the drain on the federal treasury that tuition tax credits would bring.

Although the Reagan plan would be phased in over a three-year period, some critics have projected that by the third year, 1985, tuition tax credits would cost the treasury as much as \$7 billion.

Taxpayers utilizing the credit would be able to subtract \$100 from their taxes due for 1983, \$300 for taxes due in 1984 and \$500 for 1985 for each child enrolled in a non-public school, provided the credit did not amount to more than one-half the tuition paid.

Reagan repeated in his message to Bush and O'Neill that he regretted the credit would for now be limited to the elementary and secondary levels. Parents of college students would not be eligible.

Seeking to head off criticism that the tax credits would aid segregation academies, the President's bill specifies that no credits will be allowed for tuition paid to schools that follow racially discriminatory policies. Schools would be required to file annual statements with the Secretary of Education under penalty of perjury that their policies do not discriminate on the basis of race.

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Overwhelming Needs Keep
Ragland in West Beirut

By Bill Webb

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--As 400 other Americans boarded two U.S. Navy troop carriers for evacuation, Jim Ragland explained why he will stay on in besieged West Beirut.

"This is modern warfare at its most terrible, its worst, its maddest," he said, in a June 24 telephone interview. But the slim Oklahoman has stayed on during other conflicts during his missionary career and one of the reasons he feels he must remain now is to give flesh-and-blood credibility to the message he's been preaching in West Beirut for years: "God is a present help in trouble."

The Southern Baptist missionary does hope to return to the United States for his son's wedding in a few weeks, but overwhelming needs for shelter, medical care and encouragement in the troubled Palestinian sector compel him to stay and help at least a little while longer.

Earlier in the day he had talked with three other missionaries--David King, Pete Dunn and Wayne Fuller--when they met him at the Green Line (which separates West Beirut from the rest of the city) to bring medical supplies and food.

They and the six other missionaries staying in Mansouriye, the hillside village overlooking Beirut, also are planning to stay in Lebanon.

Ragland, 57, has left West Beirut just once since Israeli warplanes began bombing the city June 4--for about an hour to escort his wife, Leola, to Mansouriye. She is back home in Duncan, Okla., one of seven missionaries to leave Lebanon.

After she left West Beirut, her husband quickly transformed the 750-student Beirut Baptist School he founded 28 years ago into a first-aid clinic and refugee center. The fierce fighting has left the city with limited medical services and more refugees than available shelter.

The clinic, staffed round-the-clock by a Moslem doctor and several nurses, is set up to handle mass casualties, but most of the patients have been refugee youngsters with everything from bronchial infections to chicken pox.

Ragland said things have been "very quiet" in the area of the school, though shells have landed within a block of the institution, adjacent to the Ragland home and a Baptist church.

The danger is very real, he realizes, as he sees bombed-out buildings and looks into the faces of frightened, homeless--often ill--refugees. "It just breaks your heart," he admitted.

Trouble and tragedy have touched him personally. Two little girls who attended the school were killed in the fighting; he fears there are others he hasn't yet heard about. "She had beautiful brown eyes and was the sweetest thing you could image," he said of the girl who died most recently.

Baptists in the area have not been immune to fear, he said, "but they have been brave in all this."

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"We've been meeting almost every evening for prayer at the church. Last night we had 15. As we were worshipping, a big blast (that destroyed a munitions dump) shook the church," he recalled. "The pastor went on preaching a word of encouragement. We had prayer, and then we quietly left."

"We have enough food," he said. "But we do have a shortage of medicine."

The other missionaries have faithfully secured medical supplies in East Beirut and delivered them to him at the dividing line, Ragland said. "One day they came out in the heaviest shelling," he added.

Power has been out frequently in the city and a two-day outage meant a shortage of water in the compound because the pumps there are run by electricity, Ragland said.

But despite difficulties and inconvenience, lulls in the fighting have given the missionary time to complete at least one chore—he painted his wife's kitchen. And many of the refugees who have lost the most have taken time to express their appreciation to him.

Mrs. Ragland tells of one refugee family who moved into the center after losing everything they owned for the third time. "He asked Jim if I was there," she said. When Ragland said she wasn't, the man responded: "Then you don't have any supper. I want to share our supper with you." He handed Ragland a boiled egg, a cucumber and a tomato.

The Raglands ask that Baptist pray for the people in the Middle East affected by the fighting, and for the safety of the missionaries who remain. Both are praying that missionaries will be able to share their faith in the midst of fear and confusion.

As she continues to pray for her husband, Mrs. Ragland remembers his words to her the day she left Lebanon: "Honey, I'm staying here because I believe this is where the Lord wants me. There's a job to do here, and I don't see anyone else to do it."