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**SBC Moderates Initiate
Unity Move With Draper**

By Wilmer C. Fields
Director, Baptist Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President James T. Draper Jr., spent four hours discussing the need for unity within the denomination with four leaders of a "moderate" group which had opposed his election to office.

Draper characterized the meeting as "open and positive, a constructive first step" toward reconciling factions in the Baptist body.

The Aug. 23 meeting was initiated by Bill Sherman of Nashville, Tenn., Cecil Sherman of Asheville, N.C., Edwin F. Perry of Louisville, Ky., and M. Vernon Davis of Alexandria, Va., as spokesmen for moderates, to find acceptable ways to depoliticize the convention presidency as a means of restoring Southern Baptist harmony.

The moderates see in a group whose watchcry is "inerrancy" of the Bible an attempt to take over the SBC agencies and institutions through the appointive powers of the convention president. The "inerrantists" generally supported Draper for convention president while the moderates mostly backed Duke K. McCall of Louisville, Ky. Draper was elected at New Orleans in Jun by a vote of 8,331 to 6,292.

Those present for the Nashville discussions said their purposes were to find ways to end "the annual political contest for the office of the president," strengthen the office for spiritual rather than political leadership, support Draper as a healing influence in the convention, and channel Southern Baptist energies into more important Christian causes, especially the denomination's program of expansion in missions and evangelism, Bold Mission Thrust.

Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, who also was present in the meeting said, "I am grateful this meeting has taken place. It should lead to good results, especially in Bold Mission Thrust."

John Sullivan of Shreveport, La., SBC first vice president, also was a participant in the meeting. He said after the meeting, "We understand each other. We are together in principle. We simply have to work out the strategy, the details of how to achieve harmony in our midst."

The group, all pastors except Bennett, declined to release details of specific proposals discussed. Draper said he already had been thinking about some of the approaches considered.

Draper plans to study the proposals further, talk with the group again, consult others and said he likely would have a public statement on these matters during his message to the fall meeting of the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville Sept. 20-22.

Draper told Baptist Press, "Not any of us want to keep on fighting. There are some positive steps yet to come. I want to pray and think about these matters. In a few weeks I want to sit down with these men again. I feel positive about the time we have had together. Our discussions have been warm and friendly."

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Cecil Sherman said, "I take hope from this meeting. Jimmy Draper is living up to what he said he wanted to be and do. If this continues, trust will build. Only the extremes, right and left, who prefer to divide us, will object to this kind of effort. I take heart!"

Davis said following the meeting, "I hope President Draper will continue to talk about reconciliation and community with all groups and that people will accept him at his word. I hope that his presidency will be a healing one."

Bill Sherman described the meeting as marked by openness, fairness and integrity, qualities necessary for resolving conflict.

Perry said, "I believe a process for peace and vital Christian fellowship has begun here today. We hope and pray it will continue."

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Public Education Not As Bleak
As People Think, Bennett Says

By Duann Kier

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)—The common perception that the quality of public education has seriously declined is an exaggeration participants at a Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission conference were told.

"There is definitely a crisis in public education," said G. Willis Bennett, director of graduate studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., "but the quality of public education has not lowered as much as public perception would lead us to believe."

Bennett traced the present crisis to the nation's passing of the National Defense Education Act following Russia's launching of Sputnik. "We focused on technology and had high expectations for public education," he said. "Now that these high expectations haven't been met we perceive public education as woefully inadequate."

"Media representatives have contributed to this perception by highly publicizing and overemphasizing the negative aspects of public education."

Bennett said decreasing enrollment, a contributing factor to the actual crisis in public education, is a result not only of higher enrollment in private schools but also the population change. "Decreasing enrollment has an adverse economic effect on schools," he said. "It means some schools have to close and some teachers have to be laid off, and the media cover more stories like these than the more positive ones."

Bennett said enrollment will continue to decrease because there are fewer school-age children now than when schools were built for the "baby boom" population.

"The consolidation of schools into fewer schools and larger schools has contributed to the public's perception of the education crisis because most individuals prefer to keep the 'community school' open even if there are legitimate reasons not to do so," he said.

Even though 90 percent of the nation's children are in public schools, Bennett said, enrollment in private schools is accelerating. "Parents want more 'character education' in school for their children but do not perceive they are receiving it," he explained. "A private school can be selective in its enrollment and can somewhat order its environment. But a public school "is more pluralistic and each individual is accepted and valued regardless of race, economic status or personal handicap."

Bennett feels Christians need to get rid of unfounded assumptions about public education and get the facts. "The church can help improve the quality of education by providing interaction between the members and the local schools," he explained. "A church can have teacher appreciation days for which students can invite their teachers to church for a special service and they can promote school programs and functions when appropriate rather than competing for the same time. A church can also relate to a community school to provide needed support services such as tutoring to discourage dropouts and furnishing clothing and supplies for those in need."

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Churches can also be "leaven for good" in conflicts over consolidation and school busing. "Anything an educator does is going to displease somebody," Bennett said. "We are saved from total disillusionment if we recognize that the public schools reflect American democracy with all its pluralism and elements of contradiction.

According to Bennett, public schools are uniquely qualified to help children prepare to live in our pluralistic society. Particularly for Southern Baptists, but for all other Americans as well, free public education is an indispensable investment for the future, an investment which must not now be abandoned, he concluded.

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Convention's Vice President
Survives Schematic Coronary

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EL PASO, Texas (BP)--Gene Garrison never got off the ground--a circumstance which possibly saved the life of the pastor of First Baptist Church in Oklahoma City and second vice president of the 13.8 million member Southern Baptist Convention.

Garrison, 51, had been the guest speaker for both services of the centennial celebration of First Baptist Church, El Paso Aug. 22, but he woke up at 4 a.m. Monday feeling ill. "I just thought I had the flu or some kind of virus so we went ahead to the airport and got ready to go back home," he said in a telephone interview from Sun Towers Medical Center in El Paso.

As the 11 a.m. flight taxied into position to take off Garrison hyperventilated and the pilot turned the plane around and went back to the terminal where an ambulance rushed the pastor to the hospital.

The first EKG indicated a heart attack and Garrison's blood pressure was 190/150.

"I have hypertension anyway and the doctors thought at first I had had a major heart attack," Garrison explained. But his own early morning diagnosis had been accurate--at least to some extent. "The doctor said I had a virus, his words were a 'real mean virus,' that cut off the oxygen to my heart and produced a schematic coronary--something that makes the EKG schematic read like a coronary when there hasn't been one," he explained.

Tests the next two days showed no signs of heart damage and 48 hours after stopping the flight just before takeoff, Garrison and his wife Martha planned to catch another plane for Oklahoma City. He is very aware of what could have happened if he had hyperventilated 20 or 30 minutes later while the plane was flying over the unpopulated stretches of West Texas.

"It could have been a bad scene," he admitted. "I'm glad the Lord was taking care of me."

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Mother And Daughter Licensed
By Baptist Church In Florida

By Adon Taft

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8/25/82

MIAMI (BP)--In a history making action members of the University Baptist Church in Coral Gables, Fla. have voted to license a mother and daughter to the ministry.

"I don't particularly see it as a pace setter," said pastor Dan Yeary, of the step that was taken without a dissenting vote from the one-third of the 1,852-member congregation present during the Sunday night service. "The personnel committee all along felt we should do something to confirm Lynn's calling and status, perhaps enlarge the scope of her ministry."

"I don't feel like a radical here although I realize this is unusual," said Lynn (Mrs. Ron) Phillips, who at 41 is the older half of what is believed to be the first mother-daughter duo ever to be licensed together in the nation's largest Protestant denomination, the 13.8 million member Southern Baptist Convention.

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"It never ever crossed my mind that I was doing anything radical," added Phillips' daughter, Merry Lee Phillips. "It's just between me and God," said the 17-year-old who will enter Baylor University in Waco, Texas this fall as a religion major. "I'm doing it for God, not for women."

Licensing of women to the ministry in itself is a rare happening among Baptists, noted Dr. Sarah Frances Anders, a sociologist at Louisiana College who has chronicled the role of women in the SBC since the first woman was ordained to preach in the convention in 1963.

"At least 175 women have been ordained," she said. "That many I have confirmed and there may be as many as 225. I am convinced that there are at least 200. But not more than a dozen of those women are in pastorates and half of those are co-pastoring with their husbands."

Most of the ordained women are in the chaplaincy or some sort of institutional service, the professor said. Others are ministers of education or ministers to youth and a few are ministers of music.

Licensing is a sort of nebulous term but it is the first official step toward ordination. "There are no guidelines," Yeary said. "Basically it is an affirmation by the church of their (Lynn's and Merry's) calling and their demonstration of it."

At this time neither woman feels called to preach but they would not rule out that possibility if they complete seminary training and seek ordination. Yeary has "no desire, as yet at least, to deal with the ordination issue. I don't want a protracted argument on the role of women in the church. But I have no personal hang-ups about women in the ministry."

Lynn, whose husband is a wholesale food broker, sees her calling as a ministry to children and the licensing as "a statement of affirmation by the church for the legitimacy of my ministry." Licensing, "doesn't alter my duties but is my statement to the church that I feel called to ministry," she explained. "I did not feel ready for ordination, I think that comes after more theological and professional training. I'm just maximizing myself for God's best use." She hopes one by-product of the double licensing would be to encourage more young women to pursue church careers.

She has served on the church staff as the minister to children for four years. In that capacity she directs the church's work with 500 children through the sixth grade in Sunday School, University Bible Club (a Sunday night program), the annual summer Kids Kamp, Playcation Days (a twice-weekly program of field trips, Bible study and recreation for eight weeks in the summer) and the Dial-a-Bible-Story program. She has an assistant for pre-schoolers and 60 volunteer workers under her supervision.

A native of Wauchula, Fla., Lynn has a degree in education from the University of Florida. She taught in public and private schools in Florida and in Alabama and was a loan officer with a major savings and loan association before she was asked to join the staff at University. "Looking back I see the Lord's hand in guiding me into so many job opportunities," said Phillips whose 19-year-old son Frank refers to her as "my mother, the minister."

"It seems like He was preparing me for what I am doing today," she said. She added that she hopes to go to seminary and to be ordained.

For Merry the commitment to a church vocation began after a "Disciple Now" program for youth in the church two years ago. "I felt God wanted me to use my talents in some kind of ministry," she said. "So I went before the church and shared my feelings."

Her talents include those that made her a cheerleader, a member of the concert chorus, captain of the bat girls for the baseball team, a member of the student council, a distance runner on the track team and a "Senior of Distinction" at Gables High.

At church, they enabled her to sing soprano for three years with the group called Proclamation, be a part of the youth choir, be selected president of Camp University where she also won the gold medal for twelfth grade girls and the Rocky Award as the top girl in the camp olympics. She also participated in mission tours to the Bahamas and to Massachusetts.

"I would still do what I feel called to do whether I were licensed or not," Merry said. "Licensing is just an added blessing for willing to be obedient. Maybe it is another blessing I don't feel lik I can stand before a church and preach--but if I'm called I will."

She feels her mother's calling may have influenced her and she is sure it made it easier. "If she were in some other field maybe she wouldn't understand and accept what I'm doing," Merry said. "But mom and I are a lot alike in the way we think and what we want to do."

Both women attribute much of what they feel is their own spiritual growth to the staff and members of University Baptist Church. "I'm not sure this could all happen somewhere ls," Lynn said. "University Church is unique in that it gives everybody so many opportunities to grow."

She hopes that "a by-product of our licensing will be to encourage more young women to pursue a church career."

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(Taft is religion writer for the Miami (Fla.) Herald)

Attempted Kenyan Coup
Bamboozles Missionaries

By Robert O'Brien

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NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--Roy Brent awoke at 4:30 a.m. that fateful Sunday. He strained his ears. Was that the crackle of gunfire he heard?

But Brent dismissed that notion. "It's just the bamboo Milt Ertelt told us about," he thought groggily as he dropped back to sleep.

Ertelt, a fellow Southern Baptist missionary in Nairobi, hadn't wanted the Brents to worry when they moved into the apartment beneath him and his wife, Charlotte. "There's a place down the road which loads and unloads bamboo," Ertelt had explained. "When they drop the bamboo poles they sound like gunshots."

About 6:30 a.m., Brent's wife, Dena, urged him, "Wake up. I hear gunshots. Go back to sleep," Brent replied. "It's just the bamboo."

So they blissfully slept on as dissident elements of the Kenya Air Force tried unsuccessfully on Aug. 1, 1982, to overthrow the government of Kenya President Daniel Arap Moi.

A couple of hours later the Brents, both New Mexicans, listened dumbfounded to Ertelt who had rushed down to report that what they had heard was a coup--not bamboo.

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