



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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December 1, 1982

82-172

Begin Interrupts Mourning
To Visit With 15 SBC Leaders

By Dan Martin

JERUSALEM (BP)--Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin met with 15 Southern Baptist and seven U.S. Jewish leaders Nov. 30--his first meeting with a non-political group since the death Nov. 13 of his wife, Aliza.

The Southern Baptists and Jewish representatives of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith spent a brief time with Begin on the last full day of a 10-day joint Baptist-Jewish study tour. The Israeli leader, presently in a 30-day period of mourning, was bearded and haggard-looking.

Southern Baptist Convention President James T. Draper Jr. expressed sorrow for Begin's loss and also gratitude that Begin met with the Baptists while mourning. "Through all of these weeks we have been praying for you. We are sad at your experience," Draper said.

Draper said Southern Baptists are praying for him (Begin) and reminded him Southern Baptists had prayed for him during his courageous effort at peacemaking with Egypt during the signing of the Camp David Accord several years ago. "We will continue to pray for your effort at peacemaking and that you will have great success."

Begin told the Southern Baptists: "I cannot speak of my personal problems. We had a lifetime of 45 years together . . . 45 years which were unique in the annals of mankind and in our history. There was much suffering and more of that was on the side of Aliza." Her death was, "God's will and I have to accept it humbly although with great pain," he said.

On other topics he said Israelis "have made great sacrifices for peace. We have fulfilled the accord. There were two parts of the Camp David Accord and one has been completed and the other part deals with the autonomy of our neighbors.

"This land (Israel) should be a land of peace and not a land of bloodshed."

Begin did not speak specifically of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon but did thank Southern Baptists for their support of Israel and "its just cause."

During the meeting, Paige Patterson, president of Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, and an associate of W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, reissued an invitation for Begin to participate in a rally at First Baptist Church in Dallas when he returns to the United States.

Begin was to have appeared at such a rally at First Baptist Church, Dallas last month but cancelled the appearance when his wife died.

The tour group included Gene Garrison, second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, as well as Mark Briskman, North Texas-Oklahoma regional director of the Anti-Defamation League from Dallas.

The entire group visited several villages in southern Lebanon one day of the tour accompanied by representatives of the Israeli defense force (army).

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Sunday (Nov. 28) Draper, Dale Thorn (administrator of the Israeli Baptist Mission) and Dan Martin (news editor of Baptist Press) went to Sidon, about 50 kilometers north of the Israel-Lebanon border, for a meeting with Southern Baptist representatives in Lebanon.

The missionaries in Lebanon expressed concern for the plight of the Palestinian refugees and for the camps where they live and shared with Draper their concerns about the Israeli incursion into Lebanon.

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Overflow Crowd Celebrates
Grady Nutt's Life, Friendship

By Vince Staten

Baptist Press
12/1/82

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Friends, more than a thousand of them, crowded into Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville Nov. 29 for a memorial service to Grady Lee Nutt, the country humorist who died in an Alabama plane crash Nov. 23.

There were well-known friends from his show business career like country music legends Roy Acuff and Grandpa Jones, Hee-Haw singer-comedian Kenny Price, producer Sam Lovullo and writer Tom Lutz. There were friends from his life as a Southern Baptist. There were friends from his college and seminary days. And there were friends who had just encountered Nutt and responded to his warmth and happiness.

They came, not to wallow in sorrow, but to celebrate the life of the man known to millions of television viewers as "The Prime Minister of Humor" on Hee-Haw.

"Grady was always taking care of his friends, always making us feel as if we were the most special person to him," said Dwight Cobb, who had known Nutt since Cobb's seminary days, 16 years ago and, like Nutt, a member of Crescent Hill church.

So while the congregation was singing the hymn of affirmation, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," Cobb was remembering the man who had made him feel so special.

"Grady was always the word of affirmation for me. His last Sunday he called me up to see if I had some time. We built a fire and sat by it. I'll always be grateful for those three hours together because of his affirmation," Cobb said.

Paul D. Duke, pastor of Highland Baptist Church in Louisville, brought a smile when he remembered Nutt saying, "if all the people who loved me were placed in one room, you'd need a bigger room."

And sure enough, the church didn't have a room big enough. After the sanctuary was filled, about 250 people were routed to the chapel to watch the service on closed-circuit television.

Crescent Hill's minister, H. Stephen Shoemaker, brought a knowing nod from many in the crowd when he told Nutt's version of the story of Abraham:

"Grady loved to talk about Abraham getting antsy about God giving him a family with Sarah, and Abraham deciding to black his face and take up, as the law allowed him, with the concubine Hagar. They went into the desert, Grady said, for prayer and, in his words, their devotional they named Ishmael."

While Shoemaker told that story, Cobb remembered and nodded, "Grady preached that sermon during one of our youth emphasis weeks."

Daniel Aleshire, associate pastor at Crescent Hill, spoke for everyone at the service when he said, "We are not ready for Grady Nutt to be absent from our lives. We're in too great a need for the laughter he has given us and the gospel of Christ we experienced in him."

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When the service was over, many stayed, gathering in the aisles, talking, embracing and remembering, swapping Grady-stories and laughing at how much Nutt would have enjoyed his service. "He'd have had fun with this," said Ray Bailey, a church member who had known Nutt since their days at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

"Grady would have cried all the way through," said Cobb. "He wouldn't have made it through a single hymn before crying. And he would have loved what's happening now, all the people hugging. Grady was always the last to leave."

An hour after the service, Eleanor Nutt was still standing at the altar, hugging friends. "No doubt about it," she said of her husband. "Grady would have loved it."

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(Vince Staten is the television-radio critic for the Louisville Times.)

Karate Expert Ministers
Through Gymnasium And Jails

By Doug Bradley

Baptist Press
12/1/82

BEND, Ore. (BP)--Most ministers do their work from church pulpits. Tom Flaskerud does his ministry in gymnasiums and jails.

Flaskerud, a member of First Baptist Church, Tumalo in Bend, Ore., runs Freedom of All ministries from his home. The program is one of his own design, a mixture of karate and other martial arts set to Christian beat.

Christian karate? It's not as unlikely a pairing as it might seem at first, Flaskerud said. "We learn to fight to avoid fighting. Freedom of All is just a style created by me -- with Jesus at the center.

"I refined it in street fights and bar room situations--before I knew the Lord," he said. "What we're striving for in Christian karate class is to get away from the oriental beliefs, the mysticism. There's nothing mystic about the martial arts. It's just a lot of hard work."

Flaskerud said he knew of only three other Christian karate schools in the United States. When he's not teaching karate or giving evangelistic demonstrations to area churches, Flaskerud lays carpet and sells solar heating equipment. He visits county jail inmates on Sundays.

The teacher honed his own fighting skills during his years with outlaw motorcycle gangs and as president of one Midwest club, The Undertakers. He went to jail for the first time at 16 and admits to involvement with violence and drugs. At age 30 he was "born again."

"Basically the kind of life I was living--I knew I would either end up in prison or dead," he said, leaning back in an old office chair in the garage of his home which he converted into a gym. "I never had any friends, people I could trust. I didn't have any peace in my life."

After moving to Oregon he sat down to watch a John Wayne movie on television one Saturday. His wife-to-be, Carla, spun the dial past a Billy Graham program on the way to the movie. He turned the channel back to the evangelist and watched the whole program.

"It seemed like everything he said, he was talking to me," Flaskerud said. To Carla's relief he "accepted Jesus" as Graham asked and left his brawling ways to build the ministry.

"In my life I've become stronger, physically stronger, since I've come to know the Lord," Flaskerud exclaimed. "I can do things now which I could never do before."

He crossed his ample, tattooed arms and continued. "It's important to know the scriptures --the Word of God--and be able to defend ourselves, both physically and spiritually. To look on our bodies as temples of God we need to develop them as well as our minds.

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"There's so much violence in the world today, on television," he said. "Bruce Lee, Chuck Norris--the kids look up to 'em. They go out and try to imitate them. Here we have the same abilities only we don't go out on the street and use them. Here we reach out and try to walk with the Lord and not be caught up in the worldly violence."

"Here," he said, "we defend ourselves and don't hurt the opponent. In traditional martial arts it's 'Go out and annihilate 'em'."

The physical conditioning isn't easy and Flaskerud admitted he's hard on the students. As the students lay on the floor and struggle to hold their legs six inches off the floor he tests their muscle tone with his feet. "It sounded pretty soft on that last one--like a waterbed," joked one student.

After the students finish exercising, practicing and sparring, they put down their protective gloves and pick up their Bibles. They gather in a close circle in the center of the gym on the floor covered with a variety of types of carpet.

After a discussion of a scripture passage, a short prayer closes the class and the students mill about putting on their shoes and talking.

One young student twirls a set of nunchakus, two short sticks held together by a short section of chain, as others look on.

"We teach weapons, he said, pausing to give his Bible a thump, "but we really strive for the sword."

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(Adapted from the Northwest Baptist.)

Unsaleable Goods
Feed Outreach Effort

By Oscar Hoffmeyer Jr.

Baptist Press
12/1/82

SLIDELL, La. (BP)--Damaged merchandise from a grocery chain becomes part of an outreach ministry when First Baptist Church, Slidell, La., shares with families facing emergencies.

Pastor Hoyt Nelson said the Woman's Missionary Union had been operating a pantry ministry for several years with articles the women donated. "When the store manager, Emmett Easterling, a member of our church, said he would like to find an outlet for food and other items that were good but not saleable, I said we could handle that through the program we already had."

Twice a week men pick up from the stores and deliver to the church's pantry. Women sort the items and fill orders that are then delivered to homes of those in need. Those working in the program are volunteer church members. The church spends about \$100 a month on gasoline.

Nelson said requests for help come from many sources--neighbors, police, church members knowing of a need and families themselves. The church seeks to meet emergencies rather than be the support system for a family.

"For example," Nelson said, "recently we got a call about a family whose trailer had burned. They had no insurance, the husband was dead and the woman had four children. We were able to help her until she could get other help."

The pastor said the program is in operation because the church is concerned for persons, not because it is trying to operate a welfare agency. "We do not even give (assistance) to evangelize, although sometimes our program opens doors for witnessing."

However, the church has started two missions because of needs discovered in a community when families were being visited for the program.

A committee in the church operates the pantry program. From the requests that come to the church office, orders are filled from available items on hand. In most cases they are delivered to the home rather than the recipients coming to the church.

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Delivery helps solve one of the problems of the program. "When families picked up their orders they would see our storeroom and feel we should give them more," Nelson said.

Orders are prepared according to available goods and distributed as evenly as possible, he said. "On the average a box will be valued at \$40, although this varies with family need."

Another problem the committee has faced is criticism by the family when the church did not provide exactly what they requested. "We can distribute only what we have," Nelson said. "We never know what will come from the stores."

"The other day I got a call, on Sunday. A family needed gasoline. I said, 'We can provide that. What about food?' They said they hadn't eaten in two days so I brought them to the pantry and gave them food and even Pampers for the baby. They were transients from the North who had come South seeking work."

Last year the church distributed more than 610 boxes, including more than 100 to transients.

The program accomplishes three things, Nelson said. The church becomes a helping organization, families in need are helped during an emergency and the store benefits by having an outlet for unsaleable but usable goods and receiving a tax credit.

Slidell is north of New Orleans across Lake Pontchartrain.

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House Defeats Amendments
Restricting IRS Authority

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
12/1/82

WASHINGTON (BP)--In a departure from recent history the U.S. House of Representatives has refused to restrict Internal Revenue Service authority to regulate the tax exempt status of parochial and nonsectarian private schools.

The restrictive language had been part of the Treasury Department's appropriations measure each year since 1979, but was stripped from the bill earlier this year in committee.

Efforts by Rep. Robert K Dornan, R-Calif., and Rep. Philip M. Crane, R-Ill., to restore the restrictive amendments failed.

One of Dornan's proposals would have prohibited IRS from implementing controversial regulations conditioning tax-exempt status for private schools on racially non-discriminatory policies. The regulations, proposed in 1978-79, have been withdrawn by IRS. A second Dornan rider would have prohibited IRS from denying taxpayers a deduction on "general purpose" contributions to private schools attended by their dependents.

The Crane amendment would have prevented IRS implementation of new regulations on the tax-exempt status of private schools not in effect when the appropriations bill is enacted.

While the impact of the House action is unclear, the overall question of tax exempt status of private religious schools which discriminate on the basis of race is pending before the Supreme Court in the Bob Jones University/Goldsboro (N.C.) Christian Schools case.

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