



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

-- FEATURES

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Businessman Keeps Bargain;
Gives \$100,000 to Missions

By Marty Croll

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Seven years ago Tom Jones was working in a glass business when, distraught over a lack of direction, he called out to God.

"You get me another business like I had, and I'll start doing something about what I'm supposed to be doing for you."

Jones recalled those words recently from the tiny office of a thriving business he bought just months after he spoke them. Since he opened, his business has been the source of more than \$100,000 funneled directly into worldwide missions through the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Jones is not his real name. The soft-spoken man whose words reflect his love of the Bible asked he not be identified, saying the right hand of the body of Christ should not know what the left is doing.

Jones was not a Christian when he made his bargain. But three weeks later a stranger, who had gotten Jones' name from an equipment salesman in Richmond, Va., called from Virginia and told him he was selling out. "Three months and I had my business," Jones said.

Since then God has directed him to reach those who have never heard the Word of God, Jones said. After a life-changing decision, it was gradually revealed to Jones he should use his business as a faucet to flow money into specific soul-winning projects.

When he understood about stewardship, he established a set percentage of his monthly profit to go straight into missions work--no matter what.

The percentage has been increasing steadily. Though it might not increase each month, it will never decrease, Jones vows. He trusts the Lord to provide enough from what is left over to support him, his wife and the four of his six children who still live at home.

"There're so many things each one of us is supposed to be doing. I've got a long way to go. I may be off here or flunking there, but I have picked up on this one area, this one thing--tithing," said Jones.

Raised by Christian grandparents, Jones was married at 17 and baptized with his wife at 19. But only six years ago did he begin to understand what Christianity is all about.

"I was 40 years old before I knew why my grandmother was sitting in a chair reading a Bible with tears in her eyes," he said. "And she was all the time trying to get me to slow down and sit down and read some."

His wife was a Christian during the years he wasn't. One day after Jones bought the business his wife brought him a religious book.

"I didn't read books or anything," Jones said. "But I actually stopped what I was doing and started reading." It was only a matter of time before he found a Bible, wiped the dust off of it, and started reading that, too. "That's the way I woke up," he said.

"After I accepted Christ, I began to realize we're supposed to be down here doing some thing. It's going to get done one way or the other, but the Holy Spirit said to me, 'You do this and I'll do that.' I just took Him at His Word."

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Since Jones took that step many doors have opened to him and last year he became personally involved in a Philippine boat ministry he sponsored.

Through the Foreign Mission Board, Jones sought out Oscar Fortuna, a preacher he considered to be "burnt up with the gospel," and spent time with Fortuna to learn of his ministry in Davao City on the Philippine island of Mindanao.

Jones has returned to the Philippines twice. On his first trip back, he took part in overseeing the construction of a 40-foot boat Fortuna and volunteers from his church could use to carry the gospel among 60 islands nearby.

Jones financed the \$8,000 boat and stayed until it was built, using a hollowed-out tree, handcrafted outriggers and a second-hand diesel automobile engine.

Later he returned for a month-and-a-half crusade using the boat. Teams from Fortuna's church visited people during the day and preached at night.

Jones saw poverty like he never knew existed. He also saw God's work in progress. Regardless of how worn out the evangelism teams were, all they needed to do was preach the Word, and islanders would make decisions for Christ.

"You would average 50 to 60 a night who would come forward. It was unbelievable," he said. "I've seen the tears and I've seen it all. And I know there was response. Even though I couldn't understand the language, I know people were moved to come forward. When you see it, you know the Lord did it."

Jones told of leaving one island as a typhoon approached. The water was getting rough, and islanders on shore were urging them to stay put. "People were back on the island standing there shaking their heads, saying, 'They're a bunch of nuts on that boat.' But we were gone."

Jones was fascinated at how God used the money he put into the project. "Just in two or three operations, you're talking about thousands hearing the word. And thousands came forward. I figure for one dollar a head, one accepts Jesus. You can just count them."

Since he doesn't see himself as a preacher, Jones stayed in the background during the island crusades. "My job is to take the money (from his business) and send it up there," he says. "Each of us have our part to do. And the more the body (of Christ) is united, the more work is going to get done."

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1,000th MSC Volunteer
Serving Michigan's Deaf

By Sherri Anthony

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FLINT, Mich. (BP)--The two teenage boys on stage faced the crowd but stared intently at Adriene Russell, following her cues as they sang to members of Deaf Baptist Mission from Flint.

The boys could not hear the music. They are deaf. Russell, the 1,000th Mission Service Corps volunteer appointed by the Home Mission Board, was one of the few people in the room who could hear.

Russell, 18, left her home in Pasadena, Texas, last May to work with the estimated 29,000 deaf people in Flint as a Mission Service Corps (MSC) volunteer.

MSC is a Southern Baptist Convention program which assigns self-supporting volunteers to areas with priority mission needs in the United States and abroad. Russell's story is similar to many MSC volunteers: she wanted to be a part of missions, but found outlets limited.

Because she was not a college student and could not participate in summer missions, Russell applied last summer to work with the Reach-out to Texas Deaf team--a volunteer missions project. Because of limited positions for hearing people, she was turned down.

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Undaunted, Russell turned to Mission Service Corps.

So did Dwaine Laramore, director of missions for Genesee and Bay Baptist Associations in Michigan, who was looking for a volunteer to work with the deaf people in Michigan. MSC matched the person with the need.

Russell plans to be in Michigan at least two years. The largest part of her financial support comes from her home church, Thomas Avenue Baptist in Pasadena, but individuals and other groups also contribute.

She intends to go to college when she is through with her MSC term because, "Hopefully, after living on my own and working in Michigan I'll have a better idea of where I'm going when I finally get to college."

"Mission Service Corps has provided the avenue for lay people to get involved in full-time mission work," explained David Bunch, director of Mission Service Corps at the Home Mission Board. "MSC has also given visibility to the productivity of volunteers in missions setting."

When Southern Baptists set up MSC in 1977, they predicted 5,000 persons would volunteer by 1983. "At a glance, we have not met that goal," conceded Bunch. "But the original definition of volunteers set by the Southern Baptist Convention was people who served for an indefinite period of time--six months, a year--and supported themselves through secular work.

"Now the definition includes only people who volunteer for a minimum of one year and provide their financial support without secular employment," he explains. "I think the figure would be much higher if we had stayed with the original definition."

According to church reports, short-term mission projects have increased from 20,000 in 1976 to 56,000 in 1982.

"MSC has heightened visibility of volunteer missions," Bunch pointed out. "We ask people for a year--some can give that, but those who can't begin to think 'I could give a week.'"

Ronald Boswell, director of the Volunteer Enlistment Department at the Foreign Mission Board, added, "To many Baptists, missions is academic--very theological, very 'spiritual.' When lay people give their time, missions becomes names of real people and real places.

"Also volunteer missions almost always deepen the volunteer's appreciation for giving," Boswell said. "Lottie Moon and Cooperative Program offerings become tanks full of \$3-per-gallon gas or (repairs for) a church building with a sagging roof."

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Hunger Follows Water Problems;
Southern Baptists Offer Help

By Mary Jane Welch

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--As raindrops fell, Lolete Dotson fought back the urge to run outside.

Th rain had just broken what some were calling the worst drought in the history of southern Africa. Dotson, a Southern Baptist missionary nurse in Bophuthatswana, knew the rain would bring relief to thousands, but she wished she could share her ample water supply with the many still without.

In a way, she does. She and other Southern Baptists bring water to thousands each y ar through development projects carried out by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board with Southern Baptists' hunger relief gifts. In 1982, the board's missionaries and volunteers carried out more than 25 projects that called for well drilling, spring capping, irrigation or other water development. One provided a well and water system for a clinic in Bophuthatswana.

The lack of clean, easily accessable water doesn't sound like a hunger problem, but it creates one. Across parts of Africa and Latin America, fields lie barren because the rains never came. In some countries women spend many hours they could use for other chores walking to get the day's drinking water.

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In southern Africa, cattle are being slaughtered, some for glue, before they die of thirst and starvation caused by drought. The men who lose their cattle don't just lose a food source; they lose their life's savings. A bony child gets barely enough food to live, but he shares that food with the parasites inside his body. Sanitation is difficult with scarce water, nearly impossible if that water is polluted.

Southern Baptists are helping in a number of ways. One of their most ambitious projects is in the Diabo Circle region of Upper Volta, where missionaries and Tennessee Baptist volunteers have built a dam, dug wells and built basins to catch water.

Still, water is precious. Missionary Larry Cox and volunteer Guy Causey visited 10 recently dug wells and were surprised to find each had a small padlock attached to an old bicycle chain barring people from "stealing" the water. Each hand-dug well contained about 20 gallons of the precious liquid.

In another village, the people made 4,000 mud bricks for a church from the last puddles that stood at the end of the rainy season. Then construction halted. There was no water left for mortar.

In Ceara, Brazil, a state where drought is frequent, Baptists decided to combine a program for providing food and water with a program to help establish new churches and strengthen existing ones. Baptist workers provided help in 18 cities and towns. In most they distributed food or seeds and in some they built cisterns, public fountains or baths or dug wells.

Pacajus, like many of the cities in the project area, had municipal water, but the system was sometimes dry for more than a week at a time. Baptists built 12 cisterns to collect water for the dry periods. The city's mayor was so impressed he instructed health authorities to recommend cisterns to others.

The Baptist pastor's wife planted a vegetable garden, using some of the water from her cistern. Soon six other families had copied her garden.

In some countries a shortage of water is the problem; in others the problem is a shortage of clean water. In Bangladesh, Baptists put down their first well in 1970 when a tidal wave contaminated already questionable water sources. Since then, the Baptist mission has drilled almost 1,000 wells and plans to continue drilling. The cost, paid for with hunger relief funds, ranges from \$300 per well in some areas to \$100 in areas with a high water table.

The quest for water continues. When Louisiana Baptists undertook the People Who Care development project in the Gokwe region of Zimbabwe, their first move was to secure a well-drilling rig and an operator for it. Zimbabwe is one of the southern African countries hard hit by drought. Rain has brought relief to one small part of that continent but in other countries people are still watching for rain clouds.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Texas Baptist Churches
Suffer \$2 Million Damages

By Larry Brumley

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DALLAS (BP)--Damage to Texas Baptist churches, homes and businesses from Hurricane Alicia was more extensive than originally thought.

Communications were disrupted by the storm so it was several days before church leaders and mission directors could assess the extent of the damages.

More than 2,700 homes were destroyed or rendered unliveable by the hurricane, including about 1,400 in Galveston which took the initial brunt of the storm's 115 mph winds.

Taylor Pendley, chairman of the Baptist General Convention of Texas' Church Building Recovery Task Force, estimates total damage to Texas Baptist churches will top \$2 million.

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Sagemont Baptist Church, in Houston, received more than \$500,000 worth of damage when high winds tore huge air conditioning units off the roof of its new sanctuary and ripped away part of the roof. The church is scheduled to occupy the building in October. Ralph Edwards, minister of education, said he didn't think the damage would delay the move.

"Initially we were guessing between \$200-300,000 in damages, but the insurance man said it would be closer to \$500,000," Edwards said. Water poured through holes left in the roof when the air conditioning units were torn off and ruined carpet, ceiling tiles and wall covering.

Kingspoint Baptist Church, also in the Sagemont area of Houston, lost a portion of the roof over its educational space, "leaving the classrooms in shambles," said Mickey Scott, the church's pastor.

One of more than 90 tornadoes spawned by Alicia gutted the sanctuary at Fairmont Park Church, LaPorte. Two of the church's brick walls were knocked down, allowing high winds to rip out ceiling tiles, lights and air conditioning ducts.

The church, which lost its entire facility in a fire seven years ago, moved into the damaged sanctuary in December, 1981. "One of our deacons estimated damage at \$200,000," said Michael Sabo, minister of music.

Ironically, Iglesia Bautista of Bonita Gardens in Houston suffered only slight damage but when the power company restored the electricity, the building caught fire and burned.

Numerous other Texas Baptist churches also suffered damage, according to Pendley.

Disaster relief units from five Baptist state conventions--Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma--joined with the Red Cross to feed 100,000 meals to disaster victims the first week after the hurricane. Disaster relief units from Alabama and Tennessee Baptists replaced the Mississippi unit and one of the Oklahoma units at the end of the first week.

Many Baptists, including members of University Baptist Church in Clear Lake, who weren't hit by the storm, took time off from their jobs to help their less fortunate neighbors.

Many people from that church had been volunteers following the Paris, Texas, tornado in 1982 and the series of tornadoes which devastated the Conroe-New Caney area, north of Houston, last spring.

Volunteers from across the state, including Texas A&M University and Houston area churches helped staff the Texas Baptist Child Care units in Galveston and Baytown.

They cared for children of disaster victims who were applying for disaster relief through government agencies at the FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) Centers.

Despite the widespread destruction of the hurricane, there were relatively few deaths.

Lisa Norman, a 24-year-old member of Second Church, Highlands, was killed Aug. 18, when a tree fell on the car she was riding in with her husband and son. They were returning to their home after the storm, said LaNelle Neatherlin, a secretary at the church.

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Alicia, Arkansas Helps
Alicia's Texas Victims

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DALLAS (BP)--In the wake of Alicia, one of the first disaster relief offerings came from Alicia, Ark. Maurice Reynolds, director of missions for the Black River Association of Arkansas, sent a letter to Texas Baptists with a check. He explained his sister and her family were among the disaster victims in the Houston area.

"They are okay," he said, "though they lost virtually all their possessions."

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