



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Craig Bird, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Hasteley, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

August 26, 1983

83-129

Explosion Next Door Damages Beirut School

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--A French ammunition truck blew up in front of a building next door to the Baptist school in Beirut Aug. 25, breaking windows in the school and damaging the wall between the two buildings.

One person was killed and eight injured in the explosion, but no one was injured at the Baptist school. The building where the explosion occurred was heavily damaged.

Missionary Ed Nicholas said the blast knocked windows from the Baptist school, broke the kitchen windows of one missionary home and blew open the wooden door on another. It also weakened the already sagging eight-foot concrete block wall between the buildings which will probably have to be taken down. Students were not at school, which is scheduled to open for a new term Oct. 4.

A contingent of French soldiers from the peacekeeping force in Lebanon were staying in the building where the explosion occurred, according to Jim Ragland, school director now on furlough in the United States. The troops came to the school yard to play basketball and "let off steam," he said.

According to news reports, a spokesman for the French contingent said an accidental fire destroyed the truck. But in Berlin, Armenian terrorists claimed they staged the fire and two other attacks to get comrades freed from French jails.

-30-

BJCPA Sides With Students
In Free Exercise Case

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
8/26/83

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Baptist public affairs agency has sided with a group of Pennsylvania high school students in asking the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia to uphold a lower court ruling which permitted a student-initiated religious group to meet on an equal basis with non-religious groups during a morning activities period.

In a friend-of-the-court brief written and filed by its general counsel, John W. Baker, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs argued the Williamsport Area School District had violated the students' free exercise of religion and free speech rights by denying them the same access to the morning activities period provided non-religious groups.

The BJCPA, a public affairs agency representing eight national Baptist denominations, including the Southern Baptist Convention, was joined in the brief by the National Association of Evangelicals, a Wheaton, Ill.-based organization whose affiliates include colleges, universities and 36,000 churches from 74 denominations.

At issue before the Third Circuit is a ruling by the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania that the student-initiated religious group Petros has equal access to school facilities because the school district created a limited open forum by establishing the activities period. Petros was the only group denied permission to meet as a sanctioned student activity.

-more-

"Since early 1981 the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs has been looking for clean, clearcut cases in which to make the argument for the free exercise of religion," BJCPA Executive Director James M. Dunn said of his agency's decision to enter the case on the students' side. "We see Williamsport as such a case."

In a similar case in 1981, the BJCPA filed a Supreme Court brief supporting of the free speech and free exercise rights of a group of Missouri university students. The high court sided with the students in that case on free speech grounds.

"We've always consistently supported prayer that is truly voluntary," Dunn said, "and this sort of approach to offering access to religious groups at the high school level with various safeguards against government involvement represents nothing more than elemental fairness."

Dunn added the agency also supports legislative efforts to accomplish similar equal access objectives at the secondary school level, saying a bill introduced by Sen. Mark O. Hatfield, R-Ore., (S. 815) "holds real promise for a valid application of the free exercise clause of the First Amendment."

In the brief, Baker argued the First Amendment's ban on establishment of religion "does not require Petros be denied equal access to the use of facilities by Williamsport Area High School."

Petros' participation in the "limited open forum" created by the Williamsport Area School District, the brief states, does not violate any of the Supreme Court's establishment clause tests. Those tests require a law or policy to have a secular purpose, neither advance nor inhibit religion, and produce no excessive entanglement of government in religion.

Because the activities period was used by non-religious groups for a number of years before Petros requested permission to meet, the brief argues the limited open forum was created for "purely secular purposes" and not "religious purposes." Permitting a group such as Petros to meet, the brief contends, does not constitute "sponsoring or promoting that group." Finally, the presence of a monitor or record keeper who is an employee of the state, the brief states, would result in "negligible" and not "excessive" entanglement of government with religion.

The brief further contends the Williamsport decision denying Petros' request to meet burdens the students' free exercise and free speech rights without demonstrating a "compelling state interest" that "cannot be served by less restrictive means."

"Limits on religious liberty are permitted only when the heaviest burden of proof has been borne by the state," the brief concludes, charging the school district had demonstrated no compelling reason to justify limiting the students' free exercise of religion and free speech rights.

Baker said the case is legally significant because it gives the Third Circuit and possibly later the Supreme Court a "clear opportunity in a clean case to define the boundaries of free exercise rights" for high school students.

"In this case," Baker explained, "the courts will have an opportunity to deal with student-initiated, student-run participation in a limited public forum. In the past, the Supreme Court has dealt with state-sponsored, state-initiated religious exercises."

The Williamsport case could have additional significance, Baker added, if it is appealed to the Supreme Court. A decision by the high court against the students, Baker said, would likely fan the flames of a national push to amend the Constitution's First Amendment.

-30-

Lottie Moon Belongings Donated To
Historical Commission Archives

Baptist Press
8/26/83

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--"It is a burning shame that men can shoot innocent people (or guilty ones) and hide under the U.S. flag," wrote Lottie Moon, pioneer missionary to China.

-more-

Her 1907 letter referred to an American citizen in China who allegedly murdered a native Chinese. Moon wrote to fellow missionary Peyton Stephens and suggested he go to the American Embassy in China and express displeasure the alleged murderer might use his American citizenship to lessen possible judicial measures against him.

Moon's tattered and yellowed letter, which also discusses purchasing turnip seeds, was donated to the Southern Baptist Historical Commission by Fleeta Stephens, the daughter-in-law of Peyton Stephens.

Mrs. Stephens of Columbia, Mo., informed the Nashville-based Historical Commission the letter and a photograph of Moon had been "tucked away in a drawer" since her father-in-law's death in 1950. After her husband's death last year, she decided to make Moon's letter and photograph available for research.

"We're interested in collecting missionary documents which detail the lives of Southern Baptist missionaries," said new Dargan-Carver Library archivist, Bill Sumners. "We have missionaries that have served for a long, long time. Their papers have great significance in documenting their lives and work."

The Dargan-Carver Library, owned and operated by the Southern Baptist Historical Commission and the Baptist Sunday School Board, possesses the largest collection of Southern Baptist historical and research materials in the world.

-30-

Elaine Dickson Resigns
As Direct Sales Manager

Baptist Press
8/26/83

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Elaine Dickson, manager of the Baptist Sunday School Board's direct sales department since its inception in 1979, has resigned effective Oct. 1 to pursue writing, consulting and training interests.

Dickson, who joined the board in 1975 as supervisor of the young adult section in the Sunday school department, said, "My years at the board have been satisfying and fulfilling, both personally and professionally. At this point in my career, I look forward to charting new directions in some areas where I can continue to be related to the mission of our denomination.

Bill Graham, director of the book store division which includes the direct sales department, said, "Elaine Dickson has given direct sales the kind of organizational leadership needed for a new operation."

He cited the creation of the Lifeway Home Shopping Service and Ministers Resource Service as "approaches that will continue to make a positive contribution to the growth of Sunday School Board marketing efforts."

Before assuming her present position, Dickson was church services and materials coordinator and completed an executive office assignment leading a 1976 organization study of the church services and materials division.

A native of Illinois, Dickson earlier was dean of student affairs at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and an executive on the staff of SBC Woman's Missionary Union. She is immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association.

-30-

ACTS Program Features
Baptist Student Groups

Baptist Press
8/26/83

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Glorieta Quiz, a pilot television program for the ACTS network, was taped by the Radio and Television Commission during the annual student conference at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

-more-

The student conference, sponsored by national student ministries of the Baptist Sunday School Board, was used for the single elimination competition which will be aired in the spring of 1984 on the American Christian Television System (ACTS).

More than 25 Baptist Student Union groups participated in the preliminary competition. Sixteen teams will appear on the 30-minute weekly series when it airs in May.

Four team members, plus two alternates from each school, competed in a match of wits to see which team could answer the most general knowledge questions. Question categories included religion, the Bible, science, philosophy, history, mathematics and sports.

Chip Beall, host of the nationally televised College Bowl, was the host for the Glorieta Quiz. Judges for the competition were selected from the staff of Dallas Baptist College, Dallas, Texas.

BSU groups represented Iowa State University, Ames; Louisiana Tech University, Ruston; Hardin-Simmons, Abilene, Texas; East Central Oklahoma State University, Ada; Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee; University of Southern California, Los Angeles; Colorado State University, Fort Collins; University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, Belton, Texas; New Mexico State University, Las Cruces; Eastern New Mexico University, Portales; Texas A & M University, College Station; University of Texas at Arlington; Arizona State University, Tempe; University of Texas, Austin; Southern Methodist University, Dallas, and University of Washington, Seattle.

The RTVC is considering taping similar programs at both Glorieta and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Conference Centers during 1984 student conferences.

Other programs planned for the ACTS network include Invitation to Life, Sunshine Factory, Country Crossroads, Profiles, Our World, The Plant Groom and the David Wade Show. Programs are planned for all age groups--preschool through senior adult.

-30-

(BP) photo mailed to Baptist state newspapers by Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press

Deaths Of Missionaries
Cause Many To Ask 'Why?'

By Norman Jameson

Baptist Press
8/26/83

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The deaths of missionary Roger Thompson in Ecuador, a missionary kid in Indonesia and several volunteer workers in the United States this summer are vivid reminders of the perilous and often isolated duties of Christian workers.

Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board records show 31 men and women have drowned, been murdered or killed in car accidents or airplane crashes while serving as Southern Baptist missionaries.

The earliest were Mr. and Mrs. J.S. James who in 1848 were drowned in Hong Kong harbor. Thompson is the latest. He was on his way to teach Christians in Cuenca to use a soul-winner's New Testament in witnessing when the airplane in which he was riding slammed into a mountain, killing 116.

In 1860 Mr. and Mrs. A.L. Bond and Mr. and Mrs. J.Q.A. Rohrer sailed for China aboard a boat that disappeared at sea. Five missionaries have died in China, not including the Bonds and Rohrers, and eight in Brazil.

All the deaths are tragic but among the most shocking were those of Rufus Ray, who in 1941 was tortured to death by Japanese soldiers in the Philippines; Mavis Pate, who was murdered by Arab soldiers in the Gaza Strip in 1972, and Archie Dunaway, murdered in 1978 in Rhodesia by guerrillas.

Sept. 4 marks the 25th anniversary of one missionary death that is still affecting Southern Baptists--the drowning of Wimpy Harper during an outing with family and friends in east Africa.

-more-

Jesse Fletcher, president of Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, was the Foreign Mission Board associate personnel secretary who processed Harper through appointment as a foreign missionary.

In 1965, seven years after Harper drowned, Fletcher stood on the beach where the accident occurred, asking "Why?" He found some answers.

Arville Senter, then a first-term missionary in east Africa, told Fletcher he and his wife, Pauline, committed themselves to missionary service after reading of Harper's death.

Fletcher also remembered professor Cal Guy told a chapel audience at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Fort Worth, Texas, the news of Harper's death. "At the close of a simple memorial service, he extended an invitation for mission volunteers," Fletcher said. "Scores answered in response to that service."

Cornell Goerner, then area secretary for Africa, said, "You know, it's hard to realize that when Wimpy died we had in east Africa less than two dozen missionaries, one organized church, an incomplete hospital and an incomplete community center. Seven years later we had 104 missionaries here, over 200 churches, a flourishing hospital, three community centers, two Baptist boys' high schools, a publishing house and a seminary."

In 1982 there were 223 Southern Baptist missionaries in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (the old east Africa mission) working in 1,612 churches and preaching points. There were more than 14,000 baptisms reported last year.

Answers to the "whys" of untimely, seemingly unjust deaths of people, like Wimpy Harper and Roger Thompson, dedicated to bringing others to knowing Jesus Christ, are never easily apparent.

William R. O'Brien, executive vice president of the Foreign Mission Board, said it is life's "most perplexing question" and one he has asked many times. The answer, he said, lies in the nature of life itself where no one is immune from pain and suffering, and ultimately death.

O'Brien said the number of deaths to missionaries is remarkably low considering the 138 years of foreign board operation, missionaries' high mobility and frequent presence in times of natural disaster and war.

There never has been a decrease in interest among potential missionaries following news of a death on the field, O'Brien said, and the board continues to appoint record numbers.

Harper's wife, Juanita, is a missionary in Kenya and their son, Richard, is a missionary in Brazil. "Death did not turn them from God or the pilgrimage God led them to," O'Brien said.

Fletcher sees a possible answer in the tremendous response of others to missions service as a result of the example of people like Harper.

He had completed laying the foundation for the Baptist missionary enterprise in east Africa. Like Moses, someone else would lead across Jordan.