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Rapid Growth of ACTS
Causes Cable TV Stir

By Greg Warner

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Although the ACTS network is less than two months old and hardly a TV powerhouse, its rapid growth is causing a stir in some cable TV circles and drawing criticism from other religious broadcasters.

ACTS, the American Christian Television System, has been in full operation since June 12. Its family and Christian programs already reach more than a million homes through 84 cable TV systems and two low-power TV stations.

But ACTS has been criticized by the PTL Network, the country's largest religious TV system, and CBN Cable Network, which formerly held that distinction, for aggressive marketing. "If we weren't making motion, we wouldn't be making waves," ACTS President Jimmy R. Allen said.

All three networks are distributed primarily through local cable TV systems, many of which are required to offer their communities religious programming. Since most cable systems have a limited number of channels available, cable operators often end up choosing either ACTS, PTL, CBN or another service that offers religious programs.

Both PTL and CBN have charged ACTS' consultants or supporters have pressured some cable operators to bump the other networks off cable systems in favor of ACTS.

The Baptist network issued a policy statement in May disavowing pressure tactics. "ACTS' personnel have never to our knowledge and will never use practices which in any way speak against other groups or seek to proselytize members or avenues of distribution," the statement said in part. "Never are cable operators asked to drop or move any particular service. Any ACTS' personnel violating this approach would be dismissed."

According to PTL, however, the statement did not solve the problem. Regardless of policy on the national level, "the distance between the home office and the local boys is a long, long way," said Jack Hightower, PTL marketing director.

Hightower said the pressure is coming primarily from Baptist pastors anxious to get ACTS on their local cable systems. "When these ministers go to a cable system manager with evangelistic fervor instead of a conciliatory spirit, it comes across as hard-sell," he said.

Sometimes the enthusiasm of a Baptist minister looks like "the wrath of God" to a cable manager, Hightower said. Whether they "intimate, suggest or demand" that ACTS be put on and another service dropped, he said, it is perceived as pressure.

Unlike PTL and CBN, which were started by independent religious broadcasters, ACTS is being developed by a denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention. ACTS' marketing strategy draws attention to the strength of Southern Baptists and promises participation by Baptist churches in local program production and promotion.

In order to make room for ACTS in Jackson, Miss., Capitol Cablevision bumped CBN from the system's basic service to its second tier, which costs subscribers more because, Capitol officials said, ACTS would better serve subscriber needs and interests.

By contrast, United Cable Television in Tyler, Texas, chose to leave CBN on their basic service and put ACTS on the second tier until another basic channel opens up. But in Little Rock, Ark., the city council instructed Storer Communications to replace PTL with ACTS.

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Though unconfirmed, similar conflicts are reported in other communities. But no one is ready to call the problem epidemic. "There is a problem, but how widespread it is I don't know," said Gene Linder, executive director of programming and production for ATC, which owns 467 cable TV systems, including the one in Jackson.

Linder said the heavy involvement of local people is both the prime attraction of ACTS and its biggest danger. "Anytime you have a vested interest, there is the potential for pressure." Allen also credited the network's "grass roots structure" with creating some pressure.

"The community involvement factor is the most exciting thing to the cable operators," he said. "But in trying to explain their decision to carry ACTS, it can easily sound like they are responding to pressure. They may genuinely be trying to give the community a popular and needed service, but it's hard for them to explain that."

Allen said quick acceptance of ACTS by cable TV operators has caused apprehension among other broadcasters. "Any aggressive marketing position causes problems," he said. "If we were not making considerable progress, no one would make anything of our strategy. We are trying to be very positive. We believe there is room for all of us in cable."

PTL and CBN agreed there is a need for all the services, but said most of ACTS' gains have been their losses. "In any instance where ACTS has gotten on, it has been at the expense of another religious service," said Tom Rogeberg, CBN vice-president for operations.

Lloyd Hart, national cable affiliate manager for ACTS, said in most cases ACTS has instead found space on new or expanding systems or where adequate space has not necessitated eliminating any services.

"If it comes at the expense of another service, we're not always told that," Hart said. "We don't suggest that be done, so we don't even make an issue of it by asking. In many cases where a cable system already has a religious service and no extra room, we are told we will have to wait as much as a year before another channel is available. And that's fine."

Hart said ACTS informs communities it is available as "an unapologetically religious network." Then, at the invitation of local supporters, one of ACTS' 300 consultants meets with the cable operator to outline the service and demonstrate local support.

"There is no discussion of who's already on the system or who needs to be kicked off," Hart said. "Then the cable operator has to decide if the community is in favor of ACTS. It would only hurt us to force our way onto a cable system," Hart said. "Even if pressure got us on in one city, it would hurt us with every other system owned by that same company."

"Pressure is met by resistance, that's human nature," agreed ATC's Linder. It would be unwise for any network to develop an adversary relationship with cable systems, he warned.

All three networks insist they are not in competition with each other, except in the sense that all services compete for limited channel space. Hightower said PTL is the only one of the three that carries religious programs exclusively and the others should not be considered religious services. Both CBN and ACTS mix religious programs with family-oriented entertainment.

CBN (23 million subscribers) no longer promotes itself as a religious service, so PTL (10 million subscribers) is considered the largest religious network. Rogeberg said CBN's size and ad-supported programs means it does not compete with the others. "Our competition is more with the USA Network and (superstations) WTBS and WGN than with ACTS," he said.

Although the three services are trying to minimize the competition and conflicts in their marketing to cable systems, most predict some problems will linger. It may be hard for cable TV operators to see them as non-competitive, Allen said, especially when reporters and other outsiders are looking for a "holy war."

"But we would rather see PTL and CBN and ACTS all on the same system," Hart said, "because any of them would be better than most other cable services."

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Cumberland Grads Aim To
Help Judo Into Spotlight

By Barry Horn

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (BP)--College football has Notre Dame. College basketball has North Carolina. College judo has Cumberland. College baseball has...

Wait a minute. College judo? Cumberland? What do they cheer? "Judo chop 'em up for the Indians. Flip 'em for the old maroon and white?" What does the best judo player in the country get, the Bruce Lee Memorial Trophy?

Well, devotees of Trivial Pursuit, America's latest fad, will be happy to know Cumberland College, student population 1,800, located in the heart of coal country in Williamsburg, Ky., is the reigning national champion in judo. The Indians also won titles in 1980 and 1983. Arch-rival San Jose State in California won the title in 1981 and 1982.

Now the old maroon and white is hoping to help the red, white and blue at the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

Cumberland graduates--132-pound Edward Liddle, who migrated to eastern Kentucky from New York, 200-pound Leo White, a Californian, and 235-pound Doug Nelson, a New Jerseyite--comprise more than one-third of the eight-man U.S. Olympic Judo team.

"Cumberland is run by the Southern Baptists," Liddle explained. "There is no dancing. There is no drinking. There is no mixing with girls. There is only judo."

There is judo because Cumberland, in the early 1980's was one of the few schools in the nation to field a judo team and offer scholarships to promising high school judo players (that is what they are called). One of the school's physical education professors learned the sport while he was in the Army and suggested the school try to seek some notoriety through judo.

But there is little glitter in judo. The U.S. Judo Association has fewer than 20,000 members. Most people think judo is a martial art like jujitsu and karate.

"We are stereotyped," said Brett Barron, the 172-pound member of the U.S. team. "People are always asking us to break boards and chop ice. I can't do that. You know, there is no such thing as a judo chop. That's not what the sport is all about."

On the contrary, explained Paul Maruyama, an Air Force lieutenant colonel and coach of the 1984 Olympic team. "Judo was founded in 1882 as a sport by a man named Kano. It was derived from the martial arts, but it is not designed to hurt or maim. It was designed to be a sport like boxing. In fact, Kano was the first member of the International Olympic Committee from the Orient."

Judo, Maruyama said, is more similar to wrestling than karate.

"There are throws and takedowns and pins," he said while preparing to put his team through a Tuesday afternoon workout at the United States Olympic Training Center. "But there is more movement than wrestling because judo players are allowed to use their legs."

And they also are allowed to choke and apply bone-breaking arm bars. Choking an opponent into unconsciousness or breaking his arm in a behind-the-back bar is perfectly legal in judo.

"People are unwilling to concede and will allow themselves to be choked into unconsciousness if the stakes are high enough," said Nelson, who lapsed into unconsciousness at last year's U.S. Open while trying to escape a choke hold.

The object of the sport is not to force an opponent to lose consciousness. The object is to pin the opponent to the mat for 30 seconds within a five-minute round. If there is no pin, the referee and a panel of judges decide the outcome.

"There are not a lot of people who are willing to pay a lot of money to learn a sport where they will get beat up," Maruyama admitted.

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But, they do play judo at the Olympics. They have since Japan hosted the 1964 Games in Tokyo. The Japanese are the best at the sport. Then come the Russians, the East Germans and the French. The Americans, well, they are improving.

When San Jose graduate Bobby Berland, a 189-pounder from Wilmette, Ill., won a bronze medal at the 1983 World Championships in Moscow, he became the first American to win a medal since 1963.

"Our chances are as good as they ever have been to win medals," Maruyama said. "The fact the Games are in the United States and the fact the Eastern bloc is gone helps."

Only two American judo players--James Bregman in 1964 and Allen Coage in 1976--ever have won medals. Both won bronzes.

Maruyama and his athletes believe any one of the eight players on the team could win a medal in the judo competition.

"Not one person on this team doesn't believe that he can't win a medal," Liddie said.

In addition to the Cumberland three, San Jose State placed two players on the team, 156-pound Mike Swain and Berland. The University of Alabama, which doesn't have a judo team, but has a football team of some note, contributed Dewey Mitchell, a former linebacker, who was the Crimson Tide's Most Valuable Defense Player in 1977. Mitchell competes in the openweight division. Craig Agena (145), who competed for the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, and Barron, the only American gold medal winner at the Pan Am Games, round out the team.

"We want those medals," Nelson said. "I wish the Russians and East Germans were coming. But they are not. So all we can do is go out and give it the old college try."

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(Horn is a staff writer for the Dallas Morning News. Story is reprinted by permission from the Dallas Morning News.)

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Cigarette Labeling Legislation
Delayed In Congress

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
7/24/84

WASHINGTON (BP)—Supporters of federal legislation to strengthen health warnings on cigarette packs fear the proposal may get sidetracked by election-year politics.

Despite support from both cigarette manufacturers and national health groups, the Comprehensive Smoking Health Education Act has been stalled in Congress by members from tobacco-raising states who are seeking concessions favorable to tobacco growers. Though eventual passage of the compromise legislation seems assured, the stalling tactics could delay action until 1985.

Foy Valentine, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, noted the Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City, Mo., "in a resolution adopted with overwhelming support expressed strong opposition to smoking cigarettes and to the economic and government practices which perpetuate this industry."

"Now is the time," he added, "for Southern Baptists to urge their senators and representatives to expedite the consideration of this badly-needed piece of health legislation and then to vote for it."

In addition to requiring a rotation system of tougher warning labels on cigarette packages, the legislation would require disclosure of chemicals added to tobacco in the manufacturing process.

According to Matthew Myers, staff director of the Coalition on Smoking OR Health, cigarettes are "the only product consumed by Americans at the present time in which the manufacturer is not required to disclose to federal scientists the identity of the chemicals added to the product during the manufacturing process."

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Myers pointed out that the growing awareness of health hazards related to cigarette smoking inhaled even by non-smokers means that disclosure of chemicals "is of great importance" to smokers and non-smokers alike.

The coalition formed by the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association and the American Lung Association is a prominent anti-smoking lobby in Congress.

The demand both within Congress and from the public for action has resulted from an increased awareness of health threats posed by cigarette smoke. Cigarette smoking has been cited as the largest preventable cause of illness and premature death in the United States.

Though passage of the Comprehensive Smoking Education Act would be "one significant step" toward resolution of the tobacco smoking issue, Myers, Valentine and other anti-smoking activists point out that action also is needed on other legislative fronts.

--Unless Congress acts to extend current legislation, the federal excise tax on cigarettes will revert in 1985 from 16 cents per pack to 8 cents. According to Myers, if excise taxes on cigarettes had simply kept pace with inflation since 1950, the tax would now be about 30 cents per pack.

Among other reasons, an increase in the excise tax is needed to help discourage smoking among teenagers, he added. "An increase of 10 percent in the price of a pack of cigarettes will produce a 10-15 percent decrease in the number of teenagers who start smoking," he said.

--Congress also will decide on the level of support, if any, to be given to tobacco growers as a part of the agricultural support program.

The Southern Baptist Convention voted in Kansas City to "encourage the Congress...to terminate agricultural funding and subsidies to those who plant, grow, or sell any tobacco products."

Valentine noted "change in government policy is vitally needed to break the pattern of government-encouraged production of tobacco. No valid social policy can be permanently served by financially subsidizing with general tax funds the growing of tobacco."

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Dilday Elected
By Georgia Paper

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Baptist Press
7/24/84

ATLANTA (BP)—Robert H. Dilday has been elected associate editor of the Christian Index, weekly paper of Georgia Baptist Convention, effective about Sept. 1.

Dilday is currently assistant to the executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington.

He was a news writer for the Arkansas Baptist News Magazine for one year. He has also been news writer for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and an intern with Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

He is a graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Seminary, with additional journalism studies at universities of Georgia, Arkansas and Texas. He is son of Russell H. Dilday, Jr., president of Southwestern Seminary, and Mrs. Dilday.

Mrs. Robert Dilday is the former Nancie Wingo. She is minister to college students at Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Va.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) article "Christian Unity Prevails At World Youth Meeting," mailed 7/20/84, please note that this was not the first conference held in Latin America. The 1953 BWA Youth Congress was held in Rio de Janeiro.

Thanks, Baptist Press