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Blind Woman Breaks Barriers
Through Faith, Perseverance

By Mary Jane Welch

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—Today Lucy Ching sees that blind children in Hong Kong routinely get the opportunity she fought for as a child—going to school.

Ching was the first blind person in Asia to attend school with sighted children. Today, from her post in Hong Kong as a government social worker with the handicapped and elderly, she can look proudly at the changes which have come during her lifetime.

One of the greatest rewards of her job, she says, is seeing lives changed—blind beggars and prostitutes training for new jobs and children who can cope with attending regular schools routinely given Braille transcription for their class materials.

To many people, Lucy Ching's life shows the triumph of a tough, persevering human spirit. But to Christians who've heard her testimony, including those gathered for this year's Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City, Mo., her story also shows the gospel's power to change lives.

She took a long vacation from her job this summer to tell Southern Baptists at the convention; at Baptist conference centers in Ridgecrest, N.C., and Glorieta, N.M.; at GA camp and other places, how they've played a part in making her life what it has been. Her trip was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and the Anvil Foundation, a benevolent organization set up by a group of businesswomen in Texas.

When she uses English tapes to interest a handicapped person in hearing the gospel, she can do it because Southern Baptist missionaries read the Bible onto those tapes. (When she transcribed the New Testament, the Baptist Hymnal and part of the Old Testament into Braille, help and encouragement came from Southern Baptist missionaries.) When she gets discouraged and life looks bleak, she turns to a couple of Southern Baptist missionaries in Hong Kong.

"I do want them (Southern Baptists) to know that one day when we go to heaven all these Christians who have been giving to foreign mission work will probably have many, many people coming to shake their hands and tell them, 'Look, I am the person that you have led to Christ through your Southern Baptist mission work because you have given.' I truly believe that and I want to say to all Christians and churches who have been supporting Southern Baptist mission work my big thank you."

Ching's story starts in Canton, China, when she was blinded by a herbal concoction when she was six months old. Relatives blamed her blindness on the sins of her ancestors, her parents and herself.

But her life was changed after she heard her younger brothers and sisters chanting a verse they had learned at the Baptist school they attended: "For God so loved the world..."

"Do you think," Ching asked her sister, "that God would love a blind girl who people say it is better to die than to grow up?"

"Well, he must because you are part of the world," said her sister.

Ching began attending a Baptist Sunday school and soon became a Christian, but still wasn't content. She wanted to go to school.

Hearing her sister read from the Bible about Jesus' promise to answer prayers prompted her to pray one night that she might go to school. Unknown to her, her mother was in the room and overheard the prayer. She discouraged her daughter from getting her hopes up. Blind children in the United States and England may go to school, she said, but not in Asia.

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But the missionaries who knew Ching were touched by what she calls "her passionate desire to learn." With their help, she was enrolled in Pooi To Middle School with her brothers and sisters. Because there were no special materials for a blind student, her brothers and sisters and missionary kids read materials to her and teachers tested her orally.

Even when her family fled to Macao and Hong Kong to escape the Communists, Ching continued her education. She was granted a scholarship as the first Chinese blind student for the teacher training course at Perkins School for the Blind in the United States; next came a scholarship to attend Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

She felt God's call to work with the handicapped in Hong Kong. When she found no opportunities to work with a church, she answered a newspaper ad for a government social worker with the blind. When she arrived for her interview, 15 sighted men were waiting too. She could hear them whispering among themselves about whether the government officials might possibly hire this blind woman. They did.

In the 25 years since, she has shown skeptics a woman and a blind person can not only work with the blind, but can administer rehabilitation and care facilities in a district of Hong Kong. And she can do it well enough to win top awards for her achievements.

She won the Disabled Persons Award of the Pan-Pacific Conference for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled, which is given to one person in the Far East each year. She was named a Member of the British Empire by the Queen of England.

And in 1979, she won the Asian award for outstanding social work given by the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind. She was particularly surprised to receive that award because it had always gone to sighted male physicians.

The awards gave her the opportunity to share her witness on Hong Kong television and radio, an experience both disappointing and rewarding, she says. She was pleased when young people wrote and called to say her testimony had changed their lives. But she was disappointed that many reporters treated it as a joke when she gave credit for her work to God.

As with many events in her life, Ching pins her feelings on this to a Scripture passage—the parable of the three servants and their talents in Matthew 25. In the story, the servants who received five talents (money at that time) and two talents both doubled the money left in their care, but the servant given one talent hid his in the ground until the master returned.

Ching says she feels that she is a two-talent person, while those who are not handicapped are five-talent people. But she points out that the master gave the same praise and reward—"Well done, my good and faithful servant"—to both when they used his resources well. The Lord requires people only to do their best with what he has given them, she says.

Ching explains that she has sometimes failed in doing God's will. "There were times when I felt that the difficulty was so great that I just could not carry on. But whenever I felt like this, my habit and practice was to kneel down and pray."

Although she works in a government job, Ching says she has opportunities to share her witness through the way she carries out her work. One man with whom she worked asked to speak with her his last day on the job before moving to Canada. He explained that although he didn't work directly with her, he could tell from the way she went about her job that she was Christian. Because of what he had seen, he planned to attend the Baptist church when he arrived in Canada. She later heard that he had kept his word and had become a Christian.

As Ching's faith spills over into her work, her work spills over into her free time. A member of Caine Road Baptist Church, she devotes much time to transcribing the Bible and Christian literature into Braille, an effort which involves thousands of volunteer hours from many helpers. She teaches an English class which gives her the opportunity to teach non-believers about the Bible. And she visits the blind and elderly and reads the Bible to them. She seeks to offer other blind and handicapped people the same helps God has given her.

Speakers Challenge Students
To Involvement In Missions

By Linda Lawson

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)—Citing urgent needs for Baptists to pastor language churches in California, minister to new converts in southern Africa and begin campus ministries with internationals, Carolyn Weatherford challenged college students to active involvement in missions.

Weatherford, executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, Birmingham, Ala., spoke at the closing session of the student conference at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center where the theme, "Missions: Attitude to Action," was sounded to the more than 2,500 students and leaders by platform speakers and conference leaders.

Students also were urged to be missionaries on their campuses and to spearhead denominational efforts to strengthen missions.

"Ninety-five percent of seminary trained men and women remain in the United States with five percent of the world's population, while five percent go outside the U.S. where 95 percent of the world's population live," said Weatherford. "Is it fair that a person should hear the gospel a second time before everyone has had the opportunity to hear it the first time?"

She urged students to commit themselves to Christ, consider world needs and accept their responsibility to witness and minister. "Christ's call to missions is active, not passive," Weatherford said. "What has God given to you, how has he gifted you and what are you going to do about it?" she asked.

Morton Rose, vice-president for church programs and services of the Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, Tenn., challenged students to take the lead in the 1985-90 Southern Baptist Convention emphasis on strengthening missions. "The hope for missions in America can rest with this body of students and students yet to come," he said.

"There are millions of people who do not know Christ, who do not know the life-giving process to give meaning in life. They cry out in all kinds of ways. It's all a cry for help," said Rose. "What would happen if we as Southern Baptists could mobilize our army and speak to these needs?" asked Rose.

Charles Baker, pastor of University Heights Baptist Church, Stillwater, Okla., said, "God has called you and appointed you to a mission field right now, the college campus. Get lined up with God and get ready to go back and share."

"Don't get caught up in minors," warned Baker. "Major on Jesus and love and redemption. Your campus does not need one other judge."

Mildred McWhorter, director of three mission centers in downtown Houston, said students should not let fear of failure keep them from witnessing.

"Some of you are afraid to witness. You are afraid you will make a mess of what you say," noted McWhorter. "God won't let you do that. I challenge you to witness. Do it the best way you can. God doesn't say you have to win the whole world. He said to tell the whole world," she emphasized.

Gordon Kingsley urged students to reflect on the question, "What is my mission", a question he called the most important in life.

"That is the question that lifts our lives from our routine to God's routine," said Kingsley, president of William Jewell College, Liberty, Mo. "Our job is making a living, our mission is making a life."

Students who accept God's mission as their own discover what God had in mind for them is also what is best for them, said Kingsley.

More than 4,500 students attended simultaneous conferences at Glorieta and Ridgecrest Conference Centers, sponsored by national student ministries of the Sunday School Board.

Lb. PR. Office
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Baptist Witness
Shifts Gears At Fair

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Baptists in New Orleans are adjusting their witnessing game plan for the second half of the Louisiana World Exposition as summer missionaries return home and local churches become more active.

Baptists have focused on a ministry in the Vieux Carre and at campgrounds using performers and personal witnessing rather than formal programs on the fairgrounds.

"These ministries will continue but with more local participation rather than the summer missionary groups," Jimmie Knox, director of Baptist Exposition Ministries said.

Statistics for the first half of the fair show more than 66,000 persons have been contacted by the volunteers with 38 documented professions of faith.

Caroline Veno, director of campground programs, said approximately 25 different mission groups have worked in 17 campgrounds, 10 in Louisiana and seven in Mississippi. Programs have included sing-alongs, puppets, Backyard Bible Clubs and Big A Clubs. Worship services have been held on Sunday, she said.

"We have had approximately 2,300 campers attend performances with eight decisions recorded," Veno said.

Five Baptist churches have cooperated on a rotating basis to lead worship services at the St. Bernard State Park near the Chalmette Battle Grounds, for example, she said.

Baptist volunteers expressed appreciation for an opportunity to witness. In Waveland, Miss., volunteers ended the summer by saying, "When we started giving out free snowcones we had a captive audience of more than 150 to see our puppet show." And campers responded with "We didn't know Baptists did good things like this."

Even a camp manager, who had been hostile toward mission groups performing at his place, attended the final presentation and "liked it."

But some of the summer missionaries felt the pressure.

David Stewart, who coordinated schedules of the summer missionaries in the Vieux Carre, said, "Sometimes they were tired and days were hot and dusty. And they did not always feel like going on the streets. But they did. Of course with day after day on the streets they remarked that the French Quarter smelled the same...food and garbage, food and garbage, a reference to the numerous restaurants in the area."

But they developed relationships with the street people, those who live and work in the Vieux Carre. Many of the locals responded to the Baptist young people after they came to know them. "Baptists are nice people to be around," they said.

A few of the visiting Baptist groups were able to perform on the Fair site, mainly at the Jazz and Gospel Music pavillion. Mostly the Baptist programs were in Jackson Square, on Bourbon and Royal streets and in campgrounds.

Stewart noted more than five other religious groups were in Vieux Carre, including Assemblies of God and Mbonies.

"No other group had the performing groups that we had," Stewart said. "And Baptists were complimented for keeping the area clean of discarded brochures, although few were thrown down."

Knox said the experience has demonstrated a permanent ministry is a possibility in the French Quarter with entertainment groups and other programs at the campgrounds.

Four brochures were prepared by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board especially for the Fair. One was titled "The French Quarter's Best Surprise." Inside a description about the Quarter is followed by an invitation to know about "meeting Jesus."

Knox said after giving one of the tracts to a man walking past, the man wheeled around and came back. "I didn't know what he wanted but he said, 'I don't need this.' And I said, 'Does this mean you already know Christ as your personal saviour?' And he said, 'Yes.'"

"Then he said, 'I'm not a Baptist but I sure am glad you're here. Can I have some brochures to take to friends?'"

The Louisiana World Exposition is scheduled to continue through the second week of November.

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HMB-N

HMB Awards
Associational Missions

By Leisa A. Hammett

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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—During home missions week at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, four directors of missions and a church were honored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board for their missions leadership in communities varying from rural-urban to metropolitan areas.

Maurice Flowers was named the 1984 outstanding missionary leader in a rural-urban association in the East. He is director of missions for the Jones Baptist Association in Laurel, Miss. The Jackson, Miss., native formerly was director of missions for the Bolivar Association in Mississippi.

Under Flowers' leadership, the Jones Baptist Association began prison, police, nursing home and hospital chaplaincy ministries.

Mt. Vernon Baptist Association (Alexandria, Va.) Executive Director William Cumbie was named 1984 outstanding missionary leader in a metropolitan association in the East. He has been pastor of churches in Virginia and Maryland and has been president of the Virginia Baptist General Association.

Roy Godwin, director of missions and evangelism for the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, received the PACT consultant of the year for the East. PACT provides assistance for churches in "changing communities." Godwin was director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association, Maryland, and pastor/director of Philadelphia City Ministries, Pennsylvania, both under HMB missionary appointment.

By studying the history of churches experiencing change and the demographic changes in the church's surrounding community, PACT consultants identify critical issues facing the church. Consultants also interview church members to determine the church's goals, aspirations as well as untold frustrations or resentments. With such data, consultants suggest goals and action plans so the surveyed congregations can take new direction.

Approximately 56 percent of Southern Baptist churches in metropolitan areas are located in significantly changing communities. The HMB has provided training for 110 PACT consultants throughout the nation to work with the nearly 3,000 congregations experiencing racial, economic, age or other forms of transition.

Receiving the 1984 PACT Church of the Year for the East award was Green Acres Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala. In recent years the church's community has experienced racial and socio-economic changes but with PACT assistance has increased church membership.

HMB associational staff also honored Charles Nunn for his years (1976-84) as an HMB director. Nunn is the director of missions for the Richmond Baptist Association in Virginia. He has been pastor of churches in West Virginia, Virginia and Texas.

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