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August 30, 1984

84-123

Political Coalition
Recruits SBC Support

By David Wilkinson

WASHINGTON (BP)—The president of the Southern Baptist Convention and his three immediate predecessors have joined a political campaign "to help restore traditional, moral and spiritual values" in America.

SBC President Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta, and former presidents James T. Draper Jr. and Adrian Rogers have agreed to serve on the executive board of the new American Coalition for Traditional Values.

Another former president, Bailey Smith of Del City, Okla., is a member of ACTV's "board of governors," consisting of pastors from 300 major U.S. cities.

Organized in April and in full swing since early July, ACTV claims to be an umbrella organization representing millions of Christians—"America's largest minority." It has been endorsed by organizations such as Moral Majority and by religious media leaders such as Jim Bakker, Jerry Falwell, Rex Humbard, James Robison and Jimmy Swaggart.

Though overwhelmingly white and Protestant, the organization claims to represent a broad spectrum of "true Christians from many varying doctrinal positions."

ACTV has identified 10 "basic concerns" by which it plans to measure political candidates. Headed by a constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion, the list includes support for a public school prayer amendment, tuition tax credits and a "strong national defense" and opposition to homosexual rights, pornography and "misguided" welfare programs.

Chaired by conservative author Tim LaHaye, ACTV maintains a central staff in the San Diego offices of LaHaye's Family Life Seminars. The coalition also employs a five-member staff in Washington and seven "field directors" in different regions of the country. According to Doug Shaddix, deputy director of the ACTV field office, a Washington-based "talent bank" also has been established "to get Christians into positions of authority in government."

Unlike Moral Majority and other political action groups which communicate primarily via direct mail to individual households, ACTV's basic strategy is to work through local congregations by soliciting the active support of pastors of "Bible-believing churches."

ACTV furnishes camera-ready information for church newsletters and bulletins and disseminates brochures and other materials for distribution to church members.

One of the "most effective tools," according to one field director, is the controversial "Presidential Biblical Scoreboard." The 40-page publication provides voting records and statements of presidential, congressional and gubernatorial candidates related to "traditional family moral issues."

ACTV also encourages each church to establish a "Good Government Committee" to help channel information and to organize voter registration drives and "get out the vote" campaigns.

The coalition hopes to register more than two million new voters before the November elections, claiming that "if liberals regain control of the White House and Senate, a liberal socialist state will follow within a few years."

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

Utilizing combined mailing lists furnished by Falwell, Swaggart, Kenneth Copeland and others, ACTV has contacted pastors of more than 100,000 churches. Its field directors are busily "following up" on some 18,000 pastors who pledged to conduct voter registration drives.

ACTV administrator Curtis Maynard, a former Southern Baptist pastor, claimed the coalition already has attracted "many mainstream Southern Baptists." A complete list of the "board of governors" is not yet available, he said, but it includes a "a lot of Southern Baptist men."

One of the most prominent of those, SEC President Stanley, was in Israel this week and unavailable for comment. But Draper, who turned over the SBC president's gavel to Stanley in June, said he agreed to serve on ACTV's executive board "because it's the only avenue I have to say some things I believe in."

"Southern Baptists," he said, "do not give me this kind of opportunity—I wish they did—to take a stand on issues I feel strongly about like school prayer, religious liberty, pornography and homosexuality."

Draper recently carried his role as an ACTV executive committee member to a hearing of the platform committee of the Republican party. He spoke briefly on behalf of the organization and introduced ACTV spokesmen Falwell, Swaggart and Robison, who presented testimonies.

Despite his enthusiasm for the coalition, Draper said he would "have to weigh carefully" the decision to join ACTV if he were still SEC president. "I would have been more reluctant then, I'm sure," he explained.

The Texas pastor also qualified some of the claims made in ACTV literature. The often-repeated claim to "represent 45 million Christians" is "good rhetoric," he said, "but I don't know how accurate that really is. I do think ACTV does represent a lot of people."

Although ACTV literature speaks of addressing political issues with a "uniform moral voice," Draper admits a "diversity of opinion" is inevitable, even among Christians.

Even ACTV's executive committee, he said, does not have "absolute unanimity on the specifics" of all 10 concerns. "I'm not positive myself on all ten, especially tuition tax credits," he added. "Maybe I'm against it just because I've heard so many times I'm supposed to be against it. But there are others on the board who feel very strongly about it."

Despite such qualifications, Draper believes "general unanimity" on concerns such as abortion and pornography is "a good possibility—if you don't become legalistic about it as some other coalitions have done."

ACTV's Maynard agreed there is "some room for difference," though "I find it hard to believe someone who would vote for all 10 concerns would not be a better candidate than someone who struck out on all of them."

He specifically defended ACTV's strong stand on abortion. "Our position is very hardline, you might say. Some people talk about exceptions like rape. Well, our position is once you open the door to destroy life, whatever the reason, you open a real quagmire to defend other situations. Who are we to take life away?"

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New Right Strategists
Consider New Party

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
8/30/84

(Editor's note: The American Coalition on Traditional Values—the subject of the story above—interacts with other New Right groups in numerous ways; some of which are talking of forming a new political party)

WASHINGTON (BP)—As Republicans and Democrats battle it out on center stage this November, some of the principal architects of the New Right are waiting in the wings with visions of a third political party.

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Frustrated over an inability to push their causes through Congress, New Right leaders hope by 1986 to assemble the framework for what strategist Paul Weyrich has called "a new political arrangement" to provide "the leverage we need to push our agenda."

High on that agenda are a constitutional amendment on abortion, organized public school prayer and tuition tax credits, along with opposition to homosexual rights legislation, the Equal Rights Amendment and cuts in the defense budget.

To help "push" those issues, third party planners probably will turn to the political-religious alliance fashioned four years ago. In 1980 Weyrich, Richard Viguerie and other New Right champions successfully recruited support for Ronald Reagan from religious media heavyweights like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and James Robison. During the last two years, the coalition reportedly has been drawing an increasing number of Southern Baptist pastors.

Ironically, though the "New Religious Right" helped put Reagan in the White House, much of the interest in a new party has been generated by dissatisfaction with the President's performance on selected New Right concerns.

Reagan's verbal support has been "worth less than the Teleprompter it's written on," according to a disgruntled Howard Phillips, chairman of the Conservative Caucus and one of the most outspoken advocates of a third party. Though other New Right leaders are less strident in their criticism, many share Phillips' frustration.

Conservative Digest publisher and direct mail guru Viguerie surveyed discrepancies between the President's promises and performance on certain issues and reluctantly concluded, "It is time for a change." The Digest conducted opinion polls reflecting similar disappointment among conservative leaders who believe Reagan has not been "conservative enough."

Despite such criticism, Viguerie, Phillips and others are supporting Reagan's reelection. But, explains Cal Thomas of Moral Majority, "We've learned it really doesn't matter who gets elected president, as far as certain policies are concerned, particularly economic policies."

Though he wonders "how it would work out practically," Thomas is "intrigued" by the idea of a third party. Politicians, he said, suffer from "a Cream-of-Wheat kind of pluralism that is not willing to take a stand on anything. I share the dream of what could happen with men and women of real solid conviction in places of national leadership."

Thomas, Phillips, and others emphasize a new party would not have to win every election to be successful.

"Maybe a third party could force the other parties to get with it in terms of some of these important issues, rather than always fudging," Thomas explained. "It's like Kroger being the only store in town, and then A&P sets up a business across the street. If A&P starts attracting customers, Kroger has two options--changing or losing more of its business."

Phillips and others hope to gear up plans after the November elections, with the goal of running independent third party candidates in a few, carefully targeted congressional races in 1986. Depending on the success of those campaigns, the movement could expand into a full-fledged national party as early as 1988.

Though organized support from religious groups would not be "absolutely crucial" in the early stages, New Right strategists recognize the potential in harnessing the energies of a new political activism among Christian leaders, particularly Protestant fundamentalists.

The Christian community "is by no means politically monolithic," Phillips pointed out, "But I think there are a lot of Christian conservatives out there who are potentially strong supporters" of a third party.

A "very encouraging" sign, he added, is the formation of the American Coalition on Traditional Values, an umbrella group embraced by the country's most prominent TV preachers and by organization such as Moral Majority and the Christian Voice.

Organized in April, ACTV operates out of the San Diego offices of Family Life Seminars, headed by conservative author Tim LaHaye. The executive board, chaired by LaHaye, includes SBC President Charles Stanley of Atlanta and former SEC presidents James T. Draper Jr. of Euless, Texas, and Adrian Rogers of Memphis, Tenn.

In its campaign to "return this nation to the traditional moral values upon which it was founded," ACTV hopes to mobilize a national network among the country's estimated 40 million "evangelical Christians" in support of 10 "basic concerns," including abortion, prayer in public schools, pornography, tuition tax credits and a "strong national defense."

ACTV represents a significant development in the religious community because it incorporates a "more sophisticated approach" to political involvement, according to Jim Ellis, assistant director of the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress. The organization, headed by Paul Weyrich, has consulted the ACTV staff on strategy and issues.

ACTV disseminates information on candidates and issues, along with suggestions for political action, to a "board of governors," consisting primarily of "Bible-believing pastors" in 300 cities. In turn, the pastors channel the materials to their congregations.

Ellis adds, however, that ACTV is just one element in an emerging "groundswell" of activism from the religious and political right. With or without a third political party, "We're just getting started."

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Floridian Named
To Southern Post

Baptist Press
8/30/84

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—J. Michael Dudit of Tallahassee, Fla., will become director of communications at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., Sept. 10.

Dudit, who recently completed the Ph.D. degree in humanities at Florida State University, holds the Master of Divinity degree from Southern Seminary and the Bachelor of Arts from Stetson University, DeLand, Fla.

He was public affairs director for Palm Beach Atlantic College, West Palm Beach, Fla., and assistant to the president and director of media services for a Tallahassee advertising firm.

Dudit currently is associate pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Tallahassee. He has been a pastor and campus minister, and is a member of the administrative committee of the Florida Baptist Association in Tallahassee.

He received the Clyde T. Francisco Preaching Award at Southern Seminary in 1976, and has written articles for numerous publications. His writing and design efforts have won several awards from the Baptist Public Relations Association.

He succeeds Robin Oldham, director of communications since February 1984. Oldham will return to Georgetown (Ky.) College as assistant to the president.

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USSR-Alabama Program
Possibility Discussed

By Robert M. Duck

Baptist Press
8/30/84

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)—The possibility of a person-to-person program between Alabama Baptists and Christians in the Soviet Union will be explored, under a recommendation adopted by the Christian Life and Public Affairs Commission of the Alabama Baptist Convention.

The thrust of the program will be to persuade Alabama Baptists to correspond with everyday Russian citizens with particular emphasis on "our Christian brothers and sisters in the USSR," according to commission chairman Melvin Cooper.

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Cooper added: "The vital issues which govern relationships between our two governments should not obscure the fact the Russian people are loved by God as we are. They are family oriented, hard working and face the same problems in life as many of us here in Alabama."

The Christian Life and Public Affairs Commission will contact the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board for advice, and for methods of securing names and addresses of Soviet citizens.

"If an effort by Alabama Baptists can open the door of communications a few inches, it will be worth our time. If Alabama Baptists pray for Russian Christians and they, in return, are in prayer for us, that is a tremendous step forward, Cooper added.

In other action, the commission:

--Encouraged Baptist ministers in Alabama to be more sensitive to moral and ethical issues arising on the national scene today. The ministers were urged to increase the awareness and participation of their church members in the political process, and to impress upon them the importance of voting in the upcoming national election. The commission cautioned pastors to avoid identifying with particular candidates and specific political causes as "being in or of the will of God."

--Voted to send a letter to the corporate officials of Eckerd Drug Company commending that organization for a program to remove pornographic materials from company newsstands. Corporate officials of the 7-11 stores also were to be contacted urging them to follow the example of Eckerds.

--Voted to write a letter to the officials of the Miss America Pageant commending them for their recent action concerning the former Miss America, Vanessa Williams.

The commission also heard a report from a sub-committee reviewing the moral, theological, ethical, legal and medical questions raised by surrogate motherhood, in vitro fertilization, in vivo fertilization and the establishment of the sperm banks in the United States.

The commission will recommend to the executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission that a seminar be held devoted to "these critical questions, utilizing expert speakers from the American Medical Association and the American Bar Association as well as noted theologians in this country."

The Alabama Commission will extend an invitation that such a seminar be held in Birmingham, Ala., because of the proximity of the University of Alabama Medical Center. The hope also was expressed that UAB Medical Center consider the establishment of a department of biomedical ethics as has been done at other major institutions attached to a university.

The commission also called for opposition to the so-called "Laxalt Bill," which, if passed by Congress, would allow advertisement of state lotteries in every state of the union.

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Stetson Names
PR Director

Baptist Press
8/30/84

DELAND, Fla. (BP)—Helena Strauch Nyerges has been named director of public relations for Stetson University, a 3,500 student school affiliated with the Florida Baptist Convention.

Nyerges succeeds Fred H. Cooper as director of public relations. Cooper has been assigned other responsibilities within the university. He will continue university responsibilities as sports information director and in special projects.

Nyerges, a native of Baltimore, has been director of communication at Stetson since January 1983. She holds a journalism degree from the American University in Washington and was communication director for the Information Industry Association in Washington for five years before moving to Florida.

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President Of Seminary
Challenged To Debate

By Dan Martin

DALLAS (BP)—Roy L. Honeycutt, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has been challenged to a "public debate" to substantiate charges he made against "Texas leaders of the independent fundamentalist political party" in the Southern Baptist Convention.

In a convocation at the Louisville, Ky. seminary Aug. 28, Honeycutt declared "holy war" against the "unholy forces, which, if left unchecked, will destroy essential qualities of both our convention and this seminary."

In the address, Honeycutt spoke of the "independent fundamentalist political party," the "inerrantist political party," "Texas leaders (of the party)"...and "a Dallas leader (of the party)" but only once mentioned by name Pressler/Patterson (Paige Patterson of Dallas and Paul Pressler of Houston), in reference to such a political organization.

Honeycutt said the "independent fundamentalists" had a breakfast meeting in Kansas City, Mo., in an effort to "enlist campus subversives." He also charged "one of the Texas leaders" had called a student who frequently drives the (seminary) president's car to see if he could provide "anything...which might be of help...to the independent fundamentalist party."

Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, and associate pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, told Baptist Press: "Regarding his multifarious accusations, I challenge him to meet me in a public debate on a neutral site in a large auditorium, where anybody who wants to attend can do so, to present the evidence to substantiate his charges."

The Texan added he believes there ought to be "three or four debates at various places around the nation so everybody can hear what is said," and that a "concluding debate should be held during the Monday afternoon session of the Pastors' Conference" of the 1985 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (June 10) at the Dallas Convention Center.

Patterson also challenged Honeycutt to be prepared to debate the question: "Is the Southern Baptist Convention Drifting Toward Liberalism?"

During the convocation address, Honeycutt said the seminary "has nothing to hide, whether at the classroom lecturn or the chapel pulpit."

Patterson responded: "Presnall Wood, editor of the Baptist Standard (newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas) tells us we should tell the truth and trust the people. I believe he is right. If it is true, as Dr. Honeycutt says, that Southern seminary has nothing to hide, and invites all the world to see the actions and hear the words (of the seminary), then he should do exactly that. I ask that he allow all classroom lectures be taped for the next two years and those tapes be made available to all."

Contacted about Patterson's challenge, Honeycutt said he is "not really open to" such a debate, which he referred to as a "19th Century, win-lose debating match." He said, however, he is receptive to "open dialogue."

"I am not trying to win a point, but to move back to the strong emphasis on pluralism and that there is a place in the denomination for all of us," Honeycutt said.

In response to the challenge, Honeycutt noted the request to tape all lectures for two years "is unrealistic." Apart from the logistics, which he said would require 30,000 to 40,000 hours of tape, such a thing would "destroy the learning setting."

Patterson commented he is "amazed and deeply hurt that a platform purchased by Cooperative Program mission money could be used to launch a so-called 'holy war' against a significant portion of the people who gave that money."

He added Honeycutt's convocation speech is "a demonstration of denominational fascism which is determined to brook no criticism and will do whatever is necessary to squelch and suppress it."

In amplification, Patterson said he "would not deny that I had breakfast with some Southern seminary students (in Kansas City)" but added, "the meeting was at their request and their interest was in obtaining sources from which they could read conservative positions."

He said the meeting was "real secret--in the lobby and restaurant of the Embassy on the Park," included "not more than six students" and lasted about an hour, including breakfast.

The subject of providing information on Southern administrators or faculty members "was not even broached," Patterson said. "They (the students) were exceptionally gentlemanly and thoughtful in their remarks regarding the administration of Southern seminary. It was hardly the kind of group that could be called 'campus subversives'."

"This is what I mean by 'denominational fascism,' when the president of Southern seminary—who does not know the real character or the real motivation of his own students in this case—can label them 'subversives' just because they talk to a conservative who doesn't happen to be on their campus," Patterson added.

Patterson said he "cannot imagine" what Honeycutt "is talking about in referenc to the student driver. I do not know anyone who drives for him."

Pressler, a Houston appeals court judge, said of Honeycutt's charges: "I hav absolutely no idea what he is talking about. If such incidents did occur, then the burden is on him (Honeycutt) to say who was involved and to give the facts concerning them."

Pressler, recently elected to the SBC Executive Committee, added: "Holy wars are never holy. History shows they are based on greed, personal ambition or a need by leaders to divert attention from problems at home. We do not need a holy war."

"We need holy witnessing, holy communication and holy integrity. Our problems should not be solved by war, but by communication. Our institutions should not be liberal base camps for a holy war, but should be open to all Southern Baptists."

Pressler also took exception to the label of "independent fundamentalist political party," by noting: "There is nothing independent about us. We are loyal Southern Baptists."

He said while he believes "in the fundamentals of the faith, too often people use terms like this to connote a negative spirit, something those who know me would never accuse me of. The term political also is wrong because we are doing what every Southern Baptist has a right to do, and that is to prayerfully work within the system."

During his speech, Honeycutt referred to a "Dallas war room with its reported information banks...(where) files on as many of 400 of us (are) catalogued." Others previously hav referred to a "heresy file" at Criswell Center.

Patterson told Baptist Press the "war room" is nothing more than "historical archives relating to the past 25 years, with particular emphasis on the last 10. We (Criswell Center) are an institution of higher learning and would suppose that someday someone may want to do a dissertation on this (the controversy in the convention)."

The files, he said, include "hundreds of news stories, both from secular and denominational press sources, books published by Southern Baptists and about Southern Baptists, tapes of sermons preached and other kinds of information."

The collection, which "may include 5,000 or 6,000" items does include tapes of lectures, he said, but added such tapes "have never been solicited by us. They have been provided to us on a fairly regular basis. We have never sought them out."

The collection, now being catalogued, is available to any scholar or student who wishes to examine it, he said, adding he "is sure Southern seminary and Southwestern seminary (in Fort Worth, Texas) have their own collections. I would think any Baptist institution of higher learning worthy of the name would be keeping a chronicle of this period in our history."

He added: "I would hope it is not a heresy file since it includes copies of my books."

Concern For Children
Drives Migrant Minister

By Patti Stephenson

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)—More than 400,000 migrants annually toil in California's rich agricultural valleys which stretch from the Mexican border to north of Sacramento. Leaving homes in Texas, Mexico and Latin America in search of work, they live in camps, government-sponsored and private, sprinkled across 40 counties.

Augustine Salazar, director of migrant missions in California since 1970, covers 3,000 miles a month to minister to his working flock in the fields. As a Christian social ministries missionary, Salazar not only ministers to migrants, he also tells California churches about migrant needs and how to meet them. Sometimes, those needs seem endless.

Migrants constantly call Salazar for help. He distributes food, clothing, literature; helps buy medicines; and performs funerals and weddings. He records a weekly Spanish-language radio program, shows Christian films and holds weekly services and Bible schools at migrant camps. He visits farmworkers in hospitals and prisons.

Salazar also devotes much time to Baptist churches wanting to start a migrant ministry. "A Hispanic congregation can best minister to migrants," he acknowledged. "But if there's not one in the area, then I work with an Anglo congregation."

More than 30 California Baptist churches have some sort of migrant ministry; 100-plus churches help provide the health kits he distributes to migrant children. In Fresno, volunteers from Templo Bautista assist with Bible school. Since the average farmworker is illiterate, Salazar has trained literacy volunteers to teach migrants how to read.

The frustration of too little volunteer help from local church members is a problem in Salazar's work. "The Spanish churches here are small and the pastors feel pressured to build self-supporting churches," he noted. "So they may wonder what they can gain by working with people who come and go, when so many who live nearby need to be saved." He continued, "Our greatest need is for bilingual, bicultural pastors who do not forget where they come from."

Born into a farm family of 13 children, Salazar's ability to empathize and to identify with migrants is rooted in his own past. His mother taught him to read, using a Bible; the family held weekly worship services in their home. "When I tell the migrants I was born and raised in Mexico, their eyes light up," Salazar said. "They are very happy I am one of them."

Salazar is troubled migrants have failed to gain respect and appreciation from the predominantly Anglo community they serve. "Many Anglos resent the migrants who come and work here, but don't realize if it weren't for them, we wouldn't enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables on our tables," he said. "If not for their willingness to work, our crops would ruin."

Many migrants work harder for less money than most Americans. Though they pay taxes, they seldom collect benefits; less than three percent are on welfare rolls or receive any public assistance.

But Salazar is worried most about the children. "If we don't educate them and teach them about the love of Christ, they can grow up bitter and full of hatred," he explained.

He remembers once being barred from a barber shop because of his Mexican heritage. "Think of the little fellow who doesn't have the love of God in his heart, and how that feeling of not being wanted hurts. It's not hard to understand why some are angry, or why some strike back," added Salazar.

He paused and wiped his eyes as the memory of his own rejection receded. "I try to make the children feel important, and help them realize they are people with rights like anyone else to be what they want to be," he said. "If it were not for them, you know, I would not have this job."

Migrant families sense his love and concern for them. To minister to migrants, "you do not just go and talk about Christ directly. You show concern, talk about family and work before salvation," he said.

"I never ask, 'Are you a Christian?' because most Catholics think since they were baptized as babies, they are Christians." It's almost a synonym for 'human being' to them." He is careful not to criticize their beliefs but to find common points of faith.

Neither does he introduce himself as a Baptist preacher, but as "a man who has had an experience with Jesus Christ." If someone asks if he is a priest, he replies 'yes,' then shows them the scripture attributing priesthood to all believers.

"When I teach God's word from the Bible, they often tell me, 'This is what I need.' Many will say they believe in Christ, but aren't willing to join a church and be baptized. Sometimes it takes a long time to bring them there," he noted.

This past year Salazar recorded 166 professions of faith among migrants and only 17 baptisms. Many who pray to receive Christ move on to the next harvest; he may never see them again.

But there is no time for despair. A drive down California highways reminds Salazar of the endless needs of his flock: the bent figures of migrant farmworkers in wide-brimmed straw hats at work in the fields. Smiling, listening, consoling, praying, helping in whatever way he can, Augustin Salazar ministers to migrants.

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(Adapted from Missions USA, May-June, 1984.)

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

Birmingham Baptists Give Hope
To Unaccompanied Refugee Children

By Sherri Anthony

Baptist Press
8/30/84

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Son Huu Phung is 18 years old. During the day he attends Banks High School. He makes a living working part time—four hours a day during the week, more on weekends. He is an "unaccompanied minor"—a Vietnamese refugee, under the age of 18, who arrived in the United States without a parent or legal guardian.

"Most people don't understand how this can happen," said Jean Jones, chairwoman of the Mayor's Task Force on Refugee Resettlement and member of Fairfield Heights Baptist Church. "Many times parents send their children away for a better life. It takes a special love to send your child into an unknown situation—a special kind of desperation."

Son and his younger sister, Yume, began their journey to Birmingham five years ago. Their father, a school principal in Vietnam, refused to teach communism after the Communists captured South Vietnam in 1975. Realizing he didn't want his children growing up under communist rule, the father paid his brother to take Son, 14, and Yume, 13, out of the country.

A small fishing boat became their method of escape. After they reached the safety of international waters, a storm broke. Waves were "as tall as a house." To keep afloat, they threw all belongings overboard—including most of the water jars; they were four days without fresh water. "But we had enough love to survive," recalled Son.

They spent seven months in refugee camps before being sent to the United States. "My uncle promised he would help us, but at the camp he said nothing about his responsibility to us. When we got here, he went to Minnesota. We haven't seen him since," said Son.

When Son and Yume arrived in Birmingham, alone, no one met them. After several hours in the airport, they were picked up by a man from a resettlement agency. He took them to a house with nine other refugees with no food or heat. Within two months the resettlement office disbanded, and the children were alone again.

For six months Son and Yume lived with a family that treated them as servants. Admitted Son, "We didn't want to displease them. I wanted to leave, but I didn't know how."

Help came through Rebecca Peebles, a retired school teacher who taught him English as a second language at Woodlawn Baptist Church.

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Through Peeples' example and patient teaching, Son accepted the Christian faith. He studied four weeks "about my obligation to being a Christian; then I was baptized."

When Son needed a home Peeples called social agencies, but could not get help because no one had legal custody of this young refugee.

She knew about another refugee, Hoa Kim Lam, a Laotian working as a translator for the Birmingham public school system. She arranged for Son to share his apartment. Members of Woodlawn church provided utensils, furniture and other household items. The Birmingham Baptist Association paid their rent.

In an effort to provide housing and financial aid for other unaccompanied minors, the Birmingham association entered a legal battle. "The association concluded that either institutional care or foster homes was the answer to caring for these kids," explained Bill Rutledge, Alabama language missions leader. "But we couldn't get approval for either because the government refused to acknowledge the existence of unaccompanied minors in Alabama. It claimed the minors didn't exist."

Alabama's refusal to recognize the existence of these minors made it impossible for them to get health or life insurance, or apply for financial aid to a college or to any other institution. And the legal red tape frustrated people willing to be foster parents.

Harris Cook, pastor of West End Baptist Church, became a victim of this frustration. In May 1983, Cook and his wife, Freda, opened their home to 17-year-old Yume. With her brother's blessings, the Cooks petitioned the courts to become Yume's legal guardians.

On December 1, 1983, their uphill battle was won and the Cooks became Yume's legal guardians. "This was the first acknowledgement of unaccompanied minors the state has made," explained Cook. "It will mean so much to Yume and to us." The decision also makes it easier for other unaccompanied minors to have their status legalized and benefits awarded.

For Son, life in the U.S. as an unaccompanied minor has not been easy, but he has few complaints. In March, at the Cook's invitation, he moved to their home, where he will live until he enters Samford University. Reunited with his sister, he is not alone for the first time in years and has more than "enough love to survive."

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(Adapted from MissionsUSA, May-June, 1984)

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

CORRECTION: In (BP) story, "Seminary President Declares 'Holy War' In SBC Battle," mailed 8/29/84, please make the following correction. In the sixth paragraph, please change the word 'Adherence' to 'Adherents'.

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Thank you,
Baptist Press

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