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Clown Minister Considers
Clowning Serious Business

By Leisa A. Hammett

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (BP)--Clowning is serious business for Carol Phipps, singles and youth minister for First Baptist Church, Alexandria, Va.

A native of Maryland, Phipps has been clowning around for almost 14 years, dressing up in costume to entertain people. But it wasn't until she was asked to "clown her testimony" (a humorous dramatization of her testimony) that clowning took on real meaning to her.

Now she considers herself a clown minister.

Phipps had never written or performed a humorous dramatization of her testimony before. At first she was flabbergasted by the assignment. But the experience challenged her to remember becoming a Christian when she was an 11-year-old child.

Phipps did not grow up in a Christian home, but went alone to a large church each Sunday. "I didn't know how to sing hymns, or that you were supposed to read from stanza to stanza and not across two whole pages," she laughed.

Remembering and incorporating her childhood experiences in church added a new dimension to her clowning ministry. Now those experiences seem funny, but as a child they were scary and frustrating, Phipps said.

Being a child of God, figuratively and literally, made her "stumbling blocks into stepping stones," she said.

"If you understand the Scriptures you realize God is very personal. God has a sense of humor; he laughs and wants us to be his children," Phipps explained. "Clowns epitomize (that) tenderness and childlikeness," she said.

"Clowns willingly take the slaps life gives them and then get back up. Like Jesus, they turn the other cheek. Clowns renew their sense of wonder and awe," she added.

To prepare for her clowning, Phipps studies the Bible, the background of the Scriptures, and Hebrew and Greek translations of the Bible. "Then I try to see (God's message) as a child would, using all my senses," Phipps said.

"I've grown so much through clowning," she stated. "It's like being born again, seeing the world as a child. There is a sense of excitement...hope, joy and vulnerability."

"A clown is automatically somebody...just the makeup and the costume get attention," Phipps said explaining a clown's white makeup signifies death and its red nose signifies resurrection. Other colors signify a clown's individuality.

She explained her clown, Servo Servin, (meaning "I serve serving") exemplifies her approach to ministry--trying to model Jesus Christ who is "the greatest servant." In June 1982, clowning also became her fulltime job.

Phipps and roommate Karen Heath began a free-lance clowning ministry called "E.T.S., Equipping to Serve and Entertaining the Saints," to provide storytelling, clowning, mime, puppetry for churches, camps, retreats and hospitals.

After a year of travel with E.T.S. Phipps and Heath moved to Williamsport, Pa., to work as Southern Baptist Home Mission Board Mission Service Corp volunteers.

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Phipps, a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., was minister of education and youth and Heath was minister of outreach and administration for First Southern Baptist Church in Williamsport.

Seven months later Phipps and Heath moved to Alexandria where Phipps began working at First Baptist and Heath started school at Gallaudet College for deaf.

Although the opportunities for clowning are less in her new responsibilities, Phipps said she finds similar fulfillment in organizing creative worship. "Creative worship," said Phipps, "helps congregations experience and understand freedom in Christ and joy in the Lord."

Worship involving oral interpretation, monologues, clowning, role playing, storytelling and singing, Phipps said, communicates God's sense of humor, personness and love for his children.

Now, as a clown minister, she doesn't just entertain children. When she puts on her red nose and white makeup, she is trying to use creative new approaches to tell the story of Christ's love. For her, that's such good news it's worth clowning about.

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

Retiring Missionaries
Look Back With Humility

By Erich Bridges

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Bill Gaventa learned humility early in his 27-year missionary career.

The physician from Georgia had just arrived in Nigeria with big plans for healing bodies and souls when a local man asked him, "Sir, did you not think that God was in Africa before you came?" Pondering that question helped Gaventa realize he didn't go to the mission field to "take God to a place he'd never been before but to join him there in the work...he was already doing."

Gaventa, who now directs medical services at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, was among 31 recently retired Southern Baptist missionaries honored Oct. 9 at Richmond's New Bridge Baptist Church. The themes of humility, thankfulness to God and gratitude for decades of Southern Baptist support highlighted the recognition service.

The 31 missionaries spent a combined total of 1,006 years in 18 countries. They include several mission pioneers, three doctors, teachers and preachers and at least one near-legend—Everley Hayes.

Hayes has long been famous for her nursing work in China with missionary doctor Bill Wallace in the late 1940s, and the months she endured house arrest after the Communists came to power. Wallace ultimately died in a Communist prison. Hayes was allowed to leave China and went on to help open two Baptist hospitals in Indonesia, her field for 30 years.

The Illinois native told listeners at the recognition service that for many years she's felt like a "prayer walking," thanks to the uncounted prayers of Southern Baptists who've supported her ministry.

Ralph and Betty Jean Bowlin (of Alabama and Texas, respectively) pioneered Southern Baptist missions in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, working in a region which changed names three times during the Bowlins' 33 years there. They began by starting churches and moved on to seminary teaching, but never lost their enthusiasm for rural evangelism.

"We started many churches under trees," Bowlin said. "There is no church in Zimbabwe known as First Baptist Church. But there are a lot of First Baptist trees!"

Roy Lyon of Texas spoke of surviving two mob attacks and several plane crashes during his years in Mexico and Venezuela, where he trained more than 100 men who now are active pastors. "I'm grateful for having been a missionary...a Southern Baptist missionary," he said.

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Another couple who recently returned from Latin America, Hubert and Jean Middleton of North Carolina, remembered their "34 short years" in Chile and declared they were catching a flight the next day to join in a Chile partnership evangelism crusade. Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks joked that he felt "a little apologetic to interfere with your work just to have you retire here."

Other missionaries recognized in the service were Thomas and Ellen Adkins of Oklahoma and Texas, 26 years in Hong Kong, Gaza and Jordan; Ross and Mary Lynn Fryer, Texas and Arkansas, 26 years in Indonesia and the Philippines; Virginia Miles, North Carolina, 36 years in the Philippines and Indonesia; Carter and Agnes Morgan, China and South Carolina, 36 years in Hawaii, Hong Kong and the Philippines, and Alma Ruth (Mrs. Roy) Lyon, Texas, 32 years in Mexico, Venezuela and at El Paso (Texas) Baptist Publications Mission.

Also recognized were Alice (Mrs. Bill) Gaventa, Tennessee, 27 years in Nigeria; Lorne and Virginia Brown, Canada and Tennessee, 34 years in Jordan, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Uganda; George and Rosemary Kollmar, New Jersey and Texas, 25 years in Colombia; James and Maxie Kirk, North Carolina and Kentucky, 37 years in Brazil; James and Jane Musgrave, Missouri and Texas, 36 years in Brazil; Virginia Highfill, North Carolina, 35 years in Japan; Fred and Elvee Horton, Pennsylvania and Louisiana, 34 years in Japan; Reiji and Asano Hoshizaki, California and Hawaii, 35 years in Japan; and Bob and Helen Sherer, Alabama and Illinois, 32 years in Japan.

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WMU Provides Space
For Mission Church

By D'Lesá Garnett Carroll

Baptist Press
10/12/84

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—At the new Woman's Missionary Union national headquarters building in Birmingham, Ala., missions is more than just talk.

Three baby beds are lined against a wall in the first floor ladies lounge. In a conference room a piano and pulpit await Sunday and Wednesday worship services. The art project studio holds tables and chairs for pre-schoolers to use during Sunday school.

The extra furnishings are in evidence because Woman's Missionary Union is providing meeting space for a three-year-old mission until its church is built.

Meadow Brook Baptist Mission is sponsored by several churches in the Birmingham area, including Mountain Brook Baptist Church and Brookwood Baptist Church.

Ten acres of land for a permanent church site have been purchased near the WMU site. The church will be located in a fast-growing area which currently has more than 18,000 residents.

The membership of approximately 55 has nearly doubled since mid-summer. Employees of WMU are so supportive several have become members. In fact, the first meeting in the new WMU building was a church service which filled the 400-seat auditorium.

The new WMU building provides more than its facilities. A distinct atmosphere of missions awareness flows throughout the national headquarters. Personal belongings of Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong, as well as artifacts collected by missionaries all over the world, represent the dedication Woman's Missionary Union has for missions. With this kind of atmosphere, WMU offers support to a missions-minded congregation.

A combined interest of the churches and WMU is the Cooperative Program. Yearly figures show that through August 1984, Mountain Brook gave 15.77 percent of its total receipts to the CP and Brookwood gave 13.95 percent.

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Funding Bill Maintains Non-Profit Mail Rates

WASHINGTON (BP)—Barring possible across-the-board rate changes by the Postal Service's Board of Governors, a large catchall funding bill passed by Congress will keep non-profit rates at their current levels through Sept. 30, 1985.

Called a "continuing resolution," the \$370 billion appropriations measure provides \$801 million for the "revenue foregone" subsidy which Congress uses to reimburse the Postal Service for the difference between full commercial rates and the reduced rates charged a variety of non-profit and other mailers.

Passed by the Senate 78-11 and the House 252-60, the spending bill contains fiscal 1985 funding for a number of federal departments and agencies for which Congress had not cleared regular appropriations bills.

Congress' \$801 million appropriation for revenue foregone was well over the \$400 million Reagan administration budget request. This is the second consecutive year Congress has fully funded the postal subsidy, maintaining current rates.

However, rates could yet be affected during 1985 should the Postal Service Board of Governors agree to implement changes recommended by the Postal Rate Commission.

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Foreign Mission Board Names Maroney, Faulkner To New Posts

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has named Jimmy Maroney its new senior evangelism consultant and missionary John Faulkner associate director for eastern and southern Africa.

Maroney will replace Ervin Hastey as senior consultant for evangelism and church growth when Hastey retires Jan. 4. Faulkner, missionary to Zimbabwe, will replace Maroney.

In another personnel change, the international trustees of the board's Baptist Spanish Publishing House, El Paso, Texas, have named Bob Tucker, associate to the director for western South America, to be associate director of the publishing house.

The board also announced the Dec. 31 retirement of Franklin Fowler, senior medical consultant. Hastey will be retiring after 32 years of service with the Foreign Mission Board and Fowler after 37 years' service.

Hastey and his wife, the former Ruth Tyson of Buffalo, Okla., were missionaries to Mexico for 22 years and to Panama for three years before he joined the Foreign Mission Board staff in 1977. In Mexico, Hastey was director of evangelism and later coordinator for programs for the National Baptist Convention of Mexico. He was born in Thomas, Okla., and is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

Fowler, the son of pioneer missionaries to Argentina, helped found the Baptist hospital in Asuncion, Paraguay. He and his wife, the former Dorcas Hawk of Oklahoma City, were missionaries to Paraguay and Mexico for 14 years before he joined the Richmond staff. Fowler is a graduate of Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn., and of Vanderbilt University's School of Medicine, Nashville, Tenn.

In his new post Maroney will research evangelism and world trends and advise board staffers and missionary organizations on strengthening current evangelism and church growth programs and developing new ones. He also will assist national Baptist conventions and unions which do not have Southern Baptist missionary evangelists, but request help with their evangelism and church growth programs.

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Before coming to Richmond, Maroney was a missionary in Nairobi, Kenya, where he was director of the Baptist Center for Urban Studies. He also has been a missionary to Ghana and Ethiopia and a journeyman in Ghana. He was pastor of churches in Texas and taught in Everman and Wichita Falls, Texas.

He was born in Seymour, Texas, and lived in Wichita Falls while growing up. He is a graduate of Midwestern University, Wichita Falls, and of Southwestern seminary. He and his wife, the former Kay Farmer of Wichita Falls, have two children.

Responsibility for managing evangelism projects handled by Hasteley will be shifted to Billy Peacock, who has been managing Partnership Evangelism, the program which links pastor-led teams of lay persons from Southern Baptist churches with overseas churches.

Faulkner, a general evangelist assigned to Harare, Zimbabwe, has also been an evangelist and church adviser in Kwekwe (formerly Que Que) and a camp bookstore manager and seminary teacher in Gweru (formerly Gwelo). Before his missionary appointment in 1970, he was pastor of churches in Texas and Alabama.

Born in Marion County, Ala., Faulkner considers Tuscaloosa, Ala., his hometown. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, and of Southwestern seminary. He and his wife, the former Anne Williams of Carrollton, Ala., have two children.

Tucker and his wife, the former Margaret Roberts of Texas, have been missionaries for 21 years. They most recently lived in Colombia, his home base for eight years as associate to the director for western South America. Tucker was liaison between Southern Baptist missionaries in that region and the Foreign Mission Board.

For 12 years he was an evangelist and church starter in several areas of Venezuela. He also taught at the Venezuelan Baptist Theological Seminary, Los Teques.

The Athens, Texas native was graduated from Baylor University, Waco, Texas, and Southwest seminary. Before missionary appointment he was a pastor in Ohio and Texas.

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Former Cable TV Exec
Joins ACTS Network

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10/12/84

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—William Karnes, a 30-year veteran of the cable TV industry, has joined the Radio and Television Commission as national cable relations manager for the American Christian Television System.

Karnes is former president of Sammons Communications, the 13th largest cable TV corporation in the nation. After leaving Sammons in 1973, Karnes was a private consultant to cable TV companies, most recently as president of Karnath Corporation of Dallas.

Since February Karnes has worked with ACTS as a Mission Service Corp volunteer. In th permanent position of cable relations manager, he will negotiate affiliate contracts with major cable TV corporations to carry ACTS on their local systems. He also will work directly with local cable TV systems in major metropolitan areas.

Karnes, a native of Dallas, lives in Plano, Texas, with his wife, Dianne. They were commissioned as Mission Service Corp volunteers Feb. 26 in a service at Richardson Heights Baptist Church, Richardson, Texas.

ACTS is a network of family and Christian entertainment programs delivered by satellite to cable TV systems and low power TV stations nationwide. The network is operated by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by th Radio and Television Commission