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Baptist Missionary Wins  
Major Asian Award

By Marty Croll

MANILA, Philippines (BP)--Southern Baptist missionary Harold Watson has won the Ramon Magsaysay Award, considered the Asian Nobel Prize.

Watson becomes one of a handful of non-Asians to win the award during its 28-year history. He joins the ranks of individuals and organizations working in 16 Asian countries such as India's Mother Teresa, the 1962 winner.

The award foundation's trustees named Watson for helping "the poorest of small farmers" by encouraging international use of a hillside farming technique he and two Filipinos developed, which they call Sloping Agricultural Land Technology (SALT).

"I'm amazed," Watson, of Brooklyn, Miss., admitted. "I'm real surprised, but real satisfied, too." He and his wife, Joyce, a Dallas native who grew up in Irving and New Boston, Texas, learned about the award by cable three days before returning from furlough to the Philippines Aug. 13.

The Ramon Magsaysay Award was set up to honor a president of the Philippines who died in a plane crash in 1957. It goes to one person a year in each of five categories: government service; public service; community leadership; journalism, literature and creative communication arts, and international understanding. Nominations are received secretly from throughout Asia. Watson's award, for international understanding, is the only one open to non-Asians or organizations.

Winners will be recognized Aug. 31 in Manila, Philippines, where foundation offices are located. The award carries a \$20,000 cash prize.

Watson credits the entire Mindanao Baptist Rural Life Center staff for the Magsaysay award. There, in the hills of southern Mindanao, three other Southern Baptist agriculturalists, 14 Filipino agriculturalists and a Southern Baptist nurse team up to wage war on hunger, teaching Filipino farmers and their families how to live better.

More than 6,000 people from Asian nations travel to the Philippines every year to study SALT, the award foundation said in naming Watson. SALT is thought to hold promise for reclaiming Asian land destroyed by slash-and-burn subsistence farmers and profit-hungry timber companies.

"It's not God's will anyone suffer and go hungry," said Watson. "Christ came that we have abundant life. We're here to try somehow to help people have abundant life, physically and spiritually."

Watson told Philippine finance and government leaders at a special seminar in late 1983 that SALT could revolutionize the lives of three-fourths of the families who farm in developing countries. It could save minority farming groups worldwide from starvation and extinction. About two-thirds of the world is hilly and mountainous terrain, Watson said.

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In the most rural sections of the central and southern Philippines he estimates five million farmers fight to eke out a living on hillsides, battling slanting slopes and eroding fertility resulting from torrents of rain.

Even terracing washes out. With SALT, terrace farming gets a new twist: use of the ipil-ipil tree, with which Watson first started experimenting in 1973.

In SALT, ipil-ipil seedlings planted inches apart and trimmed back 10 times a year form thick hedgerows. Several yards are left empty between hedgerows. With the hedgerows, hillside erosion begins to work for the farmer, causing the space between the two hedgerows to fill in and flatten to form a terrace.

Scientifically known as the leucaena leucocephala, the ipil-ipil grows quickly. Its roots work as deep into the soil as its height. Foliage from the tree, high in nitrogen, is used to fertilize the land. Corn, beans, pineapple, coffee, bananas, peanuts, sweet potatoes and fruit trees have prospered in SALT.

SALT trainees learn to use a simple, inexpensive A-frame device to analyze hillside contour and determine where to plant hedges. They are shown how to plant different crops to create a continuing food supply for their families and even a saleable surplus.

Last year professors, students and extension workers from 14 Philippine land-grant universities and colleges trained at the center. Each month the Philippine Ministry of Agriculture sends groups of technicians and farmers to the center for training. The U.S. Peace Corps and volunteers from Great Britain and the Netherlands routinely schedule training at the center.

Watson, whose parents were farmers near Hattiesburg, Miss., was born in 1934. He received the bachelor and master of science degrees in agricultural education from Mississippi State University, Starkville. A stint in the U.S. Air Force in Asia led him toward missionary work and he studied at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, after teaching vocational agriculture in Hattiesburg.

He and his wife arrived in the Philippines in 1964. While in Cotabato, the Watsons and their missionary co-workers selected the present site of the Mindanao Baptist Rural Life Center on the southern island of Mindanao. With donations the missionaries purchased a hillside that had been farmed for 20 years and then abandoned because of impoverished soil. He began working to reclaim it for farming.

SALT is only one of many programs at the Rural Life Center. Others include Baptist Out of School Training (BOOST) and Food Always in the Home (FAITH). Watson's staff includes Warlito A. Lakiqunon, the center's assistant director, named one of the seven Most Outstanding Young Filipino Men of 1981.

From the beginning, Baptists made sure their Christian witness came across during the agricultural program. One goal has been to establish new churches from contacts made at the center. In the association near the center there are now 36 Baptist churches.

Watson once viewed the Christian faith as an "I-God" relationship limited to a life that reflected, "I love you, God." Now however, he has come "to understand it is an I-God-People relationship. The more I love God the more I will relate to people and reach out to help people."

Tanner Challenges Twenty-Six  
Church Planters To Be Vessels      By Leisa A. Hammett

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Southern Baptist Home Mission Board President William G. Tanner challenged 26 church planter apprentices to let their lives count for Christ.

In a commissioning service at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, during home missions emphasis week, Tanner said God has not changed how he uses the lives of Christians.

"God carried out his mission in the lives of early Christians much like he does in Christians today, dwelling in their lives and working miracles with their hands," he said.

Tanner added the same God which called the 26 church planter apprentices would be accompanying them in their various fields of mission.

A church planter apprentice is a recent seminary graduate with less than two years pastoral experience who will start and lead new churches in "new work areas where there are no Southern Baptist churches."

"A life will not be effective," Tanner told the apprentices, other home missionaries, laypeople and denominational employees, "until it measures up to the purpose for which God has designed."

Tanner continued that "casual Christianity," which he said is prevalent in today's society, is not an effective lifestyle. A casual relationship with God, he said, lacks strong roots that need to be growing in a "soil of commitment," preventing them from being blow away or uprooted.

"God's still in a do or die frame of mind. Still," he added, "some Christians are only going to give God a residue, what's left of them. Our God," he emphasized, "is not a garbage can that takes our leftovers, he expects the same from all of us."

Still, Tanner said if individuals permitted him, God would use their lives, no matter how broken, weak or limited.

Six of the Home Mission Board appointed apprentices are from Georgia, three from Texas and Oklahoma and two from South Carolina and Florida.

Other states represented are: Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, West Virginia, Missouri, Illinois, Arkansas, Michigan, Tennessee and Alabama.

The Home Mission Board is a missionary-sending agency of the 14.3-million member Southern Baptist Convention. The agency supports more than 3,700 missionaries who are serving in various capacities in all 50 states, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, American Virgin Islands and Canada.

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Editors, Please Note: Home State releases, with photos, are being sent to you

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--One missionary residence in Uganda was leveled and another looted, but Southern Baptist missionaries have found little other property damage and learned of no Baptists seriously injured during the recent coup there.

Some of the missionaries returned briefly to Uganda in early August to check out the situation but most have since returned to Kenya.

The house rented in Lira for Walter and Billie Allen was destroyed, according to word which came to missionary Jim Rice from sources inside the country. The Allens' house sat only 500 yards from the home of deposed President Milton Obote, which also was destroyed in the coup.

Walter Allen visited Uganda in early August, but did not travel to Lira, Obote's hometown. He and missionary physician David Sorley checked conditions in Mbale, where Sorley, of Minnesota, is stationed. They found no damage.

Jimmie Hooten and journeyman John Dina visited Jinja and Jim and Linda Rice and their baby daughter traveled to Jinja and Kampala. The missionaries found no damage in Jinja, but later heard reports of additional fighting there.

Before visiting the country they had learned the Baptist bookstore and offices in Kampala received minor damage and the home of George and Doris Berry of South Carolina was looted. The Rices learned police have recovered a car stolen from the Berry's yard.

Except for the Rices, who were still in Kampala, all missionaries had returned to Kenya by Aug. 13, said Davis Saunders, the Foreign Mission Board's director for eastern and southern Africa. Kenya missionaries have made housing arrangements for them to stay there until they can make a decision about returning to work in Uganda, he said.

One couple, Harry and Doris Garvin, came to the States Aug. 13, a week earlier than planned, for furlough in Cisco, Texas.

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Dilday Finds Strength,  
In Past, Present, Future

By Leisa A. Hammett

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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention will reunite and continue with its goal of reaching the world with the saving message of Jesus Christ by the year 2000 said Russell H. Dilday Jr., president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, is convinced.

In a recent interview, Dilday said despite attacks on so-called "liberals" in denominational insititutions, (including himself and the Fort Worth seminary he heads) he finds hope in Southern Baptist heritage, strength and encouragement through a God who lives in the present and an unwaivering faith in the future.

During home missions emphasis week at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, Dilday preached a five-sermon series on the biblical basis for missions in America to approximately 2,700 home missionaries, denominational employees and laypeople.

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Dilday, a former director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, which sponsored the conference, urged conferees to not give up their pursuit of Bold Mission Thrust (an effort by the Southern Baptist Convention to present the message of Jesus Christ to the entire world by the year 2000) even amid any personal difficulties or convention controversies. He was referring to controversies which have emerged over the last seven years within the SBC.

"I really believe (the convention) is going to be all right and we are going to come back to our task as a convention," Dilday said.

Dilday told Ridgecrest attendees the heritage of the world's largest non-Catholic denomination and the work of SBC missionaries, boards, agencies and schools should be preserved and cherished. "There are those who might discard our mission heritage because they are not informed or are misinformed. We ought to treasure our Southern Baptist heritage," he said.

Historically, Dilday said, a mutual conviction to missions has united Southern Baptists. According to a recent survey of U.S. denominations by David T. Bunch, HMB Mission Service Corps director, approximately 33 percent of missionaries in the U.S. are Southern Baptist.

Because of the nationwide threat of despair evidenced through drug and alcohol abuse, broken lives and teenage suicide, reuniting for the cause of Bold Mission Thrust in America is "urgent business" for the SBC, Dilday insisted.

In an interview Dilday affirmed, "I do have faith in the missions heritage of Southern Baptists and in God who has been very real and has encouraged and carried me through my personal struggles the last several months.

"When you are following the Lord you can hear almost anything and know, with confidence, it will be all right," he said in reference to the name calling and accusations. Dilday said he is praying for the 22 members of the peace committee, organized at the June Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas to study ways the 14.3-million member convention could unify.

Using various Old and New Testament references, which, during his sermons he labeled "the inspired word of God," he noted references to "compassion fatigue," times when the faith of early Christians waned and they became discouraged about winning the world to Christ.

"The Bible calls us back to a burning concern. You can't quit when you realize there are so many who have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ," said Dilday, noting Christians today share the same strength and encouragement of early Christians. Both generations could believe Jesus' words that he will not forsake or leave his people.

"Jesus is our advocate," Dilday said. "No matter what happens--others may condemn you and problems may arise--but his word is clear. He will never leave or forsake us. That's our gospel, a hope and unwavering truth that takes us into the future to share with those who have not heard about the good news of Jesus Christ."

Dilday challenged conferees to develop a personal mission strategy, an individual plan to contribute to Bold Mission Thrust, and to learn by doing. Developing a mission strategy, he said, requires diligence, practice and effort which remains steadfast amid circumstances.

Maintaining personal mission strategies despite discouraging circumstances is possible with the power and presence of Jesus Christ in our lives, he said, since Jesus Christ is the "stackpole" of Christian life, the sustainer of Christians during biblical times and today.

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