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Passion For Evangelism
Took Hastey Around World

By Mary Jane Welch

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—For Ervin Hastey, evangelism is a passion.

Seeing this gentle man "catch fire" behind a pulpit is convincing evidence he means it when he says preaching and teaching have brought him more "just pure enjoyment" than anything else he's done in more than 40 years in the ministry.

What his oldest son calls his "magnificent obsession with seeing men and women gain entry to the kingdom of God" has fueled a drive which has prompted more than one supervisor to urge him to slow down.

This January, Hastey finally took their advice, and his doctor's, and retired several months before his 65th birthday. He had worked with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board 32 years.

Americans used to the flamboyant style of some American evangelists might underestimate the effectiveness of someone as quiet and self-effacing as Hastey. But under his leadership Mexican Baptists adopted daring new evangelism methods and saw their evangelism and church growth statistics surge upward. Baptists in Panama hadn't started a church in six or seven years when he arrived there. That soon changed.

It was that record, plus some evangelism consulting he had done as a furloughing missionary, which convinced the Foreign Mission Board to ask him in 1977 to join the home office staff and counsel Baptists worldwide on evangelism and church growth.

His success in working with world Baptists may come as much from his skills in cross-cultural communication as from the teaching, preaching, promotional and organizational skills he feels the Lord has given him.

Ironically, he didn't recognize his skill for cross-cultural communication until he'd been doing it for years. As a late-night planning meeting in Hong Kong wound down, David Wong, a former president of the Baptist World Alliance, looked across the table and said to Hastey, "Brother, has anyone ever told you that you have a special gift of God for cross-cultural communication?" Hastey had never thought about it.

But others had. His son Stan, associate director of information services for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, says his dad always counted others as better than himself and considered himself a true partner with the people he worked with.

Hastey admits he adopted the "heart language" of the Latin culture and found leaving it traumatic. "We met together, we planned together, we prayed together, we would go out and try to rent a building and be rejected together," he says. One senses he still longs for the warmth and enthusiasm for evangelism he found among Latin Christians.

Perhaps his skill in training others in evangelism through the years stems partly from his personal identification with his learners. "When I was saved at the age of 15, I was just a country kid," he says. "I was ignorant about more things than I knew anything about."

But his pastor's wife, who led him to the Lord, didn't leave him that way. She began training the young man in his new faith. When he felt the call to preach at 16, her husband set aside an hour each Saturday to teach Hastey how to teach the Bible, how to pray, and how to witness.

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In that light it's not surprising that Hasteley considers his greatest contribution to Baptist work in Mexico, where he spent 22 years, to be his training of Baptist leadership in "the fine arts of evangelism."

Hasteley says his native Oklahoma was his training ground for evangelism and cross-cultural communication. One experience as a young associational missionary was especially pivotal. Though Hasteley counted an Indian as one of his two best friends in high school, he never thought about crossing cultures to witness until he began planning an association-wide youth revival.

After he blanketed the area with promotion, he realized the Cheyenne Indians living nearby were the only people who wouldn't feel naturally included in the invitation. He and his wife, Ruth, went to the chief and asked if they could send several cars to bring the Indian young people to the revival. The chief agreed.

That led to a Vacation Bible School under the trees on the reservation, then an adult Bible class, then a revival which resulted in 11 baptisms and a new church.

The excitement Hasteley felt from cross-cultural evangelism helped move him and Ruth toward foreign missions. They arrived in Richmond for appointment expecting to go to Japan, but the secretary they would work under had noticed in Hasteley's materials a deep, abiding interest in evangelism. In Japan, he feared, they might be absorbed into an educational institution. He suggested they talk to the secretary for Latin America.

Everett Gill told them an association on the southwest coast of Mexico was on his heart. For 30 years, the area had been without a Southern Baptist representative although they asked for one year after year. After praying and talking late into the night, the Hasteleys changed course.

In Mexico Hasteley soon was teaching a little bit of everything and preaching all the time—both in churches and in unreached, out-of-the-way places. Hasteley estimates he preached an average of five times a week throughout his missionary career.

He was asked to lead the evangelism committee for Mexican Baptists and to begin teaching at the seminary. While there, Southern Baptist colleague Roy Lyon asked him to go to Piedras Negras to help make arrangements for Mexican Baptists' first city-wide evangelistic crusade. The week before the crusade was to begin, Lyon, ill with a liver ailment, asked Hasteley to replace him as crusade director.

About 250 people became Christians during the crusade and Mexican Baptists were exhilarated by the openness they found when they visited homes to witness and invite people to services—something no one had tried before in Mexico.

Hasteley decided to try the same thing in his association. But Baptists there ran into roadblocks. First no one would rent to them. When they finally rented a building, despite a regulation against open-air meetings, Catholics rented the building next door and aimed loudspeakers right at the building.

The city's mayor came to the rescue by asking the Catholic bishop to call off the opposition. He backed up his words with two truckloads of armed soldiers to protect the Baptist meeting.

The two success stories showed Mexican Baptists they could do more than they had dared or even imagined. With the Torreon crusade in mind, they elected Hasteley full-time evangelism director and embarked on a five-year evangelism push which sent their statistics for church growth soaring.

In spite of his successes, Hasteley would be quick to say he has learned much from others through the years. One man who taught him a valuable lesson, he says, is E.O. Akingbala, pastor of a large Nigerian church which started many missions.

As Akingbala prayed with the new believers after a service where Hasteley had preached, Hasteley began leaving in order to catch his plane. But a voice caught him.

"It was Akingbala," he says. "He was with those 11 people. He never left them to come to me to say goodbye. He waved to me and called to me, but he stayed with them. That so impressed me because that showed me a pastor's loyalty to cut over somewhat superficial greetings and things to stay with what he considered his first priority, with his people who had just made professions of faith."

Hastey didn't say it. But that makes him and Akingbala men of like minds.

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

Reagan Offers Olive Branch
At National Prayer Breakfast

By Stan Hastey

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WASHINGTON (BP)—Declaring that "the clerk and the king and the communist were made in (God's) image," President Reagan told the annual national prayer breakfast "man finds liberation only when he binds himself to God and commits himself to his fellow man."

Speaking to a capacity crowd of 3,200 invited guests in a ballroom of the hotel where four years ago he was shot by would-be assassin John W. Hinckley Jr., the President said: "There are such diversities in the world, such terrible and passionate division between men, but prayer and fellowship among the great universe of God's believers are the beginning of understanding and reconciliation. They remind us of the great, over-arching things that really unite us."

Other prominent public figures led prayers, gave short talks and read Scriptures during the event, including Secretary of State George Shultz who, in the opening prayer, said, "You have shown us that we must seek to prevent nuclear war, even while recognizing that we must maintain the capability of defending ourselves."

In a prayer for national leaders, Philadelphia Mayor Wilson Goode also remembered "those who are hungry, those who are homeless and those who are unemployed." The closing prayer was given by Army Chief of Staff Gen. John A. Wickham.

Vice-president George Bush read an Old Testament selection and U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor read a New Testament passage. California Governor George Deukmejian, U.S. Senator Lawton Chiles, D-Fla., and U.S. Rep. Wes Watkins, D-Okla., gave brief inspirational addresses.

Reagan, in his nine-minute talk, praised the prayer breakfast movement, which has now gone beyond the U.S. to other nations. "In some of the most troubled parts of the world," the president noted, "political figures who are old enemies are meeting with each other in spirit of peace and brotherhood." He said he wished he could be more specific, "but it's working precisely because it is private."

He recalled the movement began in 1942 when a small group of senators and members of the House began to meet informally to share personal problems and pray together. Today prayer breakfasts are held weekly on Capitol Hill, one in the Senate, another in the House.

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Past, Present, And Future
Celebrated At WMU Meetings

By Carol Sisson Garrett

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—"Nothing that splits us is as important as that which binds us together in our task of missions," national Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Carolyn Weatherford told WMU executive board members and state and national WMU staffs recently.

Weatherford's remarks reflected a tone of a reaffirmation and celebration of purpose which marked the week of WMU executive board-related activities held at the new national headquarters building in Birmingham, Ala.

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"In our past and our present, our very existence is justified by our never changing purpose of missions," Weatherford said.

WMU history was applauded, made and directed through executive board actions, and through events surrounding the 1985 January meeting.

About 600 special guests came to into the new Woman's Missionary Union national headquarters building for official dedication ceremonies, held during the executive board meeting. Southern Baptist Convention agency heads, home and foreign missionaries, present and former WMU executive board members took part in the dedication program. The audience spilled over into conference rooms equipped with closed circuit TV to view the dedication.

"Pray while you work," was the inscription on one of the special gifts presented to Woman's Missionary Union by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Lloyd Elder, BSSB president, presented WMU eight original letters and one Christmas card from Annie Armstrong to her historic BSSB counterpart, J.M. Frost.

"This correspondence reveals a woman who was sometimes plainspoken, but who also was guided by a singleminded commitment to the cause of Jesus Christ and Southern Baptists," Elder said. Elder said the gift was given to honor present WMU Executive Director Carolyn Weatherford.

Four state WMU organizations added to the many gifts received for the new headquarters building. Hawaii, Kentucky, Arizona and Wyoming each presented gifts.

The 1986-87 WMU plan of work for churches and associations was reviewed, evaluated, and approved by the executive board and state WMU staffs. The general theme for the year's activities and curriculum will be "Gifted to Serve--Called to Act."

The WMU executive board voted to expand publications and services to previously unreached consumer groups. These new publications and services could include such items as bookmarks, flags of states, international dolls, a WMU cookbook and missions trivia questions kit.

Every new product and service will be closely tied to WMU's purpose of missions education. Production of some new items will begin immediately.

Associate Executive Director Catherine Allen explained a computer problem which had caused several months of WMU magazine subscriptions to be late or lost. Allen urged WMU leaders to direct churches with subscription problems to write WMU.

Marti Solomon, WMU Acteens consultant, announced the 1985 National Acteens Advisory Panel. The panelist are Lisa Baugh, Mt. Hermon, La.; Mae Choa, Newhall, Calif.; Carol Coon, Carnegie, Okla.; Hannah Holtzclaw, Pineville, Ky.; Bonnie Hughes, Clinton, Tenn., and Denise Jacobson, Houston.

The panelist will serve as pages at the WMU annual meeting June 9-10 in Dallas, and at the Southern Baptist Convention which immediately follows.

The WMU Centennial Committee announced plans for the 1988 celebration of 100 years of Woman's Missionary Union organization.

Richmond was named as the site of anniversary celebrations. WMU was founded at Richmond's Broad Street Methodist Church on May 14, 1888.

The executive board also voted to establish a Second Century Fund to help provide good, well trained WMU leadership where needed.

Other Centennial related events will include the release of a children's biography on Carolyn Weatherford; a book written by Weatherford, and a book written by former WMU Executive Director Alma Hunt; prayer retr ats for churches and associations and historical markers on previous national headquarters building sites.

Reagan Asks Broadcasters
To Support Defense Policies

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)—President Reagan called on evangelical and fundamentalist broadcasters here to lend their support to his economic and defense policies, citing a passage in Luke's gospel to justify his administration's arms buildup as a necessary precondition to peace talks with the Soviet Union.

In a separate appearance before the National Religious Broadcasters annual convention, Vice-President George Bush hit themes more familiar to the politically conservative audience by condemning abortion and praising school prayer and tuition tax credits.

Reagan, making his fourth consecutive appearance at the NRB meeting, quoted Luke 14:31-32 ("Or what king, going to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace.") as scriptural justification for his long-held policy that only by being stronger than the Russians can the U.S. hope to achieve peace.

After reading the Luke passage, Reagan declared: "I don't think the Lord gave us all this to one day have to negotiate from weakness."

But he also reiterated a theme he frequently has used since his inauguration—that the U.S. is now at a point of sufficient military strength to pursue negotiations with the Soviets.

Only in passing did Reagan mention topics he has hit hard in previous appearances before the same convention. He likened the broadcasters to the apostles Peter and Andrew in being "good and faithful fishermen" and for having "fought the good fight, for prayer in the schools and against abortion and for freedom in the world."

And in a passage that drew sustained applause, the President declared: "When I was reelected in November I didn't figure I was being sent back to the White House to turn back to the policies of the past. I still believe the government is the servant of the people—and not the other way around."

Before Reagan spoke, an invocation by Southern Baptist Convention president Charles Stanley offered thanks "for answering our prayers to place (Reagan) at the helm of our country." The Atlanta pastor and television preacher also prayed for Reagan's success and safety during his second term.

Bush, while praising America's religious pluralism, went on to declare that those opposed to public school prayer and tuition tax credits and favoring abortion have renounced it.

"I can't believe," he said, "that the founding fathers intended that the Constitution prohibit children from opening their school day with a voluntary prayer. I cannot believe that they intended that the Constitution would prohibit measures to extend pluralism and tolerance in education—measures like the tuition tax credit.... I cannot believe the Constitution...could ever sanction the wholesale destruction of innocent human life."

Like Reagan, Bush was applauded loudly when he declared that "compassion at the national level is no substitute for loving our neighbor at the local level." He added: "I believe it's time we looked less to Washington and more to our States and cities and counties and towns, and more, beyond government—more to our churches, our communities of faith."

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CORRECTION: In BP dated February 1, 1985, please make the following corrections to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting program. On page three, please add that Morris H. Chapman is chairman of the Committee on Order of Business; change the spelling of Stan Coffee to Coffey; and change the word chairman to pastor following Fred H. Wolfe's name.

Thank you, Baptist Press

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