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Philip Newberry's Parents
Tell Of Pain, God's Love

By Eric Miller

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)—Some in the audience cried when Philip Newberry's parents gave their testimony recently. Philip is the Southern Baptist missionary child who contracted meningitis and lost his hands and feet earlier this year.

Wearing artificial legs and feet, the 26-month-old boy walked across the stage at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center during Foreign Missions Week in early August. His parents, Jan and Randy Newberry, missionaries to Brazil from Gordon, Texas, gave testimonies during the Sunday morning worship service.

"We had a dream when Philip first had the amputations that he'd be able to walk on the stage at Glorieta," Newberry said. "Well, he walked. Our next dream is that we'll be back in Brazil by Christmas."

When Philip was in intensive care at Medical College of Virginia in Richmond and his condition continued to deteriorate, "I looked at him lying there—nine I.V. pumps going at one time," Newberry said during an interview.

Catheters were in his stomach and chest, along with a respirator tube in his throat and a feeding tube in his nose. His heart was beating but not pumping blood. His kidneys had failed and his lungs weren't sending oxygen into the blood. "The doctors said he wouldn't make it through the day," Newberry remembered.

"I looked down at him and I said, 'Lord, I am not willing for him to die. I really am not willing.'"

That Saturday before Easter, Newberry explained, "We prayed that if Philip was never going to have any kind of life, was going to be brain damaged and be a vegetable, then we prayed that the Lord would take him on home.

"I remember Jan praying, 'I love to hold him, but I can't hold him with all those tubes in him. But Lord, you can, and so you hold him for me right now. And I want you to let me hold him again.'"

The day before, Philip had cried, "Hurt!" and "Momma," his mother told the Glorieta audience. But that day he was motionless and said nothing. The doctors' "expressions told us there was no hope for him. (It) would be his last day to live."

At least a thousand times during the next few weeks she asked, "What's happening, Lord?" Jan Newberry said. Why was God doing this? Weren't they doing the right thing by working in Brazil?

Then she looked around the hospital waiting room and noticed Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board staff members, area Baptist church members and others she had never met. "Again, I asked, 'Why do all these people care so much?' Then, I realized he (God) was making his love real to us through others."

That Easter, she had just a glimpse of what it cost God to give up Jesus, she said: "I cannot comprehend such love. I was not willing to let my son die for anyone or for any reason."

Philip began to show some progress Easter night.

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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However, the meningitis caused poor circulation in Philip's extremities, resulting in gangrene. This required amputation on April 29 of the left arm at the elbow, the right hand at the wrist and both legs just below the knee.

Many prayers have been answered, the Newberrys said. Although Philip had a stroke and the communications area of his brain was damaged and doctors were concerned he might not be able to talk, he can. At one time, doctors said he appeared to be deaf and blind, but he is not. They also were concerned the meningitis might cause brain damage. If it had, Philip would be unable to walk with prostheses.

Physical therapists said they felt Philip would be able to walk with crutches, but the first day he tried to walk, he did so without crutches and has not needed them.

During Philip's recovery, his mother recalled, two doctors walked into his room as his parents stood by. One doctor looked at Philip and said, "Well, it's just a miracle. I saw him when he was so sick and I just can't believe he's alive."

The other doctor said, "What do you expect when half the United States is praying for him."

The Newberrys have received about 800 cards and letters. Toys, 150 books and stuffed rabbits, dogs, teddy bears and Sesame Street animals arrived for Philip after his birthday on June 2. When a stuffed Mickey Mouse--bigger than Philip--arrived, Philip was afraid at first, but he soon made a new friend.

By holding things between his arms, Philip can feed himself, draw and color. "A U.S. doctor now is doing hand transplants," Newberry said. "In a few years, Philip may be getting feet transplants."

Philip, who was born in Brazil, will have a better testimony there than in the United States, Newberry said. A typical Brazilian family with a child in Philip's condition would "either put him out on the street to beg or just let him sit at home and not do anything."

But Philip will show people, "Well, I may not have hands and feet, but look what I can do," Newberry said. This, he added, will encourage handicapped Brazilians to seek a fulfilled life.

"God called us to Brazil, and he hasn't taken that call out of our hearts," Newberry told the Glorieta audience. When the Newberrys shared the gospel with Brazilians, they often were asked, "Why has no one told us this before?" Yet they "live in a country with a church on every corner and with a picture of Jesus and Mary in every place you go."

"We plan to go back, so you pray for us."

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

Farm Crisis Hits
Southern Baptists

By Sherri Anthony Brown

Baptist Press
8/18/86

EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is the first of a three-part series on Southern Baptists and the American farm crisis. It is adapted from the July-August issue of MissionsUSA, published by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

BUCKLIN, Mo. (BP)—On a hot, dry August afternoon, Ramalee and Milford Olson, both 58, visit the North Central Missouri farm home their neighbors and family built, board by board, stud by stud.

From that base they raised three children and ran their dairy farm. But those days are gone for these victims of America's farm crisis.

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Today the picket fence gate hangs crooked, its once-white paint gray and peeling. Weeds grow high and thick. Across the road, the dairy barn stands silent, a looming reminder of happier days. Spider webs connect dusty glass pipes that once carried fresh, warm milk to refrigerators. The barn still smells of cows and straw.

The Olsons, members of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Bucklin, Mo., sold their dairy farm in the spring of 1985, before they lost everything. "The biggest decision is whether to hang on as long as possible or give it up and try something else," he says.

They moved to nearby Brookfield, population 5,000, planning to get "town jobs," but quickly discovered the market for 58-year-olds in a depressed economy is not good. "There's always someone younger than me, prettier than me and smarter than me," she explains.

The Olsons' decision to sell their farm came after their lending agent, Product Credit Association--an organization that takes in a farmer's income, then pays his bills--informed the Olsons their income would not cover their real estate payment.

"We suggested stretching the loan payment, but they said land value had fallen too much; it wasn't worth enough money to warrant extended payments," she explains.

Forced to pay the \$25,000 payment, the Olsons "gave them (PCA) some of our clear land, some of our savings, and the money from the farm sale. Now we owe nothing," he reports.

He still struggles with his anger and bitterness toward institutions he perceives are cold, heartless and only out for profit. "But you've got to write some of this off. Just go on. Took me a long time, but you've got to do it," he says.

His voice cracks. "I have never blamed God for this. It's not his fault. He's still there."

Several miles from the Olsons' former farm, a covered basement sits amid barns and animal pastures--home of David and Mary Fickess and their four children, who also are part of Pleasant Grove Church.

The Fickesses have harvested their last crops. They are bankrupt.

"If someone had told me four years ago I would lose all this, I wouldn't have believed it. I always believed that if you work hard, you'll make a living, but you can't," Mary Fickess says.

In 1972, the couple grabbed hold of their dream, sacrificing money and status to be able to work together and raise their family together. They worked their land, often in the tradition of the past--by hand--planting corn, soybeans and hay, as well as operating a dairy barn. Things went well, he remembers. "We weren't rich, but we did all right."

Then, in 1981, North Central Missouri was covered in rain; the Fickess farm suffered 11 floods. They lost \$30,000 that year. The next year they took a second mortgage on the land to plant crops.

But the next five years were more of the same. "We lost money each year; the last three years have been big losses," he says. Their debt grew to be more than twice the worth of the land.

The banks will lend the Fickesses no more money. "And I don't blame them," he says. "Actually, I don't want them to lend me anymore money because I could never pay it all back."

The Olsons and the Fickesses are not alone in their dilemma. Earlier this year, the Farmer's Home Administration sent 70,000 "pay-up notices" to farmers more than a year behind in repaying loans.

These farmers are the "middle people," says Gary Farley, associate director of rural-urban missions at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Trapped in an economic swamp between distributors and consumers, they face the worst crisis in American farming since the Dust Bowl days of the Great Depression.

Farley, a sociologist, describes the average family farmer: mid-30s, college-educated, began farming when land and commodity prices were good. They followed traditional wisdom of the industry--borrow, get bigger, make larger profits.

During the 1970s, most farmers made a few cents per bushel harvested, but they produced growing numbers of bushels. They were urged by the federal government to plant fence-row-to-fence-row. Says Farley, whose father was an agricultural teacher, "They had a dream: They wanted to live as well as anybody."

Government reports reveal that by 1985, the national farm debt had hit \$213 billion, up from \$182 billion in 1981; farm income plummeted by nearly \$9 billion in one year. In four years, land values fell 19 percent, more than twice that in hard-hit Midwest.

As with the Fickess family, farmers had plunged so far into debt, lending agencies would not consider new loans. So by the mid-1980s, family farmers knew they must sell their assets to pay their debts. Yet decreased land values meant the sale of land, equipment and buildings still did not pay debts.

Farmers are going broke. In the final 13 years of this century, an estimated 600,000 fewer families will work and live on farms. In five years there will be fewer than 100,000 mid-sized family farms. If solutions aren't forthcoming--and soon--a powerful part of the American heritage--its Jeffersonian, agrarian roots--will crumble.

Already, says the Home Mission Board's Quentin Lockwood, director of rural-urban missions, "We have basically lost the option of a person going into business as a farmer. Under our system, it costs more to produce than can be earned."

Next to go, Lockwood says, "may be values derived from our association with the land--the reward of hard work; the integrity of honest dealings with others; the sense of home, of place, of belonging to something eternal; a generation after generation reverence for the whole of creation."

"I guess we've romanticized farming," says Lockwood, "but the farmer has become, for many of us, a sort of standard bearer of moral values. He is part of our roots. In his downfall are seeds of loss for all."

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

Indonesian Baptist Star
Injured In Heroic Rescue

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BANDUNG, Indonesia (BP)--An Indonesian circus star who became a Christian through the work of Southern Baptist missionaries was bitten as he rescued a fellow performer from the jaws of a breakaway tiger.

The star, Iwan, single-handedly subdued a tiger who was about to put the head of a dwarf clown into his mouth. During the rescue the tiger's fangs sliced through Iwan's left thigh.

"Please pray that I will still be able to serve the Lord," Iwan told Southern Baptist missionary William "Mac" McElrath of Murray, Ky., from a hospital bed two days after the incident. Iwan is star of the high wire and flying trapeze.

Iwan, 21, became known to many Southern Baptists through the 30-minute color film, "Oriental Circus," and the 1982 Foreign Mission Study, "Church in the Big Top," telling the story about a Christian fellowship of traveling circus performers.

The fellowship began when Southern Baptist missionaries John and Nell Smith of Brookhaven, Miss., led circus leaders to become Christians and helped them organize a church while they were in Jakarta, Indonesia. McElrath and his wife, Betty, also have worked with the circus believers, coming to know Iwan in Vacation Bible School sessions they led in Bandung, Indonesia.

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The incident with the tiger occurred during a night performance Aug. 2 in Bandung in the western sector of the densely populated Indonesian island of Java. The tiger escaped while being moved into a trick cage for a magic act. The dwarf clown, a newcomer to the circus, tried to run but was overtaken by the pouncing tiger.

Iwan and the clown, a non-Christian, both were in satisfactory condition in a Bandung hospital but were not expected to rejoin the circus before it left town.

A majority of the Oriental Circus troupe are professing Christians who hold Sunday morning worship under the big top. When there is no Baptist pastor, deacon or missionary available to help them, Iwan often leads the service.

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Texas Woman Wins BJCPA
Hymn-Writing Contest

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
8/18/86

WASHINGTON (BP)—Frances S. Dean, a Baptist layperson from Abilene, Texas, has won the national hymn-writing contest sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

Her hymn, "Liberty, That Sweet Word Sounding," will be introduced during the Baptist Joint Committee's 20th Religious Liberty Conference Oct. 6-8 in Washington. The hymn also will be published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church music department.

Contest judges selected Dean's hymn from 104 entries. Judges were William J. Reynolds, associate professor of church music at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; Milton Ryder, pastor of First Baptist Church, Boston; and Richard Donn, director of the U.S. Navy Band's Washington Chorus.

The judges also chose three additional entries as being "worthy of recognition." Those hymns were submitted by Diane Owen Jordan, Signal Mountain, Tenn.; Milan Lambertson, Ottawa, Kan.; and James E. Taulman, Nashville, Tenn.

Dean, a former public school teacher, earned bachelor's and master's degrees in English from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene. She is a former violist with the Abilene Symphony Orchestra.

Her husband, T.W. (Jack) Dean, is retired dean of Hardin-Simmons' School of Music. He also has served on the faculty of Southwestern Seminary.

The Deans are members of Abilene's First Baptist Church.

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Church Drama Lets Others 'Preach,'
Says Southern Seminary Professor

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—As far as Bob Hughes is concerned, the stage is his pulpit.

As assistant professor of communications at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., Hughes is one of several faculty members pioneering a renewed emphasis on Christian drama. For him, drama is a form of preaching that should be encouraged in churches.

"Drama is yet another way to share the gospel. It is a preaching tool and shouldn't be relegated to a recreational activity," he insists.

Hughes also says drama is a way to involve people in ministry of the church.

"It's a way that young people or the Woman's Missionary Union or anyone in the church can have an opportunity to preach, much in the way you 'preach' through the Christmas musical or Easter cantata," he explains. "I've seen so many young people get involved in drama in church and go from there to greater involvement in ministry."

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That concern is rooted in his own experience as a preacher's kid in California, where his father was executive secretary of the state's Southern Baptist convention. As a nine year old, he saw the play "Green Pastures," a humorous recasting of biblical stories, on television, and it had a profound effect.

"It gripped me with spiritual value in a way I'd not been gripped by preaching," Hughes recalls. "A lot of my career traces back to that experience."

His first publication was a play called "The Stone Congregation," written while he was a college sophomore. Today he sees writing as his major contribution to Christian drama—and as the area of greatest need.

"The biggest problem we have as play producers in churches is so much of the material is so bad, and what is good has been done a lot so people have already seen it," he asserts.

His first collection, "Plays That'll Preach," recently was published by Broadman Press, and Hughes is considering a second volume.

Southern Seminary faculty members involved in drama on campus—others besides Hughes include Ragan Courtney, assistant professor of Christian drama; Mozelle Sherman, professor of church music drama; Raymond Bailey, professor of preaching; and William Hendricks, professor of Christian theology—have an opportunity to test their productions with a ready group of seminarians.

This year, for example, plays scheduled to be produced on campus include "Lovely Moon Lady," a musical by Courtney based on the life of missionary Lottie Moon, and "The Sons of Noah," a drama by Hendricks. Chapel services this year also will include a series of monologue sermons entitled "Heroes of the Faith," by seminary faculty.

Hughes believes drama deserves a place in the seminary curriculum because of its value in ministry and worship.

"It stimulates interest and adds variety to the worship program in a local church," he says. "In producing plays here we are training for ministry."

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Missionary Pilot,
Zebra Collide

By Evelyn Knapp

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KYELA, Tanzania (BP)—Pilots are supposed to be airborne. Zebras don't belong on highways.

But when the pilot and the zebra decided on the same overland route, Southern Baptist missionary Cordell Akin became stranded just inside the Tanzania-Kenya border. Akin finally located a car in a nearby village and convinced the owner to tow his vehicle, which had been badly damaged when the zebra ran out of heavy bush in front of his car.

By the time Akin arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, it was past midnight and the tow rope was barely five feet long after breaking five times during the 90-mile trip.

Last January, in the same area, Akin had made an emergency landing because of an oil leak. He and the other missionaries with him then flew to Nairobi at treetop level in case they needed to land again.

But Akin has no doubts to which inconvenient trip he prefers. "I'd rather be flying," he admits.

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(Knapp is missionary press representative for Tanzania.)

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