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WMU Exec Will Accept
Christian Life Award

By David Wilkinson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, says she plans to accept the 1987 Distinguished Service Award from the denomination's Christian Life Commission despite opposition from some commission trustees.

The commission, meeting in annual session Sept. 16-17, voted 16-13 by secret ballot to accept its executive committee's nomination of Weatherford, the first time in the 21-year history of the award a nominee has been chosen by a split vote.

The award is given to persons who have made outstanding contributions in Christian ethics. Weatherford would be the third woman to receive the award.

While emphasizing she was "not personally wounded" by the close vote, Weatherford said she was "hurt for the sake of WMU."

"I think our members have a right to be offended that WMU did not get any more consideration than it did from the board members who cast negative votes," she said.

Weatherford added that after more than 28 years in denominational service, including the past 12 as director of the 1.2-million-member WMU, "I am puzzled as to how there could be trustees of one of our Southern Baptist Convention agencies who have never heard the name of the executive director of Woman's Missionary Union."

During discussion of the award nomination, one commission trustee said he did not "know who in the world" Weatherford was. Another requested resumes on future nominees be sent in advance to commission members since he also did not recognize Weatherford.

After learning of the comments, Weatherford noted she has been a guest speaker several times in recent years in the church where one of the two trustees is a deacon.

Several board members also raised questions about the criteria for selecting award recipients, and one trustee objected to the timing of the award since Weatherford "has spoken out at the (SBC) Forum and other places" and has supported the idea of women in ministry. The SBC Forum, held prior to the Southern Baptist Convention, is commonly identified with moderate-conservatives as an alternative to the SBC Pastor's Conference.

Weatherford said she "found it difficult to understand how some of the board members could think WMU is a woman's organization that goes around touting ordination of women. Anyone who knows WMU knows that we are not a woman's organization that happens to support missions. We are a missions organization that happens to be composed of women. Missions is our purpose, our lifeblood, our heritage and our future."

The award, she added, is a "recognition that missions and ethics and evangelism and social action in Jesus' name are inseparable parts of the whole gospel."

Weatherford said Southern Baptists should be "proud of WMU's role in missions education, mission action and mission support. I think those who offered my name in nomination understand that what we do in mission action is very much grassroots citizenship at its finest."

Weatherford said she plans to accept the award because "I think WMU has earned it."

Roman Catholic-Southern Baptist
Hay Lift Helps Farmers

By Jim Burton

MADISON, Ga. (BP)—Farmer helping farmer in the name of the Lord has helped relieve a critical hay shortage in Georgia.

Fifteen boxcars of hay from Roman Catholic dairy farmers in Iowa were distributed to dairy farmers in 15 drought stricken Georgia counties through coordination by the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic men's organization, and the Brotherhood Commission, the Southern Baptist missions education agency for men.

Roger Lamar, a dairy farmer from Putnam County and member of Jefferson City Baptist Church, said the hay lift, "displays Christianity. People are reaching out to share their love in the community. This is what we need more of. The world would be a much better place if everyone would share and share alike."

For DeVere Manderfield, who coordinated the efforts of Iowa farmers through the Knights of Columbus, this was his first opportunity to work with Southern Baptists. "Boy, there's nothing more I'd like to see," said Manderfield of Waucoma, Iowa, "...our Catholic hay going to them Baptist cows."

Gary Hargrove, Iowa Brotherhood director, said working with the Knights of Columbus has built some bridges between Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics. "I think it let them know that Southern Baptists aren't really weird," said Hargrove. "It opened their eyes that we are in the mainstream of religion."

Madison, Ga., was the drop point for three counties—Morgan, Greene and Putnam. Local Southern Baptists were responsible for distributing the hay in each of the drop points.

"We've got 58 dairymen in Putnam County, and we thought the only way that would be fair would be to draw their names out of a basket," said Flora Beasley, a Southern Baptist disaster relief volunteer. "It's sort of a chance thing for a church organization to do but that's the only fair way we knew how to do it."

Hay came to Georgia and the southeast through a number of sources, but not every farmer had received aid.

Lawrence Tyson is a bi-vocational Southern Baptist pastor who recently sold his dairy operation. He said that in Putnam County, a lot of hay had been distributed on a first come, first serve basis.

"The same person could keep coming back," said Tyson. "And some people are like a hog at the trough. They'll push everybody away and get in front and cause confusion. So we decided we'd eliminate that by calling people after drawing their name out of a hat."

For Austin Dennis, the hay distributed by Southern Baptists was the first he received. "It will make a big difference," said Dennis. "It will feed my calves for a month."

Dennis said he is a Methodist and that his cows would be glad to get the hay grown by Catholic farmers.

"They'll smile at this," said Dennis.

The farmers who received hay represented a number of denominations. Some do not attend church.

"I think it will make a big impression on these fellows, especially those who don't go to church," said Tyson. "I had one out there a while ago telling me how much he really appreciated it. He said he reckoned he'd have to start going to church somewhere."

Hoyt Howard, Morgan County Baptist Association's disaster relief coordinator, was pleased with the distribution.

"It doesn't go a long way but it helps out a lot," said Howard. "We are trying to get it to the farmers that really didn't have any...the ones who requested it and hadn't gotten any from any other source."

Howard, a member of Shiloh Baptist Church, worked with Morgan County Extension Agent Wayne Tankersley to set up the distribution.

"We formed the Morgan County Emergency Hay Foundation," said Tankersley, a member of Madison Baptist Church. "We already had experience on getting it and getting it coordinated.

"This hay will make a tremendous difference. Any one shipment is not going to be the salvation of the farmer. But if we keep getting a few shipments along, it'll help tremendously."

Tankersley estimated that Morgan County needs 6,000 tons of hay. Each of the farmers receiving hay at Madison received a ton and a half. If the donated hay can last until the fall hay harvest, the dairy farmers should be able to make it.

"We have been blessed with a little rainfall in the last three weeks," said Tankersley. "It is going to go a long way toward giving us a pretty decent fall cutting of hay. If we get a little hay relief along, we can scrape and scrimp and get by."

Cameron Byler, director of Baptist Men and national disaster relief coordinator for the Brotherhood Commission, enlisted state Brotherhood departments in Iowa, Minnesota-Wisconsin and Georgia to coordinate the project.

"I don't know of any disaster as devastating as a thing like this," said Byler. "It's just as devastating as a hurricane or anything else."

Byler contacted Bob Greene, Georgia Baptist Men's director, to see if there were a need. Once Greene confirmed that Georgia farmers needed help, Byler's search for hay led to Manderfield.

According to Manderfield, the Knights of Columbus had located hay and were trying to give it away.

The coordination became critical. Both Greene and Manderfield experienced some difficulties. But a spirit of cooperation helped to overcome the obstacles.

The Wittenburg Trucking Company, Readlyn, Iowa, hauled the hay from the farms to Prairie du Chien, Wis., at half the cost. The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board covered those expenses. Two railroad companies, Burlington Northern and Norfolk Southern, donated boxcars and transported the hay from Wisconsin to the six Georgia cities. In addition, local farmers and businesses in each state donated tractors and fork lifts to help load and unload the hay.

According to Byler, a second hay lift coordinated by the Brotherhood Commission has been completed. Dewey Hickey, Kansas-Nebraska Brotherhood director, arranged for two boxcars of hay to be delivered to Cleveland, Tenn., Sept. 17.

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Jim Burton is associate editor of the SBC Brotherhood Commission's World Mission Journal.
(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Brotherhood Commission

WMU Urged To Promote
Cooperative Program

By Karen Benson

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union members, as lay members of Southern Baptist Convention churches, are "vital and key persons" to tell others about the Cooperative Program, an SBC agency leader said.

Speaking recently to WMU members, James Powell, executive vice president for Cooperative Program promotion for the SBC Stewardship Commission, urged WMU'ers to help educate Southern Baptists about the Cooperative Program.

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"We will never have people understand the Cooperative Program until we make up our minds to do some educating," he told the women. The Cooperative Program is a unified system of financing SBC missions, education and ministry programs worldwide.

The voluntary plan of giving does not have to be a cold, dull subject, he said, insisting, "It's impersonal because we let it be impersonal."

Powell said: "Do something every month to promote the Cooperative Program. Show something that is happening in the world as a result of your giving through the Cooperative Program."

Although there has been some negative talk about the Cooperative Program in recent years as the denomination has struggled with internal controversy, the plan is nonetheless a good one—and is worthy of promotion, Powell said: "Don't be concerned about negativism. Support the Cooperative Program. Be a positive voice for missions support."

Cooperation is the "grace that God gives us that is perfect," he noted.

"The system we call 'Cooperative Program,' in order to get the job done to carry it out, is not perfect. Anytime we find there is a better way to do mission support, then we need to change the name, change the program—do whatever needs to be done to change it. What is important is our deciding to do something together. That's cooperation," he said.

WMU members could begin promoting the Cooperative Program by encouraging their churches to give on a percentage basis to the program, rather than designated dollar amounts each year, he said.

With tough economic times, particularly in Farm Belt states, it becomes too easy for a church to strike a dollar figure from the church budget as a cutback effort, he said. It is more difficult to completely cut out a percentage.

WMU members need to gather the facts about the Cooperative Program before attempting to educate other church members about the program, he said.

"Don't tell people what you don't know. Too many of us are already doing that," he said.

Also, become identified with the subject, Powell told the women, adding, "If you don't believe in and support the Cooperative Program as a way of life for missions and Southern Baptists, it's going to show."

Use every opportunity to talk about the program, Powell said: "Be everywhere you need to be and somewhere you don't. We don't have enough conversations about the Cooperative Program. There is a lack of knowledge about the plan because we don't talk about it enough."

Through the education process, Powell said, church members should learn that "cooperation is when we make up our minds that we want to do something together that has vision—that has hope."

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Pallet To Platform To Publication,
Robertson Claims A Lifetime Of Music

By Charles Willis

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Few people can say their professional experience spans a lifetime, but Fes Robertson will say with a straight face he has 52 years of church music experience.

Then, with a mischievous grin emerging to match the gleam in his eyes, he will admit his infant church music experience was on a pallet in the corner of the choir area at Mt. Liberty Baptist Church in McLean County, Ky., listening while his parents sang.

Robertson was elected recently to direct the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's music publishing department, a component he says has been established in response to needs expressed by ministers of music across the Southern Baptist Convention.

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The consolidation of music editing, publishing and marketing in one department will make non-curriculum church music items more readily available through a wider range of sources.

Publication of church music curriculum materials and consultative services related to church music education will continue in the church music department. The two components will work together cooperatively, he notes, with the music publishing department providing publication support as needed.

"Church music must help Christians to praise God," Robertson insists, adding he plans for the products of the music publishing department "to exalt Jesus Christ, to exhort, to strengthen fellowship, to aid Christian growth and to witness to a lost world the hope of salvation."

His philosophy about church music, the only area in which the department will publish for the foreseeable future, is that "lyrics must be theologically sound and doctrinally pure."

"While excellent poetry is desirable, the imagery must be easily understood. The words must truly become those of the singers," he says.

Robertson feels musical taste is both subjective and emotional: "Each of us is an authority on the kind of music we like and the kind which speaks to us. It will not be our purpose to try to change anyone's taste in music but rather to publish music which meets them where they are, whether that be a difficult anthem or a simple gospel song.

"I have some strong reservations about some of what is done under the label of Christian music," he continues. "At best, much of it should be classed as devotional music rather than music used for corporate worship. Much of it has theology that is weak or even wrong. I am often amazed at texts which are encouraged to be sung in church but which would not long be tolerated in a sermon from the preacher."

A native Kentuckian, Robertson says his "first real excitement about church music" came during Church Music Leadership Conference at Ridgecrest, N.C. B.B. McKinney, the famed Southern Baptist music leader and composer, directed the music.

The chance to meet a widely known musician was but a side benefit to Robertson's experience at Ridgecrest. He discovered the variety of music career opportunities available to young persons. "I knew I didn't want to be a preacher or a missionary," he recalls. "I hadn't known there was anything else I could be!"

Upon enrolling at Murray (Ky.) State University, Robertson was encouraged to major in voice rather than his preferred choice of trombone, and, at the urging of his father, minored in business. While F.G. Robertson supported his son's musical interests, he wasn't so sure a living could be made in music.

Robertson earned the bachelor of sacred music and master of church music degrees at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and subsequently moved to Jacksonville, Fla., to be minister of music at First Baptist Church.

At a music reading session during a state church music conference, he met a church music consultant from the Sunday School Board. Robertson was curious to know, "What exactly do you do?" The rest is history.

Robertson became a young people's and adult music consultant in April 1967. His career at the board also has included music promotion in the Broadman division and supervision of the youth/adult/general materials section in the church music department. His accomplishments include singing for the cable television program "At Home With The Bible" and serving a term as president of the Southern Baptist Church Music Conference.

"As I look back on my life—my rural background, vocal training, business studies at my father's insistence and the variety of churches where I have worked—I really believe the Lord was behind all this," he says of his most recent career change. "The Lord denied me some opportunities I thought I really wanted to prepare me for what I needed to serve him."