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December 2, 1986

86-179

Liberians Pay Tribute To Slain Missionary

By Marty Croll

YEKEPA, Liberia (BP)—Thousands of Liberians streamed into Yekepa, Liberia, three days after the murder of Libby Senter to tell each other why they felt the Southern Baptist missionary was one of their own.

Mrs. Senter, of Shelby, N.C., and her daughter, Rachel, 10, were stabbed to death in their Yekepa home Wednesday morning, Nov. 26. A Liberian, Benjamin M. Morris, 32, admitted to the murders two days later.

George and Libby Senter moved with their two children to Yekepa six years ago as newly appointed missionaries. They long ago decided in case either died on the mission field they wanted to be buried in Liberia as a Christian witness to the people.

The Liberians paid tribute to Mrs. Senter during a wake, funeral and burial on the grounds of Mount Nimba Baptist Church Nov. 29 and 30. They told of her willingness to identify with them by learning their language and staying overnight in their homes as she worked with her husband in surrounding village churches.

A procession of people from the Mano and Gio tribes accompanied the caskets containing the bodies of Mrs. Senter and her daughter as Liberians carried them out of the city's hospital morgue. The tribal people walked alongside the caskets for more than a mile.

"This was really a Liberian funeral, and it would please Libby because she was so close to the people," said Liberian Johnetta Minor, president of Ricks Institute, a Baptist school located in Monrovia.

Liberians started arriving at the church from throughout Nimba County for a wake lasting from 7:30 p.m. Nov. 29 until about 4 the next morning. They eventually packed the sanctuary and spilled outside onto church grounds and under a brush arbor. About 3,000 people attended the funeral service from 2:30 to nearly 5 p.m. Nov. 30, watching as the bodies were buried atop a little knoll by the church.

Among Liberians attending the funeral were Walter D. Richards, president of the Liberia Baptist Missionary and Education Convention, with which missionaries work; Charles Blake, convention executive secretary; William E. Stewart, one of the most prominent figures in Liberian Baptists' partnership with Georgia Baptists; and Victoria Dukuly, president of the convention's Woman's Missionary Union.

Dukuly, who was recovering from surgery, made the eight-hour round trip from her home in Monrovia, the capital city, just for the funeral. Instead of viewing Mrs. Senter's body, Dukuly said she wanted to remember her as happy and high-spirited, the way she was as they worked together with Girls in Action youth groups in the country.

Forgiveness was one topic the Liberians discussed widely among themselves. They were stunned as word got around that George Senter had placed his hand on Morris' shoulder, looked the accused murderer in his eyes and told him he forgave Morris for killing his wife and daughter.

"That's a story that just amazed everybody in the area," said Bradley Brown, the administrator of the 67 Southern Baptist mission workers assigned to Liberia.

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After arresting Morris as he fled toward the Liberian border, police avoided bringing him into the open when they returned him to Yekepa. They reportedly feared for his life at the hands of an angry Liberian mob.

Senter's ability to turn away anger and forgive Morris so amazed some people that they did not know what to think, and at the wake some talked as if the murder might have been God's will, Brown said.

To balance this, Brown's funeral sermon explained that children of God are to hate evil, and that the murder was done "not by the will of God but by the wicked will of a wicked man under the power of wickedness." Further, he reminded the crowd, the seeds of evil in every man's and woman's heart will grow into evil deeds if they are allowed to do so.

"But even in the presence of wickedness, which is not our Father's perfect will, we have the assurance that he is working in all things for his glory and for our good," Brown said. "He is with us and is going to get the ultimate victory."

George Senter, of Gibson, Tenn., was assigned to start and strengthen churches in villages around the city, often traveling away from home for a week at a time. His wife actively participated in the work.

Liberians poured out their appreciation for the Senters and other Southern Baptist missionaries working throughout Liberia. "This was seen and heard and felt during both the wake and funeral," Brown said. Nearly all of the Southern Baptist missionaries on the field in Liberia, about 50, traveled to Yekepa for the weekend.

The wake gave an outlet for expression to nearly 30 Liberians who otherwise would not have had the chance to speak out about Mrs. Senter. Throughout the night, Liberians presented floral arrangements in the church in memorial to her. The vigil was punctuated by song, prayer and appeals for people to give their lives to Jesus Christ.

Liberians told how Libby Senter loved the people of Nimba County. "They appreciated her effort at learning the Mano language, and the fact that she would go out regularly on Mondays and stay overnight with them, asking for no special treatment," Brown said. "She wanted to live as one of the villagers and wanted to learn new things as they did them."

One village pastor told the crowd with great emotion how his people had given her a name in the Mano language which meant "second," indicating she was only the second woman from outside their tribe who had tried to learn their language.

Other contributors thanked God for sending Mrs. Senter and prayed that he would speak through the tragedy of her death to draw people closer to himself.

One contributor to the wake spoke of the daughter, Rachel, noting in her tribute Rachel's identification with the country. A teacher at the African Bible academy Rachel attended in Yekepa told about Rachel's answer to an assigned question, "How do you know you are a Christian?"

The teacher quoted Rachel as saying she knew she was a Christian because as she believed in Jesus Christ as her Savior, her "heart felt satisfied"—a phrase typical of Liberian speech.

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Court Rejects Church's Appeal
Of Unwelcomed Landmark Status

By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press
12/2/86

WASHINGTON (BP)—The Supreme Court has rejected the claim of a United Methodist church in New York City that a municipal commission violated its religious freedom by designating it an official landmark subject to the panel's jurisdiction.

In a one-line order handed down Dec. 1, the high court upheld rulings by three New York state courts that the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission acted within the law in 1981 when it designated the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew a landmark to be preserved. As such, the once thriving—but now impoverished—congregation came under the commission's authority.

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Throughout an unsuccessful five-year challenge to its unwelcomed status as an official landmark, attorneys for the church argued the New York City Landmarks Preservation Law—enacted in 1965—violated the U.S. Constitution's guarantee of free exercise of religion by subjecting the church to "immediate, criminally enforceable governmental restrictions" for refusing to repair the church.

In addition, church lawyers maintained, application of the law also would amount to taking church property for public use in violation of the Fifth Amendment's requirements that government provide just compensation when claiming private property.

By refusing to hear the church's case, the high court let stand the lower panels' rulings—including a 4-3 decision by New York's highest court—that the dispute was not "ripe" for judicial review because the landmarks commission had yet to attempt enforcement of the law on the church. Further, the lower courts held, the church had bypassed appealing application of the law to the commission itself by choosing instead to take the matter to court.

Legal standing by an aggrieved party normally is conditioned in part on a showing that actual injury has been incurred and that all possible administrative remedies have been exhausted.

The church's lead attorney, constitutional authority William Bentley Ball of Harrisburg, Pa., called the New York City situation an instance "where proof of irreparable injury has been established even though the threat of enforcement of the challenged statute is not immediate." The church's primary objection, he added in papers asking the Supreme Court to review the case, was submitting itself to the administrative review of a commission which under the Constitution has no authority over churches.

But in a brief asking the court to reject the church's claims, New York City Corporation Counsel Frederick A.O. Schwarz Jr. contended "no controversy exists and the case is not ripe for judicial review" because the church had not applied to the commission for relief from landmark restrictions. "The fact that petitioner is a religious organization is irrelevant to the question of whether there is an unconstitutional 'taking' and does not ... implicate the free exercise clause of the First Amendment," he concluded.

The Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew, located at West 86th Street and West End Avenue, was constructed in 1897. Although it once boasted a membership of 3,000, current membership is 250, with a Sunday attendance of about 100.

Throughout its dispute with the landmarks commission, the congregation has insisted it wishes to remain at the current site but is unable to raise the estimated \$350,000 needed to make the repairs required by the landmarks law. The church had wanted to demolish the existing structure and build a smaller, more functional sanctuary on the site, as well as an income-producing apartment building. The income from leasing apartments was to have been used solely for the support of the church and its ministries.

The legal battle has galvanized support for the church from virtually every quarter of New York City's religious community. Joining the church in its unsuccessful bid to have the Supreme Court review the dispute were the National Council of the Churches of Christ, New York State Council of Churches, Council of Churches of the City of New York, Queens Federation of Churches, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York, Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn, Synagogue Council of America and New York Board of Rabbis. (86-397, Church of St. Paul v. Barwick)

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Missions Issues Explored
Via FMB Teleconference

By Carol Garrett

Baptist Press
12/2/86

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—The integrity of Southern Baptist hunger relief funds, the status of Christianity in China today and current prayer needs were some of the topics Southern Baptists had the opportunity to discuss with missions agency leaders and missionaries during the Nov. 22 Foreign Missions Teleconference.

More than 106 calls were made during the live broadcast, which was seen over the Baptist Telecommunication Network and the ACTS Network.

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Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks assured viewers that Southern Baptist dollars contributed for hunger relief in Africa had been well-used. Parks was in Africa last April.

"The money that was sent through Baptist channels got out to the people that it was meant to get to—volunteers and career missionaries. I saw (them) with my own eyes delivering it to the families that needed it," he said.

Less than 1 percent of Baptist-sent grain was lost through transportation, even over almost 1,000 miles of roadless territory, he added.

Parks also discussed urgent foreign missions prayer needs with Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Carolyn Weatherford and Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission President James Smith.

Today's thriving Christian church in China is evidence of Southern Baptists' most urgent prayer need, Parks said, noting, "One of the great needs of today is to pray for countries we call closed countries."

China, the first Southern Baptist foreign mission field, recently has become more open after 30 years of almost no contact with Chinese Christians. In those 30 years, the 700,000 evangelicals have grown to somewhere between 3 million and 20 million, Parks said.

"The urgency of praying and continuing to pray even when we don't see results" is the lesson Southern Baptists can learn from the church in China today, he said.

Missionaries cannot go into about 70 countries in the world. "But prayers can go," he said.

Weatherford urged Southern Baptists also to pray for people in countries around the world where Christianity is considered a "western" religion. "I'm praying not only for closed countries, but countries where people's ears are closed to the gospel," she said.

Listeners also learned more people are becoming personally involved in missions by going as volunteers to many of the 108 countries where Southern Baptists do have missionaries.

Volunteering has "literally revolutionized their whole attitude about not only missions, but the importance of praying about it also," Smith said.

Still more volunteers are needed, Weatherford said. "The missionaries had requested over 12,000 volunteers overseas this year, and we probably will send only about 7,000," she reported.

Whether going as volunteers or supporting missions at home through praying and giving, all Southern Baptists are responsible for missions, said Becky Ables, daughter of missionaries Ed and Linda Ables of Argentina.

"More than anything I want people to realize that it's not just the career missionaries and the preachers and pastors that are responsible for being missionaries, but it's also the job of everyone," she said.

In live studio interviews, live telephone calls around the world and taped messages, missionary after missionary talked about the great "harvest" possible on his or her mission field if more workers and more money were available.

The Foreign Mission Board budgets its entire Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal to meet the missionaries' priority needs. But the first priority met is sending all the missionaries who volunteer to go, Parks said. If the \$75 million goal is not met, "we would take money away from capital and operating needs. We would send the missionaries, but with less tools to work with," he said.

Wilson Donehoo, missionary to the Caribbean, said each Southern Baptist will decide how far the Lottie Moon offering will go in meeting needs on the mission field. "The real test of whether or not these needs are going to be met will be as the individual Christian gives, and whether or not we meet our goal," he stressed.

Former Repossessor
Now Reclaims Souls

By Scott Collins

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Shutting off water to unpaid customers and repossessing cars for a finance company prepared David Freeman for the ministry.

Now the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary student isn't bothered when residents in Cavile Place neighborhood in Fort Worth, Texas, aim a shotgun at him. And he can stay calm while talking to a man considering suicide.

Before moving to Southwestern, Freeman worked for a credit company. He and his wife also worked with low-income families and as foster parents. Freeman now works for Tarrant Baptist Association.

He has been knocking on doors to tell Cavile Place residents he wants to help them. Of the first 18 homes Freeman visited, 12 respondents said their main need was to know Jesus Christ.

When Freeman began helping people in the area, "the informal network identified me as a helper," he says.

Now he and student Ron Oliver have started a Baptist church in the neighborhood where shootings averaged two a night. After one and one-half years, shootings have dropped to an average of two per month.

The area was so rough local police would not go into it with fewer than four officers. Seventy-five percent of the residents live below poverty level. Sixty percent of the adult residents in Cavile Place Apartments are single mothers. The median family income is \$6,281.

In July, neighborhood residents hosted an appreciation dinner for police and city officials. Such progress has been based on a personal touch to Freeman's ministry. "I've always felt we need to help people physically and then meet their spiritual needs," he explains.

For example, a woman came to Freeman for help paying her rent. He assisted her with the material need and then addressed her spiritual poverty. Later she told him, "I found help to problems I didn't even know I had."

Freeman developed a strategy for assessing the needs of the community, a concept he applied from a seminary class. And through the Tarrant Association's Urban Allies program, Freeman has combined classroom experience with "street" experience.

Oliver agrees being pastor of Cavile church has given him valuable experience. He also has involved four other seminary students in the work. The church, which receives help from Sagamore Hill Baptist Church, recently received its first three adult members. Average attendance is 35-40.

Oliver retired from the military in 1975 after 21 years and went to work for Federal Electric Corp. as an engineer before coming to Southwestern in 1985. He has involved an engineer from General Dynamics, George Abrams, who tutors neighborhood children in mathematics.

These practical efforts have built a bridge between the Cavile community and the gospel, which Oliver and Freeman have found as important as their classwork.

Seminary training alone will not reach the people, Oliver says, noting, "The only thing they respond to is when you pass their exam."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

Foy Valentine Receives
Clarence Jordan Award

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Foy Valentine, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, has been honored by the Clarence Jordan Center of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for "outstanding contributions" in Christian ethics.

Valentine, the second recipient of the honor, was recognized for his "sacrificial service, prophetic witness, exemplary life and outstanding leadership" in directing the work of the Christian Life Commission since 1960.

The special recognition is awarded in honor of Clarence Jordan, a Southern Baptist Greek and New Testament scholar who was a pioneer in racial reconciliation during the turbulent 1950s and 1960s. Jordan, a graduate of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., founded Koinonia Farm outside Americus, Ga., a Christian community where Valentine worked for a summer after graduating from Baylor University.

Jordan, known throughout the world for his "Cotton Patch" translations of New Testament writings, died in 1969.

Southern Seminary ethics professor Paul Simmons, who made the presentation, praised Valentine for his "prophetic stands" on issues such as racial justice, economic opportunity and political responsibility.

Valentine, he said, has been "committed to a vision of God's kingdom beyond all earthly prizes and beyond all denominational politics and institutions."

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None Dare Call
It Vacation

Baptist Press
12/2/86

GREENVILLE, S.C. (BP)--Furlough does not equal goof-off time for Southern Baptist missionaries. Just ask Jill Branyon.

Branyon, who teaches at the Baptist high school in Nyeri, Kenya, came home to Greenville, S.C., last spring for a four-and-a-half-month furlough. "I began to sigh a bit when people asked how I was liking my vacation," she admits.

Not that she had much time to sigh. During those 18 weeks, she traveled 4,838 miles, filled 40 speaking engagements and had week-long stints at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center in North Carolina, Camp Marietta in South Carolina and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's Missionary Learning Center in Virginia.

She drove to Texas for her family's first reunion in five years. When she told her 102-year-old grandfather she is a missionary, he replied, "Well bless your little heart." And during the summer's relentless drought, she worked long hours on the family farm.

But she doesn't expect or want long stretches of lazy days when she comes back to the United States. "Don't get me wrong," she insists. "I love to share missions with anyone who will listen--and even with a few who would rather not."

Just don't think she's on a paid vacation.

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New Member Assimilation
Key To '90s For Baptists

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press
12/2/86

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Effective assimilation of new members into churches may be the challenge of the 1990s if Southern Baptists are to maintain their historical beliefs and attitudes, claimed Bruce Powers, professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

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The denomination must have a strategy for dealing with people who join the church so new members will understand who Southern Baptists are and what they believe, said Powers, speaking to church administration consultants from state Baptist conventions in their annual meeting in Nashville, Tenn.

"The ways Southern Baptists minister must change in the '90s," Powers said, "because many people in our churches lack deep levels of spiritual commitment. Just becoming a church member doesn't make people different.

"Southern Baptists have become the establishment today, instead of remaining largely rural and agricultural as we were in the early days of the denomination. We are now primarily urban and successful, defending traditions instead of challenging them."

Powers identified seven developments in society that must be handled by the denomination if it is to reach people more effectively in the '90s.

One development is the growth of major metropolitan areas in New York and Los Angeles. "These population centers will force Southern Baptists to face the megachurch problems and opportunities," he said. "We will have to develop ministry patterns not common in our culture."

He also addressed developments related to the fuel crisis, information and management technology, pluralism, senior adults, families and unemployment.

"The world will be facing an enduring fuel crisis by the year 2000," he predicted. "Public transit will be a must, but churches will have to give serious consideration to the locations of missions and new churches."

One of the most significant areas of concern and opportunity for Southern Baptists will be finding ministry outlets for senior adults. He said almost two-thirds of the people who are retiring today leave work before age 65. Most are in good health, and many want part-time work.

"Availability is the issue facing senior adults and involvement is the key," Powers said. "They are available, and they have skills. Churches will have to decide whether they are just going to provide arts and crafts or mobilize senior adults to serve."

If the denomination is successful in reaching more people, then massive resources must be given for assimilation, he insisted, calling for a strategy for dealing with the problem of members who do not have deep spiritual commitment. "If we are to hold to our biblical theology, then we must set up ways to teach people who we are and what we believe," he explained.

As more and more members are taken into the church and not informed about historical Southern Baptist beliefs and polity, the denomination runs the risk of adopting the values of the new members instead of changing the new members' lives according to the values to which traditional Southern Baptists subscribe.

Joe Stacker, director of the church administration department at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, said the 1990s could be the most important time in the history of Southern Baptists: "Southern Baptists must be ready to claim the future for Christ. Our churches have got to get rid of the business-as-usual outlook and start taking redemptive risks."

He challenged the state consultants to look to the future in hope and cooperation, "because that is the Baptist way. We must address issues as denominational ministers and servants of Jesus Christ. The world won't be what it should be until we get excited about being the people of God."

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Argentine Doctor Team
Heals More Than Body

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
12/2/86

NEUQUEN, Argentina (BP)—Colleagues looked upon Roberto Bisonni as a hero after he and the emergency room doctors he supervised saved a farm worker from sure death several years ago. But the excitement of success lasted only a short time for the Argentine Baptist physician.

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The farm worker had come to the hospital after falling drunk underneath a rolling tractor wheel. After extensive treatment and a long recovery, he walked out of the hospital smiling and thanking his doctors.

A week later, drunk again, he stepped in front of a truck. This time he was killed.

"The surgeon who had operated on him asked me, 'Why did we do so much work? What did we save him from?'" Bisonni remembers. "It showed me how insignificant health and sickness are compared to eternity. That was the first case that made me think what I was doing in the emergency room was really not sufficient."

Bisonni felt God was urging him to abandon a solid government job and start a total ministry—to heal the soul as well as the body. What emerged was a health program based on two services Bisonni says are somewhat foreign to Argentines: family-practice medicine and paramedic ambulance services.

Bisonni and a team of four young doctors run Argentina's first and only ambulance service now, with 40 intensively trained volunteer paramedics who respond to needs anywhere in the city within four minutes.

Bisonni had been comfortable and secure in his job. All his life he had expected to be a physician because his mother, a practical nurse, had told him, "You're going to be a doctor someday."

At 21, in medical school and searching for meaning, he had attended an evangelical camp, where he came to know Jesus Christ personally and met the woman he later married. Eventually he became chief of emergency services at the government hospital in Neuquen, working with good equipment and making a good salary.

"But I began to feel the Lord leading me to leave. So I told him if that were the case, to send me three good doctors I could train as family doctors. I also gave him a time limit—I said six months," he recounts.

Not three, but four doctors came to Bisonni after he made that decision. All of them had quit other medical training because they believed God was leading them into a personal practice where they could tell whole families about Jesus Christ.

"At first we had such few patients that we had to examine each other to keep in practice," Bisonni says. "But that was not so bad. We took a lot of the time to pray together, and we got close to each other in prayer. Then the news of our practice got out. It has been continuously growing since then."

The earliest boost to the practice came when the team received an ambulance from an Argentine man who had planned to start a medical program for Indians outside the city. "It wasn't difficult to see where the Lord was leading," says Bisonni. "We looked around, and we had an ambulance, an ex-chief of an emergency room, some young doctors and a city of 150,000 with great needs." The physicians began training young people to be volunteers for paramedic ambulance crews.

Every month paramedics answer 150 calls for emergencies including auto injuries, heart attacks, strokes and intoxication. The city's television station broadcasts pictures of ambulances and the emergency telephone number. "All of the city knows us now," Bisonni says. Recently he was invited to explain the program at a meeting of the Cardiac Association of South America.

But to Bisonni the success of the program lies not in physical healing it has helped bring about or recognition it has gained. He measures success in the lives of people like a 50-year-old paraplegic woman brought to the team's 11-bed hospital last February with an apparent heart attack.

Hostility was written all over her. After treating her, physicians talked with her about Jesus. But she hardened her heart, Bisonni says. As the day wore on, she constantly demanded service from the nurses and complained to her husband and anyone else who came near.

"One doctor in the group asked her why she did not accept the Lord," Bisonni reports. "She said, 'I'm living in hell now, and I might as well die and go on in hell. And the sooner the better.'"

Minutes later as physicians worked with another patient, the woman's heart stopped beating. With little hope—but acting out of routine—paramedics massaged her chest for 20 minutes. Just as they were about to give up, her heart began to beat. After two electric shocks it was working normally again.

Oddly, no brain damage had resulted, and by afternoon the woman was fully recovered and back to fighting and complaining, Bisonni says. "But I asked myself, 'Why did the Lord bring her back to life?' I visited her that night, feeling new opportunity to speak to her about the Lord." But she would not listen.

Leaving for home, Bisonni told the physician in charge to press upon her the need for accepting Jesus as her savior.

At 2 a.m., Bisonni answered a telephone call from the resident physician at the hospital. The woman had just died from an irreversible hemorrhage. But minutes before, in apparently good condition, she had admitted she really did need God after all and prayed to accept him. For what might have been the only time in her life, she had experienced peace.

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

Yugoslavian Scholar Publishes
Serbo-Croatian Greek Grammar

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ZAGREB, Yugoslavia (BP)—Nela Williams, a Southern Baptist missionary working with Baptists in Eastern Europe, has written the first New Testament Greek grammar in Serbo-Croatian, a language spoken by many Yugoslavians.

It also is the first Greek grammar in any of Yugoslavia's languages to use a self-study method.

The 330-page book, titled "The Greek Language of the New Testament," was released in October by a Catholic publisher in Zagreb. It will be sold throughout the country in both religious and secular bookstores.

A faculty member at the Baptist seminary in Novi Sad, Williams is the daughter of Josip Horak, president of the Baptist Union of Yugoslavia. She is the widow of the late James Williams, a Georgia native and Southern Baptist missionary who was killed in an auto accident in 1980.

Williams and her husband began work on the Greek grammar eight years ago. "I can't help but praise the Lord for his marvelous work," she observed. "His hand has been steadily moving this production from its very beginnings, when I started thinking and working on it with my husband, to its completion."

Although designed for individual use outside of the classroom, the book also has been adopted as a text at several theological schools of different denominations in Yugoslavia. Recently it was on display at the international fairs in Frankfurt, Germany, and Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

Williams has received a degree in linguistics and German from the University of Zagreb and a certificate of theology from the International Baptist Theological Seminary of Ruschlikon, Switzerland. She also studied at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., where her husband received a doctorate.

After appointment by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in 1976, the Williamses began teaching at the Baptist Seminary in Novi Sad. Since her husband's death she has lived in Zagreb, reared her three children and taught in Novi Sad.

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Army Of Volunteers
To 'Invade' Prisons

By Orville Scott

DALLAS (BP)—On the 45th anniversary of the invasion of Pearl Harbor, an army of 20,000 volunteers will launch a prison invasion in more than 500 correctional institutions in 45 states.

Armed with Bibles and Christian concern instead of guns and bombs, the volunteers will spend the weekend of Dec. 5-7 behind prison walls, sharing their Christian faith with inmates.

"They will seek to reach that 90 percent of the inmates who don't go to chapel services," said Paul Kramer of Dallas, administrator for Prison Invasion, the nationwide ministry effort.

Kramer, author of "Crime is a Choice," a book to be distributed in the prisons, said Prison Invasion is the fulfillment of a dream for churches, chaplains and many converted ex-convicts who lead prison ministries.

Kramer served time and helped lead Bible study at the prison at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Ala., with Chuck Colson, who formed Prison Fellowship after serving a sentence for involvement in Watergate.

"A great deal of credit for Prison Invasion goes to prison chaplains, those missionaries who don't get much recognition," Kramer said.

Ex-convict Paul Carlin of Crockett, Texas, a Southern Baptist minister who is director of Prisoners Bible Institute, a key sponsor for Prison Invasion in 24 Texas correctional facilities, said: "The tendency is to lock up convicts and forget about them. But we can't forget about them, because most of them are coming back (to their home communities). How much better it is to have them come back as new people in Jesus Christ."

A model for the simultaneous Prison Invasion was conducted by 500 volunteers in eight Texas prisons in 1984, with 2,100 inmates making profession of faith in Christ, said Carlin.

Kramer said the volunteers will go into the cells and cellblocks with the message that "Jesus Christ changes lives." Experience has shown that the average volunteer in a weekend will reach three inmates for Christ, he noted.

Longtime prison ministries leader chaplain Raymond Hoekstra of Dallas will lead the Prison Invasion at Indiana State Prison at Michigan City, along with George Meyer, who was Al Capone's driver.

Infamous converted ex-convict Bob Erler, the "catch me killer" who was sentenced to 99 1/2 years in Florida, will help lead the Prison Invasion at Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman. Erler was a cellmate of Jack "Murph the Surf" Murphy, who was paroled Nov. 11 and will be involved in the invasion in Florida prisons, along with ex-mobster Frank Canstantino, author of "Holes in Time."

Kramer said several San Francisco 49ers football players will participate in the Prison Invasion in San Quentin. Helping lead the San Quentin effort is a graduate of the prison, Jerry Graham, author of "Where Flies Don't Land." Since becoming a Christian, Graham has established a home for abused juveniles in Sacramento, Calif., said Kramer.

Several states have issued proclamations in support of Prison Invasion. Proclamations by the governors of Idaho and Oklahoma note that in contrast to the invasion of Pearl Harbor in 1941, "This invasion will not be with hate but love, not with violence but hope. Hope of a better tomorrow, spiritually, morally and socially."

Citing the "effort to touch the prison population throughout the United States in a significant and life-changing way," the proclamations call on citizens to support Prison Invasion.

Kramer and Carlin said plans are to involve churches and individuals in a follow-up ministry to inmates who accept Christ, providing counseling and discipleship training through continuing prison ministries.



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