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Elmer West Retires
From Second FMB Stint

By Craig Bird

FMB-F

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Elmer West has made quite a splash in Southern Baptist life--and the ripples of his influence will wash the shores of foreign missions for years to come.

West, who retires from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Dec. 31, has spent the past six years directing the special ministries section of the human resources department, but it was a 10-year stretch in the personnel selection department that let him touch deep into the heart of overseas evangelism.

The board appointed its 900th missionary in March of 1953--one month after West became secretary for missionary personnel. When he left the office in October 1963, the Southern Baptist mission force on the field had passed 1,800.

"We did appoint some mistakes, though," West joked at a retirement luncheon in Richmond. "Many of them are sitting here today--they couldn't make it on the field."

About 30 of the board's staffers who were appointed missionaries during West's tenure attended the luncheon--including R. Keith Parks, president of the board; William R. O'Brien, executive vice president; and Harlan Spurgeon, vice president for human resources.

"Elmer West has marked the course of missions in a significant way," Parks said. "These sitting here are only representative of many others scattered on mission fields around the world today."

West was the 30-year-old pastor of Glen Allen Baptist Church in Richmond, Va., when he was asked to head the personnel section. His wife, Betty Jane, remembers their "being the only staff with young children and a need for baby sitters."

"I felt like I had a bear by the tail," he admits. "I had two people as support then and by the time I left there were 22 of us." The increased staff keyed the surge in missionary appointments.

When 172 missionaries were appointed in 1963, it set a mark not surpassed for 15 years, until 181 were appointed in 1978. Research figures show it took fewer Southern Baptists to produce one missionary that year than it has at any time since.

Under West the board initiated its first formal orientation sessions to prepare missionaries for the move overseas, with a one-week session at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center. Another significant launch was the missionary associate program, which raised the age limit for mission assignments.

West and his department also "did the spadework" on what later became the Journeyman Program, two-year volunteer mission efforts by young Southern Baptist college graduates.

He returned to the pastorate in 1963, guiding Ravensworth Baptist Church in Annandale, Va., through an explosive growth period before taking on the challenge of pastoring in an academic community at Mars Hill (N.C.) Baptist Church.

He rejoined the denominational work force in 1968 and spent six years with the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission in Nashville, Tenn., producing materials for the annual race relations emphasis and coordinating the commission's annual national seminars.

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The seminars drew national attention when they provided a forum for Southern Baptist theologians to debate proponents of "The Playboy Philosophy" and the situation ethics movement.

A return to the local church as pastor of Ginter Park Baptist Church brought him back to Richmond in 1974 for another six-year stint. Then, in 1980, "like a bolt out of the blue" he was asked to consider returning to the board as director of the special ministries department, where he supervised work with students interested in missions, a work broadened in 1984 to include ministry to children of missionaries who are college age and above; world missions conferences; and various other ministries to furloughing missionaries.

He is proud that in this role he has seen the beginning of a black church relations section at the board, "and everything is in place for starting work with other ethnic groups."

West feels the balance between denominational duties and leading local churches "kept me in touch" with the needs and feelings of the average Southern Baptist as well as the overview of the larger programs.

The common threads of dedication to a calling from Jesus Christ and a love for all God's people have marked his career, associates have noted. Those threads pulled him into working for fair housing legislation when many Southern Baptists wanted nothing to do with civil rights. It involved him with halfway houses which work with alcoholics--and it has led him to a decade-long struggle to find God's will economically in terms of lifestyle.

He sees that as the next pressure point among Southern Baptists. "If you think race or sex gets people upset, start talking about money" in light of Christian responsibility, he points out.

Although officially designated "retirement day", Dec. 31 will just mark another stage in West's life. He will turn full-time attention to Calvary Baptist Church in Richmond, an inner city church with a small membership and "a great spirit," West said.

He has been interim pastor there for six months and is excited visibly by the challenges.

He also hopes to do extensive writing on the proper economic lifestyle of Christians; continue and expand his reading time, mostly political biographies; and spend some time with his three daughters and their spouses, his son, and his grandchildren.

And his love affair with Southern Baptists will likely find new outlets. As he noted, referring to his style of mixing pastorates with denominational jobs, "Sometimes you have to go out and get a deep breath before you can come back in!"

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

Missionary's Forgiveness
Stirs Grieving Texas Father

By Art Toalston

FMBF

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LUBBOCK, Texas (BP)--A father in Lubbock, Texas, is praying he can do the same thing George Senter did.

Senter is the Southern Baptist missionary who forgave the man charged with murdering his wife and daughter Nov. 26 in Liberia.

Lynn Huckabee lost his 26-year-old daughter, Carol, in a double murder Dec. 17 in Lubbock.

Huckabee and his wife, Sharon, were in Calvary Baptist Church's morning worship service Dec. 14 when the pastor, Dale Cain, made note of Senter's visit with the man jailed for murdering his wife, Libby, and 10-year-old daughter, Rachel. Senter said if God could forgive, he could, too.

"I felt I could never do it," Huckabee recalled, having no idea his daughter would be murdered three days later. "Now I'm praying I can (forgive). I think Dale and the Lord were preparing me for what was about to happen."

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Huckabee said, however, "I haven't made an attempt to go and see him," the accused, Orien Joiner Jr., a 37-year-old North Carolina native who lived in the same apartment building as Huckabee's daughter and her roommate, Eva Marie De Forest, 29, who also was murdered. "I just can't (make a visit) ... right now," because of the mix of anger and hurt he feels.

But in a men's discipleship group Dec. 21, Huckabee prayed that Joiner would become a Christian, and he prayed for Joiner's parents. If they're still alive and have heard of the crime, Huckabee said, "They're hurting, too. I'm certain they are."

Huckabee also gave his daughter's last paycheck from her job as a waitress to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering which supports the work of 3,700-plus missionaries under the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

He felt his daughter would be pleased with the gesture.

"I just hope," Huckabee said, "that it helps somebody to come to know Jesus."

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Paul Choon-Taik Kim:
From Alley To Altar

SEBTS
CO-F

Baptist Press
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WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)—"I never dreamed I'd be here at Southeastern Seminary watching Paul graduate," said his adopted American mother, Betty Kanouse. "He has accomplished far more than I'd ever have dreamed possible in completing his degree here."

Kanouse and her husband, Edgar, of Los Angeles, shared the same pride as the natural parents present at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary commencement exercises recently in Wake Forest, N.C.

"Paul is everything we could have asked for in another son," she said. "We look at him just like we do our two natural sons."

The subject of her comments, Paul Choon-Taik Kim, has been a model of perseverance in pursuing his calling to ministry. His story is one of living as an abandoned child on back streets and alleys in South Korea, foraging for food in trash cans and overcoming adversities of every description.

His fortunes changed forever for the better when Mabel Calter of the Evangelical Alliance Team came to Pusan, Korea, to establish an orphanage in the mid-1950s. Betty and Edgar Kanouse requested an opportunity to sponsor a child at the orphanage, and Kim became a permanent part of their lives.

"Paul has become everything we'd hoped he'd be," said his adoptive mother. "He is a good father to his three sons, Samuel, Mark and Timothy and a loving husband to his wife, Cindy. They are all part of our family."

Kim and his wife hope to return to Korea to work in a Christian camp. Their immediate plans are to accept a position with a Christian camp in Wisconsin and "wait on the Lord's timing" for their return to Korea.

"For nearly 25 years I'd been receiving support and pictures and letters from the Kanouses while in Korea," Kim said. "I can't fully describe how excited I was to meet them in person in 1981 and express my undying gratitude for all that they had done for me. I can never thank them enough, and they will always be family to me. I stopped by the Kanouse home in Los Angeles on my way back to Korea from serving as a delegate to an international Christian conference in New Mexico. They accepted me as a part of the family. I felt like I was visiting my own family in my own home.

"I became a Christian in about 1963 while at the Pusan orphanage in Korea," said Kim. "The constant support and encouragement which I received from the Kanouses helped prepare me to accept Christ as my personal savior and lead me into my calling into the ministry.

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"I began making preparations to attend seminary in the United States following my visit in 1981. At Southeastern Seminary I've been able to realize my dream of completing my theological education."

"This has been memorial day for all of us," shared his wife. "My father is a retired Methodist minister in Korea who served for 30 years in the ministry there. I pray that Paul and I shall have as rewarding a ministry as my father. I also want to thank Betty and Edgar Kanouse for all they have done for our family."

"I hope to be a good steward of my Christian education as I continue my ministry at Antioch Korean Baptist Church in Alexandria, Va., and in Christian camp work in the future in both the United States and hopefully, back in Korea," Kim noted.

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Blind Graduate Sees
Christ's Call Clearly

SEBTS-
Co-F

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WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)—The challenges and obstacles for any one studying for a seminary degree are tough. For Wally Koch they are multiplied greatly.

They include navigating slick and broken brick walkways across campus; listening to seemingly endless tapes of lectures, test notes and book reviews; dictating his book reports, papers and other required written materials to his typists.

Koch is blind. Yet on a recent Saturday, he was among the 123 Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary seniors receiving graduate degrees. His self-discipline, persistence and commitment to his goals had seen Koch through yet another major challenge.

"I give a lot of credit to both my parents and my wife's parents for graduating," he notes. "Without their constant encouragement and assistance as well that of our entire hometown community in Bethlehem, Pa., many times I wouldn't have had the courage and strength to go on and complete seminary."

For Koch the battles do not end with his graduation from seminary. He feels he has encountered roadblocks to his goal for a career in ministry as a church pastor. There has been little response from state and regional leaders in several East Coast states. "I would really like to find a pastorate in Pennsylvania, Maryland or Virginia," Wally says, "but the seeming lack of interest in me by Baptists has forced me to explore the possibility of working with other denominations."

Wally and Kathy Koch do have high praise for their Southeastern Seminary experience.

"I really appreciate the openness and acceptance of varied opinions and positions that I found here at Southeastern," he says. "I feel that I really understand the Bible much more clearly than I did when I came here.

"I also really appreciate the way the Southeastern community has stood behind us both academically and financially. The special grants, awards and scholarships designated for visually-impaired students is a real help."

Although blind physically, he sees his calling to the ministry clearly: "I really feel that God is leading me into the pastoral ministry. I feel sure that he is working out his plan in my life right now and will continue to do so in the future."

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Special Worker Sees Progress
For Black Church Development

By Frank Wm. White

BSSB
AT

Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Black people and churches are seeing progress and increased openness in the Southern Baptist Convention, a black Southern Baptist pastor from Alabama reported.

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Milton Boyd was among black church relations workers from state conventions who for the first time this year attended Sunday school and church training annual planning sessions at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

As a state special worker, Boyd trains Sunday school leaders in both black and white Southern Baptist churches. He noted that situation reflects a change in attitudes from 12 years ago, when Boyd and his family were the first blacks accepted for membership in a Southern Baptist church in Montgomery, Ala.

In 1976 Boyd started Westside Baptist Church in Montgomery as the first black Southern Baptist church in Alabama. Now he is pastor of Westside and another black Southern Baptist church in Montgomery and is director of black church relations for the Montgomery Baptist Association in addition to his role as special worker for the state convention.

Boyd was enlisted as a special worker to train Sunday school leaders in black churches but with only seven black Southern Baptist churches in the state, "there wasn't much call for training," he said.

He considers his acceptance as a trainer for Sunday school workers in white churches a breakthrough. But he continues to focus primarily on developing new black Southern Baptist churches. He hopes there will be twice as many black Southern Baptist churches in the state in the next few years.

Boyd's optimism for black church development relates to goals of the black church development section of the Sunday School Board's special ministries department to increase the number of black Southern Baptist Sunday schools from the current estimated 850 to 5,000 by the year 2000.

Much of the work in black church development across the convention involves establishing and strengthening Sunday schools in existing black Southern Baptist churches, said Bill Banks, director of the special ministries department.

In Alabama and other states with few black Southern Baptist churches, starting new churches is a primary focus, Boyd said.

"We want to strengthen the existing churches and start new ones, too," Boyd said.

He is encouraging black Southern Baptist churches to start new missions and is working with white Southern Baptist churches to involve them in starting missions and new churches in black communities.

The second church where Boyd is pastor, Central Baptist Church, was started as a mission of Westside in 1983. Fourteen men from those two congregations have been ordained or licensed to preach. One of those since has become pastor of the first black Southern Baptist church in Mississippi.

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Wiltshire Pastors Deaf
Mission In New Orleans

By Breena Kent

NDBTS
CO-F

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)—Donnie Wiltshire is a pastor, but the majority of his congregation will never hear him preach.

Pastor of Baptist Deaf Mission in New Orleans, Wiltshire preaches in sign language.

"Most persons who lead our worship are deaf people," he says. "They will sign, and someone will read their sign and interpret into English. There is no piano or organ, because most of our people are deaf; deaf people lead the music, and hearing people sing along.

"Being a deaf mission, we have some rather unique needs," he notes. "We're not only an ethnic group, we're a multi-ethnic group. The church is comprised of deaf persons, hearing persons, deaf-blind people, white folks, black folks, yellow folks—we've got them all."

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To accommodate such a diverse congregation, Wiltshire speaks audibly as he signs his sermons.

"We are a growing congregation," notes Wiltshire, who has been working through the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board as pastor of the mission for nine years. During that time, he says, the attendance has increased from five to 44.

Baptist Deaf Mission began in the late 1970's, when Southern Baptists started "congregationalizing" deaf people, Wiltshire reports. A mission of Lakeview Baptist Church, it was one of the first Baptist deaf congregations in the United States.

As a mission, the budget is supplemented by the Louisiana Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, New Orleans Baptist Association, the sponsoring church and a co-sponsoring church.

When the mission was begun, it was responsible for 20 percent of its budget needs. "Now we're responsible for 65 percent," says Wiltshire.

The mission is situated adjacent to Lakeview Baptist Church. "Having this relationship to the sponsor church, we are able to minister better to the hearing and the deaf in the church," Wiltshire says. For example, "hearing children go to the sponsor church's Sunday school. They are also able to meet together (with their deaf parents) for worship."

Wiltshire's interest in deaf people began as a teen-ager in Corpus Cristi, Texas. "When I was a junior in high school," he says, "I met a deaf girl. I decided to learn sign language to talk to her." And he did.

It was not long before he was interpreting for the deaf in a church in that city. "And I've been in (deaf ministry) ever since," he reports.

In addition to his position as pastor of Baptist Deaf Mission in New Orleans, Wiltshire also is a doctor of theology student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he also has worked with deaf students. He has taught "Introduction to Deaf Ministry," "Baptist History" and "History of Christianity" at the seminary.

"None of our seminaries have programmatic commitments for theological education for deaf people," says Wiltshire, chairman of the board of trustees for the Southern Baptist Conference of the Deaf. "I hope to help us move past that so that not only will they accept deaf students when they come, but actually seek deaf (students)."

His work with the deaf is not limited to the United States, however. Wiltshire also is seeking opportunities of ministering to the deaf abroad. "There is an estimated 200 million world deaf population," he says. "So Southern Baptists have not even begun to speak to that need."

Having returned from a trip to Dominican Republic, Wiltshire notes that whereas most foreigners may take years to learn a language, "I could be talking with a deaf person in two days quite fluently because of the visual of (sign) language. We had no communication problems at all. I couldn't read or write what they said, but I could understand sign language."

Wiltshire's wife, Irma, is also fluent in sign language, as are his two children--Kyle, 8; and Wendy, 5.

Although he is involved in ministry to the deaf throughout the United States and abroad, Wiltshire says, "I plan to continue pastoring the mission as long as the Lord keeps me here."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by New Orleans Seminary