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87-3

Enrollment At Southern Baptist
Colleges Continues Upward Trend

By Lonnie Wilkey

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Predictions of declining student enrollments failed to materialize once again at Southern Baptist colleges and universities.

Last August the U.S. Department of Education's Center for Statistics forecast college enrollments would decrease by 83,000 students. Instead, a recent federal survey of colleges indicated enrollments grew by 151,000 students, a 1.2 percent increase.

Southern Baptist colleges and universities, however, saw their enrollments increase 2.0 percent, from 95,539 students in 1985 to 97,453 students during the 1986 fall semester.

According to figures released to the Southern Baptist Education Commission, 35 of the 51 Southern Baptist junior and senior colleges reported increases ranging from 0.4 to 26.1 percent. Figures do not include students enrolled in non-credit courses.

Missouri Baptist College in St. Louis reported the largest increase, 26.1 percent, while Virginia Intermont College in Bristol saw its enrollment decline by 18.29 percent.

Four of the five Baptist junior colleges experienced declining enrollments. Only Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Ga., reported an increase, 16.0 percent.

Arthur L. Walker Jr., executive director of the Education Commission, attributed the overall increase to more aggressive recruiting procedures by Southern Baptist colleges.

Walker observed Baptist college administrators have realized the number of traditional college-age students has declined in recent years, and in all probability it will continue to decline.

As a result, he said, college have initiated programs designed to attract students who for one reason or another did not choose to attend college after high school.

These "non-traditional" students, Walker noted, will be the key to the growth of Baptist colleges. "Southern Baptist colleges and universities must continue to develop programs to attract racial minorities, women and those who have attended college but are now interested in courses in additional vocational areas," he said.

In terms of total enrollment, Baylor University in Waco, Texas, is the largest Southern Baptist college, with 11,556 students. Other schools in the top 10 in enrollment are Mercer University, Macon, Ga., 5,771; Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C., 5,054; University of Richmond, Richmond, Va., 4,705; Samford University, Birmingham, Ala., 3,831;

Campbell University, Buies Creek, N.C., 3,647; Mississippi College, Clinton, Miss., 3,598; Furman University, Greenville, S.C., 2,964; Stetson University, DeLand, Fla., 2,856 and Houston Baptist University, Houston, 2,618.

The 1986 fall enrollment figures and the percentage of increase or decrease at all Southern Baptist junior and senior colleges are:

Alabama -- Judson College, 361, (5.6); Mobile College, 871, (8.6); Samford University, 3,831, (4.4);

Arizona -- Grand Canyon College, 1,572, (3.8);

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Arkansas -- Ouachita Baptist University, 1,403, (-0.77); Southern Baptist College, 498, (17.7);

California -- California Baptist College, 655, (9.7);

Florida -- Palm Beach Atlantic College, 1,134, (3.9); Stetson University, 2,856, (2.2);

Georgia -- Brewton-Parker College, 1,242, (-3.3); Mercer University, 5,771, (10.2); Shorter College, 728, (-1.08); Truett-McConnell College, 1,009, (16.0);

Kentucky -- Campbellsville College, 604, (-5.6); Cumberland College, 1,927, (-7.97); Georgetown College, 1,362, (3.6);

Louisiana -- Louisiana College, 983, (-3.8);

Mississippi -- Blue Mountain College, 313, (10.6); Mississippi College, 3,598, (-0.3); William Carey College, 2,004, (12.7);

Missouri -- Hannibal-LaGrange College, 730, (3.0); Missouri Baptist College, 658, (26.1); Southwest Baptist University, 2,331, (11.2); William Jewell College, 2,061, (1.7);

North Carolina -- Campbell University, 3,647, (2.0); Chowan College, 888, (-7.78); Gardner-Webb, 1,867, (2.4); Mars Hill College, 1,323, (-6.76); Meredith College, 1,947, (5.4); Wake Forest University, 5,054, (-0.2); Wingate College, 1,697, (1.9);

Oklahoma -- Oklahoma Baptist University, 1,655, (3.2);

South Carolina -- Anderson College, 1,056, (-1.58); Baptist College at Charleston, 1,794, (16.6); Furman University, 2,964, (0.4); North Greenville College, 470, (-11.15);

Tennessee -- Belmont College, 2,364, (4.7); Carson-Newman College, 1,681, (4.7); Union University, 1,546, (2.3);

Texas -- Baylor University, 11,556, (0.7); Dallas Baptist University, 1,742, (7.1); East Texas Baptist University, 691, (-1.1); Hardin-Simmons University, 1,804, (-0.7); Houston Baptist University, 2,618, (-5.65); Howard Payne University, 980, (15.2); University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, 1,348, (3.1); Wayland Baptist University, 1,827, (1.6); and

Virginia -- Averett College, 972, (2.0); Bluefield College, 362, (8.1); University of Richmond, 4,705, (2.1); Virginia Intermont College, 393, (-18.29).

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Missionaries Find Parents'
Illnesses Force Hard Choices

By Leland Webb

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A common but serious family problem is causing some Southern Baptist foreign missionaries to return to the United States at least temporarily and to spend emotional energy and personal finances in the process.

The problem is the illness or infirmity brought on by aging that afflicts some parents of missionaries. And because the problem receives little public attention, one source of possible help--U.S. church members--remains largely uninvolved.

When a parent of a missionary becomes seriously ill or handicapped by complications of aging and no other family member is available to meet the need, the missionary faces a wrenching dilemma: How can filial duty and Christian calling be balanced? How can he or she respond to two clear teachings of Scripture: duty to honor parents and supremacy of Christian discipleship over family ties?

"Missionaries with aging or ill parents in the States must deal with a whole range of emotions, as well as face some tough decisions that will impact their lives and careers," summed up Joe Bruce, Foreign Mission Board associate area director for Middle America. He was among more than 50 missionaries who responded to a questionnaire on this problem.

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"They become more acutely aware of the geographical distance as their parents become older," he said. They also face guilt, financial hardships and the problem of "dealing with their own mortality."

Because the birth rate in the United States was comparatively low in the 1930-40 period, many veteran missionaries now facing decisions about aging parents have few or no siblings to help shoulder the load, pointed out Joyce De Ridder, healthcare recruitment consultant at the Foreign Mission Board.

In addition, the lengthening of average life expectancy increases the possibility parents may face debilitating ailments of age.

The situation, in the words of missionary Delores Hill of Thailand, is "one of the most overwhelming problems missionaries face."

Choices for missionaries facing the difficulty sort out to about three: (1) Stay on the field. Persons able to do this usually have family members in the United States who can handle the situation. A handful of missionaries have stayed at their posts by taking a parent with them to the field for a while. (2) Return to the United States temporarily. A missionary may hastily arrange an early furlough to appraise the need. The next option may be to request a leave of absence, with salary suspended to allow time to choose a course of action. (3) Resign. Seldom an easy decision, resignation may emerge as the option meeting the most needs. For some, early retirement is another option.

Several offered a plea not to judge others for what they decide. "People must be very careful never to pass judgment," warned Dan Cobb, veteran missionary in Thailand. "It is not our place, and we seldom have all the facts. ... Conditions are never 'the same.'"

Many parents are notorious for masking the truth about their health in letters. A missionary thousands of miles away without an objective report feels at a loss in trying to evaluate conditions. Overseas telephone calls, now common, don't always work smoothly and can be expensive.

This is an area where many suggest church members at home might assist. The missionary craves facts. "If someone would write often telling us exactly how mother is getting along, that would be a great relief," sighed one. Hearing "no news is worse than hearing the bad news," affirmed another.

Church members at home can help in some other practical ways, although a few missionaries cautioned that some parents may be "too proud, independent and private" to accept aid, and some types of help can come only from family members. Also, not every church may be equipped for such a ministry. Noted one woman of her experience, "People in the church seemed to be frozen, unable to understand practical ways of responding, while wanting to do so."

Missionaries who have been aided by churches express deep gratitude. One told of the church that helped her husband's father: "They bought groceries, harvested his garden, cut firewood, provided transportation to the doctor, cheered him up." Without this help, "we could not have stayed" on the field.

In some situations, says one, it would help "for a local church to 'adopt' the parent or parents to see to daily needs and then call the family member when major decisions need to be made."

Among other suggestions: involve parents in visiting shut-ins or provide another way for them to serve; tape-record a message from the parent to send the missionary; have a trusted person serve as "secretary" to sort through bills and unsolicited mail; arrange for a "personal care" worker to see that medicine is taken, proper food eaten, clothing kept clean.

Many parents of missionaries seem never to meet anyone else whose child serves in missions. One missionary suggested that the Foreign Mission Board sponsor an informal organization of parents. The Japan Baptist Mission, reported De Ridder, already produces a quarterly newsletter for parents of all its missionaries. This has "resulted in parents praying for one another and sharing with one another," she said.

One basic rule rings out in whatever way someone at home might try to assist: Follow through. Never offer help if there is no commitment.

Family relationships for missionaries differ almost endlessly — in number of brothers and sisters, stability of siblings' families, degree of family closeness, sympathy of other family members toward missionary calling.

Sometimes missionaries feel warm support from others in the family. "We thank God for sisters and brothers whose interest and concern for missions has caused them to go the extra mile in caring for our parents in order that we could remain at our place of service," noted one.

Parents' conditions also vary greatly. When aging or illness saps a parent's decision-making power and clear reason, the burden of choice falls squarely on the children. In seeking affordable facilities for parental care, missionaries face the same problems as children in the United States, but missionaries face them at long range, adding to the hardship.

The recent "explosion in resources in gerontology" means resources do exist, De Ridder pointed out. Every state now has some kind of office on the aging, she reported, and all can make referrals as to where to find help. De Ridder shares this kind of information in an optional session during furloughing missionary conferences and in a one-hour period with new missionaries during orientation.

But many missionaries "feel keenly their own responsibility, even when others are willing to assume this load (for ailing parents)," suggested Bob Hardy, associate area director for East Asia. "I was fortunate to have brothers and sisters who lovingly cared for their parents and understood my calling," said one missionary. Still, "many times I had deep anguish about not doing my part."

One noted that because of the culture in the society in which she serves, "where honor and respect" are given the elderly, if she did not return home to care for her aged mother, "my witness would be a sham."

Many parents remain supportive toward their child's overseas ministry, even during their own troubles. Others, feeling their own needs bearing down, may hint — or ask outright — that their children not return overseas. One mother wrote her missionary son, "I love you, but I'd love you more if you come home."

Those in the mission force who have faced parental needs urged new missionaries to grapple with the possibilities before a crisis strikes, exploring the "what ifs" for themselves and with others in the family. A single woman missionary recalled that when she tried to discuss matters, "the family did not want to talk about such morbid things, since all of us were strong and well." Now, after a crisis, they "have a united plan."

Both at home and on the field, prayer is a key resource. One missionary's mother who avoided reporting her illness to her daughter overseas explained, "I didn't want to worry you. ... You can't do anything about it." Her daughter responded, "Mom, we can pray."

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(Adapted from the December 1986 issue of The Commission, magazine of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.)

Pastor Warns Leaders
Of Empty-Bucket Syndrome

By Frank Wm. White

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Constantly helping others can create an "empty-bucket syndrome" which pastors and denominational workers must guard against, a Nashville, Tenn., pastor warned Sunday school leaders.

"The empty-bucket syndrome is so subtle, the bucket can be totally empty before we realize it," Charles Page, pastor of First Baptist Church of Nashville, told state Sunday school leaders and Sunday school department workers attending annual planning meetings at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

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Church staff members and denominational workers continually are giving to others to help their spiritual lives. The daily outflow causes a drain on their own creativity and freshness, Page warned.

"People think that we are always fresh and renewed because we deal with spiritual things daily," he said. But the danger of full-time Christian work is that we can allow spiritual things to become mundane and casual, he added.

Page said it is essential for persons who are responsible for the spiritual health of others to be aware of the need to maintain a balance between spiritual, emotional and physical health.

Without a balance of the three, a pastor or denominational worker will not be able to maintain the spiritual zeal needed to help others, he cautioned.

Because of the demands on a pastor's time, it is important to schedule time for prayer, Bible study, family, leisure and exercise. Page recommended a disciplined schedule of prayer, Bible study, witnessing and participation in local church activities to maintain the spiritual dimension.

Prayer may be the simplest element of spiritual life, but it is not the easiest to do, Page said: "Prayer is work. It's the hardest work we will ever do. There are always things to keep that work from being done."

Emotional freshness requires a positive outlook and an awareness of what is going on in the world.

Page said he makes a point of reading motivational literature to help maintain a positive outlook: "You cannot stay fresh with a negative outlook on life. You can't help others unless you know what is going on in the world."

Although good physical condition is difficult to maintain, it is essential for total freshness. "Without physical condition as well as spiritual and emotional condition, you will never be as fresh as possible and totally able to help others," he said.

Without a freshness as a Christian and a balance between the three areas, leaders will not be able to meet the needs of others effectively, Page warned.

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Student's Ventriloquy Success
Ministry Speaks For Itself

By Elizabeth Watson

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Lee Pitts lets a dummy do the talking when she shares the gospel.

The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary student is a ventriloquist. Through Nicky, her wooden puppet, Pitts puts smiles on faces with the story of a living Christ.

But smiling is something Pitts only recently learned to do herself.

She grew up in a broken home in Alabama, void of physical and emotional warmth. For eight years she lived in a trailer house with no heat or hot water, thankful for the single blanket on her bed.

Thinking she was the most unfortunate and "ugliest girl in the world," Pitts considered committing suicide at age 12. But through a local church's bus ministry and Vacation Bible School, she found a reason to live.

"I discovered there was someone who loved me--Jesus," says Pitts. "I accepted Christ at that time, but there were still many hard roads I had to travel. Parental quarreling and family break-ups never stopped, so I often changed schools three or four times each year."

When Pitts was 15, her stepfather held her family hostage, threatening to kill them if they left the house. Pitts and her brother escaped through a window and ran for help to Bob and Betty DeLoach, her church choir director and his wife.

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The DeLoaches took Pitts as a foster child. She traveled with them around Alabama as a member of the church youth choir and puppet team. Pitts first saw ventriloquy performed on one of these trips.

"The ventriloquists who traveled with Dad's team fascinated me," Pitts remembers. "So I decided to secretly learn the art myself and surprise my foster parents."

Her first "dummy" was an old Simon Says doll discovered in a church closet. In only a few months she mastered the pronunciation of the ventriloquy alphabet. With "Little Nicky," a puppet she borrowed from a church in Georgia, she soon was using her newly developed talent.

"Nicky helped me blossom as a young lady," Pitts says. "Because he is able to say things I could never say, he's like the other side of me no one ever saw."

"My ventriloquy ministry is proof that God uses ordinary people for his extraordinary purposes. The message Nicky and I share with others is that God is not concerned with our abilities but with our availability."

Pitts draws large crowds with Nicky. She has ministered in more than 500 churches and schools. But it is the powerful testimony she shares through Nicky that causes people to seek new lives in Christ.

"People can relate to the 'hard knocks,'" Pitts says. "Even though I have been through so much hurt, God has healed me, and that 's encouraging to people. People today need encouragement."

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(Watson is a student newswriter at Southwestern Seminary.)