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March 17, 1987

N - BSSB

87-39

BWA President Takes Message
Of Love, Prayer, Family

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Whether he is worshipping with 19 members of a Christian church in China, giving a Russian man his first Bible or taking \$50,000 in relief funds to Baptists in Nicaragua, the president of the Baptist World Alliance carries the message that a larger Baptist family loves and prays for them.

Less than 24 hours after returning from a five-day trip to Nicaragua that included a 45-minute session with President Daniel Ortega, G. Noel Vose spoke during an employee chapel service at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Vose reported that Ortega told him that religion represents "one of our sources of renewal" in war-torn Nicaragua. He described the 7,000 Baptists in his country as "good citizens."

Learning from Vose that he would be speaking at the board on his arrival in the United States, Ortega appealed, "pray for us; pray for our country."

Vose, also founding president of the Baptist Theological College of Western Australia, notes that Baptists in Nicaragua have gained acceptance in the country through medical, educational and social work. He said the \$50,000 in BWA aid was received "warmly and gratefully. I only wish we could have been taking \$250,000."

After seeing overwhelming needs in countries like Nicaragua, Vose said his message to Baptists in affluent parts of the world is "live simply and share."

He said the purpose of the trip to Nicaragua with Gerhard Claas, BWA general secretary, and Edna de Gutierrez of Mexico, president of the BWA women's department, was to meet with Baptist leaders and deliver aid funds, learn of additional needs, discover more about church-state relationships in the country and to express support for Nicaraguan Baptists through meeting government officials.

Wherever he travels, Vose said he goes with one message.

"I have only the Bible. I am naked without the Word. Baptists are interested in many things, but the heart of their interest worldwide is the Bible. When you give people the Word of God, they've been fed," said Vose.

In addition to providing a structure for a worldwide family of Baptists that includes 134 national groups and 35 million people, Vose said the BWA provides relief funds to help Baptists in parts of the world that some individual groups might not otherwise know about.

"I only wish we had \$10 or \$20 million to give each year instead of \$1.5 or \$2 million," he said.

The BWA also serves as a clearinghouse where individual groups can receive help or expertise from others in areas such as education. For example, he said a major contribution of Southern Baptists to Baptists worldwide is "your enormous emphasis on evangelism."

Also, he said the BWA fills a unique role in church-state relationships and he hopes it will increasingly have a part in "missionary evangelism" in areas where no member bodies have contacts but where the alliance does.

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"Baptists are individualists; that is both our strength and our weakness," said Vose. "Individual Baptists need the larger community to maintain balance and health and growth."

Vose will continue as president of the BWA until the 16th Baptist World Congress in Seoul, South Korea, in 1990.

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

Officials Recommend Minor
Changes In Tax-Exempt Law

By Kathy Palen

N-BJC
Baptist Press
3/17/87

WASHINGTON (BP)—Representatives from the Internal Revenue Service and Department of Treasury told a House subcommittee they do not favor a "wholesale change" in the law governing lobbying and political activities by tax-exempt organizations.

Lawrence B. Gibbs, commissioner of internal revenue, and J. Roger Mentz, assistant treasury secretary for tax policy, recommended that members of the House Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee work to clarify and balance current regulations.

The Internal Revenue Code contains 25 categories of organizations — ranging from charitable, educational and religious organizations to labor unions — generally exempt from federal income tax. Those organizations are subject to a variety of restrictions on lobbying and political activities, depending upon the specific activity and the type of organization involved.

The most stringent restrictions are applied to religious, charitable and educational organizations, which are exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and are eligible to receive deductible charitable contributions. Organizations receiving 501(c)(3) status are prohibited from engaging in direct or indirect participation or intervention in any political campaign and must limit their lobbying activities — any attempt to influence legislation through affecting the opinions of the general public or through communication with any member, official or employee of a legislative body or governmental agency — to an "insubstantial" portion of their total activities.

Both Gibbs and Mentz testified regulations on lobbying involve a number of ambiguities that have resulted in problems for tax-exempt organizations and the government.

"The rationale for the current restrictions on lobbying activities has never been clearly articulated," Mentz said, adding the current restriction was added to the tax law by a Senate floor amendment, the legislative history of which is inconclusive as to its purpose and scope.

Gibbs noted additional problems occur in determining whether a lobbying act may be attributed to an individual member rather than the entire organization and in measuring what amount of lobbying activity constitutes a "substantial part" of the organization's overall activity.

"Lack of a precise standard causes problems for the Service in its attempt to enforce the statute uniformly," Gibbs said. "It also has a negative effect on charitable organizations since they cannot gauge the permissible level of these activities."

Both men referred to a 1976 congressional action designed to address charges of vagueness against the substantial part test. As a result of Congress' enacting Internal Revenue Code section 501(h), a 501(c)(3) organization now may elect to be subject to a mechanical test, based on expenditures, for determining a permissible level of lobbying.

Mentz recommended replacing the substantial part test with an expenditure test. Although admitting an expenditure test is "not necessarily the best measure" of an organization's lobbying activities, he said it "represents a significant improvement" over the substantial part test.

Other major problems arise from "affiliated exempt organizations" and sanctions for violations, according to the testimony of both men.

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Under current law, a group that intends to engage in both educational and substantial lobbying activities may establish separate organizations. Although permissible, such arrangements create difficult administrative problems, especially with regard to the proper allocation of expenses between the two organizations, Mentz said.

He contended such difficulties are "exacerbated by a fundamental tension in the law," which creates an incentive for a group to allocate expenses to its 501(c)(3) organization -- which is eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions but must limit its lobbying activities -- rather than to its affiliated 501(c)(4) organization -- which is not entitled to receive tax-deductible contributions but does not have to restrict its lobbying activity.

Mentz recommended the subcommittee consider a statutory definition and required disclosure of affiliated exempt organizations on information returns with appropriate penalties for failure to provide such information.

Under current law, the only sanction for violation of prohibitions on political and lobbying activities is loss of exemption, Gibbs testified. He said the sanction can be "unreasonably severe" if a prohibited activity is not extensive or, conversely, "unreasonably light" if a public charity has little or no taxable income.

Mentz said the vagueness of the substantial part test also contributes to "sometimes unduly harsh" imposition of the sanction.

Mentz recommended expanding the sanction to include, in some cases, the imposition of excise taxes on organizations and/or their officials that violate restrictions on lobbying and political activity.

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Sunday School Editor,
Wilbur Lamm, Dies

N-BSSB

Baptist Press
3/17/87

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Wilbur C. Lamm, who at one time was the only editor of Southern Baptist adult Sunday school materials, died Monday, March 16, at the age of 66.

Lamm was editor of Convention Uniform Series Sunday school materials for adults for almost 30 years from 1955 until he retired in March 1984 due to health problems.

He was instrumental in broadening the options for Southern Baptist adults with the addition of materials for young adults, senior adults and lessons for the deaf as well as teacher materials. Lamm designed and edited the first adult Vacation Bible School materials and helped develop both the Life and Work Series and the Bible Book Series.

Lamm was one of three Southern Baptists to serve as chairman of the interdenominational Committee on the Uniform Series since its inception in 1872. The committee develops guidelines for the International Sunday School Lessons used by 24 denominations.

He began his work with the board following eight years as professor of Bible and Greek at North Greenville Junior College, Tigerville, S.C.

Lamm, a native of North Carolina, was a graduate of Campbell College in Buies Creek, N.C., and earned a bachelor of arts degree from Wake Forest College in Winston-Salem, N.C. He received master of theology and doctor of theology degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

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

Airport Closing Won't Delay
Inerrancy Conference

*N-CO
(SWBTS)*

Baptist Press
3/17/87

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—The national Conference on Biblical Inerrancy is still on schedule even though flights into the Asheville, N.C., airport have been grounded for the opening day.

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Randall Lolley, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. announced March 13 that the Asheville airport will be closed for resurfacing of runways from 11 p.m. May 1 until 6:50 a.m. May 5.

The conference is scheduled May 4-7 at nearby Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center.

Ridgecrest has scheduled shuttle service from two alternate airports to the conference center. Conference participants should schedule flights into either the Greenville/Spartanburg, S.C., airport or the Charlotte, N.C., airport, said Betty Hicks, a spokeswoman for Ridgecrest.

Inerrancy Conference hospitality rooms will be clearly marked at both airports May 3 and 4, Hicks said. Participants should wait there until the next shuttle to Ridgecrest arrives.

Hicks said Greenville/Spartanburg, the preferred airport, is a one-and-one-half hour drive from Ridgecrest. The Charlotte airport is a two-hour drive, she said. Special shuttle rates will be \$15 per person from the Greenville/Spartanburg airport and \$18 per person from Charlotte.

Participants should plan to depart from the Asheville airport, which will have reopened by the time the conference ends, Hicks said.

The nearly 700 people already registered for the conference will receive a card in the mail requesting flight information, Hicks said. These cards should be returned to Ridgecrest with flight number, arrival time, date of arrival and airport so that shuttle schedules may be planned.

Transportation questions should be directed to Hicks at Ridgecrest, P.O. Box 128, Ridgecrest, N.C. 28770, (704) 669-8022.

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'Prepared Persons'
Aim Of Seminary

N-(D)
(NOBTS)

Baptist Press
3/17/87

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"All we can do down here is to try to aim them," said New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Landrum P. Leavell II when asked what kind of graduates the seminary is "trying to turn out."

In a recent chapel address at the seminary, Leavell said, "I pray that we're going to graduate prepared persons" — and defined prepared persons as, persons who love people, are peaceable, positive, persistent, and pious.

One "problem" which Leavell has found among Southern Baptists is "scholars are on one side presiding over static or declining churches, while those with minimal training... are, with single-minded commitment, building strong churches and winning numbers of people to Christ."

He said it is possible for a person with an earned doctor of theology degree to grow a "super church.... But, you can name them in the Southern Baptist Convention with one hand, and maybe have a finger or two left over," he said.

"Being evangelistic and building churches is the future of what we are. And if we don't do that, there won't be a future," said Leavell.

"Unfortunately, I've seen some warm-hearted, evangelistic folks come to this campus who have left here far different from the way they came, as far as their outreach and their ministry are concerned."

However, it is Leavell's goal to "turn out" prepared graduates.

"First of all, I hope our graduates will be people persons," he said, "those who love people enough to try to make friends with them and win them to Christ."

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Second, "I would hope we'll graduate peaceable persons. ... If you're a peacemaker, the chances are excellent that you're going to get bumped around a little bit and bruised in the process." But, Leavell feels "the viability and the future usefulness of the Southern Baptist Convention is going to rest upon people who are peaceable people."

Peace is dependent upon everyone "having a little bit of his own elbow room," he said. "You try to put me in a straitjacket and make me believe what somebody else believes simply because they believe it ... you're going to have trouble with me. ... You're going to have to give me a little bit of room. And by the same token, if I expect you to give me a little room, I'm going to have to give you a little."

Leavell said, "There may have been injustices on one side or the other of the Southern Baptist Convention, but we're not going to solve the problem by doing the same thing to another group that the first group says was done to them." He said Baptists may "live to see this whole thing fragmented simply because there are not any peaceable people."

Third, Leavell hopes New Orleans Seminary graduates will be positive persons. He defines "buzzard religion" as a quality of people who are always looking for something that is "dead and stinking, and always quick to repeat that to the widest possible area."

Fourth, he hopes graduates will be persistent persons who are "lifelong learners." That's the only kind of commitment that's going to prevent spiritual and intellectual stagnation in your life."

Fifth, Leavell hopes they would be pious persons. "That's not saying somebody who is 'holier than thou,'" he said. Rather, it is reverence for deity, and devotion to divine worship.

"The thing that really concerns me is the number of younger preachers in our denomination today that are voting a party ticket. Brother, if you haven't got sense enough to make up your own mind, and somebody else has to tell you how to vote, you might as well live in Russia," he said.

"But, if you're a Spirit-filled Christian, you don't have to have anybody tell you how to vote. ... You can be your own man, and I would pray God that the graduates of this institution will be that.

"I'm not telling you who to vote for. Vote for the one you feel God wants you to vote for, not somebody you've been told to vote for."

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Texas WMU Sets \$5.5 Million
Goal For State Missions

Baptist Press
3/17/87

N-Texas

DALLAS (BP)—A \$5,555,555 goal for the 1987 Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions was set by the Texas Woman's Missionary Union Executive Board during their March 11-13 meeting.

The 1987 offering is the first Texas state missions offering following the once-in-a-lifetime, two-year Mary Hill Davis Centennial Offering. To date, about \$22 million of the \$30 million centennial goal has been given or pledged.

The 1987 goal is an increase of almost 43 percent over the \$3,184,840 goal in 1984, the last "normal" state missions offering.

Basic 1987 allocations include \$1,014,500 to enhance Texas Baptist multi-cultural ministries; \$1 million to reach people through new churches; \$520,000 to strengthen new church work; \$520,000 for special urban ministries; \$727,000 to support specialized mission opportunities; and \$623,000 to increase missions awareness and support through missions education.

An additional \$1,151,055 is added for new mission/church assistance, to help churches start 2,000 new congregations as part of the Mission Texas emphasis. All receipts over the \$4.4 million basic goal will be added to the new mission/church assistance fund. Receipts less than the basic goal will be adjusted in the allocations for new mission/church assistance.

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Acteens' Return, Recovery
Called An Answer To Prayer

By Ken Camp

N-Texas

WACO, Texas (BP)—A weekend trip to a statewide Acteens meeting in 1986 turned into a nightmare for three teenage girls and their adult counselor. But when two of the girls and their leader returned to the Texas Acteens IMPACT meeting this year, it was a dream come true for them and their prayer partners throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

Acteens Stefani Johnson, Carrie Bass and Kelly Lynn Greene and their adult leader, Melanie Tate — all from University Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas — were struck by a car on the campus of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, during the Texas Acteens IMPACT conference in March 1986.

Stefani and Carrie sustained severe head injuries in the accident, Kelly suffered a concussion and knee, tendon and ligament damage and Tate seriously injured her legs. Stefani — the most seriously injured victim — was semi-conscious for several months, and she did not speak her first words for almost six months.

In spite of their fears and their memories of the year before, Carrie, Kelly and Mrs. Tate returned to the Baylor campus March 6-8 as part of a group of 30 persons from University Baptist Church who attended Acteens IMPACT 1987, an event sponsored by the Texas Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

"It was hard to come back and bring the girls again, but our church thought it was very important to come," Tate said. "My family was tense about it, but my husband and two girls came with me.

"Stefani really wanted to come, but everyone was afraid for her to make the long trip," said Tate. "We're taking a Baylor sweatshirt home to her."

Tate noted Stefani recently was able to stand for the first time since her accident, and she underwent eye surgery to correct double vision. After extensive work with a physical therapist and a speech therapist, she is making slow but steady progress.

"She was able to memorize the scriptures to complete her queen step (an Acteens rank), and she will be in the recognition services at church in May," said Tate.

Tate, who was in a cast for 9 months, now walks with the aid of a cane. At an examination the week prior to the recent Acteens IMPACT meeting, doctors assured her she should be able to set the walking stick aside in six to eight months.

Carrie, who originally was listed as critical and was unconscious for 20 hours following the accident, said both its positive and negative effects have been lasting for her.

"Some things are harder for me because of the head injury, such as memory," she said. "But I feel like I'm closer to my parents and my church, and I've been a lot closer to God.

"It was kind of scary coming back," she said, "but I figured I'd have to get over what's happened and go on."

"I was scared, but after coming back it's no problem," said Kelly. "The accident helped me to realize that I don't have to wait until I'm 35 to say, 'God, here I am. Use me.' There's no guarantee any of us will be around then."

Kelly's mother, who came to the 1987 Acteens meeting with the University Church group, praised the support of her church family and stressed the importance of prayer in her daughter's recovery and in the lives of everyone involved in the accident: "In the hospital, we could just feel the comfort of God, and we knew people were praying for us. We couldn't have faced it without prayers."

Since the accident one year ago, all of the girls and Tate have accumulated large collections of cards and letters from Acteens and concerned Southern Baptists around the world.

"We filled a scrapbook with correspondence from all around the world -- from people who read about the accident and who wanted us to know they were praying," said Kelly's mother.

"Our church has been wonderful. Everyone has been so supportive. They couldn't have been better," said Tate's husband. "And other Acteen leaders have called to say, 'We're so glad you're going to IMPACT again and that the girls can go again. We'll be praying for you.'"

The day before leaving for Waco, Carrie visited Stefani. Although she was disappointed she could not be at the 1987 Acteens IMPACT meeting herself, Stefani said she was excited for her friends.

"Stefani told me she'd be praying for me," said Carrie, "and she said to look both ways before I cross the street."

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(BP) photo available upon request from Dallas bureau of Baptist Press

God's Expectations Are Not Man's,
Parks Says At Southwestern Conference By Scott Collins

N-10
(SWBTS)

Baptist Press
3/17/87

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Southern Baptists have "conned themselves into believing God expects what they expect," Keith Parks told participants at the 38th annual student missions conference at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, spoke to more than 700 college students from the South and Southwest who attended the conference March 6-8.

All Christians are called by God, Parks said: "He has called us to be the people through whom he completes that work Christ came to do. Most of us would like to see the world saved without it costing us. The Lord does not invest the price of redemption simply to save that soul from destruction, but to reach out to others."

Even though Christians are called, it is not unusual to ask where, when and how to serve, Parks said. That question causes a "gnawing" and "searching" to know God's will.

"If you really wanted to, you could know God's will," he said. "But we're afraid of what it would be."

Many Christians want to know God's will before they commit to doing it, Parks added. "God says, 'Will you do my will?' and we say, 'What is it?'"

But Parks said God wants Christians to say yes first. "You can trust the man who died for you to lead you in the best way," he affirmed.

Gladys Lewis, a free lance writer and former missionary to Paraguay, challenged students to "reach beyond the Jordan" and other boundaries in response to their call.

Finlay Graham, guest professor of missions at Southwestern Seminary and retired missionary to the Middle East, echoed Lewis' thoughts: "Christianity in its outreach knows no local, national or international barriers. Our response to that outreach must be embodied in flesh and blood."

Graham said a commitment to outreach is not easy. "Discipleship is neither cheap or easy. It will cost you everything. Your all on the altar and God's will must be first and last."

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Hitchhiker From Brazil
Becomes Missionary

By Eric Miller

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Arnold Pessoa is a missionary at last — after hitchhiking from Brazil to Texas and attending college for a decade.

God called Pessoa to the United States to attend college, but getting there took three years and plenty of prayer, he says. He spent nights alone in the jungle and among Indians.

He was stranded on a boat in the ocean, almost stampeded by a herd of cattle and nearly assaulted by a group of angry men.

He encountered persecution but also blessings, because along the way he preached and led Colombians, Nicaraguans and Mexicans to know Jesus Christ.

Seventeen years have passed since Pessoa, 41, first set out for the United States. Now he has a bachelor's degree, a master of divinity degree and a wife, Lucy, 37, whom he met in Texas. They have two sons, Valerian, 8, and Ismael, 4.

The Pessos were appointed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in December 1986 as missionaries to Colombia, where he will work as a general evangelist. They recently completed missionary orientation in Rockville, Va.

His journey to the United States started with an airplane ride to the Brazil-Venezuela border. There he began walking along a road with a backpack containing a blanket, shirts, pants, food, a notebook and a Bible.

After two days of walking, he discovered the road ended. He headed back to Brazil, sleeping in the jungle at night and keeping a campfire going to scare off animals. Out of food, he observed monkeys and ate what they ate.

He spent a night with an Indian tribe in Venezuela, staying in a tent provided by the Indians. That night, one of the men sang and danced around his tent. Thinking the Indian might attack him, Pessoa crouched in the tent for hours, ready to dash into the jungle if an attack occurred.

The next day Pessoa asked a woman who was teaching Spanish to the tribe about the Indian's actions. She explained he was only expressing his happiness in having Pessoa as a guest.

Along the way he met several people who helped with his transportation. A wealthy Brazilian woman bought a plane ticket for him to San Andres Island, off the coast of Nicaragua. A doctor running for a political office on the island gave him some vitamins and a ride on a boat bound for Panama. But the engine broke down and the boat drifted all night until mechanics repaired it the next morning.

In Panama a secret service man guarding the home of the nation's vice president allowed him to have a word with the vice president and Pessoa got a free pass on a bus that took him to Costa Rica.

Always, he watched for opportunities to preach. Often he got mixed results. One time he was preaching in a small town in Mexico when a Catholic priest and 20 men stormed the building. He told the men God would judge them if they stopped the service. They left, but later as he walked from the building, 10 men confronted him to assault him.

"I approached them and I put my hand inside my coat to take out some tracts," Pessoa recalls. "They thought I was taking out a gun; so they started running in all directions. They left 10 bicycles."

He yelled to the men, "Please come back. I have some tracts for you." They stopped and told him they were angry because he spoke "evil against the saints." But that night at a worship service Pessoa conducted, seven of the men accepted Christ as their personal savior.

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A Catholic farmer who knew Pessoa was a Protestant preacher and was making visits in the area prepared a strong greeting. When Pessoa arrived at the man's home, the farmer opened a gate, mounted a horse and drove a herd of cattle straight toward him. Pessoa leaped to the side, narrowly escaping the stampede.

While Pessoa was in Mexico trying to get a visa to the United States, his wife was leaving her home country of Cuba.

All Cubans leaving the country were required by Fidel Castro to work for the government without pay for nine months. Each day she and about 300 women were hauled on trucks to fields where they picked vegetables from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The women slept in army barracks and received meager meals. "It was like punishment because we wanted to leave the country," she notes.

Once in the United States, she worked in a New York factory for a year. But she wanted to prepare "to serve the Lord in a better way" and enrolled in the Mexican Baptist Bible Institute in San Antonio, Texas. There she met Pessoa, and they were married.

He has been the pastor of Spanish-speaking churches in Hart and Divine, Texas. And he was the pastor of churches in Morton, Texas, and San Francisco. While they were attending missions conferences at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center in New Mexico, the Pessos felt a definite call to the mission field as they talked to missionaries.

Looking back at his three-year journey to the United States, Pessoa says, "I always prayed and I never stopped reading my Bible. That kept my strength and faith in God."

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

Area Once Rejected Now Home
To River Ministry Worker

By Ken Camp

F-Texas

Baptist Press
3/17/87

DALLAS (BP)—Twenty years ago, the rugged Big Bend country of Southwest Texas was the last place in the world Mike Barrera wanted to live. Today, as coordinator of Mexican rural work for the Rio Grande River Ministry, Barrera calls the area "home."

When Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas, offered Barrera a basketball scholarship in the 1960s, he visited the campus and found West Texas unappealing.

"I was so thankful that I was able to come back home to God's country — back to Laredo," he says.

But years later, when Barrera felt God calling him from his career as a Houston businessman into the ministry, his first pastorate was at First Mexican Baptist Church of Van Horn, Texas — about 100 miles northwest of Alpine.

While serving in Van Horn, Barrera fell in love with the Big Bend area along the Rio Grande. He preached an average of seven times a week in rural villages along the river — first on his own, and later as a Southern Baptist Mission Service Corps volunteer.

Feeling the need to prepare himself better for ministry, Barrera enrolled at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. One year ago, he received a letter from the Texas Baptist State Missions Commission asking if he would be willing to coordinate Mexican rural work from an office in Marfa, Texas — about 30 miles west of Alpine, the city he once considered "the end of the earth."

Although he felt sure it was where God meant for him to serve, he was uncertain about his family's reaction to the move. He showed his wife the letter and asked, "Polly, could you spend the rest of your life out there?"

"That's where God has called you, and I'm going wherever he leads you," she replied.

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Since moving to Marfa, Barrera says, he has spent about 40 percent of his time in the office handling administrative chores and about 60 percent in the field, working with local pastors and laymen.

"Like any job description, mine has about 27 different things listed. But I have two primary responsibilities. One is to help start Bible institutes in rural areas in northern Mexico. The other is to encourage pastors and lay leaders," he explains.

Barrera currently coordinates the work of two training institutes for local pastors in Mexico: a rural institute in San Miguel and an urban center in Ojinaga. A third training institute, possibly at Nueva Rosita, is expected to be operating by mid-summer.

Although originally intended to be training centers for pastors unable to attend seminary in Mexico City or elsewhere, the training centers rapidly are becoming lay institutes. In an area where churches significantly outnumber pastors, it is essential for the laity to be trained for leadership positions, Barrera says.

"At Ojinaga, only three of the 16 or 17 students are pastoral candidates. Among the more than 100 students at San Miguel, laypeople outnumber pastoral students nearly nine to one," he says. "They want to learn how to study the Bible and how to grow as Christians."

Although few of the students at Ojinaga and even fewer of the pupils at San Miguel have had much formal education, Barrera says the people are very intelligent and anxious to learn.

"Probably half of these guys ought to have honorary PhDs in practical engineering, considering how ingenious they are in farming and ranching and sustaining their families," he says.

Barrera's work with the training institutes, as well as his other responsibilities in Mexican rural work, is funded through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program and the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions.

"If it weren't for Mary Hill Davis, we'd have to pack our bags and leave," he says.

Barrera sees his role primarily as encourager and co-laborer. He says that the groundwork for the institutes was laid by his predecessor, Jimmy Smith. Furthermore, Mexican Baptists are in the midst of "T.E.E. Year," an emphasis on theological education by extension that has created interest in the training institutes.

"The pieces of the puzzle are all fitting together," Barrera notes. "God has already prepared the work. We're just co-laborers with him. We get to be instruments to guide the operation."

One "piece of the puzzle" that has fallen into place has been instructors. The institutes use local pastors with expertise in particular areas to teach those personal strengths to others. Currently, Barrera is the only American instructor.

"In addition to providing an academic education, we want to help the local leaders to become strong men of God, men of integrity. The native pastors serving as professors can be role models," he says.

"We want to phase out of the operation and turn the institutes over to Mexican Baptists. Ideally, we should be able to phase out in about five years. Our goal is for this to be an indigenous effort."