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November 2, 1987

87-164

Missionary Teacher  
Killed By Drunk Driver

N-FMB

By Art Toalston

SAN JACINTO, Calif. (BP)--Gloria Brinks, a Southern Baptist missionary teacher who also carved a niche in church planting in Peru, was killed in a head-on auto accident Oct. 29 about 40 miles southwest of Redlands, Calif.

The driver of the other car has been charged with driving under the influence of alcohol. He is Sacramento R. Arevalo, 20, of Paris, Calif., who is in a local hospital with major chest injuries, according to a spokesman at the California Highway Patrol's office in Banning.

Brinks, 41, had addressed a Woman's Missionary Union meeting at First Baptist Church of San Jacinto and was returning to Redlands, where she had lived during her furlough with her parents, John and Marie Brinks.

The San Jacinto church's WMU had given her a surprise Christmas party, complete with presents, because Brinks was scheduled to return to Peru before Christmas.

She was to have eaten that night with Gayle Thomas, a former missionary to Tanzania whose husband, Larry, died of cancer in 1982. The food was ready and the table set when Thomas received a call from the Brinkses saying their daughter had been killed in an accident about 1 p.m.

Brinks' assignment in Peru involved teaching grade school children of missionaries in Trujillo and supervising the schooling of older missionary children there as well as missionary children throughout the country in correspondence study. She worked with more than 20 such children and their parents. Her supervisory work took her throughout the country.

Soon after she arrived in Peru in 1982, missionaries "realized that she had come not just to teach our children, but that she related beautifully right from the start with the Peruvian people," said fellow missionary Sherra Armstrong. Armstrong, in Richmond, Va., for a conference for furloughing missionaries, said she had had daily contact with Brinks, who taught her two children for three years.

"I especially feel for the Peruvians whose lives she touched so closely," Armstrong said. She believes they can take comfort in the fact, however, "that she left something of herself there that will go on and on and will touch many, many people."

Brinks worked with a Peruvian pastor, Vicente Cruz, and his wife, also named Gloria, in starting the Upper Room Baptist Mission in the town of Moche just south of Trujillo. Their first meeting was in the Cruzes' living room in 1984. The mission became a church earlier this year. Sixty-five adults and children now worship each Sunday in the church's partially constructed building.

"Gloria exemplified what should be the desire of each of us," said Armstrong's husband, Hayward. "Regardless of job title, each of us should be evangelists." Although she was a teacher by training and by job assignment, "I think her priority in life was working with Peruvian people and doing her part to see that they knew about the love of Christ," he said.

Fellow missionary Karl Wallace, also in Richmond for the furloughing missionaries' conference, doubts whether any first-term missionary in Peru has been more successful in evangelism and church planting than was Brinks.

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While on furlough, Brinks had joined Temple Baptist Church in Redlands, where Thomas is a member. She was the third grade Sunday school teacher, active in the singles' department and a participant in the prayer ministry.

She also was taking courses in advanced Spanish and computers at Crafton Hills College in Yucaipa, Calif. She had planned to use her new computer expertise in her teaching.

Brinks was someone people trusted when they had prayer needs, Thomas said.

"Gloria had the unique ability to minister to a particular need of a particular person," Mrs. Armstrong concurred. "You sensed concern from her. You felt like you could confide problems to her."

As a teacher, she was "very caring, very professional," Mrs. Armstrong added. "She always came prepared. The children knew what was expected of them on a day-to-day basis."

Brinks, a Sheldon, Iowa, native, grew up in the Reformed Church and sensed a call to missions at age 16. She became a Baptist while working as an elementary teacher in Bloomfield, N.M. A neighbor and fellow teacher invited her to First Baptist Church, and she initially attended from time to time. Later, in visits to the home of then-Pastor Bobby Fuller and his wife, Phyllis, she asked questions about Baptist doctrine. She decided to be baptized in 1977.

As a member of First Baptist of Bloomfield, "she would load her car up with the poor children of the community and bring them to every service," Mrs. Fuller recalled. The Fullers now live in Big Spring, Texas, where he is pastor of College Baptist Church.

Brinks invested time and personal finances, especially in one Spanish-speaking mother and six or seven of her children at home, Fuller said. Brinks brought the children and their playmates to church activities throughout the week.

She did her undergraduate work at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, and earned a master's degree from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. She also attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, in preparation for her April 1982 appointment as a career missionary.

Brinks is survived by her parents, a sister and a brother.

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

First MSC Couple Sent To Begin  
Work For Las Vegas Convention

N-HMB  
By Sherri Brown

Baptist Press  
11/2/87

ATLANTA (BP)--Boyd and Bonnie Margason, mission service corps volunteers, are on their way to Las Vegas, Nev., to begin preparations for the evangelistic and church-starting emphasis prior to the 1989 annual Southern Baptist Convention meeting.

The Margasons, natives of Mountain Home, Ark., are the first volunteers to be assigned to this Nevada project. Their primary assignment is to prepare work for the staff of 12 churches in Las Vegas.

"They will do property analysis, demographic surveys and begin Bible studies in the communities identified by the Southern Nevada Baptist Association," said David Bunch, director of church extension for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Last spring the Margasons, both retired, put their home up for sale and set off in their motor home for the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis. There they decided to volunteer for mission service.

"We realized we needed to go somewhere God needed us," Mrs. Margason explained. They prayed asking God to send them wherever he wanted them to go. The next morning Bunch asked them to consider the two-year assignment in Nevada.

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The Margasons had done short-term volunteer mission work in northern Nevada years before. "We saw the area and felt a real burden. At every place we serve we leave a little bit of ourselves, so Nevada seemed a good choice to return to," Mrs. Margason said.

The Margasons' assignment is part of a project to start 25 new churches in Nevada by the 1989 Las Vegas Southern Baptist Convention.

The project is a response to an action taken at the 1983 Southern Baptist Convention in Pittsburgh, where messengers voted to recommend "a strong evangelistic emphasis in connection with the (1989 Las Vegas) annual meeting."

The Home Mission Board, in cooperation with the Nevada Baptist Convention, was assigned the task of "an emphasis on missions and evangelism."

"These church starts are part of our attempt to carry out that action. The Home Mission Board is working through their state cooperative agreement with Nevada to set the direction of Bold Mission Thrust for the last decade of the century," said Bobby Sunderland, the board's director of direct evangelism and coordinator of the Las Vegas project.

Plans for starting the churches include placing two volunteer missionary couples in Nevada by January.

The Home Mission Board and the Nevada Baptist Convention are looking for "partnership" and "assisting" churches for each new mission congregation.

A partnership church will make a three- to five-year commitment to aid the church in providing pastoral salaries and purchasing properties. Assisting churches will provide smaller amounts of monetary support, Bunch said.

Both partnership and assisting churches also will provide short-term mission groups as survey workers and construction teams, as well as providing any other short-term work needed.

"Our goal is to have support for each new church by March 1, 1989, when we plan to have all the pastors on the field," Bunch said.

The pastors will be assigned in several areas. The Home Mission Board will choose and appoint seven church planter apprentices, seven church planters, seven mission pastors -- funded by partnership churches -- and four language pastors.

The four language churches have not yet been pinpointed, but a Filipino and an American Hispanic church should be included, reported Oscar Romo, the board's language missions director.

Plans also include one volunteer missionary couple assigned to each new church to serve as part of the leadership core group.

The first meeting at each church will be a revival service June 4, 1989, initiating a full week of revival meetings to be held at each church the week prior to the Southern Baptist Convention annual session.

Nevada Baptist Convention Missions Director Don Mulkey will coordinate recruitment of the partnership and assisting churches.

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Missouri Baptist Convention  
Notes Numerous Milestones

By Trennis Henderson

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(MO.)

Baptist Press  
11/2/87

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (BP)--The 1987 annual meeting of the Missouri Baptist Convention was marked by numerous milestones. The meeting included a record attendance, adoption of a record 1988 budget, election of three officers by acclamation and the installation of a new executive director.

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Among resolutions adopted by Missouri Baptists was an affirmation of continued Southern Baptist involvement in the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, opposition to political endorsements by Baptist entities and opposition to Missouri involvement in a multi-state lottery. Inspirational highlights included messages by the presidents of the Southern Baptist Home Mission and Foreign Mission boards and the executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee.

A total of 3,344 messengers and guests gathered at First Baptist Church of Springfield for the Oct. 26-28 meeting. Adoption of a \$15.5 million budget for 1988 includes a Cooperative Program allocations budget of \$14.75 million. Southern Baptist causes will receive 35.375 percent of the total income, an increase of almost 0.19 percent over the current budget.

The installation of MBC Executive Director Donald V. Wideman highlighted the convention's opening session. Missouri Gov. John Ashcroft, addressing the opening session, offered "personal congratulations" to Wideman, who has been executive director since May.

Harold C. Bennett, president-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee, also speaking during the service, told Wideman, "God has blessed you in a very special way." He reminded the new executive director, "Your leadership is crucial in a time such as this."

Wideman responded with the commitment: "If my administration has a hallmark or a distinguishing feature, I would want it to be this: By God's grace and my grit, I'm going to love you -- all of you -- the strong, the straying, the stricken and the straggler. I'm going to offer you cooperation, compassion, correction and consideration, in a spirit of love and in the spirit of Jesus."

In memory of Wideman's predecessor, Rheubin L. South, messengers voted to rename the annual state missions offering the Rheubin L. South Missouri Mission Offering. South, who was executive director nearly 12 years, died of leukemia shortly after last year's annual meeting. South's widow, Verna, attended this year's annual meeting and helped unveil a formal portrait of South, which will hang in the Baptist Building in Jefferson City.

Missouri Baptists' resolution related to the Baptist Joint Committee declared messengers "restate our desire for the Southern Baptist Convention to maintain its role in the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs; express our belief that Baptists' joint witness in our nation's capital has been beneficial to Missouri and Southern Baptists and to the American public; and regard this proposal (by the SBC Public Affairs Committee) for withdrawal to be inappropriate and its stated reasons to be unsatisfactory."

The resolution opposing political endorsements, a response to the Public Affairs Committee's recent endorsement of U.S. Supreme Court nominee Robert H. Bork, stated, "Baptists have historically refrained from endorsing or opposing candidates for public office but have openly supported or criticized actions of public officials which impinge on Baptist principles and interests." It emphasized messengers "disapprove of a Baptist entity's endorsement of any person for a civil office: local, state or federal."

The multi-state lottery resolution affirmed the MBC executive board's authorization of a lawsuit "challenging the constitutionality of Missouri's participation in a multi-state lottery." Other resolutions called for increased efforts against world hunger and statewide enforcement of Missouri's anti-obscenity law passed earlier this year.

The convention's Tuesday evening session featured an emphasis on starting new churches, with a keynote address by Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis. James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, delivered a keynote message during the Wednesday afternoon session. Foreign Mission Board President Keith Parks highlighted a foreign missions emphasis held during the convention's closing session. Parks' call to missions commitment was followed by a public invitation in which several people sought prayer and counseling.

The election of officers included the unanimous selection of President Charles Hufft, pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, Springfield; First Vice President Jim Joslin, director of missions for Greene County Baptist Association; and Recording Secretary Marilyn Coble, a member of Green Trails Baptist Church, Chesterfield. In the only race for a convention office, Lee Beaver, a member of Edmundson Road Baptist Church, St. Louis, was elected Second Vice President.

Outgoing MBC President John Hughes, pastor of First Baptist Church of Independence, said he believes the convention demonstrated Missouri Baptists are "together and that, with one voice, we are trying to glorify God."

During his presidential address, Hughes developed that theme based on Romans 15:5-6. "Missouri Baptists aren't experiencing fussing, feuding and fighting some states are going through," he said. "We are more interested in glorifying God through doing his work in the world than in arguing with one another."

Missouri Baptists' 1988 annual meeting will be Oct. 24-26 at Lake of the Ozarks.

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Sehested and Prescott Tie The Knot As  
Church Installs First Woman Pastor

By Bill Bangham

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(B'hood)

Baptist Press  
11/2/87

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--In services likened more to wedding celebration than ceremony, Prescott Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., installed Nancy Hastings Sehested as its pastor yesterday.

She is the first woman pastor in the 71-year history of the church and first woman pastor of a Southern Baptist church in Tennessee.

Four Southern Baptist churches currently have female pastors, including Sehested. With 236 members, Prescott is the largest.

The church has been a center of controversy since calling Sehested. The controversy culminated when Shelby County Baptist Association voted to exclude the church from the association membership at its Oct. 19 annual meeting.

But Nov. 1 the church set controversy aside and celebrated installation of its pastor in two services.

In an emotional service attended mostly by members and friends of the church, 300 people packed the church for communion. Representatives of Southern Baptist churches from Kentucky, Louisiana and North Carolina brought greetings, affirming Sehested and her call by Prescott.

The service was briefly interrupted by a man identifying himself as Brother Sky Blue of the Church of the New Jerusalem.

"This female Jezebel is going to lead you to hell," he said while placing literature on the communion table and touching the communion loaves before ushers escorted him from the sanctuary. "All you Southern Baptists are going to hell," he said.

A collective, low groan was the only response from the congregation, and the mood of celebration held.

Continuing the theme of a wedding celebration, Sehested asked, "Prescott Memorial Baptist Church, are we prepared for this? This is our wedding day, the day of our mutual covenant. How do we prepare for this?"

Recounting Christ's first miracle, the wedding celebration at Cana, she called this their wedding day, "our own miracle day.

"How do we prepare for this moment?" she asked. "Now a celebration, that's something we can plan for. But a miracle? How can you plan for a miracle? Miracles are always suspect.

"Christ's first miracle is a miracle to remember this day, at this wedding." So Prescott Memorial Baptist Church, friends of this community, taste and drink. God still turns water into wine."

In jeans and sneakers, and three-piece suits, church members came for communion. Black and white, oriental and Asian Indian, they hugged and cried, reluctant to leave the area around the communion table.

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"Stay here," said Sehested. "At this table we lay aside all differences ... of creed or belief ... all things that separate us. And if it seems a little chaotic never fear. Life happens in the midst of chaos."

As the congregation sang "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," laughter erupted when a chorus of "He's got all the liberals in his hands," was taken up.

At the close of the service, two people asked for membership in the church.

The mood held for the afternoon installation service attended by 350 people. Children from the church brought symbols of ministry for their new pastor: salt, bread, roses, a Bible, a towel and basin, and a cup. A representative of the youth expressed hope that they would never forget the model of their church and remain open to the will of God.

In a prayer for the new pastor, Brooks Ramsey, a Prescott member who served as recent interim pastor, called for more than sermons from the new pastor: "We need a demonstration of a life lived in Christ. There are forces at work that have already demonstrated the power to make her a non-person, a non-minister."

Harold Davis of Oakland, Calif., president-elect of the American Baptist Churches, one of the two conventions Prescott is affiliated with, pledged his convention's support.

"The American Baptist Churches stand by you today," he said. "You will not be separated from God by anything. Not by bigotry, nor by discrimination, or dogmatism ... or any other philosophical invectiveness of man."

Anne Thomas Neil of Wake Forest, N.C., missionary emeritus of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, said: "I'm from Wake Forest, and in the past week things have been painful there. But they have not forgotten you." She presented Sehested with 300 letters from students and professors at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Others participating in the service included Darrell Adams, folk singer and composer from Louisville, Ky.; Fred C. Lofton, first vice president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention and pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church in Memphis; C. Brownlow and Jeanette Hastings, of Atlanta, Sehested's parents; and Ken Sehested, her husband.

Absent were members of the Memphis Southern Baptist ministerial community.

Earl Davis, pastor of First Baptist Church, sent a letter of welcome, and a deacon from the church verbalized that welcome. Cabby Byrne, an ordained Baptist minister and member at Union Avenue Baptist Church, also welcomed Sehested.

A young woman from Bellevue Baptist Church expressed hope that someday Sehested might someday speak at her church. Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue and Southern Baptist Convention president, had spoken in favor of excluding Prescott from the association at the annual meeting.

Women pastors from several denominations serving churches in the city expressed welcome and support during a general sharing time.

In closing response, Sehested requested, "that we get past the time of the amazing thing that Prescott Memorial Baptist Church has a woman pastor."

At a brief news conference following the service, Sehested said: "Prescott in calling me has made visible the strong feeling of call many women have. We are not issues. We are people with a strong sense of call.

"This is a discouraging time to be a Southern Baptist. We have to look for some alternative structures and alternative ways of service. It may be a time to listen to new winds of the spirit."