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February 7, 1989

89-20

Baptists share gospel
at ski championships

By Joe Westbury

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VAIL, Colo. (BP)--As ski enthusiasts from around the globe gathered in Vail, Colo., for the World Alpine Ski Championships the first two weeks in February, Southern Baptists were there to greet them with the gospel.

The denomination's resort missionaries and 14 students from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary provided the only reported evangelistic witness at the international event.

"The most exciting part of my ministry here is helping people realize that there's more to Christianity than going to church and saying a prayer," said David Burroughs, a student who directs the newly founded Alpine Resort Ministries.

"We're shattering old stereotypes and helping build new visions of the church as a relevant part of life," said Burroughs, of Atlanta.

Burroughs, a semester missionary of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's special mission ministries department, coordinated the ministry with Steve Hoekstra, pastor of Vail Baptist Church. Hoekstra doubles as a home missionary and resort ministries director with the Colorado Baptist General Convention.

Burroughs arrived in early September to lay groundwork for the ministry. One of his and Hoekstra's first tasks was to recruit a team of seminary students to help them boost the visibility of the church and denomination through a variety of entertainment programs that led to witness opportunities.

The ministry was targeted to reach some of the 600 athletes from 50 nations and nearly 50,000 spectators who flocked to the alpine resort high in the Rocky Mountains.

Because of Hoekstra's ongoing ministry and the church's 14-year history, Alpine Resort Ministries gained nearly instant credibility in the resort community, observers noted. The ministry was given \$60,000 worth of booth space in the championship's food and trade pavilion, where it shared exposure with major sponsors who donated up to \$1.5 million to the event.

"One of the most exciting things is that we are working from the inside of the event rather than being on the fringes, as has been the case in other special events," Hoekstra said.

As a reflection of the church's established presence in Vail, Alpine Resort Ministries also was given responsibility for pin trading at the championships -- an important part of sporting events, where individuals swap lapel pins from other events to build personal collections.

While most of the spectators came to play at Vail, the seminary students usually worked 13-hour days to provide a uniform ministry throughout the community.

Morning for the students often began at 6:30, when they had to be on the slopes to erect sponsor banners on the courses and at finish lines. Winds frequently drove morning temperatures to 20 below zero at those altitudes, Burroughs said.

The remainder of the students' days were spent providing drama, comedy, clowning, dance and music performances at street locations around town and in mountaintop restaurants. During the performances, team members mixed with the crowds to explain their presence and share their Christian faith.

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On Sundays, Burroughs and Hoekstra helped provide four traditional worship services and six mountaintop devotionals. At the outdoor services, team members took chairlifts to the mountaintop, plunked a five-foot cross into the snow and invited bystanders to take a break for a devotional.

Services attracted up to 75 worshippers, depending on the wind-chill factor.

Burroughs said he is confident the fledgling Alpine Resort Ministry will be around long after the ski championships have ended. The ministry will continue to be a ministry of Vail Baptist Church, and Hoekstra said he hopes it eventually will grow into a statewide ministry of the Colorado convention.

David Mears, a Southern Seminary student from Florence, S.C., said the ministry is a creative way of reaching the nation's unchurched population with the gospel.

"When the world went to the Olympics at Lake Placid (N.Y.), ... Southern Baptists went to start a church. And when the Olympics ended, a church had been planted as a result of the resort ministry.

"What we're doing at Vail is evangelism. That's the crux of our ministry. We're here to carry the good news of Christ to those who have not heard it or have chosen not to listen to it."

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Lebanese woman practices
physical, spiritual therapy

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Baptist Press
2/7/89

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--The pastor of Beirut's Mansourieh Baptist Church visited a bedridden man who had sent for him.

The man told the pastor he had found the way of salvation and wanted to become a Baptist "because I want to belong to a church that does what it says it believes."

The sick man's only previous contact with Lebanese Baptists had been through Maria Daoud, a physical therapist.

Daoud is employed by the Near East Baptist Mission, the organization of 24 Southern Baptist missionaries who were forced to leave Lebanon by the U.S. State Department two years ago. Daoud's ministry is one of many that continue in Lebanon without the presence of missionaries.

She goes to the homes of poor people who cannot afford to pay for therapy and the severely handicapped who cannot go to centers where they might get help.

In one house, she tries to persuade a 25-year-old man to look for work he can do in a wheelchair. Sobhi, who was struck in the neck by a random bullet just after getting his degree in engineering, says he won't leave the house because he can't bear the pity of others. Daoud tries to interest him in spiritual books.

In another home, she gives breathing exercises to Claire, a partially paralyzed 4-year-old, and helps her empty fluid from her lungs. Sometimes she brings Claire a special gift -- a fresh egg for her dinner. The child's medicine costs her father half his monthly salary. Three other children must be fed. Once Daoud found Claire turning blue. "I thought she was dying, but I worked and I prayed and she got better," she recalls.

She also visits a home for the aged where she has many patients. One of them is Nawal, who has multiple sclerosis. Nawal can't move her arms and barely can talk. When Daoud finishes Nawal's treatment, she plugs in a small cassette player, puts the earphones over Nawal's ears and goes on to another patient. When she comes back, Nawal tells her about the Christian message she has just heard.

Once she told the therapist, "I found him."

Daoud asked, "Who?"

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Nawal replied, "Jesus."

Battles, car bombs, disease and crime keep adding people to Lebanon's thousands of handicapped. Various agencies care for them, but the Baptist ministry is the only one that takes treatment into their homes and brings the gospel along. The bedridden man said of Daoud, "She comes with the love of God, and a light follows her into the room."

Daoud once hated her patients. "The whole ugliness of war seemed to be mirrored in them," recounts Southern Baptist missionary Frances Fuller. "Every day Maria had to work in a hospital where many of the patients had been injured by bullets or artillery shells or car bombs. She had to try to help them walk again or sometimes just help them keep breathing."

Growing up, Daoud's own life was warped by war. An artillery shell killed one of her closest friends.

Missionary Bill Trimble, who suffered from ongoing back pain, became one of her patients in 1984. As Daoud puts it, "I gave him my treatment and he gave me his."

Fuller explains: "Bill always found opportunities to say to Maria, 'God loves you,'" and she accepted his invitation to visit the Mansourieh Baptist Church. Several visits later, she raised her hand when the pastor offered to pray for anybody wanting salvation.

"When Maria went home, she felt that something very special had happened but didn't know what it was. She began to read the Scriptures and realized that, for the first time, she could understand them. She came to the story about the woman who reached out to touch Jesus' clothes and was healed. Jesus turned to the woman and said, 'Your faith has saved you.' That was the moment of enlightenment for Maria, when she understood that salvation is by faith."

The pastor asked Fuller to help Daoud with one-on-one discipleship, and the missionary was amazed how quickly joy and a desire to spread the gospel blossomed in the new convert's life. Friends and acquaintances began wondering, "What's happened to Maria? She's so changed. She's so pretty."

With her new faith came a new depth of compassion for patients that now anchors her ministry. And she is determined that her work will go on, whether or not her missionary friends return to Lebanon.

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Seminary student implements
street smarts at Southwestern

By Chip Alford

F-CD
(SWBTS)

Baptist Press
2/7/89

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--When Warren McKethan talks about being smart, he's referring to "street smarts."

The victim of physical abuse, McKethan fended for himself on the streets of Dallas beginning at age 12. As a ninth grade dropout, he never learned to read or write.

And McKethan was no stranger to violence. He often found himself in the middle of street fights. "That was my way of doing things. It was the way I was brought up," he said.

At 16, McKethan married a 14-year-old girl. Not long after he was married, he did something completely out of character for himself -- he bought a Bible for his new wife.

"I gave it to Phyllis, and to this day I don't know why," McKethan said. "I'd never been in church, and I knew absolutely nothing about the Bible."

At the time, McKethan had no idea how much that book would come to mean to him or that he eventually would dedicate his life to sharing its message with others. But today, McKethan is at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, pursuing an associate degree in divinity.

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"When you know where I've come from and where I'm at now, I believe the things that have happened in my life have been a miracle," said McKethan, who lives in Lewisville, Texas, with his wife of 20 years, Phyllis, and their two children.

McKethan's miracle was not an instant turnaround, but a long process that eventually led him to accept Christ.

To support his family, McKethan worked 14 years as a machinist at a Dallas factory. "It was an extremely tough time for me," McKethan explains. "I was working graveyard shifts, and I felt locked into the job because I didn't have an education."

To ease his frustration, McKethan turned to drugs. He soon became an addict.

Searching for answers, he began attending a Baptist church. He went faithfully for six months and prayed continually for deliverance from his drug habit. But he refused to profess Christ as savior and soon was discouraged with his inability to stay off drugs.

Three days after giving up on prayer, McKethan overdosed. Lying in a hospital bed, he realized his need for salvation and later walked out of the hospital on his own.

"I went home and fell on my face in my bedroom," McKethan remembered. "I prayed and asked the Lord to come into my heart."

He checked into a drug rehabilitation center and began putting his life back together.

Inspired by his new faith, McKethan got involved in church life. He joined Northview Baptist Church in Lewisville, started teaching Sunday school, took over the Royal Ambassadors missions program for boys and joined the church choir.

"I felt the very least I owed to my Lord was to participate in his church," said McKethan. "But I felt that the Lord wanted more out of me. So, I prayed for him to show me what to do."

A friend told him about Southwestern, where McKethan met Dan McLallen, director of admissions. "The minute I met that man, I could feel the love, the caring and the kindness. It radiated from him," said McKethan.

McLallen helped McKethan enroll at the seminary, which McKethan described as "the hardest thing I've ever had to do in my life." Although he taught himself to read at age 25 with his wife's help, he said he still felt "totally unworthy" to attend seminary.

McKethan completed his first semester at the seminary last fall. He feels called to help drug addicts and people forced to live on the streets.

"There are so many people out there that are just wanting to be loved, to know they're accepted no matter who or what they are," McKethan said. "They need to know that when Jesus Christ comes into your life, things can change. They have for me."

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

CORRECTION: Please change the last sentence of the fifth paragraph of the 2/3/89 Baptist Press story titled "Ethnics talk missions with foreign board leaders" to read:

A "brain drain" would occur among overseas Baptists if many of their leaders left to become U.S. citizens, he said.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Southwestern students explore
global missions through FMB staff

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(SWBTS)

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary opened its doors to the world's last frontier Jan. 30 through Feb. 3 for the school's first-ever Global Missions Week.

More than 35 members of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board were on campus for the event co-sponsored by the agencies. The theme was "Unreached Peoples: Our World's Last Frontier."

The week included chapel sermons by FMB personnel, displays, classroom discussions and forums discussing ways Southern Baptists are reaching people where missionaries cannot go.

Southwestern President Russell Dilday, called the week "a unique and unusual experience for the seminary." The week was the "most concentrated effort on global missions" in the seminary's history, he said.

Chapel speakers during the week challenged students to reach beyond closed doors to restricted-access people. Using missionary models, sermons focused on ways Southern Baptists can implement strategies to reach people unreached by the Christian message.

"We've come a long way in the matter of world evangelization and missions around our world," said John Mills, a 30-year missionary veteran. He lauded the global increase in baptisms and churches since the beginning of the Southern Baptist Bold Mission Thrust world evangelization campaign and praised the involvement of volunteers.

"But have we taken seriously what Jesus said about denying ourselves, or have we tried to win the world with leftovers?" Mills asked. "How can we claim we are (a missions-minded people) when we spend more than 96 cents out of every dollar put in a collection plate in a Southern Baptist church in the United States?"

If Southern Baptists are serious about reaching the world for Christ by the year 2000, he said, churches must place a greater emphasis on missions through education. "If we let missions education organizations die, we'll have a missions-illiterate people who will not be used of God to win our world," Mills said.

During the forums, FMB personnel discussed topics ranging from ways to reach the unreached, to current issues facing foreign missions.

FMB researchers David Barrett, David Garrison and Dale Hooper explained the board's strategy for reaching 1.3 billion people who never have heard the gospel.

Garrison said the board's Global Strategy Group is exploring new avenues to reach these people, including the four-month-old nonresidential missionary program. A nonresidential missionary is "a full-time career missionary assigned to evangelize unreached people in areas which are either closed or highly restrictive for traditional missionary presence."

Justice Anderson, professor of missions at Southwestern and director of the event, called the week a success for missions, despite an Alaskan cold front that forced cancellation of the week's final chapel service.

"The mission was accomplished," said Anderson. "Our purpose was to get as many of our students in contact with someone from the Foreign Mission Board some time during the week."

FMB Executive Vice President Bill O'Brien said board staff responded positively about the week and were impressed with students' commitment to missions and the cooperation of seminary administrators and faculty.

"It is kind of an overwhelming experience when you see such an all-out effort," O'Brien said.

Students focused on the issue of unreached peoples and "how do we get this message across, not on the Foreign Mission Board staff," he said, noting the week allowed FMB staff the opportunity of "communicating missions at the seminary level."