



BAPTIST PRESS

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June 13, 1989

89-93

Patterson, Criswell College
drop attempt to buy school

N-FMB

HEVERLEE, Belgium (BP)--Paige Patterson has ended his effort to to buy the financially troubled Belgian Center for Biblical Education, following months of negotiations with the school's trustees.

Criswell College, the Dallas Bible school Patterson runs, was negotiating to buy the Belgian school. But Robert Johnson, chairman of the Belgian school's board of trustees, told European Baptist Press Service June 10: "We have mutually agreed with Dr. Patterson that all of our efforts to negotiate to a successful conclusion are terminated. I think both parties were very sad."

Johnson said Patterson and the trustees had arrived in principle at a successful purchase agreement. Had Patterson raised enough money, "I think we would have followed through to a successful conclusion," he added.

Patterson, interviewed by Baptist Press June 11, indicated he was unable to gain sufficient financial commitments to fund the school in the future. "The purchase price itself was not problematic," he said. But "just purchasing it would not solve their problems unless I could raise sufficient endowment or endowment commitments."

He added "One of the greatest tragedies of our era (would be) if that school, with its accreditation and doctoral program, is lost to evangelical Christianity."

Patterson is president of Criswell College and a trustee of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Sale of the Belgian school would have involved Criswell College, not the Foreign Mission Board. Patterson said in May he needed to raise \$2 million to purchase the school and another \$3 million endowment to undergird its future operation.

In March, Patterson said he would not buy the school if he felt he would imperil its future or the future of Criswell College. Criswell's annual budget is \$4.5 million, and Patterson and his staff must raise all of it, he said.

"It's a difficult time for us to be raising money right now with the economy in Texas down," said Patterson. "We're still about two years behind in recovering." Upturns in charitable giving lag about two years behind economic recovery, he said.

Patterson will contact people who donated money for the purchase, he noted. Donors might choose for their money to be returned, given to Criswell College or used in some other missionary activity, he said.

Patterson said he has no current plans for other overseas theological efforts but would launch them "any time we felt led by the Spirit of God."

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Southeastern Seminary names
new development director

N-CO
(SEBTS)

Baptist Press
6/13/89

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Raleigh, N.C., attorney George H. Harvey has been named director of development at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., effective June 5.

Harvey, 42, succeeds Robert Spinks, who resigned in 1987.

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A native of Greenville, N.C., Harvey has been an attorney with Seay, vey, Titchener and Horne since 1972. His main area of practice has been real estate law.

Harvey is a graduate of East Carolina University and the Wake Forest University School of Law. He is married to the former Margaret Elizabeth Jones. They have four sons.

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Congressional morality hinges
on politics, ethicist notes

By Pat Cole

N-CO
(SBTS)

Baptist Press
6/13/89

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A new emphasis on ethics in Congress is probably rooted more in political expediency than a genuine concern for morality in government, claimed a Southern Baptist ethicist.

Paul D. Simmons, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said "political expediency is the primary ethic" in Congress. "Whatever works in favor of a political party or its agenda will usually be trotted out."

In recent weeks, ethical problems have forced the resignations of House Speaker Jim Wright, D-Texas, and House Majority Leader Tony Coelho, D-Calif. The resignations have led to a series of charges and counter charges between Republicans and Democrats in Congress about ethical conduct.

Ethical problems of members of Congress are compounded by "a lack of clarity about the rules" that govern their ethical behavior, he said. Yet members of Congress, like others in positions of power, are prone to "see themselves as arbiters of the rules and not subject to the rules," he added.

"I suppose it's an almost universal human phenomenon when people get in power they begin to think they are somehow above the rules that govern ordinary human beings," he said.

Although the "greed factor cannot be brushed aside," Simmons said, members of Congress often are victims of a flawed system.

Congressional "salaries are scandalously low and we have set up a system that short circuits ethics in favor of economic expediency," he said, suggesting congressional salaries be raised and speaking honoraria be eliminated.

When choosing members of Congress, Simmons recommended that voters stay well informed on the issues, be cautious of candidates with strong ties to political action committees and observe the ethical standards of a candidate's campaign.

Many times, he said, people have campaigned as the "pro moral candidates," but investigations of their private lives have revealed they were "not suited for public office."

Simmons said voters should expect officeholders to model good moral behavior and inspire the public to move toward high moral standards. He cautioned, however, that citizens should hold themselves to the same level of ethical conduct that they expect of their elected officials.

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Veteran Arizona
leader McKay dies

N-CO
(Ariz.)

Baptist Press
6/13/89

PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--Charles L. McKay, former executive secretary of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, died June 6 in Yucaipa, Calif., following a battle with cancer. He was 81.

The Mississippi native led the Arizona convention for 14 years, 1956-70. During his tenure, the convention grew from 155 to 230 churches, despite the loss of 52 churches that formed the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention in 1964. Church membership rose from 29,000 to 70,000, and Cooperative Program giving more than doubled, to a high of \$430,000.

Before joining the Arizona convention staff, McKay was director of enlargement and evangelism for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville five years.

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McKay was pastor of First Baptist Church of Pascagoula, Miss.; First Baptist Church, Leesburg, Miss.; Van Winkle Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss.; Temple Baptist Church, Ruston, La.; and Toulminville Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala.

McKay resigned as Arizona executive secretary in 1970 to become pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Scottsdale, a position he held for 4 years. Upon his retirement as pastor, he became professor of Bible at California Baptist College, Riverside, Calif.

McKay was a graduate of Mississippi College and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he received master and doctor of theology degrees. He also received an honorary doctor of laws degree from Grand Canyon College.

Survivors include his wife, Glenda; two daughters: June Myers, wife of Ernest Myers, executive director of the Nevada Baptist Convention, and Ruth Wood, program director in the ASBC church growth and development division; a sister, Ruth Edwards of Mississippi; four grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

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N-10

Battery of preachers offer
encouragement, hope, guidance

By Jim Lowry & Louis Moore

Baptist Press
6/13/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Encouragement, hope and guidance were offered by a battery of preachers at the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference June 11-12.

In the closing session, former Southern Baptist Convention President Adrian Rogers of Memphis, Tenn., called on Southern Baptist preachers to mount a campaign against all forms of sin and degradation in the United States by holding higher faith in Jesus Christ.

"Our job is to lift up the truth (of Jesus Christ) so judgment, justice and equity can enter," said Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church. "America is in serious trouble. Our days as the land of the free and the home of the brave are numbered. We pray, 'Oh, God, do something.' But he doesn't because sin has built a barrier between this nation and God."

Abortion, pornography, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual immorality, dishonesty and other sins are responsible for social and moral chaos in the country today, he said.

Meanwhile, other speakers urged pastors to guard against forces that threaten their ministries.

"It is essential that God's men and women understand how to deal with conflict," said Charles Stanley, former SBC president and pastor of First Baptist church of Atlanta. "We are in a battle with Satan, and he will do all he can to destroy your ministry and divide your church. God will equip you and give you strength to continue."

When church members sense fear or see compromise, "you begin to lose your place of leadership and you lose your place of leadership and you lose respect as a leader," he told the pastors.

Stanley also warned pastors about running from conflict, because they can run out of the will of God. A friend should not seek to find a place for someone who seems to be in the middle of a difficult situation, he added, noting the person should seek the leadership of God.

Southern Baptist Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis of Atlanta challenged the pastors to make soul winning a top priority of their ministries: "There is no greater need in the Southern Baptist Convention than for soul winners. Pastors, deacons, evangelists and Sunday school teachers all need to be recommitted to be soul winners."

Texas pastor Daryl Gilyard challenged the pastors to "take your eyes off your circumstances and difficulties and Jesus will bring triumph out of your tragedy. Jesus enables us to meet whatever challenge we have with confidence."

After a personal testimony of how he never knew his parents and lived five years under a bridge, Gilyard, pastor of Shiloh Baptist church in Garland, Texas, said, "I decided that the only way to rise out of the mud of self pity was to put my eyes on Jesus. When I took my eyes off myself and put my eyes on Jesus, a peace came over me."

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John Bisag, pastor of First Baptist Church of Houston, called the pastors to spiritual renewal as a step toward revival in their churches: "America and the Southern Baptist Convention need revival. I believe all the committees and discussions and analysis are not going to change America. Somehow, the breath of God has got to come on Southern Baptists."

Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., told the pastors to "come to God on his terms. If you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

John Click, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Wichita, Kan., asked the pastors to have a spirit of God's power, not fear: "Stand your ground and suffer for the Gospel. What you believe can make the difference between heaven and hell for someone."

"A doctrinal stance has no impact if it is not baptized in agape love. A loveless gospel is a dead, ineffective, fruitless gospel. It is no gospel. Stand your ground, but stand lovingly."

J. Harold Smith, president of Radio Bible Hour Inc. in Newport, Tenn., said he has "never been prouder to be a Southern Baptist than during the last 10 years (when the SBC has been engaged in doctrinal controversy). I am proud of our past president and our present leadership."

About 9,000 people attending the Pastors' Conference elected Elliff president without opposition.

Ron Hart, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Tucson, Ariz., was elected unanimously as first vice president. Robert Holmes, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Henderson, Nev., was elected secretary-treasurer.

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Forum praises Weatherford,
supports priesthood of believer

N-CO
By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
6/13/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Words buttressing a historic Baptist doctrine, the priesthood of the believer, were heard with regularity June 12 during the Southern Baptist Forum in Las Vegas, Nev.

The Forum, a meeting ground for the losing side in presidential elections of both the Southern Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Pastor's Conference in recent years, also honored Carolyn Weatherford, outgoing executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, with its Denominational Statesperson Award. The Forum commended her for playing a key role in keeping the agency above the denominational fray.

The Forum heard addresses by two non-Baptists, Robert Schuller, TV preacher, popular author and pastor of the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, Calif., and Fred Craddock, professor of New Testament and preaching at Emory University's United Methodist Candler School of Theology in Atlanta.

Two other forum speakers took direct aim at a resolution "On the Priesthood of the Believer" from the Southern Baptist Convention last year in San Antonio, Texas.

The doctrine received "cavalier treatment" from the resolutions committee that initiated the stance last year, charged Molly Marshall-Green, associate dean of the school of theology and assistant professor of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

She also enunciated several components of the priesthood of the believer relevant "in our Baptist life today." Among them: "resistance to authoritarian pastoral leadership."

Clyde Fant, chaplain at Stetson University in Deland, Fla., argued that "pulpit popes" who view themselves as infallible are undermining the priesthood of the believer.

He noted that "eventually, there is no room for the Bible -- the Bible as it really is. It's too open, too varied" for "fundamentalist interpreters."

Forum attendance grew from about 500 to a day's end total of 700.

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The 1988 Southern Baptist Convention's resolution was adopted by messenger by about a 10 percent margin after attempts failed to amend or refer it to the convention's Executive Committee.

The resolution, while affirming the priesthood of the believer, stated that the doctrine "in no way contradicts the biblical understanding of the role, responsibility and authority of the pastor," who is "called of God to lead the local church."

The resolution charged that the doctrine "has been used to justify wrongly the attitude that a Christian may believe whatever he so chooses and still be considered a loyal Southern Baptist."

The priesthood of the believer does not make faith "the privatized domain of the individual," Marshall-Green said, nor does it license a person to say, "Nobody can tell me what to believe."

But, she argued, "no council, creed, confession or presumptuous creep (must) usurp the position that belongs to God alone."

Weatherford has led the 1.2-million-member missions education organization for women, girls and preschoolers for 15 years. She will take early retirement in August just before her marriage to Cincinnati pastor Joe Crumpler.

"I am not leaving denominational statesmanship," she told the forum. She said she will continue to pursue "a vision of a fractured convention being made whole again."

The Uptown Baptist Church of Chicago was selected for the forum's Church of the Year Award for tackling an array of urban ministries in its neighborhood, five miles north of the downtown area.

Worship services at the church, encompassing about 500 people, are held in seven languages. About 150 volunteers participate weekly in providing hot meals, overnight shelter, sobriety help and other programs to some 8,000 people.

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N-10

Moyers withdraws request
to appear before Committee

By Dan Martin & Jim Newton

Baptist Press
6/13/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--With a three-word notice, the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention Monday dismissed the possibility of a discussion between television commentator Bill Moyers and committee member Paul Pressler.

In February the Executive Committee adopted by a 40-14 vote a resolution critical of Moyer's three-part documentary, "God and Politics," and particularly a segment on Southern Baptists. Moyers immediately requested an appearance before the Executive Committee in June with Pressler, a Houston appeals court judge, to discuss the matter.

However, before the committee could consider the request, Moyers requested it be withdrawn.

The notice on the recommendations to be voted on by the Executive Committee at its meeting prior to the SBC annual meeting simply reported: "Deleted. Request withdrawn."

Executive Committee Chairman Charles Sullivan, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lenoir City, Tenn., previously said he would deny Moyers an appearance before the June 12 meeting because of the press of time at the two-hour gathering.

"I did not feel I had the right (to decide whether Moyers would appear) but that I would present it to the Executive Committee because they have the right to say whether they would hear him," Sullivan told Baptist Press.

Sullivan earlier told Baptist Press he would present the matter to the committee and let members decide in June whether they wanted to hear a discussion of the matter at the September, 1989 meeting.

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However, on Sunday night (June 11) Moyers sent a fax message to Sullivan in Las Vegas, Nev., site of the 1989 SBC annual meeting, withdrawing the request.

In the Executive Committee deliberations, Sullivan declined to read the text of Moyers' message, saying only the request had been withdrawn and adding, "it served no useful purpose" to read the text.

Moyers made a copy of his message to Sullivan available to Baptist Press, the news service of the SBC. It said:

"I have read in the Baptist Press that you intend on Monday to ask the Executive Committee to vote whether or not to allow me to appear at your meeting in September to answer Paul Pressler's attack on my documentary.

"Forget it."

"When you and Pressler would not allow me to present my case this week at your meeting in Las Vegas and when Pressler refused my offer of free time on PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) to discuss the issue following the repeat in May of the documentary, I realized that I am up against a situation most un-Baptist: closed minds, and in the parlance of your host city, a stacked deck.

"There is no way to get a fair hearing from an Executive Committee that has become a rubber stamp for a secular politician who has infected this Christian fellowship with the partisan tactics of malice, manipulation and untruth. Under his thumb, you do only his will.

"I want no part of it."

Although the matter drew discussion during a meeting of the Executive Committee's administrative and convention arrangements subcommittee Monday morning, it drew no discussion when Sullivan announced the deletion of the matter from the agenda.

However, after the regular agenda was dispensed with, committee member James Wideman, pastor of Screven Memorial Baptist Church in Portsmouth, N.H., introduced a motion that said:

"I move that the Executive Committee report to Baptist Press that Bill Moyers has withdrawn his request to appear before the Executive Committee and the Executive Committee has acknowledged that request."

The motion was adopted without discussion or opposition.

Wideman's motion was different from a motion adopted earlier in the day by the administrative subcommittee, which had voted to "respectfully request that Baptist Press only report that Moyers had withdrawn his request to appear."

Wideman explained after the full Executive Committee meeting that when he thought about the motion he made in subcommittee, he realized it amounted to instructing Baptist Press what and what not to report.

"I changed my motion because I have confidence that Baptist Press will do nothing to inflame the issue," Wideman said.

During the subcommittee meeting -- which was conducted under background rules that allow no direct quotation or attribution -- several members said they believe the whole issue is a personal matter between Pressler and Moyers and that nothing can be gained by continuing the controversy.

"Let's just let it drop and leave it alone," one subcommittee member said later.

Another said he believed it was an error to adopt the February resolution criticizing Moyers and the continuing controversy just proves the point.

Another said the matter was not just a personal matter between Pressler and Moyers. "Moyers has accused the SBC Executive Committee of being puppets of Paul Pressler, and we need to respond," he said.

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Pressler informed of the Moyers letter Sunday and called it "ridiculous." He said he did not want to see the text reported in Baptist Press.

When asked for comment, Pressler said: "I have nothing to say about it. It has been deleted, and it was reported as being deleted" from the agenda.

Baptist Press Director Alvin C. Shackelford said he wants to make sure any report in the news service is balanced and fair and tells both Moyers' reasons for withdrawing his request and offers the Executive Committee and Pressler an opportunity to respond.

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SBC WMU rallies
around 'His Name'

By Orville Scott & Joe Westbury

N-CO

Baptist Press
6/13/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Members of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union rallied around the theme "In His Name" for their two-day annual meeting as they considered ways to be more effective for missions at home and abroad.

Crowds as high as 1,600 were present in the rotunda of the Las Vegas (Nev.) Convention Center as members of the woman's auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention heard testimonies from missionaries, listened to updates on the denomination's special mission offerings and learned of countries that remain closed to the gospel message.

In her outgoing comments, retiring Executive Director Carolyn Weatherford of Birmingham, Ala., deplored the 10-year-old controversy that has polarized the denomination and consumed two-thirds of her tenure at the helm of the nation's largest woman's missions organization.

Weatherford drew applause when she said, "It is imperative that, instead of continuing to draw swords and choose sides, we acknowledge that nothing that divides us is as important as that which binds us in Christ's mandate to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all the people."

Other WMU obstacles include a weakening of missions emphasis in the convention, a declining percentage of churches with WMU units and a resulting leveling out of national membership.

As part of the final address to the group at the annual denominational gathering, Weatherford observed that SBC leadership "continues to come from churches where the Cooperative Program unified budget is less than 5 percent of the total budget rather than from churches where cooperative missions is emphasized by CP gifts in the 20 to 30 percent category."

Weatherford said she feared the combination of problems is showing up in a lack of commitment to the denomination's missions programs and will cause a further eroding in funding of those programs.

In recognition of her 15 years service to the organization, Weatherford was honored for consistently challenging WMU members and Southern Baptists to remain true to missions.

The framed citation was presented by Foreign Mission Board President Keith Parks of Richmond, Va., and Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis of Atlanta.

WMU members heard Parks report that giving to this year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering jumped almost 13 percent from last year to \$78,776,000. The total is the largest percentage increase since 1982.

Lewis said the giving level of the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions could not be predicted but preliminary receipts indicate a similar gain.

For the first time, black banners were used in the annual processional of flags to dramatize the number of nations that are closed to missionaries.

WMU members heard ways the Foreign Mission Board is attempting to plant the gospel in those countries by use of non-resident missionaries.

"Until we make more progress, three million people will wait to hear about Christ," said John Shelby, serving through Cooperative Services International in Hong Kong.

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Richard Harris, director of mass evangelism for the Home Mission Board, cautioned the Baptist women to be sure well-intentioned programs do not come between them and "the glorious task for which we have been commissioned -- the task of missions and evangelism."

The women also were challenged to urge their churches to increase their giving to the denomination's missions offerings to ensure missionary needs will continue to be met.

The women re-elected Marjorie J. McCullough of Alexandria, La., president of WMU for 1989-90 and Pattie T. Dent of Holly Springs, Miss., recording secretary.

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Missions directors elect
Russell Bennett president

N-CO

Baptist Press
6/13/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Southern Baptist directors of missions were challenged at their annual two-day meeting to help congregations grow "Great Commission" churches and to not let problems hinder their work "because God is in control."

The 250 directors from across the nation who attended the conference preceding the 1989 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Las Vegas, Nev., elected F. Russell Bennett of Long Run Baptist Association, Louisville, Ky., president, and Glen Hickey of Pulaski Baptist Association, Little Rock, Ark., first vice president.

Others elected included Ken Chadwick of Salt Lake and Rainbow Canyon Baptist Associations in Utah, second vice president; A. Lawrence Clegg of Chappapeela Baptist Association in Ponchatoula, La., secretary; Phill G. Hall of Southeast Iowa Baptist Association in Albia, Iowa, treasurer; Grayson Glass of Galveston Baptist Association in Galveston, Texas, newsletter editor; and J.R. Blakeney of the Baptist Association of Greater New Orleans, host director 1990.

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Fifteen congregations
started in Las Vegas

N-CO

Baptist Press
6/13/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Fifteen new churches and missions have been started in a special effort related to the Southern Baptist Convention 1989 annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev.

David Meacham, director of missions for Southern Nevada Baptist Association, Las Vegas, reported on Project '89 to members of the Southern Baptist New Work Fellowship during their annual meeting. Project '89 calls for 25 new works to be started in Nevada in conjunction with the SBC meeting.

Meacham said the starts are important because Nevada is the most unchurched state in the nation. Currently, Southern Baptists have 120 churches and missions in the state.

"The coming of the Southern Baptist Convention is putting us so much farther down the road than we would have been otherwise," he said. "When this convention is over and you folks leave, it's only the beginning."

Meacham said another five missions should be launched by the end of the summer. Initial plans are in place for others that will meet the goal of 25, home missions leaders said.

Work on the 25 starts has been coordinated by the Nevada Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. The mission board has provided at least seven missionaries to assist in church starting.

Other assistance has come through partnerships with individual churches, local associations and state conventions. One large Georgia church has pledged \$1,000 per month for two years to help start one of the churches in Las Vegas, where start-up costs are highest.

The 15 new starts include four ethnic congregations -- two Hispanic, one Chinese and one Filipino.

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Education ministers struggle
with reality of their titles

By Philip Poole

N- (C)

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Southern Baptist ministers of education are struggling with the reality that the label "minister" does not protect them from a world of pressures, Larry McSwain, dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., told 250 participants in the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association annual meeting July 11-12.

Unfortunately, ministers find themselves participating in the "pains of life" just as everyone else, McSwain added. And trying to fulfill too many areas of competency at one time causes "role overload, role ambiguity and role conflict" that often is difficult to handle, he said.

"We fail to care about ourselves enough to share our pains with each other," McSwain said. "Every minister needs to find someone outside of the ministry to be their 'pastor.'"

In business sessions, Bob Edd Shotwell, minister of education/administration at Hyde Baptist Church in Austin, Texas, was elected association president for 1989-90.

Other new officers are Katie Grogan, director of inter-program field services, Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware, Columbia, president-elect; Wayne Poling, church growth consultant, Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, vice president; Walter Jacobs, minister of education, Edwards Road Baptist Church, Greenville, S.C., eastern vice president.

Also Frank Fain, minister of education, Winnwood Baptist Church, Kansas City, Mo., central vice president; Thomas Kelly, director of church development, California Southern Baptist convention, Fresno, western vice president; and Cathy Nixon, director of education ministries, Northminister Baptist Church, Monroe, La., assistant secretary.

Joe Haynes, growth/administration consultant, Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, was re-elected secretary/treasurer.

LeRoy Ford, professor emeritus of foundations of education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, received the distinguished leadership award for contributions to religious education.

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Samford students back home
after hasty retreat from China

N-FAB (C)
(A1a)

Baptist Press
6/13/89

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--After a 4 a.m. departure and bus trip through Chinese back roads to avoid demonstrating students and an assist from "Indiana" Hsu, Samford students and faculty returned from a study trip to China Saturday, June 10.

The 24-member group planned to spend June studying at Anhui Normal University in Wuhu, but cut short its stay because of uncertainty over the Chinese political situation.

The group has been at Anhui a week when the decision was made to return home. Arrangements were made with the help of Herbert Hsu, an international businessman whose Birmingham-based investment company has offices in Hong Kong and other world capitals.

Samford students quickly nicknamed him "Indiana" after the hero of a currently popular movie.

"The Chinese students in Wuhu began demonstrating peacefully, filling the streets to block traffic and cause a general strike," said history professor Jim Brown, co-leader of the Samford group. "For this reason, we decided to leave the city at 4 a.m. to avoid being tied up."

The group went to Hefei by bus to await finalization of travel plans. By this time, booking passage out of the country had become difficult because of mass exodus of non-Chinese.

With Hsu's help, Brown and the others obtained passage on a Chinese commercial flight sponsored by the Canadian government from Nanjing to Hong Kong. But first, they faced a 79-mile trip from Hefei to Nanjing.

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"We went to work on getting them a bus, but told them to get ready to talk if nothing else presented itself," said Hsu.

After some anxious hours, a bus was located and the group left Hefei, again in the early morning hours.

The next obstacle was a lengthy bridge over the Yangtze River at the entrance to Nanjing. Rumors circulated that students had blocked the passage.

"We mapped a route through back roads to avoid the bridge," said Brown, "and crossed the river on a ferry."

The Samford group flew from Nanjing to Hong Kong early Thursday (Birmingham time) and returned to the U.S. on Friday.

"We were never in any personal danger," said biology professor Robert Stiles, co-leader with Brown of what was to have been a course on Chinese history and environment. "Our biggest concern was, in the deteriorating and uncertain situation, to get the students out."

Throughout the ordeal, the group maintained contact with Samford officials via Telex communications, and Samford relayed information to concerned parents and relatives.

The China study group was composed of six faculty members and 18 students, including students from Furman and Emory universities and Davidson College.

Wuhu is 600 miles southwest of Beijing, and the Samford travelers saw no violence during their odyssey. Back in Birmingham, however, they agreed on two things: they were delighted to be back home and they were concerned about the future of their Chinese friends.