



BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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Korea missionaries assaulted;
motives behind attacks unclear

By Michael Chute

N-FMB

TAEJON, South Korea (BP)--A rash of physical attacks on Southern Baptist missionaries and family members in Taejon, South Korea, has concerned mission leaders about the motives behind the assaults.

From June 12 to June 18, two missionaries -- Greg Whitlock of Lancaster, S.C., and Tom Stokovaz of Independence, Mo. -- and Samford Smith of Charleston, S.C., the father of Southern Baptist contract teacher Lori Smith, were attacked during daylight hours in the vicinity of the Taejon train station. Also, the teen-age son of a missionary was attacked at night as he walked with friends near Korea Christian Academy.

Injuries to the four were minor, and none received medical attention. However, they experienced headaches for a day or two after the attacks. At least two complained of neck pains following the incidents.

Whitlock was hit by a man while standing in a taxi line in front of the train station. He had been reading and was putting the material away, when his "head felt like it was going to explode," he said. "I didn't know what happened. I was not aware that anyone had come up beside me outside the taxi line."

Several Koreans yelled at the man who hit Whitlock but no one tried to apprehend him. When Whitlock attempted to go after the man, a Korean woman grabbed the missionary by the arm, took him to the front of the taxi line, and put him in a taxi so he could leave the scene.

Stokovaz was walking on a crowded sidewalk outside the train station when someone struck him a "hard, solid blow" on the back of the head. He turned expecting to see who hit him, but no one was there.

"Whoever it was just kept on walking," Stokovaz related. "Nothing was said. Whoever did it wasn't interested in saying anything. It could have been done so quickly that no one saw what happened.

"As hard as I was hit and as high up, I can't believe it was an accident. I believe it was intentional."

Stokovaz said he previously "had no bad experiences at all in Korea. No one has done anything that wasn't kind. I'm not worried about it."

Lori Smith, her parents and an American friend were waiting at a pedestrian crosswalk when her father was attacked. A man came up behind the group and hit Smith in the back of the head with an open hand. Miss Smith saw her father hit and got a good look at the man before he fled. Her parents were visiting her for 10 days before she completed her teaching contract with the Korea Christian Academy. They returned to the United States as scheduled June 23.

The teen-age son of missionaries, who asked not to be identified, was walking with two friends near Korea Christian Academy when a man came up to them from behind. He struck the boy on the head, possibly with an object or weapon, opening up two cuts.

The boy said the man appeared to be drunk. The attack took place near establishments that sell liquor in an area that also is close to missionary housing.

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Taejon is a major location for Baptist work in central South Korea. Baptist work there includes a seminary, the headquarters for the Korea Baptist Convention's home mission work, the Baptist military evangelism program and the school that children of missionaries attend. About 40 Southern Baptist missionaries live in Taejon and work in outlying areas around the city of 1 million people.

"The place the attacks occurred and the close proximity in time is very unnerving," said Virgil Cooper, administrator of the Korea Baptist Mission, the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries. "We've never had any kind of problems or trouble before in that area" of Taejon.

Cooper said he has advised the 138 missionaries working in South Korea "to take caution and beware. That's all we can do right now."

The four apparently were attacked because they are Americans, mission leaders speculate, although no discernible anti-American comments were made during the attacks. The people who attacked Smith and the teen-ager mumbled something they could not understand, and Whitlock heard his attacker say something about America.

"The thing that aggravated me was whoever did it had no way of knowing that I was a Christian or a missionary," said Stokovaz. "I'm prepared to take abuse for my faith, but in this case I was hit because I am an American."

Whitlock believes he was attacked "just because I was an American," he said. "Hopefully, it's just one disturbed person (doing the attacking). I was the only foreigner around. I guess I was in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Whitlock, a religious education promoter in South Korea since 1984, lives in Pusan and was in Taejon for a religious education meeting at the Baptist seminary. Stokovaz and the teen-ager who was attacked live in Taejon.

Mission leaders assume the attackers were not aware their victims had connections with Southern Baptist work in South Korea.

"We detect some anti-American sentiment from a very small quarter" of the population, said Cooper, "but certainly not from the people with whom we work. It's a small minority, but they're very vocal. They're the ones that are heard. ... The concern for the mission is that it happened in the same city, and there was apparently some anti-American sentiment."

But the teen-ager's family doesn't believe the assault on their son was anti-American in nature.

"It's not a case of him being emotionally upset" about the assault, said the father, explaining why the boy didn't want to be identified. "He feels people are overreacting. We have no reason to feel there was any anti-Americanism in the attack. Unless there's some sign of aggressive, overt anti-American sentiment, I'm not too concerned. I don't know that we're on the threshold of any danger here."

Cooper reported the incidents to the U.S. Embassy in Seoul. The U.S. State Department has not issued any advisory for American citizens in South Korea.

Increased anti-Americanism has characterized some protests by radical students in the nation's cities, as well as demonstrations held by farmers and other workers angered by U.S. efforts to break down Korean trade restrictions.

However, "they don't target individual Americans," said Neil Silver, deputy director of the State Department's office of Korean affairs. "Most of the activity is really anti-government. The anti-Americanism is sort of one other way to get at the (Korean) government. It's certainly important on the campuses, but it's still a minority of those students."

Silver speculated another reason for anti-American feeling in Taejon could be opposition to an announced long-term plan to move part or all of the U.S. military headquarters from Seoul to Taejon.

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However, a notice in a recent American Chamber of Commerce newsletter asked readers to relay any "firsthand" knowledge of attacks involving American citizens. Also, a recent article in a Seoul newspaper reported several incidents of attacks on Americans in the South Korean capital.

"Americans need to maintain as low a profile as possible," stated Cooper. "We have to bite our tongues and go on and not do anything to antagonize. The missionaries (involved) are handling it very well. They're very positive in their attitude. The Lord called them here, and it will be the Lord who sends them home."

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Prayers of youth play part
in making miracles happen

By Terri Lackey

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--In early June 1988, Heather Preas was near death in a Dallas hospital, while hundreds attending Summer Youth Celebration at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center were praying for her.

Today, Heather is a survivor of severe aplastic anemia, a rare bone marrow disease that eats away the body's immune system, and her mother, Cynthia Preas, believes the miracle is due in part to the fervent prayers of young people.

Heather was diagnosed with the disease in January 1988 after returning home from a ski trip with the youth group at her church, First Baptist of Midland, Texas. She was badly bruised, lethargic and bleeding from the gums.

Her mother rushed her to the doctor only to learn Heather had one of two illnesses -- acute leukemia or aplastic anemia, a disease which infects only five out of every one million people.

"The doctor told us to pray for leukemia," her mother said.

In January 1988, Heather was given four months to live. "They told her she wouldn't live to see her 16th birthday," her mother said, adding that the sequence that followed reads like a chapter in the life of Jesus when he went around answering prayers and healing the sick.

At the time Heather, now 17, was diagnosed, only she and her mother had joined the Midland church. Her father, Cecil, and sister, Holly, 15, became members soon after the diagnosis.

"Heather was the first one to go to the church. She felt a real urgency to join," Preas recalled.

When the church and community learned of Heather's illness, they rallied to her rescue, donating much-needed blood.

The church, which operates a blood bank, had to hire extra people to meet the demands of people wanting to donate blood for Heather, said Youth Minister Charlie Dodd.

Others volunteered to take bone-marrow transplant tests. To survive, Heather would need the transplant from someone whose tissue matched hers. However, each test cost \$500.

"One man from New Mexico donated enough money to take care of 200 of those tests," Mrs. Preas said.

Members of the youth group who could not donate blood donated their time in prayer and by visiting Heather in the hospital, Dodd said.

"The kids, many who didn't really know Heather all that well, would go to her hospital room and just stand," he said. "They just didn't know what to say."

Heather lived to her 16th birthday April 15, but by May 13 she was dying and knew it.

"She had made out all her funeral plans. She wanted to have a pizza party for all the kids at church to thank them for their prayers and visits, said her mother. "At that point, I gave her to God. I had a lot of peace about it."

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Thirty minutes later, in their Midland home where they had brought Heather to die, the Preases received a call from doctors at Baylor Medical Complex in Dallas saying they had located not one, but five bone-marrow donors in London.

"It wasn't until I had given Heather to God that a donor was found," Mrs. Preas said.

Heather went for her transplant in 1988, the week youth from the church were attending Summer Youth Celebration at Glorieta.

"On the night of her transplant, the whole congregation prayed for her," Dodd said.

After the successful surgery, Heather finally was released from the hospital in September 1988.

While Heather is not totally free from medical problems, her mother is "completely confident that miracles do still happen."

"Heather is a walking example of how God can work and how young people can help make it happen," she said.

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

Revival of gambling issues probable
in Texas special legislative session

By Ken Camp

N- Texas

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DALLAS (BP)--Proposals calling for a pari-mutuel "bail-out" and a state lottery that were dealt death blows in the 71st Texas Legislature likely will be resurrected during this summer's 30-day special session, according to representatives of Texans Who Care and the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Austin lobbyists representing horse racing investors have joined forces with racehorse owners to push for a reduction in the state pari-mutuel tax from 5 percent to 1 percent said Weston Ware, CLC citizenship associate.

"The horse racing industry is renegeing on its commitment to Texas voters," said Ware, recalling the industry's "race horses, don't raise taxes" rhetoric prior to the 1987 statewide referendum legalizing pari-mutuel betting. "This is exactly what we said would happen."

"We join with the editorial writers of some of this state's leading newspapers in reminding the horse racing industry that 'a deal is a deal,'" said Sue Cox, executive director of Texans Who Care. "The pari-mutuel promoters agreed to a 5 percent tax. That's what they promised the voters of Texas. Now they ought to be able to live with it."

The original fiscal note on the bill that led to pari-mutuel betting in Texas said the industry would produce \$20 million in revenue in 1988.

"In reality, pari-mutuel produced nothing and, in fact, cost the state money last year," said Ware.

The original estimate called for \$90 million in revenue by 1990, he said, noting, the most recent estimate from the comptroller's office is \$ 7.5 million by 1990.

"Reduce that by 80 percent as the bail-out bill would do, and you can see that pari-mutuel certainly isn't the revenue raiser for the state that its proponents pictured it to be," said Ware. "Someone in the comptrollers' office recently quipped that some of the racehorses will die of old age before they ever leave the gate. I believe they'll all be dead and buried before pari-mutuel becomes a significant revenue raiser for this state.

"We're concerned about this for one simple reason: No single special-interest lobby, whether it is the horse racing industry or any other group, has the right to manipulate state government for its own financial benefit. The pari-mutuel bail-out bill is nothing but that kind of flagrant manipulation."

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Elsewhere on the gambling front, Rep. Ron Wilson of Houston already has introduced a bill calling for a non-binding statewide referendum on a lottery.

"In a special session, regardless of the governor's call, any piece of legislation can be introduced, sent to committee and discussed," Ware explained. "Everything can be done up to -- but not including -- the point of voting. A vote can be taken only if the bill concerns a matter within the governor's call.

"We hope the governor will maintain firm control and will limit the call only to those issues such as worker's compensation that did not receive full consideration in the regular session."

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Teen refugees in U.S. offer
unique ministry opportunity

By Trennis Henderson

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JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--Miguel, 17, is from Guatemala. His father was taken from their home two years ago and killed by rebel soldiers. His mother, fearing for her own life, moved out of the house.

Felipe, also 17, is from El Salvador. He worked with his dad on a cattle ranch since childhood, and has never been to school.

Miriam, 16, is from Honduras. Her mother died six years ago. Miriam lived with an aunt for a while, then with a friend. She has worked off and on for the past two years in a garment shop.

Luis, 14, also is from Honduras. His parents died when he was two. He was passed around among relatives until he started to live on his own at age 11. He has worked in the fields, in auto garages and as a street vendor.

In addition to being teenagers from Central America who have lived through years of heartbreak and pain, they share other common experiences. Each is an illegal refugee now living in the United States. Picked up by U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service officials, they are classified as unaccompanied minors.

Miguel, Felipe, Miriam and Luis are among more than 600 unaccompanied minors whose cases are pending before federal immigration courts. The courts eventually will determine whether they qualify for political asylum or must be deported to their home countries. The court process, however, may take up to two years.

In the meantime, the number of unaccompanied minors from Central America being picked up by INS is growing at a rate of more than 60 per month. In an effort to provide food, shelter, clothing and education to the youth while they await the determination of their destinies, the Border Association for Refugees of Central America is working with INS to find temporary sponsors for the young refugees.

Alvaro, 15, is from El Salvador, but his story is turning out differently from the others. His future also is uncertain as he awaits an appeal of his deportation, but he currently is living with a Missouri Baptist family in Steele rather than staying in an overcrowded INS shelter.

Alvaro Castellanos -- his U.S. friends call him Allen -- has lived in Missouri since February 11, 1988. His latest journey began when Jim Hester, a member of First Baptist Church of Steele, saw a television news program about refugee children living in detention centers in Texas.

Detailing the terrible living conditions being endured by the youngsters, Hester recalled, "It really just touched my heart."

Explaining that his own mother died when he was three and that many loving relatives and friends helped care for him, Hester added, "There was no way to repay the love that had been shown to me except to share it with someone else."

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Hester, a single parent with two young daughters, called the television producer in New York to gain additional information. Failing to get in touch with the detention center in Texas, he eventually was referred to a similar shelter in California.

With the encouragement of his daughters but facing skepticism from other relatives, Hester made arrangements to sponsor a Central American youth. He said Allen was selected by officials as the most deserving young person at that time.

Hester, a Royal Ambassador leader at First Baptist Church and an insurance agent, knew no Spanish when Allen arrived, and Allen knew no English. "I bought an English-Spanish dictionary," Hester reflected, "and he's very patient."

Allen, who had completed the sixth grade in El Salvador, was tested and placed in the eighth grade in Steele. He currently is a freshmen, and Hester says, "He's doing wonderfully well in school."

Hester recounted that Allen left his home in El Salvador in August of 1987. He walked, hitchhiked and hopped trains throughout Guatemala and Mexico, eventually arriving in the United States in December, where he was immediately spotted and detained by INS officials. During his odyssey, he was shot at, went as much as five days without food and was unable to gain any medical attention for fear of being reported to government authorities.

Displaying his growing fluency in English, Allen said he left his home because of the nation's ongoing violence and fighting. Describing his mixed emotions, he remarked, "I left all my family, and I don't know when I'm going to see them again."

He added, however, "I like going to school and going to church and this place because there's not any fighting and it's not dangerous to stay here."

During the past 16 months, Hester acknowledged, "It's not all been easy, because he's been raised with such a different way of living. ... In one way, he feels he is an adult."

Despite the financial burden, the cultural barriers and Allen's occasional homesickness, Hester adds: "I'm very glad that he came. I just treat him like my other two children."

Even with the benefits Allen and the Hester family have provided each other, the reality remains that for each refugee like Allen, dozens like Miguel, Felipe, Miriam and Luis remain with little hope, warmth or friendship.

The Border Association for Refugees of Central America has invited the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board to take part in helping place the unaccompanied minors with temporary sponsors. Board officials, in turn, have asked state conventions to help locate families and congregations interested in pursuing such a project.

According to information from the board's immigration and refugee office, sponsors are responsible for providing food, lodging and clothing to the young refugees, enrolling them in school and offering emotional security while their cases are pending in immigration court. Sponsors also must provide letters of reference, a letter from an immigration attorney willing to represent the child and an indication of whether the sponsor can provide transportation costs to for the child.