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Goodgame stumbled
into AIDS ministry

By Kay W. Moore

F- (C)
(CLC)

NASHVILLE (BP)--Richard Goodgame, the Southern Baptist medical missionary to Uganda and world-renowned authority on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, accidentally stumbled into his role several years ago.

During medical rounds in the Ugandan capital city of Kampala in 1983, he stumped his colleagues by presenting them three cases of patients suffering from a mysterious new malady. The ailment featured rapid weight loss, diarrhea and fever.

"Nobody knew what it was," he said.

But within months, this mysterious malady -- soon to be identified as AIDS -- spread so rapidly in Uganda that it gave the small African country a new dubious distinction. The Uganda-Zaire area now has the highest concentration of AIDS in the world. It affects 1 million of Uganda's 16 million people.

Goodgame's new challenge in helping Ugandans in crisis came at a time when he was on a personal search for precisely "what it meant to be a medical missionary and what it meant to be a man of God in a crisis situation."

The answer resulted in a pamphlet, "Medical Science and God's Word Give ANSWERS to Questions Related to AIDS." It now is the backbone of Uganda's AIDS education program and has been reproduced 2 million times.

In the pamphlet, Scripture passages with biblical teachings about sex, marriage, self-control and eternal life are printed alongside medical facts about AIDS. It meets with full approval of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, who has said "the mighty pulpit is the answer to AIDS," said Goodgame.

Into African rural areas, remote villages and urban campuses, Goodgame, 40, has taken his combined AIDS education and evangelistic message. He has spoken with several million Ugandans in the past three years and has trained lay people to do likewise.

Goodgame says Ugandans' openness to the Scriptures in light of the AIDS scourge is remarkable, Goodgame said. "It's an incredible thing to see God use his Word in the promised fashion and see it melt hearts," he said recently in Nashville at a national AIDS conference sponsored by several agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention. "The Bible says you can change if you are controlled by the Spirit."

For his work, the SBC Christian Life Commission will present him its Distinguished Service Award for 1990. CLC Executive Director Richard Land will present the award in early April at Goodgame's home church, First Baptist of Friendswood, Texas.

Goodgame's biggest challenge is fighting myths that exist about AIDS just as readily in Uganda as they do in the United States, he said. For example, people in one village thought AIDS would go away if they merely returned goats they had stolen from their neighbors. And Ugandans and Americans alike believe they can catch AIDS from being around AIDS patients.

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"AIDS is a case of bad VD (venereal disease)," he said. "You get it from sleeping around. You don't get AIDS from (being around) AIDS patients. You get AIDS from perfectly beautiful, wonderful, attractive, satisfying, lovely sex partners."

AIDS spreads in Uganda through heterosexual promiscuity, since Uganda has no drug addiction or homosexuality, he said: "Women are demanded to have sex. If you're a secretary in the office, you have to sleep with your boss. If you're a student in the college, you have to sleep with your teacher."

"This same thing can happen anywhere promiscuity exists and where the virus is introduced into the population." For example, if the AIDS virus infiltrated the red-light district of New York City, "within a matter of years, 80 percent of those people would have it. We read a few years ago that no AIDS existed in Southeast Asia. Now we read where 80 percent of the prostitutes in Bangkok have AIDS."

Even though Rick Goodgame's life from an early age has revolved around medicine, he wasn't inclined to be a doctor at first, he said. He was born in Nashville while his father, John T. Goodgame, was a surgeon in training at Vanderbilt University Medical School. He grew up in Clearwater, Fla., where his older brother, J. Thomas, now practices with his father.

He was a history, English and religious studies major at Vanderbilt, but his religion emphasis reflected no serious spiritual commitment. In fact, he was in the process of rebelling from "a lot of the conservative biblical Christianity of my parents and was trying to figure out a way to get out of the faith gracefully without hurting anybody."

But after attending a campus revival led at Vanderbilt by some former drug addicts who were new Christians, Goodgame committed his life to Christ. By that time, he had decided to enter the medical field but had nine months until medical school began, so he went overseas "to see how the rest of the world lived." There, he was apprenticed to Southern Baptist medical missionary Hal Boone, who not only gave Goodgame his first glimpse of Uganda but also introduced the young man to his daughter, Susan, who soon became Goodgame's wife.

He finished medical school at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and spent two years doing research in the West Indies with the Rockefeller Foundation. By this point, missions was weighing heavily on his mind, as he became aware of the spiritual and medical needs of developing countries.

"We wondered about doing missions as "tentmakers" but staying here and remaining active in a local church," he said.

But after a year in Boston as senior resident in internal medicine and infectious diseases at Massachusetts General Hospital, the Goodgames felt called to become career missionaries. They entered Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, for missionary training. They left for Uganda in 1980 after believing until two weeks before their appointment that they were headed for Kenya.

Goodgame's assignment was to teach at Kampala's Makerere University School of Medicine in Uganda, to work with other missionaries there to establish and strengthen local churches and to work in student evangelism.

But just as Goodgame and his colleagues were beginning to identify AIDS cases in Uganda, his first furlough occurred, and he spent a year at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston while his colleagues reported back the results of their testing.

When he finally returned to Uganda, Goodgame could see the country was "already in a terrible situation."

By 1985, about 12 to 15 percent of the patients in hospital wards in Kampala had AIDS and about 10 percent of all blood donors and about 10 percent of all women in prenatal clinics tested positive for the HIV virus that causes AIDS.

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Soon, President Museveni summoned Goodgame and his fellow doctors to the presidential residence in Entebbe to give him a status report. Goodgame said people in the Ugandan ministry of health tried to minimize the epidemic. "They said this isn't as bad as malaria, it isn't as bad as typhoid," he reported.

At that point, Museveni interrupted them, saying: "I can see even though I'm not a doctor that this is an emergency. This could be worse than any war, worse than Idi Amin," the former murderous Ugandan dictator.

"He commanded us to let people know what was happening and to prevent it," said Goodgame.

Goodgame's approach was threefold. He first tried to launch an education program to help people die, since the AIDS epidemic quickly mounted. By 1989, 30 percent of blood donors and 30 percent of healthy pregnant women tested positive for the virus, and 50 to 70 percent of all patients on medical wards in Kampala had AIDS.

"Christians should be experts at dying," since the Bible teaches about Jesus' death and resurrection and the Christian promise of everlasting life, Goodgame said. "We have to encourage people they can die with the same power as Jesus Christ and not fear death."

He also had to mobilize the community to take care of patients, since large segments of the community already were beginning to die with insufficient hospital beds to care for dying patients. Part of this was helping people overcome their fears of being around AIDS patients.

In Uganda, Goodgame sampled large African households that contained up to 15 people. In those homes, no one carried the HIV virus except the sexual partner of the AIDS patient. He said this is significant since people constantly share eating utensils and may sleep several people to a bed.

Most importantly, however, people had to learn that AIDS was a sexually transmitted disease. "They needed to learn from the Word of God about God's plan for sex and marriage, that he can give power and victory over sexual temptations," he said.

The jury still is out on whether this full-scale evangelistic/educational effort will result in a flood of Christian conversions in Uganda, Goodgame said.

He knows that the numbers of gonorrhea and syphilis cases have plummeted in Kampala, but he doesn't know whether the pamphlet itself can be credited with changing people's sexual practices.

"Whether it works or not, that's what we're all about," he said. "This (spreading the gospel) is what we're commissioned to do."

Now back in the United States on furlough and teaching gastroenterology at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Goodgame can observe U.S. AIDS education firsthand.

Americans' admonition to practice "safe sex" to combat the spread of AIDS is a marked contrast to the morality-based "just say no" message of Goodgame's pamphlet. The "safe sex" approach might help the HIV virus from being transmitted but "doesn't fulfill God's plan" for sex and marriage, he said.

"I don't expect the U.S. government or health authorities to start preaching abstinence," he said. "We're going to always have a different educational bent. But churches should be true to their biblical faith."

Some people fear AIDS discussions because they fear they will turn to discussions of homosexuality. But Goodgame said homosexuality is not a crucial aspect of AIDS education and said parents can talk about AIDS with their children and never include a mention of that topic.

"Homosexuals are not more at risk than anyone except they are more promiscuous," he said. "They have multiple and frequent sex partners."

At their request, the Goodgames won't be returning to Uganda, he said. During their 18 remaining months on furlough, they await reassignment by the Foreign Mission Board.

Goodgame has completed God's task for him in Uganda, he said. The system is now in place in Uganda to deal with the AIDS crisis, he added. Last year he also wrote a book, "AIDS Care: Diagnostic and Treatment Strategies for Health Workers," that can help health workers in other countries set up AIDS clinics.

Although they are open to any new location, Goodgame said he and his wife are interested in the South Sudan and hope political conditions improve there by the time their furlough is over. Regardless of where they end up, combatting AIDS will always be an interest, he said.

"I will continue to have it both as an interest and as a Bible-based ministry," he said. "In Africa certainly every missionary will be involved in AIDS, and all over the world every doctor is involved in AIDS."

The Goodgames are parents of Grace, 16; Boone Wilder, 14; Ben Richard, 12; Joy, 10; and Max, 8. Goodgame said he is not seeking the transfer because he fears for himself, his wife and children.

But because precautionary measures such as gloves and masks were not widely advocated during Goodgame's early years of treating AIDS, he continues to be tested for the HIV virus. His tests so far have come back negative, he said.

When people tell him that AIDS is a judgment from God, Goodgame says he's reminded of the biblical parable of the Good Samaritan. God expects Christians to be Good Samaritans and not bypass individuals who suffer, he said.

"We don't know why there's AIDS, or breast cancer, or diarrhea, or malaria or all those things," he said.

"We know about one judgment of God -- that Jesus Christ will separate the sheep from the goats. The goats go to hell, and the sheep to everlasting life. You can count me a sheep. I'm going to treat people as if they were Jesus -- every AIDS patient, every AIDS family -- so I won't have to fear that judgment."

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Kay W. Moore is a freelance journalist in Nashville. BP photo mailed to Baptist state papers and available from the Christian Life Commission.

China youths, scholars
embrace Christian faith

N- FMB

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NANJING, China(BP)--More young people and intellectuals are attending church and becoming Christians, said China Christian Council leader Ding Guangxun (K.H. Ting) in a recent interview.

One church in Beijing reports more than 50 percent of its worshipers are young people, Ding said. Other churches are beginning Sunday schools.

A "new attitude towards religion" is developing among scholars, he added. "In the past you could not see one article written on religion that didn't relate it to the opiate ... the Marxist definition of religion. But today we have more and more social scientists who take a much kinder outlook towards religion.

"A growing number of intellectuals take a positive attitude toward Christian faith. I know of some who have not been baptized but who have committed themselves to the Christian faith."

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Southwestern Seminary honoring
6 Distinguished Alumni for 1990

N- (O)
(SWBTS)

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Six graduates of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, will be honored during the school's national alumni luncheon June 13 at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in New Orleans.

The six, representing a variety of backgrounds and ministries, are being recognized by the seminary's national alumni association as distinguished alumni.

Recipients are Clint Ashley, president of the Canadian Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Cochrane, Alberta; Charles Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church, Roanoke, Va.; Marvin Griffin, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Austin, Texas; Essie Mae (Mrs. T.B.) Maston, Fort Worth; Paul Powell, president of the SBC Annuity Board in Dallas; and Scott Tatum, senior professor of preaching emeritus at Southwestern and former pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La.

Ashley is the founding president of the Canadian seminary. He previously was a Southern Baptist missionary in Brazil and was pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Pullman, Wash.

Fuller, pastor of the Roanoke church since 1961, was chairman of the Southern Baptist Peace Committee. He also has been chairman of the SBC Radio and Television Commission and on several SBC committees.

Griffin became pastor of Ebenezer Church in 1969. Active in the SBC, Griffin has served on the boards of the American Christian Television System, SBC Home Mission Board, SBC Christian Life Commission and Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. He also is active with the National Baptist Convention and Missionary Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Maston is the wife of the late T.B. Maston, professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern for more than 40 years. She is a graduate of Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn. Mrs. Maston graduated from Southwestern Seminary in 1923 and taught elementary education at the school before becoming a full-time homemaker. She has been a member of Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth for more than 70 years.

Powell became president of the Annuity Board in January, after being as pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas, for 17 years. Powell was president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas from 1985 to 1987 and is a trustee of Baylor University, where he was a 1956 graduate.

Tatum retired from the faculty at Southwestern in 1988 after 13 years at the seminary. He joined the faculty following a 24-year tenure as pastor of Broadmoor church. Active in denominational work, Tatum was on the seminary board of trustees for 10 years and on the board of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He also has been a trustee of the SBC Baptist Sunday School Board and Louisiana College and served two terms as president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

Tickets to the luncheon may be purchased by sending \$16 and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Office of Public Affairs, Southwestern Seminary, P.O. Box 22000, Fort Worth, Texas 76122-0500. Tickets will be sold at the SBC for \$19 each.