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July 20, 1990

90-93

Stranded missionaries  
rescued in Philippines

By Mary E. Speidel

*N.F.M.S.*

BAGUIO CITY, Philippines (BP)--Five Southern Baptist mission workers were airlifted July 19 from a highway leading into Baguio City, Philippines, after a major earthquake left them stranded for almost three days.

The July 16 quake has killed up to 600 people, including one Philippine Baptist woman in Baguio City, according to reports. No details of the woman's death are yet available.

All Southern Baptist mission personnel in the Philippines are safe and uninjured, said Sam Waldron, administrator of the mission organization there. Waldron said it was a "miracle" no missionaries were hurt in the quake, measuring 7.7 on the Richter scale.

The rescued mission workers -- missionaries Robert and Janet Nash and Julia (Judy) Yost and special assignments workers John and Helen Thomas -- and at least one Philippine Baptist were traveling on Kennon Road into Baguio City when the temblor hit. John Thomas is a trustee of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

They were stranded with hundreds of other motorists when landslides made the road impassable. Relief helicopters reportedly dropped food and supplies to the travelers.

Mission officials arranged for a helicopter owned by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Wycliffe Bible Translators) to evacuate the group from the highway into Baguio. They joined other mission workers in relief efforts from the campus of the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Baguio.

While some Americans in Baguio were reportedly being evacuated from the city by military helicopters, the mission workers wanted to return to help with quake relief. "That's their home, that's where their work is, that's where the people that they serve are. They were much aware that they could be of service there," said Waldron.

Yost, a missionary nurse from Naples, N.Y., and a seminary student were driving from Manila to Baguio. The others were returning from preaching services at Clark Air Base when the quake occurred, Waldron said.

Nash, the seminary's president, is from Athens, Ga.; Mrs. Nash is from Cornelia, Ga. Thomas, also assigned to the seminary, is a retired professor at Mobile (Ala.) College. He and his wife most recently lived in Daphne, Ala.

Thomas phoned Waldron July 20 from Baguio to report on relief work. His call was one of the first direct contacts mission officials have had with Baguio since the quake struck, Waldron said.

Thomas was allowed just a two-minute call because a line of people was waiting to make calls from what Waldron thought was a commercial phone used by telegram offices there. Downed phone lines continue to hinder communications in and out of Baguio, he said.

Waldron said Thomas reported the Baptist seminary was being used as a rice distribution center for quake victims. A relief team of three Southern Baptist missionaries from Manila arrived in Baguio July 20 with food, supplies and a generator. They drove a four-wheel-drive vehicle on the only passable road into the city. Earlier, the road had been closed because of landslides.

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Team members are David Cartwright from El Dorado Springs, Mo.; Phillip Brewster from Bixby, Okla.; and Mark Weiler from Sioux Fall, S.D. Several other missionaries in Manila planned to try to take two more truckloads of supplies into Baguio July 21, Waldron said.

So far, \$10,000 in Baptist disaster relief funds has been sent to the Baguio and San Jose areas, Waldron said. Another relief team led by Wayne and Jeanne Maness is working in the San Jose area. Maness is from Kansas City, Mo. Mrs. Maness is from Stewartsville, Mo. No word has been received from that group, said Waldron.

An additional \$25,000 has been requested for the Santa Fe region, another hard-hit area southwest of Baguio. Relief also is being planned for Dagupan City, but details have not been finalized, Waldron said.

At the Baptist seminary in Baguio, two dormitories were badly damaged, the school's business manager told Waldron. A men's dormitory may have to be condemned because of damages and an international dorm was heavily damaged, he said. Several missionary houses on campus also were damaged. A missionary staying in guest housing said that almost all glass items in missionary housing were destroyed, Waldron said.

Because of the damage to dormitories, seminary students have been sleeping outside on mattresses, Waldron said. Students are expected to move back into the women's dorm soon. They have been sharing food and cooking together on outdoor grills, he said.

Southern Baptist missionary Elaine Crane in Dagupan said the city was devastated economically. "About 80 percent of the businesses are condemned," said Crane, from Tallahassee, Fla. The quake caused a three-inch gap between her family's kitchen and the rest of the house, and the living room floor sank more than an inch, she said.

Waldron urged Southern Baptists to pray for missionaries as they work with Philippine Baptists to provide relief. They want to minister to Filipinos "in a way that will really show to them that what we're doing comes from hearts of love simply because we are Christians ...," he said.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: This story replaces the story released July 19 headlined, "Missionaries wait for rebel permission to leave Liberia."

Missionaries receive rebel  
permission to leave Liberia

By Donald D. Martin

Baptist Press  
7/20/90

VOINJAMA, Liberia (BP)--Two Southern Baptist missionaries in Voinjama, Liberia, said July 20 they were free to evacuate after waiting several days for permission to leave from rebel troops who captured the city July 14.

Missionary Chris Wilkinson of Gainesville, Fla., said he and his wife, Gwen, of Ardmore, Tenn., were safe and planned to drive to Yekepa, Liberia, July 20, then into Ivory Coast the next day. The Wilkinsons have been awaiting permission to pass through rebel roadblocks.

Voinjama, a Liberian provincial capital about 140 miles north of the country's capital, Monrovia, was captured by rebel troops of the National Patriotic Front less than 24 hours after peace talks in Sierra Leone broke down July 13.

Wilkinson asked the assistant rebel commander July 18 for permission to cross roadblocks with Mrs. Wilkinson and a small group of missionaries from other mission organizations. The assistant commander said he would not let them go until he cleared it with his commander, who was away. The rebels gave permission July 20 for the Wilkinsons and other missionaries to leave.

Wilkinson stressed the missionaries were not under any form of house arrest.

Missionaries Kenneth Nicholson of Magdalena, N.M., and Joyce Nicholson of Seaside, Calif., the other Southern Baptist couple who worked in Voinjama, left July 11 for the United States.

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When the Wilkinsons depart, two other Southern Baptist missionary couples will remain in Liberia.

Earl Williams, of West Monroe, La., and Jane Williams, of Knoxville, Tenn., are in Yekepa, a small town near the Guinea border. Ed Laughridge, of Rock Hill, S.C., and Fran Laughridge, of Great Falls, S.C., remain at a Baptist mission station in Mano River, a small mining town about 80 miles northwest of Monrovia near the Sierra Leone border.

Mrs. Laughridge said via radio messages July 19 that she had not seen any fighting in Mano River, but most roads into the town were blocked by government troops. The town has no electricity, and food and fuel are becoming scarce. The Laughridges stay in contact each day with missionary Steve Springer in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, via a radio powered by a generator.

The rest of the 60 Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to Liberia are temporarily in the United States or in countries near Liberia.

The rebels, led by Charles Taylor, a former aide to Liberian President Samuel Doe, have demanded that Doe resign and stand trial for corruption, nepotism and human rights abuses. Most international observers believe Doe's government could fall any day.

Human rights groups have accused both sides of killing hundreds of civilians in the seven-month war, which has been fought mostly along tribal lines.

Lack of food for refugees is the remaining missionaries' greatest concern, Mrs. Laughridge reported July 19. Stores of rice and medical supplies at the mission station were depleted after they aided several waves of refugees moving through Mano River to Sierra Leone.

Mrs. Laughridge said they only had enough fuel to run their generator two hours a day for about five more days. If more supplies are not found, they also will have to leave in the next few days.

Other mission and relief organizations report similar problems. Press reports said food shortages in the Monrovia area, as well as other parts of Liberia, are becoming critical.

Nuns at St. Theresa's convent, a refugee center in Monrovia, told reporters that they could only provide one small bowl of rice each day to all but the youngest children, who receive an additional small amount of cornmeal.

Some 23 refugee camps set up in and around Monrovia now house more than 40,000 people.

John Cumbers, deputy general director of the Society for International Ministries (SIM), said SIM missionaries in Monrovia's eastern suburb, Paynesville, are sheltering 12,000 refugees. SIM is a nondenominational evangelical mission agency.

SIM mission workers already have exhausted a supply of 17,000 pounds of rice delivered by local relief workers July 14. The grain lasted only a few days, although workers restricted each person to about one cup of rice a day, Cumbers said.

Water in many areas also is becoming scarce because of power shortages. Most of Monrovia's water supply comes from deep wells and is brought to the surface by electric pumps.

A lack of rain has aggravated the water shortage. Although July is part of the rainy season in Liberia, rivers and creeks are low. One press report said the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia sends water trucks escorted by U.S. Marines to collect water from a creek near Doe's headquarters, but few others go near the creek for fear of attack by government soldiers.

Five Southern Baptist missionaries to Liberia met July 17-18 in Atlanta to start planning what will need to be done in Liberia once the fighting has stopped and missionaries return.

EDITORS' NOTE: This story from the Baptist Standard is being run by Baptist Press without additional editing.

Press association endorses  
'concept' of news service

By Toby Druin

Baptist Press  
7/20/90

NASHVILLE--The Southern Baptist Press Association endorsed the "concept" of a new press service to ensure a free flow of Baptist news and information here following the firing of the director and news editor of Baptist Press by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

The SBPA, the organization of state Baptist papers in the SBC, endorsed establishment of "Associated Baptist Press" in a special meeting July 17 shortly after the termination of BP Director Alvin C. Shackelford and News Editor Dan B. Martin had been announced.

Shackelford, 58, who has also been vice president for public relations of the Executive Committee, and Martin, 51, were fired by the Executive Committee by a 3-1 vote margin, during a closed-door session lasting almost three hours.

Following a press conference after the announcement of their terminations, Nashville attorney Jeffrey Mobley, who said he was legal counsel for the proposed news service, announced it would be housed in Nashville, would begin limited service by mid-August and full service would be available by mid-September.

Mobley said the news service is being established by "interested and concerned state Baptist newspaper editors, pastors and laypersons," but declined to identify any of them at the present time.

The new service has been necessitated, Mobley said, by "the continued harassment of Baptist Press," public statements by members of the Executive Committee "which suggest their intention to install a publicity arm to report information which is favorable to a single political agenda" and the "unjustified and grievous dismissal" of Shackelford and Martin, "two of our convention's most trusted and competent journalists."

"We believe this leads to no other conclusions than Baptist Press will cease to be a fair and balanced news service reporting the business and events of the Southern Baptist Convention," Mobley said.

"Associated Baptist Press is aligned with no political group -- nor will it ever be," he said. "Its goal will be to provide a source of information which will be guided by the highest tenet of professional journalism and the standard of Christian ethics.

"ABP will be neither the servant nor savior of any group among Southern Baptists. A guiding principle for ABP will be to tell Southern Baptists the facts and to trust them with those facts. ABP will not serve as a 'press agent' of any political group or groups among Southern Baptists."

The service will be offered to state papers and other media on a subscription basis such as is currently done by Religious News Service and Evangelicop Press Association.

Bob Terry, editor of Word and Way, newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist convention, asked the Southern Baptist Press Association to "endorse the concept" of the new press service and a free flow of information.

Terry said it had been hoped that the new service would be in operation by July 18, but that it would be operating soon, possibly by adding a person on contract in a state paper office.

The SBPA approved a motion to endorse the concept after questions about how it might affect future cooperation with Baptist Press. Terry explained it would "have no impact" on Baptist Press, and SBPA President J.B. Fowler, editor of the Baptist New Mexican, said the new service would "just supplement" what might be offered in the future through Baptist Press. No successors to Shackelford and Martin or plans for the continued operation of Baptist Press have been announced by the Executive Committee.

The "concept" of the new service was approved by a wide majority of the SBPA members present, although there was one opposed and others who did not vote.

In other action, the press association approved gifts of \$500 each to Shackelford and Martin in recognition of their service to the association and Southern Baptists.

Also approved was a commitment to continue to channel news stories through SBCNet, the personal computer network through which the state papers have received and sent news stories to Baptist Press.

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Baptist Press will  
continue: Bennett

By Lonnie Wilkey

Baptist Press  
7/20/90

N-CO (GN)

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Executive Committee President Harold C. Bennett said he plans to continue publication of Baptist Press.

In a telephone interview with the Baptist and Reflector, newsjournal of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, July 13, Bennett acknowledged "nothing is in place," but noted a process will be established to "publish Baptist Press with the staff we have left. We will keep it going," he said.

A Baptist Press release, dated July 18 was issued the day following the termination of Al Shackelford and Dan Martin as director and news editor, respectively, of the convention's news service. The BP release contained statements issued by the Executive Committee, Martin, and Shackelford.

Bennett affirmed that the three remaining BP staffers -- Doris Elliott, Polly House, and Maria Sykes -- are not in danger of losing their jobs.

"I met with the ladies this morning (July 18) and told them they are absolutely secure, with my personal request that they stay where they are and get the job done." Bennett said Executive Vice President Ernest Mosley would work with the remaining BP staff at the present time.

Mosley affirmed that he "is working with the staff to keep BP flowing." He said he and Bennett have met with Jim Newton of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board who serves as chief of the Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

"Our anticipation is the bureau chiefs will continue to send stories through Baptist Press," Mosley said. Newton also is serving as a bureau liaison with Baptist state paper editors.

On July 20 Newton released a statement on behalf of the five bureau in Atlanta, Nashville, Dallas, Richmond, and Washington.

They said that "as long as Baptist Press can continue to operate with journalistic integrity within historic guidelines, we pledge our efforts to cooperate within the system."

The statement noted that the absence of professional journalists at the central office of Baptist Press "places greater responsibility on each of us in bureaus to maintain journalistic integrity and credibility."

The statement concluded that "Baptist Press is more than an office in Nashville run by a director and a news editor. It is a cooperative effort involving hundreds of committed and trained journalists who work in Baptist agencies, state conventions, Baptist state papers and other organizations throughout the nation and around the world.

"Those of us who remain within this Baptist press network recommit ourselves to the historic Baptist tenet that 'Baptists have a right to know' and to the high standards of fairness, openness, balance and integrity that are essential to a free press in a demographic society.

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Mosley said that "lacking a professional journalist at the present time, the staff will rely more heavily on stories provided by the bureaus and other news writers." Mosley added that he assumes "an interim BP director will be employed as soon as the process can be completed."

Charles Sullivan, chairman of the administrative and convention arrangements subcommittee of the Executive Committee, told the "Baptist and Reflector" Bennett will have the responsibility of finding people to fill the positions vacated by the termination of Martin and Shackelford and the recent resignation of Marv Knox, former feature editor, who left to become editor of the "Western Recorder" in Kentucky.

Bennett said he did not know if he would have any recommendations for the Executive Committee members when they met in September. "I will have gone through the process and will try to fill the positions," he said.

Regarding the firing of Martin and Shackelford, Bennett said, "I felt Al and Dan did a good job."

Bennett declined to comment about conversations with Executive Committee officers regarding Martin and Shackelford or the closed meeting of the committee on July 17.

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Parham testifies during hearing  
on alcohol warnings legislation

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press  
7/20/90

WASHINGTON (BP)--Most Southern Baptists, as well as a vast majority of other Americans, want restrictions on the marketing of alcoholic beverages, a Southern Baptist ethicist told a House of Representatives subcommittee.

Robert Parham, associate director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, testified July 18 before the House Subcommittee on Transportation and Hazardous Materials on proposed legislation that would require health and safety warnings to appear on all advertisements for alcoholic beverages.

The Sensible Advertising and Family Education Act -- or SAFE -- would establish five health and safety warnings, one of which would be required to be used in any advertisement for alcoholic beverages. The bill is being sponsored by Sen. Albert Gore Jr., D-Tenn., and Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy II, D-Mass.

"I believe that Americans want something done to curb the daily saturation bombing of their living rooms by ads for a product that causes enormous harm to the American family," Parham said.

The proposed legislation, Parham said, would provide the public with much-needed and long-overdue health information. It would avoid the extreme of an outright ban on alcohol advertising, he added, while also counterbalancing the other extreme of "unbridled, anything-goes-that-sells-alcohol position."

"No one thinks that health messages alone will prevent the 100,000 alcohol-related deaths each year in the United States," Parham testified. "But health messages are an important step toward a healthier and safer nation.

"The goals of rotating health messages far outweigh the loss in private gain that the alcoholic beverage industry might experience. Moreover, rotating health messages promise to enhance the public good."

In addition, such messages would help protect children from ads that portray alcohol in a seductive manner, Parham explained.

"Clearly, parents have a responsibility to educate," he said. "But even the most well-intentioned parent cannot defend his or her children against a multibillion-dollar giant that buys the best talent in the advertising industry to produce the most persuasive ads on television and radio for the single purpose of private gain. Government has an obligation to support parents, not to abandon them in the war against the drug the nation drinks."

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