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August 2, 1990

90-100

Baptist workers await
chance to leave Kuwait

By Art Toalston & Mike Creswell

N-jmb

KUWAIT CITY, Kuwait (BP)--A Southern Baptist couple was near one of the hottest battle sites when thousands of Iraqi troops stormed into Kuwait Aug. 2.

Maurice and Laurie Graham, of Shelbyville, Tenn., and Hutchinson, Kan., were living in an apartment in the church where they work -- across the street from Kuwait's national assembly building. The couple and their two sons, ages 13 and 10, now have moved to the residence of an official of the American Embassy, Graham reported in an Aug. 2 telephone call to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

The national assembly building, Graham said, "is covered with Iraqi soldiers." The area "is really a hot spot."

"We had some problems with (Iraqi) soldiers coming into the house four different times, and one time they got a little rough ... but no one is hurt or anything like that," Graham recounted.

"There's still fighting. We still hear gunshots and bombs or something going off," he said.

The Grahams are among more than 1 million foreigners in Kuwait uncertain how invading Iraq will respond to world pressure against its pre-dawn invasion of Kuwait. Iraqi officials have announced that foreigners will not be permitted to leave Kuwait until further notice, according to news reports. The Grahams plan to leave when they are able to do so.

The Grahams moved to Kuwait less than three months ago as the first Southern Baptist workers in the country. They work at the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait City. He is associate pastor involved in youth and music work; she is a church musician.

The couple transferred to Kuwait from Liberia, a West African nation currently in the throes of a bloody civil war.

Before their appointment as Southern Baptist workers in 1986, Graham had been director of pastoral care at St. Jude Children's Hospital in Memphis, Tenn., for six years.

Oil-rich Kuwait is a country of 2.1 million people, including more than 1 million expatriates from the United States and numerous other countries.

Iraq is said to have a million troops, many of them experienced in battle after the nation's long war with Iran. Kuwait has a much smaller force of about 20,000 troops who were easily overrun. Within eight hours after launching the invasion, Iraqi officials in Baghdad announced they had taken control of the country and set up an interim government. The United Nations Security Council, during an all-night emergency session, condemned the invasion.

Kuwait's airport was bombed, then closed, and soldiers were said to control key government buildings. Hard fighting was reported in Kuwait City, with many citizens detained by Iraqi troops. Foreigners residing in the city were being advised by their governments to stay indoors.

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Although Iraq said it invaded and toppled the Kuwaiti regime at the request of the unidentified "revolutionary government in Kuwait," the two countries had been having intense debates over disputed oil fields and oil prices in recent weeks. When Kuwait gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1961, Iraq also claimed ownership of Kuwaiti territory. American troops in the Persian Gulf have been on full alert for weeks as Iraq massed troops along Kuwait's northern border. Iraq has threatened to make Kuwait a "cemetery" if other governments intervene.

The National Evangelical Church, where the Grahams work, is affiliated with the Reformed Church in America, with headquarters in New York. Graham said the denomination's three workers assigned to Kuwait currently are in the United States.

The congregation is home to 28 ethnic groups encompassing some 8,000 people. "On Friday, which is worship day, services are scheduled back-to-back from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m.," Mrs. Graham wrote after visiting the congregation in February.

Dale Thorne, director of Foreign Mission Board work in the Middle East and North Africa, visited the Grahams just a week before the invasion. The couple's household goods are still in storage in Liberia.

The church building is about a 10-minute drive from the American Embassy, which was reported surrounded by Iraqi tanks Aug. 2.

In a telephone call Mrs. Graham was able to place during the morning of Aug. 2, she was "extremely calm and collected," said her mother, Margaret Nuzum. The call was made at mid-morning by Kuwait time; it was 4 a.m. in Kansas.

"Laurie said, 'I wanted to talk to you, Mother, before you turn the television on,'" Mrs. Nuzum said. But her mother already had been watching accounts of the Iraqi invasion on Cable News Network for an hour.

Mrs. Graham said the family's suitcases were packed and they were in touch with the U.S. Embassy. "I asked her, 'How about the boys?' and she said, 'They're scared,' which shows that they're normal," Mrs. Nuzum recounted.

"There's nothing to do but wait and pray," Mrs. Nuzum added.

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Honeycutt recovery
'right on schedule'

By David Wilkinson

N-CO
(Ky.)

Baptist Press
8/2/90

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt said doctors have told him his recuperation following recent open heart surgery is "right on schedule."

Honeycutt, 63, underwent successful five-bypass heart surgery July 24 after tests ordered as a part of his routine annual physical exam indicated blockage in several arteries. He said doctors found no damage to the heart and told him he could expect a complete recovery following 10 to 12 weeks of recuperation.

Speaking one day after being released from the hospital, Honeycutt said the surgery had left him "humbled and amazed by the power of prayer, the marvels of modern medicine and the recuperative abilities given by God to the human body."

He and his wife, June, emphasized their gratitude for the outpouring of prayer support from Southern Baptists across the country.

Despite an eagerness to resume his responsibilities as soon as possible, Honeycutt said he "will do my best" to abide by doctors' instructions for recuperation. "And June," he added with a smile, "has assured me that she will help me live up to my promise."

G. Willis Bennett, provost of the Louisville, Ky., seminary, is serving as acting president during Honeycutt's absence.

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ABC-TV decides against
'thirtysomething' rerun

By Louis Moore

F-^(CO)
(CLC)

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists should thank ABC Television executives for their decision not to rerun a controversial "thirtysomething" segment featuring a homosexual scene, said Richard D. Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

The segment was one of two eliminated from the summer reruns of the show.

Television critics such as Howard Rosenberg of the Los Angeles Times have charged that the segment was dropped from the reruns because of the controversy resulting from its portrayal of homosexuality. The segment originally ran on Nov. 7. It featured two male homosexuals in bed.

Immediately after the segment was broadcast last November, Land urged Southern Baptists to contact ABC-TV and protest its showing. As late as January, ABC officials were reporting receiving 25 to 30 calls a day from viewers protesting the showing.

Rosenberg reported in the July 19 edition of the Los Angeles Times that the controversy scared off advertisers from "thirtysomething."

"Benign as it was, the scene prompted advertisers to desert the episode en masse," he wrote. "And now fearing a repeat, ABC is withholding the episode from its summer reruns schedule.

"By doing this (not rerunning the segment), the network is getting under the sheets, too. It's in bed with the narrow-minded ignoramuses who believe that this plausible, intelligent and sensitive depiction of gays makes 'thirtysomething' dirtysomething," Rosenberg said.

Land said, "I am delighted that ABC has decided not to rerun this highly offensive episode. I hope Southern Baptists who share our feelings will call and write ABC and tell them how much they appreciate this decision. We criticized ABC for making the wrong decision originally, and we should praise them when they make the right decision as they have now."

Calls of gratitude should be made to ABC at (212) 456-7777.

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Kentucky RA counselors
killed in auto accident

By Marv Knox

7-CO
(Ky.)

Baptist Press
8/2/90

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Two counselors-in-training at Kentucky Baptists' summer missions camp for boys died in a head-on automobile crash July 30.

Tim Covington and Jim Davidson died when the car Covington was driving was struck by a car driven by James Scott Mattingly of New Haven on state Highway 52 in LaRue County, shortly after noon. Covington and Davidson, both 17, died at the scene.

Mattingly, 20, died that afternoon at Humana Hospital-University in Louisville. Davidson's 20-year-old brother, Brett, was critically injured and taken to University Hospital.

Covington and Jim Davidson had worked at Camp Rabro, a Royal Ambassador missions camp for boys at Cedarmore Baptist Assembly near Bagdad, and at Royal Ambassador camp at Jonathan Creek Baptist Assembly near Aurora for a total of eight weeks this summer.

Covington was the son of Ronald and Sandra Covington, members of Second Baptist Church in Greenville. Davidson was the son of Larry and Terri Davidson of Boston, near Louisville. Larry Davidson is pastor of Rolling Fork Baptist Church in Boston and a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, where Mrs. Davidson works.

His parents did not have life insurance on him, and an aid account for the family has been established at the seminary.

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The boys were off work the morning of their accident and had gone fishing, friends said. Covington was scheduled to work at camp that week, and Davidson had planned to take the week off. "They were super boys," said Bill Gaddis, Royal Ambassador camp director and their supervisor for the summer.

"Tim was real mechanically inclined and helped us with a lot of mechanical problems," Gaddis added. "I haven't seen many boys his age with that skill. He worked hard and gave us his all. "Jim was a real good counselor, working with the boys in activity periods, devotional times and chapter times, when they did the devotional time with the boys."

The impact of their deaths was "pretty rough" on other camp staff members, Gaddis said: "Several of them took it real hard. But as Christian young men, they're dealing with it in a satisfactory manner and sharing Christ with the boys."

As counselors-in-training, Covington and Davidson worked at everything from food service, to groundskeeping to working with young campers. "They were real fine young men," Gaddis said. "They were learning a lot in life and in their Christian walk. It's hard to put into words what these boys were like unless you knew them."

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Conference for blind
formed at New Orleans SBC

N-10

Baptist Press
8/2/90

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The Southern Baptist Conference for the Blind was organized at a special meeting during the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans. The inaugural meeting was attended by six individuals who are blind or who minister to the blind.

The conference will meet annually, with its 1991 meeting in Nashville and its 1992 meeting in conjunction with Home Missions Week at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Five objectives were adopted for the conference:

- To provide opportunities for fellowship among blind members of Southern Baptist churches;
- To provide opportunities for blind Southern Baptists to develop leadership skills;
- To encourage blind church members to participate actively in their churches;
- To make Southern Baptists aware of the many blind people among their churches and communities and to encourage Baptist leadership to provide needed ministries; and
- To offer assistance in the development and distribution of educational and evangelistic materials for the use of blind individuals.

Charles Couey of Nashville was elected president of the new organization. People who are interested in receiving information about the Southern Baptist Conference for the Blind can write to Couey at 103 Brenda Lane, Antioch, TN 37013.

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Baptists arguing about wallpaper
while house is on fire, chaplain says By Mark Wingfield

F-AMB

Baptist Press
8/2/90

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--"Our house is on fire and we are still discussing what kind of wallpaper we want in the dining room," a Southern Baptist chaplain said of his denomination.

Larry Ellis, a Navy chaplain, made the statement during "Jericho: A Missions Festival" at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center. Ellis was the morning Bible study teacher for the week-long missions conference.

As a military chaplain, he claimed to have a "different perspective on Southern Baptist life" than the average pastor or layperson. He told the group Southern Baptists should take a lesson from chaplains and learn to cooperate despite minor doctrinal differences.

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"From where I stand, when I read about the differences between the various factions of our convention, it frustrates me greatly," he explained. "While I know the differences must loom large in individual minds, to me they really fade to relative insignificance in the face of our larger world mission.

"Our differences are real, but compared to the world, compared to those billions of people who don't know Jesus ... those differences, regardless of how big they may seem to us, are really about the filigree on the cup. They aren't about what's in the cup.

"We're not in the business of giving away pretty cups, we're in the business of giving away the Lord Jesus Christ," he said.

Ellis said Southern Baptists always have had differences but previously submerged those differences in a common commitment to missions. "If that's not important enough for us to submerge our differences, then we need to pray and ask God to break our hearts and the Spirit of the Lord to fill us until it becomes important enough," he declared.

The chaplain said Southern Baptists need to learn where to draw the line between essentials and non-essentials.

"I've learned Baptists do not have a corner on salvation and holiness," he said. "I've also learned that it is possible to cooperate with people who have a completely different understanding of Scripture and have a different tradition.

"In my world we are constantly making decisions about what is essential and what is not essential, what we can do in good conscience and that we can't do," he said. In his environment, where only one of nine people profess Jesus Christ, Christians learn to work together, he added.

Likewise, Southern Baptists should realize that in a world hostile to Christianity they must work together to spread the gospel, Ellis said. He urged warring factions to "step back, regroup and love one another" for the sake of the kingdom of God.

"Fifteen years ago we were poised to do wonderful things, and perhaps our time is not yet past," he said. "We are still a great church. We are still filled with many saints. We still have a biblical message and we still have a degree of zeal in our hearts.

"But unless we begin to allow the Holy Spirit to unify us and bless us and break our hearts and forgive us for our sins, we will become a stagnant backwater. We will lose our birthright. We will have the torch taken from our hands."

Southern Baptists will be more accountable for what they have done to spread the gospel than for what they have fought about, Ellis said. "Our raging debates, about which we fiercely contend, will in a few generations be a curious footnote in the history books. They won't matter a great deal.

"However, the march of the kingdom of God under our stewardship will be important, and we will be vindicated or judged by that."

Speaking all week from Acts, Ellis listed three essential beliefs for the New Testament church: the control God has of history, the person and work of Jesus Christ, and the necessity of calling the world to repentance and salvation.

Other things, such as worship styles, music and church polity, are not essential to the Christian mission, he said.

Beyond the national struggle in the denomination, churches and individuals have placed non-essentials before the primary task of world evangelization, Ellis said.

"The world has been disillusioned by communism, and it can easily be disillusioned by Christianity," he suggested. "What do they see?"

"The world sees TV evangelists caught up in lust and perversion. The world sees churches who move where the money is rather than to where the people are. They see a church that is powerless to change public policy or morals.

"Where's the beef?" Ellis asked. "Where's the world-changing power?"

He chided Southern Baptists for not talking about the Holy Spirit for fear that "someone might think we're Pentecostals."

He questioned the "suburban church club" that resists change in order to maintain the status quo.

He lamented that Southern Baptist churches are dying in transitional neighborhoods because members will not overcome prejudice. "If 60 percent of our churches in a city are dying, we don't need to build new churches there. We need to repent of our sin and resurrect them in the Holy Spirit to witness to God's people where they are, whatever color they are, however much money they have, or whatever their sin."

He cautioned that Southern Baptists are guilty of evangelism without discipleship so that people are inoculated against the faith rather than given a fever for the faith.

Despite problems in the denomination, Ellis said he finds hope in one side effect. "I suspect there are more people praying for Southern Baptists right now than have ever been praying for Southern Baptist life and work. We're being bathed in prayer."

Ellis is currently force chaplain for the chief of naval technical training in Memphis, Tenn. He was pastor of churches in Virginia and Kentucky before becoming a chaplain in 1968.

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Aspiring writers should
just plunge in: author

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
8/2/90

F-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--Aspiring writers should "just plunge in and do it," an author and speaker said.

"How do you get started writing?" Robert Hastings, editor emeritus of the Illinois Baptist, newsjournal of the Illinois Baptist State Association, and author of several books about his life growing up in southern Illinois, asked a group of about 60 attending the annual writers workshop at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

"You just start writing something," he said. "You can always clean it up later."

Hastings, a Springfield, Ill., resident, was the guest speaker for the 10th consecutive year at the 1990 Sunday School Board Writers Workshop, July 16-19, sponsored by the Church Program Training Center.

The annual conference provides training to aspiring writers in preparing articles, books, devotions and curriculum for board periodicals.

John Shivers, a first-time workshop participant and member of First Baptist Church of Calhoun, Ga., knows what it means to "just plunge in" and start writing.

Shivers, development director for the Georgia regional library system, said he wrote his first novel ("if you could call it that") at age 11.

Hastings dubbed dedication and emotion as two important characteristics of a writer.

Shivers adds to that list tenacity.

After 48 attempts to publish an article in Home Life, the Sunday School Board's family magazine, Shivers said he finally succeeded in May 1989.

"I tried my first time when I was 17," said Shivers.

"Home Life was a consistent factor in our home when I was growing up," Shivers said. "Outside of Sunday school and discipleship training literature, Home Life was really the only real magazine I ever read."

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"So at age 17, I sat down and wrote the most marvelous masterpiece and sent it to Home Life. A little while later, it came back," noted Shivers, who said after a few years and several attempts at sending articles to various magazines, he began to notice each one had a specific target audience.

When Shivers began tailoring his pieces for specific periodicals, "I began noticing a difference in my rejection slips. They were nicer, more encouraging. Some had hand-written notes from editors."

Shivers even revised one rejected Home Life article and submitted it to The Deacon, a periodical produced by the board's church administration department.

It was published.

His fire was fueled. He had only one thing on his mind.

"I just had to get something in Home Life if it killed me."

Shivers followed developments at Home Life including a change of editors and criticism by some that the magazine featured too many female writers.

Shivers pulled up an article he had written three or four years earlier, sent it in again and it was published. The result after 48 tries -- a first-person, two-page article, Making the Grade, about seeking professional help for his daughter in dealing with problems at school.

Shivers said success has given him confidence.

"Within the last five years, I have really begun to see how my writing could be a ministry. I definitely felt it was something the Lord wanted me to do," he said. "But, it is also something I do for me."

Hastings said writers who share their inner emotions and feelings have the talent to "move other people.

"Your job is to get in touch with people through the printed page and touch their emotions," Hastings said.

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