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90-102

Baptist workers OK in Kuwait;
Liberia couple's status unclear

By Erich Bridges & Donald D. Martin

N-JMB

KUWAIT CITY, Kuwait (BP)--A Southern Baptist family in Iraqi-controlled Kuwait has not been heard from directly since Aug. 2, but a cable from the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait City indicates they are still safe.

However, mission officials are unsure of the status of two Southern Baptist missionaries in Liberia.

In Kuwait, Maurice and Laurie Graham of Shelbyville, Tenn., and Hutchinson, Kan., and their two sons, ages 13 and 10, reportedly remain in the residence of a U.S. Embassy official, according to the U.S. State Department's Kuwait task force.

"The Graham family is safe and they are with the (embassy) family," said State Department official Michael Ann Dean of the task force, referring to a cable received Aug. 3 from the embassy in Kuwait City. "We haven't any update cable. ... If they felt there was any danger they would certainly move (the embassy family) and of course they would move the Grahams also."

The situation in Kuwait City remained relatively calm for Americans and other foreigners Aug. 6, the State Department said. But the airport, bombed Aug. 2, remained closed and no evacuation plans had been made.

No change was reported in the wake of Iraqi threats against foreign nationals in Kuwait. "The information we have is basically that nothing bad is happening," Dean said. "As far as we know it's just a holding pattern right now." About 3,800 Americans live in Kuwait.

An official identified as the foreign minister of the new puppet government in Kuwait warned Aug. 5 that countries considering "punitive measures" against Kuwait and Iraq "should remember that they have interests and nationals in Kuwait."

The Grahams were living in an apartment in the church where they work, across the street from Kuwait's national assembly building. The area became the scene of fighting as invading Iraqi forces swarmed into the city Aug. 2.

The area "is really a hot spot," Graham said in a phone call to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board that day. Iraqi soldiers entered their home four times and "got a little rough ... but no one is hurt or anything like that," Graham said.

The family left for the embassy official's home later that day, discovering as they departed that the rear window of their car had been shot out during the fighting.

The Grahams recently moved to Kuwait 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.

Meanwhile, Foreign Mission Board officials were unsure of the status of missionaries Ed and Fran Laughridge in northwest Liberia after losing scheduled radio contact with them Aug. 4.

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Mrs. Laughridge, of Great Falls, S.C., usually contacts missionary Steve Springer in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, by radio each morning and evening from the couple's mission station in Mano River, a small mining town about 80 miles northwest of Monrovia near the Sierra Leone border. Springer said he had not heard from the Laughridges since the morning of Aug. 4.

Laughridge, of Rock Hill, S.C., planned to drive to Sierra Leone Aug. 4 to purchase about \$5,000 worth of rice for refugee hunger relief and then return to Mano River. Laughridge was expected to arrive back in Mano River Aug. 6, Springer said.

Mrs. Laughridge reportedly had learned of the U.S. Marines' airlift, which evacuated 61 Americans and 12 other foreign citizens from the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia Aug. 5, from a radio operator who spoke to her, according to Southern Baptist mission workers in Ivory Coast.

The Marines entered Monrovia in helicopters from ships off the coast after rebel leader Prince Johnson threatened to arrest Americans in the city to provoke international intervention in the Liberian war.

Mrs. Laughridge may have left Mano River after learning of the evacuation, rebels controlling the area may have confiscated her radio, or the Laughridges may have run out of fuel that powers the radio's generator, said mission officials.

Rebels in the Mano River area are led by Charles Taylor, a former aide to Liberian President Samuel Doe. They have demanded that Doe resign and stand trial for corruption, nepotism and human rights abuses.

The only other Southern Baptist missionaries remaining in Liberia were Earl Williams, of West Monroe, La., and Jane Williams, of Knoxville, Tenn. The Williamses work in Yekepa, a small town near the Guinea border. The Williams drove into Ivory Coast to purchase supplies and planned to return to Yekepa Aug. 7, officials said.

One other missionary couple, Chris Wilkinson of Gainesville, Fla., and his wife Gwen, of Ardmore, Tenn., left Liberia in late July after being escorted with other missionaries by rebel forces to Yekepa from rebel-held Voinjama. The Wilkinsons are now in the United States.

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Southern Seminary profs
consider move to Georgia

By Marv Knox

N-^{CO}
(Ky.) SOTS

Baptist Press
8/6/90

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Professors at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., are talking about starting a new seminary in Georgia.

They cite a mass exodus to the vacant campus of Tift College in Forsyth as one option open to them in "denominationally uncertain" times.

The idea of moving to Tift College came from Glenn Hinson, a church history professor at Southern Seminary. Tift was an all-female Baptist school that merged with Mercer University, a Baptist school in Macon, Ga., in 1986. Mercer closed the Tift campus, about 65 miles south of Atlanta, in 1988 and still owns the property.

If a new seminary were started, more than half of Southern's faculty and about 1,000 of its 3,200 students would move, Hinson predicted.

A move would cost about \$30 million, he estimated, adding the amount is attainable: "Divide that in 3,000 churches giving \$10,000 each. That doesn't sound unreasonable."

Bill J. Leonard, professor of church history and president the seminary's Faculty Association, said, the discussions "reflect the uncertainty and fluidity that is occurring throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Because of the way the controversy continues, people are asking questions they hoped they would never have to ask. So the discussion about moving a portion of the faculty is part of a broader discussion about a variety of options.

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"We would all like to stay at Southern and continue teaching our students, but after this spring and the Johnson document, we don't know that we can stay. Because we have families, we have to explore options. We do not know what the future holds."

(The "Johnson document" is a 16-page article released this spring by Jerry Johnson, then a first-term seminary trustee, from Aurora, Colo. The article criticizes five professors and seminary president Roy L. Honeycutt, who, it says, "just does not believe the Bible.")

A move to Tift is only one option, Leonard and Hinson said. Others are:

-- "Stay at Southern Seminary as long as we can," Leonard said. "But given the Johnson document, it's possible some of our colleagues would not have that possibility." He mentioned faculty firings and administrative changes as possible fallout from the document.

-- "Send resumes and do their own thing, and the faculty would disperse by attrition," he added.

-- Move to Tift or some other location. Hinson noted the Shelby Campus of the University of Louisville -- former site of Baptists' Kentucky Southern College -- as an alternative, along with a possible move to Nashville.

The concept of new forms of training for ministry is not unique to Southern Seminary.

Baylor University this summer registered the name George W. Truett Theological Seminary with the Texas secretary of state, should Baylor trustees decide to start a school of theology or divinity. Observers linked the move to the possible firing of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary president Russell Dilday and the restructuring of that school by Southern Baptist conservatives.

The Southern Baptist Alliance is trying to start a seminary; Wake Forest University is starting a theology school; and several non-Baptist schools are opening Baptist "houses" for study.

At Southern Seminary, Hinson's idea about Tift provides "a frame of reference for our general discussion," Leonard said.

Leonard has not contacted Mercer University about the Tift campus, and the Southern faculty has not initiated fund-raising efforts on behalf of a new school, he said.

"There are people, I suppose, who choose not to give to Southern Baptist institutions," he said. "But it's not because we told them. ... People are asking those questions all over the SBC, 'Where do I give my money?'"

Theological education will be on the agenda of a national meeting of moderates in Atlanta Aug. 23-25, Hinson noted. They may create an alternate Southern Baptist unified budget, which might provide funds for such a school, he said.

Virginia Baptists are considering a new budgeting process that includes a \$134,000 line item for theological education, which also could go to a new school, he added.

"We have had numerous calls from people saying, 'Where do I send money?'" he reported. Perhaps a foundation, with trustees, could be created to handle contributions, he said, noting faculty members have not gotten that far in their deliberations.

The timing of any move depends on Southern's trustees, Hinson said. "If our trustees in their September meeting do not create any big waves as they did last April, we will look to April (1991) and see what will happen."

Whatever the timing, a major concern is students, Leonard said: "One of the saddest aspects of this relates to our students. ... (But) if all the seminaries in the SBC offer primarily one kind of instruction, where will the Baptist students go who do not conform to that kind of instruction? Fundamentalists asked that question, and that's why Mid-America and Luther Rice seminaries were started. I guess moderates can ask that question, too."

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The seminary professors have not reached uniformity or consensus regarding the questions that face them, Leonard said.

But their consensus involves teaching, he added: "We're committed to being here. We're committed to our students and are going to try to help our students deal with being ministers in the Southern Baptist Convention at this time. We hope we'll be here in 10 years."

In the meantime, however, "we are asking questions because we have to feel we have some participation in our future."

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Baylor president bans dancing,
considers new 'Truett' seminary

By Toby Druin

N-CC - JACO
Baylor Baptist Press
8/6/90

WACO, Texas (BP)--Baylor University President Herbert H. Reynolds has continued a ban on dancing on campus and has taken the first step toward starting a Baptist seminary.

Should Baylor trustees later approve beginning the seminary, it would be named the George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

Baylor trustees voted in late July to let Reynolds decide the issue of dancing on campus, and approved reserving the name should the school opt for starting a new seminary.

Reynolds' decision to continue the 145-year-old tradition of no dances on campus puts to rest for the time being an issue that had been simmering since February when a student task force asked that dancing be permitted on campus.

A trustee committee studied the dancing issue before the board voted to leave the decision to Reynolds as president.

Trustee Chairman Winfred Moore said the action of the board reflects its confidence in the administration's ability to make decisions.

"We decided the administration should have the continuing freedom to act and our full support in its action concerning the issue of dancing on campus," Moore said.

Reynolds said the dancing issue would be reviewed at a later date, but did not specify when that might be.

Though it was not unanimous, trustees also approved Reynolds' request that the university register the name, George W. Truett Theological Seminary, with the Texas secretary of state in case the school decides to begin a seminary in the future.

Truett was pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas for the 47-year period from 1897 to 1944. Reynolds said Truett "epitomized all that is good of Baptists, beginning with his unwavering commitment to religious liberty and religious freedom.

Reynolds said the decision to reserve the Truett name was to provide for any future contingency "should there be a time when it appears we might well be advised to consider establishing a school of theology, divinity school or seminary, depending on how comprehensive the program is intended to be."

Reynolds said he hopes the existing six Southern Baptist theological seminaries will continue to offer programs with historic Baptist principles such as autonomy of the local church, the pastor as the undershepherd not chief executive, priesthood of the believer, and religious liberty.

But if the six seminaries move in a different direction, "we would want to be in a position to ensure that our denomination is well served by the kind of advanced programs that Baylor, as the largest of our Baptist institutions, is able to provide.

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Baylor University Press Secretary Michael Bishop, in a statement to news media, added that Reynolds was serving notice that "we know how to start seminaries. We have the faculty; we have the library, and we think we would be flooded by applicants from seminary professors who are not happy in a totalitarian environment."

Establishing a new seminary would require approval by the Baylor trustees beyond reserving a name with the secretary of state, which is only the first step in the process.

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'God spared us,' volunteer
says after Philippine quake

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
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BAGUIO CITY, Philippines (BP)--Not fear, but awe, overwhelmed Southern Baptist volunteer John Thomas as he watched a whole mountainside reduced to rubble in one thunderous roar during the July 16 earthquake in the Philippines.

"The shifting soil under our feet made standing difficult," remembered Thomas, of Daphne, Ala. "In a matter of seconds the mountainside ... came crashing down. On the left side of the road, the mountains came down in three streams, one about 100 yards south of us, another right in front of us, and another about 100 yards north."

Thomas and his wife, Helen, were driving home to Baguio City with Southern Baptist missionaries Bob and Jan Nash of Athens and Cornelia, Ga., after participating in a weekend ministry out of town. Thomas was navigating them along Kennon Road, a well-traveled artery into Baguio City, through an area with a steep mountain to their left and a gorge to their right.

Suddenly the car lurched sharply toward the gorge. "Small rocks were falling onto the roadway from the hillside to our left, so I accelerated to reach a clearing about 100 yards ahead," Thomas said. "Split seconds after I left the point of acceleration, a huge boulder the size of our automobile occupied the space where we had been, and a large tree fell adjacent to it."

Then, on the other side of the gorge to their right, a whole mountainside became a pile of dirt and rocks in seconds.

Thomas, a trustee of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, had preached the day before on the subject "Being Secure in an Insecure World," based on Psalm 91.

Little did he dream that he would experience the protection promised in that Old Testament passage as they spent the next three days stranded on the road.

"I never doubted for a moment that God was present and was going to see us through this overwhelming demonstration of the forces of nature," said Thomas, a retired professor at Mobile (Ala.) College. "I was never afraid, but I will admit to being very bewildered, awed and perplexed by the overwhelming power of the earthquake."

Between 4:26 p.m., the time of the first quake, and 8:03 p.m., Thomas counted 24 tremors, many of which caused more dirt and rocks to come tumbling down the mountain that walled them in. During that period, however, the mission workers suffered not even one scratch.

"We saw, felt, and heard God's power at work -- all at once," said Mrs. Nash. "And we know he had us in the palm of his hand." Riding in the car, "10 seconds slower or 10 seconds faster would have buried us in a landslide."

Others were not as fortunate. A Philippine mother at the site lost her 4-year-old daughter. The girl was crushed by falling rock as she bathed with her 8-year-old cousin in a little stream running beside their home. The cousin was critically injured. Others who lived in villages along the road were injured. Many were killed or injured when rocks buried them in their autos.

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During the three days they were stranded along Kennon Road, the two couples found a student from the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Baguio who had been riding on a bus about a half-mile in front of them. They also met up with Southern Baptist missionary nurse Judy Yost of Naples, N.Y., and a seminary graduate who had been riding together just to the south. Although they had been on three separate trips, the seven were stopped within walking distance of each other.

At one point as the Thomases and Nashes sought safety, they needed to cross two massive landslides, crawling over and around boulders as other stones were being jarred loose by continuing tremors, which numbered 535 during the five days after the initial shock.

"We knew Baptists were praying for us," said Mrs. Nash. "We got through without injury. Others were killed both before and after we went on that treacherous path."

Three students from the Baptist seminary in Baguio found the two couples at a bus where they had gathered with stranded Filipinos. Despite heavy rain, the young men risked their lives to look for the missing Baptists, equipped with ropes in case of an emergency.

The wife of one of the rescuers, a father with two small children and a third on the way, at first rejected the idea of her husband's leaving to go down the mountain. But then she remembered the words of Jesus: "Greater love hath no man than this, that he should lay down his life for his friends." It was then, she said, that she felt peace and encouraged him to go.

"The Lord met our every need in such miraculous ways," said Mrs. Nash. At the bus, "we had fresh running mountain water 24 hours a day. During these days we had been sending written messages both north and south. The Lord knew where we were, but we thought if someone on earth knew too, it might help!"

As soon as word of the group reached missionary administrator Sam Waldron in Manila, he contacted the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Wycliffe Bible Translators) to arrange for a helicopter to rescue the stranded missionaries.

First, however, two Philippine helicopters landed with doctors and evacuation equipment for the critically injured.

The missionaries returned to Baguio to help survivors stabilize their lives. "Tremors continue," said Thomas, two weeks after the first quake. "But God has spared his servants to serve again."

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Evangelist leaves South Africa
after tensions erupt with Muslims

By Art Toalston

N-JMB

Baptist Press
8/6/90

MOBILE, Ala. (BP)--A Southern Baptist evangelist's speaking tour of South Africa was canceled after tensions with South African Muslims flared.

Anis Shorrosh of Mobile, Ala., left South Africa July 30 after scheduled appearances in Cape Town and Durban were disrupted.

Fighting broke out after his first talk on "The Koran and the Bible: Which Is God's Word?" in a Cape Town suburb's civic center July 24. According to several accounts, Shorrosh was fortunate to escape about 30 angry Muslims with only minor injuries.

A public meeting in Durban was canceled July 29 when tensions soared as about 4,000 Muslims and Christians gathered at a 2,200-seat city auditorium.

Shorrosh left the building under police guard in a paddy wagon.

Shorrosh is a Palestinian, a native of Nazareth from a Christian background who now is a U.S. citizen. His efforts challenging Islam have included public debates, speaking appearances and a book titled, "Islam Revealed, a Christian Arab's View of Islam."

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In all, eight appearances scheduled for Shorrosh were canceled by the Apostolic Faith Mission, the denomination that sponsored his South Africa visit. The Pentecostal body claims 1,000 churches in the country and 1,000 in other parts of Africa.

"It was not fair to the general public to proceed with these meetings," said Johan Carstens, missions secretary for the denomination. "We also could not guarantee the safety of Dr. Anis Shorrosh anymore.

"I didn't expect something like this to happen and many Muslims did not," Carstens said, noting that he had received a number of telephone calls from Muslims stating that Shorrosh's antagonists "would not represent the Muslim community's attitude at large."

In an interview, Shorrosh said he intends to continue a "confrontational" approach to Muslim evangelism, even though some Christian workers consider this method harmful.

"We are not talking about confrontation on the emotional level," he qualified. "We're presenting facts ... speaking the truth in love."