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August 10, 1990

90-104

Conflicting reports cloud
couple's whereabouts in Kuwait

By Art Toalston

N-FMB

WASHINGTON, (BP)--Conflicting reports on the whereabouts of a Southern Baptist family in Iraqi-controlled Kuwait have been issued by U.S. State Department spokespersons, who nevertheless assure that Maurice and Laurie Graham and their two sons are safe.

"We know that they are OK and they have been in contact with the embassy" in Kuwait, State Department spokesperson Jill Misage said Aug. 10.

On Aug. 8, spokesperson Judy Dunbar reported to Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials that the Grahams, from Shelbyville, Tenn., and Hutchinson, Kan., and their two sons, ages 13 and 10, had taken shelter in the embassy.

Misage, however, could not confirm the Aug. 8 report. "I am not even certain they are residing there (at the embassy)," she said Aug. 10. "I know that they are with a (U.S. Embassy official's) family ... but I don't have any further information."

Dunbar could not be reached Aug. 10 to offer any clarification.

About 130 State Department officials work at the embassy compound, which encompasses a series of buildings on "a large amount of acreage," according to the State Department.

State Department spokespersons said they had no estimates of the number of Americans who have taken shelter in the embassy. An estimated 3,000 Americans remain in Kuwait waiting for word from Iraqi officials that they may leave. Kuwait's borders, airports and docks remain closed, Misage said, and thus no evacuation plans for Americans have been formulated.

"Some food shortages have been reported," said one spokesperson, "but then other reports say that some grocery stores are open. It's kind of a mixed report. I don't think there's cause for panic."

Mrs. Graham's mother, Margaret Nuzum in Hutchinson, said, "I just have steeled myself that it's going to be a long haul. I don't think it's going to be (resolved) tomorrow or the next day but we can always hope. You have to have hope."

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Missionary family in Liberia
freed, but elects to stay

By Donald D. Martin

N-FMB

Baptist Press
8/10/90

MANO RIVER, Liberia (BP)--A regional rebel commander in Liberia told Southern Baptist missionaries Ed and Fran Laughridge Aug. 10 that they were free to leave their mission station in Mano River and depart from Liberia.

But the Laughridges and their son Edward, 20, have decided to stay on in Mano River because of the need for relief work in the area, Mrs. Laughridge told missionaries in neighboring Ivory Coast via radio.

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"We feel for now we have a needed ministry here," Mrs. Laughridge, of Great Falls, S.C., said. "Our situation has improved considerably. The regional (rebel) commander said we are free to come and go across the border as we please. There are no restrictions. At this point we are not planning to leave immediately."

Mrs. Laughridge said tension in the area, about 80 miles from Liberia on the Sierra Leone border, has decreased and the number of rebel troops has dropped.

The Laughridges met with the rebel commander Aug. 10. The commander said the family had been free to leave all along. Their six-day detainment was the result of a misunderstanding with a lower-level rebel commander, he said.

Rebel troops of the National Patriotic Front had earlier refused to let the Laughridges leave the area or, for several days, to communicate by radio with mission officials in Ivory Coast.

But tension between the missionaries and local rebels in the Mano River area began to ease several days before the meeting with the regional commander.

In fact, Laughridge, of Rock Hill, S.C., and a group of rebel soldiers drove Aug. 8 to the Sierra Leone border and received a supply of rice from Southern Baptist missionary Dean Ekberg, of Rockford, Ill. Ekberg, a geological engineer working to develop water projects in Liberia, evacuated from the country earlier and now is helping with relief work for Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone.

Ekberg sent 25 100-pound bags of rice in a canoe across the river that divides Liberia and Sierra Leone. Laughridge planned to pick up the rice and return the same day, but the process took longer than expected and forced Laughridge and the rebel soldiers to spend the night at the river before returning Aug. 9 to Mano River.

The desperately needed rice, distributed to rebels and civilians in Mano River, lasted only a short while, Mrs. Laughridge said. Finding food apparently is becoming the main concern of both civilians and rebels in the area, she said.

Southern Baptist missionaries working with Liberian refugees in Ivory Coast reported similar hunger needs.

"I watched rice being unloaded in a village (in Ivory Coast) of more than 2,000 refugees," said missionary David Brown, of Marietta, Ga. "Eight or nine children rushed in with pans to scoop up rice that had spilled onto the ground." Stray grains of rice were even swept up from the truck beds to make sure none was wasted, he said.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has spent \$98,000 through the Ivory Coast mission organization for the Liberian Refugee Project. Brown and other mission workers have distributed food to more than 16,000 Liberian refugees in the last few months, he said. Recently the Foreign Mission Board released an additional \$150,000 for the relief project.

Some refugee camps, though safely behind Ivory Coast's border, are gripped with fear, Brown said.

"At night it is difficult for them to sleep because they hear gunfire," he said. "They are afraid perhaps that if they fall asleep they will once again be attacked or killed, even though they are now safe on this side of the border."

More than 200,000 refugees have fled the fighting in Liberia's seven-month civil war, which has killed more than 5,000 people, mostly civilians.

Peace-keeping troops from west African nations were reported to be building up on Liberia's borders. Also, 2,000 west African troops were reported to be headed by sea from Freetown, Sierra Leone, to Monrovia. The peace-keeping force will try to end the civil war.

HMB trustees affirm CP, warn
against alternate giving plans

By Mark Wingfield

N. NMS

ATLANTA (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board affirmed the Cooperative Program and warned against alternate giving plans after hearing financial projections for the agency through 1993.

During their Aug. 8 meeting, HMB trustees adopted a resolution presented by Anthony Carson of Louisville, Ky. The resolution affirms the Cooperative Program and states the group's opposition to "negative designation or any attempt to circumvent the Cooperative Program."

The Cooperative Program is the denomination's unified budget that funds home and foreign missions, theological education and other national causes.

A second resolution, offered by Jon Meek of Aberdeen, N.J., expanded upon Carson's resolution by calling on trustees to encourage their churches to increase support of the Cooperative Program. Meek also requested that HMB administration distribute the text of a devotional message given earlier in the meeting by George Harris of San Antonio, Texas.

In the devotion, Harris urged trustees, "don't quit now" in supporting the Cooperative Program. "The world is not interested in whether we escrow or don't escrow our funds, whether we're moderate or conservative, but whether we know Jesus," he said. "This is not the time for Southern Baptists or the Home Mission Board to quit."

Concern about negative designation and alternate funding plans has increased since the denomination's annual meeting in June. Churches and state conventions which consider themselves cut off by current leadership have announced plans to alter their giving as a form of protest.

In his address to the board, HMB President Larry Lewis also spoke about threats to the Cooperative Program. Missionaries, not convention leadership, will be hurt by churches withholding money, he said.

"Who are the ones who suffer?" Lewis asked. "Not Paul Pressler. Not Paige Patterson. Not Larry Lewis or Morris Chapman. Not the SBC Executive Committee or even you, the members of the Home Mission board of directors.

"No! It is the missionaries who suffer most. It is the cause of world missions that pays the price.

"Read my lips," Lewis declared. "We must not hold our missionaries hostage while we fight our political battles in the SBC."

Lewis predicted an "impossible" situation if Southern Baptists destroy the Cooperative Program and return to a societal method of funding missions. "If this becomes the prevailing approach, budgets will be slashed, programs will be eliminated, services will be reduced. In all likelihood, staff members and missionaries will lose their jobs."

He encouraged trustees to "stand up and be counted for the Cooperative Program."

Despite his concerns about the threat to the Cooperative Program and what Lewis called "the untimely dismissal of two respected journalists," Lewis said he felt positive about the future of Southern Baptists. (Lewis was referring to the action of the SBC Executive Committee dismissing Al Shackelford and Dan Martin as director and news editor of the Baptist Press.)

Lewis said he believes the present leaders of the convention "will make a definite and deliberate effort to broaden the leadership base to include a larger spectrum of Southern Baptist lives. I believe this is imperative if we achieve healing and reconciliation within our beloved denomination," he said.

Lewis concluded with an appeal for Baptists to demonstrate unconditional love. "A harsh, condemnatory, judgmental spirit is unbecoming any community of Christians." He urged Baptists to unite in the task of missions and evangelism and "in our desire to see our nation and our world brought to Jesus."

The night before, at a dinner for trustees, planning section vice president Ernest Kelley spoke about the status of HMB finances.

Kelley explained budgeting procedures and projected income and expenses for the next three years. Although the 1991 budget looks favorable, projected expenses will exceed projected income for 1992 and 1993, he said.

"Next year, several factors will come together to give a good or at least improved financial picture," Kelley explained. As a new formula for allocating Cooperative Program funds comes into place, the HMB in 1991 will receive a larger than usual increase in funds. Also several big-ticket items, such as the "Here's Hope" simultaneous revivals, which were in the 1990 budget will not be in the 1991 budget.

Projections call for the Cooperative Program to provide about \$1 million more to the HMB in 1991 than in 1990. However, that increase must be offset against a \$500,000 decrease in Cooperative Program funds in 1990, he said.

In 1992 and 1993, the HMB expects to receive annual increases in Cooperative Program receipts of approximately \$550,000. But health benefit costs alone could increase as much as \$1 million in each of those years, he said.

Unless income increases more than expected or projects are eliminated, the HMB will experience a budget shortfall in 1992 and 1993, Kelley predicted. That prediction is based on the assumptions that Cooperative Program giving will increase 2 percent each year and will not be negatively affected by the denomination's ongoing controversy.

"There are indications that something must be done," he said. "The earlier done, the less disruption. We believe we have enough time to do something in an orderly fashion before 1992. Hopefully, through attrition in regard to personnel and a sharp, critical eye directed at every expense, we will keep a balanced and well-managed budget."

Kelley noted that budget planning is not an exact science because the HMB "lives out of the offering plate" and is impacted by budget problems faced by state conventions.

He cited the Florida Baptist Convention as an example. By adjusting the formulation of their Cooperative Program giving, Florida Baptists will give about \$1 million less to the unified missions budget next year, he said, resulting in about \$200,000 less given to the HMB.

Where decreases in Cooperative Program funding fall short, increases in the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering could make up the difference, Kelley said. For example, although the HMB slashed its budget by nearly 7 percent in 1989, expenses still exceeded income by about \$2 million. That difference was covered by a better-than-expected increase in Annie Armstrong gifts.

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Board declines to rescind policy on women;
hears of increased Easter offering receipts

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
8/10/90

N-HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--Rather than rescinding a policy prohibiting financial assistance to churches with women pastors, trustees of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board voted to affirm the role of women in missions support.

Albert Simms, retired pastor from Richmond, Va., offered a motion to rescind the policy during the board of directors meeting Aug. 8. His motion was seconded by Orris Bullock of the District of Columbia.

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Earlier in the meeting, trustees heard that 1990 receipts for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering are up 6.74 percent over 1989, changed the approval process for mission pastors and appointed 25 missions personnel.

The board elected four people to the agency's national staff in Atlanta and adopted a motion opposing negative designation to the Cooperative Program after hearing an appeal from the board's president.

The action Simms sought to rescind was passed in October of 1986 and prohibits the HMB from providing financial assistance to churches with women in pastoral roles. He presented his resolution during the miscellaneous business portion of the agenda.

Nelson Price, pastor of Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., offered a substitute motion to delete all of Simms' proposed resolution except one paragraph dealing with women's contributions to missions support.

Price's substitute motion passed with four people voting against the changes.

The paragraph trustees approved says the HMB "recognizes the significant part women have played in missionary education and in faithful, often sacrificial, financial support of the work of this board." It also expresses gratitude to Woman's Missionary Union for promoting the Cooperative Program and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

George Harris, pastor of Castle Hills First Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas, said the substitute motion "affirms the ministry of women but diffuses the volatile issue of women's ordination."

After the meeting, Simms called the substitute motion a "parliamentary maneuver to cut the heart out of my resolution."

During the meeting, Simms said in his six years as a board member, no other issue has generated as much response as this matter. He said the policy has "resulted in division and strife" and is "widely considered to be an infringement upon the autonomy and the rights of local churches."

Johnny Jackson of Little Rock, Ark., chaired the committee which studied the issue for a year before the 1986 policy was established.

"The question was not then and is not now the autonomy of local churches," said Jackson who is now chairman of the board's missionary personnel committee. "Any church can ordain and call as pastor any person it so desires."

"The issue is: Do Southern Baptists in 35,000-plus churches want their Cooperative Program money spent to fund and support women pastors?"

Simms said he has never been pastor or member of a church which ordained women and he is not ready for a woman pastor in his church. Yet he said, "I have believed from the beginning that the Home Mission Board made a grievous mistake in adopting the arbitrary policy of giving no financial assistance to churches with women pastors."

In other business, trustees were told the 1990 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering should total \$34.4 million by year end based on current receipts. The receipts on Aug. 7 reached \$32.58 million, a 6.74 percent increase over last year, reported Bob Banks, HMB executive vice president.

If the projected \$34.4 million is received, the total will be \$1.4 million more than the Easter offering receipts for 1989.

Trustees also changed board policy to allow faster processing and approval of certain categories of personnel. Mission pastor candidates and individuals receiving field personnel assistance now may be approved through an administrative process without trustee approval.

Missionaries, missionary associates, apprentices and US-2 missionaries will continue to be appointed by trustee vote, while financial assistance for mission pastors will require only approval by administration.

Larry Lewis, HMB president, said the action is significant because it affirms the role and integrity of the HMB staff and state conventions in the approval process.

"We have heard and have responded to a plea from state conventions to try to eliminate delays and paper work in the process," Lewis said. "This action, we believe, will solve some of the problems we have experienced."

Trustees also elected four people to staff positions.

James F. Eaves was elected director of the church evangelism department. He is currently professor of evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Moises C. Rodriguez was elected assistant director for ethnic leadership development in the language church extension division. He currently is pastor of Templo Bautista Del Salvador in Waco, Texas, and assistant in church history at Baylor University.

Pamela Mungo was elected director of project development in the new church extension division. She is currently church extension director for the Baptist Convention of New England.

Kenneth Neibel was elected associate to the director of the new church extension division. He has been associate director of the field servicing department for the new church extension division.

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HMB sells headquarters site,
will relocate within Atlanta

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
8/10/90

N-10/MB

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board has sold its 6.3-acre headquarters site in midtown Atlanta for \$14.5 million and plans to relocate to a new facility in the metropolitan Atlanta area in five years.

The sale was approved by the agency's board of directors during a March 14 meeting in Atlanta but could not be made public until the transaction was closed, President Larry Lewis said. He announced completion of the sale to trustees during their Aug. 8 meeting.

The buyer is AmProp Georgia I Limited Partnership of Chicago.

Terms of the sale call for the HMB to lease its current facilities at 1350 Spring St. from AmProp for five years while a new site is selected and a new headquarters building is designed and constructed. Proceeds from the sale will be invested and drawn upon as they are needed for the relocation, Lewis said.

"We are planning for this relocation to be a cost recovery transaction," Lewis said. "Proceeds from the sale of our midtown property will be used in the development of a new headquarters site.

He explained that no future Cooperative Program funds will be required to finance the project and that Annie Armstrong Easter Offering funds could not be used because they go directly to the mission field.

Lewis said future cost-savings is a major reason for the relocation. "We have been in our current facilities more than 20 years, and the cost of maintaining deteriorating buildings is now consuming more of our missions money than we think is appropriate. We expect to enter a new facility debt-free, with a lower overhead that will allow us to channel more money into direct missions.

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"Conservative estimates show we can save at least \$315,000 per year on decreased property taxes, maintenance costs, security needs, communications and insurance," he said.

Lewis explained that for the HMB to remain at its current site would also require spending approximately \$2 million to meet new city fire codes on sprinkler systems.

Atlanta's midtown business district has experienced a building boom in recent years that has driven real estate prices higher. However, analysts believe the midtown boom has crested and will subside until the "overbuild" of office space is corrected.

"We determined that if we were going to sell, this was the best possible time to do it," Lewis said. "Otherwise, we would have been locked into this location for another five to 10 years with escalating maintenance costs as well."

A new site has not been selected, but that task is the first priority of a site and building committee appointed by the board of directors. Plans call for the site to be purchased within the next year, Lewis said.

Criteria for site selection include accessibility, proximity to hotels and restaurants, cost, taxes and future value, he said.

The recommendation to sell the current property came from a long range site development committee of the board of directors.

In 1984, the decision was made to keep the HMB in Atlanta rather than move it to another city more centrally located in United States. The long range site development committee was appointed in 1986 to develop a plan for upgrading the current facilities. However, when architectural studies showed that was not financially feasible, the committee began looking at the option of selling the property.

John Faris, a businessman from Laurens, S.C., was chairman of the committee. Serving with him were Brad Allen of Duncan, Okla.; Carolyn Byrd of Charlotte, N.C.; Clifford Hogue of Midland, Texas; Clark Hutchinson of Marietta, Ga.; Liston Morris of Columbia, Miss.; Ronnie Yarber of Mesquite, Texas; and board chairman Ralph Smith of Austin, Texas.

Danny Moore, director of the HMB's business division, served as staff coordinator for the committee and will continue to work with the new committee on relocation.

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

Dan Stringer elected
Arizona top executive

By Elizabeth Young

N-CCO (Ariz.) Baptist Press
8/10/90

PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--Dan C. Stringer was unanimously elected executive director-treasurer of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention by the state's executive board Aug. 7.

Stringer, 62, has been living in Scottsdale, Ariz., since shortly after his retirement as executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention in 1989.

Stringer's employment is subject to approval "by a two-thirds favorable vote of the messengers in an annual or special convention session," according to the Arizona convention's constitution.

Harvey Kimbler, state convention president and search committee chairman, has called a special convention for Aug. 28 at Trinity Baptist Church in Casa Grande, Ariz.

If approved, Stringer will succeed Jack Johnson, who became president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission July 1.

Board members broke into spontaneous applause when Kimbler pronounced the voice vote unanimous. Twenty-two of the 31 board members were present for the meeting.

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Stringer told the executive board that he began his denominational career in Arizona more than 35 years ago.

He was pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Buckeye, Ariz., 1957-59; First Southern Baptist Church in Las Vegas, Nev., (then a part of the Arizona convention) 1965-66; and Coronado Baptist Church, Scottsdale, Ariz., 1968-69. He was president of the Arizona convention in 1965 and served on the state's executive board for eight years.

An Arizona convention staff member from 1966-71, Stringer served in a variety of roles, culminating in the positions of associate executive secretary and missions director.

He left the state in 1971 to become executive director-treasurer of the Northwest Baptist Convention, a post he held for eight and a half years. He was executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention for ten years before taking early retirement in 1989.

Listing goals he would have as Arizona executive director, Stringer stressed the importance of financial stability and said he wanted Arizona to be able to contribute its part to the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program.

He noted that it is the responsibility of state conventions to raise Cooperative Program funds and that it is "an integral part of the total Southern Baptist life, and a major responsibility of the executive director-treasurer."

Stringer's commitment to Cooperative Program promotion was demonstrated in salary negotiations with the search committee. The committee intended for him to begin at about midpoint on the Arizona convention's salary line for executive director. However, Stringer requested that he work at the entry level salary, \$66,950 including benefits (about \$7,000 less than the committee intended), and that the salary package be further reduced by 20 percent. The 20 percent will be used as a discretionary fund for Cooperative Program promotion.

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Annuity Board assets at \$2.9 billion
after second quarter earnings rise

N-EO Annuity Baptist Press
8/10/90

DALLAS (BP)--Total assets of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board are nearing \$3 billion, trustees were told in Nashville during their July 30-31 meeting.

Treasurer Harold D. Richardson reported a sharp recovery in earnings during the second quarter after a lack-luster performance in equity and bond markets during the first three months of the year. Total earnings for the first six months exceeded \$100 million.

Agencies and institutions added 3,300 new members to the Convention Annuity Plan in the first six months, generating an additional \$5.5 million annual contribution to assets, which totaled \$2.917 billion on June 30, said Annuity Board President Paul W. Powell.

Benefits paid by the Annuity Board totalled \$88.9 million in the first half of 1990, up \$3.8 million or 4.58 percent, over the same period in 1989.

The relief committee of the board reported 37 people had been approved for grants. Of these, 16 were approved for monthly grants for up to two years, 15 will receive expense grants for two years, and six will receive one-time grants. The relief ministry of the board is funded by the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget.

Under the board's Adopt an Annuitant program, 115 annuitants were approved for a \$50-per-month increase in benefits, bringing the number of annuitants receiving the monthly addition to benefits to 669.

Trustees promoted Douglas D. Day, director in property and casualty, and Robert P. Henry, director in member services, to vice president positions.

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Six new trustees attended their first board meeting after a June orientation session in Dallas. They are: Richard E. Dwyer, pastor of Narbonne Avenue Baptist Church, Lomita, Calif.; Luis E. Neito, financial accountant for Metropolitan New York Baptist Association; Thomas A. Shaw, pastor of Red Fork Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla.; G.R. Rush, president of G.R. Rush and Company, certified public accountants, Chattanooga, Tenn.; Herman J. Smith, chairman of the board of First American Savings, Bedford, Texas; and J. Ray Taylor, president of Alexander & Alexander of Texas, Inc., Dallas.

The next meeting of the Annuity Board trustees will be Oct. 29-30 in Dallas.

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Maryland pastor resigns
from Executive Committee

EXEC Comm. By Bob Allen

Baptist Press
8/10/90

OCEAN CITY, Md. (BP)--Terry L. Davis, a Maryland member of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, has resigned in protest of the firing of two Baptist Press editors.

Davis, pastor of Ocean City Baptist Church, submitted his resignation in a letter to Harold C. Bennett of Nashville, president of the Executive Committee.

Davis said his decision was prompted by the firing of Al Shackelford, director of Baptist Press, and Dan Martin, BP news editor, along with the committee's decision to act in executive session with instructions for committee members not to discuss anything that went on in the meeting.

"The situation is such that I don't want to be a part of the Executive Committee any longer," Davis said in an interview with the Baptist True Union, newsjournal of the Baptist Convention of Maryland-Delaware. "When people say, 'Terry Davis is a member of the Executive Committee,' I am embarrassed."

Davis was elected to the 77-member Executive Committee in 1986 to fill an unexpired term, and was re-elected to a four-year term in 1989.

Bennett, in a letter to Davis, said he regretted his resignation, but would present his resignation to members of the Executive Committee when it meets in September.

Bennett pointed out the process for filling his unexpired term is the responsibility of the SBC Committee on Nominations, and that the vacancy would be filled by action of the convention in Atlanta next June.

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Kenya dancers accept Christ,
raise lifestyle questions

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
8/10/90

UKUNDA, Kenya (BP)--The "Drum of Africa" dance troupe recently hacked out a new village in the 6-foot-high brush and coral rock along Kenya's coast.

Dance leader Cosmos, better known as Bwana Safari, wanted to be nearer the string of luxury tourist hotels where the troupe performs traditional dances and songs almost every night.

That decision gave them more than a new home; it added a new meaning to life after the move brought them into contact with Christianity.

Five young men from the "Drum of Africa" were resting under a tree in the Moses' Corner neighborhood of Ukunda, Kenya, on a July afternoon. They had torn down their old houses and bundled up the saplings used for frames for their new homes.

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They weren't looking forward to the one-hour walk hauling the heavy wood to their new village. So when Southern Baptist missionary David Sorley stopped to talk, they willingly visited with the tall American doctor who spoke Swahili.

Sorley, a Minneapolis native who operates a medical clinic in Nairobi, was in Ukunda to take part in the Kenya Coastal Crusade.

The intensive evangelism effort combined about 60 Southern Baptist missionaries who work in Kenya, 540 Southern Baptist volunteers from America and scores of Kenyan Baptist pastors and lay workers to saturate the Kenya coast with the Christian message.

"As we talked I asked if they knew about Jesus Christ and if they were interested in eternal life," Sorley said. "They responded (positively) but at the same time told me they were members of a drumming and dancing group, and many Christians condemn what they do."

But as Sorley shared the gospel with the young men, all five prayed to become Christians. "They each said an individual prayer," he recalled. "I didn't want them to just repeat what I said or what someone else voiced."

They asked Sorley to come to their new village and talk to the others if it wasn't too far out of his way. It wasn't. Not only were Sorley and the Southern Baptist volunteers in town staying in one of the hotels where the "Drum of Africa" performs, they were in the one closest to the land the dancers were reclaiming from the bush for their village.

That night Sorley and Patrick, a Kenyan Baptist pastor, followed Emmanuel, one of the dancers, for a mile along a narrow trail. Bwana Safari greeted them warmly and said he was interested in hearing what they had to say, but it was late; they would have to return the next day.

When they returned the next morning, Bwana Safari decided he too wanted to become a Christian. So did six women. "As the women prayed they laughed," Sorley explained. "Some of it was nervousness from praying in front of the men, but I had the feeling mostly it was from the joy of the Lord they were feeling." Later two other men became Christians.

Pointing at Sorley, Bwana Safari declared, "Until that man came and told us about Jesus, we had left all religion aside for a long, long time. We had forgotten about God. All we did was work and eat and sleep. Now we sleep better, feel stronger." Laughter greeted his next comment as he patted his ample stomach, "and I'm eating better."

Like anyone knowledgeable about the hospitality of Africans and their desire to tell any visitor whatever makes him happy in order not to be rude, Sorley wanted to see if the responses were valid.

He was impressed that the group persisted in asking what being a Christian would mean in how they lived. "Over and over they asked if Christians could dance and drum. They were serious about living the kind of life Jesus would want them to live."

Sorley told them those decisions were between them and God. "As you study the Bible and pray the Holy Spirit will guide you," he stressed. "But what you say in a song and who the dance is for is probably the most important thing. Do you do something for the glory of God or does it glorify Satan and the spirits?"

Two days later Sorley returned to the village and led a Bible study on assurance of salvation. He noticed the drums and shakers were used to accompany the Christian choruses Patrick taught the dancers.

That night the "Drum of Africa" performed at Sorley's hotel. Another young woman, one he had not seen before, came to him after the show. She too wanted to be a Christian.

Sorley continued to grab time in the village in between visits to other areas for door-to-door evangelism efforts. His wife, Darlene, accompanied him to encourage the women and demonstrate they could pray too.

The village -- seven huts with walls and roofs made of palm fronds, housing 10 men, seven women and 10 children -- responded avidly when Sorley shared Psalm 150 with them. The psalm describes various instruments used to praise God in the Jewish temple. When Sorley asked for the tribal names of equivalent instruments, almost everyone joined the conversation.

Bwana Safari even asked if the Bible mentioned a whistle -- a key to setting the rhythm in their dances. Apparently it doesn't, but the dancers were overjoyed to find that God does not disapprove of music.

Sorley is confident even more members of the dance troupe will become Christians and he hopes the new believers will become active in a Baptist church a 20-minute walk from their village.

"They have a lot of difficult decisions to make," he said. "But I don't think God is through working there yet."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Multiple signs help start
Kenyan church for deaf

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
8/10/90

F-SMB

MOMBASA, Kenya (BP)--Put together enough silent miracles and you get a church. At least that's what happened in Mombasa, Kenya, last month.

Skeptics might call it the "String of Incredible Coincidences Church." But the real name is Coast Baptist Church for the Deaf. And folks involved don't mind describing the circumstances of its birth in spiritual terms, along with the rebirth of more than 300 deaf Kenyans as Christians.

The dream of communicating the gospel to deaf Kenyans began, independently and sometimes vaguely, in Colorado, Florida, North Carolina and at the Pwani Bible Institute in Kenya. At the end it had caught the imagination of the leader of the Mombasa-area deaf association, a Kenyan hearing teacher and pastor, a Georgia missionary and a Texas teacher.

The American component started in Denver with two members of Applewood Baptist Church. Robert Payne, a U.S. Geological Survey employee and a deaf evangelist, and Barb Coffan, a professional interpreter for the deaf, were among 18 from the church who decided to participate in the big evangelistic crusade that brought more than 500 Southern Baptist volunteers to the Kenya coast in June and July. The church also operated a 24-hour prayer chain during the crusade. At first neither volunteer knew the other wanted to share the Christian faith with deaf Kenyans.

Meanwhile Cindy Reeves, who was one year into a degree program in deaf interpretation in Charlotte, N.C., and deaf education specialist Elyse Sanderlin of Euless, Texas, also signed up to be part of the crusade -- but as part of regular evangelism outreach. They didn't know about a deaf program.

In Orlando, Fla., David Causey didn't have time or money to consider a trip to Kenya. In addition to working at Disney World, he is minister to the deaf at First Baptist Church and the only deaf person in a group of 24 students in a seminary extension program.

Nine thousand miles away in Kenya, Benedict Tsuma was busy heading up the Pwani Deaf Association. Two students at Pwani Bible Institute were praying about starting a Bible study at Ziواني School for the Deaf in Mombasa. And teacher-pastor Joram Magore was frustrated by his inability to tell the deaf son of a close deaf friend about Jesus.

Debbie Pugh, a Southern Baptist missionary from Decatur, Ga., was looking forward to working with the evangelism volunteers in any capacity needed. A deaf outreach didn't pop into her mind, but Ziواني School for the Deaf is less than a block from Mombasa Baptist High School, where her husband teaches.

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Here's what brought all these folks together:

Causey heard about the Kenya evangelism project a month before it started when Coffan spoke in his deaf Bible class. Two people in his church canceled their reservations to go on the trip, his boss approved his vacation request to go, and unexpected monetary gifts swamped him, so he got a Kenya visa.

A deaf minister friend in Charlotte showed Reeves, a member of Hickory Grove Baptist Church there, a newsletter from Applewood Baptist Church telling of the evangelism project. She called Coffan.

Sanderlin, one of many Kenya volunteers from First Baptist Church of Euless, saw the deaf signing group in the London airport enroute to Africa, found out what was planned and joined the dream.

But those were happenstances, the volunteers agree. The miracles lay ahead.

The deaf ministry group prayed about goals for their two weeks in Kenya and decided: (1) to establish a church for the deaf; (2) to share the gospel with the deaf themselves, and (3) to try to awaken interest in the deaf among hearing churches and teach Kenyan Baptists sign language so they could continue the ministry.

"I am a Christian only because I was born in America and people told a deaf boy how to be saved," Payne explained. He was driven by images of the end of time, when hearing Christians are taken to heaven, "but the deaf Kenyans remain on earth because they never heard about Jesus."

That same zeal and compassion has taken Payne to Italy, South Korea, Mexico and England to preach to the deaf and organize churches. "Those trips were all so difficult," he said. "But this time we've seen the Lord just. ..." He stopped, then with sign language said, "Miracle is too mild a word. Awesome, awesome is the word I need.

"I'm overwhelmed and I just praise God because in two weeks I have personally seen more than 300 deaf people become Christians, and there was no witness to the deaf by any Christian church until we came as far as we know. And now there is a church. We hope there will be many more deaf churches started all over Kenya."

But getting that first one started wasn't simple.

No coordination of deaf education exists in Kenya. All three schools for the deaf visited by the volunteers used different systems. One used American sign language; another used Kenyan sign language and the third used a combination of pantomime and spelling.

The first meeting the volunteer team held at Mombasa Baptist High School to begin teaching pastors and lay people how to use sign language and evangelize the deaf attracted the team members -- and no one else.

Discouraged but undaunted, the group decided to walk the few blocks to First Baptist Church and see if the pastor there was interested. He wasn't there, but they were offered the use of a Sunday school classroom.

"We were sitting there planning when a man walked in and sat down," Coffan said. "(Missionary) Debbie Fugh didn't recognize him so we figured he had come to learn about deaf ministry and we started teaching him to sign." In a few minutes another man walked in, then another, then two more.

Only after all five were well into talking with their hands did one of them ask what was going on. They had come for an associational pastors' meeting; no one told them that meeting had been canceled.

But one of them, pastor-teacher Magore, caught the vision. He told of his deaf friend and the friend's deaf son and excitedly offered to spend the week with the team. It was the only time in months he could take off from his teaching duties; students were preparing for exams.

Meanwhile Pugh had put the volunteers in contact with the headmistress of Ziwani School for the Deaf, who in turn had introduced them to Tsuma, head of the school. "He was the exact person we needed," Coffan pointed out. "He knows everyone and everything in the deaf community, had a job that left him free to go with us in the daytime and is brilliant. He could translate the various forms of sign language and teach us Kenya sign language."

But Tsuma wasn't a Christian. "These people kept telling me about how Jesus loved me and died for my sins but I kept refusing," he said. "But at night I would dream about what they said. I was pulled between rejecting and accepting." After a week he said he wanted to become a believer.

The team went to Kilifi School for the Deaf, north of Mombasa, and Kwale School for the Deaf, south of the city. There, as at Ziwani, response to the gospel was overwhelming.

Communication problems were overcome in unexpected ways. For example, a Muslim girl provided the link between Payne's sermon and students in Kwale when she volunteered to translate.

"This was the first time these students had ever seen a deaf white person," Coffan said. "That alone was a great encouragement to them, to see their deafness is not unusual."

Four Kenyan Christians dedicated to sharing the gospel with the deaf -- Magore, Tsuma and the two Bible students -- were in place. Magore even offered to resign from his hearing church to lead the deaf church. But it was decided the new deaf congregation could meet on Sunday afternoons, so he could lead both with no time conflict.

At the organization service of the Coast Baptist Church for the Deaf July 1, the miraculous connections continued.

When Payne shared through signs and pictures the way to become a Christian, 11 teen-agers and young adults responded.

The first to raise his hand was the son of Magore's deaf friend.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Doorway, deformity used
for gospel by Benin layman

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
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COTONOU, Benin (BP)--Constantin Fanougbo is not Jewish. But his doorposts hint at a Hebrew heritage.

The Bible tells how the children of Israel marked their Egyptian doorposts with lamb's blood to let God's death angel know where to pass over. Fanougbo paints his doorposts with red enamel so people know where God can be found.

Of course, the west African Baptist layman didn't search for historical or theological reasons when he picked up his brush. It just seemed natural to him to letter his name and address on one side of the entrance to his yard and a Bible study invitation on the other side.

When you play host to a Bible study in your home every Friday at 7 p.m. with hopes of growing a church for your neighborhood, it doesn't hurt to advertise.

Not that Fanougbo relies primarily on outdoor advertising to entice people to ask him how to become a Christian. "Constantin shares the gospel from 'Who Is Jesus?' like he has memorized the entire book," explained Southern Baptist missionary Asa Greear, a church developer in Benin. "Who Is Jesus?" is the first book in the Bible Way correspondence course.

A Bible study in Fanougbo's home was a natural outgrowth of his desire to provide proper Christian training for his eight children.

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They were attending Etoile Rouge Baptist Church, 10 miles away from their village of Godomey. But the entire family seldom went on the same Sunday. Public transport for 10 people costs almost \$35, more than he could afford and still feed his children.

His neighbors, he knew, were just as isolated. No church of any kind existed in the area. So he shared the need with the Etoile Rouge church. He discovered another deacon in the congregation who lived in the village next to Godomey and had the same spiritual burden.

Greear, a first-term missionary from Ashland, Ky., offered to help, so the trio began going door-to-door to measure the interest in a church in Godomey.

Any doubts about God's leading vanished at the first house.

"A young woman opened the door and we walked right into a crisis," Greear recalled. "She was holding a 3-year-old who had been born with only one arm. In Benin a birth defect is thought to be connected with fetishism -- black magic -- and the strain on the family was almost too great for them to bear."

But when Fanougbo spoke he had the parents' rapt attention. They couldn't help but stare at the stump where his left arm should be. Quietly he told of his own painful childhood, when his parents and others tried to keep him from talking. They believed the fetish which had deformed him since birth also empowered him with terrifying ability to control the future and "anything I said would come true."

His intellectual world widened when a stubborn schoolteacher finally convinced his parents he should attend classes with "normal" children, he related. And his spiritual world opened when he moved to Cotonou, Benin's capital, to attempt to sell his paintings.

There another Southern Baptist missionary, Dutton Bonnell (now retired), kept visiting him but never buying anything. "I'd ask what price he'd give me and he'd ask me if I knew the value of my life, because God knew how much I was worth and that was why he'd sent his son to earth to die to save me," Fanougbo said of the process that led him to Christianity.

"I overcame this handicap and the fear of a fetish through the love of Jesus," he told the parents. "This baby can too if you love and support him."

The three men visited homes for eight weeks, encountering dozens of people who said they were under the bondage of fetishes and spells. Each time Fanougbo could speak from his own experience of the power of Jesus Christ. Then a Tuesday prayer meeting (at the other deacon's house) and a Friday Bible study were launched.

After the first three months, with attendance as high as 20, the nucleus of a church was formed in Fanougbo's house.

The "death angel" of fetish worship now has to pass over more and more people in Godomey. The red marks on Fanougbo's doorpost explain why.

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