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Missionary family divided  
by Ethiopia strife reunites

By Craig Bird

N-FMB

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (BP)--A new government and Ethiopian Airlines made it possible for Southern Baptist missionary Rob Ackerman to fly his children out of violence-wracked Ethiopia June 8.

But an Ethiopian Christian provided the emotional release.

Ackerman, of Wheaton, Ill., and his three daughters -- Bethany, 9, and 6-year-old twins Melody and Krista -- were on one of the first flights out of Ethiopia June 8 when the international airport in Addis Ababa reopened two weeks after being closed by fighting.

The father and daughters were sealed in the Ethiopian capital when soldiers of the Tigrean People's Liberation Front ended a 30-year civil war in May by taking control of Addis Ababa, the capital. Other Southern Baptist missionaries in the city at the time were Sam and Ginny Cannata, John and Mary Lou Lawrence and Jerry Bedsole.

Patty Ackerman, Rob's wife, and Rosie Bedsole were in Nairobi, Kenya, for a conference when the TPLF unexpectedly made the final push to the very edges of Addis Ababa, isolating the capital for two weeks. Mrs. Bedsole was on the first flight back into Addis Ababa from Nairobi June 9, but the Ackermans decided to reunite in Nairobi.

Last March the U.S. Embassy advised all American citizens to leave Ethiopia when it became obvious it was only a matter of time before anti-government coalition would achieve military victory. But hundreds of American missionaries remained since rebel leaders insisted they had no desire to capture the capital. Most Baptist mission work was continuing, and Addis Ababa exhibited a surface calm that belied the threat of violence.

Ackerman and other missionaries also had to struggle with how Ethiopian Christians might react if they felt they were being abandoned when things really got tough.

"But when we heard the airport might open, one of the men who had walked through the battle lines to attend a Bible school at the mission offices came to me and said it was OK," Ackerman said. "They understood we needed to reunite our family and had seen we were willing to stay beside them even in danger."

Ackerman said none of the missionaries were threatened during the rebel occupation of Addis Ababa. For unknown reasons looters stayed away from the Baptist compound -- even while looting the government military hospital across the road and another missionary compound less than a quarter-mile away.

The only physical impact on the area came when the massive ammunition dump exploded early June 5. Shock waves from the deadly blast, which was about seven miles away, pushed the metal window shutters out of their tracks in Bethany Ackerman's bedroom.

Pieces of metal "the size of small ball bearings" peppered the Bedsoles' house after the blast. An empty rifle bullet box, perforated by exploding shells, floated out of the sky into the Cannatas' yard.

"At first I thought some government soldiers had gotten a hold of some tanks and were launching a suicide attack against the rebels, but when I found out what was going on I told Bethany and she went right back to sleep," Ackerman explained. "The twins never even woke up."

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Construction work on a Baptist clinic at Minjar resumed in early June, Ackerman said, but the most recent Baptist feeding station is no longer needed.

"We were basically feeding people from north of Addis Ababa who had been displaced by the war. Now they're going home, so we hope to resume feeding as close to their homes as we can get to keep them going until their first crops come in," he said.

In the first days after rebels took control of Addis Ababa, all the reinforcing steel and some other building materials were stolen from the clinic site. But when Baptists said work would not proceed until everything was returned, community pressure caused all the items to be returned.

Ackerman first heard the airport might reopen at church services at the International Evangelical Church. He began calling the airport every day and was told the first flight would leave June 7. He made reservations, but the flight was delayed until June 8. He could not get confirmation that the reservations were still good, so he and his daughters showed up at the airport that morning. After a tense wait, their names were called.

Two flights left for Nairobi within minutes of each other and two other flights left for other international destinations.

In Nairobi, Mrs. Ackerman was told the flight had been postponed again, but she went to the airport anyway. For three hours she and Kenya missionary Linda Allen "walked around and around and on every circuit we'd stop and ask if they had any information," she said. "Finally they confirmed the flight was in the air and that Rob and the girls were on the passenger list. We went to the observation deck and almost immediately saw the plane. I started crying even before I saw them get off."

She even got past the security guard in the customs area when she "grabbed the first girl I came too and started sobbing .... I think he could tell by the look in my eye I was going to get to my family no matter what he said."

Earlier, a generous stranger provided the last link in reuniting the family. On arrival in Kenya, Ackerman was confronted by an immigration official who told him he had to come up with \$40 in cash for the visas necessary to enter the country. "He looked at my credit cards, reminded me it had to be cash and gave me a hard time for not having the foresight to have gotten the visas in Ethiopia or at least bring U.S. dollars with me," Ackerman said. "He wasn't impressed by the fact all bank accounts had been frozen and we had no way to get money out."

A man in line behind Ackerman decided the missionary looked trustworthy. "He worked for the World Bank and was headed home to Ohio but he handed me \$40 and said I could mail him a check later," Ackerman explained. "I said I could do better than that -- I had my checkbook from my American bank with me."

The Ackerman family hoped to return to Addis Ababa around June 19 if conditions allow.

"The girls don't seem to need a vacation right now," Ackerman admitted. "But Patty and I sure do."

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William H. Crouch, Jr.  
named Georgetown president

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Newspaper*

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GEORGETOWN, Kentucky (BP)--William H. Crouch, Jr. has been named the 23rd president of Georgetown College, according to Robert Baker, chairman of the board of trustees of the Kentucky Baptist Convention school.

Crouch will begin his duties as president Aug. 1. He has been vice president for development at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., since June of 1988.

Crouch, 39, holds the doctorate of ministry and master of divinity degrees from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; a bachelor of arts degree in sociology from Wake Forest University; and an associate degree from Wingate College.

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He has been on the staff of Gardner-Webb College in Boiling Springs, NC, and the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina. He also was pastor of two churches in North Carolina.

Married to the former Janice Banister of Anderson, SC, Crouch and his wife have five children.

Georgetown College has an enrollment of more than 1,500 students and is affiliated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

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Drugs worst problem, teens say;  
adults believe it's peer pressure

By Terry Lackey

F-SSB

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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Teens placed drugs at the top of the list of the biggest problems they face today, but adults claim peer pressure is the number one nemesis of youth, surveys revealed.

A Gallup poll listed 54 percent of American youth as saying drugs are their biggest foe, while 12 percent listed alcohol as second. Pregnancy was third with 11 percent; peer pressure, 10 percent; AIDS, 5 percent; and parents, growth, no job and suicide each at 2 percent.

On the other hand, adults believe peer pressure is the top concern of young people, according to an informal survey taken during Summer Youth Celebrations at Glorieta (N.M.) and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Centers last year.

Adults listed personal problems as the second biggest problem of youth; family, third; and spiritual, fourth.

Young people surveyed at Glorieta and Ridgecrest last year listed drugs as their biggest problem; peer pressure, second; alcohol, third; sex, fourth; and family, last.

"Parents seem to dwell more on peer pressure as a problem, according to the survey, than youth do," said Barry Sneed, youth specialist in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training department. "Youth see peer pressure as a problem, but they don't see it as a big problem like parents do."

Sneed presented the data to a group of youth ministers attending youth celebration at Ridgecrest, June 8-14. Summer Youth Celebration is sponsored by the youth section of the SSB's discipleship training department.

Sneed said what he found interesting is youth view alcohol and drugs as separate vices. That concept is probably perpetuated by advertising campaigns that advise young people to "Say no to drugs," while sports heroes on alcoholic beverage commercials tempt them with the fun of drinking, he noted.

Sneed suggested, adults might lump the drug use by youth in the same category as peer pressure, possibly explaining the discrepancies in the youth and adult surveys.

"Peer pressure means putting pressure on one another to conform to certain moral ideas and standards," Sneed said. "That can run the gamut from sexual promiscuity and drugs to dabbling in occults and the New Age movement."

"But peer pressure can be positive as well," he said. "Christian youth can help their friends be good disciples, read their Bible daily and pray consistently."

Aligning adults' and teens' ideas of the youth's biggest problems will take communication among the two groups and time together.

"The key is coming up with ways to do more things (at church) with young people and parents together," Sneed said. "A lot of young people say they never do anything with their parents outside of them serving as a chaperon for some event."

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Chaperons are viewed as authority figures, Sneed said, and youth sometimes need to be able to look upon their parents and other adults as companions and friends.

Providing youth and adults with simultaneous training and ministry opportunities is one way to place them on a more equal level of understanding, he said.

Other data offered by Sneed revealed teens spend 40 minutes a week talking to their fathers and 55 minutes a week talking to their mothers.

"Those areas need to be addressed by youth ministers," Sneed said. "More and more today, moms and dads are in the workplace, and they have their schedules, and the youth have theirs.

"Communication is the key to closeness. The world is very unassumingly robbing families of time together and we need to work on ways to combat that."

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Young people go to peers first  
for help, advice with problems

By Terri Lackey

F-SSB

Baptist Press  
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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Misunderstanding is a common malady in the teen-ager/parent relationship -- one that especially manifests itself when adults speculate on who youth go to when they need help, a study reveals.

In an informal survey given to young people and adults last year during a summer conference, adults seemed to be batting out in left field when it came to their knowledge of a teen's choice of confidants.

In the survey, given during Summer Youth Celebration weeks at Ridgecrest (N.C.) and Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist conference centers, 33 percent of the adults said they believe young people go first to their youth ministers when in need of help or advice.

But the youth had a different idea.

Youth minister was fourth on their list of intimates, beaten by friends, first; parents second; and God, third; the survey revealed.

Parents weren't so far off in their second choice of youth confidants -- 31 percent picked peers, but parents placed themselves last on the list of people youth would go to for help.

That was far from the second-billing youth gave their parents.

"All this to reveal that while parents are up there, they aren't the first people young people go to when they seek advice, and, obviously, neither are youth ministers -- friends are," said Barry Sneed, youth specialist in the Sunday School Board's discipleship training department.

"It's refreshing to see young people still have confidence in their parents," added Jim Cashwell, minister of youth and single adults at St. Andrews Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C. "But we also see that we need to do more in helping our Christian youth counsel with their peers."

Consequently, youth studied the Convention Press book, "How to Help Your Friends," during Summer Youth Celebration at Glorieta and Ridgecrest.

"I think we need to understand that kids are talking to kids, and have as long as I know," said Joe Richardson, author of the book and counselor at the Sunday School Board.

A Gallup poll shows friends spend an average of 15.3 hours a week together outside of school.

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Richardson's book arms young people with ways to sense or recognize problems in their friends, how to confront those problems, how to help friends work through the problems, and how to use the Bible to address the problems.

Youth ministers can also provide opportunities to train young people how to counsel their peers in a Christian way, Cashwell said.

To hone youth counseling skills, churches could involve youth in leadership roles at the church, provide older youth group members with counseling responsibility of younger youth group members, encourage group interaction and prayer partners, establish a youth witnessing program and arm young people with information about potential youth crises, such as pregnancy, AIDS, or threats of suicide, Cashwell said.

Another counseling tool, Cashwell said, is the 24-hour Counselor, a four-volume tape collection addressing needs and problems of young people.

"Youth will continue to go to their friends for help," Sneed said. "We need to make sure our Christian youth give good advice."

About 2,500 attending Summer Youth Celebration at Ridgecrest, June 8-14. The youth celebration is sponsored by the youth section of the SSB's discipleship training department.

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Youth ministers' awareness  
may curb problems later

By Terri Lackey

F. SSB

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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Youth ministers should become aware of the signs of sexual abuse and take proper action before the trauma affects the future of young people, a counselor said.

Statistics reveal one in four young women and one in 10 young men are sexually abused, according to Southern Baptist counselor Joe Richardson, who said nearly one-fourth to one-third of the young people who come to him for counseling during summer youth camps reveal being sexually abused in some way.

Sexual abuse can run the gamut from sexual verbal suggestions and touching or fondling by a parent, relative or trusted adult to actual intercourse, said Richardson, a counselor with the Sunday School Board in Nashville.

Richardson, who served as staff counselor during Summer Youth Celebration at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, June 8-14, said the sheer number of young people who come into him revealing sexual abuse indicates Southern Baptist families are not immune to the problem.

Richardson said when many of the adolescents and young adults, including youth leaders or sponsors of youth groups, come to him to reveal sexual abuse, they might be telling someone for the first time.

"Several of those adult sponsors said they had never told anyone about having been abused," Richardson said. "Never. Not a spouse or a friend had ever been told their problem."

"Frequently, the ones who have talked to someone about it before, get the feeling that person doesn't believe them, and then they just drop it," he added.

Often an adult's response to the revelation of sexual abuse by a young person is "Oh, my gosh," Richardson said.

"One way to deal with the problem is through our response. When we say, 'Oh, my gosh,' what the young person hears us saying is 'You're lying.'"

Richardson said an adult's initial reaction may come from just not wanting to believe the information is true.

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"If we believe it, then we are pretty well obligated to do something about it, and that's not easy," he said.

Richardson said sexual abuse, left unchecked or ignored, has the potential of destroying lives.

Sexual abuse can manifest itself later in life in poor or failed marriages and trust issues, Richardson said. Without counseling, the result of sexual abuse is often traumatic, he said.

"It can destroy a person's self esteem and confidence and leave them pretty well a mess," Richardson said.

The result of sexual abuse is the victim's feeling of guilt, shame, anger and confusion. They can feel dirty, worthless and repulsive, he said.

Richardson said he has no idea of the number of churches that have been touched by the trauma of sexual abuse, but he is sure there are many.

"Just look around you, we have about 2,500 young people here this week. According to statistics, one in four of these young girls have been abused."

Youth ministers and youth leaders have a responsibility to become informed about the signs of sexual abuse, Richardson said. Young persons being sexually abused offer many warning behaviors.

They have a greater knowledge of sex than their age predicts and they often have an unusual relationship with the one doing the abusing. "In some cases, they are very protective and defending of that person," Richardson said.

Youth ministers must become educated and read about sexual abuse, Richardson said. They should know how to properly inform the authorities about the abuse.

In most states, a youth minister would be obligated to tell the authorities about suspected or revealed sexual abuse, Richardson said. Failing to do so could get him or her "in real trouble" when it is discovered two or three years later they have been told about sexual abuse by a member of their youth group.

"Sexual abuse is one of the most painful problems along with suicide that a church will have to deal with. It stands to bring great amounts of grief to a church family," Richardson said.

"It is becoming increasingly impossible to ignore it."