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Missionary to Colombia
dies of leukemia

By Mary E. Speidel

HOUSTON (BP)--Virginia Fraser, a Southern Baptist missionary to Colombia, died Sept. 30 in Houston.

Fraser, 67, had been battling leukemia since 1987.

She taught English as a second language at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Cali, Colombia, for eight years. While undergoing chemotherapy treatments, she continued a full teaching schedule, said fellow missionary Mildred Verbeck, Fraser's roommate for 39 years.

Fraser also taught English to medical professionals at a Cali university. Outside the classroom, she helped begin a hunger relief program in Petecuy, a poor neighborhood in Cali, which led to the start of a Baptist mission church. She also helped minister to survivors of the 1985 volcanic eruption and mud slide that buried Armero, Colombia.

"Virginia had a great feel for helping people develop a self-concept that God loves them, that they were worthy individuals," said Verbeck. "She was never gifted in public speaking. She never wanted to be in front of a crowd. But she always had that deep interest in hurting people She wanted so much to help people know that Jesus loved them and that they were worthy."

Fraser also was known for her hospitality. "She was a friend to missionaries," said Verbeck. "Our home was the kind that everyone came to visit. She furnished a very supportive ministry to her colleagues."

Fraser, from Huntsville, Texas, returned Jan. 15 to the United States for medical reasons. After her return she lived briefly in Beaumont and Rosenberg, Texas. She was to have retired as a missionary this year.

She was appointed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board as a missionary associate in 1982. She went to the mission field after taking early retirement from public school teaching in Pueblo, Colo., where she helped start Southern Baptist work.

Earlier, she taught public school in Kingsville, La Marque and La Porte, Texas. Fraser received the bachelor of science degree from Sam Houston State University in Huntsville and the master of arts degree from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley.

Fraser is survived by her mother, four sisters, a brother and 19 nieces and nephews. Funeral services were scheduled for Oct. 3 at University Heights Baptist Church in Huntsville.

The family requested memorial gifts be sent to a mission memorial fund at University Heights Baptist Church or to the American Cancer Society.

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

Ghana missionaries r and
to critical need for water

By Donald D. Martin

GAMBAGA, Ghana (BP)--Before the Ghanaian sun has burned off the morning's dew, Saada has stood in line five hours for a bucket of water.

For Saada, a women in her mid-30s, waking each day before dawn for a trip to the well is a way of life during west Africa's dry season.

"I try to come to the well early in the morning, before the sun is up," she says. "If you're lucky, you can get a barrel full. But the men who take water with their tankers and those who draw water to sell come first. Sometimes many will come and I will sit all day waiting.

"Each year the dry season makes my life very difficult. I'm not able to care for my children. Sometimes by the time I get water and then cook the food, I'm too tired to eat."

Saada must draw her water from a well that's the main source of water for more than 10,000 people in the northern Ghanaian town of Gambaga. Fights over water are so common at the well men with canes and long switches patrol the queues of women.

Prolonged drought has placed Ghana on the growing list of African nations threatened with famine. Even when subsistence farming generates enough food, the meager water supply in northern Ghana's dry climate forces village women to work late into the night cooking and cleaning, reserving daylight hours for gathering water. The dry season, which lasts three to four months, leaves most women fatigued and susceptible to serious illnesses.

A small team of Southern Baptist missionaries from the Baptist Medical Center in neighboring Nalerigu hopes to ease this and similar situations. The team drills deep water wells as part of a pilot human needs project supported by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's human needs fund.

Team members want to help several area villages find and maintain a better water source, improve village health practices and start or strengthen local Christian groups.

"For us to ignore something like this would be shameful," insists missionary Mike Walker from Ewing, Ill., director of the Ghana Baptist Mission's Three-Phase Project. "Once you become aware of a situation like this, you have to respond. That's exactly what we hope to do with this new project."

It's easy to see how fights between frustrated and fatigued women can break out over one's place in line, Walker observes.

Each dry season, when parched farmland goes without rain for several months, women often spend all day gathering water. By tradition, supplying the home with water is the woman's job in the Mamprusi villages that dot the northern region of Ghana, where the Baptist hospital has ministered for 34 years.

In villages willing to share responsibility, the missionaries' project weaves water exploration, public health assistance and evangelism into a series of independent yet overlapping programs. In the next year and a half the project team will drill about 40 new wells and install hand pumps for each, explains Walker. He coordinates the project work of missionaries Dean Ekberg, Cherry Faile and Jim Haney.

Ekberg, from Rockford, Ill., directs the water program. Haney, of Clinton, Mo., coordinates evangelism programs. Faile, a registered nurse who grew up in Africa, directs the primary health care program. She is the daughter of missionaries George and Elisabeth Faile. George Faile is founding physician of the Baptist hospital in Nalerigu.

The human needs project, with a budget of about \$500,000, has added water exploration and drilling to existing health and evangelical programs, Walker says.

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After an initial contact with a village, the missionaries go in and explain who they are, what they would like to do and what the village is expected to do. If villagers agree to do their part, one of the team's three extension workers surveys the village, learns how it gets water and determines water quality. The village and the missionaries then sign an agreement to work together.

Following the agreement, Faile queries village leaders about health needs. Ekberg surveys and selects a promising drilling site where they can install a water pump. Then the missionaries give the pump to the village at a ceremony that includes an evangelistic message. Throughout the process, team members look for the best ways to establish long-term village contacts.

Each village has its own responsibilities. Most are expected to help buy and maintain the well's hand pump. In the past, village pumps were the property of the Ghanaian government. But some pumps stand idle because they are broken or water supplies are contaminated. Walker hopes villages that own their own wells and pumps will take better care of them.

The idea of ownership is new, as well as a number of other ideas used in the project, Walker says.

"We're optimistic, but we've just started," adds Faile. "The mission team members are also cautious about promising too much too fast. Over the years, people in these villages have been promised help from a number of well-meaning relief groups, but little gets done.

"We have to make sure that we deliver what we promise."

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

Relief funds strengthen
village health care program

By Donald D. Martin

Baptist Press
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ZANDUA, Ghana (BP)--Southern Baptist missionary Cherry Faile was looking for a good argument.

So when raised voices shattered a village's afternoon calm, Faile simply smiled. "This is great," she said as she stepped away from a group of arguing men and women. "They don't usually get into it like this."

Faile had asked leaders of the northern Ghanaian village, Zandua, to meet and list some of the village's pressing health needs.

The work in Zandua is part of a human needs project launched by a small team of missionaries from the Baptist Medical Center in Nalerigu, Ghana. The new program, the Three-Phase Project, draws its support from Southern Baptist human needs funds. The project assists Nalerigu-area villages in water development, public health and in setting up new evangelistic programs or strengthening existing ones.

Faile, who grew up in Africa, directs the primary health care program. She is a registered nurse and daughter of missionary George and Elisabeth Faile. George Faile is founding physician of the Baptist hospital in Nalerigu.

Before the afternoon meeting had ended, she pronounced it a success. The group had forgotten about her presence and was grappling with the village's true health problems.

Villagers often listen politely to visiting health care workers, but seldom act on their advice, she explained. In Ghana and other developing countries, villagers readily welcome public health workers and offers of health care assistance, she said. But the visits often have little effect on village life, and problems of malnutrition, diarrhea and high child mortality continue.

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The Ghanaian government also has recognized this problem. The country's ministry of health may scrap its own primary health program if village response to the costly effort does not improve, Faile warned.

"The Ghana government set up a health care worker system a few years ago, but they're cutting back because they see it's not working," she said. "Before we get the word from the ministry of health that there are no more public health care workers, I really want to give it a chance."

Faile believes most village health care programs fail because health workers tell villagers what they need rather than investing time to find out what villagers really want.

"The most successful programs are the ones where you can get in with the villagers so they plan the program with you," she explained.

"If I decided the best way to help this community was to build pit toilets, most village committees would say, 'Oh yes, we all want pit toilets.' But if I'm out here all the time, and they get comfortable with me, they would say to me, 'We don't really want those. Why would I want to go into a little room to go to the bathroom? That's a stupid idea.'"

When the afternoon meeting ended, the village leaders, like others the week before, decided to clean up the village. They said there was too much trash and litter around each family compound.

But reaching a consensus is just the first step, Faile stressed.

"Although the villagers are tightly knit and will cooperate in things like compound building or roofing, they don't necessarily see that they hold corporate responsibility for village projects," she said. "They're very independent. So new ideas of community responsibility for village health are not quickly embraced."

Another village that decided it too needed to clean up its trash is a good example, she said. The villagers agreed something should be done, but they have never organized to do anything about it.

Moving beyond just talk is difficult. Success of any village project relies heavily on relationships, she said. That's why Faile plans to move off the mission hospital compound in Nalerigu and into Zandua. She believes if she lives full time with the people, villagers in Zandua and surrounding villages eventually will see her as a neighbor, not as an honored guest.

"It's still too early to tell if this is the ideal way to get to know people, because I haven't actually done it," she acknowledged. "I may be overly optimistic about how all this will work out. I may get out there and find that I'll go crazy in a couple of months. But I don't think that's going to happen. I feel like it will help the village health system so much. We can train the village health workers, but unless the village supports them they aren't going to last very long."

Living in the village also will bridge a gap in Faile's own understanding of villagers that reaches beyond her concern for their physical well-being.

"For me to work or have an effective witness, to tell what God has done for me, I have to understand where people are coming from," she said. "Living here will let them see that I'm not so different. So when I say something about what Christ means to me, they don't say, 'Well you're so different, it can't mean the same for us.' It's relational evangelism, which is important, but it takes time."

For Faile, that's something worth arguing about.

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

National soul-winning
meeting goes soul winning

By Tammi Ledbetter

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Participants in the SBC National Soul-Winning Conference in Indianapolis took time out to put into practice what had been preached.

Visiting just short of a thousand homes, the soul-winners were able to find half of those visited at home, surveying 362 people. At least 208 prospects for local Southern Baptist churches were reported and 35 individuals professed faith in Christ through the encounters.

Alvin Reid, director of evangelism for the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, told how he and Darrell Robinson, Home Mission Board vice president, persisted in knocking at "just one more door" after repeated unsuccessful attempts to find someone at home.

Their efforts led to an encounter with a young Catholic woman he described as active and faithful in her church.

"Her heart was tender and open and she accepted Christ," Reid told the 350 gathered for the Sept. 19-21 meeting. He advised them to "always knock on one more door."

HMB President Larry Lewis expressed his concern "that there are so few prophetic voices railing against sin in our pulpits today.

"I am ashamed that we, as a denomination have tools, resources and personnel, but do such a pitiful job of taking the gospel to every living creature," Lewis said.

SBC Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien urged the group to reach out to those in need of the gospel.

"I think sometimes we denominational workers are the worst. The call of the calendar is often louder than the call of the lost," she said. "God forgive us for putting perfunctory service above the call of serving Christ."

SBC President Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, urged support for his strategy for involving local churches in a Watchman on the Wall National Prayer Alert.

"I believe in mass evangelism and personal evangelism. That's our work for God," Chapman said. "But revival cannot be programmed or worked up. It must be prayed down.

"I know the caliber of people you are in Indiana and I want you to urgently and fervently pray for God to bring spiritual awakening. I pray that he brings it through Southern Baptists. But it doesn't matter to me who he brings it through, I just want Southern Baptists to get in on it," said Chapman.

As a part of his message which described the army of Gideon, Chapman reminded those present to stand in their assigned places.

"I've pastored outside the Bible Belt and I know a little of what it is to feel forgotten, forsaken, thinking Southern Baptists are all over those southern states. But no matter the amount of depression or discouragement that ever comes, God has put you in one of the most exciting places," said Chapman. "It is time to raise those trumpets. God needs an army with a trumpet in one hand and a torch in the other for Jesus."

Other speakers at the conference included Ohio State Baptist Convention President Gary Frost; Indiana pastor Michael Cramer of Mishawaka; Johnny Hunt of First Baptist, Woodstock, Ga; and Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church.

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EDITORS' NOTE: Tammi Ledbetter will furnish, upon request, individual reports on each speaker for the states they represent. Contact the Indiana Baptist.

Bill Leonard named
Samford religion chair

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Bill J. Leonard, professor of church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary since 1975, has been named chairman of the Samford University department of religion and philosophy.

Leonard will join Samford in January and will succeed W.T. Edwards Jr., who will relinquish the chairmanship and continue to teach full time in the Samford religion department, according to Samford officials.

Leonard holds degrees from Boston University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and Texas Wesleyan College. He has done post-doctoral study at Yale University.

Ordained a Southern Baptist minister in 1971, he was on the staffs of churches in Texas and Massachusetts prior to joining the Southern Seminary faculty. A Decatur, Texas, native, he is married to the former Candyce Crew. They are parents of a daughter, Stephanie Erin, 16.

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South Carolina moderates
elect officer slate

Baptist Press
10/2/91

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--More than 450 moderates met at St. Andrews Baptist Church in Columbia Oct. 1 to organize the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of South Carolina.

It will be aligned with the national Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

The body unanimously approved a slate of officers presented by its nominating committee, chaired by John Cothran of Greenville, a layman and former member of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

Elected were William Coates, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orangeburg, moderator; Donna Forrester, associate pastor at First Baptist Church, Greenville, and former chaplain at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., moderator-elect; and Thomas Benning, a layman and member of First Baptist Church, Clemson, secretary-treasurer.

The meeting was presided over by E.C. Watson of Elgin, retired executive assistant to the executive secretary-treasurer of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

Program personalities included John Hewett, pastor of First Baptist Church, Asheville, N.C., and moderator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and Jimmy Allen, president of Faith and Family Ministries in Fort Worth, and a former SBC president.

The Fellowship's function is not to give birth to a new denomination but to preserve endangered Baptist distinctives, Hewett said.

He encouraged the South Carolina group to organize their branch of the Fellowship "not with clenched fists but with open arms."

The time for re-examination has come for Southern Baptists, Allen told his audience. "We must learn from the past without living in it," he said, adding that the SBC will "never again be what we knew."

Allen said the SBC has "done some good things and we must not walk away from them."

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He called for more decision making by the individual churches instead of the bureaucracy and a "restoration of missions participation."

"God is working anew to get us back to the local church," he said. "We might be standing on the edge of one of the greatest spiritual awakenings God can give us."

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