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NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Commit
901 Commerce #
Nashville, Tennessee 37
(615) 244-2
Herb Hollinger, Vice Presid
Fax (615) 742-8
CompuServe ID# 70420

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3906 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

February 19, 1993

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EDITORS' NOTE: This story is embargoed for release until Monday, Feb. 22.

Survey shows Baptists waning
on missions, fearing apathy

By Art Toalston

Bapist Press
2/19/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--If a survey can be believed:

Foreign and home missions aren't among the top priorities of many grass-roots Southern Baptists.

Apathy, meanwhile, will be the most important issue in Southern Baptist church life as the next century begins, according to some 1,400 active Southern Baptists.

Still, the group held fast to another Baptist hallmark -- evangelism and witnessing -- ranking it first in priority, by far, for local church ministries, followed strongly by ministry to families.

Results of the survey are to be reviewed during the Feb. 22-24 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee in Nashville.

Key facts about the survey:

-- It was commissioned by the SBC's Inter-Agency Council of chief executives of the convention's 19 entities.

-- It was supervised by the Coordinating Committee of the Inter-Agency Council. The committee, with some 25 other officials from SBC entities as members, handles study projects assigned to it by the council on a range of issues. The Coordinating Committee utilized the services of the Sunday School Board's research department to develop two questionnaires and tabulate the responses.

-- The survey is part of the Inter-Agency Council's planning for SBC-wide emphases beyond the year 2000. A key challenge facing the council is a denomination-wide coordinated emphasis plan to succeed "Bold Mission Thrust," the SBC's flagship emphasis since 1978 on world evangelization. The council is to develop its recommendations by June 15, 1994.

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-- The survey was done in two stages, with some 1,200 Southern Baptists responding to an April 1992 questionnaire and some 1,400 responding to one last October.

-- A target group of 2,150 Baptists received both questionnaires. Their names were provided by executive directors of state conventions asked for active church members reflecting "the diversity of Southern Baptists in your fellowship," in urban or rural areas, ethnicity, gender "and if known, alignment in denominational voting." Each convention named a number of Baptists equal to 0.125 percent of its resident church members.

-- Pastors accounted for 38.9 percent of the 1,400 respondents to the latter questionnaire; other church staff members, 8 percent; deacons, 21.6 percent; Sunday school teachers or officers, 35.5 percent; teachers/leaders in church programs other than Sunday school, 28.6 percent; church officers, 11 percent; others, 8 percent.

-- One problem in the survey, revealed in the data tabulation, was a shortage of respondents under age 30. Follow-up research is planned for the 18-30 age range.

Support for home and foreign missions was one of seven local church ministry areas, as identified in responses to the initial questionnaire, that the target group was asked to rate in importance in the second questionnaire.

According to the Coordinating Committee's report: "'Home and foreign missions' was clearly ranked as least important among the seven ministry areas. Only 7 percent of all respondents ranked the missions area either 1 or 2"

The low ranking of missions "was remarkably consistent among all staff and layperson groups," the committee said, adding "nearly half of the persons in most groups gave a rank of 6 or 7 (low importance) to the mission item."

Another missions-related area -- "Ministry to groups outside the church (homeless, sick, hungry, jobless, imprisoned, lonely, etc.)" -- was ranked sixth in the responses.

The second questionnaire also asked for a ranking in importance of "six primary issues," as identified in tabulations of the initial questionnaire.

"Over half of the respondents ranked 'apathy' first; nearly three-fourths first or second," the Coordinating Committee reported.

Last again was a missions-related issue: "Personnel and funding for foreign and home missions."

Ernest E. Mosley, executive vice president of the SBC Executive Committee and a member of the Coordinating Committee, said the findings "are not being treated as a stimulus for hand-wringing or crying despair but as a guide to the inspirational and educational efforts that are needed during the rest of this decade and beyond ... to keep gloom and doom from becoming reality."

Among key results in the survey:

-- ranking of "primary issues that may affect Southern Baptist church life at the beginning of the next century": 1) Apathy, lack of commitment. 2) Personal involvement in evangelism. 3) Controversy in the denomination. 4) Adequate teaching/training for church leaders and members. 5) Financial support for church ministry. 6) Personnel and funding for foreign and home missions.

After the strong tally of apathy as the top issue, the Coordinating Committee reported, "The next-highest issue, "personal involvement in evangelism," was ranked first by one in seven persons, and first or second by nearly half of them."

Concerning denominational controversy, the committee noted its third-place ranking stemmed largely from respondents rating it either 1 (high) or 6 (low) -- only 10 percent used middle-range 2-5 rankings. "Pastors and other employed staff members gave lower importance in rankings of "controversy ..." than did laypersons," the committee added.

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-- ranking of local church ministry areas: 1) Outreach/evangelism/witnessing. 2) Ministry to families. 3) Prayer ministry. 4) Training/Bible study. 5) Ministry to groups within the church (senior adults, single adults, youth, handicapped, grieving, etc.). 6) Ministry to groups outside the church. 7) Home and foreign missions.

"'Outreach/evangelism/witnessing' and 'ministry to families' were ranked significantly highest in importance by each group," the committee noted.

The church ministry rankings evidenced "no significant differences" among respondents despite size or location of their churches, whether they are church staff members or laypersons or their ages, the committee said.

-- ranking of 11 "critical social issues," as identified from the first questionnaire's tabulation: 1) The family. 2) AIDS. 3) Abortion. 4) The economy. 5) Health care. 6) Homosexuality. 7) Aging. 8) Race relations. 9) Drug/alcohol use. 10) Crime. 11) Homelessness.

-- ranking "the effectiveness of the following in influencing your church to engage in particular activities": 1) Literature from SBC agencies (Sunday school, discipleship training, WMU, Brotherhood, Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board, etc.), with over half of respondents in each church staff and lay group ranking it first. 2) State convention staff promotion. 3) Local Baptist association promotion.

Other demographic factors concerning the respondents included:

-- church size: 1-99 members, 5.8 percent; 100-299 members, 19.4 percent; 300-499 members, 17 percent; 500-749, 15 percent; 750-999, 8.4 percent; 1,000-1,499, 12.9 percent; 1,500-1,999, 5.9 percent; 2,000 or more, 15.4 percent.

-- age: under 30, 1.1 percent; 30-39, 14.6 percent; 40-49, 24.3 percent; 50-59, 28 percent; 60 or over, 32.1 percent.

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Reactions mixed over plans
on economy offered by Clinton

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
2/19/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Clinton's presentation of his economic plan before a joint session of Congress and a nationally televised audience produced a not-unexpectedly mixed response:

Many Democrats in Congress hailed it.

Other Democrats expressed reservations.

Republicans assailed it.

Most Americans seem to favor it.

The president, focusing on the economy in what is traditionally a State of the Union address, called on Congress to choose change or cause the country to suffer dire consequences. He implored members of the Senate and House of Representatives to accept his economic package or risk "condemning ourselves to years of stagnation" and "condemning our children and our children's children to a lesser life than we enjoyed."

In his Feb. 17 speech, the president introduced a four-year plan which includes \$246 billion in federal spending cuts. The proposal, according to newspaper reports, also contains about \$246 billion in tax increases, \$109 billion in spending increases and a net reduction of \$325 billion in the budget deficit, although Clinton did not specify those figures in his speech.

"Tonight, for the first time in 12 years, a president of the United States told the truth about the budget and the economy," House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt, D.-Mo., said in a written statement.

The president's plan "will restore fiscal sanity with an even hand, spur short-term revitalization and promote long-term, sustainable economic growth," said Gephardt, a member of a St. Louis church dually aligned with the Southern Baptist Convention and American Baptist Churches. "It is a plan to rebuild the ladder of opportunity for all Americans."

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Other Democrats in the House were not as optimistic.

Although he praised Clinton's forthrightness, Rep. Mike Parker, D.-Miss., expressed concerns about the package's "significant new spending" and a failure to cut spending enough.

He believes Clinton "will find it extraordinarily difficult to gain passage of his total package without deeper cuts in federal spending and a much clearer picture of how to achieve a balanced budget," Parker said in a press release.

Republicans, meanwhile, called the president's plan a reversal of campaign promises and a return to tax-and-spend policies.

"I would be willing to work with him if he really wanted to do some spending cuts," Sen. Trent Lott, R.-Miss., said in a written statement, "but I think his tax proposals are bad, I think they're unfair, I think they hit middle Americans and I think they're going to hurt the economy."

Lott, like Clinton, is a Southern Baptist.

Though the package would increase income taxes on salaries above \$30,000, polls indicated Americans responded favorably to Clinton's speech. A Washington Post-ABC survey, conducted immediately after the address, showed 74 percent approved of "most of the proposals Clinton made in his speech," the newspaper reported. Only 18 percent disapproved.

His plan is based on four fundamentals, the president said in his speech: Placing new emphasis in spending on investment rather than consumption; honoring work and family in a tangible way; reducing the deficit honestly; and paying for the plans with cuts in government waste, cuts in spending and fairness in additional taxes.

"We must now break the habits of both political parties and say there can be no more something for nothing and admit frankly that we are all in this together," Clinton said. "There is plenty of blame to go around in both branches of the government and both parties. The time has come for the blame to end."

No one "likes the tax increases, but let's just face facts," he said. "We cannot deny the reality of our condition. We have to play the hand we were dealt and play it as best we can."

Among the specific recommendations Clinton mentioned in his speech were:

- immediate investment of \$30 billion to create 500,000 jobs.
- reform of the health-care system, with plans to be presented this spring.
- freeze on federal government salaries for one year.
- reduction of bureaucracy by 100,000 jobs.
- broad-based BTU tax on heat content of energy.
- increase in top level for income taxes from 31 to 36 percent.
- increase in rate for corporations with taxable incomes of more than \$10 million to 36 percent.
- investment tax credit for small businesses.
- increase in Social Security taxes on upper-level recipients.
- expansion of the Head Start and Women, Infants and Children's nutrition programs.
- program of national service in exchange for college loans.
- expansion of the earned income tax credit.
- reformation of the welfare program to help put people back to work.
- passage of a crime bill which adds 100,000 to police forces.
- passage of the Brady gun-control bill.

**Southeastern aids theology study
in former communist headquarters** By Norman Miller

OBNINSK, Russia (BP)--In a building once named the "House of Political Enlightenment," a semester of theological lectures and biblical studies continues. The former Communist Party headquarters, which local residents say was used for "brainwashing," was converted by Obninsk municipal officials into the International Academy of Modern Knowledge, a polytechnical academy which offers a track of theological and biblical studies in its curriculum.

Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, traveled to Obninsk, a city of 100,000 people 62 miles south of Moscow, and delivered the academy's week of inaugural lectures to 55 students, Feb. 1-4. Patterson, describing his lectures as "an overview of the overview," briefly taught on the major topics of systematic theology. Patterson took brief excursions into the apologetical arguments for the existence of God, and he also lectured on church history.

Patterson said Southeastern, Southern Baptists' seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., is "deeply involved with this phenomenal opportunity and has plans to do something more permanent in the future."

"We are committed to help the academy in developing its theological curriculum, and Southeastern also is providing a professorial staff," he said.

Professors who travel to Russia are required to pay their own expenses, Patterson said. "Southeastern has not committed itself financially, but we are attempting to raise funds for the Obninsk academy from donors outside Southeastern's usual supporters."

The International Academy of Modern Knowledge is a three-way venture between Southeastern, PRO Missions of Memphis, Tenn., and officials of Obninsk, Russia. Southeastern and PRO Missions became involved through Phil Roberts, Southeastern's associate professor of evangelism and director for PRO Missions' efforts in Eastern Europe.

Roberts, who attended the inaugural week in Obninsk, was invited last November to the city by its municipal officials to discuss the possibilities of beginning a theological track of studies within the larger curriculum of the institute. In discussions with the mayor of Obninsk and other city officers, Roberts' help was requested in establishing theology study at the fledgling academy.

Roberts quoted one of the municipal officers, who had pointed to a large metal relief of Marx, Lenin and Engles, and said, "That used to be our trinity. Now we want to learn about the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

"Another official remarked that the Russian people are 'sick of the bankruptcy of communism and the hopelessness of atheism,'" Roberts recounted.

"The facilities in Obninsk are the finest I've seen anywhere in Eastern Europe," Roberts said in an interview. "The building has 12 classrooms with a capacity of over 50 persons per room." Roberts said the rooms are equipped with closed-circuit television which can be utilized to transmit lectures from two other lecture halls; one hall seats about 250 people, the other more than 500.

During inaugural ceremonies, the mayor of Obninsk, Yuri Kirillov, said, "It is symbolic that the first faculty of our institute is a theological one. This is very important to the present state of development in Russia, especially when so many things are changing in our country."

Alexander Postinikov, president of the institute, said in an interview, "In order for the new Russia to succeed, our nation must establish a moral base that reflects world values." Postinikov also expressed his gratitude to "the Americans for helping establish a theological track of studies. This is a courageous step which will help in these difficult times of our country."

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An advertisement for the academy and the track of theological studies was distributed throughout Russia via a national newspaper. More than 500 inquiries were received, one from Vladivostok, a city on the sea of Japan, some 4,000 miles east of Obninsk. Officials at the institute said 120 applicants were selected for an entry interview, and 55 of those were approved for admission.

The students represent a cross section of the former Soviet Union's culture and education, with many holding graduate degrees in the physical, medical and nuclear sciences. One student sought theological education to fulfill duties as a chaplain to a group of cossack fighters. Another was the assistant city prosecutor of Obninsk. Yet another was the local Baptist pastor's wife, and some were members of the Russian Orthodox Church. Three students quit their jobs to enroll in the academy.

Students submitted brief, written explanations why they sought a theological education. Nearly all expressed the desire to expand the scope of their education, some desired to have a better understanding of Christianity and some even noted they hoped Jesus would come into their hearts.

Iliyah Sofonov, 24, said he "was not serious about studying Christianity" when he first arrived. "I am from a society that has not read the Bible, but thanks to the lectures, a great change has come into my heart," Sofonov said. "And when I read my Bible at night and think about this change, tears fall from my eyes."

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Texas Baptists preparing
for key sporting events

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
2/19/93

DALLAS (BP)--When the world comes to Texas to play, local Baptists will provide opportunities to pray.

About 2,500 athletes ages 12-19 and an entourage of up to 3,000 well-wishers will visit north Texas April 2-11 for the American Airlines Dallas Cup XIV, an international soccer tournament.

Fred Sorrells, Southern Baptist itinerant missionary to Madagascar and the Indian Ocean islands, currently is on special assignment from the Foreign Mission Board to help Dallas Baptist Association coordinate ministries to the visiting soccer teams and their fans.

Meanwhile, San Antonio Baptists are encouraging all Texas Baptists to help them "Lift the Light" during Olympic Festival '93, July 23-Aug. 1. The San Antonio festival is expected to attract more than a half-million spectators and at least 4,200 athletes competing in 37 sports.

In response, Rebecca Short is serving with San Antonio Baptist Association as coordinator of Summer Ministries '93, encouraging church groups and Baptist Student Union teams from around the state to plan summer mission trips to the Alamo city.

Activities planned include sports clinics and evangelistic rallies; more than 100 Bible clubs in inner-city shelters, parks, recreation areas and multi-housing units; performing arts, clowning and puppetry on San Antonio's River Walk; and refurbishing inner-city homes.

The Dallas Cup is expected to draw 166 teams from the United States and 23 foreign countries -- including some where Southern Baptists have no missionary presence.

Most teams will stay in the homes of local Dallas Cup participants or in a hotel. But to help the 50 or so visitors who will need other lodging, Eugene Greer, church recreation Home Mission Board volunteer, is enlisting churches whose members are willing to open their homes to the young people.

Several congregations will provide church buses to transport visiting teams to special events, according to Joe Mosley, associate director of missions of the Dallas association.

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Spring Valley Baptist Church, located near the Dallas Cup headquarters hotel, will make its family life center available for tournament-related ministries, Mosley said. Among other events, a three-day international clinic preparing referees for World Cup competition will be held at the church.

Dallas Baptist Association also is helping to plan an Easter sunrise worship service for the visiting teams at Lake Highlands High School stadium in north Dallas.

Planning and mobilizing volunteers for the Dallas Cup ministries is good preparation for the summer of 1994 when Dallas serves as a host city for World Cup soccer competition, according to Mosley.

Dallas will serve as communications headquarters for all of the World Cup activities that will be conducted in at least a half-dozen cities, from Pasadena, Calif., to Buffalo, N.Y. The 1,400 foreign correspondents expected in Dallas for that event represent a missions challenge in themselves, Mosley noted.

"We want to continue moving more in the direction of sports ministry and evangelism," he said.

Since about 10 different language groups are represented among Dallas Cup participants, Sorrells is seeking furloughing and retired missionaries -- and other Christians with language skills -- to serve as interpreters.

Sorrells, whose primary foreign assignment is agricultural missions, initially became involved in evangelistic sports outreach when he read that Madagascar would host the Indian Ocean Island games.

"As I read the list of countries involved, I realized there were several where Southern Baptists had no missionary presence, and it seemed to provide us an avenue of ministry in those places," Sorrells said.

Although it was outside his area of expertise, Sorrells organized a Baptist hospitality center for spectators visiting Madagascar during the competition and launched other outreach ministries in association with the games.

"I learned through Henry Blackaby's 'Experiencing God' teachings that if we are sensitive to the activity of God and are willing to get in on what he is doing, sometimes he will call to a specific ministry someone with no particular qualifications so that God alone will be glorified," Sorrells said.

This year, he is working with Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to enlist about 30 students to participate in men's and women's basketball and volleyball teams. The teams will scrimmage Indian Ocean national teams in the Seychelles Islands this summer.

Working closely with Texas Baptist Men, Sorrells also is creating a database of laypersons with sports backgrounds willing to serve from two weeks to two years in international sports evangelism.

In addition to athletes, he is seeking referees capable of teaching officiating to others, coaches and sports medicine practitioners including trainers and physical therapists.

"God is opening doors that are just unbelievable in the area of sports ministries," Sorrells said.

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EDITORS' NOTE: Sports evangelism is a growing emphasis in Christian ministry. Foreign Mission Board staff writer Mary E. Speidel traveled to Argentina to report on it. The following three stories, along with six photos mailed to state Baptist newspaper editors, may be used individually, as a series or in a package.

Soccer star sees fame
as 'gift from God'

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
2/19/93

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (BP)--Jorge Cruz butts the soccer ball with his forehead, slamming the ball into the goal.

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"Excellent!" yells his coach, as Cruz and his teammates hustle to get in place for the next drill. It's morning practice for the Hurricanes, a professional soccer club in Buenos Aires, capital of Argentina.

On the sidelines, four young boys watch Cruz -- their favorite center forward -- hone the soccer skill of "heading" the ball.

When the team takes a break, they follow Cruz across the field. One with a camera wants to photograph him. Dripping with sweat, Cruz wraps his arms around the other boys for a pose.

After practice, more young fans swarm around him as he leaves the locker room. He seems to take the attention in stride.

Cruz is from Colombia, but he understands what soccer means to Argentines. "It's a passion," he said.

"It's stronger than the passion of Dallas Cowboy fans," added Cruz's wife, Julie, a Southern Baptist pastor's daughter from Beaumont, Texas.

Twice -- in 1978 and 1986 --- Argentina has won the World Cup, the sport's highest honor. The 1986 World Cup brought international fame to Argentina's Diego Maradona, a national soccer hero who made his professional soccer debut at age 15.

Cruz got his soccer start while growing up in Tulua, Colombia. At age 12 he was chosen for a team that prepares young people to play professional soccer. He went on to play three years for America de Cali, a professional soccer club in one of Colombia's major cities.

As a rising soccer star in Argentina, Cruz makes clear the place soccer holds in his life. "Soccer is something that God gave me to glorify him, to show people that Jesus exists," said Cruz, a Baptist.

He has had many opportunities to do that through national media coverage of his soccer achievements. During interviews he always mentions his faith. "For most people who know Jorge Cruz, the first thing they know about me is that I'm a Christian," he said.

Last year while playing with the Hurricanes he was featured in the national sports magazine Grafico, the Argentine equivalent of Sports Illustrated. A photo of Cruz holding a Bible appeared on the cover.

Such coverage is unusual for a non-Argentine athlete. "It was like a gift from God to me," said Cruz. "God knows that soccer is a passion in Argentina. It's like he chose me to tell others here about him through soccer. It's an opportunity to show people my faith."

Southern Baptists have a part in Cruz's mission. While he was playing professional soccer in Colombia, a scout from Houston Baptist University met him and offered him a soccer scholarship. Cruz attended Houston Baptist from 1985 to 1988. He was leading scorer for the Huskies soccer team (now disbanded) in 1985 and 1987.

While at Houston Baptist, Cruz met Julie Martin, daughter of Marion and Mary Martin, now of Orange, Texas. Julie was studying Spanish at the university; Cruz was just learning English. The two began communicating through an English-Spanish dictionary.

Cruz was not a Christian when the couple married. But while visiting in the Martins' home, he accepted Christ during a late-night conversation with Phil Herrington, now associate pastor of New Beginnings Baptist Fellowship in Houston. Herrington was leading evangelistic services at LaBelle Baptist Church in Beaumont, where Martin then was pastor. He is now pastor of MacArthur Heights Baptist Church in Orange.

Cruz was so excited about his decision that he woke up the whole family to tell them. "It was like a family celebration," Herrington recalled.

The Cruzes moved to Argentina in 1989 when Cruz got an offer to play with Racing de Cordoba, a professional soccer club in the highest-ranking division. He started gaining national media attention in 1991 while playing with Chaco Forever, a first-division club in Resistencia, Argentina. He joined the Hurricanes in February 1992.

Sometimes reporters ask Cruz how he feels about God when he misses a goal and his team loses. "I say, 'I feel the same, because God is with me when I lose and when I win.' I know that this is a chance game," he said.

Cruz's teammates are curious about his faith, too. "They always ask me questions about Jesus," he said.

Cruz shares Scripture and talks about his faith with his roommates during concentration, a period before games when players stay in a hotel away from family and friends. He invites teammates to pray with him before matches.

Many of Cruz's teammates don't want to change their lifestyles.

"They have a life of popularity and women," said Mrs. Cruz, who is expecting the couple's third child this fall. "A lot of players have said to Jorge, 'I don't want to give that up.'"

But one player accepted Christ while attending a meeting of Argentina's Christian Athletes with the Cruzes.

They feel God will lead them to many other such opportunities. "A great revival is going on in Argentina," Mrs. Cruz said. "It's really neat to know that the Lord has chosen Jorge as a part of that."

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(BP) photos (one vertical, one horizontal) mailed Feb. 17 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

**Sports evangelist teaches
Argentine Baptists to 'fish'**

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
2/19/93

BUENOS AIRES, Argentine (BP)--The sun isn't up yet when Robert Winter arrives at the airport in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He gets in line at the ticket counter, balancing a fishing rod against his luggage.

Winter's not a morning person, but today he looks wide awake. He's going to one of the world's best trout fishing spots near San Carlos de Bariloche, Argentina.

Actually, Winter first will spend several days with fellow Southern Baptist missionaries Steve and Vidonia Smith, from Hattiesburg and White Oak, Miss., respectively. They lead a Baptist sports ministry through First Baptist Church in Neuquen, Argentina.

Winter, from Columbia, S.C., is sports ministry consultant for the Argentine Baptist Convention's evangelism department. He teaches Argentine Baptists and missionaries how to use sports to tell people about Christ.

"Jesus said you have to go where the people are," said Winter, the first Southern Baptist foreign missionary appointed as a sports evangelist. "The vast majority of the world's people play or watch some kind of sport. We've got to go to them . . . They're not going to come to us."

He believes athletics provide a natural way for Christians to share their faith. "Sports is an international language," he said.

Argentines definitely speak that language. Argentina has given the world such athletes as soccer's Diego Maradona and tennis star Gabriela Sabatini.

Twice Argentina has captured the World Cup, soccer's highest honor. The No. 1 sport, soccer is "practically a religion" in Argentina, Winter said. Tennis and volleyball rank second and third. Another Argentine favorite is paddle ball, almost a cross between tennis and racquetball. It is played on a court half the size of a tennis court. Since the sport was begun in Argentina about five years ago, paddle ball courts have been springing up "almost on every street corner," Winter said.

Winter has been learning about Argentine athletics since he and his wife, the former Ann Belle from Albany, Ga., became missionaries in 1989. He is a former minister of recreation at churches in Georgia and South Carolina; she is a former teacher.

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In Argentina, professional and amateur athletes compete through sports clubs. Argentine schools don't have sports programs, so young people who can't afford club fees play their sport wherever they can. Sometimes that's in the streets.

In a poor zone in Buenos Aires, Baptist layman Enrique Flores, a policeman, leads an athletic program for such young people. He is volunteer director of Pumas del Sur, a Baptist sports center offering sports instruction, Bible study, counseling, meals and health care. About \$45,000 in Southern Baptist hunger relief funds have helped to support the center.

"When you throw out a ball in Argentina, kids come from everywhere just to play," explained Flores, who received an award for his work in 1987 from former Argentine President Raul Alfonsin. "Once we get their attention, then we develop a relationship with them and find out what their other needs are."

Winter, who credits Flores with instigating the request for a Southern Baptist sports missionary in Argentina, has worked with him as a consultant on the Pumas project.

But Winter's job has a national scope. Based in Buenos Aires, he travels throughout Argentina leading sports ministry workshops for Baptist churches and associations. Participants receive evangelism materials in Spanish that he has translated or written for almost every sport in Argentina.

An evangelistic sports program started by Argentine Baptists is one result of his ministry.

Young people compete on soccer and volleyball teams from Baptist churches. Finalists advance to a national tournament held at the Baptist camp in Cordoba province. Each team must conduct evangelistic meetings and retreats, and at least 30 percent of its players must be non-Christians.

In 1992 about 400 non-Christian young people participated; more than half accepted Christ as Savior. During the national tournament, a referee hired from a local sports association also accepted Christ.

Winter also has created a model showing churches how to do sports ministry with limited resources. When the Winters and their two sons arrived in the country in 1990, they joined the Baptist Church of the Village of Urquiza near their home.

He soon started a volleyball ministry at a park just a few blocks from the church. Because of his heavy travel schedule, he trained a church member, Marcelo Battista, to lead the program.

Every Saturday Battista, 26, sets up a volleyball net in the park. He and several other volunteers try to develop relationships with young people who come to play. They invite them to church and give out sports tracts, including one with a volleyball theme designed by Winter.

"I'm not a preacher, but God uses the talent that he gave me," said Battista, a businessman in Buenos Aires.

"I'm not a preacher, either," Winter added quickly. But he believes that sports ministry "is as much of a calling as anything else in the local church, like teaching Sunday school or being a deacon."

Battista is a good example of that.

"If you're going to fish for men, you've got to have a hook," Battista stressed. "And you've got to put something on the hook that they like."

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(BP) photos (one vertical, one horizontal) mailed Feb. 17 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Smiths help Argentines
train for 'race of life'

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
2/19/93

NEUQUEN, Argentina (BP)--Steve Smith squints in the midday sunlight as he pedals his Trek road bike around the skating track.

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Two champion roller skaters trail closely behind him. Their thigh muscles bulge as they pick up speed on their skates. After several laps, the skaters switch places. Smith stays in front of them, breaking the force of the wind.

The athletes are two of Argentina's best: Jose Luis Lozano, five-time gold medalist in the 1987 Pan-American Games, and Claudio Iurchur, second among speed roller skaters in Argentina. They're training for a national skating race in March. Smith sometimes joins them for workouts in Neuquen, Argentina.

Today Smith wears black biking shorts with a pink stripe down each leg. A silk-screened watermelon decorates the front of his green T-shirt. He hardly looks the part of a Southern Baptist missionary.

But he's not your traditional missionary. Neither is his wife, Vidonia.

The Smiths, from Hattiesburg and White Oak, Miss., respectively, came to Neuquen in 1991 to help First Baptist Church develop a sports ministry. He already had served three and a half years in general evangelism in San Juan, Argentina. Although the couple enjoyed that role, they dreamed of one day using interests in sports, fitness and nutrition on the mission field.

"But we weren't even looking for that in San Juan; we were happy there," Smith recalled. Completely out of the blue, they got a phone call from Lozano on April 11, 1990, Mrs. Smith's birthday.

The professional skater, a Baptist, had heard of the Smiths from Leon White, a former Southern Baptist missionary in Argentina. Lozano dreamed of starting an evangelistic sports center in his hometown of Neuquen. When he told White about his desire, the missionary put him in touch with Smith.

Lozano already was using his skating talent in evangelism. At age 20 he had accepted Christ as Savior at First Baptist Church of Neuquen. Five months later he won the world championships in Mar del Plata, Argentina.

From then on he has spoken openly about his faith through media interviews and contact with other athletes. Besides the five medals from the 1987 Pan-American Games in Indianapolis, Lozano holds 53 national and 12 South American titles in speed roller skating.

But in addition to skating, Lozano began to feel God was calling him to help create a broader sports ministry through his church. First Baptist supported the idea, and Lozano started looking for people to help him.

Mrs. Smith recalled Lozano's first conversation with her and her husband: "He said, 'We want somebody who will be willing to put on the short pants with us, someone who will get out there with us.'"

For the Smiths, the phone call "was like God was coming down out of heaven and saying, 'Hey, this is what you always wanted.' We never imagined that we would have the opportunity to do something like this," Smith said.

The missionaries are living out that dream in Neuquen, a "sports-crazy" city, Smith said. About 60 percent of its 200,000 residents are under age 15. About 80 percent of young people Smith surveyed said they played sports.

To reach them and other sports fans in the community, the Smiths have built a team of Baptists who lead the Christian Sports Foundation. The foundation is a ministry of First Baptist Church, which operates several community ministries such as a school and health-care outreach and ambulance services.

Smith has trained about 16 Baptist lay people in leading evangelistic sports clinics. The volunteers conduct regular clinics for young people in a variety of sports, including Neuquen's most popular sports of volleyball and skating.

The Smiths and their colleagues also have started a small gym in a rented building in downtown Neuquen. The gym is staffed by Baptist laymen Marcelo Palidino, a national judo champion in Argentina, and Jose "Pepe" Soto, known for his work as a trainer of professional athletes.

The men build relationships with clients who come to the gym to work out. That leads to conversations about life and problems. Then they tell people about the answers they have found in Christ. "It's not like preaching a sermon to the multitudes," Palidino said. "It's forming an effective one-on-one relationship."

At First Baptist Church, Mrs. Smith has similar opportunities through an aerobics class she leads twice weekly for women. She always teaches an evangelistic Bible study during exercise breaks. The class also gives her a chance to share her fitness philosophy. "If you are physically fit then you're a fit instrument to be used (by God)," she said.

These ministries, closely tied to First Baptist, will later be housed in the foundation's gymnasium now under construction. The structure -- 145 feet wide, 132 feet deep and 46 feet high -- will be the largest gym in Neuquen province. It is partly financed by \$85,000 from the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions. The project also has received donations from the community, including about 10 acres of land where the gym will be located. The governor of Neuquen province has pledged \$100,000 in support.

The Smiths and their colleagues hope to start a church through the gym and its ministries. "There are lots of people who never go inside a church building but will come to a gymnasium. In that environment in a very nontraditional way they'll be able to hear the gospel," Lozano said.

They also plan to use sports principles to train people who become Christians through the project. Smith, a marathon runner, has written a series of sports devotionals called "10 Keys to Victory." These apply sports concepts such as endurance to living the Christian life.

Sports examples provide a natural way to train Christians, the leaders believe. "For instance, the Christian life is like a race. Just like in a skating race, in the race of life you're going to have times when you fall. You're going to have times when your muscles get tired," Lozano said.

"When you fall down, you get up and finish the race. When people fall in their Christian life, they need to get up and keep on moving, to continue the race," said Lozano, who is training for the 1995 Pan-American Games in Mar del Plata.

That concept expresses Smith's philosophy of life and ministry. So does a poster on the wall of his office: "The race is not always to the swift but to those who keep on running."

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(BP) photos (one horizontal, one vertical) mailed Feb. 17 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Cooperation yields new clinic
for poor in north Mexico city

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
2/19/93

DALLAS (BP)--Poor people in Ciudad Acuna, Coahuila, can receive free health care at a new clinic, thanks to Texas Baptist River Ministry, a Methodist ophthalmologist, an international service organization and a deaf physician from the Mexican interior.

Representatives of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and Del Rio-Uvalde Baptist Association joined the Lions Clubs of Acuna and Brownwood, Texas, in dedicating the new clinic Feb. 13.

The Lions Clubs of Texas District 2A1 and sister organizations in the Acuna area secured the land and built the clinic which the River Ministry will manage, providing medical, dental and specialized eye care to the poor at no cost.

The clinic's completion marked a dream come true for Stephen Kelly, an ophthalmologist from Brownwood who has served on River Ministry medical mission trips for six years and has been bringing his office staff to serve in Acuna for four years.

Though Kelly is a Methodist, he became involved in River Ministry through the influence of several Texas Baptists who serve on his staff, including Yvonne Trevino, whose husband, Salvador, is pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista in Brownwood, and Marcia Wells, whose husband, John, is pastor of First Baptist Church in Lake Brownwood.

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After seeing the need for a permanent health care -- and especially eye care -- facility in Acuna, Kelly remembered hearing about the Lions Clubs' international "SightFirst" campaign and the service organization's commitment to conquering blindness.

"My friends who are in the Lions Club were interested in what we were doing here, helping the poor," Kelly said.

Leaders of Lions Clubs in West Central Texas contacted fellow club members in Acuna, surveyed needs in the border city and adopted construction of the clinic as a service project.

Through Jack Calk, director of missions in Del Rio-Uvalde Association, Kelly linked the Lions to River Ministry's ongoing health care ministries.

"The Lions Club and River Ministry have the same agenda when it comes to service," Kelly said.

But while the Lions Club is interested primarily in restoring sight to the visually impaired, day-to-day operation of the Acuna clinic will focus at least as much on granting spiritual sight and contributing to total physical well-being.

The Acuna clinic -- valued at more than \$100,000 -- will offer full-service health care and no apologies for evangelistic outreach, according to Elmin Howell, director of Texas Baptist River Ministry.

Livia Sanchez, a native of Guadalajara, Jalisco, serves the new clinic as resident physician and administrator. A recent graduate of Hispanic Baptist Theological Seminary in San Antonio, she has a 70 percent hearing loss but proficiently reads lips in both English and Spanish.

Sanchez was born into a financially secure family -- her father is an engineer and both her mother and her sisters are medical doctors -- and she was given every educational opportunity. But while she was in medical school, Sanchez felt called by God to medical missions among the poor.

Initially, she interpreted the calling simply as a responsibility to donate her time to weekend or week-long mission trips. But while serving on one such trip, she became convinced that health care ministry among the poor was meant to be her career.

"The Lord touched me as I saw the needs of the poor in my own country," she said.

Texas Baptists will support Sanchez's ministry in Acuna through their gifts to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions.

The state missions offering not only funds the health care, agricultural-economic development, evangelistic and church planting programs of River Ministry, but also provides funding for Hispanic Seminary where Sanchez received training.

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Baptist paper spurs widow's efforts
to help Louisiana's problem gamblers

Baptist Press
2/19/93

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (BP)--Legislation creating treatment opportunities for compulsive gamblers will be introduced in the Louisiana legislature next month, thanks to the initiative of a 72-year-old widow from Lafayette who reads the Texas Baptist Standard.

Hazel Hall, a member of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Lafayette, La., read an editorial in the Feb. 10 issue of the Texas Baptist newsjournal pointing out the harmful effects of a state lottery and applauding the efforts of the Texas Council on Problem and Compulsive Gambling.

The editorial noted Texas lawmakers in 1991 established a \$2 million-per-year appropriation from general revenue for problem gambling education and treatment programs.

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"Yes, this action was no doubt a concession to those who had opposed a state-run lottery, but the results are the same," editor Presnall Wood said. "And Texas can be thankful that those having a problem with gambling can call the gamblers' helpline toll-free number of 1-800-742-0443."

Hall had witnessed firsthand the effects of problem gambling, having worked as a credit manager when pari-mutuel horse race gambling was legalized in Louisiana.

"When it hit my desk, you were in trouble," she recalled. "I remember grown men and grown women coming in crying and saying they thought they could win on the horses, but they lost everything. I saw right then, you don't make anything off of gambling."

"That article in the Baptist Standard got me off dead center, and I started calling legislators."

She personally went to see her state representative, Don Higginbotham, taking him a copy of the Standard editorial.

"I told him it's going to hurt one way or the other, so the state might as well decide when it's going to pay. It's a matter of either setting aside some money now to help these people, or else putting the money into welfare payments for them later," Hall said.

She then called Texas state offices in Austin for more information on the legislation that resulted in creation of the Texas Council on Problem and Compulsive Gambling.

Sources at the capitol put her in touch with Sue Cox, executive director of the council. Cox is compiling a packet of information for Higginbotham, who has agreed to sponsor a bill in the Louisiana legislature allocating funds for compulsive gambling education and treatment programs.

"Mrs. Hall has a cause she believes in, and I believe it is a very good cause," Higginbotham said, recalling a phone conversation with another constituent who had gambled away \$30,000 in four months on video poker.

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Colson 'humbled, grateful'
as Templeton Prize recipient

Baptist Press
2/19/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--Charles Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship and former self-described "hatchet man" for Richard Nixon, has been awarded the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion.

Colson is a member of Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Va.

The \$1 million-plus prize previously has been awarded to Billy Graham, Mother Teresa and Alexander Solzhenitsyn. It is named for financier John Marks Templeton and seeks to be a Nobel Prize-like award in the field of religion and spirituality.

"When I first learned of this award, I did not feel a sense of exultation," Colson, 61, said in a statement. "I was instead driven to my knees, humbled and grateful to the Lord Jesus Christ whom I serve."

Colson dates his born-again conversion to Aug. 12, 1973, after hearing a personal testimony from Tom Phillips, a top official with Raytheon Corporation. He served seven months in prison of a one- to three-year term for his Watergate offenses and was released in January 1975. He began Prison Fellowship in 1976.

Prison Fellowship now encompasses a 280-member staff, some 50,000 volunteers in the United States and similar outreach in 54 countries.

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CORRECTION: Please make the following correction in (BP) story titled "Southeastern initiating Islamic study center," dated 2/10/93.

Change the 14th paragraph to read:

Timothy came to Southeastern on the recommendation of Southern Baptist evangelist Anis Shorrosh. Shorrosh is the author of "Islam Revealed."

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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