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**NATIONAL OFFICE**  
SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-2355  
Herb Hollinger, Vice President  
Fax (615) 742-8919  
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** 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** 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300  
**RICHMOND** Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 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

May 5, 1993

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**Volunteers star of missions  
in convention's host city**

By Sarah Zimmerman

**Baptist Press  
5/5/93**

HOUSTON (BP)--The stars at night may be big and bright in Texas, but deep in the heart of Houston, the stars are volunteers.

From stuffing envelopes to teaching people to read and organizing food pantries, volunteers are instrumental in every aspect of Southern Baptist life in this year's convention city.

Spiritual and physical needs among 3.9 million people can be overwhelming, but volunteers offer hope that the job will get done, said Lori Hill, volunteer coordinator for Union Baptist Association. "With more people working, we can meet more needs," she said.

Every month volunteers work 1,000 hours in the associational office, but that does not include hours donated to Houston's four mission centers or hundreds of multi-housing ministries. Six people on the associational staff, including Hill, are volunteers.

Houston leaders intentionally recruit, train and give volunteers rewarding jobs. For example, volunteer Myrtle Tolley became interim director of Houston's four mission centers when home missionary Mildred McWhorter retired in December.

Doris Meyer has been a Mission Service Corps volunteer in Houston since 1985. A former school teacher who now coordinates grants for the Aldine Independent School District, Meyer said she has always loved to read.

She was motivated for literacy missions, however, because her brother could not read. He was her first adult student and the first person Myer saw make a profession of faith as the result of literacy missions.

Currently Meyer trains adults to teach others to read. She also frequently spends her lunch hour at an elementary school, helping children improve their reading skills.

Elsie Cosgrove, another Mission Service Corps volunteer, organizes distribution of \$1,400 to \$1,600 of food each month. Cosgrove mails a list of needs to 32 mission coordinators from Sunday school classes at First Baptist Church of Houston and classes respond with food donations.

The food is distributed through Westview Baptist Church, one of First Baptist Church's mission congregations.

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Teresa Bolin, a native of Argentina, became a Christian when she attended a church-sponsored program for people seeking U.S. citizenship. She participated in week-long mission trips with her church before realizing "missions doesn't have to be just a week a year."

Now Bolin, also a Mission Service Corps volunteer, leads a Big A Club in an apartment complex on Monday afternoons and teaches English classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Though volunteerism is encouraged, there is a constant need for more workers. After leading a Big A Club in a government-subsidized apartment complex by herself for two years, Roma Vick found assistance through Star of Hope, a shelter for the homeless.

However, the Christian men who help her teach seldom serve as volunteers after they move out of the shelter.

Vick said her dream is for someone to be a "paraclete" for the volunteers from the homeless shelter. "They're all babies in Christ. They need older Christians to be alongside them. They need to be taught so they can teach."

At the associational office, Hill had 12 places where she needed volunteers in May. "As we project growth, the need for volunteers just multiplies," she said.

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(BP) photos (horizontal and vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines on SBCNet Newsroom.

Crossover events to address  
Houston's 'vast lostness'

Baptist Press  
5/5/93

HOUSTON (BP)--Indianapolis and Houston are "incredibly different" cities, says Alvin Reid, but the need to share the gospel is the same.

As director of evangelism for the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, Reid was a leader in Crossover Indianapolis last year. The evangelistic thrust preceding the Southern Baptist Convention resulted in 1,043 professions of faith.

Reid has since moved to Houston where he is assistant professor of Christianity at Houston Baptist University.

"I don't think there is a city in the Bible Belt that is more innovative than Houston," Reid said. "The resources here are much greater (than in Indianapolis), but the lostness is just as vast."

A 1990 report on church membership shows 42 percent of Houston's Harris County residents are not affiliated with any of 133 religious groups. This year's Crossover activities will include door-to-door visitation, block parties, church rallies and a prayer conference.

To be involved in Crossover, contact Bobby Sunderland, Home Mission Board evangelism assistant at (404) 898-7688 or 1350 Spring Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30367-5601.

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline on SBCNet newsroom.

African American Fellowship  
slates 2 sessions in Houston

Baptist Press  
5/5/93

HOUSTON (BP)--The African American Fellowship of the Southern Baptist Convention will meet twice in connection with the June 15-17 annual SBC meeting in Houston.

A "Celebration of African American Messengers" to the SBC will be at 6 p.m. Sunday, June 13, at Brentwood Baptist Church in southwest Houston, the church were the fellowship's president, Joe Ratliff, is pastor.

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Featured speaker during the service will be Howard Anderson, pastor of Singing Hills Baptist Church in Dallas.

On Monday, June 14, the fellowship has scheduled a noon luncheon at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, when leading African-American churches will be recognized for baptisms and other church growth categories.

Cost will be \$15 per person. Advance tickets may be purchased by checks made payable to African American Fellowship, c/o Brentwood Baptist Church, P.O. Box 450409, Houston, TX 77245.

The fellowship encompasses 2,000 African-American churches affiliated with the SBC.

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EDITORS' NOTE: Please substitute the following story for one with the same headline in (BP) dated 4-30-93.

Computer users gather  
prior to SBC meeting

Baptist Press  
5/5/93

HOUSTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Computer Users Association will meet in June to share information among computer users employed by Southern Baptist organizations, including churches.

Theme for the conference is "Achieving Quality Begins With Us." Participants will review electronic mail and video conferencing as well as hear a Baptist Sunday School Board representative discuss the Church Information System and uniform church letter data.

The meeting is scheduled from 8 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Friday, June 11, and 8:00 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, June 12, at First Baptist Church of Houston.

Cost for attending the conference, including a luncheon, is \$25. For more information or to register, contact Charles Williamson, director of systems development for the Home Mission Board and the organization's president, at (404) 898-7282 or 1350 Spring Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30367-5601.

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Secretaries elect  
1993-95 officers

Baptist Press  
5/5/93

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Some 560 people attended the 1993 meeting of the National Association of Southern Baptist Secretaries, April 28-May 1 at the Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Elected to NASBS offices for the 1993-95 term were president, Karen White of First Baptist Church, Coppell, Texas; membership vice president, Judy Wood, Pastoral Counseling Center, Winston-Salem, N.C.; publicity vice president, Bettye Hughes, Trinity Baptist Church, Lubbock, Texas; and secretary-treasurer, Peggy Duncan, Northeast Louisiana Baptist Association in Monroe.

Dale O. Steele, pastor of Penelope Baptist Church in Hickory, N.C., led Bible studies under the conference theme, "Fulfilling Your Ministry." Fes Robertson, former director of Genevox Publishing at the Baptist Sunday School Board, led music during the four-day meeting.

NASBS was founded in 1985 as a professional organization for church and denominational office personnel.

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**Students spend spring break  
doing inner-city housework**

**By Tracey King**

JACKSON, Tenn. (BP)--Fifteen Baptist college students spent spring break '93 cleaning house -- and not as a favor to Mom.

The students were part of a special team sent to Atlanta to do inner-city mission work from Union University in Jackson, Tenn. The SPOTS (Special Projects Other Than Summer) team assignments included cleaning apartments for elderly and disabled tenants, serving meals at a homeless shelter and working at a thrift clothing store.

For five days, team members mopped, swept, ironed and shared about Jesus with residents of Roosevelt House, a high-rise apartment complex for senior citizens and disabled adults. Roosevelt House is located in Techwood, the oldest public housing project in the United States.

"Housework may not seem like much of a ministry, but to older or disabled people who can't get around or afford help, it's a miracle," said Star Walker, a junior from Boise, Idaho.

"Some of the apartments were filthy, especially the ones with bugs," shuddered Walker. "At times, singing choruses like 'The Joy of the Lord is My Strength' was the only thing that got me through the day."

Sissy Burney, a freshman from Selmer, Tenn., discovered using a mop and broom can be a great witness.

"I met a man who had been saved in 1992 when a (Union University) SPOTS team cleaned his apartment," Burney recounted. "Mr. Gonzalez spoke no English and talked with me through a team member who knew Spanish. He told me lots of people had shoved religious tracts under his door but no one had asked him what he really needed until last year. A clean apartment opened the door for someone to share Jesus with him. What an awesome way to witness!"

Home base for the team was Techwood Baptist Center in the heart of the downtown project. Terry Moncrief, pastor and executive director since 1972, began volunteering at the center while a student at nearby Georgia Tech.

For most of his college career, Moncrief rejected Christian beliefs. After the death of his father, he accepted Jesus as his Savior. David Beal, then director of the Techwood Center, counseled Moncrief at the altar.

"This center had a tremendous impact on my life during college," Moncrief said. "I believe college students, like the SPOTS team from Union, greatly benefit from this type of ministry opportunity."

Throughout the week students served lunch at the Atlanta Union Mission, a homeless shelter for recovering drug and alcohol addicts. The team also distributed Bibles and tracts to the mission's residents and worked in the Here's Hope Thrift Store, another ministry of Techwood Center. Each morning team members sorted and steam cleaned donated clothing.

The thrift store distributes much of its clothing through the exchange of "Here's Hope Dollars," a special currency circulated by area ministry groups. These vouchers may be redeemed at the store in exchange for needed items.

"Although we provide clothing for needy families, the mission of this store is to provide direction to the inexperienced and unemployable by training them for gainful employment," said Jenny Page, store manager.

Trainees, along with local church volunteers, actually run the store. Each employee is trained in shipping/receiving, time cards, sorting, pricing, customer relations, business etiquette, cash register and other areas of retail work.

"Job training helps people break the cycle of poverty," Page said.

All the team members agreed the trip to Atlanta was hard work but well worth the effort.

"I didn't want to go to Atlanta," Burney reflected. "The inner city scared me and I didn't feel qualified to do mission work. But on this trip, God reminded me he could use me anywhere doing anything if I just left it in his hands."

Former Vietnam missionaries  
revisit church they nurtured      By Raymond L. Daye

LAFAYETTE, La. (BP)--Herman Hays fought in Vietnam, and his wife Dottie fought right beside him. They arrived in South Vietnam in 1959, before large-scale U.S. involvement in that country. They left in 1975 just before Saigon fell to North Vietnamese troops.

Hays was not in the American army; he was in God's army. His battlefield was the streets of Saigon and other southern towns and cities. His weapon was the Bible, not an M-16 rifle.

The streets and jungles and rice paddies where American soldiers fought and died in the fight against communist forces are now in the hands of those forces, but the church where Southern Baptist work began in South Vietnam is stronger now than it was when Hays left in 1975.

"It proves that even when missionaries have to leave a country, God never leaves," Hays said.

The Hayses returned to celebrate Grace Baptist Church's 30th anniversary in November 1992. They were surprised by the church's success, even with strict guidelines imposed on religion by communist authorities.

Hays retired from Foreign Mission Board service in October 1991 with 33 years of service, but retirement does not mean inactivity.

The Hayses have been away from Vietnam 18 years, but in a sense they never really left. Hays has been ministering to Vietnamese congregations for all but three of the past 34 years -- 16 in South Vietnam, seven while serving with the Foreign Mission Board office in Richmond, Va., seven in Australia, and now in Abbeville, La., in First Baptist Church's Vietnamese-language ministry.

The Hays family -- Herman, Dottie and three small children -- were the SBC's first missionaries to Vietnam, arriving a few months before another missionary couple.

Hays said he tried to find literature on Vietnam before he left, but almost everything written referred to the country's days as French Indo-China.

"South Vietnam became an independent republic in 1954 with the division of the country into the communist North Vietnam and non-communist South Vietnam," he said.

"There was a Baptist military man, Dan Whitt, who met us when we arrived," Mrs. Hays said. "His parents had written him that we were coming and he had a place for us to stay and helped Herman set up the financial books for the mission."

"I always thought of him as my 'John the Baptist,' preparing the way for me to begin our mission work there," Hays said. "I clearly saw the hand of God in his being there to meet us."

Soon after the Hayses arrived, Bill and Audrey Roberson and Lewis and Toni Myers joined the SBC mission work in South Vietnam. The Robersons are retired in North Carolina and Myers is vice president of the FMB's Cooperative Services International, working with countries where there are no Southern Baptist missionaries.

When the country fell to North Vietnamese troops in April 1975, there were 40 Southern Baptist missionaries, career and short-term, leading 50 congregations from Can Tho in the southern delta to Hue in the northern part of South Vietnam. The two largest were Grace Baptist, serving primarily Vietnamese, and Trinity Baptist, which served the English-speaking population during the war years.

Within a few years, only Grace Baptist remained. The church in Can Tho survived for about a year until the government finally shut it down for having inadequate documentation and no formally trained pastor.

At one point, Grace's membership had dwindled from 150 to only a few faithful families. It was allowed to remain open for services because it met the strict criteria established by the government, including documentation of ownership of its property and a formally educated Vietnamese-born pastor.

That pastor is Le Quoc Chanh, who "gave his heart to the Lord the very first time an invitation was given in our very first service in the Vietnamese language," Hays said. "Chanh was the first Vietnamese won to the Lord and the first one baptized. He later felt the call to the ministry, went to seminary and became the first Vietnamese pastor of Grace Baptist Church."

Grace Baptist now has almost 600 members and is growing. Its goal this year is to win and baptize 400 Vietnamese to the Lord. Considering the ability and zeal of its pastor and the congregation, Hays said the church could reach that ambitious goal.

The church also wants to open three new missions, hoping its government-approved status can also fall on any separate congregations it sponsors, and to start three kindergarten centers in the coming year.

"Our return to Vietnam was an answered prayer," Mrs. Hays said. "The main purpose of our going was to celebrate with them. They wanted us there because Herman had started the church and was its first pastor."

The Hayses spent nine days in Saigon, from Nov. 9 to Nov. 18.

"We organized Grace Baptist Church on Nov. 18, 1962, with 33 charter members, mostly Americans living in Saigon," Hays said. Attendance at the two-day celebration averaged 500.

The Scripture theme of the occasion was Psalms 103:2 -- "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits."

"It moved Dottie and me immensely that their emphasis was on praising God and not forgetting the blessings of God on them," Hays said.

The services began at 6:30 a.m. and ended at 5 p.m. both days. The congregation ate breakfast and lunch together. Eight choirs from the church sang.

The church does not preach a watered-down version of the gospel, but there are restrictions imposed by the authorities, Hayes recounted. One is that no non-Vietnamese citizen -- including a Vietnamese native who left the country since 1975 and has returned -- can proclaim or promote a religion.

"For that reason, the church could not invite me to preach," Hays said. "Chanh felt bad about that. I was able to lead the prayer of benediction in the church and make some brief remarks to thank the church for the gifts they gave us."

Mrs. Hays sang a special with two other former missionaries.

"I've never seen such a response after a special as I did after we finished that song," she said. "It was very moving for me."

The work begun in Vietnam more than 30 years ago is bearing fruit not only in that country, but among Vietnamese around the world.

"One of the first converts of the work in Can Tho was Dang Minh Lanh," Hays said. "He is now the pastor of New Orleans Vietnamese Baptist Church in Gretna. It shows how a missionary work can come full circle."

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Despite war, missionaries  
have fond Vietnam memories

By Raymond L. Daye

Baptist Press  
5/5/93

LAFAYETTE, La. (BP)--While a vicious war raged in the countryside around Saigon, Herman and Dottie Hays felt secure in the loving hands of Christ.

The Hayses were the first Southern Baptist missionaries to work in South Vietnam, arriving in that country in 1959 and remaining until North Vietnamese forces were only a short distance from Saigon in 1975. They witnessed the Vietnamese War from a vantage point most Americans did not have -- from inception to completion.

There were times when the family was scared, when the war ventured into the streets and cafes of Saigon and other towns where they preached and ministered to the Vietnamese people.

A North Vietnamese tank crashed through a wall in front of their home during the 1968 Tet Offensive.

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Restaurants where they enjoyed eating were bombed by Viet Cong agents. At night, the sounds of war outside of Saigon could be heard as they prepared to sleep.

"There was a feeling of fear and insecurity at times, but there was also always a feeling this was where God wanted us and he would protect us," Mrs. Hays said. "And he did."

Mrs. Hays said she and her husband played host to thousands of U.S. soldiers during that time, and to the best of her knowledge all of them made it home alive.

The war affected the family in other ways. At one point the Hayses had to bring their two sons back to Vietnam from boarding school in another country "because they were hearing reports of how bad it was in Vietnam and they couldn't bear to leave us behind."

When the war cooled down, the boys were sent back to school "and they were all right after that," Hays said.

For most of the 16 years they lived in Vietnam, the war was far removed and the family was never directly in danger, Hays said.

"We lived a normal and secure life," he said. "In Saigon, the war was usually far removed from us. When we had to travel to other areas, we had to go everywhere by plane because the ground routes were not secure."

"When we would come home on furlough and hear the news the people were receiving about what was going on in Vietnam, we could see how the people here had the image of the war they did."

That image wasn't always 100 percent accurate.

"In spite of the war, we and our children have pleasant memories of our time in Vietnam," Mrs. Hays said.

"We had a strong unity of love in our mission family," Hays added. "We found a lot of strength and support in our fellow Christians."

In an ironic twist, their oldest son, Paul, dropped out of college and was drafted into the U.S. Army. He was sent to Can Tho, near his parents' mission.

"We are probably the only American parents who were happy when their son was sent to Vietnam," Mrs. Hays said with a laugh. "He was stationed near us, so he was allowed to spend time with us while he was there."

Their son served in a support capacity and did not serve in direct combat, Hays said.

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**Multi-faceted ministry unfolds  
for pastor in northeast Nebraska** By Eva Wilson

**Baptist Press  
5/5/93**

MADISON, Neb. (BP)--At first, Abraham Aldape said "no" when he sensed God calling him to northeastern Nebraska.

Aldape had been pastor of Iglesia Bautista Emanuel in Dodge City, Kansas, eight years. "I hated to leave." After four difficult years in Dodge City, "the Lord was blessing and everything was going fine," he said.

But Aldape said God began to convince him. And his wife, Annette, also was feeling that God was leading them to move to Madison.

"The Lord just opened things up once we made the commitment to come," he said. "There's never a doubt in our minds that we're where we supposed to be."

Aldape and his family made the move in July 1990. They found a rental house, despite a housing shortage in Madison. And a position opened up for his wife, a school principal, at Stanton Elementary School, about 20 miles northeast of Madison.

At Calvary Baptist Church in Madison, Aldape is pastor to a congregation of about 60 people. He has baptized about 25 persons since coming to Calvary. About 90 percent of the church members are native Nebraskans who grew up in the Madison area.

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"This is one thing that has really strengthened the church," Aldape said. "These people have their homes here. They're not going anywhere."

Madison, population 2,100, is a farming community. The major industry is a pork processing plant employing about 650 people.

Many of the employees are Hispanics. But most of them live in Norfolk, 20 miles north, due to Madison's housing shortage. Aldape leads a Bible study for Spanish-speaking people on Saturday nights at his home.

The Hispanic community in the Madison area is very transient. Combined with the packing plant's work schedule, it causes attendance at the Bible study to fluctuate. The plant's employees normally work Monday through Saturday. But this spring employees often got off work early on Saturdays and had Mondays off. So with a long weekend, many of them went out of town.

The Hispanic Bible study reached a high of 25 when the Aldapes first arrived in Madison. But when the first snowfall came, many of those who attended headed south to a warmer climate.

Calvary Baptist Church also is reaching out to the community through its children's ministry, home Bible studies and Acteens for teen-age girls. Two girls who were honored during the church's recent Acteen recognition accepted Christ through Acteens.

The church also is seeing answered prayer in the form of a Bible study at Humphrey, a few miles south of Madison. A ministry in Humphrey, a staunch Catholic and Lutheran community, has been "a matter of prayer for months and years," Aldape said.

Bob and Shelly Noonan lead the Humphrey Bible study group. They have been members of Calvary two years.

Bob grew up in the Catholic church in Humphrey and Shelly was raised in the Lutheran church there. The Noonans, both 31, farm and raise hogs. Shelly is teaching their three children at home.

Ron and Cheryl Schmidt, from Calvary, helped the Noonans find a personal faith in Christ.

So now the Noonans are helping their friends and neighbors from similar backgrounds find the same faith. The Humphrey Bible study group began in July 1992 and meets at the Noonans' or in another home.

"This is the first time many of them have ever heard the Good News," Shelly said. Several people have accepted Christ through the Bible study. However, this decision may result in being "shunned" by family members, she said.

"Most of my relatives think I've gone off the deep end," Bob admitted.

In their Bible study, the Noonans are stressing a personal relationship with Christ. "The goal for us is to win people to Christ," Bob said.

Aldape, who recently also became coordinator of Southern Baptist work in that part of Eastern Nebraska Baptist Association, hopes to see the Humphrey story repeated throughout northeastern Nebraska, because of the tasks in his new position is starting new works.



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