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SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355

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) 828-5100
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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EDITORS' NOTE: The Southern Baptist Convention took votes June 16 on a resolution addressing President Bill Clinton and a Home Mission Board-recommended stance on Freemasonry. These stories were in process when Baptist Press was approaching its deadline, thus (BP) will post these stories in its 6-17-93 release. If information is needed sooner, phone the SBC Newsroom in Houston, 713-650-8141.

**Controversial paper's distribution
was unauthorized, Patterson says**

**Baptist Press
6/16/93**

By David Winfrey

HOUSTON (BP)--A 16-point position paper outlining differences between orthodox, neo-orthodox and liberal Christian beliefs was not meant for distribution from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's display booth at the Southern Baptist Convention, said seminary President Paige Patterson, who wrote the document.

The paper, titled "Understanding the Controversy," contends to "clarify the differences among us," according to an introductory paragraph. In addition to comparing beliefs, the document classifies schools, seminaries and individuals as adherents to those beliefs.

"I wrote the chart a number of years ago to use as a teaching tool to help folks understand some of the issues in the controversy," Patterson said in a hand-written statement released morning of June 15.

"I did not authorize its use and deeply regret it has been distributed," Patterson stated. "I therefore have taken steps to discontinue the distribution of the chart here in Houston."

Some of those defined as neo-orthodox Christians, however, have reacted strongly to Patterson's attempt to characterize their views.

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The chart's statements about orthodox Christianity include:

-- "Accepts full inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible."
 -- "Tends to emphasize missions, evangelism, church growth, pastoral leadership."

-- "Claims the Bible is the Word of God."

-- Lists Mid-America Baptist Seminary, Criswell College, Luther Rice Seminary, Southeastern Baptist Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Seminary and New Orleans Baptist Seminary as among those advocating these views.

The chart's statements on neo-orthodoxy, claiming it is "really neo-liberalism," include:

-- "Rejects inerrancy completely." Some Southern Baptists accept an "infallibility of purpose," meaning that the Bible is infallible in its spiritual teachings, the chart says. To these persons, the Bible's "'thoughts' are inspired but not necessarily the words."

-- "Talks about missions, but does very little about evangelism or missions. Emphasis is on structure and strong centralization and control."

-- "Claims the Bible contains the Word of God."

-- Lists Baylor University, Gardner-Webb, Wingate, Carson-Newman and Cumberland colleges and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as among those advocating these views.

-- Lists retiring Southern Seminary President Roy Honeycutt, Southwestern Seminary President Russell Dilday, Midwestern Seminary President Milton Ferguson, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Executive Director Cecil Sherman and "most Baptist state paper editors" as representative Baptists adopting those views.

"All that is said of any one of the three positions is not necessarily applicable to all its adherents," the paper states. "But in general, the outline here provided is an accurate appraisal of the views of these schools of thought."

Despite that caveat and the apology, those listed as holding neo-orthodox views responded strongly against the characterization.

Dilday said he accepts Patterson's apology, but called it "just another 'Paigerism,'" claiming "the damage is already done."

"The document distributed by Dr. Patterson is an unfortunate repetition of the strategy he used in earlier years -- spreading inaccurate and unfounded accusations to lure confused messengers into his political camp," Dilday said in a statement. "Now he falsely accuses me and Southwestern Seminary in an apparent attempt to lure confused students to his school."

Dilday also said the statements are insensitive to SBC President Ed Young's efforts to bring reconciliation and healing to the convention.

Milton Ferguson, president of Midwestern Seminary, said he was grieved by "the gross misrepresentations of my theological convictions."

"My theology is accurately represented by the Baptist Faith and Message," he said in a written statement. "I have worked continually during the controversy to achieve understanding, promote mutual respect and experience reconciliation with integrity for all. I will continue to do so!"

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Roy Honeycutt originally issued a statement strongly protesting distribution of the document. Upon hearing Patterson's explanation, however, Honeycutt said he accepted the clarification in good faith.

"I do not, however, accept the content of the document," Honeycutt's statement said. "I think, most importantly, his clarification removes any barrier on seeking peace and reconciliation in the SBC."

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Norm Miller, Pat Cole, Scott Collins & Marty Blankenship contributed to this story.

**Ed Young urges Baptists off
'side streets,' back to Jesus**

**Baptist Pr ss
6/16/93**

By Cameron Crabtree

HOUSTON (BP)--The America of yesterday is gone because Southern Baptists and evangelical churches have gotten off on "side streets" of homiletics, politics and inattention to evangelism and missions, said Southern Baptist Convention President H. Edwin Young.

"Our America, from any viewpoint, is growing darker and darker and darker," said Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston. "We look at our America in this hour and we have to ask, 'Where is the church?'"

Young said social victories today appear on the side of abortion advocates, drug dealers, the American Civil Liberties Union and proponents of the humanist agenda.

"The evangelical church, and, yea, even much of our beloved Southern Baptist Convention, have been on side streets," Young said. Recent Gallup surveys, Young noted, show church attendance up, but traditional morality in decline.

Charging churches across America with impotence, Young said Christians must take up the cross of Christ daily: "My cross is every day and I'm to deny my agenda and I'm to give, in every way, Jesus the highest priority in my life.

"We're to walk through our cities and our towns and people will look and say, 'Are you a Christian?' and we'll say, 'Yes, we're guilty; I'm a Christian.'"

The "gates of hell," Young said, seem to prevail against the church (in America) because "what we call church is something other than what Jesus has built and is building."

Political "side streets" also have occupied the attention of too many Christians, Young asserted.

"Somehow, we began to play political games and by definition politics comes to coalitions and coalitions lead to compromise and when we're in bed with a politician a genuine born-again Christian will be led to make compromises that we cannot and must not make," Young charged.

"The difference between the church in the 21st century and the church in the first century is the difference between influence and power," Young said. "The first century church did not have much influence (on the larger society), but it had the power of God" in its life and work.

But the "saddest side street we have marched down," Young said, is ranking evangelism and missions too low on the priority list.

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"Out of our 38,443 (Southern Baptist) churches last year 7,771 churches did not baptize a single person," Young said. "Out of our 38,000-plus churches last year over 20,398 of these churches baptized four or less -- many of them with memberships of 1,000, 1,500, 2,000, some of them 3,000-plus members."

Young said in his own Second Baptist Church it took 19 other members to win one person to Jesus Christ.

"Brethren, we might as well get deadly honest," Young stated. "You can't find any universalists among us, but ... by not letting evangelism be the main thing ... we have become functional universalists."

Young said churches must reclaim the promises of God to win the world for Christ.

Then, Young predicted, "No president and no congress shall be able to stop the purposes of the almighty God. When George Bush was president we did not have revival and now that Bill Clinton is president he can't keep us from having revival."

But churches must become desperate for God and pray for renewal and revival," Young said. "When the message of evangelism becomes the main thing again, the SBC will no longer be on side streets."

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**Young warns of crossing line
of political involvement**

By Sarah Zimmerman

**Baptist Pr ss
6/16/93**

HOUSTON (BP)--While messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting introduced 17 resolutions critical of President Bill Clinton, Ed Young called for more distance between churches and politics.

During a press conference after being re-elected SBC president, Young said Southern Baptists recently have been prone to cross the line between religion and politics.

Young, pastor of Houston's Second Baptist Church, said he encourages his church members to vote and to be personally involved in politics. Yet he said churches should not endorse candidates or be involved in political movements and political blocks.

Praying for Clinton "has been my only agenda since he was elected," Young said, despite his disagreement with Clinton's stand on giving homosexuals minority status and Clinton's pro-choice beliefs about abortion.

If messengers adopt a resolution about Clinton, Young said he hopes it will result in a private meeting between Young and Clinton for a time of "praying and sharing."

Young said he hopes Clinton will reconsider some of his positions but he added that revival is not based on who is president but on Christians.

On denominational politics, Young said his goal is to "get back to missions and evangelism." In the last 13 years, Southern Baptists have continued to "slide away from really reaching pagans for Jesus Christ," Young said.

Young described himself as a "Bible-believing, evangelical Southern Baptist" who prefers to not use terms such as fundamentalist or moderate.

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Asked about his support of Woman's Missionary Union, Young said he affirmed WMU. "We desperately need the energy of these wonderful women of God," Young said.

Earlier this year WMU officers voted to expand their products to include materials for any missions organization, in addition to materials written exclusively for Southern Baptists. Young said he did not understand how WMU could support missions offerings that would compete with Southern Baptist offerings for foreign, home and state missions. WMU leaders, however, have not stated any plans to promote alternative offerings.

Young said he has read but not studied Lloyd Elder's proposal for denominational reconciliation. Elder, former president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, issued the call for healing several weeks before the SBC annual meeting.

Young said his first impression was that Southern Baptists have already tried most of Elder's suggestions and that the material offered little "substance that would lead us toward healing." Yet Young said he would look at the material more closely.

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**SBC messengers elect
Committee on Committees**

**Baptist Press
6/16/93**

HOUSTON (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention messengers elected 68 persons from 34 state and regional Baptist conventions June 15 to serve on the SBC's Committee on Nominations.

The committee will bring nominations to the 1994 SBC meeting in Orlando of Baptists to serve on the SBC's various boards, commissions and committees.

The committee, to be chaired by William E. Bell, a member of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, is made up of two persons from each state or regional convention -- one layperson and one in church-related vocational work.

Committee members, listed by state, name, residence and church, are (*indicates layperson from each state):

Alabama: Ernest Franklin Whitaker Jr., Gilliam Springs Baptist Church, Arab; *James Jerry Benson, Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile

Alaska: Walter E. Davidson, Faith Baptist Church, Anchorage; *Cary W. Bierdeman, First Baptist Church, Kenai.

Arizona: Byron Banta, Corona Baptist Church, Chandler; *Dayle Lee Henson, First Southern Baptist Church, Flagstaff.

Arkansas: Dennis Cottrell, Harvard Avenue Baptist Church, Siloam Springs; *William D. Sykes, Central Baptist Church, Jonesboro.

California: Douglas Metzger, Magnolia Avenue Baptist Church, Riverside; *Anita Ciprian, Primera Iglesia Bautista, San Jose.

Colorado: Kenneth R. Barnett, Lakewood, Christ Baptist Church, Denver; *Howard L. Kroese, Golden, Applewood Baptist Church, Lakewood.

District of Columbia: William A. Moyer, III, Hillandale Baptist Church, Adelphi; *Thomas A. Hay, Fort Washington Baptist Church, Fort Washington.

Florida: Theodore H. E. Burrell, Trinity Baptist Church, Ocala; *Richard E. Lovejoy, Immanuel Baptist Church, Panama City.

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Georgia: Robert G. Smith, Stone Mountain, Rehoboth Baptist Church, Tucker; *Larry W. Brown Sr., Prays Mill Baptist Church, Douglasville.

Hawaii: Eugene Phillips, Mililani Baptist Church, Mililani; *Donna Farr, Kailua, Olivet Baptist Church, Honolulu.

Illinois: Michael Wayne Nolen, Friendship Baptist Church, Plainfield; *Andrew H. McClurg, Wheaton, Glenfield Baptist Church, Glen Ellyn.

Indiana: William Rash, Hawthorne Baptist Church, Indianapolis; *Kathryn Elaine Barbour, Graceland Baptist Church, New Albany.

Kansas-Nebraska: Timothy A. Folds Sr., Cornerstone Southern Baptist Church, Lawrence, Kansas; *Gary Ray Fuller, Omaha, First Baptist Church, Bellevue.

Kentucky: Bob W. Brooks, First Baptist Church, Louisa; *Yvonne Yates, First Baptist Church, Mayfield.

Louisiana: Claude Fontenot, First Baptist Church, Rayne; *Rhonda Harvey, Central Baptist Church, Springhill.

Maryland-Delaware: Michael L. Trammell, New Market, Mt. Airy Baptist Church, Mt. Airy; *Steven Raymond New, Montrose Baptist Church, Rockville.

Michigan: Robert Beddingfield, First Baptist Church, South Lyon; *Robert Hollis, First Baptist Green Oak Township, Howell.

Mississippi: Albert H. McMullan, First Baptist Church, Stonewall; *D. Wayne Ross, Temple Baptist Church, Hattiesburg.

Missouri: Gary Taylor, Lake St. Louis, First Baptist Church, O'Fallon; *John H. Ford, Concord Baptist Church, Jefferson City.

Nevada: William Don Potts, Sunrise Southern Baptist Church, Las Vegas; *Steve Rohrer, Spring Valley Baptist Church, Las Vegas.

New England: Paul Elizalde, Iglesia Bautista Casa de Oracion, Worcester; *Janice Griffin, North Country Baptist Church, Berlin, New Hampshire.

New Mexico: Dale Shook, Taylor Memorial Baptist Church, Hobbs; *Lois Jean Cone, First Baptist Church, Albuquerque.

New York: Timothy Dale Bitting, Emanuel Baptist Church, Potsdam; *Dewey Lee Hamrick, Clifton Park, Trinity Baptist Church, Schenectady.

North Carolina: Doug Worley, Broad Ridge Baptist Church, Orrum; *Rebecca Hardy, Holly Hills Baptist Church, Burlington.

Northwest: Mitch Martin, Richland, Wash., Quinault Baptist Church, Kennewick, Wash.; *Wilbur Adams, Eastmont Baptist Church, East Wenatchee, Wash.

Ohio: Steven N. Davidson, New Harmony Baptist Church, Milford; *John E. Sommer, Kidron, Orrville Baptist Church, Orrville.

Oklahoma: Wade Burleson, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Enid; *Jerry Fine Bethany, Northwest Baptist Church, Oklahoma City.

Pennsylvania-South Jersey: John I. Morris, Colonial Hills Baptist Church, Bedford; *Becky Miller, Bensalem, Haines Road Baptist Church, Levittown.

South Carolina: Ross Robinson, Northside Baptist Church, West Columbia; *Berry Harmon Creamer, New Prospect Baptist Church, Anderson.

Tennessee: Ben Wilkes, Second Baptist Church, Union City; *Brian L. Davis, Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova.

Texas: William E. Bell, Dallas, First Baptist Church, Euless; *John S. Brunson, First Baptist Church, Houston.

Utah-Idaho: Royce Shoemate, First Baptist Church, Vernal; *Billy Barton, Silverwoods Baptist Church, Sandpoint, Idaho.

Virginia: Kelly J. Burris, Kempsville Baptist Church, Virginia Beach; *Lorraine G. Simms, Salem, First Baptist Church, Roanoke.

West Virginia: Don Yeager, Fairlawn Baptist Church, Parkersburg; *Don Dinger, Brushfork Baptist Church, Bluefield.

On Wednesday evening, Atchison reported to the messengers a pastor resigned from the Stewardship Commission in order to correct an error. Benny King of First Baptist Church of Fenton, Mo., resigned, leaving the commission with 10 ordained ministers, 10 state convention employees and nine laypersons. The commission must have one-third representation from each category, according to bylaws.

The commission can function legally with a vacancy but not with an additional representative in a category, Atchison told Baptist Press.

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**BSSB's 'spectacular'
earns positive reviews**

By Douglas Hollinger

**Baptist Press
6/16/93**

HOUSTON (BP)--Leaving the George R. Brown Convention center following the Baptist Sunday School Board's 90-minute report and multimedia extravaganza June 15, retired pastor T.D. Traylor searched for words to describe the experience.

"It's like taking a picture of the mountains," the Laurel, Miss., resident said. "You can't zero in on any particular feature" but just appreciate "the whole effect." Whatever made it work, he said, "It's better than a dry report."

Messenger reaction to the presentation -- integrating video and live drama, music, guest celebrities and elaborate props, as well as a local drill team -- has been consistently positive, judging from comments made to reporters late Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning.

"I could take some more of this," said Russell Johnson of Missouri City, Texas, a first-time convention attendee. Houston resident Harry Robertson agreed: "In today's age, with MTV and all, you have to keep things exciting."

Although impressed with several aspects of the report, Columbus, Ohio, resident Will Pollard sounded a lone cautionary note: "It's probably the most overwhelming report that I've ever seen given at the SBC," he said. "Maybe a little overdone."

Several messengers saw the presentation as signaling a "new day" for Southern Baptists.

"Southern Baptists are finally getting out of the old and into the new. It's a class act," said pastor Shane Craven of Dalton, Ga.

Milton W. Boyd of Shreveport, La., was excited by the "inclusiveness" he saw on stage. "They used so many different people: men and women, young and old, ... all races, different media, variety."

Dallas resident Carl V. Watkins, a conference attendee for 53 years, concurred: "I thought it was good, really something different."

"It made me proud to be a Southern Baptist," said Chuck Tripp of New Haven, Miss. Tripp's mother is attending her first convention since 1957, when she was disappointed at continuing racial tensions within the denomination. Seeing the drill team from Houston's Brentwood Baptist Church, composed of African American young people, receive a standing ovation was very healing, he added.

"For my mom to see that was quite touching."

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Tripp's wife, Denise, also appreciated the "more creative types of ministry" exhibited by the report. The Sunday School Board, she said, "is really getting into people's needs."

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**Elder, Osborn seek process, plan
for bringing SBC 'family' together By Ken Camp**

HOUSTON (BP)--Former Baptist Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder and Rodney Osborn, coordinator of a work group of state convention executive directors and presidents, announced at a June 15 press conference in Houston their goal of finding a process to bring the Southern Baptist "family" back together.

"We need to return to the missions task both in missions support and missions governance," said Elder, professor of biblical studies and preaching at Belmont University in Nashville.

Elder met with Osborn, a Peoria, Ill., physician and immediate past president of both the Illinois Baptist State Association, three state convention presidents and two state executive directors at a breakfast meeting June 15 to find direction for a movement to broaden involvement in Southern Baptist giving and governance.

The group plans to bring some presentation to the 1994 Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando, Fla., but Osborn said it was not yet determined if it would be a motion, a resolution or some other type of statement.

One goal of the group in the next year will be to "learn what our family really wants," Osborn said.

"We seek to interpret God's great call for a new day in missions advance. We seek input from those of like mind to share in the development of the process to implement this vision, to assist in 'calling the Southern Baptist family together,' to accept the challenge the future holds for our response to the Great Commission," according to a statement adopted by the work group.

The six-member work group, along with Elder as facilitator and resource person, agreed to meet in Chicago in about 10 days to develop a vision statement and mission statement for the movement and to discuss mechanisms for involving a broad spectrum of Southern Baptists from all 35 state conventions in charting a course for reconciliation in the SBC.

Broad goals of the work group will be shared with the Fellowship of State Convention Presidents at their meeting in Houston during the Southern Baptist Convention, either by Osborn or by one of the three state convention presidents on the work group.

The work group was named by an ad hoc gathering of about three dozen Baptist state convention leaders who met following a research report presentation by Elder June 14.

In addition to Osborn, other work group members elected by the ad hoc meeting were Dick Maples, president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and pastor of First Baptist Church, Bryan, Texas; Joe Baker, president of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio and a director of missions; Rodney Travis, president of the Missouri Baptist Convention and pastor of First Baptist Church, Jackson, Mo.; R. Quinn Pugh, executive director of the Baptist Convention of New York; and Cecil Sims, executive director of the Northwest Baptist Convention.

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More than 100 state convention presidents, executive directors and executive board chairpersons and other "concerned Baptists" attended the June 14 meeting convened by Elder to discuss his report, "Calling the Family Back Together."

The report -- which had been mailed to Southern Baptist missions leaders nationwide -- included a statistical report on "critical trends" in Southern Baptist life and 20 action plans designed to broaden participation in SBC decision-making and reduce the appointment power of the convention president.

At the press conference, Osborn stressed that the work group was not "wedded" to any of Elder's action plans, but members were open to consider any number of processes designed to effect reconciliation in the convention.

"Our concern is to get on with the mission of reaching out to the world with the message of Jesus Christ," he said. "Our first priority is not the controversy. Our first priority is the mission."

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**Willard Scott addresses
SBC ministers' wives**

By Debbie Moore

**Baptist Press
6/16/93**

HOUSTON (BP)--"Jesus loves me, this I know" is one of the most important and meaningful things known to Willard Scott, weatherman on NBC's morning news show, "Today."

Speaking to more than 570 women gathered for the 38th annual Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives Luncheon, Scott said the other two meaningful things in his life are "going into anything with an attitude of prayer" and witnessing.

"We don't have to beat them over the head," he said, advocating instead what is known in Baptist circles as "lifestyle evangelism." Raised a Southern Baptist but now a member of his wife's Episcopal church, Scott said, "We can talk things to death. ... If what we believe in our hearts is right, it will prevail; it has for 2,000 years."

Introduced as "a star who makes a difference and who epitomizes the joy of living," Scott also reminisced about his rise to stardom, answered questions from the audience and recognized the 99th birthday of one of the women present.

Now a 43-year employee at NBC, Scott started working for the network as a page when he was 16.

"I always wanted to work in broadcasting" as a radio announcer, he said. Early in his career, which started and has continued in the Washington, D.C., area, Scott was not only the original Bozo the Clown but also the original Ronald McDonald.

In 1953 Scott, who has a bachelor of arts degree in philosophy and religion but no qualifications in meteorology, was assigned to do a five-minute weather report on the radio. Some time later the president of NBC, a fan of Scott's, asked him, "Why haven't you ever been on the network?"

"Because nobody ever asked me," Scott replied. The president then asked him if he would like to do the weather report for the "Today" show, which he has done ever since.

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Relating "the most exciting and meaningful thing that has ever happened to me," Scott said several years ago he received a letter from a young man who asked Scott to announce the 100th birthday of his uncle on the air during the "Today" show. After doing so, Scott began and continues to receive from 170 to 200 letters each day from people all across the country hoping to have their friend or relative's 100th or 100-plus birthday announced on the program.

Scott then honored a participant at the luncheon, Bess Russum of Hattiesburg, Miss., as she celebrated her 99th birthday.

June Honeycutt of Louisville, Ky., 1993 president of the ministers' wives group, announced the slate of 1994 officers: Ellen Tanner of Oklahoma City, president; Anne Collingsworth of Orlando, Fla., vice president; Sherrie Blankenship of Paris, Texas, recording secretary; and Dixie Gray of Salt Lake City, corresponding secretary.

The speaker for next year's luncheon, when the SBC meets in Orlando, Fla., will be Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of evangelist Billy Graham.

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**Fitness program builds
body as well as spirit**

By Kirby F. Warnock

Baptist Press
6/16/93

HOUSTON (BP)--While most messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention were concerned about spiritual matters, one exhibit booth in Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center was centered toward more worldly matters.

Ray Furr, communications director for the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, has headed up the "Fitness First" exhibit for his second straight year, addressing a subject that receives little attention from the heads of the SBC: What kind of shape is your congregation in?

"We (Southern Baptists) are very concerned about our souls, but not much attention is paid to these temples that we dwell in, our bodies," said Furr.

Furr should know. As a seminary student he let his weight balloon to nearly 200 pounds and was always tired. One day he got a look at his driver's license photo and became determined to change. He embarked on a rigorous fitness program -- running, lifting weights, riding an exercycle and adopting a strict low-fat diet. The result? "I lost nearly 70 pounds."

But the mental benefits far outweighed the physical ones. Furr no longer felt tired after work; he liked his appearance and found that he had more alertness and stamina during long hours at the office. He also found out that he was sick less. His body was stronger and he fought off colds and illnesses.

With the urging of Annuity Board President Paul Powell, Furr began to "spread the gospel" of fitness. He began to communicate his views in wellness articles in The Years Ahead, the board's publication, and took the next step by opening and operating a fitness booth at last year's Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis.

Powell gave the project his support, in part because of rising health insurance premiums the Annuity Board was faced with year after year. One of the biggest problems facing churches today is the soaring cost of health insurance for the pastor and the church staff.

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Furr is convinced a convention-wide wellness program could result in savings to the SBC. Furr argued that if the number of insurance claims could be reduced by a wellness program, the premiums would hold steady, or drop.

Industry pundits agree.

"Our insurance policy is claims driven," said Joel Mathis, Annuity Board vice president in charge of insurance. "The more claims we file, the more money Prudential has to pay out and the higher our premiums go."

Unfortunately fitness has never been a priority at the SBC, and many Baptists battle obesity, heart disease and high blood pressure. Baptists are known for their hearty eating habits at covered-dish dinners, picnics and ice cream socials. On top of that, many church staff members are sedentary, spending hours behind a desk. Without balancing diet and exercise, this can be a lethal combination.

Compounding this problem is the fact that many Baptists look at this world as a mere stopover on the way to heaven. Some people would argue they don't need to add one, two or even five more years to their life. What do you say to them?

"I don't try to tell people that they will live longer," Furr said. "I tell them that 'you will live better.'"

"I understand where they are coming from about looking forward to heaven, but if you are in better shape, you will live a fuller, more productive life on this earth. You won't be too tired to play ball with your grandchildren."

So it was that Furr embarked on his crusade. He is living proof that a person can turn things around, no matter how badly out of shape he or she is.

At his board's fitness booth, blood pressure can be checked or children can be put through a kid's fitness program. There are Christian aerobic tapes for sale as well as nutrition advice. They have been seeing between 300 and 400 people a day, giving fitness assessments and prescribing moderate exercise programs.

"If I can just get one or two people to change their lifestyle a little -- start walking three times a week -- then it's all worth it," Furr said.

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**Porter praises role
of convention pages**

By Tim Yarbrough

**Baptist Press
6/16/93**

HOUSTON, June 15--Every few years it happens -- a Southern Baptist Convention page shares with Lee Porter his desire to surrender his life to ministry.

"I pray before (the convention) and the week after that some will hear the call of God," said Porter, SBC registration secretary who has worked with the pages for 25 years.

"During a Foreign Mission Board report several years ago a page leaned over to me and said, 'That's what I want to be (a missionary),' " Porter smiled. "That's really what it's all about."

In the years Porter has worked with pages, 10 have shared their special call with him.

Each year former pages or parents of pages return to the convention and tell Porter what they've become since being a page.

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"They are pastors or missionaries ... college professors," Porter says. And when Porter says pages are vital to the work of the convention, he means it. It takes a cast of hundreds to carry out the work of a convention that includes 20,000 messengers, said Porter, and pages are literally "the hands and feet of the convention."

In a pre-convention orientation and pep talk to the 14 High School Baptist Young Men and six Acteens who serve as pages, Porter emphasized the importance of their role. Acteens join the young men on the opening day of the convention following their work at the Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting.

"I want you to be alert to this great opportunity of service. It's an extension of the service you've done in your church, only now you're on the SBC level," Porter told the young people.

High School Baptist Young Men qualify to be pages by completing 300 hours of personal missions involvement, said Tim Bearden, page coordinator for the Brotherhood Commission. "This experience helps them to better identify with their convention and gives them an inside look at the annual meeting and workings of the SBC."

"They'll be tested emotionally, physically and mentally," added Jeno Smith, who also coordinates pages. "It's easy to become frustrated when you don't know what's coming next."

Duties of pages include working in the convention newsroom, registration, information center and message center.

The delivery of messages and ballots are among the most important duties of pages. Emergency messages are relayed by pages to the platform, where Porter approves the placing of the message on the convention's closed-circuit TV.

"We will receive over 1,000 emergency messages in a week," Porter said. "There will be 800 deaths in SBC churches and the pastors of those churches are here. It is extremely important that we locate people in an emergency."

Despite the preparation they receive, the convention offers surprises for pages.

"It's exciting ... you don't know what to expect," said Matthew Waters of South Carolina. "You just have to learn to go with the flow."

David Lambert of Tennessee, who also is the 1993 High School Baptist Young Men's Speakout winner, said he has already made several close friends. "The guys and the leaders are great ... It's just our second day together and I feel like I've known these guys forever."

A typical day for a page begins at 5 a.m. and does not end until long after the last messenger has left the convention hall. In all, pages work about 60 hours in four grueling days.

The first pages to serve at the convention were sponsored by local churches in the late 1940s, Porter recounted. The Brotherhood Commission took over sponsorship of pages during the 1960s.

Pages serving at the 1993 convention were: Len Singleton and Nathan Holmes, Alabama; Wendy Hoag and Jason Tolbert, Arkansas; Alison Grigg, Illinois; Jennifer Lott, Mississippi; Jay Hoffmann, New Hampshire; David Casey and Michael Morgan, North Carolina; B.J. Lipscomb, Oklahoma; Matthew Waters, Brian Spearman and Mark James, South Carolina; David Lambert, Stephen Stewart and Amy Wilson, Tennessee; and Daniel Kilcoyne, Nathan Pylate, Keo Rasavong and Shawn Thrapp, Texas.