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In France, missionaries
witness through football

By Mike Greswell

Baptist Press
7/26/93

PARIS (BP)--The center snaps the ball, lines of beefy players crunch, the quarterback fades back to pass ...

Wait a minute! American football in France? What's going on here?

And what are Southern Baptist missionaries doing coaching both sides?

It all began when missionaries David Murray and Rod Boatwright -- both football fans -- looked for new ways to meet people to share the gospel.

The April game at a stadium in Paris ended in a 6-6 tie. Murray's team scored a touchdown but failed in an extra-point attempt. Boatwright's squad made two field goals.

About 70 teams play in the amateur French Federation of American Football. Three age-group levels compete: 15- and 16-year-olds, 17- and 18-year-olds and 19-to-34-year-olds. Most players are unpaid amateurs, but the league attracts a few Americans who receive small stipends and living expenses to play.

Murray, of Zachary, La., arrived in France in 1987. Based in Tours, he coordinates services for other Southern Baptist missionaries coming there to study the French language. Some of the students stay in France; more often they head on to West Africa or some other French-speaking country.

Murray heard rumors American football was played in the area. He had to ask at a sporting goods store where games were played, since they weren't highly publicized. That's because "football" in Europe, and most everywhere else, means teams of men in shorts kicking a round soccer ball.

American football has the same following in France that soccer has in the United States -- some interest, but far short of Super Bowl-level enthusiasm. But just as soccer has gained wider acceptance in the States in recent years, American-style football has grown in Europe. Exhibition games by American pro teams have helped make Europeans aware of the bone-crunching sport.

And while European intellectuals may pooh-pooh anything American, almost anything from the United States gets a second look from young people. Hot items include jackets and shirts emblazoned with pro team names and symbols.

When Murray found the local team, the players asked him to coach. Before injuries sidelined him, he played tackle for two years while a student at Mississippi College back in ... well, some time back. Football fever ran in his family; he was chaplain for high schools in Franklinton and Zachary, La., during the 1970s, and his brother played for Louisiana State University.

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"I always had a secret desire to coach, but I would tell my wife, Barbara, and she would chuckle, so I never followed up on it," he said.

But his coaching success in France gives him the last chuckle. Murray brought an American's enthusiasm and an inborn sense of the game that is more or less part of an American's heritage.

In 1988, his first year coaching in France, his team was on probation as a new entrant to the league. But in 1989 the team won the national championship in the third division. The next season it played in the more demanding second division and won enough games to make it one of the top four teams. It lost in the semifinals.

The team missed being No. 1 in 1991 only by losing the final game. Last season it won the conference title but was knocked out early in the play-offs.

Rod Boatwright's Paris team also reached the top of its conference last season. Like Murray, Boatwright didn't exactly make football a career. He played in high school in his hometown, the Atlanta suburb of Chamblee, Ga., but lacked the size for college ball. When one of his major interests in life was denied him, he instead turned his attention to Christ. "The Lord became my new passion," he recalled. But he kept a lifelong interest in sports.

After Boatwright arrived in France to study French, he was asked to referee a football game for a local team. When the team members saw an American well-informed on football they asked him to help coach.

Boatwright abruptly found himself trying to recall training exercises from 18 years before. "I had to work on remembering the finer points of the game," he admitted. He also had to be creative, since the team lacks training equipment -- no blocking sleds, for example. But three Americans, who joined the team fresh from university play, helped him update techniques.

"Mainly what I do is build confidence by encouraging them that they can do something," said Boatwright. "Any game depends on your confidence level. You can learn a skill, but the rest of it is confidence in yourself. I tell them they also can have confidence in the Lord. Some of them have a hard time accepting it, but I've seen progress."

Both missionaries give New Testaments and Scripture portions to players and talk openly about their faith in Jesus Christ. Murray's home church, First Baptist Church in Zachary, sent New Testaments for him to distribute.

On long bus trips across France, both missionaries counsel players about many topics other than football -- relationship problems, family problems, spiritual needs. Murray has helped conduct several funerals of players' family members, an indication of his acceptance as a spiritual leader.

"If I can't lead them to the Lord, I can at least teach them some lessons to help them live better lives," Boatwright said. "I can help them learn to control their tempers in difficult situations and to think under pressure. Another goal both of us have is to give Protestants in general and Baptists in particular a good image."

Most French people are not familiar with Baptists and assume they're some oddball sect, not a mainline evangelical group.

Boatwright will complete an apprenticeship at a Paris-area church this summer and will move to Nancy, France, to work with a growing Baptist church. He already has talked with the local American football team about helping out.

Football has helped Murray win acceptance in the community. Since he and his family were on furlough in the United States early in 1993, he missed much of last season. But when he returned to France in March the local newspaper did a story -- complete with photograph -- about his return. In France, coverage of an evangelical Christian in secular newspapers is rare. The players in Tours think highly of Murray, the article observed.

David Mayere, 24, is one Frenchman who found Christ through football. As secretary and assistant for Boatwright's team, he and the missionary became friends. Mayere, a student at the prestigious Paris school, the Sorbonne, was writing a thesis on how football affects American society. So Boatwright arranged for him to spend several weeks in his hometown of Chamblee.

Boatwright's parents put Mayer in touch with First Baptist Church and with students at the Baptist Student Center at Georgia Tech. Rich Taylor, Baptist campus minister, talked at length with Mayere, who was asking questions about Christianity because of his contacts with Boatwright.

One night, after reading in the Gospels of Luke and John, Mayere came to a decision for Christ. "I said yes, yes, yes, I want to become a Christian," he remembers telling God that night. Later he discovered Taylor had prayed all night for him, as did many people from First Baptist in Chamblee.

Back in France, Mayere was baptized in April at Morsang-sur-Orge Baptist Church, south of Paris.

"The players respect this guy Rodney (Boatwright)," said Mayere. "Football is a way to meet people and to make them realize there's another thing in life -- Jesus."

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(BP) photos (three horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines available in SBCNet Newsroom.

Silent treatment is key
to China music ministry

By Donald D. Martin

Baptist Press
7/26/93

XIAN, China (BP)--Conductor Phillip Posey believes the key to filling China's concert halls with music is silence.

"Music carries so little cultural baggage. There's something in music that connects us all," said Posey, guest conductor of the Shaanxi Symphony Orchestra. Posey, 56, is a music volunteer with Cooperative Services International, a Southern Baptist aid organization.

But he found connecting with Chinese listeners isn't always easy in a country known for its boisterous audiences. Posey's first concert there unnerved him.

"The atmosphere of the performance was dismal," he said. "They talked, they smoked and children ran all over the place. The musicians had long since resigned themselves to this, but I could see it was still hard on them. I decided the orchestra deserved better."

Posey, on sabbatical from his directorship of instrumental studies at William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo., had inherited an orchestra seasoned more in perseverance than skill.

Orchestra members, whose ages range from 21 to over 70, had worked more than six months without a conductor. They rehearsed on aging instruments in a drafty, warehouse-like building in a city known for harsh winters.

Posey and his wife, Ann, understood many of these limitations when they considered sabbatical options, along with their 13-year-old daughter, Dawn. But they chose the CSI assignment anyway because it blended the couple's musical talents with their Christian commitment. Mrs. Posey teaches keyboard part time at William Jewell College.

"We knew we were supposed to come here," Posey explained at his Xian apartment on the campus of Shaanxi Teachers University, which employs the orchestra. The Poseys also teach music at the university.

"As Christians, we bring a special kind of caring to our profession and our relationships," he said. "I think others sense that."

That care formed the core of Posey's efforts to instill in orchestra members a spirit of unity and pride in their art.

"I wanted to help develop a deep sense of professionalism that comes only from pride in successful performances," he explained.

For his debut with the 75-piece orchestra, Posey tripled the time he would normally prepare with a professional group. But at his first concert in the meeting hall of a local factory, the polished overtures drowned in the commotion and conversations of the audience.

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Despite his guest status in a foreign country, Posey decided he would insist on silence from the audience in a prepared statement at the orchestra's next performance. When an orchestra member later read the statement, he assured Posey it wouldn't be needed because the next performance was at the university's own music conservatory.

Despite the assurances, Posey tucked the statement into his pocket before the concert. He needed it sooner than he expected: after just a few bars of the opening movement, dozens of students barged into the 700-seat hall, demanding to hear the concert although they had no tickets.

In the confusion, Posey waved his arms and cut off the music.

"I stopped the overture," he recalled. "The orchestra was in absolute shock. I then walked off the stage and found the woman that had read the opening announcements and gave her my statement."

Before she could respond, two university officials in the audience stood up and began shouting at the students, telling them to sit down and be quiet.

"You could have heard a pin drop," Posey recalled with awe. "But by now the orchestra was in total shock. I walked back to the front and quietly reassured them. They looked around and saw that nobody was talking. I raised my hands and we started to play -- and they played their hearts out. For the rest of the evening they played beautifully, without the slightest flaw."

More than music was created that evening, Mrs. Posey said.

"When Phil refused to go on until everyone was quiet, it gave the orchestra members a sense of pride," she said. "They saw that he was willing to take risks for them. And once the audience quieted, the orchestra could hear how good they sounded."

A new confidence took hold of them.

"They were absolutely beside themselves with excitement," Posey said. "There was an enthusiasm you don't always see on the professional level."

Other rough spots came during the Poseys' six-month term, which ended in July, but difficulties didn't alter their commitment, Mrs. Posey said.

"We often felt like just going home. But the Lord didn't send us over here for nothing. We always felt this has got to work," she said.

And in China, a country often void of any Christian witness, their quiet commitment speaks scores.

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available in SBCNet Newsroom.

Volunteers en route home
killed in van accident

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--Two volunteers who were returning home after helping rebuild hurricane damaged homes in South Dade County were killed Friday when their van swerved to miss an oncoming vehicle on rain-slicked roads in Darby.

David Craig, 41, and Jane Kneese, 81, both members of First Baptist Church of Tishomingo, Okla., were thrown from the van and killed after it ran off the road, rolled three times and flipped July 23 at 11:15 a.m. Five others from the group were listed in serious conditions at area hospitals after the accident on State Road 52.

The van was one of two carrying a group of 14 people, six men and eight women, who had spent the week April 17-23 assisting in the Florida Baptist Convention's on-going disaster relief efforts in south Florida.

According to Roger Harrington, director of the relief center in Florida City, the group "was a crackerjack team." He also reported First Baptist Church of Dade City has opened "their arms to minister to the remainder of the group during this time of crisis."

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Cultural collapse reveals
'hole in soul,' Bennett says

By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--A cultural collapse over the last three decades illustrates there is "a hole in the soul of modern man," former secretary of Education William J. Bennett says in an interview in the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's Light magazine.

The culture's collapse, reflected in such indicators as increased crime and teenage pregnancy rates, has been caused by "a collapse in the vitality of certain beliefs and vitality in the holding of certain principles and certain ideas on the part of the American people," Bennett says.

The weakening of such beliefs, not economic decline, has negatively impacted the generations reared since 1960, he says.

"The single most important predictor of a child's behavior is what the child believes, not race, not socioeconomic background, but what the child believes," Bennett says. "So these ideas, these values, these moorings that we give children, as Aristotle said, 'determine not a little, determine not some, but determine almost everything.'"

Christian Life Commission staff members interviewed Bennett in Washington after the March release of his Index of Leading Cultural Indicators. An abridged version of the interview appears in the July-August issue of Light, the CLC's bimonthly ethics publication.

The 22-page Index consists largely of charts and statistics demonstrating what Bennett calls a "social, cultural collapse." Included are charts showing dramatic increases in abortions, child abuse cases, violent crimes, daily television viewing, illegitimate birth rates, teen pregnancy rates, teen suicide rates and single-parent home rates, as well as a decline in Scholastic Aptitude Test scores. Most of the indicators are tracked from 1960 to 1990.

The failure of American education to focus on moral development has played a significant role in the problems, Bennett says in the interview.

For 180 years in America, "everybody believed the purpose of education was moral, intellectual and spiritual. ... even up into the 1950s ...," Bennett says. "And teachers would not hesitate to talk about right and wrong and things like that. That's all changed, and it has changed in about 25 years."

The American people "want schools to teach children how to distinguish between right and wrong," he says.

"I do not think the so-called separation of church and state requires our schools to be indifferent to the souls of children. I think, in fact, otherwise."

Not only schools, but the family, church and government also have roles in reversing the culture's decline.

While passing on the right values probably is more important, the presence of two parents also is crucial, Bennett says.

The church, meanwhile, has not ministered as it should during this decline.

"There hasn't been the attention to my soul, and the struggle between good and evil for the possession of the soul, which, I remember, marked my education as a child," says Bennett, who is a Roman Catholic.

"One of the numbers I did not use in The Index because I thought it would take too much time to explain was that during this 30-year period, 1960 to 1990, church attendance was way up. Well, what does that mean? It means that whatever else is going on, church attendance is not sufficient to counter some of these other things."

The main thing government can do to help is "stop doing harm," Bennett says.

Government also should increase the dependent exemption for families, allow educational choice and do a better job of fulfilling the roles for which it is responsible, Bennett says.

He also says the welfare system must be restructured in order to help the poor.

It is "almost as if we have been conducting an unwitting social experiment about people, saying, 'Let's have children. Let's not raise them. Let's not teach them the right values. Let's support them entirely on government, and let's see how they turn out.' And now the results are in. And it's sort of like a society within a society," Bennett says.

Bennett is a co-director of Empower America, a recently formed conservative political organization, and has been mentioned as a possible Republican presidential candidate in 1996. Not only was he secretary of the Department of Education under former President Reagan, but he was director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy under former President Bush.

He was interviewed by CLC Executive Director Richard Land and CLC Director of Government Relations James A. Smith.

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ANALYSIS

Former U.S. official
sees cultural collapse

Baptist Press
7/26/93

EDITOR'S NOTE: The SBC Christian Life Commission staff recently interviewed William J. Bennett, secretary of education under former President Reagan, following the release of his Index of Leading Cultural Indicators. Bennett, who was director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy under former President Bush, is co-director of Empower America, a new conservative political organization, and a distinguished fellow at the Heritage Foundation.

CLC Executive Director Richard D. Land and Director of Government Relations James A. Smith interviewed Bennett in his Washington office. Here is an abridged version of the interview:

Q. Where did you get the idea for The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators, and what were you trying to demonstrate with The Index?

A. I got the idea of The Index by talking one day on an airplane about The Index of Leading Economic Indicators and how much we make of it. I was saying, given the relative importance of it compared to other things, we certainly should have an index of leading moral indicators or social indicators or spiritual indicators. That was the first formulation, but the point was we go to tremendous difficulty and show great interest and earnestness about studying economic trends. There are things more important than economic trends. We ought to look at them, too. So I thought it would be neat to do this in an empirical way. If we just talked about it, people would say, "That's nice." But if you put numbers on it, people would have to pay attention.

Q. What is your theory of cultural collapse?

A. By social, cultural collapse, I mean essentially the numbers I cite, the numbers of crime rate, youth suicide rate, teenage pregnancy rate, all these indices of social pathology. What accounts for it?

There are essentially two contenders: one, economic decline, and the other, cultural decline. You cannot make any sense by the argument of economic decline. Fifty years ago, 60 percent or 65 percent of this country was below the poverty line. We had nothing like these indices of pathology that we have now. If you go through the last 50 years and chart the pathology numbers and the economic numbers, they do not correlate. In fact, crime and other indices seem to be higher when times are good rather than when times are bad, arguing that crime may have more to do with envy than it does with desperation.

I don't want to bore you with a whole lot of numbers, but suffice it to say enough studies have been done to show that if social well-being were a function of economic well-being we should be much better off socially today than we were 50, 30 or 20 years ago, because we are by and large much better off economically ...

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I think what has caused it, which is the question you asked, is a collapse in the vitality of certain beliefs and vitality in the holding of certain principles and certain ideas on the part of the American people. Here, I don't want to get too particular, but there's a debate going on now about family structure. I happen to think family structure is important. I think the scholarship shows that family structure is important. It probably is the case that the values a family passes on to its children are more important than the structure of that family, but sooner or later the values that are passed on will affect the structures. If you have a single mom who is passing on good values, that is probably better for children than a two-parent family that's a Dickensian conspiracy to teach kids how to pick-pocket. But sooner or later the values that are preached will be values that are practiced . . .

The single most important predictor of a child's behavior is what the child believes, not race, not socioeconomic background, but what the child believes. So these ideas, these values, these moorings that we give children, as Aristotle said, "determine not a little, determine not some, but determine almost everything."

Q. During the last campaign, there was some discussion of the children's rights issue. Do you think that with the parents' revolt going on in the New York City public schools there is the possibility of a budding parents' rights movement?

A. I think there may be something to it. I mean, they have disfranchised the parents from lots of things. First it was just the division of labor: "We'll take care of this, you take care of that." Now parents find they are being shut out, and when they open the door and look inside, what they see is not very attractive. The thing in New York is phenomenal. I spent an evening with those folks in a town meeting there . . . and it was interesting, because it was a "politically correct" meeting if you looked at the composition of the group. It was white. It was black. It was Hispanic. It was New York, you know. Yet everybody shared the same values. But the parents said, "You will not corrupt my children," and so on. And they won. That's the important thing. That's what may give rise to the notion, or give support to the notion, that there is a budding parental rights movement, because maybe you can win some.

Q. You have talked about the architecture of the soul. What do you mean by that, and what is its relation to rights and responsibilities and how we balance those in our kind of society?

A. My thesis is, and I think I can prove it, that for 180 years of American history everybody believed the purpose of education was moral, intellectual and spiritual. And if you go back and look at what people were saying through American history, this was it. You had the influence of a Dewey . . . but even up into the 1950s, people thought schools had a moral, intellectual and spiritual purpose. And teachers would not hesitate to talk about right and wrong and things like that. That's all changed, and it has changed in about 25 years. This is this extraordinary period again that I keep coming back to for purposes of The Index, for purposes of reference. You ask the American people what they want schools to do. They want schools to teach their children how to read and write and count and think. They want schools to teach children how to distinguish between right and wrong. That's what parents want schools to do. And it's funny that when in 1993 you just stand up and say that, people sort of take a quick breath: "Is that a nutty thing to say? Is he on the fringe?" And then, all of a sudden, people think about it and they say, "Yeah, I do want my child's soul made better."

As people would put it in a more usual parlance, they think when they send their children to school they should come home smarter but also better. They should treat their little brothers and sisters better. But this is part of education, too. I would view that as part of the responsibility of the school, but this is not certainly part of this long litany we've had for 25 years about student rights. We have so much emphasized student rights to the detriment of the responsibilities of students and of education that we no longer see the responsibilities.

Q. What do you think the roles of government and churches and the private sector are in the problems that are illustrated by The Index?

A. Well, what I see, looking at The Index, is a hole in the soul of modern man. There is a part of us which I regard as most important that is not being tended to. I want to be modest in terms of my recommendations. I was pretty modest in my book, The De-Valuing of America, but also, I guess, pretty tough, saying that I thought from my perspective, my church (Roman Catholic), there wasn't enough direct ministering to this aspect of our lives. There hasn't been the attention to my soul, and the struggle between good and evil for the possession of the soul, which, I remember, marked my education as a child. Maybe people think it's not appropriate to speak to adults that way, but it seems to me from what I see in Chevy Chase, Md., and other suburbs and other places, it's very much in order. Philosopher Alfred North Whitehead said, "You cannot catch a real rat with an imaginary dog." You cannot go after a problem that has to do with the heart and soul of man with a federal program. Things have to be addressed in the right way. You have to use the right instrument to get the right music. I say the church among others because I don't think it is only the church. I mean I think there is an educational function here. I do not think the so-called separation of church and state requires our schools to be indifferent to the souls of children. I think, in fact, otherwise. Certainly the family has a major responsibility there.

The government has a very complicated responsibility. I would say at this point the main thing the government should do is stop doing harm. It should stop encouraging bad behavior as it does with welfare programs, as it does with some education programs, as it does with a host of other programs. One of the numbers I did not use in The Index because I thought it would take too much time to explain was that during this 30-year period, 1960 to 1990, church attendance was way up. Well, what does that mean? It means that whatever else is going on, church attendance by itself is not sufficient to counter some of these other things.

Q. What are a couple of things you think the government should do besides not doing harm?

A. Increase the family dependent exemption. I mean that's a very specific one. End the welfare system (as it is known today). Provide for parental choice. Take on responsibility for things it's supposed to have responsibility for. Instead of doing 5,000 things which the government is doing, most of them badly, do the three or four things it is supposed to do and do them well. Such as keep the streets safe. And I think this is a very, very important thing.

There's an educational point to all this. We are trying to teach children of all races, classes certain values and that it is right to be good and to be decent and to be responsible. They must see this with their own eyes from time to time. You know, the one thing I got all the time from the cops in the drug job was, "Well, why should they work at McDonald's for three bucks per hour when they can" The first answer is, of course, because it's right to do that, because you don't become a jerk. It's wrong and it is wicked and imprudent, and you don't live very long when you become a drug runner. You can't ever give up the answer that it's right, but also you've got to give these kids some help. I mean you've got to get the competition off the street. I mean, how much moral equanimity do we expect from a 13-year-old kid in the streets? Some choices shouldn't be there for him. He shouldn't have to choose between \$300 a night running drugs and working a real job.

Q. Can we have the revaluing of America without a complete restructuring of the welfare system as we've known it?

A. I don't think so, not for those folks, and probably, to some extent, not for us either who are supporting it. No, you cannot address the problem which bothers all of us, the problem of the underclass, without addressing welfare. In Myron Magnets' book, The Dream and the Nightmare: The Sixties' Legacy to the Underclass, he says the underclass is five million people and essentially didn't exist before 1965. That's what's really interesting. People were in and out of poverty, but you did not have this sort of hard-core thing which has moved through time, grows dramatically in the '70s, slows in the '80s. Now that is almost as if we have been conducting an unwitting social experiment about people, saying, "Let's have children. Let's not raise them. Let's not teach them the right values. Let's support them entirely on government, and let's see how they turn out."

And now the results are in. And it's sort of like a society within a society. No, we cannot address that problem without a radical change in welfare.

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For a copy of Bennett's Index of Leading Cultural Indicators, send \$2 to the Christian Life Commission, 901 Commerce, #550, Nashville, TN 37203-3696.

Seminary Extension presents
awards during missions week

By Lesley S. Vance

Baptist Press
7/26/93

GLORIETTA, N.M. (BP)--Seminary Extension presented its annual center director award during Home Missions Week at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Each year two center directors are recognized for giving outstanding leadership and service to Seminary Extension centers. Awards are presented during Home Missions Week at Ridgecrest and Glorieta.

Wil Nuckolls, center director award recipient, was recognized during Glorieta's Home Missions Week. He has worked with Seminary Extension for 25 years at the Golden State Bible Institute, a seminary extension center in Sacramento, Calif. He has taught over 20 courses and directed the center.

Bill C. Butler was awarded as center director during Ridgecrest's Home Mission Week. Butler has served as director of the Pensacola Bay, Fla., extension center for over 10 years. His center has offered over 75 courses with more than 200 students enrolled.

"These two men represent the finest of our 350 center directors across the country," Seminary Extension Executive Director Doran McCarty said. "Center directors like these explain why Seminary Extension is still a vital agency for ministry training with over 5,500 students."

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "FMB seeks to attract revenue going now to non-Baptist groups," dated 7/22/93, please change the first paragraph to read:

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Foreign Mission Board is seeking to attract more of the money Southern Baptists give to other mission groups that more effectively personalize their work to donors.

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Retired Home Life editor dies after lengthy illness," dated 7/23/93, please change the first sentence to read:

Reuben Herring, 71, retired senior editor of Home Life magazine ...

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