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August 13, 1993

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Mud-devastated town
receives Baptist TLC

By Ferrell Foster

Baptist Press
8/13/93

HULL, Ill. (BP)--The smell of decay fills the air. A brown mush surrounds houses where once there had been green lawns. Evergreen trees, now brown, are wrapped with soggy corn stalks like garland around a Christmas tree.

Days before, this town of about 500 people in western Illinois had been submerged by water from the flooding Mississippi River, which is five miles away. But as the waters slipped away, Kentucky Baptist volunteers moved in to help.

The volunteers entered the town on Friday, Aug. 6. By Tuesday, Aug. 10, they had received 95 requests from residents for help in cleaning their homes.

Some of the volunteers scattered around town to pump water from flooded basements. And a team of about 10 removed soaked flooring from homes and helped remove a thin layer of mud that covered indoor surfaces that had been underwater.

"They don't know how much difference it makes," resident Jack McKinney said of the Kentucky volunteers. "We couldn't have done it by ourselves." McKinney and his wife, Elaine, are members of nearby Payson Southern Baptist Church.

Greg Carr, pastor of West Pike Baptist Church, echoed the appreciation. "These guys have done a tremendous job," he said. "I was just amazed."

The independent church had about six feet of water in its building during the worst of the flood, said the pastor, who grew up as a Southern Baptist and is a recent graduate of Hannibal-LaGrange College, a Southern Baptist school in Missouri.

"We're expecting some big things as a result of this" ministry by the Kentucky volunteers, the pastor continued. "We're going to have an excellent ministry opportunity" as old barriers are broken down.

Elaine McKinney described the scene in Hull as "mind-boggling, impossible to believe."

When Jack McKinney first returned to his home Aug. 6, "the air would actually burn your nose" because of the decaying vegetation and open sewage, he said.

Kentucky volunteer Vincent Carman said the smell reminded him of rotting leaves caught in an old fishing boat left outside, except this smell covered the entire town and surrounding area. Carman is pastor of Hays Fork Baptist Church in Richmond, Ky.

A grain silo in town had burst, and the corn had begun to ferment, resident Wayne Ertz said in explaining part of the smell.

The lawns looked more like mud than the remains of grass.

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Loreta M. Harris, a 72-year-old resident, retrieved color pictures of her lawn before the flood. The pictures showed green grass, red geraniums and purple petunias. The flowers disappeared in the flood, and the grass turned to mush.

"You just can't believe what it does to a person," she said of the flood. But, she added, "They say God never puts more on you than you can stand."

Larry Polston, a Baptist volunteer from Aberdeen, Ohio, used one of six Kentucky pumps to remove water from Harris' basement. When it got down to about six inches of depth and the pump was unable to keep its prime, Polston moved to a house next door.

Other volunteers worked pumps scattered around the town. They were limited to removing two feet of water per day from each house. If they removed more, there was danger of basement walls collapsing.

The volunteers wear rubber boots and gloves, and their own cleanup at the end of each day is designed to protect them from possible disease.

They hose down their boots with hot, chlorinated water and leave them in a garage, said Fourleen Price of First Baptist Church in Louisa, Ky. Then "someone brings out to us our bags ... with clean clothes and bath stuff." Dirty clothes are placed in a garbage bag so they can be washed.

The volunteers then take showers with liquid soap "from the top of your head to the bottom of your toes," Price stated. A two-gallon container of bleach and water is then "poured over your head." And finally a regular shower is taken.

There were 45 Kentucky Baptists in the area Aug. 10, said Paul Anderson, on-site coordinator. But 14 were leaving the following day.

First Southern Baptist Church of nearby Quincy is housing volunteers and is "filled to capacity," Anderson said. "We really are in need of places to house volunteers when they come in."

And he thinks they "might be here until September," depending on how quickly water recedes from other areas and how cleanup progresses.

But Anderson does not complain about difficult circumstances. "As a unit we're always delighted to help people that are in need," he said. "That's our service."

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(BP) photos available upon request from The Illinois Baptist.

College, law enforcement officials
to investigate former president

Baptist Press
8/13/93

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Mississippi College officials have initiated contact with law enforcement agencies in the investigation of the college's former president, Lewis Nobles, and allegations he embezzled \$3 million in donations made through his office.

"We have made appropriate contact with the district attorney of Hinds County, U.S. attorney and the FBI," said Alan Perry, a Jackson attorney hired by the college's board of trustees to lead an investigation of Nobles' handling of donations during a 15-year period.

The 4,200-student college, led by Nobles for 25 years, is affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention and is located in Clinton, Miss., near Jackson.

Perry's Aug. 12 announcement came as the college's trustees met in Jackson to adopt strict regulations on the handling of college donations by the president's office, to meet in executive session with the Baptist convention's 16-member executive committee for more than an hour and to meet with law enforcement officials for an hour and a half.

Ed Peters, the local district attorney, said after the meeting Nobles "is suspected of criminal violations, both state and federal. ... Much of the information that would be needed has already been obtained."

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Peters also said the investigation also will seek to recover funds the college claims are missing.

After the meeting with state Baptist officials, the convention's executive director-treasurer, Bill Causey, said, "The trustees at MC are acting responsibly."

Many of the financial regulations trustees adopted for the president's office already are followed by the college's offices of business affairs and institutional advancement.

Additionally, trustees implemented a program requiring acknowledgements and receipts to donors include two original signatures by college officials. A new "donor education program" will inform donors and foundations of what procedures to expect in making donations to the college.

Nobles, 67, resigned Aug. 3 in a conflict with trustees over the alleged financial improprieties. Court documents filed by the college Aug. 7 alleged Nobles had embezzled \$3 million. Nobles was under a local court order to turn over a list of all his financial accounts by Aug. 13.

Nobles, in a comment to the convention's Baptist Record newsjournal said "only one side of the controversy" has been aired and that he should be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Vice president given
expanded role at Southern

Baptist Press
8/13/93

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A vice president at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has been given expanded responsibilities and a new title as part of an administrative restructuring at the Louisville, Ky., school.

Thomas F. Mabe, vice president for development at Southern since 1987, has been named vice president for institutional advancement. In his new role, Mabe will oversee the seminary's communications and alumni relations functions as well as the school's development activities.

Alumni relations and communications were supervised previously by the Southern's vice president for seminary relations. That position has been vacant since David R. Wilkinson left the seminary in May to become communications coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in Atlanta.

Two other offices in the seminary relations division, admissions and placement, will be reassigned to other divisions within the school, said seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr., adding other details regarding the restructuring will be announced by early September.

"Tom Mabe has served both effectively and faithfully as vice president for development," Mohler said. "Southern Seminary has reached historic levels of contributions through major gifts, annual giving and estate planning under his leadership. This broadening of his responsibilities indicates the quality of contribution that I am confident he will continue to make at Southern Seminary in the future."

Prior to joining the seminary staff, Mabe, 58, served four years as vice president of Baptist Medical Center in Kansas City, Mo., where he was in charge of the hospital's development efforts. The Pulaski, Va., native also worked nine years as director of development and denominational relations at Virginia Baptist Hospital in Lynchburg and five years as executive director of the Lynchburg Baptist Association. He also has been pastor and associate pastor of Southern Baptist churches in Virginia.

Mabe earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Richmond and a master of divinity degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

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**Draper: More time needed
to analyze staff reduction**

By Art Toalston

NASHVILLE (BP)--Additional time is needed to analyze a study of corporate overhead costs at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, President James T. Draper Jr. announced to employees Aug. 13.

Draper earlier had planned to inform employees by Aug. 13 of details of an expected reduction in staffing in two board units, corporate services and finance and administration, encompassing 346 full-time employees. "Fewer than 50 employees will be affected," Draper wrote in his Aug. 13 announcement of a delay in implementation, printed in the daily newsletter for the board's 1,700-plus employees.

Draper said he will report to the board's trustees, who meet Aug. 16-18 at the Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center, "that decisions are in process but not yet finalized."

"After spending most of this week studying the report on corporate overhead, analyzing its consequences and the financial impact, and seeking God's leadership, I find I am not yet ready to make final decisions," he wrote, asking employees for patience and prayer.

Draper said he intends for decisions to be made and communicated to affected employees by the end of August.

"I regret that this delay leaves many of you wondering about your future or concerned about fellow employees," Draper wrote. "However, I am convinced that the more time I have, the better decisions I can make."

Draper also reiterated, "The process we will follow in announcing decisions will be to talk first with affected employees. Then we will make announcements to all employees. Only then will public announcements be made."

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**Risenhoover named
to new RTVC post**

By Shawn Switzer

**Baptist Press
8/13/93**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--C.C. Risenhoover has been named director of the institutional advancement group for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

Risenhoover, a former director of public relations at Baylor University, will report to Doug Dillard, RTVC vice president of external relations.

"We have structured the external relations area to take advantage of C.C.'s unique abilities," said Dillard. "He will be in charge of public relations, planned giving and direct mail."

Risenhoover most recently has been an author who has had 13 books published since 1985, 11 of which are novels, and professor of journalism at Chemeketa College in Salem, Ore.

Risenhoover was press representative for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1965-66, then was employed at Baylor as director of news and information services. He later was named director of public relations.

He later taught journalism at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas, Eastfield College and Southern Methodist University, both in Dallas, and Henderson State University in Arkansas; was a reporter for the Fort Worth (Texas) Star-Telegram; and was manager of media relations for E-Systems, Inc., the nation's largest electronic warfare systems developer. He left E-Systems in 1985 to devote full-time to writing books.

Risenhoover has a bachelor's degree in journalism and religion and an master of arts degree in radio/television/film from Baylor. He was in the first class of students enrolled in the school's religious journalism program founded and directed by the late Dave Cheavens.

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"I feel like the prodigal son must have felt," he said. "For years I've wandered in a direction opposite from the once-strong commitment to Christian communication that was instilled in me by Dave Cheavens and Judge (Abner) McCall (former president of Baylor). But now I'm being given a second chance to do something significant for one of the most important ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention. I'm humbled by the opportunity and eager to use my talents to promote the kingdom of God."

Risenhoover said he hopes to speak to youth and adult conferences regarding the need for Christian communicators.

"In our churches are many creative, talented people who need to be challenged and encouraged to work in various areas of Christian communications," he said. "With the explosion in communications technology, it's important that Southern Baptists take an even greater media leadership role in carrying out the Great Commission."

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She went from the corporate top
to prison, then to ministry

By Raymond L. Daye

Baptist Press
8/13/93

BATON ROUGE, La. (BP)--Shirley DeLoach had everything she thought she wanted: a high-paying job in Southern California that brought with it power, prestige, control. Then, nine years ago, she went to prison for a crime she says she did not commit. Even so, she is thankful that injustice brought her something she had left far behind in rural Louisiana -- her Christian faith.

She is now the Louisiana director of Prison Fellowship, an interdenominational organization started by Charles Colson 16 years ago after he served a federal prison sentence for his Watergate-related crimes.

"I lost every material thing I ever gained -- money, prestige, power, knowledge, control," DeLoach said. "I lost all of it, but I gained the most important thing -- a truly personal relationship with a living God. I am thankful he was so merciful that he brought me to the point I could really know him."

She is a member of First Baptist Church in Baton Rouge but most of her weekends are spent in other communities working to enlist volunteers and churches in Prison Fellowship programs.

DeLoach has come a long way, physically and spiritually, since her years in rural West Carroll Parish. She was born on a farm, attended Pioneer High School and was baptized by her uncle in First Baptist Church of Delhi.

When she left Louisiana, she attended UCLA and received a degree in business tax management.

It was in college she gave in to the lure of the materialistic business world, accepting its philosophy that there is really no such thing as absolute right or absolute wrong -- only gray areas in between.

"It is hard to survive in the corporate world without that philosophy," DeLoach said, "but I never got away from knowing deep down inside of me that it was wrong."

She rose in the company to become executive vice president of business tax management. Then one day she heard a voice from her past speaking to her conscience, and she made a commitment to Christ to dedicate her life "in a way that I could no longer live without those absolutes."

"When I told my employer this, he threatened me," DeLoach said. "He said if I didn't work for him, I wouldn't work for anyone."

"I was charged with a major crime, mismanagement of corporate funds," she said. "Although I did not steal his money, I plea bargained to get away from the total corruption of the situation I was in."

She was sentenced to four years in prison and was released after serving two years, with nothing left of her former life.

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"I went to prison in 1985 and was released in 1987 with nowhere to go. My husband had deserted me. I had no money, no home. I started over.

"A Christian volunteer for Prison Fellowship offered me a job," she said. "That was my new beginning -- people who believed in me when I couldn't believe in myself. All of that is why I do what I do now."

Rather than become bitter while in prison, DeLoach found new strength and time to reflect on her life to that point.

"I became aware of the shallowness of my Christianity all of those years. There had been a total lack of involvement in people's lives," DeLoach said. "I asked God to give me his love for people if he wanted me to work for him in prison. It was like the lights came on.

"Before I went to prison, I would have written a check to your cause or made a sizeable donation to the church, but I would not get personally involved," she said. "My prison experience made me want to get involved."

She became familiar with Prison Fellowship during that time and spent two years counseling other women inmates in need of assurance that God does not turn his back on those who make mistakes.

"For the two years I was in prison, I studied the Scriptures and counseled hurting women," she said. "Upon my release, I worked as a volunteer with Prison Fellowship, training volunteers to work with inmates and their families."

She moved back to Louisiana in 1990 and began working as the state Prison Fellowship secretary. In 1991 she was offered the job as director.

Although there are many conversions during Prison Fellowship seminars, the focus of the work is on discipling inmates who have accepted Christ, either before or after being imprisoned.

"We want to see them come to a full knowledge of Christ and to know they can lead a Christian life in prison," she said. "Throughout the Bible, God uses examples of people who failed and were still used to do his work. That is what we try to get over to them, that just because they made a mistake does not mean God does not love them and cannot use them in his work.

"All the work we do is done by myself, part-time secretary Diane Howald and about 300 volunteers," DeLoach said. "Without the volunteers, we couldn't possibly do this job."

One of DeLoach's most rewarding and emotional moments in Prison Fellowship came this past year during a three-day seminar on Angola Prison's death row. A condemned man whose final appeal had been denied "came up to me and told me, 'Because of Prison Fellowship, I have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Without you coming in here, I would not know him as my Savior.'

"When you touch another life like that, you can't help but be touched too," she said.

"When the phone rings in my office, I never know what trauma is on the other end of the telephone line: a parent's child sent to prison, a prisoner's family about to have their utilities cut off, an ex-prisoner wanting help to find a job," DeLoach said. "I have found that the pain in a prisoner's life is no different from the pain in a church member's, and we need to know how to reach out to all people in pain."

One of the programs Prison Fellowship operates through participating churches is Angel Tree, in which the churches provide Christmas gifts for inmates' children. The program has almost tripled in the three years it has been conducted in Louisiana.

"We started in 1990 with 2,911 children and that grew to 4,537 in 1991 and 5,700 in 1992," she said. Preparation for the Christmas program begins in August.

Requests are made by prisoners through their chaplains. Prison Fellowship workers "sort them into the local areas and send them to the participating churches who then purchase the gifts and deliver them to the families for Christmas," DeLoach said. "It can be a great outreach for the church, not only at Christmas but year-round. We are always looking for more churches to participate around Louisiana."

She said the Focus on the Family organization has given her six scholarships for Angel Tree boys to attend a basketball camp in New Orleans on June 21-23. The camp is for boys ages 8-17 from single-parent families. For more information, call DeLoach at 504-293-5345.

Prison Fellowship, as an interdenominational organization, stresses the many similarities among the denominations and avoids "the differences that divide us into denominations," she said. For example, Baptists such as DeLoach cannot push for baptism by immersion as a public expression of obedience to Christ. That type of instruction must come from a prison chaplain.

The Prison Fellowship "Statement of Faith" keeps some denominations from participating.

"If they don't believe in the Trinity or the completed work of Christ on the cross, then they can't subscribe to our 'Statement of Faith,' which is the basis of our teaching in the prisons," DeLoach said. "There are some Presbyterian churches, some Catholic, Pentecostal and others that do not participate because of disagreements they have with the 'Statement of Faith.'"

The statement's major points are: belief in one God and the eternal Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the virgin birth, sinless life, resurrection and ascension of Christ to heaven; Christ as the only mediator between God and man; belief in the Bible as the authoritative, inspired and inerrant Word of God; that all people are sinners unable to attain salvation without a new birth through justification by grace through faith in Christ alone; one universal church with Christ as its head, called to preach the gospel throughout the world; the necessity of the Holy Spirit to work in a person's life to bring them to salvation and to grow in the faith; and a belief that Christ will personally and visibly return "and bring salvation and judgment to completion."

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(BP) photo available upon request from the Baptist Message, Louisiana Baptists' newsjournal.

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