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Woman finds friend, healing  
from crisis pregnancy center

By Ellen Walker

Baptist Press  
2/2/94

COLUMBIA, Md. (BP)--Sharita Francis had an abortion. She was married, had three children and lived in Washington. The African American family was financially strapped, so an abortion seemed to make sense. But now, through the birth of a child and the compassion of a friend, she has experienced the peace and forgiveness of God's grace.

When she went to an abortion clinic "conversation was casual -- the weather, politics, that kind of thing," Francis said. It was a "cold, uncompassionate" place. She remembered "crying and being totally upset."

"If I had gotten counselling, I wouldn't have done it," she recalled.

During the abortion process she received no emotional support. "I was paralyzed. I wanted to run, but I could not get up," she said, with much pain in her expression. The experience was so emotionally difficult for her that she blanked the doctor's name out of her memory. She could not even bring herself to go back for her post-abortion exam.

Following that experience, Francis became depressed and even suicidal. Her marriage fell apart. "I still shake when I think about it. It was painful and scary. It's hard to talk about," she said.

After struggling with guilt and a sense of unworthiness, two years ago Francis became pregnant again. As she entered a pregnancy center in Laurel, Md., she was given a counselor and her first thoughts were, "What does this white, middle-class woman know?"

What Francis found was a "compassionate, sensitive, warm, sweet" Christian who became her friend. Shirley DelRosso, a volunteer counselor at the center and member of Covenant Baptist Church in Columbia, Md., became Francis' coach at birth and now provides child care for the 18-month old girl.

DelRosso has not always been a counselor. About four years ago she was struggling to understand God's will for her life.

As a young person DelRosso watched as a miscarriage devastated a good friend while at the same time another friend had an abortion. "I was confused," she explained. She could not understand why one friend would have an abortion while the other, who wanted a child, could not have one.

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A few years later DelRosso became a Christian. Through the messages of her pastor, D. Walter Collett, she began to understand the "development of a baby. It's not just a blob of tissue. Did you know that the heart begins to beat just 18 days after conception?" she asked.

About three years ago, her pastor called the people of the church "to stand for what was right." She knew then what God wanted her to do. With some fear she attended her first pro-life rally in Washington and committed herself to participate in Operation Rescue. She "pledged to be non-violent and to submit to the Lord and his leadership."

At that abortion clinic rescue, DelRosso was the first of about 100 people arrested. She heard a snide remark from the crowd and remembered praying, "Lord, this is all for your glory."

It turned out to be a "joyous experience. We sang and witnessed to so many people," she said. Since that experience DelRosso has been arrested several times, but she has found that her most productive opportunities have come from counseling at the pregnancy center. As a trained counselor she is able to talk with women who are just coming in for their "pregnancy test, a step before the abortion door." There she can offer information and encouragement in a more private environment.

At a rescue, "you can't get a quiet place to talk. My heart goes out to the women. They are confused. The pro-abortion people surround them and they are screaming in her ear while you are trying to talk," DelRosso said.

Although she admitted participation in a rescue is not for every Christian, there are ways for churches to get involved. "It's time for Christians to get out and get serious and take a stand, to put their money where their mouths are," DelRosso said.

This involvement might mean standing in front of a hospital or clinic and holding a sign which reads, "Need Help? Call this Number," or writing letters to doctors, lobbying the Senate or House, supplying diapers and baby food to a local pregnancy center or manning a pregnancy hot-line.

"We need to inform people," DelRosso said. "The industry makes an abortion look like a pap smear. Women think they are being empowered with a choice when in reality they are being victimized, having life ripped out of them. Today 4,000 women will be victimized by abortion."

In all of her efforts, DelRosso's focus is upon the woman. "We need to minister to that woman. Try to understand what brokenness she's coming from." In many situations she may be coming from an abusive past. "God is the only one who can peel away the layers of hurt and erase that," she said.

Even in the case of rape or abuse, DelRosso asked, "Is that any reason to do a violent act against an innocent person? The bottom line is do not kill. I am responsible to set forth the truth with love and compassion and to minister to that woman."

Often passionate in her desire to convince people to save a life, DelRosso has had to learn "to put that strong passion inside and to ask, 'Is this for the Lord?' He wants me to lovingly, but boldly, share his love," she said.

Her witness is evidenced in how God has dealt with Francis through DelRosso. During the birth experience, Francis became a Christian and a member of Covenant church. "Jesus has brought peace in my life that I could find no other way. Jesus is the only answer," Francis said.

Before meeting DelRosso, Francis had seen the tiny blue and pink crosses on the front lawn of Covenant church in an undertaking to draw attention to the tragedy of abortion.

"They put me off," Francis said. "I thought the church was judgmental, but it's not." Instead, Francis said she has found a church family that has been supportive in a number of ways including a baby shower prior to her daughter's birth.

Southern Seminary draws plans  
to proceed on campus center

By Michael Duduit

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Trustees at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have voted to proceed with architectural work on the third and final phase of the seminary's Honeycutt Campus Center.

In a Feb. 1 meeting, Southern Seminary's trustee executive committee also heard a positive report on Louisville, Ky., seminary's enrollment and elected a new evangelism professor.

With more than half the projected \$4.1 million cost now in hand, trustees voted to engage a firm to complete drawings and specifications for the north building of the campus center, which will house food service and conference facilities. Construction will begin once all needed funds are in place, explained seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr.

"This expanded facility will allow us to proceed with an ambitious program of continuing education, as well as meeting many on-campus needs," Mohler told executive committee members. A recent \$1.5 million gift from Mr. and Mrs. Walter Chiles of Eustis, Fla., put seminary fund-raising efforts over the half-way point.

In other business, Southern Seminary trustees received a final fall enrollment figure of 2,300 students. That updated figure represents a 2 percent increase over the previous year, in contrast to the 4 percent decline reported previously. Initial enrollment figures for the spring semester reflect a 3.5 percent increase in new students.

Trustees also elected Thom S. Rainer, senior pastor of Green Valley Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., to the post of associate professor of evangelism and church growth. Earlier in the day, Mohler announced Rainer's appointment as the first dean of the new Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth, the seminary's fifth graduate school.

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Churches, individuals  
needed for Cross Over

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
2/2/94

ATLANTA (BP)--With 173 churches in central Florida planning to participate in Cross Over Orlando, churches and individuals from other areas are needed to help carry out the pre-convention evangelistic thrust.

Participating churches represent more than half the churches and missions in the six central Florida associations, said Jerry Pipes, national missionary for the Home Mission Board's evangelism section.

"We want to match a partner church (from outside the area) with every participating church in central Florida," Pipes said.

Cross Over Orlando is jointly sponsored by six local associations, the Florida convention and the Home Mission Board. Church and individual volunteers will be matched with Florida churches by May, and most Cross Over events will be Saturday, June 11, Pipes said.

Previous Crossover activities have included neighborhood surveys, block parties, evangelistic rallies, street evangelism and church planting. Last year, 1,267 professions of faith, 196 rededications and 1,448 prospects were reported in Houston.

Host churches will develop a plan to "reach out to their niche of central Florida," Pipes said. Volunteers from other areas will help host churches carry out their plan.

Home Mission Board evangelism personnel will provide witness training for Cross Over Orlando participants. Tom Kyzer, Florida Baptist Convention evangelism associate, is leading prayer support efforts.

For information on becoming a partner church or individual participant, contact the Home Mission Board at (404) 898-7687.

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Cross Over Orlando logos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

Board won't refund church's money;  
hears call for prayer emphasis By Mark A. Wyatt

FRESNO, Calif. (BP)--California Southern Baptist Convention executive board members voted Jan. 28 not to return missions gifts contributed by a San Francisco church whose messengers were refused seating at last year's state convention meeting.

Board members also heard a call by the president of the state convention for a special prayer emphasis leading up to next November's convention meeting during the board's Jan. 27-28 sessions in Fresno.

CSBC President Milton Steck, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Vacaville, urged the prayer emphasis in response to what he said was "the heartbeat of a lot of people who didn't feel good about what happened" at the 1993 CSBC annual meeting in Santa Rosa.

The executive board approved a committee recommendation rejecting a motion to return missions gifts to 19th Avenue Baptist Church. Karl Ortis, director of missions for San Francisco Peninsula Baptist Association, made the motion at last November's convention after a 213-204 vote against seating messengers from 19th Avenue because the church's pastor is a woman.

The motion subsequently was referred to the executive board.

The decision not to refund the church's money was made with no discussion and no apparent opposition. According to the recommendation presented by board member Arlie McDaniel Sr. and approved by the board, the decision was made "in light of 19th Avenue Baptist Church's desire to not have their Cooperative Program gifts refunded, and their decision to continue supporting the work of the State Convention through the Cooperative Program."

McDaniel told fellow board members, "I believe this recommendation expresses it all." He said the church had been contacted "more than once" about the motion. "As you all know, they never did falter in their giving."

The San Francisco congregation announced last December it would continue making contributions to the Cooperative Program despite the convention's refusal to seat messengers from the church.

After the vote, Mark Cook, board member from First Southern Baptist Church in El Monte, asked: "If this church is going to continue to support the convention, does this mean we're going to have to go through what we went through in Santa Rosa" at this year's convention in San Diego?

"Is one side going to lay down their guns or what?" Cook asked.

"As long as the Scripture is being violated, yes it's going to happen," replied Robert Lewis, pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Fairfield. "If they apply (to seat messengers from a church) with a woman pastor, I believe it's a violation of Scripture. My conscience dictates that I" resist any such application, Lewis said.

Robert Langley, board member from Long Beach, said that kind of action at convention meetings "is what's reported and what gets the attention. It doesn't advance the cause of Christ."

David Daffern, minister of education and youth at First Southern Baptist Church in Hemet, said, "I think it takes a lot of character on the part of the church not to say, 'Well, we'll take our marbles and go somewhere else.'" Daffern said he appreciates "the character of the people to say, 'We're not going to cut and run.'"

"They're also supporting the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship," Lewis responded.

Lewis and other board members expressed hope that 19th Avenue would not send messengers to the 1994 convention in San Diego.

Luis Castillo, a layman from Iglesia Bautista Nuevo Nacimiento in Wilmington, suggested the board "try and resolve this issue before the next convention."

Doug Metzger, executive board chairman and pastor of Magnolia Avenue Baptist Church in Riverside, explained Baptist polity prevents one Baptist entity from imposing its will on another.

"That's the autonomy of that church to decide how to operate," Metzger said.

"What we're doing here is a moot question," McDaniel told fellow board members. "We're just spinning our wheels. The church may not even send messengers next year. If they do, the convention will have to deal with it. It's not our problem," he said.

"If they don't apply, there will be no problem," Lewis declared.

Following that exchange, Steck, the convention president, asked that California Baptists "set aside the months of April and October as designated months to pray for one another" in the convention.

"I'm not focusing in on Scripture," Steck began. He said his church does not ordain women as ministers or deacons. "I'm not putting down those who do," Steck added.

"We can say there's a violation of Scripture, but I believe there might have been a greater violation of Scripture by the way we handled ourselves and the way we went away from Santa Rosa," Steck said.

Steck said prayer bulletins containing "praise reports for our churches" will be prepared to suggest ways churches can pray for one another.

"I believe we need to affirm men in ministry, we need to affirm women in ministry. God has a place for all of us. Let's just find out what God wants to do with us," Steck said.

Heeding Steck's appeal, board members concluded their two-day meeting with prayer for several concerns including the next convention meeting. Members also prayed for one another as well as for victims of the Jan. 17 Northridge earthquake and the continuing relief work in Southern California.

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**Kenya's Boran still unreached  
but no longer untouched by gospel** By Craig Bird

Baptist Press  
2/2/94

**NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--**The Boran of Kenya are still an unreached people group as far as Christianity is concerned.

But the strong-willed, cattle-centered, overwhelmingly Muslim tribe definitely has been touched.

There's even a Boran Baptist Church in Nairobi, Kenya, and a Bible study sponsored by that congregation in Marsabit -- 350 miles north in the traditional Boran homeland.

The church is the core that remains from an evangelistic breakthrough on Easter 1992. That's when 73 Boran people -- in the middle of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, in full view of their neighbors and friends -- were publicly baptized as followers of Jesus.

Immediately preceding that Easter Sunday came seven weeks of intensive dialogue between local Boran elders, Southern Baptist missionary John Witte and Mohammed Wario. Witte met Wario, a Boran Christian, through a contact made 15 years earlier in Nairobi by Witte's wife, Linda, and her then-missionary parents, John and Martha Adams.

Wario had prayed for years for a chance to share the gospel with his people. So when Wario introduced other Boran from his neighborhood to the missionary from San Antonio, Texas, the usual barriers to communication didn't immediately slam into place. The elders were even anxious to talk; maybe here was a chance to break out of the economic grind of mere survival that's the lot of most Boran, they reasoned.

The Boran group got straight to the point with Witte: They wanted help in setting up businesses, getting a clinic in the area, finding someone to pay school fees. But when he said he wasn't able to do that, they still agreed to meet on a regular basis to discuss "God things."

For the first three weeks the name of Jesus wasn't mentioned. Instead passages from the Koran and the Bible were read and discussed. A breakthrough came in a discussion of how sinful man makes contact with a perfect God.

"If God were standing on top of this building and we were in the street, could any of us jump high enough to reach him?" Witte asked.

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"Of course not," came the unanimous response.

After a moment of silence an elder in the group stated, "What we need is an advocate to help us get to God."

Witte was ready to give that advocate a name: Jesus.

In mid-February the elders decided to talk among themselves. Borans depend on consensus in decision-making. Thirteen declared their desire to become Christians. A week later another 10 joined them.

On March 15, 1992, at a Pentecostal church that loaned the Baptists its facilities, Witte prepared to baptize the 23 who had asked for public immersion. The church served a meal before the baptism, "so anyone who just came to eat would leave." But the crowd didn't shrink as the service began.

Eight more people made professions of faith in Christ during the service. Others who had earlier agreed with "the facts" of Christianity but had declined baptism also joined the line. When the crowd posed for pictures afterwards, 73 Boran had been baptized.

Then came the backlash.

"Muslims were asleep until the baptism," Wario explained. "That woke them up to what was happening. Persecution came and has continued. People fell away but some came back. Some never left. But I had prayed for four years for the chance to tell my people about Jesus. How could we stop now?"

The Baptists were accused of bribing people to convert. Offers were made to buy photos of the baptism to publish in Islamic newspapers "as proof of what you're doing."

A man came to Wario and confessed he had been paid to murder the Baptist pastor. "But here is my knife -- we are of the same clan, and I can't kill you," he said.

Some of the converts were fired from their jobs; others were kicked out of their homes. A few were beaten, many threatened. When the church began building a meeting room, opponents tried unsuccessfully to block them with legal action. Boran Baptist Church didn't have 73 active members for very long. After six weeks attendance averaged around 30 -- where it has hovered ever since. Worship services are like first-century churches, with lots of testimonies and singing to encourage each other against the difficult times.

But despite their own problems, the church members have looked outward from the beginning.

Almost immediately after the baptism the small group began discussing how they could present the gospel to their friends and family. Witte got permission from the Southern Baptist mission organization in Kenya to devote time to work with the Boran, both in Nairobi and in Marsabit. He and Wario began making the bone-jolting journey north once a month, seeing what lay on the other side of the breakthrough.

By February 1993 they had a title deed for property to build a church and two large green-and-white signs pointing the way to Boran Baptist Church.

The dedication of the church plot attracted an all-day crowd of 200 people who danced, sang, ate and listened to what the Baptists had to say. They also almost fought over a "friendly" game of tug-of-war when Witte unwittingly let two clans make up the competing teams.

Since that official beginning, Witte's trips have been more infrequent as other mission assignments cut into his time. But Wario travels monthly between Nairobi and Marsabit, hitching rides on the transport trucks that link the harsh, arid northeast province of Kenya with the rest of the country.

Philip N'gina, an evangelist sent out by the Nairobi church, lives in Marsabit full time. With little financial support and training, he keeps things going between Wario's trips.

"He isn't trained but he's really proven faithful to the task," Witte said.

Now the work stands poised between the initial touch of the gospel and establishment of a strong, self-sustaining Christian witness among the Boran.

"Baptists have made a commitment to the Boran and if we don't keep it the people of Marsabit might refuse to listen to the gospel again," Wario insisted.

But they're listening now. If Baptists can build a church building and fill it with children who will come every day and learn Bible stories and gospel songs, Wario predicts, in five years they will be strong and the "way of the church will be smooth."

"We are a hard people," Wario admitted, using "hard" in both positive and negative ways. "But we keep our word. A Boran who decides to stand for Jesus will stand all the way. If we can show them, by the way we live, that Jesus is the only way to God, nothing will move them from their faith.

"The Boran just need the right man. And that man is Jesus."

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

Baby rescued from the trash  
key to Boran response today

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press  
2/2/94

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--There's no shortage of tragedy in the Mathare slums of Nairobi.

So the starving, helpless and almost hopeless baby who found his way into the lives of John and Martha Adams 15 years ago was just another in a long list of challenges.

But the Southern Baptist medical missionaries took the boy home, where their teen-age daughter, Linda, helped care for it for weeks at a time.

When the child died a couple of years later, the effort seemed futile. Yet that baby -- saved from a garbage heap and death in the jaws of hyenas and wild dogs -- was the key that unlocked the hearts of the Boran tribe of Kenya to the claims of the gospel a decade and a half later.

In 1977 an older Boran woman, Adijah, found the child abandoned on a garbage heap and asked government officials if she could keep him. But the sickly child, whom she named Abdi, needed more than the love and care the Muslim woman could give him ~~and she was so poor herself she couldn't feed him properly.~~

Several months later a worried Adijah took him to the Baptist clinic in Mathare Valley. He was 18 months old, weighed 11 pounds -- and had tuberculosis. He couldn't even move his head.

But the Adamses took him to their own home. Linda, a sophomore in high school, put his bed in her room and got up in the night to feed him through a tube. Slowly he gained some strength, although he was mentally and physically retarded because of malnutrition.

Adijah was so impressed she brought the missionary family another challenge: her granddaughter Mumina, about the same age as Abdi, who had been paralyzed when an injection hit her sciatic nerve.

The Adamses took in Mumina too. For three years they cared for both babies in their home two weeks out of every month. They forced Abdi to stand up and walk and got a brace for Mumina in addition to massaging and exercising her legs.

But Abdi died of pneumonia in 1980 and soon afterwards the Adamses resigned as Foreign Mission Board missionaries and returned to the United States.

At no time had Adijah or any of her family shown the slightest interest in Christianity. They appreciated what the missionaries had done but were content with Islam.

Young Linda Adams thought the story ended there.

Years passed. Linda went to college, became a nurse and married John Witt. They were appointed Southern Baptist missionaries -- to Kenya -- by the Foreign Mission Board in 1990. In December 1991 a young woman knocked on her door in Nairobi.

"Do you remember me?" she asked. "I'm Asha."

Linda didn't, but a few words established the link. Asha was one of Adijah's daughters, an aunt to Mumina. The missionary doctor now working in Mathare had told her Linda Adams was back in Nairobi. The next day Asha returned with Mumina and her brother, Mohammed Wario.

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"I had never known how many other kind and wonderful things Mother and Daddy had done for the family -- they never made a big deal about it," Linda explained. "But Mohammed told me my Dad had found him walking the streets one day and challenged him about why he wasn't in school. Then my folks wound up paying his fees so he could go to carpentry school and bought him tools he's still using today to make a living."

Then came the bombshell: Three years after the Adamses had left Kenya, Wario had become a Christian through the witness of students at Pan African Bible College. His mother, who had rescued baby Abdi from the garbage, had thrown Mohammed out of her house at first, but as she saw the changes in his behavior had accepted him again.

He didn't know any other Boran Christians, and for four years he had been praying daily for someone to help him share the gospel with his people.

Linda went and interrupted her husband, who was plowing through paperwork in his office. "I think you better come hear what this guy has to say," she told him. Witte would soon become partners with Wario to begin a church among the Boran.

Today Boran Baptist Church in Nairobi averages 15-30 in worship while undertaking an ambitious visitation and Bible study/prayer meeting program that fills up six days of the week. The struggling congregation is spearheading establishment of a church in the unevangelized Boran homeland, 350 miles north on the Ethiopian border.

"My folks could never have dreamed what would happen because they took Abdi home," Linda said. "They were just doing their job as Christians the best they knew how. God just blessed their faithfulness."

And her own.

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

Boran and Christian:  
to be both takes courage

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press  
2/2/94

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--To be a Boran means a lot of things.

It means to be proud, often even stubborn. It means to depend on cattle as the basis for traditional life. It means a strong cultural, tribal identity.

And almost always it means being Muslim.

The members of Boran Baptist Church are proud, appreciate cattle and don't waver from calling themselves Boran. They want the community links of Boran society.

But because they're openly Christian, they face mild-to-harsh persecution from Muslims:

-- The walls of Ali Mayu's rented room leave no doubt to his religious stance. "Jesus is all I need," declares one. Bible verses adorn another. One drawing is titled "A Cross for Everyone" and another shows a Roman soldier driving a spike into Jesus's hand while insisting, "A job is a job, but I know that God sent Jesus into the world."

Mayu became a Christian before his wife, "and that brought war into our home," he explained. Local Muslims raised money to help her get a new husband. He went home to Marsabit for 19 days and prayed to God to "reveal your truth" to his wife. While he was gone she visited Boran Baptist Church and began to understand the gospel. When he returned she became a Christian.

The couple has since received seven visits from the local Muslim sheik "to prove the Bible is a lie."

"Since they see we will stay in Christianity, they won't have anything to do with me," Mayu said. "They won't buy the goats I sell to make a living. They won't even walk through our door -- they climb in and out the window instead."

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-- Asnakch Gashu has to depend on the church to buy her food and pay her rent while she tries to find a job. Two of her sisters live nearby but won't help unless she leaves Christianity for Islam.

"I cannot become a Muslim just because I have problems," the 19-year-old said. "It is better to lose all things and have eternal life than to have everything and not be saved."

-- Abdu's parents told him if he was fond of going to church he would be killed.

He is so fearful he stays indoors almost all the time, avoiding those who threaten him but also missing worship services. His mother wrote him recently declaring if he remains a Christian he can never call her mother again.

"I don't regret the decision to accept Christ," he insisted. "But it hurts to live in fear and to lose my family."

Boran Baptist pastor Mohammed Wario admitted "if the church cannot become a replacement support system for Boran Christians then we will likely fail. We are so few in numbers now and so many of our members have so many problems that we battle just to hang on.

"Yet we need to show by the quality of our lives that Jesus makes a difference. Then our fellow Boran -- who are watching us very closely -- will see the truth. But if we fail, they will also see that."

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(BP) photo (vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Modern-day David knocks giant Donahue off station," dated 1/31/94, please make the following corrections:

In the 14th paragraph, please change the word spokeswoman to spokeswomen, and in the 20th paragraph, second sentence, please change the word has to had.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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