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Rwanda horror is personal  
for evacuated missionaries

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press  
4/19/94

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--To most people, television and newspaper images from Rwanda of trucks heaped with bodies and streets littered with corpses are horrifying but distant -- both geographically and emotionally.

But the 11 Southern Baptist missionaries forced to flee the central African country in April are watching a land they love die. And as the cameras scan the destruction, they fear they will recognize the victims -- slaughtered because of their ethnic identity.

"It even hurts too much to call the names of our Rwandan Christian friends when we're praying for them because there are so many who have probably died," said missionary Dianne Randolph of Dallas.

Among those they are concerned about are:

-- Vincent, an employee of the Southern Baptist mission organization in Rwanda for 12 years and a key leader in Kigali Baptist Church in the Rwandan capital. He had been worried for several months, predicting even before the most recent fighting erupted that "I won't make it next time."

The morning of April 9 he slipped into the house of a neighbor who had a phone and called missionary Vernon Sivage of Midland, Texas.

"I want you to pray for me and my family," Vincent told Sivage. "Looking out the window right now I can see an armed gang searching house to house for Tutsis. When they find my family they will kill us all."

Sivage prayed with him over the phone. Ten minutes later the missionary drove out of his home to join an evacuation convoy leaving Rwanda. Vincent was likely dead before the Sivages even reached the American Embassy compound.

-- Emmanuel worked as a guard for missionaries Martha Colwell of Wilksboro, N.C., and Katrina Knox of Columbia, Tenn. When he tried to go home April 7, he was turned back by soldiers. Colwell read Psalm 9 with him after he shared his fears for his family.

"He cried," she said. "And Rwandan men never cry in public."

-- A pastors' and leaders' meeting in Butare stranded 22 men and one woman in the southern town, cut off from their families in other parts of the country after the killing began. They faced the twin traumas of starvation and being unable to protect their families.

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-- Eleazar Ziherambere, executive secretary of the Baptist Union of Rwanda, was caring for his children while his wife was in London for a conference. Well-known as an outspoken critic of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (the Tutsi army now taking control of Kigali), he also was a close friend of the late Rwandan president, Juvenal Habyarimana, whose death in a suspicious plane crash sparked the current bloodletting.

"Eleazar was on the Rwandan Patriotic Front hit list in 1990 when it almost captured Kigali, and his friendship with the president puts him at risk from the Hutu elements who are wiping out the moderate leadership," one missionary said.

Ziherambere spoke by phone with most of the missionaries before their evacuation April 9 from his home in Butare, in southern Rwanda. "He had nowhere to run; the borders were all closed to him. We really fear the worst," another missionary said.

One spark of hope came April 18 as a message from missionary Jeff Polglase in Burundi reported the following:

"We heard that Eleazar Ziherambere passed through Burundi on his way to Nairobi ... We haven't seen any other Rwandan (Baptists) but have heard that there are some in an outschool of Kibati, not far from the (Rwanda-Burundi) border. This is all we know at moment."

The names and faces of scores of other pastors and women and children overflow the memories of all the missionaries, adding perspective to the material and emotional loss the Americans have undergone.

"We prepared to evacuate in 1990 and packed a small carry-on bag then," Sivage called. "We didn't actually leave them but we did go through emotional separation. It was a good first step to cut ties between what we own and who we are. We are not what we own!"

The Southern Baptist missionaries left the embattled country in three different groups:

Stan and Marlene Lee of Greenville, S.C., and their daughter Meredith; David and Janet Hooten of Tifton, Ga., and their children Nathaniel and Anna Lee; and Colwell and Knox linked up in Butare and crossed into Burundi in the same convoy.

Vernon and Sandi Sivage, with daughter Keri, and journeyman Marty Felts from Brownwood, Texas, were in a later convoy into Burundi.

Larry and Dianne Randolph, out of contact with the others for two days and cut off from the American Embassy by heavy fighting, made it out on a Belgian transport plane later.

The Lees couldn't find any gasoline for sale in their rural town of Gitarama. Lee siphoned what little gas he had in his truck into a car belonging to Free Methodist missionaries and they left together. They had barely over half a tank to link up with a convoy more than 60 miles away.

Soldiers stopped them three times before they reached Butare and found the convoy had left. One gasoline station refused to sell them gas and a second said they had to have government authorization. But another Rwandan intervened and told the attendant he could sell them what they needed. Before they reached the Burundi border they caught up with the convoy.

The Hootens live in an isolated area beside the Rwanda-Zaire border. Originally told to "sit tight" until the embassy came for them, they learned there would be no rescue. After three days locked inside their house they made a pre-dawn dash in their loaded vehicle for a rendezvous with a group of Free Methodist missionaries.

At the contact point the Free Methodists weren't there -- but an angry and well-armed mob was. The Hootens literally pried one man's fingers off the vehicle door as they drove away. Later, after hooking up with a Dutch convoy, they waited for 20 minutes as a mob screamed at them and built multiple barricades in the highway. A heavy rainstorm dampened the crowd's building frenzy until -- "out of nowhere" -- two Rwandan soldiers drove up and talked the mob into letting the Westerners pass.

Colwell and Knox had little difficulty getting out. But they are haunted by the hundreds of rural Rwandans who lined the roads and watched Westerners flee.

"They were all so sad," Colwell said. "It was like they were thinking, 'Once they're gone we're gone too. We have no hope.'"

Felts moved to the Sivages' house for two days before they left. Together they watched and listened as the neighborhood around them was looted. A constant stream of looters filed by on a path 10 feet from a gate to the house. "They were all armed; we couldn't have stopped a mob if it had wanted to come in," Sivag said.

When they first attempted to leave, United Nations troops atop a building near their house waved them back inside, just minutes before a massive firebomb exploded on the road. The Sivages wrote their phone number on cardboard so the U.N. soldiers could read it with their field glasses. Later the soldiers called to tell them the road was clear and they drove safely to the American Embassy.

Meanwhile, the Randolphins were caught in the middle of the worst violence. They live near the airport and heard the explosion that was probably the plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi being shot down. They watched individual houses selectively being destroyed by grenades.

One group of Rwandans, carrying their belongings, rushed to the supposed safety of army trucks. "They think they're being rescued but they will be taken away and killed," the Randolphins' worker noted.

"It was like 'Schindler's List,'" Mrs. Randolph said. "People lining up to die just because of their ethnic group."

After moving to a Catholic school with 20 other missionaries, the Randolphins came under fire when gunmen in nearby woods shot at Rwandans crowded into the same compound. Then, en route to the airport, they drove through sullen-faced mobs standing around the still-bleeding bodies of those they had just beaten to death.

Even the airport was no haven from trauma. Mrs. Randolph befriended one distraught Rwandan Tutsi woman and prayed with her as they waited to board a plane. The woman burst into tears every time she tried to tell the missionary what was wrong. Later her French-Canadian husband quietly explained. They had driven to her family home en route to the airport and found the 11 bodies of her parents and siblings -- bludgeoned to death.

Ten days later, all the missionaries except Knox (who flew to the United States) are meeting and praying together, trying to decide what to do. Some probably will travel to western Tanzania and see if Rwandan refugees are joining Burundi refugees in desolate, desperate camps. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board already has committed funds for relief. Also, as soon as possible, a survey team will return to Rwanda to assess the carnage.

Until then, they pray for their country and their friends.

"The healing process has begun but the worst is still to come," Marlene Lee admitted. "So far I've not been angry, angry, angry -- but I've had some anger and depression. I'm doing better talking about it now but I still can't write any of my feelings. I either write stupid, superfluous things or wet the page with tears.

"We won't go back to the Rwanda we know. Many people we know and love will be gone. But we have been called to a people and when we return we will be taking something back to them they desperately need -- hope and love."

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

Current Rwanda bloodbath  
rooted in ancient enmity

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press  
4/19/94

KIGALI, Rwanda (BP)--Much of the world may have heard about Rwanda for the first time in April as tens of thousands of people died in day after day of tribal savagery there.

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But the reasons behind the carnage reach back centuries.

Both Rwanda and Burundi are populated primarily by two tribes: the Hutu and Tutsi peoples. The Hutus far outnumber the Tutsis with approximately 80 percent of the population of the two small central African countries, but only recently have the Hutus achieved any political power.

For centuries the Tutsis, known as the "Tall Ones," were the ruling class while the Hutus were laborers. Hutu rebellions and Tutsi measures to retain control have marked their history.

When the winds of change swept Africa in the 1960s, turning colonies into independent countries, the Hutus seized control in Rwanda. But in Burundi the Tutsis remained on top -- primarily by dominating the army.

The Tutsi government in Burundi was charged with killing up to 300,000 Hutus in the 1970s -- about the same time Uganda's Idi Amin was gaining notoriety for his slaughters. But the world took little notice of the bloodshed in Burundi.

In the late 1980s, as Burundi's Hutus moved to flex their political muscle, more fighting left an estimated 100,000 Hutus dead and sent hundreds of thousands more fleeing into Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire.

In 1990 a Tutsi-dominated army, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, invaded Rwanda from Uganda, claiming the Hutus were persecuting the Tutsi minority. The war featured numerous peace treaties and cease-fires, but the front slowly gained control of more and more of the country.

In 1993 a Hutu was elected president in Burundi, although the army continued as a Tutsi domain. When he was killed, clashes between the tribes left scores of thousands dead and sent hundreds of thousands more into exile.

Despite the fact the two tribes speak the same language and live side by side in most areas of the two countries, there's been very little mingling.

Rwanda's apparent stability of 25 years, compared to the periodic bloodbaths in Burundi, is attributed to President Juvenal Habyarimana, who held the radical Hutu elements in check during his quarter-century of rule. With his April 6 death in a plane crash that also killed Burundi's president, Hutu gangs and elements of the army were unleashed to hunt and kill Tutsis.

Now, with the Rwandan Patriotic Front seemingly taking control of Rwanda, it may be the Tutsis' turn for revenge in Rwanda -- while in Burundi the Hutus wait their turn.

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

Midwestern Seminary president  
announces plans for retirement By Brenda Sanders

Baptist Press  
4/19/94

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Milton Ferguson, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary the past 21 years, will retire July 31, 1996. He announced his plans for retirement during the opening session of the seminary's annual trustee meeting April 18.

"This decision on my part is totally voluntary and positive in purpose and intent," Ferguson, who will be 66 May 8, told the trustee board. "It is the result of my prayerful conclusion regarding God's leadership for me and for Midwestern Seminary."

In a unanimous vote, trustees formally accepted the president's timetable for retirement. Trustee chairman James Jones, evangelism director for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, expressed appreciation for his personal friendship with Ferguson, as well as for the president's "courage and leadership" during recent years of transition at the seminary and within the Southern Baptist Convention.

The 35-member trustee board approved a search process committee which will report back to the full board at its October meeting.

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Jones stressed this is not a search committee but rather it will come up with the process that the trustees will use to select a new president. He said a process was not in the seminary's guidelines for selecting a president.

The members of this search process committee are: chairman, Dennis Wood from Tempe, Ariz.; and James Dobbs of Columbus, Ohio; Robert Collins of Blue Springs, Mo.; Stoney Shaw of St. Louis; and Ronnie Rogers of Hot Springs, Ark.

And in their last session April 19, trustees approved a formal resolution of appreciation and support for Ferguson and they "applaud his courage in leading us during these days of transition" and they committed themselves to cooperating with him in "providing the atmosphere in which we can work together." Also, they pledged to make every effort to keep the unity in the process of the time of transition and the election of a new president.

Ferguson made his retirement announcement at the conclusion of his annual report to the board. He expressed a desire to activate his retirement plan "in a way and at a time which would facilitate an orderly, effective transition and thereby undergird the stability and the progress of Midwestern Seminary as we move forward into the future."

He said he had been "prayerfully considering" this move for "several months" and had consulted with chairman Jones about the decision "during those months." In more recent days, he said, he had made the trustees' executive committee aware of his plans.

In talking with executive committee members, Ferguson said, "I explored with them my thinking regarding the time and the method which would be in the best interest of the seminary. They requested that I allow ample time for us to work together in addressing several of the major challenges before us and to allow the trustees opportunity to establish orderly procedures for selection of my successor. I respect their judgment in these matters and I will honor their request."

Ferguson's retirement will come at the close of the institution's 1995-96 fiscal year.

He told trustees he would not be a "lame duck" and added: "I want you to know that I'm not withdrawing into a rocking chair to ride out the next two years. I intend to be aggressively, assertively acting in a leadership role. I intend to be pushing forward -- pushing you as trustees, pushing the administration, faculty and staff, enlisting the support of the alumni, and acting as if I were a newly inaugurated president, eager to go."

His voice breaking with emotion, Ferguson pledged, "I intend for these last two years to be the best years that I have to give. ... It is my intent and my prayer that this transition be Midwestern's finest hour."

Richard Proctor, first vice chairman of the board and a municipal court judge from Wynne, Ark., presented a response from the executive committee, noting members felt "a profound sense of loss, some uncertainty and a lot of grief" to see Ferguson's tenure come to a close.

However, he said, they also felt "a profound sense of gratitude" for the president's "effective and capable leadership."

"We look forward with anticipation to the additional two years of leadership and fellowship that he will provide for us," Proctor said.

Ferguson assumed duties as president of Midwestern Seminary in February 1973. During his tenure, the seminary has experienced growth in student enrollment, financial stability and development of academic programs and campus facilities.

In recent years, Ferguson has repeatedly called for the institution's trustees to focus on their "common bond in Christ," rather than on theological or political differences.

During his April 18 report to the board, he urged trustees to set aside personal agendas, while reaffirming their "unity in Jesus Christ" and "commitment to the welfare of the seminary."

At the close of his report, Ferguson received a standing ovation from the trustees.

Ferguson had taught at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, 16 years before assuming Midwestern's presidency in 1973. He was professor of Christian philosophy from 1965-72.

Ferguson holds the bachelor of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern and an undergraduate degree from Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee. He is a native of Harrah, Okla.

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Christian education dean  
named at Southern Seminary

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A professor and administrator at Denver Seminary has been named dean of the school of Christian education at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Dennis E. Williams, chairman of the department of educational ministries and administration at the Conservative Baptist-related seminary, will assume the Southern Seminary deanship May 1. He succeeds William B. Rogers who resigned as dean last year to assume full-time teaching duties at Southern.

Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. announced Williams' appointment April 19 during the opening session of the seminary's spring trustee meeting. Just prior to Mohler's announcement, trustees unanimously had elected Williams professor of Christian education.

A professor at Denver Seminary since 1971, Williams also serves as executive administrator of the North American Professors of Christian Education and executive director of the Mountain Area Sunday School Association in Denver.

Williams is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, where he received the master of religious education and the doctor of education degrees. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on motivational factors in Southern Baptist Life and Work Adult Sunday School curriculum.

Williams has written numerous articles and curriculum materials and is the author of a recent book titled, "Volunteers for Today's Church, How to Recruit and Retain Workers." He also is a member of the review board of the "Religious Education Journal."

In 1991, the Southwestern Baptist Religious Education Association presented Williams its "Distinguished Educator Award."

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His tracts prove productive  
around town -- and in Belarus

By Tim Palmer

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O'FALLON, Mo. (BP)--You might say Gary Taylor has a one-tract mind. Or you could say he looks at tracts like American Express travelers checks and won't leave home without them.

Whatever anyone else might say about this simple little paper witnessing tool, Taylor is sure of one thing: It attracts people to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is sure because he has seen it happen so many times -- from O'Fallon, where he is pastor of First Baptist Church, to Belarus.

In February, an officer in the former Soviet Red Army prayed to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior after reading a tract Taylor had given him one morning in a hotel elevator in Minsk, the Belarussian capital.

Assuming the man didn't speak English, Taylor simply handed him one of the Russian-English tracts that members of Missouri Baptist Convention Belarus partnership teams carry when they visit the former Soviet republic. Taylor and his companions got off the elevator and the fellow stayed on.

"We just went over to breakfast and I really thought no more about it," Taylor said. That night, fellow team member Roy Blunt of Bolivar told him, "That guy you gave a tract to this morning was looking for you."

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The next day, Taylor was sitting in a sixth-floor reception area waiting for a ride to a meeting with the pastor of Awakening Baptist Church in Minsk, to discuss a partnership link-up with his church. "And off the elevator steps Roy Blunt and Vladimir."

As it turned out, Vladimir spoke English well, along with German, French and Russian. A Ukrainian, he had risen to the rank of colonel during his 25-year army career.

"He said to me he was a Bolshevik," Taylor recalled. "But he emphatically shook his head and said, 'I'm not a communist.' He kept crossing his arms across his chest to say, 'I do believe in God.'

"And he said, 'Because of the nature of my work in reconnaissance, I've killed many men,' and he said, 'I feel bad about it.'

"And he said, 'What I want to know is, that God your tract tells me about, can that God accept me and forgive me?'

"And of course I assured him that was so."

After confirming that Vladimir believed he could be pardoned through Christ's death on the cross, Taylor led him in the sinner's prayer. Vladimir then told Taylor he had a 15-year-old son named Boris and he wanted his son to have a different kind of life.

Before Taylor left Belarus, he arranged to have two Russian Bibles mailed to Vladimir and Boris in the Ukraine. The youth group at First Baptist in O'Fallon has been praying for the father and son, the pastor reported.

Taylor is no stranger to handing tracts to strangers. "It was just a real natural thing to do over there because I do it all the time over here," he said. "I try not to leave the house without some tracts in my pocket." He said he prefers the "Eternal Life" tract produced by the Home Mission Board personal evangelism department.

When he eats at a restaurant or buys gasoline for his car, he leaves a tract. Recently a young man who worked at a service station came up to him and said, "I want you to know I read that tract and I prayed that prayer and I invited Christ into my life, and I just wanted to thank you."

He gave a young woman at another station so many tracts that when a church member started to use a tract to counsel her after she responded to an altar call, she laughed and said, "I've got a whole stack of those at home. I know what to do and I just want to do it." Soon afterward Taylor baptized her.

When he eats out, the pastor explained, he tucks his tip into a tract with the money sticking out so the waitress or waiter can see it. Asked if he's a big tipper, he laughed and said, "Well, you have to be when you do that. If I don't tip I don't leave a tract."

Not many people refuse a tract, he noted, though a cashier at one restaurant he frequents is resistant. "I've given her two but it's always over protest." He said he sometimes feels like the Boy Scout who helped an old lady across a street when she didn't want to go.

One of the nice things about tract witnessing, Taylor said, is that in 1 Corinthians 3 Paul wrote that some plant, some water, but God gives the increase.

"That takes the burden off me," he said. "All I have to do is plant or water and leave it up to God to give the increase."

Taylor pointed out the Southern Baptist Convention is promoting "60 days of soul-winning" in October to prepare for the January-March 1995 Here's Hope emphasis. "This is a natural time to get a reservoir of tracts up," he said.

Susan James, an assistant editor in the Home Mission Board evangelism section in Atlanta, estimated the HMB sends out from 750,000 to 1 million Eternal Life tracts a year. "This is our most popular witnessing tract at this point," she said. They cost a dime apiece and are printed in 10 languages besides English.

A half-dozen tract titles are available, including three developed for Here's Hope: "Roman Road" for adults, "Road to Hope" for youth and "God's Special Plan" for children.

Thomas Wright, director of materials development for the HMB evangelism section, said "Roman Road" is in the format of a road map.

"It's very distinctive and we've had tremendous response already," Wright said.

He pointed out a tract can serve as a guide to a prospect, an outline to the person doing the witnessing and a "leave by" device, as on Taylor's restaurant tables.

"They work in a variety of ways and they work very effectively," Wright said.

Taylor, whose church baptized 90 people last year, figures tracts are a gospel witness tool for the ages.

"It just looks like anybody can sling some seeds," he said.

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(BP) photo available upon request from Missouri Baptists' Word & Way newsjournal.

Little tract helps turn  
family members to Christ

By Everett Hullum

Baptist Press  
4/19/94

ALBANY, Ore. (BP)--Elaine was nervous. Afraid, really.

For weeks she had put off this moment and, now that it had come, she realized more acutely than ever that her future would be determined in the next 15 to 20 minutes.

Elaine was in love with a non-Christian. And she had resolved that she, a Southern Baptist since childhood, could not marry a non-Christian.

As she and Ed pulled up in front of his apartment, Elaine took out the little, well-worn "Eternal Life" booklet she'd read dozens of times. "Ed," she said hesitantly, "there's something real important we must talk about."

Elaine had met Ed Cardwell almost a year before -- only two weeks after moving to Albany, Ore., in 1981. He was just back from military service; she worked for a computer firm. Soon they were talking -- casually -- about getting married.

"But I didn't think it would last unless we were both Christians," Elaine recalls. So there she was that early evening trying to explain to Ed "about being unequally yoked," and it just wasn't working.

Ed had been raised in a family with strong moral values but no church affiliation. The words Elaine was using were as foreign to him as Swahili. Finally, desperately, Elaine said, "I have this booklet that will make it a lot easier."

The "Eternal Life" booklet did just that.

As Elaine walked Ed through the simple words that describe the profound act of faith that is commitment in Christ, Ed became convinced this was something he wanted in his life. "I already knew there was something different about Elaine -- something special. We'd talked about church and religion a few times, but she hadn't preached to me.

"Now, the way she went about it, she did a very good job. She was nervous, but what she said made sense."

When Elaine asked Ed if he felt he could pray the prayer of salvation, Ed said yes. Elaine was surprised. "This is really serious," she told Ed. "This will change your life."

"I know," Ed replied. "I'm ready."

"I never did plan out," Elaine says now, "what I'd do if Ed said no."

More than 10 years later, the yes seems louder and clearer than ever before. The Cardwells have three children. Ed is an industrial supplies salesman; Elaine, part-time secretary at the church and full-time homemaker.

And both are witnessing more actively than ever. The original little "Eternal Life" booklet published by the Atlanta-based Southern Baptist Home Mission Board has long since been enriched by newer approaches, but it remains the backbone of their efforts to communicate the gospel message.

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It was, in fact, the key to Ed's most difficult -- and most rewarding -- witnessing experience. After they were married, Elaine and Ed dropped into a pattern of irregular church attendance. Elaine "felt miserable about it," but they were both busy, life was good and it was easy "to drift away."

Then Ed, at age 29, was diagnosed as having cancer. Surgery and radiation treatments cured him. But the experience reminded him of the importance of having God as a focal point of life. "Something like that will wake you up," he says, smiling.

The couple -- through the witness of a friend -- discovered Calvary Baptist Church, a small Southern Baptist congregation not far from their home and started attending regularly. The couple taught in Sunday school. Ed became a deacon. The more they became involved, the more Ed felt compelled to talk to his parents about the Christian faith.

One day, as he left for work, he told Elaine, "I'm going by Mom and Dad's; I may be late getting home."

Says Ed today, "I think it's harder to witness to someone you know well, but I felt a real hunger to do that."

Worried about their salvation, yet not wanting to offend, "I wasn't sure how far I'd go. I just planned to point out the changes Christ had made in my life. I gave my testimony and then got the 'Eternal Life' booklet out and said, 'I'd like to know what you think.'"

When Ed finished, Dave and Marie Cardwell smiled and said they would become Christians. "It was like a double take," Ed says. "I said, 'Really?!'"

"Yes," they said.

Before and since, Ed has had the "exciting experience of helping someone come to know the Lord." He insists he has been "just in the right place at the right time. You don't really lead people to the Lord -- the Lord is doing it."

Yet he adds quickly, "Once you have that experience, you keep wanting to do that -- it's like a hunger. Not every witnessing episode results in a profession of faith, but it's exciting when it happens."

And never so exciting, he concludes, as on the spring evening when he used the wrinkled "Eternal Life" booklet to help his parents discover new life in Christ. "It's really something when someone you love comes to the Lord," he says.

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Hullum is a free-lance writer/editor/photographer in Atlanta. This article first appeared in the HMB periodical Evangelism Today.

His aim: more Baptists  
sharing their witness

By Tammi Ledbetter

Baptist Press  
4/19/94

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--If you aren't willing to swim in the ocean, Chuck Kelley hopes you'll at least check out the wading pool he's designed.

Realizing most Southern Baptists have never tried any of the evangelism training materials already available, Kelley has written a manual on the simplest level possible. And he's hoping more church members will get their feet wet.

Through a "One-Day Soul Winning Workshop," Christians are introduced to the witnessing life. The eight hours of training help participants learn to prepare and give their personal testimonies, how to make an evangelistic home visit, how to introduce the gospel and how to use a witnessing booklet to share the gospel.

It's the simplicity of the approach that impressed Indiana pastors who recently completed the training. "Every one of our people felt they could do it," said Steve Faith of Cloverleaf Baptist Church in Indianapolis. "They're familiar with the Scriptures from the Roman Road. They may not have put them together like this, but it's just a matter of learning a few words in between."

Through this "basic training" method, Kelley asks participants to learn two stories -- "your story and his story." He encourages Christians to talk about their own story through a salvation testimony or life experience.

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While some people are more comfortable talking about their own salvation, Kelley noted there are those who were saved as children who may prefer to relate a more recent experience when Jesus really helped them. "So we give two options -- explain what Christ means to them personally through salvation or a recovery story of the way Jesus helped them."

The tract developed by Kelley makes use of Scriptures known as the Roman Road. "The easiest way to share his story is with a tract. You don't even have to remember anything." The gospel message is arranged in the booklet like a road map that traces a person's life experiences.

Kelley said he hopes to "lower people's expectations of what it takes to be a witness," rather than raising them. "I want people to believe witnessing is something they can do."

That's not been the case for most church members, said Kelley, who teaches evangelism at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and frequently speaks at evangelism conferences around the country. "Most Baptists believe evangelism is the most important job for someone else to do."

Kelley said he hopes all believers will become confident in witnessing. "You don't have to be a biblical scholar or theologian. You don't have to have a super-extrovert personality or go through intensive training. You can witness if you can just learn two stories -- your story and his story."

For Kelley, that sense of confidence came as a youngster who was impressed by the example of an older brother-in-law, Paige Patterson. During his teen-age years, Kelley spent time during the summer at his married sister's home.

"Paige was always witnessing and he helped me to understand the significance of evangelism -- that it was something I should do as both an obligation and responsibility."

Later, Kelley said he came to realize people are more open to the gospel than he had imagined. His wife's father, Bob Harrington, was known as the chaplain of Bourbon Street and took Kelley along with him as he shared his faith in the French Quarter of New Orleans. "At the kinds of places he would go I'd think we don't have a prayer of making a difference," Kelley related. "But he showed me people are more responsive than we think they are."

Leroy Pickering, pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Danville, Ind., said the workshop helps participants recapture the vision of reaching people. "It provides you with a means of telling the story of Christ and especially your personal testimony in a personal way."

Over the last year, members of Cloverleaf Baptist in Indianapolis have distributed light bulbs to members of their community "as a way to show God's love in a particular way," Faith recounted. But as some members tried to field questions that came their way, they felt unable to respond adequately.

"This material gives them something they will feel comfortable with sharing," Faith said of the training manual. "Both of these things together are pretty simple -- the Roman Road and passing out light bulbs."

"People need to feel like witnessing really is my job and not someone else's," Kelly reiterated, "and that this is something I can actually do."

Once they've checked out the wading pool, Kelley figures it won't be long before more Christians enjoy the waves.

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Octogenarians ease suffering  
as yearly volunteers to Brazil By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press  
4/19/94

TAYLORS, S.C. (BP)--Burton de Wolfe Davis doesn't like to sit still. Neither does his wife, Sarah Blanche.

"Life is so interesting," said Davis, 84. "There are so many things to do and see that, for us, sitting in a rocking chair watching TV is a terrible way to end life."

Davis and his wife, 83, are doing anything but sitting.

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The couple, of Taylors, S.C., recently returned from Brazil, where they led a team of nearly 30 Southern Baptist volunteers in operating a mobile medical clinic.

The medical volunteers treated 3,509 Brazilians at the week-long clinic held outside Fortaleza, a city of about 3 million people. Another six volunteers did construction work at a Baptist camp near the city.

It was the 12th medical project the Davises have led in the area since they retired in 1975, after more than 30 years as Southern Baptist missionaries to Brazil.

In 1982 the couple founded Mobile Medical Missions, Inc., a group of about 30 medical professionals -- mostly members of First Baptist Church in Taylors. The team travels annually to the Fortaleza area to conduct clinics with Brazilian medical professionals.

The clinics are held in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and Gill Memorial Hospital in Fortaleza. During their 30 years as missionaries there, the Davises started the hospital, a Baptist school and church.

The Davises themselves aren't health care workers. His background is in interior architecture and design; hers is in religious education.

But as missionaries and volunteers, they believe in "touching people in the name of Jesus Christ," said Davis. "Sometimes people listen to the story of Jesus better if you show concern for their suffering, too."

They had plenty of opportunities for that during their last trip to Brazil. More than 1,000 Brazilians already were waiting in line when the volunteer medical team arrived in Itapipoca, a town several hours by bus from Fortaleza.

"The lines were so long that when we stood in front of the building, we could look in each direction and we couldn't see the end," said Davis.

Welcomed rains have ended a 10-year drought in the area, but downpours drenched Brazilians as they waited. Many spent the night in line -- usually with nothing to eat -- to be sure they got treatment. One man walked 30 miles to the clinic.

When the volunteers finally had to pack up the clinic, several hundred people were still waiting.

The team provided medical and dental care and distributed several hundred pairs of used eyeglasses. They gave parents parasite medication and a three-month supply of vitamins for each child. They provided free prescriptions to other patients in need.

Davis helped supervise the clinic. He and his wife also translated for medical workers.

"I translated from morning until night," Mrs. Davis said. She gave patients an evangelistic tract and, when time permitted, asked if they were Christians. "Patients were coming through so fast I couldn't do very much. But I tried to talk to them and point them to the right way of life."

One woman whose baby was seriously ill told Mrs. Davis she had three children by three different men. The woman had never married. Her father supports her and the children.

"I had an opportunity to give her a few words of encouragement, words that she needed to hear," said Mrs. Davis.

While translating for physicians, her husband also encouraged and comforted several women suffering from nervous conditions. Questioning them, he learned they had been abandoned by their husbands. One woman with six children told Davis she was penniless; she survived by begging door-to-door for food for her children.

During the clinic, physicians treated a handicapped boy who was malnourished and needed all kinds of medication. The Davises' son, Derick, found the boy waiting in line in the rain, unable to get inside the clinic gate because of the crowd.

"He was really in danger of being crushed in the press of the crowd," said the elder Davis.

Derick, who works in publishing in Raleigh, N.C., has participated in all 12 of his parents' medical clinics in Brazil. His brother, Eric, pastor of Eastview Baptist Church in Belton, S.C., went on one earlier trip and hopes to go again next year.

Their parents, meanwhile, have no plans to quit volunteer missions anytime soon.

"We'll keep going back until the Lord doesn't let us go anymore," Davis said.

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

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CORRECTION: In the program for the SBC annual meeting, dated 4/13/94, please make the following corrections:

Switch speakers and identifications for Tuesday, June 14, at 9:25 a.m., and Thursday, June 16, at 9:40 a.m. That will mean Bo Mitchell will speak on Tuesday, and Arturo Cobo will speak on Thursday.

Also, change the city mentioned in connection with Steve White on Tuesday, June 14, at 1:55 p.m., from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., to Merritt Island, Fla.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "New SBC seminary thrust developing in the West," dated 4/15/94, please substitute the following for the 11th paragraph:

Golden Gate's enrollment for the spring term is 975, reflecting a 12 percent growth over last spring at the Mill Valley campus, the southern California campus in Brea, the Northwest campus in Portland, Ore., and the Ethnic Leadership Development centers scattered across the western United States.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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