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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**

SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #7  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-2200  
Herb Hollinger, Vice President  
Fax (615) 742-8600  
CompuServe ID# 7042C

**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522  
**DALLAS** Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232  
**NASHVILLE** 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300  
**RICHMOND** Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

June 10, 1994

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**African countries embracing  
'True Love Waits' campaign**

**By Chip Alford**

KAMPALA, Uganda (BP)--The worldwide influence of "True Love Waits" continues to grow with young people in several African countries now participating in the sexual abstinence campaign launched last year by Southern Baptists.

A nationwide chastity rally at City Council Hall in Kampala, Uganda, is planned July 29, the same date similar events will take place in the United States and Canada. Initiated by Southern Baptist missionaries Larry and Sharon Pumpelly, the celebration is expected to attract between 3,000 and 5,000 teen-agers and college students from Uganda and surrounding countries in east and central Africa.

The goal of "True Love Waits" is to encourage teens and college students to follow biblical teachings and remain chaste until marriage. According to Pumpelly, that message is finding a receptive ear in Uganda, a country plagued by AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

"AIDS is a tremendous problem here," she said. "Thirty percent of healthy pregnant women who come in for prenatal care are found to be HIV-positive."

The campaign already has gained the support of Janet Museveni, wife of Uganda's president, Yoweri Museveni.

"She's a committed Christian and she is very supportive of the campaign," Pumpelly said. "She is hosting a key meeting for us on July 6. We've invited key religious, government and military leaders from across the country, including the minister of education. We will make a presentation about the campaign and several teen-agers who have committed to abstinence will share their testimonies."

True Love Waits also has been endorsed by the Uganda National Student Association, Pumpelly said, adding there is "a very good possibility" the campaign will become part of the curriculum in Ugandan schools.

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As in America, the Ugandan abstinence campaign is an ecumenical effort with Baptists, Catholics, Anglicans and Pent costals working tog ther alongside other religious and government leaders. The July 29 rally will feature a wide range of activities, including skits, music and testimonies from teens who have already promised to r fraim from sex until their wedding night.

Following the event, Pumpelly said two-day True Love Waits conferences will be held at approximately 30 sites across the country. A series of nine lessons will educate young people about th biblical view of sexuality.

At the end of each conference, participants will have an opportunity to sign covenant cards promising to remain chaste until they marry. Pumpelly said the cards will be collected and likely presented to the Ugandan president.

"We're very excited about this campaign. The youth who are alr ady participating are so enthusiastic. I think this will go beyond our wildest imagination. People here are hungry to be challenged."

Uganda is not the only African country embracing True Love Waits. In April, the women's department of the Togolese Baptist Convention launched a French-language version of the campaign at a camp for Christian girls in Togo's capital city of Lome.

A group of 94 girls spent three days studying the biblical plan for dating and marriage. Eighty-nine of the girls later signed covenant cards pledging abstinence until marriage.

"When the girls returned to their home churches and told others about their study and commitment, they received a very enthusiastic response," Patsy Eitelman, a Southern Baptist missionary in Togo, reported. "Many churches are already asking how they can obtain this teaching for their youth."

In Kenya, 130 students at Nyeri Baptist High School pledged to remain chaste until they marry during a True Love Waits commitment service in late 1993. The students considered love for their unborn children, their future mate, their friends, themselves and God as reasons for abstinence.

Campaign organizers say international participation in True Love Waits is likely to escalate as the Baptist World Alliance begins to carry the program to its 165 Baptist groups representing more than 38 million Baptists in 150 countries. As part of BWA's efforts, True Love Waits guidance materials are being translated into Spanish, German and French.

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**Texas panel grapples with ways  
to keep churches happy with CP**

**By Toby Druin**

**Baptist Press  
6/10/94**

DALLAS (BP)--Texas Baptists' Cooperative Missions Giving Study Committee got down "to the reality of the seriousness of the matter" June 8, according to chairman Cecil Ray, in formulating a recommendation to the state convention on enhancing cooperative giving.

And the "seriousness" is whether the recommendation will continue or have a stated relationship between the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Southern Baptist Convention or any other Baptist body, how missions and ministry funds are to flow from the churches to them and what will be considered "Coop rative Program."

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In its fourth meeting at the Baptist Building in Dallas, the committee discussed the need for the committee in the first place: that some people and churches feel they can no longer support the SBC, that it no longer exists as they have known it in the past, and they want to give their missions and ministry support dollars another way but still have them considered "Cooperative Program."

Ben Loring Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church in Amarillo who made the motion at the 1993 state convention that the committee be authorized, explained to the committee in April that his church's mission gifts have been made to appear "second class" because it has channeled its gifts to SBC entities through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship rather than the SBC Executive Committee. Last year the church gave more than \$180,000 to SBC causes but they were not considered "Cooperative Program."

To remedy that, the study committee has considered a recommendation that would call for a Texas Cooperative Program budget with gifts beyond Texas to any Baptist cause -- SBC, CBF or others -- to be designated and directed by the churches. All would be considered "Cooperative Program."

That plan differs from current practice that has any Cooperative Program gift going to the state convention treasurer's office divided between the state convention and SBC according to a formula approved by messengers to the state convention each fall.

The current percentage is 66.35 percent retained for Texas causes and 36.65 percent sent on to the SBC Executive Committee for distribution to SBC mission boards, seminaries and agencies, according to a formula approved by messengers to the SBC annual meeting each June.

At last week's committee meeting one member challenged omission of the SBC from any recommendation, saying "Cooperative Program" historically has meant the partnership between the state and Southern Baptist Convention. He said he favored recognizing gifts through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship but opposed limiting the Cooperative Program budget to just Texas. To leave out worldwide missions causes from the budget would hurt everyone, he said, contending that 94 percent of Texas churches now support the Cooperative Program budget as is, including the BGCT and SBC portions.

Another said that the Cooperative Program would not be the Cooperative Program if the SBC is omitted, though he said that for everyone to be happy some changes are needed.

Others wanting the SBC omission said the SBC no longer exists as it once did and to leave the BGCT/SBC distribution plan intact would be to leave them out.

Others noted that unless a recommendation is formulated that "provides inclusion" of churches that may differ in their giving practices it will have failed in its assignment.

Ray asked each of the members to write their own versions of a recommendation on what would constitute Cooperative Program gifts and how they would be distributed and send them to him. A writing team will formulate them into one or more recommendations for the committee to consider at their next meeting in Dallas, July 29, although Ray said an earlier date might be considered.

**Astronaut says his faith  
takes care of any fears** By Laurie A. Lattimore

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--The one thing that scares Lt. Col. Tom Akers is traveling as a passenger. "The most helpless feeling for an astronaut is flying commercial airplanes in bad weather," he joked. "You can't do anything."

Akers, a Baptist layman, spent a record 571 hours in space flight during three National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) missions between 1990 and 1993 and logged a record 29 hours, 40 minutes walking in space.

But the space veteran considers his three journeys toward the stars less dangerous than the commercial flights he reluctantly takes.

The Missouri native, recently honored at the state Capitol in Jefferson City, said in an address that his Christian background was one of the early foundations that made it possible for him to be a successful astronaut.

"One thing about being a Christian is I can let God worry about things while I sit back in the driver's seat and relax," Akers said.

He acknowledged it would be foolish not to be aware of the potential dangers of his profession, but so far he hasn't had any close calls. He said his faith in Christ helps him keep the risk factor in perspective.

"There's no point in worrying about it because God is taking care of it. ... I have never been scared."

Walking in space creates a sensation hard to put into words, Akers said. If he had to try, he went on, he would call it similar to "going outside after being cooped up all winter. You really don't spend enough time appreciating it when you're in space."

Akers was part of the famed crew that spent 11 days last December capturing and restoring the Hubble Space Telescope to full capacity. Four astronauts completed five spacewalks on that journey; Akers made two of them.

During his first mission in 1990, Akers and his fellow crew members successfully deployed the Ulysses Interplanetary Space Probe on its four-year journey via Jupiter to investigate the polar regions of the sun. In 1992, he was on the crew that took the space shuttle Endeavor on its maiden voyage. He was one of three astronauts involved in the spacewalk to capture the stranded INTELSAT, an international telecommunications satellite.

An exhibit has been added to the Missouri Museum in Akers' honor featuring a NASA space suit, photographs of Akers and other memorabilia from his space flights.

Gov. Mel Carnahan told the crowd in the Capitol Rotunda that Akers' success as an astronaut was a success for Missouri -- a success for the small town where he grew up, Eminence, for the public schools, for Missouri's higher education institutions and for the values all represent.

State Treasurer Bob Holden told Akers, "Tom, you have gone farther and higher than anyone here!"

Akers graduated from the University of Missouri at Rolla and served as a high school principal in his hometown. In 1979 he joined the U.S. Air Force as a flight test engineer. He was selected for pilot training in 1982 and worked with weapons development systems. NASA called on Akers in 1987.

Akers currently is working with NASA on its plans to build a space station, but he dreams of another trip to space.

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"I have been lucky to fly three times in three and a half years, so I'm low on the list to fly again," he said. "But hopefully I'm in line for another flight."

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**Dad, sons' evangelistic fervor  
spreads in numerous directions**

**By Toby Druin**

**Baptist Press  
6/10/94**

DALLAS (BP)--On any given day in the United States -- and even a few foreign countries -- it is likely, almost a certainty, that a church, school or crusade audience somewhere is hearing the gospel according to Gage.

That's Gage as in Freddie, Daniel, Paul, Rick and Rodney.

They are all evangelists. Freddie, the father, made a profession of faith and was called to preach the same night in 1951 in a Dan Vestal revival in Houston. He hit the sawdust trail a few months later and today, after almost 1,400 revivals and crusades, probably has preached to more Southern Baptists in a local church setting than any evangelist in history.

More than 1 million people have made professions of faith in Freddie's meetings, and he's still preaching, although most of his time now is given to a new role as director of communication to the Southern Baptist Convention for Rapha Treatment Centers.

It's only natural that his sons would follow Freddie into evangelism. Aside from their calling, they were exposed to it as fast as they came on the scene. When Daniel and Paul were small in the early 1950s, Freddie was attending Decatur Baptist College and held many revivals in the area around the school. His wife, Barbara, attended as many meetings as she could. The crowds got used to seeing the "Gage boys."

"Dad preached with a dynamic presence," said Daniel, now 41.

"I remember seeing scores of people respond."

All have cut at least part of their teeth in evangelism as part of their father's pre-crusade revival teams. Freddie would utilize "Go Tell" teams for at least a week prior to his crusades to go into the streets, schools and clubs to contact unsaved persons and line them up for revival attendance. All of the boys participated at one time or another.

Daniel made a profession of faith in Christ at age 6, drifted away as a teen but made a recommitment of his life in 1978. He had his own hair-styling salon in Houston and began to lead his customers to Christ. Two years later he surrendered to preach and traveled with his father, assisting him in area-wide crusades for four or five years and occasionally preaching for him.

"The crusade trail was awesome," said Daniel. "Some of those churches were dead, but we would see more saved in a Sunday through Wednesday crusade than the whole previous year. We would go to pastors' luncheons and revival would break out there."

Daniel said he also could remember his father being gone much of the time when he was young and has trimmed his own schedule to spend more time with his wife and son and daughter. He, too, works with Rapha but still preaches about 10 revivals each year, in addition to working with his brother, Rick, in his youth camps.

Paul, two years younger at 39, felt called into ministry in 1979 and over the years has specialized in advanced work for evangelism crusades, helping organize and mobilize churches to reach their communities or cities for Christ.

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"I have found that my place in th ministry is to help," h said.

Ninety percent of what he knows about it, he said, came from experience with his father. At one tim h was x cutive director of Freddie's ministry. Now he is managing his brothers, Rick and Rodney, and has begun to branch out into helping churches with capital fund-raising campaigns, again "helping" local churches "maximiz their resource potential to have a greater impact in reaching their communities for Christ."

Rick, 35, was consumed with athletics in his growing-up years and that insulated him, he said, from his father's ministry.

"I remember traveling with him to some of his meetings and th boys' homes he operated in Houston," said Rick, "but I was so wrapped up in all my own sports world that I didn't get plugged into all that Dad had going on."

When he found Christ in January 1984 while on Texas Tech's football coaching staff, he immediately called Freddie and Barbara to t ll them. "And it wasn't until then," he said, "that I realiz d all that Dad had been through all those years."

Two weeks later he accompanied his father on a revival trip to a Georgia church, got involved with his "Go Tell" team and saw dozens of young people won to Christ. He returned to the church briefly as a youth director. A graduate of Cameron University, he later coached at Liberty University before making a full-time commitment to evangelism.

Rick continues his sports emphasis, however, leading camps in addition to preaching in church revivals and area crusades. He presents a program, "On Track," in many schools where he holds crusades. Last year he preached in Russia and Eastern Europe.

The youngest of the four, Rodney, a 1991 graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, at 28 is one of the most widely used evangelists in the Southern Baptist Convention. He spoke to the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference in 1993, one of th youngest preachers ever to address the conference. He also has been a special guest in Billy Graham crusades in Philadelphia and Little Rock.

In addition to his revivals and crusades, Rodney also speaks to many high school audiences about the dangers of alcoholic beverage consumption. Rodney has also struck another nerve among young p ople with a book about the AIDS peril, "Let's talk About AIDS and Sex," published by Broadman & Holman of the Baptist Sunday School Board. It was a finalist in the 1993 Gold Medallion Award category of the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association.

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**Steve Gatlin looking to God  
for his next step in music By Charlie Warren**

**Baptist Press  
6/10/94**

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP)--Steve Gatlin ain't what he used to be. He's not what he was at the summit of his sweet success with the Gatlin Brothers. And he's not what he was when he danced with the deadly duo of drugs and alcohol.

A Christian since age 9, Steve admits he once placed God on a back shelf in his life, content to live lif on his own terms, terms that ultimately d liv red a mixture of both success and failure.

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In the late '70s, he had it all -- wealth, prominence, celebrity status, you name it. As a member of Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers, Steve had tasted the world's riches.

But he also had tasted the bitter dregs of despair. When older brother, Larry, checked into a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center in 1984, Steve and their younger brother, Rudy, were by his side, not just to lend support, but to deal with their own drug and alcohol problems.

"You know you've reached the bottom when you quit digging," Steve recalls. "We quit digging."

The Gatlins cleaned up their act and made a pact to remain drug and alcohol free, a policy that remains in effect today.

"I haven't had a drink since 1984," Steve says with both pride and humility. "I don't ever have to worry about DUI or being a little high and saying something to Cynthia or one of the kids that's not in good judgment."

Steve Gatlin will be featured in the Baptist Sunday School Board's report to the Southern Baptist Convention, on Tuesday, June 14, in Orlando, Fla.

After rehabilitation, the Gatlins rebounded and tasted success again -- until the late 1980s and early '90s, when the hits quit coming as often and Larry began having throat problems that led to major throat surgery in 1991. In December 1992, Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers completed their "Adios Tour" and said good-bye to their lives on the road.

Larry went to New York City to play Will Rogers on Broadway. Rudy went to Branson, Mo., to perform in a live theater production of Oklahoma.

Steve waited on a sense of direction from the Lord. He's still not certain where God is leading, but he's committed to Jesus Christ and content to let God direct his future.

"The past 18 months have been a time for Steve to grow on his own," says Steve's pastor, Mike Glenn, pastor of Brentwood (Tenn.) Baptist Church. "Most of this growth has been in his relationship to God and his commitment to Christ. That's impressive during a time when it would have been natural to concentrate on career. Because of that, God has opened up some career opportunities for him."

Last fall, Steve released his first solo album, crooning 10 songs he calls contemporary Christian country music. If the Christian market responds with invitations for him to sing, he's ready to "just profess to the world about Jesus Christ."

"This may be my swan song. I don't know," Steve admits. "I may sing in five churches and it'll all be over. Then I'll know this is not what I'm supposed to be doing."

"I want to be a 24-hour-a-day Christian. If I'm supposed to sing, I'll sing. Sometimes we plan so far in advance, we don't really let God lead. My favorite chapter in the Bible is Matthew 6, where it talks about not worrying about tomorrow. Tomorrow will get here soon enough."

As he looks back, Steve believes his pressure-cooker life left him unprepared for the level of success he eventually achieved.

His first public performance was at age 4, when he and Larry won a talent show at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas.

From there, they sang southern gospel on a local TV show, joined sometimes by sister LaDonna and by Rudy when he became old enough to hold a microphone. As their popularity grew, they would don their little cowboy outfits and sing anywhere -- fashion shows, picnics, churches, civic organization events, "anytime anyone needed entertainment." They sang together through high school and into college.

Steve attended Texas Tech University in Lubbock, where he received a bachelor's degree in elementary education. There, he met Cynthia Guerra. They married on Aug. 4, 1974.

In 1975, Steve moved to Nashville, singing backup to Tammy Wynette in a group called Young Country, which had been started by Rudy, LaDonna and LaDonna's husband, Tim Johnson.

Larry had moved to Nashville about five years earlier and experienced success as a singer and songwriter. Larry's initial success ultimately launched the Gatlins into national prominence.

Steve recalls the occasion. "I'll never forget the afternoon Larry said, 'I've got \$25,000 in the bank. Nobody's going to make us stars but us. I'm willing to invest this \$25,000. When it's gone, if we're not successful, it's every man for himself.'"

It was 1976. Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers put a band together, cut an album and won a Grammy that spring for "Broken Lady." Then came "All the Gold in California" and the hits kept coming.

"Life does not prepare you for success like we had," Steve explains. "As we worked hard, we played hard."

Steve and his brothers drank in the late '70s and early '80s. Then, as they made more money and faced the pressures of road tours, they tried marijuana, then cocaine. Larry and Rudy became addicted.

"I was no saint. I participated," Steve admits. "But it never consumed me. It was a passion for Larry in particular."

The addiction got worse, hits stopped coming and finally Larry walked into Steve's office one day and said he was going to get help for his addiction.

"That's when I got my life straight again and found out, man, I don't have to have any of this. I've been an absolute fool not to make God the center of my life," Steve says.

Steve was raised in the Assembly of God church, which the family attended every Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night. Steve didn't drift away from his spiritual upbringing until his college days.

From those college days until 1984, he had sort of a long-distance relationship with God, but "it was not a close walk, not like I have now."

Steve's wife, Cynthia, verifies the impact of the renewal experience.

"His priorities changed and his family really did become No. 1," Cynthia explains. "When he was home, we were first. Looking back at the big picture, it's made everything better."

Steve has a quick response when asked about his marriage. "I don't think there's a better one," he says. "People who truly love each other can really care for one another, but have totally separate lives. That's the way we are. Our lives are not so entwined with one another that we have to know what each is doing every hour of the day. We're interested in each other's lives, but we don't smother one another."

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He credits his wisdom and insight regarding his brothers and their personalities with helping to smooth over the conflict that sometimes surfaced. Steve admits Larry's prominence as lead singer and primary songwriter caused tension.

"I'd be lying if I said it didn't cause a problem at times. Everybody's got egos. People call me Larry on occasion. They call me Rudy on occasion. You lose some identity."

Will the Gatlin Brothers perform together again? Steve offers a strong maybe. They've definitely said good-bye to touring, but they are exploring setting up a theater in Myrtle Beach, S.C., where they could perform three or four months a year and their families could join them part of the time.

"I don't want to do it like I did 10 years ago," Steve says. "I've enjoyed being home with my children, going to my church, being a part of the church's music ministry, all those things that have made family life great."

In the meantime, Cheyenne Records has released Steve's album, "Love Can Carry." Steve sent a copy to Larry and received what he called "the nicest compliment he's ever paid me."

"You blessed me," Larry told him, "and you're going to bless many people."

That seems to be Steve's strong desire. He describes the album as a message of hope.

"I want people to know that bad situations are never as dark as they may appear. Good times will not always last, but neither will bad times. With God's help, you can get through any crisis."

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This article first appeared in "Home Life," a publication of the Baptist Sunday School Board, and is used by permission.

Steve Gatlin wants to be  
'just dad and husband'

By Charlie Warren

Baptist Press  
6/10/94

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP)--Despite the satisfaction of stardom and success, Steve Gatlin says his greatest joy is being a parent.

Gatlin, his wife Cynthia and their three daughters, Ashley, 16, Allison, 11, and Aubrie, 10, live in Brentwood, Tenn., where they are active members of Brentwood Baptist Church.

Steve credits Cynthia with raising well-behaved children, especially during those years he was on frequent road tours. "She had to be both mother and father a lot of times," he says. "She's a good disciplinarian. When I was gone, she stepped in and took over."

But when Steve comes home, he leaves his stardom on the doorstep. He says Cynthia keeps him humble.

"I'm just a regular old Joe to her," he laughs. "She could care less about my celebrity status. The kids too, I think. When I come through that door, I am no longer a celebrity. I'm just dad and husband. The fact that I'm a celebrity doesn't relieve me of parenthood."

An involved dad, he attends every game, recital and school activity possible and holds strong opinions about parenthood. He believes when a child is involved in setting the rules and regulations, she is more likely to abide by them.

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"Parents should respect the child enough that they make the rules together," he says, citing one example. "When Ashley turned 13, I said, 'Ashley, this is the first time you've been a teen-ager. Keep in mind it's also your dad's first day to have a teen-aged daughter. I think we ought to make some rules together. I'm not going to tell you you need to be off the phone at 10 o'clock, that you need to be in bed at 11 or that you need to be home a certain time when you go to the movies with your friends. You and I are going to talk about those things and come up with something acceptable and agreeable between the two of us.'"

Despite his love for music, he has no desire to steer his children toward music careers.

"We as parents have to expose them to every good, wholesome activity. Let them have a taste of it. Then, if they like it, let them develop," Steve says.

For example, he wants to expose his children to piano without unreasonable demands or expectations.

"I told them, 'Take one year because I want you to be exposed to it. Take the second year for you, because you'll learn how to play songs, not just notes and scales. If after the second year you don't like it, I'll never ask you to play again.' If they have a knack for it, they will have picked it up in that time frame," he says.

Steve's only regret regarding family life is the many days he was away from Cynthia and the girls while traveling with the Gatlin Brothers. He feels he missed much of the early years of his daughters' lives.

"I'm not going to miss out on the last five years when they're about to leave me," he promises. "I have a 16-year-old daughter. For all practical purposes, I've got a year and a half with Ashley and she's off to college, and then she's out on her own. I've got five or six with Allison and Aubrie. I'm going to be more protective during the next five years.

"I got a taste in 1993 of what it's like to be home," he says. "Boy, I sure like it!"

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