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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522, CompuServe 70420,250
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232, CompuServe 70420,115
NASHVILLE Linda Lawson, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300, CompuServe 70420,57
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151, CompuServe 70420,72
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223, CompuServe 71173,316

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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ADVISORY: The central office of Baptist Press in Nashville, Tenn., will be closed Monday, Jan. 2, for the New Year's holiday.

He says youth need challenges
versus trips, entertainment

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
12/30/94

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Church leaders today are "under-challenging" youth, according to author Henry Blackaby, who said they are offering entertainment and road trips instead of godly challenges.

Church leaders "are saying, 'Let's go swimming' or 'Let's go to Six Flags,' 'Let's watch videos or listen to music,'" said Blackaby, author of the popular resource, "Experiencing God," and consultant of revival and spiritual awakening for the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Mission boards and Baptist Sunday School Board.

"The greatest tragedy in churches today is that we are under-challenging our youth. I've never seen any age group that responds more deeply with greater sacrifice than teen-agers," Blackaby said.

"Somehow (church leaders) feel they can't put anything heavy on teens, and that's just not true. Teens are waiting for that. They are waiting for someone to know they are more capable of just being baby-sat," Blackaby said.

Blackaby was speaker at the first-ever Experiencing God Youth Celebration, Dec. 27-29 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center. About 2,000 youth and youth leaders packed Spillman Auditorium at Ridgecrest to hear Blackaby, according to Clyde Hall, manager of the Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division youth section which sponsored the event.

"This may well be the last generation God calls extensively to take the Good News to all nations," said Blackaby, who said he believes Jesus will return before this generation of young people breathes its last breath.

"This generation that's living could well be alive when the Lord returns, and I'm afraid unless we take action now they will be just as disoriented to the second coming as the people in biblical times were to the first coming."

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Blackaby said the entire church body -- not just the youth director -- is responsible for equipping young people for the task of taking the gospel to the world.

"Churches tend to hold their youth leaders responsible for equipping the youth, and that's terrible," Blackaby said. "The whole body of the church has a responsibility to build up the youth."

Besides being under-challenged, youth are seeing fewer Christian role models, Blackaby said, giving that as one reason young people are not entering the ministry field in droves.

"There are so few role models out there. There is so little for youth to look at. I am hearing from young people that many of their leaders lack integrity.

"The leaders say one thing and do another. If youth leaders ask their youth to pray, then they must be pray-ers. If they ask their youth to witness, then they must be witnesses.

"Youth look at their leaders to model. It is crucial for leaders to live like they ask youth to."

Blackaby said youth leaders should either have a solid marriage to model God's intention for a well-adjusted family or, if they are single, choose couples in the church whose family lives exemplify happiness and godliness to help them in their work.

"The tragedy with today's youth is what's happening with adults," Blackaby said. "The tragedy is the brokenness of family life. Youth need modeling for what good parenting is all about."

Youth also need adults to model a passionate relationship with Jesus Christ, he said.

"A lot of people practice religion, but they have lost the dynamics of what the relationship with God ought to be."

Youth are hungry for passion in life, he said. "Because church leaders have lost their passion, youth turn to rock stars and music, a medium that is full of passion."

With direction, Blackaby said, young people could channel their passion into God's work.

But first, they are in dire need of a "fresh renewal of a godly character development," he said.

"God won't give a big assignment to a small character."

By studying the youth edition of "Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing God's Will," teen-agers could discover what it is God wants them to do with their lives, Blackaby said.

"There has never been a generation that has had greater opportunity and access to God's work because of ease of travel, more open doors in other countries, and just general wealth of our nation. This generation is so completely poised to do more than any other generation that has gone before it. We must give them the tools."

Youth attending the Experiencing God weekend at Ridgecrest studied the workbook, "Lift High the Torch: an Invitation to Experiencing God." The workbook is preparation for young people who choose to complete the more in-depth study of the "Experiencing God" youth edition.

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EDITORS' NOTE: The Mission 95 wrap-up and other stories to be released from the conference will be posted Saturday, Dec. 31, in the SBCNet News Room pending their release by Baptist Press Tuesday, Jan. 3. Cutlines for photos accompanying stories today and Dec. 31 mailed by the Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press also will be posted in the SBCNet News Room.

**Mission 95 connects students
with high-tech missions exhibits** By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Some college students attending Mission 95 in Louisville were jailed for sharing their Christian faith.

But don't worry. They were released in less than 10 minutes, and the jail they were thrown in was only a makeshift area in the exhibit hall of the Commonwealth Convention Center in Louisville, Ky.

The experience was part of "Global Venture," an interactive exhibit of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board intended to help students "view the world from a different perspective."

"Interactive" was the unstated theme of the exhibit area at this giant student missions conference was sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's national student ministry in cooperation with the Foreign and Home Mission boards, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood Commission.

Elsewhere in the exhibit area, students could call missionaries anywhere in the world at no charge, interview missionaries and receive a videotape of the interview to share with friends, help build church furniture for a mission or record an audio-tape message to a missionary.

But Global Venture, designed by the FMB especially for this conference, was the centerpiece of the exhibit hall. It was part exhibit, part game and part theme park ride.

Students "boarded" a "Venture Airways" flight in an area designed to look like an airplane. Then they exited the airplane to visit one of four geographical regions: Asia, South America, Africa or the Middle East.

Missionaries guided the student tourists through regional displays with the assistance of personal cassette players and earphones handed to each participant.

From there, the students gathered in a large area representing an unnamed country where each person was assigned a role to play. Some were declared nationals; some foreigners. Some were assigned to be Christians; some non-Christians.

Participants had to fend off the pleas of child beggars and street vendors, then were jolted by a decree from the country's president that anyone caught talking about Jesus Christ would be jailed. Security personnel in military uniforms roamed the crowd searching for Christians, snatching anyone caught witnessing.

Some participants randomly were chosen to be crippled or killed by an earthquake. Others were made more receptive the gospel by the tragedy and were forced to search all the harder for someone to tell them about Jesus.

In a debriefing session after each round of the journey, students saw how many participants became "Christians" through the process and how many searched in vain for someone to tell them about Jesus.

Billy Kruschwitz, an FMB staffer responsible for coordinating the Global Venture exhibit, said the goal was for students to see and feel missions in a way that would touch both head and heart.

The exhibit was fashioned after attractions at major theme parks, he said.

Running the various components of the exhibit on a synchronized schedule required an elaborate timetable and the coordination of six video monitors, 60 cassette players, hundreds of cue cards and literature pieces and the labor of dozens of workers.

Beyond the Global Venture, students were exposed to a variety of home and foreign missions needs in the exhibit hall.

The Kentucky Baptist Convention's disaster relief team displayed their equipment, along with information about disaster relief work. The Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission set up a woodworking shop where students helped build 20 wooden tables and dozens of wooden toys for Jefferson Street Baptist Center in Louisville.

Students could play missions video games in one area or use computers to search for names and addresses of missionaries around the world in another.

In a studio area, students could interview missionaries and get the entire experience recorded on a videotape to take back to their campus or church.

Some of the interactive experiences were more pleasant than others. Besides the prospect of being jailed in Global Venture, students also were bombarded with hard facts about the spiritual condition of their world.

A "population clock" in one area graphically demonstrated the increasing number of non-Christian people in the world. A video monitor displayed the rate of increase in world population every second, along with the rate of increase in the world's Christian population.

While symbols moved rapidly across the screen to mark the 11,117 person-per-hour growth in world population, other symbols moved more slowly to demonstrate the 4,766 person-per-hour growth in world Christian population.

But students had to stand in front of the video monitor nearly eight minutes to see any change in the number of Christians in World A, that portion of the world most untouched by the gospel. The World A Christian population increases at the rate of only eight people per hour.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press.

'Christian musicianary' trains
musicians worldwide to minister

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
12/30/94

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A beat-up old guitar with fragile strings changed Scott Wesley Brown's life.

Brown already was a successful contemporary Christian musical artist with a string of No. 1 hits when he journeyed behind the Iron Curtain in 1983 to conduct a series of "covert concerts." He told his story Dec. 27-30 to participants in Mission 95, a conference for college students sponsored by five Southern Baptist agencies.

On his first trip to Moscow, his guitar was confiscated by the Soviet secret police, he reported. Ready to sing but with no instrument to accompany him, Brown asked a Russian pastor if he could borrow a guitar.

The pastor spoke to a young man in the congregation, who scurried off. About 15 minutes later, the man returned, out of breath and sweating, but carrying a tattered duffel bag.

"Inside was the most beat-up guitar I ever saw in my life," Brown recalled. "It was so twisted and bent I thought, 'I'll never be able to play this old thing.'"

But not wanting to offend his hosts, he began pounding out a rhythm, just as he would on his own guitar. Almost immediately, the owner began waving his arms and talking excitedly.

Brown asked what was wrong, and the pastor explained, "He says he waited a whole year for a pack of strings, and you're playing so hard he's afraid you'll break them."

Although Brown's guitar didn't make the trip, several sets of replacement strings he had packed did. He reached into his bag and handed the young man the packs of strings.

The man looked at the strings with wonder and then told Brown, "Now I will be able to worship Jesus forever."

In that instant, Brown found renewed purpose for his life. He went back home to Nashville, Tenn., and founded I CARE (International Christian Artists Reaching the Earth) Ministries. The organization distributes musical instruments and equipment to Christian musicians in Third World countries, and it trains the musicians for ministry.

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"My goal is to disciple the nations," Brown explained in an interview. "We Christians disciple others in the area of our gifting -- some in agriculture and some in dentistry. As for me, I'm a musician. I disciple the musicians."

He has traveled to 37 countries and taken more than 100 professional musicians with him. They have conducted seminars for as many as 3,000 Africans and as few as a dozen Germans.

"We train the nationals to reach their nations for Christ," he continued. "That's the trend in missions today. We can be with them and their people for only a little while. But if we train them well, they will provide a lifetime of ministry."

Brown's I CARE ministry blends his two passions -- worship and missions. A self-styled "musicianary," his specific focus is on helping people worship and praise God. And that focus has shaped his vision for reaching others."

He emphasized both passions during his "Worship with a Mission" seminar at Mission 95.

"For a long time, I thought missions was going and saving people," he told college students from across the country. "But the focal point of missions still is worshipping God."

Brown quoted missions strategist John Piper: "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't."

Citing a string of psalms, he stressed: "Worship is the goal, the fuel of missions. ... If we're not excited about God, how can we be excited about telling others about God? Where passion for God is weak, missions will be weak."

Missions is the "second-greatest activity on earth," he stressed, following "seeing God exalted among the nations."

The Bible reinforces the idea that worship is primary, Brown said. He noted Scripture includes 839 references to music, and "200 verses tell us to sing."

Down through the ages, music in worship has been blessed by God to reach people for Christ, he added.

"Many Romans were converted when they heard the early Christians singing in worship," he noted. "And the music of (Protestant reformers) Martin Luther, John Calvin and Charles Wesley was very important. More people have been won to Christ through their hymns than were won by their sermons."

He told about a friend who is a missionary in France who claimed, "Music is the key to open the Frenchman's heart." And he described how another friend used praise songs to win Hell's Angels motorcycle gang members to Christ on a California beach.

"It's incredible, the power of God through worship," Brown insisted. "According to the Bible, preachers will be out of work when we get to heaven. But musicians will be busy. We'll sing in heaven."

Brown combined his zeal for worship and missions during the final night of Mission 95, when he recorded a live praise and worship album before the college crowd.

The album, which hasn't been titled, is to be released in 1995 on the Integrity Music label. And Mission 95 was a perfect place to record it, Brown said.

"We were looking for a place to do an album," he explained. "And when I told the organizers of Mission 95, they said, 'Great! Let's do it.'"

Brown specifically wanted to record his songs at Mission 95 because "the theme of the album is the same as the theme of the conference."

And that theme, in Brown's own words, perfectly blends his two passions: "To mobilize the church to greater worship, and to extend that worship to the nations."

Dreaming the wrong dream
hurts missions, author says

By Chip Alford

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Baby boomers are selling the wrong dream to their children and it could have a devastating affect on missions.

That's the word from Tom Sine, a Seattle-based futurist and Christian author who believes many evangelical Christians have bought into the American dream at the expense of their faith.

"We've allowed the American culture to determine what's of value and importance. To define what the good life is really all about, we need to use the Bible," said Sine, a featured speaker and seminar leader at Mission 95. The Southern Baptist missions conference for college students was held Dec. 27-31 in Louisville, Ky.

"There are Baptists who believe the Bible literally, use it devotionally, but don't take it seriously," Sine said. "Most of us have embraced a discipleship that trivializes the gospel."

Many Christian adults are passing that misguided approach to faith down to their children and teen-agers, leaving them confused or ambivalent about what missions and a personal commitment to Christ are all about, he said.

"The under-30 age group is giving approximately 50 percent less at church, and it isn't because you don't care," Sine told the more than 3,000 students attending the conference. "It's because we've sold you the wrong dream -- the American dream with a little Jesus overlay."

While praising Southern Baptists for their rich missions heritage, Sine told students they are living in a "threshold time" of rapid change, increasing poverty and exploding population growth which will require them to "re-invent" missions to reach an increasingly complex world for Christ.

"We need you to lead, not just fill in and take places," he said. "We need new vision and creativity ... whole new approaches to missions."

He urged students to go beyond a "one-track" approach to missions where a small group of people devote themselves to full-time work while the majority of church members pray and offer financial support.

"In the New Testament, everybody was involved. It was 'whole life stewardship,' not tithing," he said.

Sine said today's students must abandon the baby boomers' obsession with achievement and personal fulfillment and let Scripture determine their priorities and values.

Instead of seeking a job at the highest possible salary to build a bigger and better house with a 30-year mortgage attached, he suggested students seek multiple-unit housing and seven-year mortgages. Then when their homes are paid off, Sine said young adults could be free to reduce their working hours to give more time to ministry.

"If you can reduce the amount you spend on houses and cars, you can increase the amount of time and money you have for the kingdom," he said.

"We need to help people create lifestyles that are much less driven and more celebrative. We need to create some Christian rites of passage and throw some parties," said Sine, who is author of the book, "Live It Up! How to Create a Life You Can Love."

Warning that "institutional structures of your denomination and others won't last very far into the 21st century," Sine urged students to mobilize their creativity to envision new ways to reach the unreached.

Students who had worked in creativity groups during Mission 95 shared some of their ministry ideas. These included:

-- Form a church for students called the Lost-Found Church that meets Sundays at 2 p.m. with non-traditional music, dramatic Scripture readings, and the use of poetry and art in worship. The church would be directed by a committee of students. Members would be organized in family groupings that meet outside the church during the week.

-- Organize teams for sharing the gospel, allowing people to use their professions and skills. For example, athletes could lead sports ministries. A pop culture team could be established along with a Christian skateboard team.

-- Organize medical teams who work on a rotation basis at their employment so one team would always be available for ministry.

-- Use students to set up an international computer E-mail system to facilitate communication among students throughout the world.

"One of the problems we have in our churches is that we do our religious education like 'one size fits all,' but all generations don't learn the same way," Sine said. "I think there are all kinds of possibilities for (the younger) generation to create new opportunities in praise and worship, urban ministries and missions.

"The question," Sine told students, "is not 'whether' you will be a missionary, but 'where.'"

Mission 95 was sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's national student ministry in cooperation with the Home and Foreign Mission boards, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood Commission.

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Missionaries explain innovative ministries, callings at Mission 95

Baptist Press
12/30/94

By David Winfrey

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--From sports camps and English lessons to care bags and rock climbing, home and foreign missionaries have found a multitude of ways to share the gospel in unusual settings.

"Really, anything goes. If you've got a skill, there's a way to use it and God knows where," said Peter Stillman, a foreign missionary to Indonesia.

At seminars titled, "You Can't Do That in Home or Foreign Missions," Stillman and other missionaries explained their work is not restricted to full-time preaching. They were speaking at the student conference, Mission 95, Dec. 27-31.

The Foreign Mission Board currently needs a variety of skilled workers who can take their training and the gospel to countries closed to traditional missionary work, Stillman said.

One of the greatest needs, he said, is English teachers. Other available jobs are school administrator, midwife, physician, attorney and water resources specialist.

"There probably isn't anything you can't do in foreign missions if you put your mind to it," Stillman said. "Whatever you are, you can use that -- either in the States or abroad."

The only essentials for missions work are a commitment to knowing and being completely obedient to God's will and a desire to relate the gospel to people, he said.

"There really isn't a profession that is the blessed profession, the holy profession that God wants to use," he said, adding that people used by God in the Bible included tax collectors, doctors, shepherds, cupbearers for kings, priests, fishermen and carpenters.

Resort missionary Steve Hughes of Yosemite National Park said his work offers opportunities for creative and inventive missions work.

Hughes works each summer with a team of Innovators, student missionaries who get jobs in the park to support their missions work. This summer, Innovators will lead youth Bible studies for visiting children, an evening coffeehouse ministry with Christian entertainment and sports clinics for the children of those working in or near the park.

"Because it's resort ministry and the situation is unique, and the people are unique, we have to minister to them in unique, non-traditional ways," he explained.

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The Innovators regularly take care bags with cookies, other treats and a gospel tract to park rangers and other workers to show them Christian love, Hughes said.

Hughes also is on the board of directors for Solid Rock Climbers for Christ, a group of Christian rock climbers who share their faith as part of their hobby.

One recent event drew 150 climbers to a high-carbohydrate dinner, Hughes said. About 100 stayed afterward to hear a talk from a Christian climber, and four people made professions of faith.

The Innovator missionaries are often involved in relational evangelism with other workers at the park, Hughes said.

"After a couple of days, a couple of weeks, people are just drawn to the Christian people because they sense something different about them and that difference is the love of Christ."

Hughes encouraged students to look for new ways to share Christ back in their communities.

"I want you, as you go back, to just look around you," he said. "What do people do for recreation, and where does that present an opportunity to make contact with someone so you can tell them that God loves them?"

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Physician says comfort
doesn't mesh with missions

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
12/30/94

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Devotion to creature comforts and commitment to following God's leadership don't go well together.

"One of the biggest traps we have to living the life God want us to live is our comfortable way of life," Christine Sine told students attending Mission 95 seminars on discipleship and short-term mission service.

"The first thing we need to learn is to move outside our comfort zone. I can tell you it is scary," said Sine, an Australian physician who struggled with seasickness while working 12 years on the medical missions ship, Anastasis, sponsored by Youth With A Mission. Now living in Seattle, Wash., she also has served on short-term projects in many countries, including a six-week stint in the refugee camps of Thailand.

Opportunities to meet missionaries and learn about options for mission service were a major focus of the national Southern Baptist student missions conference held Dec. 27-31 in Louisville, Ky.

Too many Christians allow excuses such as fear of adapting to different cultures to keep them from doing God's will, said Sine, author of "Survival of the Fittest," a book on preparing for short-term mission service.

"I don't think God has us doing things we don't want to do," Sine said. "He has us doing things he knows we have the ability to do and will ultimately enjoy a great deal."

Tragically, she said, many Christians in western countries become so dependent on technology that their creativity and problem-solving ability is stifled. She described a nurse in a hospital with a dirt floor and no electricity who saved the lives of premature twins by constructing an incubator of cardboard boxes, hot water bottles and aluminum foil.

"Some of the most creative people I've met are my sisters and brothers in Third World countries," Sine said. "And yet we have a tendency to think we have nothing to learn from primitive cultures. We must go out as learners and servants, recognizing, in humility, we don't know it all."

"There is a radical new brand of Christianity coming out of Third World countries," she said. "God is present in all cultures. We need to look for the presence of God there and learn to affirm that."

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To be effective on a short-term missions project requires theological, physical, spiritual and emotional preparation, beginning with a clear, honest understanding of your motivation, Sine said.

"Why do you want to go?" she asked. "Is it because you have a desire to go overseas? Is it because you think God is calling you? Is it because you think you'll find someone to marry?"

"Hopefully, most of us go to share the life God has shared with us."

She also advised seeking God's direction about where to serve, even for a short-term project. She said she not only survived six weeks amid squalid conditions in the refugee camps of Thailand where people died daily, but the experience transformed her life. "I felt God had called me to be there," she recalled.

Think of short-term missions from a long-term perspective, she urged.

The greatest value from a short-term project may be in cultivating relationships with missionaries and people in the country, with the idea of returning for future short- or longer-term projects, Sine noted.

"Ask yourself, what kind of long-term relationship might God be asking of me through this short-term experience?" she advised.

Flexibility, adaptability and a willingness to do whatever is needed are vital qualities for a missionary, Sine said. She noted that her first year with Youth With A Mission was spent scraping and repainting the ship rather than practicing medicine.

"We don't go first as professionals but as Christians to show the loving heart of God," she said.

Sine said she hopes, among the approximately 3,400 students who attended Mission 95, that "many would be challenged to consider missions as an important direction for their lives. We are called to serve Christ with all of our lives.

"Missions is part of life and not just an option."

Mission 95 was sponsored by national student ministry of the Baptist Sunday School Board in cooperation with the Home and Foreign Mission boards, Woman's Missionary Union and the Brotherhood Commission.

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Kenneth Cooper voices concern
over nation's fitness decline

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press
12/30/94

DALLAS (BP)--The nation's love affair with exercise is fading, which upsets the Southern Baptist physician who helped spark the modern fitness boom. If the decline continues, Kenneth Cooper forecasts ominous results for America's population.

"I think we're headed for a dismal future as far as the reduction in deaths from heart attacks," said Cooper. "We had seen a phenomenal reduction over the past 25 years. Reduction from deaths by strokes -- I think we're headed for a reversal in the very near future."

The author of 12 books, Cooper is an internationally known leader of the health and fitness movement. He is the founder and president of the Cooper Aerobics Center, which has compiled records on the physical condition of some 70,000 people in the past 25 years. He is a member of Dallas' Prestonwood Baptist Church.

His recent book, "Antioxidant Revolution," favors daily dosages of vitamins C and E and beta carotene as necessary ingredients of health and longevity. The book also traces the deaths and current cancers suffered by a number of marathon runners, which he believes may partially stem from too much exercise.

The book provoked reaction around the world, particularly from athletes who were concerned that their health might be at risk. Cooper plans to begin an intensive health study of 20 such high-level athletes soon, and his work will be the subject of an NBC "Dateline" report on Friday, Jan. 6.

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However, Cooper is equally concerned with the overall downturn in America's physical fitness. Based on Gallup polls, he estimates just 24 percent of the American public exercised in 1968, the year he published his first book, "Aerobics."

From fewer than 100,000 joggers that year, over the next 16 years those numbers skyrocketed to 34 million joggers, with the percentage of exercisers jumping to 59 percent. Recent figures show only 42 percent of the public is physically fit, he said, leading him to believe the estimates of 30 million joggers are highly exaggerated.

"As I've said before, baby boomers led this movement but their kids didn't follow suit," he said. "Those kids are now getting old enough that they're starting to have problems and they never kept up with their parents."

To appreciate how far running came over the years, consider the number of entrants in Boston Marathon. Between 200 and 300 competed in the early 1960s, but 30 years later the field held 8,000, with restrictions placed on qualifying.

The seeds of the jogging boom were planted in the '60s, with fitness pushed by President John F. Kennedy and other visible figures. Cooper's 1966 article for "Family Weekly" magazine on how to exercise like the astronauts added to the interest.

A book on jogging appeared the following year, and Cooper's "Aerobics" in 1968. Running got a major boost at the 1972 Summer Olympics when American Frank Shorter won his first gold medal in the marathon, a feat he repeated in '76.

Former magazine editor Jim Fixx picked up on the movement with the 1977 publication of "The Complete Book of Running," which reached the top of the New York Times best-seller list. He followed with another book in '78, while Cooper was writing a book every few years on aerobics and other health-related topics. By the '80s, 10-kilometer runs were a weekend staple in most American communities.

Yet, while those things helped spur the activity of the '70s and '80s, Cooper sees the handwriting on the wall. He guesses that Fixx's death from a heart attack in 1984 may have started the decrease in exercise, even though he wrote a book pointing out that hereditary factors and stress contributed to the author's death.

Despite the decline, the doctor believes the trend can change, particularly among young people. Good physical education classes need to be reintroduced in schools, he said, and society needs to make it safe again for kids to walk and ride their bicycles to class. "We need to get them away from the TV, which is killing the American student," he said. "It's well proven that a teen-ager spends as many hours watching television and playing video games as they spend in school."

"That's about 32 percent of their waking hours, while only 2.5 percent is spent studying and less than 1 percent is spent exercising. That's a disastrous trend. You add to that the fast-food generation and it's no wonder our kids are fatter and less fit than they were 10 years ago."

"So, I'm discouraged, but I'm very pleased in Texas that we have George Bush as our incoming governor. He's a good friend of mine and has been a patient of mine for years. He's pledged to reactivate the Governor's Commission on Fitness - - with the expectation and hope that we're going to revitalize the physical fitness programs for kids in grades kindergarten through 12."

If that happens, Cooper won't insist everyone hit the trail for extended runs. He quit marathons back in 1969 because of muscular-skeletal problems and uses a combination of jogging and walking to cover 12 to 15 miles a week. That level provides excellent benefits with low risk of injury, he said.

In addition, research published in the past five years has shown that fitness for health and longevity can be achieved by something as simple as walking two miles in 30 minutes three times a week. Cooper's latest book says people who use a race-walking pace of a mile in 12 minutes will burn more calories than someone who jogs at the same rate.

Most of all, he doesn't want any alarm generated by the damage that marathon runners may be suffering to detract from the ideal of staying active.

"In all our studies we're showing that if you keep yourself at a good level of aerobic fitness, for health and longevity, there is a substantial reduction in deaths from all causes, including cancer," he said.

In other words, run -- or at least walk -- for your life.

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Walker is a free-lance writer in Louisville, Ky.

Cooper: Fitness efforts
need balanced approach

By Ken Walker

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DALLAS, Tex. (BP)--While his writing and ground-breaking research in physical fitness helped stimulate America's interest in running, Kenneth Cooper has never had a one-track mind on the subject.

In his first book, "Aerobics," he said that running was a premier exercise because it offered more benefits in less time: "If it's muscles or a body beautiful (you want), you'll get it from weight lifting of calisthenics, but not much more."

However, he also listed such activities as swimming, cycling, stationery running, handball and basketball as equally beneficial. In his 1982 book, "The Aerobics Program for Total Well Being," he ranked cross-country skiing and swimming ahead of jogging on a list of 31 healthy exercises.

"I've always said the non-weight-bearing exercises, such as swimming and cycling, are superb," he told Baptist Press. "Any time you can combine your arms and legs, like skiing, you have a synergistic effect -- one and one equals three. If you get the arms involved, it better distributes the activity, and with a higher heart rate and less exertion.

"This becomes extremely important to people past 50 or 60, because if you keep running or walking you maintain your cardiovascular system but lose muscular strength in your upper body. From the waist down, you may look like an Olympic athlete, but from the waist up like you escaped from a concentration camp."

Cooper approaches the subject of exercise in a balanced manner. Though he strongly supports physical activity, in his book "Running Without Fear" he cautioned against elevating exercise to a "super panacea" and mistakenly believing it will solve any existing health problem.

For example, he listed the top risk factor for heart disease as family history, followed by stressful life and personality, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and triglycerides, and diabetes. The next five include a diet high in fat and cholesterol, sedentary living, smoking, obesity and abnormal resting electrocardiogram.

While early in his career he advocated "more is better" when it came to running, by the early 1980s research showed otherwise. In his '82 book he changed his recommendation because in studies the benefits of running more than 15 miles a week proved negligible.

"We found beyond that there was minimal improvement in the cardiovascular system until you exponentially increase the number of miles you run per week," Cooper said. "You have to go to 50, 60 or 100 miles a week to get any increase in capacity. And beyond 15 there's a marked increase in injuries. So in trying to make a program safe and effective, I felt I was obligated to put some restrictions on how much you should exercise."

For those tempted to consider not exercising at all to avoid injuries, the Dallas physician offered the reminder that in 1992 the American Heart Association raised "inactivity" from a secondary risk factor to a major risk for heart disease. That put it at the same level with high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking.

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