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95-8

ALABAMA--Wrapup: WMU executive board approves foundation.
ALABAMA--WMU board challenged, inspired by speakers.
VIRGINIA--1995: a year of prayer for the Muslim world; photo.
OKLAHOMA--Oklahoma-Indiana Link Up to help missions work.
OKLAHOMA--Decision not to abort produces triple blessings.
OKLAHOMA--Teaching English in Russia is ministry for OBU graduate.
OKLAHOMA CITY--Gospel is the same -- whether 'new' or 'used.'
TEXAS--Stamps named senior v.p. for administration at RTVC.
NEW ORLEANS--John Olen Strange, 77, dies; left legacy as Hebrew grammarian.

WRAP-UP

WMU executive board
approves foundation

By Teresa Dickens

Baptist Press
1/16/95

TALLADEGA, Ala. (BP)--The Woman's Missionary Union's executive board accepted a report during its Jan. 7-11 meeting from its long-range planning committee, calling for, among other things, the formation of a foundation.

In a Jan. 10 vote, the board voted to establish the Woman's Missionary Union Foundation, which it received as a recommendation from the long-range planning and finance committees.

The long-range planning committee's report was presented during the meeting at Shocco Springs Baptist Assembly, Talladega, Ala. Along with board members of the Southern Baptist Convention auxiliary, the five-day meeting also was attended by state WMU executive directors and their staffs; national WMU staff; invited furloughing foreign missionaries; and other guests.

The WMU board also approved a loan to the WMU Foundation for start-up costs. The funds will be released to the foundation over five years with repayment due to WMU by the end of its 15th year of operation.

The foundation will operate independent of WMU, with its own staff and board of trustees. The foundation's articles of incorporation and bylaws will call for the WMU executive director and national president to be members of the foundation's trustees.

Although the foundation will be a separate entity, its purpose will be to support national missions projects of WMU; to provide contingency funds for its own operations and WMU work within the states; and to assure the financial security of WMU into the future.

The WMU's existing Second Century Fund, Vision Fund and various scholarships will eventually be transferred to the foundation. Stipulations for the distribution of each fund or scholarship will remain the same.

"The WMU Foundation will allow gifted lay people who appreciate the work of WMU and desire to assure its ongoing ministry to assist us," said Dellanna O'Brien, WMU executive director. "It will also broaden the awareness of the many missions projects initiated by WMU, benefiting many at home and around the world physically and through the sharing of the good news of Christ."

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The board also approved the recommendation of the committee to employ a chief operations officer for WMU, with the title senior associate executive director, to streamline planning and decision-making processes. June Whitlow, who has served on the national WMU staff 28 years, was named to the position by the board.

The board also heard reports on three items approved during their June 1994 board meeting that were an outgrowth of the long-range planning committee. Two related to the committee's call to strengthen operations by utilizing new technologies.

Patricia Ferguson, WMU information services group manager, told board members the national office is now on-line with MissionsNet, a new library under SBCNet in CompuServe.

Ferguson also announced the Baptist Sunday School Board was providing state WMU offices memberships to and start-up kits for CompuServe.

Both developments, she noted, will strengthen communication with Southern Baptists and state WMU leaders.

The other report concerned the development of a network of volunteers for WMU-related ministry projects. The board learned the network will be called WMU Volunteer Connection and a volunteer coordinator will be secured.

In other business, the WMU executive board:

-- approved the establishment of the Jessica Powell Loftis Scholarship fund for Acteens. Loftis was an Acteen in a Birmingham, Ala.-area church who was killed in an automobile accident in October 1993 along with her father. Loftis' mother, Deborah, and grandmother, Mary Carlton Stear, gave the initial gifts to fund the endowed scholarship.

-- approved the budget for the WMU Vision Fund, which was created in June 1993 to fund ministry projects. The budget for 1995, totalling \$194,000, includes funding for WMU's social issues projects, the Alma Hunt Museum, Girls in Action camps in new work areas, assistance for language work, among other items.

-- approved the report of the task force assigned to develop "Project HELP: AIDS," the 1995-96 social issue. As approved, the project will include a nationwide effort to collect items needed by local AIDS ministries and an international project to provide funding through the Vision Fund for an AIDS hospice in Brazil. The hospice request came from Southern Baptist missionaries Tony and Karen Gray and will be under the auspices of the Foreign Mission Board.

-- approved the creation of the position, marketing specialist for distribution. Marti Solomon, a native of Vicksburg, Miss., and Acteens specialist with national WMU for 15 years, has been named to the position.

-- recognized outgoing board members Carol Gutshall, Arizona; Delores Tanner, Illinois; Millie Stengl, Kansas/Nebraska; Janet Hoffman, Louisiana; Sandra Fielding, New Mexico; Ann Smith, North Carolina; Quilla Whiten, Northwest; and Lottie Crim, Wyoming. Nellie Torrado, WMU president for the Caribbean area, also was recognized.

-- approved the 1997-98 Church Dated Plan and the 1996-97 Associational Dated Plan. The dated plans provide guidelines for development of curriculum (church only), activities and products.

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WMU board challenged,
inspired by speakers

By Teresa Dickens

Baptist Press
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TALLADEGA, Ala. (BP)--Speakers addressing the executive board of Woman's Missionary Union challenged and inspired their listeners in missions support and participation.

Among those addressing the group were WMU President Carolyn Miller, WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien, Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis, Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin and eight furloughing foreign missionaries.

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In her presidential address to the board, Miller developed WMU's 1995-96 theme, "Risk the Journey." She also addressed the changes facing WMU members in October 1995, when the adult women's organizations -- Baptist Young Women and Baptist Women -- takes a new structure and name, Women on Mission.

Miller cited Abraham and Sarah as her biblical example of risk-takers. "They risked the journey because the promises of God made their pilgrimages worthwhile," she said.

Noting people vary in their willingness to take risks, Miller added, "Our challenge (as leaders) is to help them -- and ourselves -- to clarify the Christian missionary journey and to trust God to carry us through the risks we take by faith.

"Our task is to lead people to active personal faith in Christ, to motivate them to accept the vision of reaching the world with the gospel of Christ and to equip them, and ourselves, with God's provisions for the pilgrimage."

As for the changes coming in 1995, Miller suggested WMU borrow an advertising slogan from Oldsmobile. Instead of "This is not your father's Oldsmobile," the slogan would be "This is not your mother's WMU."

"We must continue to hold the same missionary vision as our mothers, but the programs and methods we employ must remain secondary to the heavenly vision of telling the world the good news of Jesus," she said.

O'Brien also spoke on the need for WMU leaders and members to be open to change.

"The next five years will be critical for Woman's Missionary Union," O'Brien said. "How we function during this time will either catapult us into an era bright with hope for changing our world for Christ, or doom us to mediocrity and disappointment."

She outlined three ideals that must guide WMU during the immediate future: Gear up for constant change -- long-range planning now means looking at the next three to five years; give up reliance on events -- focus on the individual; and grow out of a minority mind-set -- provide every Southern Baptist an opportunity to be involved in missions and missions education.

"What do we do now?" she asked. "We do what we've done before with a heart for today and an eye for the future."

Both Lewis and Rankin expressed appreciation to WMU leaders for the many ways they undergird the work of the mission boards.

"No one is doing more in missions education and missions support than Woman's Missionary Union," said Lewis.

Rankin described the support he receives from WMU leaders and members across the Southern Baptist Convention as an "oasis of encouragement."

The two leaders' reports also included comments from staff members from their respective boards, who highlighted upcoming emphases, new areas of work and ongoing ministries.

While all the missionaries' testimonies were inspiring, some of the most touching remarks came from Martha Colwell, who leads women's work in Rwanda.

She opened her comments by describing a women's meeting, which she said drew 372 people and launched a new organization for girls. "Little did we know," she shared, "that within a year's time many of us would have fled the country and others would be dead."

She told of the horrible political atrocities which were directed toward many Rwandan Baptists and of the courageous faith they expressed even in death.

As she prepares to return to Rwanda in March, she asked Southern Baptists pray for repentance and healing in the country, and for wisdom for herself and the three remaining members of the council with which she works.

Other foreign missionaries who spoke during the WMU board meeting were Donna Hasteley, Paraguay; Dixie L. Hunke, Cooperative Services International; Cheryl Nance, Korea; Mickie Norman, South Europe Mission; Linda Plummer, Dominican Republic; Pam Rhodes, Israel; and D.P. Smith, Ivory Coast.

1995: a year of prayer
for the Muslim world

By Erich Bridges

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Muslims: They're at least 1 billion strong -- one in every five people on earth.

Despite deep and sometimes violent disputes among themselves, Muslims are growing in strength and numbers in many areas -- including the United States.

They believe in one God -- the God of Abraham and Moses. The Koran, Islam's holy book, recognizes and honors Jesus as a prophet, sinless and born of a virgin.

But Muslims do not believe Jesus is the Son of God. And many live in places or cultures where they seldom, if ever, get the chance to hear and respond to the Christian gospel. Those who do often risk their lives.

Only one thing will ever change these realities, Christian mission strategists believe -- prayer.

That's why a joint Foreign Mission Board-Home Mission Board task force urges on Southern Baptists to set aside 1995 as the "Year of Prayer for Muslim Peoples."

Why 1995, and why all year?

"The whole movement of Islam around the world is gaining momentum," explained Lewis Myers, chairman of the Muslim evangelism task force and FMB vice president for strategies to reach "World A" -- the most unevangelized peoples of the globe.

Islam has spread in Europe, North America and North Africa and strengthened in old Muslim strongholds in Central Asia as they have moved out from under communist dominion, Myers said.

The "most intense time" of prayer for Muslims, Myers added, will unfold during Ramadan, the annual 30-day Muslim period of prayer and fasting beginning Feb. 1 this year. For the third year, Southern Baptists and other Christians will pray for Muslims as Muslims themselves are praying.

"This is a period of time when Muslims are particularly sensitive to spiritual matters, and they're praying for themselves and their relationship to God," Myers said. "It's an ideal time to call on Christians to enter into that prayer arena on behalf of Muslims."

Does prayer for Muslims bring answers?

Last year, Myers reported, on "the very day" Christians around the world were praying for a particularly resistant Muslim people group, Christians baptized the first converts ever among that group.

"They attribute it almost solely to focused prayer," he said. "Because in the Muslim environment, people might express some interest in Christ or even say 'I believe in him.' But the decisive issue for them is baptism. That's the break point" with one's traditional religion, culture, even family.

Resources for people who want to pray effectively for Muslims in 1995 include a 30-day prayer guide -- ideal for the Ramadan period but useful any other time too -- focusing on 30 different Muslim people groups. Also available: quarterly prayer guides (the first focuses on Muslims in the Americas), a special video available March 1, and other ideas and resources for observing the year of prayer in local churches.

To order any of these resources, call the Foreign Mission Board's customer services office toll-free at 1-800-866-FMB1 or write FMB Customer Services at P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, Va. 23230.

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(BP) photo (vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers Jan. 12 by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available in SBCNet News Room.

Oklahoma-Indiana Link Up
to help missions work

By Dave Parker

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HENRYETTA, Okla. (BP)--Four years ago, Bob Shoemake was invited to help out with missions work in Indiana.

Last year, he finally accepted, and is now head of Oklahoma-Indiana Link Up, an agreement between the states.

Shoemake, director of missions in North Canadian Baptist Association, met Carrol Fowler at Falls Creek (Oklahoma conference/camp) four years ago.

Fowler, who serves as state missions/Brotherhood director for the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, invited Shoemake to the Hoosier State then, but Shoemake said the discussion "was not real serious" at that time. Two years later, Fowler asked again, suggesting Shoemake take early retirement and move to Indiana.

"I said that was what they needed, but a guy would starve to death doing it," Shoemake said.

Several events changed Shoemake's outlook. He was at a revival at Oldham Memorial Baptist Church in Muskogee, Okla., where he had held revivals 16 years in a row. Three weeks later he went to Decatur, Ind., for an evangelistic rally.

Muskogee has 24 Southern Baptist churches, he noted, but the church in Decatur was the only one in the entire county.

"It was such a contrast to Muskogee," he said.

The church leaders asked him to walk through the church and make suggestions for improvements. The building had concrete walls and bare floors with wires and plumbing hanging from the ceiling. On the front was a hand-painted sign that read "Maranatha Baptist Church."

"I said it looked like a cult worshiped there," he recalled.

He said the first step would be to cover the walls, carpet the floor and put in a false ceiling. Then, he said a large, professional-looking sign should be put up, a sign that reads "Future First Baptist Church."

Then, he suggested blanketing the area with fliers to let people know about the church.

Fowler approached him again about becoming director of evangelism in Indiana. By then, Shoemake had decided to return to full-time evangelism Jan. 1, so he accepted the offer.

It did not take long for God to confirm that he was doing the right thing.

"I went to Falls Creek for a Bible conference," Shoemake said. "I told some friends and pastors what I was going to do. I came back home, and within two weeks I had a complete 1995 schedule."

He then met with William G. Tanner, executive director-treasurer, and Bob Haskins, assistant executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. He then made his decision official.

Shoemake will be a revival coordinator, to line up revival teams from Oklahoma willing to hold a revival in Indiana. He also will coordinate the collecting of copiers, chairs, tables and other furniture and equipment needed.

"I will link an Oklahoma church up with a pastor in Indiana," he said. "The pastor will go up, get a vision for the work, then come back and share it with his church. When five or six churches in an association link up, then the association may also link up."

In April, 14 teams from Oklahoma will hold revivals in Indiana's Northeastern Association. Then in June, Oklahoma's South Canadian Association will send seven teams.

Most of Shoemake's time will be spent in Oklahoma, but he is going to Indiana in June and August.

Indiana has 333 Southern Baptist churches and 117 new works in 14 associations. Total church membership in 1993 was 96,618, for an average membership of 214.7 per church/new work.

By contrast, in 1993 Oklahoma had 1,496 churches in 41 associations. Total church membership was 780,675, for an average membership of 521.8.

Decision not to abort
produces triple blessings

By Dana Williamson

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--When Norris III was born, Norris and Tilyce White thought they had the perfect family. The baby boy joined 1-year-old sister Quakneesha. The Oklahoma City couple now had a boy and a girl -- the children they had hoped for.

However, a year later, Briteny was born into that perfect family.

When just over a year after Briteny's birth, Tilyce became pregnant again, she and Norris didn't feel they could take care of another child.

"I didn't want to have a baby and give it up for adoption," said Tilyce. "I thought the only choice was abortion."

While there had been no thought of aborting Briteny, this time the Whites made an appointment at an Oklahoma City abortion clinic.

"As we were driving to the clinic, I told Tilyce there might be abortion protesters there," Norris related.

When the couple drove into the clinic's parking lot, they encountered six rescuers (protesters).

"One lady ran over to our car and started talking to us," remembered Norris.

Tilyce said she wanted to ignore the lady, but Norris suggested they at least listen to what she had to say.

Sally Spivey of Tuttle, Okla., showed the Whites a picture of a fetus, and pointed out the baby Tilyce was carrying already was formed. She asked the young couple to return home and pray about the situation.

Spivey told them she would see what she could do to provide financial assistance and exchanged phone numbers with them. Three days later she called them and has been in constant touch since.

The Whites left the parking lot in tears, already having decided to have the baby.

About two months later the Whites discovered the baby had turned into three -- Tilyce was pregnant with triplets.

"We were shocked when we found out there were three babies," said Tilyce, "but we were not sorry we had not aborted them."

The babies, two girls and a boy, were born five weeks premature on Sept. 27. Dymond weighed 3 pounds, 1 ounce; Dominique checked in at 3 pounds, 14.9 ounces, and Dezmond was 3 pounds, 15.5 ounces. The newborns were on a respirator for only one day, and left the hospital less than three weeks after their birth.

Taking care of six children under four years of age is a challenge for the Whites.

Norris, 25, injured his knee in May when he slipped off a curb, and has been unable to work at his job as a convenience store assistant manager. He had knee surgery in October and is hoping to be able to return to work in the next few weeks.

Although the family is existing solely on Norris' disability check, he said they are doing pretty well.

"What we really need is sleep," said Norris. He and Tilyce are taking care of the children with no outside help.

Another thing the Whites need is a van. Their older model Camaro will not accommodate three infant car seats, plus three other children and two adults.

"We're pretty well house-bound until we can get some form of transportation," said Norris.

The Whites, who are members of Greater Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, would like to take the children to church. Also, getting the little ones to doctors' appointments is a real task.

So, a fund-raiser was started to raise the \$6,000 needed for a van.

With the chronic lack of sleep and added financial burden, have the Whites had second thoughts about their decision not to have an abortion?

"Never," said Tilyce. "These babies were Heaven-sent."

Teaching English in Russia
is ministry for OBU graduate By Dana Williamson

SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP)--When Laura Herriage left for Russia, she went with the idea of changing the world.

"Little did I know that I would be the one who was changed," the 25-year-old Oklahoma Baptist University graduate admitted a year and a half later.

Herriage is among 13 Oklahomans, including eight OBU graduates, who went to Russia in a partnership agreement between OBU and the Russian/American Pedagogical Systems, and in conjunction with OBU-Global Options headed by business professor John Cragin.

Herriage is one of six American English teachers in the Moscow Economics School, the first private school available for Russian children. The school, which has grown to 250 kindergarten through senior high students, has a curriculum which includes free enterprise education, teaching English as a second language and Christian studies.

"It is not a Christian school," related Herriage, "but we are allowed to share our beliefs."

The main funnel for talking about Jesus is during opening exercise in the learning center, said Herriage, who began her teaching duties in August 1993.

"We can talk about any subject here," reported Herriage. "Since most of the students are not yet fluent in English, it is difficult to explain what God has done by sending Jesus to die for our sins, but the students can learn a song about Jesus very quickly.

"When we are asked why we are always smiling and singing, we have an opportunity to tell them it's because of a man we know."

Herriage said in a seventh grade advanced English class she taught, the subject was the world.

"Somehow the class got off the topic and started talking about God. Someone asked if God created the world, and then one boy asked about God's son and why, if he was all powerful, he didn't call himself down from the cross," said Herriage.

She was able to explain why Jesus died on the cross. During the Christmas holidays, which she spent at her home in Bethany, Okla., Herriage said she received a fax saying the boy had committed his life to Jesus.

The OBU group had the opportunity to help start a church with a journeyman couple from North Carolina they met in a Moscow sandwich shop. The first Sunday the International Baptist Fellowship, which meets in a movie theater, had 29 people. A year later there are 120 people of about 15 nationalities, and a youth group has been started.

The American entourage's salaries come from donations from partnership groups -- groups of people who commit to giving \$2 per week for a certain period of time. In turn the contributors receive a monthly mail out about what's happening in Russia.

Herriage said she is receiving a blessing on both the giving and receiving ends.

"I have been on the receiving end of people giving to this ministry, but I have also been able to give to those around me who don't have enough."

Herriage related the story of an African friend who had not eaten anything in three weeks and was showing the signs of malnutrition. Herriage shared food with him, and told him never to go hungry again.

"I told him we could always share soup together."

Herriage, who grew up the youngest of three sisters at Olivet Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, said when her contract is up in August, she will not return to Moscow.

"It has been too hard on my body," revealed Herriage, who returned to Oklahoma City for four months in 1994 because of physical problems. Her body was not resupplying blood and she was acutely anemic.

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"There's a possibility Global Options may start a work in South America," she said. "I will probably work somewhere in education, and would love to be involved in different ministries.

"What is good about our company is that we can use our professions as a means to minister. We can still be a Christian influence even if missionaries are expelled from the country."

Although Herriage's visa lists her as a teacher, she said she is there mainly to minister.

"No matter what your profession is, if you've committed your life to Christ, that is your mission. You don't have to be a missionary to share your love for Christ."

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Gospel is the same --
whether 'new' or 'used'

By Dana Williamson

Baptist Press
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OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--In a day of recyclables, Southern Baptists have a golden opportunity to participate in the economical and ecological condition of the world, while advancing the Gospel to many who have never heard the Good News.

"It has bothered me for years that Southern Baptists throw away thousands of pieces of literature every quarter," said Irwin McLendon.

McLendon, a medical doctor and charter member of Oklahoma City's Village Baptist Church, is the visionary behind Project Africa, which has sent more than 73,000 pieces of literature to African nations this year.

Project Africa began three years ago through a tape ministry, headed by Village Sunday school teacher Jim Messick, which distributed tapes for the blind to 26 countries.

Messick, founder of Gleaners Bible Study Fellowship International, said because of the address on the tapes, he started getting inquiries for more literature. That's when McLendon, a member of Messick's Sunday school class, stepped in with his idea to ship used literature to the African countries.

Currently nine Oklahoma churches, two Missouri churches and one Texas church are saving their used literature for shipment to Africa.

Messick said he gets about 30 letters a day from Africans requesting literature.

"Africans don't throw away anything," said Messick. "The literature we send goes from church to church. Average per capita income there is \$250 a year."

McLendon and Messick hope to enlist churches across the state to recycle their literature by sending it to Project Africa.

"We feel the literature could be used again and again and the message it contains passed along several times to unsaved people as well as new Christians who need this teaching for their growth and maturity in the Christian life," explained McLendon.

"At Village, we set out a box at the end of the quarter, and all used literature is placed in it," Messick said.

Also Sunday school departments at Village have a \$1 a month program where \$1 is collected from each member every month for Project Africa.

He emphasized any Christian literature is needed.

"We are much in need of recycled Bibles and New Testaments," said Messick. In addition to Sunday school literature, Open Windows, Royal Service, Decision and Home Life magazines have been sent.

Messick said there is no language barrier because in the three major countries receiving the literature -- Ghana, Malawi and Kenya -- English is the major language.

Project Africa is now sending to 447 locations. Twelve volunteers from Village work two days a week mailing the literature from a house behind the church which is used as a work area and storage unit for the literature.

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"Postage," said Messick, "averages a little over \$1 per pound. Packages have to be kept under 11 pounds to keep costs down, as the price goes up drastically after the 11 pound limit."

Messick said the current postage cost is around \$4,000 a year. Shipment is by boat which takes about three months to get there, but is the most economical way to send the material.

"Once we get the project rolling, they are getting new literature every three months just as we do," said McLendon.

Messick said they also send portable tape recorders which the Africans can use to play the taped sermons and Bible studies.

"The Africans will set up on the streets, start singing songs, and when a crowd gathers, play the tapes, and people are getting saved," said Messick.

In a letter from Ghana, Isaac Tawiah said his church membership was 500 with about 80 in Sunday school. Three months after receiving the tapes and literature, the church had grown to 2,000 members with 300 in Sunday school.

Messick said if churches want to box up materials and send them on their own, he will visit churches and show them how to package and send the materials.

"This would be an excellent foreign mission project for churches, because once they send the literature, they will be the ones who hear from the Africans who receive it," said Messick.

The main thing, however, stressed Messick, is to get the literature to Africa.

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Stamps named senior v.p.
for administration at RTVC

By C.C. Risenhoover

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission trustees welcomed Jerry Stamps as senior vice president for administration at their quarterly meeting Jan. 9-10.

Stamps' appointment was effective Jan. 1. His previous title at the RTVC was vice president of business services.

Jack Johnson, president of the RTVC, said, "Since joining us in 1985, Jerry Stamps has demonstrated exceptional management skills. He is a committed Christian who uses his business expertise in positive ways to promote God's kingdom. We feel fortunate to have someone of his caliber on staff who can take on the added responsibilities of senior vice president for administration."

Stamps, a graduate of Midwestern State University at Wichita Falls, Texas, is a CPA. He joined the commission as comptroller and became a vice president of finance in 1987. He was named vice president of business services in 1992.

Prior to joining the commission, Stamps was a manager in the accounting firm of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Company in Fort Worth. He is married, has two children and is a member of North Richland Hills Baptist Church.

Trustees reviewed a budget report showing that in the first quarter of the fiscal year the RTVC was operating at 96 percent of budget with income at 102 percent. They also accepted what is referred to as a "clean" audit of the RTVC and related entities for the fiscal year 1993-94 by the firm of KPMG Peat Marwick.

On the evening of Jan. 9, trustees attended a dinner at the Worthington Hotel honoring Richard T. "Dick" McCartney. McCartney retired Jan. 1 as executive vice president and chief operating officer, a position he held for eight years. McCartney will continue as an adviser and consultant to the commission.

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John Olen Strange, 77, dies;
left legacy as Hebrew grammarian

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--John Olen Strange, 77, a Southern Baptist Old Testament and Hebrew scholar for nearly 50 years, died Jan. 11 at his home in Slidell, La.

A specialist in Hebrew grammar, Strange taught at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary from 1953-90. Upon retirement he was named professor emeritus of Old Testament and Hebrew.

"John Olen Strange was a first-class scholar and a Christian gentleman in every sense of the word," said Landrum P. Leavell II, interim president of New Orleans Seminary. "His death leaves a vacuum, and we will miss his presence." Strange was chairman of the seminary's division of biblical studies during much of Leavell's tenure as president at New Orleans Seminary.

Strange is probably best known for the book, "Biblical Hebrew Grammar," co-authored by D. Waylon Bailey, NOBTS professor of Old Testament and Hebrew.

"Dr. Strange's expertise was Hebrew grammar," said Bailey, chairman of the division of biblical studies at New Orleans Seminary. "He had a wonderful way of teaching his subject. He taught so you could remember."

Strange also specialized in research on the Book of Isaiah. He taught graduate-level courses on Isaiah for many years and wrote "The Preacher's Notebook on Isaiah" along with another colleague, Joseph H. Cothen, NOBTS professor emeritus of pastoral work. He also wrote curriculum on the Book of Jeremiah for the Southern Baptist Convention's seminary extension program, as well as many articles for denominational publications.

Yet, Bailey said "his greatest contribution came as personal contact with students, pastors and colleagues. Dr. Strange was a warm human being for whom everyone was important. He always had time for people. If you had a need, he had time."

A World War II veteran of the Pacific arena, Strange served as a regimental Protestant chaplain in the U.S. Army from 1943-46. While stationed in Korea he met a first sergeant, George W. Harrison, who coincidentally would become not only his student but also his colleague.

After the war Strange studied at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. While he was a doctoral student at Southern, Harrison enrolled as a master's-level student. A few years later, both Strange and Harrison were serving together as professors of Old Testament and Hebrew in the biblical studies division at New Orleans Seminary. Each taught at NOBTS over 30 years.

"He was a distinguished scholar, a gifted teacher, a compassionate preacher, a devoted family man and a warm personal friend to hundreds of students and colleagues," Harrison said. "A loyal Southern Baptist, he was at his best in one-on-one situations."

While those who knew him well were aware he was greatly affected by his military service, "he never spoke negatively of his experiences," Bailey said. "He lived by a great saying: 'You can't turn back the clock.' He always dealt with life as it was."

Born in 1918 in Campobello, S.C., Strange graduated from Furman University with a bachelor of arts degree in 1940. At Southern Seminary he completed both a bachelor of divinity degree in 1949 and a doctor of theology degree in 1954. He did additional study at New York University, Hebrew Union College and Vanderbilt University.

Strange is survived by his second wife, Beth Firesheets, of Baton Rouge, La., to whom he was married 17 years following the death of his first wife, Ruth. Strange had two children by his first marriage and three grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested memorial gifts be sent to the Ruth Strange and John Olen Strange Memorial Fund at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. A memorial service will be held in New Orleans Seminary's Roland Q. Leavell Chapel Thursday, Jan. 26, at 10 a.m.

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