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March 31, 1995

95-55

RUSSIA--Khabarovsk Baptists plan memorial for slain Southern Baptist couple.
MISSISSIPPI--Nobles' property at issue in Miss. court hearing.
ATLANTA--Charles Stanley's wife re-files for divorce.
TENNESSEE--Faith, creativity, discipline sustained POW, make leaders.
TENNESSEE--BSSB takes intervention steps in ministerial sexual misconduct.
COLORADO--Southern Baptists should restore repentant clergy, counselor says; photo.
TENNESSEE--Jericho remains unique, still getting results.
COLORADO--Landmark grain elevator to serve higher purpose; photo.
CALIFORNIA--Southern Baptists, led by FMB, dominate RPRC competition.

**Khabarovsk Baptists plan memorial
for slain Southern Baptist couple** By Don Martin

**Baptist Press
3/31/95**

KHABAROVSK, Russia (BP)--Baptists in this far-eastern Russian city plan to honor slain Southern Baptists Chu Hon and Kei Wol Yi during a memorial service at Khabarovsk Korean Baptist Church April 2.

The couple was found dead in their apartment by local police March 28. Police reported that Yi had sustained several blows to his head and Mrs. Yi had been strangled.

Yi, 60, and Mrs. Yi, 59, were charter members of the Tidewater Korean Baptist Church, Virginia Beach, Va. They had lived in Khabarovsk since June 1993 as participants in a medical exchange program sponsored by Cooperative Services International (CSI), a Southern Baptist aid organization. The couple had attended the Khabarovsk Korean Baptist Church, where he taught a Sunday school class.

CSI administrators from Hong Kong arrived in Khabarovsk late March 31 and plan to meet with local authorities April 1. They hope to arrange for the immediate repatriation of the bodies and meet with police to discuss the murder investigation.

The Russian press service ITAR-TASS reported police found about \$10,000 cash in the Yis' apartment. Other reports put the amount at \$20,000. Because of the banking difficulty in parts of Russia, many Westerners there keep large amounts of cash in their homes or businesses, one CSI administrator said. Yi played a key role in several CSI medical projects in the city and may well have kept funds for these projects in his home, the administrator added.

Yi, a retired cardiologist, worked at the Khabarovsk Medical Institute, where he taught medicine. He also practiced medicine in a local hospital.

Yi's work in Khabarovsk had brought him notoriety throughout the region, the administrator said. Yi had delivered several lectures at regional meetings of Russian medical practitioners and a local television station had featured Yi and his work.

Yi had been accepted into the local medical community. One hospital administrator where Yi worked said Yi was no longer considered a guest, but simply a staff doctor with full privileges to diagnose and treat patients.

Since his arrival in 1993, Yi had arranged for more than 20 doctors to work in Khabarovsk on short medical projects.

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He also had worked with several Christian organizations to ship medical equipment, supplies and textbooks to city hospitals. Even now, two sea containers in Khabarovsk full of medical supplies are awaiting clearance by Russian customs officials. Without Yi, the containers would never have been sent, explained the administrator.

The Yis originally had planned to work in Khabarovsk for two years, but they recently had arranged to stay a third year. They even told the administrator they planned to apply for another two-year term after their third year, if they remained healthy.

"They planned to keep this medical exchange going as long as possible. They not only had valuable medical experience and techniques to offer, but they knew how to offer their assistance in a spirit of love and understanding," the administrator said.

"This kind of wisdom is invaluable. We have lost two people that can never really be replaced."

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Nobles' property at issue
in Miss. court hearing

By William H. Perkins Jr.

Baptist Press
3/31/95

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--The wife of former Mississippi College President Lewis Nobles cannot sell land deeded to her by her husband shortly after he was accused of taking millions of dollars in donations intended for the college, Hinds County Chancery Judge Patricia Wise ruled March 27.

Wise extended the temporary restraining order she issued earlier that freezes transactions on property transferred by Nobles to his wife, Joy, on Oct. 11, 1993 -- just months after college trustees forced him to resign over the missing money.

Wise also ruled, however, Joy Nobles can take action on any property she owned prior to her husband's resignation Aug. 3, 1993. It is not clear whether, or how much, property she may have owned in her own name before that date.

Joy Nobles also was victorious in her fight to kill a subpoena that would have compelled her to testify at the March 27 hearing, citing her medical condition as the reason she could not attend.

A federal grand jury in Jackson returned a 20-count indictment against Lewis Nobles on Sept. 21, 1994, and the college filed civil lawsuits in an attempt to recover the donations allegedly taken by Lewis Nobles.

He currently is undergoing medical evaluation at a federal prison hospital in Missouri after apparently swallowing poison in San Francisco as FBI agents arrested him Jan. 26 on a federal fugitive warrant. The warrant was issued by U.S. District Judge William Barbour in Jackson when he failed to appear at a pre-trial hearing earlier that day.

"The college thinks Mrs. Nobles is a very nice lady and that she is innocent of what Dr. Nobles did," college attorney Alan Perry told Wise, adding the school wants to protect its right to recover losses caused by Lewis Nobles' actions.

Oxford attorney Grady Tollison, representing Joy Nobles, shot back that the college, in its lawsuit filing against Joy Nobles, had accused her of fraud and conspiracy.

He also said the college's lawsuit accused him of fraud when Lewis and Joy Nobles gave his law firm a land deed of trust to represent them, and he planned his own "remedy" in the future.

Amy Whitten of Oxford, Tollison's law partner and an attorney for Joy Nobles, said, "It's an unfortunate situation for Mississippi College to continue to state that Mrs. Nobles has done nothing wrong and to press for restraining her legal rights on her property."

In addition to Perry, the college was represented at the hearing by James Leon Young of Jackson.

Mississippi College trustee chairman Harry Vickery attended the hearing, along with college administrator Ronald Lee.

Clinton physician Ben Nash, son-in-law of the Nobles, also attended the hearing and testified as an expert witness on Joy Noble's medical condition.

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EDITORS' NOTE: The following story replaces the (BP) story with the same headline, dated 3/28/95, with updated information including a statement from Anna Stanley and information from the church's Wednesday night prayer meeting.

Charles Stanley's wife
re-files for divorce

By David Winfrey

ATLANTA (BP)--The wife of Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta, and Southern Baptist Convention president, 1985-86, has re-filed for divorce.

According to a complaint filed March 20, Anna J. Stanley is seeking a jury trial for the divorce, alimony, division of their assets and possession of their north Atlanta home.

An April 24 hearing date in Cobb County Superior Court has been set, according to an order by Clerk of Court Jay C. Stephenson.

Mrs. Stanley's complaint for divorce states: "There is no reasonable hope of reconciliation despite plaintiff (Mrs. Stanley) having made every effort to effect one."

A statement from an "accountability team," formed of First Baptist Church members to work with the Stanleys reported Mrs. Stanley withdrew from the reconciliation process and contact with the team in August 1994, "shortly before joint counseling sessions were to begin."

Team member and chairman of deacons Guy Mosier announced Mrs. Stanley's actions to the Wednesday night, March 29, prayer meeting. "We are grieved by the content of this report and ask for your earnest prayers on a daily basis for Dr. and Mrs. Stanley and the reconciliation of their marriage to the glory of God."

Stanley also made a brief statement before the congregation spent more than 45 minutes in prayer for reconciliation.

"I continue to oppose this action as I have from the beginning," said Stanley, who, with son Andy by his side, spent the prayer time kneeling before a front-row pew. "It is my desire that Anna and I be reconciled."

The accountability team's statement reports Stanley will continue as senior pastor of First Baptist Church and maintain his responsibilities for IN TOUCH Ministries -- a separate entity that broadcasts Stanley's sermons on television and radio.

"He has the full support of the body of deacons of First Baptist Church and the board of directors for IN TOUCH Ministries," the statement reads.

In a statement released through her attorney March 30, Mrs. Stanley said she "deeply" regrets the marriage has failed.

"Over the past two years, I have worked hard to save my marriage with Charles," the statement reads. "During this time I knew reconciliation would be possible only if Charles made some significant changes in his life and valued the changes that I was making in mine. Unfortunately neither has happened."

Mrs. Stanley originally filed for divorce in June 1993. Within three weeks, however, that was withdrawn and a new complaint filed seeking a separate maintenance -- or support payments while the two were separated. On July 4, 1993, Stanley made a statement about the separation from his pulpit, requesting prayer for both himself and Mrs. Stanley.

Boyd Wages, administrator for First Baptist, said the five-member accountability team recommended counselors for the two. "The accountability team functioned according to how the Scriptures outlined in Matthew 18," he said.

Wages added Stanley is still submitting to the team, but Mrs. Stanley stopped doing so in August 1994. "She had been under the guidance of the accountability team until she withdrew herself."

The accountability group's statement noted Stanley made positive remarks to the congregation March 26 regarding reconciliation.

Said Wages: "Between March 20 and March 26 we had some developments that appeared very positive toward the reconciliation and Dr. Stanley made remarks to the congregation."

A story in the Monday, March 27, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, quotes Stanley as telling the congregation, "My wife wanted me to convey this message. She and I are working on this marriage. We are not giving up."

Asked if developments had changed since March 26, Wages replied, "Apparently so."

In the statement, Mrs. Stanley mentions the Sunday address, but no positive developments. "According to news reports that appeared Monday, Dr. Stanley told his congregation that we were working on our marriage, even though he was aware that I had filed for divorce a few days before," it states. "Please pray for Charles and me during this difficult time."

During the Wednesday night prayer time, leader Larry Montgomery quoted 2 Chronicles 7:13-14, asking members to have an attitude of humility, prayer, devotion and repentance.

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Faith, creativity, discipline
sustained POW, make leaders

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
3/31/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A deep religious faith, creativity and mental discipline sustained Vice-Admiral William P. Lawrence through six years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam and represent a core of qualities that have contributed to America's greatness as a nation.

Speaking March 29 to managers of the Baptist Sunday School Board, Lawrence applied lessons from his Prisoner of War (POW) experience to the role of a leader. He was imprisoned in 1967 after his plane was shot down over Vietnam and released in 1973.

Now retired, Lawrence, a United Methodist, frequently speaks on leadership and ethics. He is a visiting scholar at the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, conducting research on the military and the media.

In a POW camp, Lawrence said, "all the veneers of a person are stripped away and the heart of a person is constantly exposed."

He listed qualities, beginning with a deep religious faith, which he said were magnified by his POW experience. Captives were not allowed to have Bibles and most of the time no forms of group worship were permitted. Faith primarily had to be a personal activity.

However, five years into Lawrence's imprisonment, a protest and fast by prisoner leaders resulted in the leaders being separated but others being allowed to have religious services.

"We felt this was one of our great victories," he said.

Throughout their captivity, Lawrence said, prisoners demonstrated creativity in meeting one another's medical needs, developing activities to stimulate their minds, maintaining a "viable military organization" and communicating with one another.

Prisoners stayed linked by using a tapping code, writing notes and talking between rounds by their guards which they monitored by looking under doors for their shoes.

"The six years I was there, we were never shut down from communication," he said.

Keeping themselves mentally active was the "great challenge of the POW experience," Lawrence said. He used long hours reliving his life in minute detail.

"I learned some fascinating things about the mind," he recalled. "Every time I relived my life I was able to resurrect more names from my childhood."

Lying on his back in an isolation cell, forced to remain still to lessen the pain of heat sores, Lawrence determined to compose in his mind the perfect iambic pentameter poem. "I got so absorbed in that project that all my discomfort was forgotten," he said. The poem he created is now the official state poem of Tennessee.

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Compassion, a sense of humor and a deep sense of patriotism also were sustaining forces for POWs, he said. "Our objective was to bring home as many people as possible alive and in good health."

Harboring no bitterness for the six-year separation from family, friends and his country, Lawrence said: "Our freedoms are not a right or privilege, but something we must constantly protect. That is the key message of the POW experience."

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**BSSB takes intervention steps
in ministerial sexual misconduct** By Charles Willis

**Baptist Press
3/31/95**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Establishing a National Advisory Committee on Sexual Misconduct is one of a series of actions the Baptist Sunday School Board is taking to provide recovery help for ministers who have engaged in sexual misconduct.

The group of nine people serving as a resource and planning group in dealing appropriately with sexual misconduct by ministers has had two meetings and will continue on an annual basis to assist the staff development section of the board's pastor-staff leadership department.

Other steps planned by the BSSB include:

- providing certified training for those enlisted by state convention staff members to help churches recover from issues related to ministerial sexual misconduct.

- developing guidelines and suggestions for personnel committees and pastor search committees to confront the issue with prospective ministers.

- establishing regional recovery centers for ministers moving toward sexual misconduct and those who have been involved in that type of behavior. The recovery centers would offer a prescribed program for recovery, restoration and social protection, as well as support for spouses and children.

- designing suggested policies and guidelines for churches to adopt related to ministerial sexual misconduct. These would include procedures for reporting suspected misconduct, a process for substantiating or dismissing allegations, a process for dealing with substantiated misconduct and redemptive actions churches can take.

- launching an educational emphasis through colleges, seminaries and state conventions to help ministers determine their vulnerability to sexual misconduct; cite the effect of such behavior on ministry, family and the church; and provide awareness of resources for recovery.

Neil Knierim, a consultant in the pastor-staff leadership department, said Southern Baptist tradition calls for ministers "to be born-again, baptized believers, who have received and accepted a divine call to ministry, have a maturing faith and sensitivity to God's leadership, have the ability to communicate the gospel and live a life of integrity."

He said when a minister's behavior contradicts the lifestyle of an obedient follower of Christ, "damage is done to the family as vows and trusts are breached. Pride rules with arrogance as it denies the teachings of Christ concerning purity.

"As word travels about the indiscretion of the minister, those outside the church are confused by the lack of integrity and commitment by one of God's servants," he continued.

Knierim characterizes sexual misconduct as adultery, fornication, deviant sexual behavior and sexual harassment.

"Ministers must be on guard concerning these areas," he said. "Ministers are human, and their human nature is challenged by supernatural expectations. Many people expect ministers to live life on a supernatural plane," he explained. "Some put them on a tightrope of being perfect, stretched over a chasm of worldly influences that leaves no room for error or misjudgment.

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"When a minister errs, it's big news. The repercussions of sexual misconduct are far-reaching. It damages the minister's fellowship with God. While salvation is secure, the closeness with God is impeded by this sin. Even though the call to ministry remains in place, the opportunity to express that calling through vocational ministry is placed in jeopardy."

Other damaging results Knierim cites include:

-- "If the minister is married and has a family, they are harmed. The commitment of exclusiveness between the minister and spouse is shattered. The implications of this action reverberate throughout the family. The responsibility of the parent to demonstrate godly living and to model healthy married life to the children is breached.

-- "It hurts the victims or partners involved in this behavior. The willing partner is guilty for their sin. The minister has facilitated and contributed to this sin. The victim may suffer effects of trusting someone unworthy of trust. Their life may be scarred by a representative of God's having taken advantage of them. The emotional and psychological implications are devastating.

-- "Sexual misconduct damages the church as a whole and the individuals in it. The church's image and reputation is impugned. There is a conflict between what the church stands for and the actions of its leaders. Trust is broken. Conflict often springs up between those who believe the minister is guilty and those who believe the minister is innocent. Sadly, some decide on the basis of this experience that they can never trust a minister again."

-- "The cause of Christ in the unchurched community is hindered. Evangelistic efforts will be injured while the congregation turns its focus inward for healing."

Knierim said while all ministers, like laypeople, commit sins, sexual misconduct on the part of a minister can be viewed by some as "an overwhelming sin. Possibly, it becomes the unpardonable sin.

"The minister must deal with this sin as with any other sin, repenting, asking for God's forgiveness, accepting God's forgiveness and requesting forgiveness from all offended parties."

In providing a means to change sinful behavior and restore ministers who have sinned sexually, Knierim cites John 8:3-11, the account of the woman caught in adultery, as evidence that forgiveness and restoration are available for people involved in sexual indiscretions.

"Jesus preferred to restore, rather than condemn," he said.

Assistance in dealing with issues related to sexual misconduct may be obtained by contacting state Baptist convention minister-church relations directors or the Sunday School Board's pastor-staff leadership department.

Included on the National Advisory Committee on Sexual Misconduct are Louis and Melissa McBurney, therapists of Marble (Colo.) Retreat; Van Oliphant, a layman and administrator at the University of Memphis (Tenn.); Mike Speer, a financial services consultant from Nashville, Tenn.; Wendell Garrison, pastor of Winstanley Baptist Church, Fairview Heights, Ill.; Gene Allen of the pastoral care and counseling department, Baptist Memorial Hospital Systems, San Antonio, Texas; Richard Dayringer, a clinical educator with the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, Springfield; Ed Yarbrough, an attorney with Hollins, Wagster, & Yarbrough in Nashville; Wayne Oates, professor of psychiatry emeritus at the school of medicine, University of Louisville (Ky.); and Knierim, Brooks Faulkner and Norris Smith of the BSSB's pastor-staff leadership department.

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Southern Baptists should restore
repentant clergy, counselor says By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
3/31/95

MARBLE, Colo. (BP)--Southern Baptists should model redemption and restoration to ministers who become involved in sexual misconduct and who are repentant, a Southern Baptist counselor said.

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Louis McBurney, founder of Marble Retreat, a counseling center dedicated exclusively to helping ministers in crisis situations, said he believes laypersons "may be opening their eyes to the sexual misconduct problem and may be trying to deal with it more redemptively."

McBurney is one of nine people from across the United States serving as an advisory committee to the Baptist Sunday School Board's pastor-staff leadership department in addressing intervention strategies for ministers involved in inappropriate sexual activities.

The stereotype of Christians who "shoot their wounded" is proven true in matters of sexuality, because the subject "is too close to home for most of us. If I deny my own temptation in this area, it is easier not to be around someone who reminds me I, too, can fall," McBurney observed.

"Never tell yourself it will never happen to you, because in certain circumstances, it can happen to anyone," he cautioned.

Among benefits of dealing redemptively with fallen ministers, McBurney said, is preventing the waste of denominational resources.

"It costs a lot to train ministers," he observed. "Dismissal is a waste of that resource. The minister may have giftedness in other areas of ministry."

Practicing redemption "gets the church into the 20th century," he said, ending the practice of "people pretending clergy are not human."

A church that takes steps to help salvage a minister's marriage and career "models redemption for others," he said. "It is more healthy than divorce and kicking people out of the church and letting them be destroyed. I haven't found anyone qualified to throw the first stone."

McBurney said in his 18 years at Marble Retreat he had noted "a kind of misperception that any pastor who could engage in inappropriate sexual activity is some kind of awful pervert."

To the contrary, McBurney has found the most common profile of the minister involved in sexual sin is "an ordinary kind of guy who is at mid-life or past mid-life. He has been isolated and frustrated in his career. He feels unappreciated, ineffective and professionally impotent. He has usually been morally circumspect. He has intended to remain faithful to his marriage vows, and he has said he'd never succumb to sexual temptation.

"His adulterous relationship has begun as the outgrowth of an emotional attachment, often through a counseling or work association. Many times his partner has had a decidedly aggressive role in initiating and encouraging the relationship, often making the first sexual overtures," he said.

Of the approximately 1,000 clergy couples McBurney has counseled at Marble Retreat since 1977, between 40 and 50 percent have been in crisis related to the minister's sexual misconduct, he said. Those who have stayed in touch with McBurney after counseling, he has found, have kept their marriages together and have experienced some kind of restoration process within their denomination, generally not Southern Baptist.

"I don't know what happens to Southern Baptists," he said. "Some of them get kind of lost.

"Some men find they shouldn't have been in the ministry in the first place, and some see having an affair as an exit opportunity from ministry. Most who come to me don't want out of the marriage, and most don't want to pursue the other woman as a life mate."

McBurney said he is concerned that there is no way to insist clergy deal with what he described as "a crucial issue."

"It is frustrating to know that statistically there are 25 to 35 percent of ministers involved in inappropriate sexual behavior, yet these destructive patterns cannot be interrupted or prevented by any direct intervention. Knowing there are hundreds of ministers who will slip into sexual misconduct during their careers, yet having no direct way to stop that, is sad. That truth makes finding avenues of better education, systematic restraints and redemptive responses all the more important."

He said variables such as high stress, low self-confidence, character disorders, depression and low impulse control have been associated with sexual misconduct.

McBurney said he sees prevention in three primary areas:

-- increased awareness of the problem, including open discussion and education at all levels of denominational life.

-- acknowledgment of the susceptibility to sexual sin, rather than assuming a position of denial.

-- and having a system of accountability, such as a clergy support group.

McBurney considers restoration a key issue, following that of prevention. He defines the process as "an approach to assist the minister, his family and the church to cope with the emotional, spiritual and relational consequences of sexual misconduct, so that healing may occur."

He said he believes for restoration to happen, the minister must feel true repentance, and there must be an attitude of forgiveness and redemptiveness on the part of everyone else.

While each situation must be handled individually with its own unique features identified and addressed, McBurney suggests general areas that are important:

-- having a clearly defined process to deal with the situation.

-- providing a period of absence from ministerial responsibility while issues are resolved.

-- providing support and counsel for the accusing or other involved party.

-- providing a period of time for healing and recommitment of the minister, if, in fact, misconduct has occurred.

-- taking advantage of help from an interim pastor or "restoration team" in helping the congregation process their feelings.

-- valuation of the minister's qualification to return to ministry or to assume a different ministry role.

"In a redemptive spirit, each case should be considered separately," McBurney said. "The sin needs to be called a sin and its seriousness acknowledged. We must, however, keep in mind that sexual sin is not the only sin and that we are all forgiven sinners."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press and posted in the SBCNet News Room.

Jericho remains unique,
still getting results

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
3/31/95

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The annual calendars of the Southern Baptist Conference Centers at Ridgecrest, N.C., and Glorieta, N.M., are packed from start to finish with "special weeks," just as they have been for decades.

And then there's Jericho.

So say its organizers. They insist that, after seven years, it's still like nothing else, anywhere, ever.

"It's experiential. You can see, touch and taste missions firsthand," said Billy Kruschwitz of the Foreign Mission Board, who chairs this year's event. "It's also inter-generational. There are opportunities for the kids in day camp, for youth at Youth Jericho and for adults. Everyone gets a dose of missions -- that's what makes it unique."

A typical day at Jericho offers worship, conferences, Bible study, prayer times, games, festivals and fairs, and all of it has one basic purpose: to bring Southern Baptist laypeople to a better understanding of, and to a greater involvement in, missions.

"We were trying to identify ways to encourage more people to become involved in missions, and we looked at a lot of different things," said June Whitlow of Woman's Missionary Union, who developed the Jericho concept in 1988 along with representatives of the other Missions Education Council (MEC) agencies -- the Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board, Sunday School Board and Brotherhood Commission. Later, she chaired the first two Jericho events.

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"We wanted more folks who wouldn't otherwise be coming to a traditional missions week. We've managed to get that audience," Whitlow said, adding Jericho is also distinctive for what it isn't -- a leadership training week.

"It's about how you can take part in missions in your own church, wherever you are, and we've held to that over the years." As a result, she said, hundreds have come forward for full-time or short-term missions service, and many more have pledged greater support for missions through prayer and giving.

"And now we are starting to hear at our missionary commissioning services that they first heard the call to missions at Jericho -- so we do know it's having an effect."

The theme for the seventh annual Jericho: A Southern Baptist Missions Festival (the official name) is "Experiencing God Through Missions," revealing a tie to the 1995 Bible study leader, Henry Blackaby.

Blackaby, who is Southern Baptists' most prominent advocate for spiritual awakening, will begin each day at Jericho with Bible study. He is the author of "Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God" and more recently of "Fresh Encounter: God's Pattern for Revival and Spiritual Awakening."

Leaders for the worship time, which concludes the typical day at Jericho, are equally well-known: Cynthia Clawson, winner of a Grammy Award and several Dove Awards for her work as a Christian vocalist, and her husband Regan Courtney, an actor, playwright and conference leader.

The Jericho Mission Project, always popular with Baptist men (and women) of any age, also returns. This year, "Jericho's noisiest corner" will again come alive to the sounds of saws, belt sanders and hammers as volunteers build pews, pulpits and a Lord's Supper table for an inner-city U.S. mission church and another mission church in Mexico. Organizers say that no previous woodworking experience is required.

As in previous years, the Jericho program not only will attempt to inspire participants to get involved in missions wherever they are, but also to bring them face-to-face with Southern Baptist missionaries in a relaxed, leisurely atmosphere.

"You can meet and talk as long as you want with many of our missionaries" at Jericho, said Kruschwitz. "Some people perceive that they are distant from missionaries, and the height of the experience for me was to find out they really aren't.

"Here were the names I knew from the prayer calendar," he added. "It was a great chance to meet them and to get to know them, their needs and the challenges they face."

This year, the Foreign Mission Board will have a missionary appointment service at Jericho Ridgecrest.

"So, in addition to seeing and hearing missionaries who have been on the field, we will have these brand-new missionaries on site as they begin their own pilgrimages," Kruschwitz said.

Jericho at Glorieta is scheduled July 29 through Aug. 4; its counterpart at Ridgecrest will run Aug. 12-18.

For a packet of information and registration materials for Jericho, call 1-800-866-3621.

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Landmark grain elevator
to serve higher purpose

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
3/31/95

CHERAW, Colo. (BP)--Pastor Terry Schwartz may be looked up to by everyone in Cheraw, Colo., someday -- if his study is ever moved to the top of the local grain elevator.

The decades-old landmark, unused and the home to pigeons for approximately 30 years, was given to Cheraw Baptist Chapel in 1993.

Local residents were amazed when Schwartz, with the donated help of an attorney, untangled complicated legal encumbrances on the property and neighboring land, located descendants of the last-known owners and persuaded the younger generation of owners to donate the unused land to the church.

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Located prominently on the main street of the small south east Colorado town, the almost-90-foot-tall grain elevator can be seen for miles as travelers approach Cheraw. Someday, the structure will bear a sign identifying the church and, perhaps, a mural. Schwartz can see a variety of design possibilities in his mind's eye, as well as that pastor's study with an unobstructed view of the entire county.

At the beginning of the project, the grain elevator was viewed as an architectural liability. To tear down and haul away debris from the giant concrete cylinder would cost thousands of dollars, which the then 1-year-old mission did not have.

Among steps the congregation took as they pondered possibilities was to contact the Baptist Sunday School Board's church architecture services in Nashville, Tenn. The drawings returned to the church show the grain elevator as the focal point of a two-phase building plan.

The illustration suggests back-lighted crosses on two sides of the structure to identify the property.

Schwartz knows the idea would attract attention. The first Christmas the congregation owned the elevator, a lighted star was placed on top of it. One older couple, their children later reported to Schwartz, discovered the star during the night and thought they were seeing a vision!

A basement room already has been used for a Bible study, and the possibility of making that unique space into a youth room has been discussed.

Schwartz laughs that the Cheraw Baptist Chapel, constituted as a church in September 1994, is called the "Cheraw Unique Chapel" by some. And rightly so.

The pastor, his wife, Kathy, and their six children moved from Denver to Cheraw in 1992 without any idea how they would be supported or where the Lord would lead them in the burden they had felt for ministry in that specific area of the state.

The mission began in the Schwartz family's 12- by 60-foot rented mobile home with a handful of people. Soon 22 people were crammed into the kitchen and dining area of the home, forcing a move.

Rented use of the local school on Sundays has brought membership growth to 34 people -- topping average attendance at the two other churches in town.

Enough money has been borrowed to allow a foundation slab to be poured beside the grain elevator, and the members held their first worship service there in balmy, 60-degree weather on Christmas Day 1994.

Outdoor baptisms have been done in a shiny, metal horse trough, and church supplies, such as hymnals and offering plates, are stored in the pastor's van.

And, last, but not least among the "unique" qualities of the church, is that it has had no less than three church organs donated to it.

The timetable for completing the first phase building has not been set, Schwartz said. Volunteer groups of church builders from Alabama, Tennessee and Texas have offered to help, but the matter of approximately \$60,000 worth of materials must be addressed.

Schwartz said he believes the money will be "no problem. It's just in his time. If God can give us 3.2 acres of land, he can provide the money."

The Schwartz family's new home, a three-bedroom double-wide mobile home on the church property, was provided by God, Schwartz said.

"He makes the payments on it every month," he declared.

Schwartz lives by faith, with a part-time job as a nurse at a nearby hospital and support the church is able to provide from tithes and offerings of members and gifts it receives from a variety of sources.

With a population of 1,500 to 2,000 people in Cheraw and the rural area surrounding it, Schwartz is confident the church can grow to 200 people once the multipurpose building is in place.

After those needs are met, he may pursue a study at the top of the grain elevator, if he still has the energy to climb the stairs!

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press and posted in the SBCNet News Room.

Southern Baptists, led by FMB, dominate RPRC competition

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif. (BP)--Led by the Foreign Mission Board, Southern Baptists dominated the annual awards competition of the Religious Public Relations Council March 30.

Southern Baptists won 28 awards, including 15 for the Foreign Mission Board, in the DeRose-Hinkhouse Awards competition of RPRC, the interfaith association of religious communicators.

Other big winners included Roman Catholics, with 15; United Methodists, 13; Lutherans, 12; and Presbyterians, 10. Sixty communicators from 24 denominations and religious groups won 106 awards presented during a dinner at the Sheraton Universal Hotel.

Foreign Mission Board awards included two of six major Best of Class grand prizes. One honored an issue of The Commission magazine produced by Leland Webb and his staff before Webb retired as editor in February. The second grand prize honored a news series on Southern Baptist response to the crisis in Rwanda written by Craig Bird, overseas correspondent for Africa.

Bird also collected a first place award of excellence for the Rwanda series and a second place award of merit for a feature story on Rwanda in The Commission. The Commission won the magazine category.

Other Southern Baptist awards included five to the Baptist Sunday School Board; four for entries from the Baptist General Convention of Texas produced by the Brad Price Design Studio; two to the California Southern Baptist Convention; and one each to the SBC Executive Committee and Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala.

Jan Johnsonius, now public relations director at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, won two awards of excellence for the Foreign Mission Board -- one for a news story entry and the other jointly with three other writers for a newspaper feature series. The other writers are missionary Betty Poor, FMB staffer Mary Jane Welch and Julie Nall, former intern in the FMB news office, now a senior journalism major at Oklahoma Baptist University and editor of the OBU campus newspaper, The Bison.

Gunther Friedrichs, David Walker, John Magyar Jr. and John Grable won awards of excellence in video and broadcast categories for the FMB, and awards of merit went to Mary Speidel for a news series, Mark Kelly for a newspaper feature and Terry McMahon and Ray Fetty in broadcast categories.

The five Sunday School Board prizes included awards of excellence to Jim Veneman for photography; Veneman, Linda Lawson and Terri Lackey for an annual report; and Chip Alford for the Facts and Trends newsletter. Awards of merit went to Lackey for The Circle newsletter and Marshall Walker for a video.

Cindy Rogillio and Teri Capshaw of Brad Price Design Studio collected two awards of excellence and one award of merit for a brochure, a booklet and graphic design for Texas Baptists. Teri and David Capshaw won an award of merit for a public relations campaign.

The two California Baptist awards were an award of excellence to Terry Barone for a promotion packet and an award of merit to Barone, Rogillio and Teri Capshaw for a direct mail advertising series.

Mark Coppenger of the Executive Committee won an award of excellence for a brochure and Hoyt R. Wilson of Mountain Brook Baptist Church won an award of merit for a brochure.

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