

**(BP)**

**BAPTIST PRESS**  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, TN 37234

F  
I  
R  
S  
T  
  
C  
L  
A  
S  
S

Southern Baptist Library  
and Archives

# (BP)

## -- BAPTIST PRESS

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

May 9, 1995

95-78

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
Historical Commission, SBC  
Nashville, Tennessee

GEORGIA--Lottie Moon: 'school marm' who made a difference.  
VIRGINIA--Celebrants told how passion for lost drove foreign effort; photos.  
VIRGINIA--Historical figure recalls hard work of FMB founders; photo.  
VIRGINIA--Child's song sparked career in missions in China and Taiwan; photo.  
GEORGIA--Historical Commission opposes restructuring; elects interim exec.  
NEW ORLEANS--New Orleans seminary housing sustains rainfall damage.  
DALLAS--Baptist camp, hospital hit hard by Texas storms.  
ALABAMA--Chowan president accepts Samford vice presidency.  
ATLANTA--ABP board discusses vision, strategy, fund-raising.  
ILLINOIS--National journal taps Arizona pastor for post.  
CALIFORNIA--Analysis: 'Gordy' challenges Hollywood toward wholesome family fare.  
OKLAHOMA CITY--Electrical lineman, family recount angelic assurance.  
TENNESSEE--Correction.

Lottie Moon: 'school marm'  
who made a difference

By Louis Moore

Baptist Press  
5/9/95

CARTERSVILLE, Ga. (BP)--On the eve of celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention, leaders of the Foreign Mission Board and Woman's Missionary Union returned to Cartersville, Ga., where Lottie Moon first heard God's call to foreign missions.

FMB President Jerry Rankin and WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien came to pay tribute to the "school marm from Virginia" whose life has come to symbolize Southern Baptist foreign missions commitment.

They recounted in special services at First Baptist Church of Cartersville how Charlotte Diggs "Lottie" Moon -- then 33 -- felt called in May 1873 to leave her successful teaching career in Cartersville for mission work in faraway China.

"At that time, China was the mission field," said Rankin.

By late 1873 -- just six months later -- Moon was in China, laying the foundation stones for a career that today is remembered annually in Southern Baptists' Christmastime offering that bears her name and will raise more than 46 percent of the FMB's 1995 budget of \$186 million.

Nearly 20 years after her call to missions, Moon returned -- in May 1892 -- to thank the women of what was then called Cartersville Baptist Church for their support for her work.

"Right noble have you held the rope," Moon said as she rose to thank the women.

"Right noble have you gone down into the well," they responded.

In the 1995 services, O'Brien said, "I doubt that any of us here personally knew Lottie Moon, but we all carry Lottie Moon in our hearts. She has become for us what it takes to take God's Word around the world."

O'Brien, who recounted the history of Moon's missionary career, presented the Cartersville church with a plaque of appreciation for its support of Moon's ministry.

--more--

Rankin noted Moon's call came after her pastor, R.B. Headden, preached on the need for Christians to heed God's call to foreign missions. Earlier, Headden had attended an associational meeting, where he became convicted of his need to preach on missions.

Headden's preaching, Rankin said, provided the link for God to steer Moon in his direction.

"We're celebrating the life and ministry of Lottie Moon, but more than that we're celebrating not so much Lottie Moon but the reality of a local church pastor and the power of God to reach down and touch Charlotte Diggs Moon," Rankin declared.

"One day she could not restrain against responding to that call."

Rankin encouraged Southern Baptist pastors to continue to preach about the need for people to respond to God's call to carry the gospel to people around the world.

Before the May 4 service at the Cartersville church, Rankin and O'Brien visited the original church building -- now a large home currently being remodeled -- where Moon announced to the congregation that God was calling her to China. The Georgia Woman's Missionary Union previously erected a stone monument at the home.

Rankin used the occasion to "pay tribute to WMU's past support for our (Southern Baptist) missionaries. Part of the reason the Foreign Mission Board today is out of debt is because of the work of WMU," he said.

WMU has been -- and continues to be -- a vital support unit for foreign missions, Rankin said.

Rankin also said Moon's life reminds Southern Baptists God is still at work today calling Christians to full-time cross-cultural missionary work overseas.

"God is still saying to us today, 'Lift up your eyes ... the fields are ripe unto harvest,'" he said.

"If we're to be like that generation that has gone before us, there's a commitment to be made. God has not called us to success and fulfillment but to commitment."

--30--

**Celebrants told how passion  
for lost drove foreign effort**

**By Marty Croll**

**Baptist Press  
5/9/95**

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A sesquicentennial celebration May 7 led about 375 participants to leaf through pages of Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board history -- a history pocked with obstacles yet driven by a passion for the salvation of people.

Against a backgroup of parading flags, the celebration, "On Mission With God -- for 150 Years" at the FMB headquarters in Richmond, Va., recounted how the board has grown since its formation in 1845.

Indeed, the convention that immediately birthed the most massive foreign missions effort in Protestant history was born out of controversy. And the board weathered dramatic setbacks before it gathered momentum for explosive growth after World War II.

The Southern Baptist Convention was formed 150 years ago at the impetus of mission societies in the South that could no longer support mission efforts of their northern brothers during the years leading up to the Civil War. But it was so tied to missions that many envisioned it as a sort of missionary society itself.

Ultimately the effort continues to advance toward its finale, said the board's current president, Jerry Rankin.

That's the day when, as envisioned in the biblical book of Revelation, heaven is a place where "a multitude ... from every nation, people and tongue (are) gathered around the throne of God," Rankin said.

It has a way to go yet. About 1.7 billion people from countless ethnic groups have yet to hear the gospel, said Lewis Myers, the board's vice president for World A strategies. World A is what evangelicals call the people groups to which the gospel is still inaccessible.

--more--

If people from these groups each took five seconds to introduce themselves, it would take 2,695 years, Myers said. Each of the few known believers among them would come by every 600 years.

Early FMB leaders focused on gathering support at home, recruiting missionaries and then expanding the mission enterprise into new countries. But it was the board's immediate past president, R. Keith Parks, chief executive from 1980-92, who turned the spotlight toward unreached people groups, Rankin said.

Many are self-contained cultures hidden behind geopolitical boundaries drawn up by treaties after major wars. "Now, God is opening up the doors of opportunity. He's breaking down barriers (to) people who for centuries have been isolated ...," Rankin said.

The audience at the celebration spilled out of the FMB's Baker James Cauthen Chapel into the lobby and a nearby overflow room set up with closed-circuit television. Each participant received a commemorative copy of the video, "Celebration: Our History in Foreign Missions," which was shown during the service.

Presentations during the Sunday afternoon celebration mentioned several key names in Foreign Mission Board history. Among them were board chief executives James Barnett Taylor, the first corresponding secretary (now called president) who guided the board from 1845-71; M. Theron Rankin (1945-53), who envisioned great growth after World War II; and Baker James Cauthen (1954-79), who turned much of his predecessor's vision into reality.

During the celebration, Jerry Rankin, FMB president since 1993, highlighted the board's "inseparable link to churches" in Richmond.

First Baptist Church was the site of the general missionary society that sent out a call for the first convention in Augusta, Ga., during which the foreign and home mission boards were formed. The church also housed the office of the foreign board for 25 years. Second Baptist Church was the site of the first meeting of the foreign board after the Augusta convention, Rankin told the crowd.

Among retired foreign missionaries attending was Mary Sampson of Richmond, appointed 50 years ago. Sampson's 38-year mission career in China and Taiwan coincides with the board's greatest period of expansion.

Sampson's father was a member of the financial board at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., where she grew up. During Sampson's childhood, her family became friends with several Chinese pastors studying there.

When Sampson was just 7, the pastors taught her how to sing "Jesus Loves Me" in their Chinese dialect. Later when they returned to their native China, the pastors wrote to the family. Sampson's father took the letters to some Chinese laundrymen to try to get them translated into English.

"When I began to ask God what he wanted me to do with my life, it was very clear: 'I want you to go to China.'"

Sampson spent only a year there. In 1946, as communism advanced across China, she had to return to the United States to care for an ill family member. Her next field was Taiwan, where she spent most of her career working with students and teaching English at Chung Hsing University in Taichung.

Since retirement in 1983, she's kept up with current events in China and Taiwan and returned to China as a tourist. She's watched with interest as Southern Baptists have been allowed to work in China in various ways -- such as teaching English -- through Cooperative Services International, a Southern Baptist aid organization.

"I'm deadly envious that I'm 77 years old and I'm not able to volunteer," she said. "I would love to be able -- as an American woman -- to stand in a communist classroom and just by my life give some kind of a witness to Jesus, though I could never mention his name in the classroom."

One former home missionary attending the celebration reflected upon friends who had gone to China, and others still serving in Honduras. Nat Brummitt, who knows overseas missionaries from his days at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, during the mid-1950s and from participating in World Mission Conferences, is a member of Winn's Baptist Church near Ashland, Va.

--more--

"Their work has been hard, but God has blessed," he said. "Although many have come to Christ, what people need to hear is that a lot of people are still lost and need to be saved. People need to hear that (serving overseas) is part of the commission (to serve God), a part of the Bible."

Earlene Jessee, executive director/treasurer for Woman's Missionary Union of Virginia, told the crowd how informed prayer by women has upheld foreign missions throughout the years.

She characterized Lottie Moon, the legendary missionary who urged a Christmas offering be collected to support foreign mission work, as a "generational thinker" who knew "we were only a generation away from extinction" were it not for missions education.

Jessee told of visiting a Korean group to explain to them how to use materials relating to the Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions. Upon arriving early Saturday morning, she found all the women already there.

They had gathered the night before to look over the materials and were so gripped by the needs that they stayed up all night and prayed.

--30--

FMB staff writers Mary Speidel and David Williard contributed to this article. (BP) photos (two horizontal) mailed 5/9/95 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines available in SBCNet News Room.

Historical figure recalls  
hard work of FMB founders

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press  
5/9/95

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Some nights, James Taylor's hand was so swollen from writing he could barely hold his pen. Still, there were letters to write and missionaries whose lives depended on him, so he forced himself to work on -- often late into the night.

That was one recollection of James Barnett Taylor, the first corresponding secretary (president) of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, recounted by William Henry Gwathmey, Taylor's co-worker and FMB recording secretary for more than 40 years.

Gwathmey shared his memories of Taylor, who led the FMB from 1846 to 1871, and of Taylor's successor, Henry Allen Tupper, with FMB staff members in an April 26 chapel service at the agency's Richmond, Va., headquarters.

Gwathmey was portrayed by Fred Anderson, executive director of the Virginia Baptist Historical Society, who re-creates two dozen characters from Baptist history. Anderson assumed the character to help FMB employees celebrate the agency's 150th anniversary.

The agency was founded at the inaugural meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention at Augusta, Ga., in 1845. Today, it leads Southern Baptists in international missions efforts in 133 countries and has more than 4,100 appointed missionaries overseas and 420 staff in Richmond. A May 7 celebration in Richmond highlighted the agency's 150-year missions heritage.

Taylor's tireless work through the Foreign Mission Board's difficult first 25 years laid the foundation for one of evangelical Christianity's strongest missionary efforts. His extensive travels across the South during the hardscrabble years of the late 19th century raised critical financial support for the fledgling international mission effort of a new convention.

When the end of the Civil War found the FMB virtually destitute -- with \$1.78 and stacks of Confederate bonds in the bank -- Taylor and a cadre of agents forged into the border states and revived the board.

Gwathmey -- through Anderson -- also remembered Tupper, who was instrumental in involving women in support of the Southern Baptist missionary enterprise.

--more--

Tupper and Mary Catherine Jeter of First Baptist Church in Richmond organized the Woman's Missionary Society of Richmond in 1872 to raise financial support to send missionary sisters Edmonia and Lottie Moon to China. It was the first such women's group in the South and paved the way for women's missionary societies at the state and national levels.

The dramatic monologue helps Baptists understand the sacrifices others made before them and appreciate their heritage, said Anderson, who performs his characters for church and school groups and meetings of Baptist leaders.

"I'm always struck by the vast number of interesting people who went before us who deserve to have their stories repeated," said Anderson, a former teacher and librarian who has directed the Virginia Baptist Historical Society for 16 years.

"It's an old adage, but it's true: People who forget where they've been can't see where they're going," he said.

Characters Anderson has portrayed include Roger Williams, John Leland, Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice. His favorite -- performed more than 250 times -- is William E. Hatcher, a prominent Southern Baptist minister in Richmond who was known for his humor and fund-raising skills.

--30--

(BP) photo (vertical) mailed 5/5/95 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outline available on SBCNet News Room.

Child's song sparked career  
in missions in China and Taiwan By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press  
5/9/95

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--For Mary Sampson, "Jesus Loves Me" is more than a well-loved hymn for children.

It's a song that changed her life. As a 7-year-old she learned the lyrics in Mandarin Chinese, the 77-year-old Sampson recalled.

Her tutors were several Chinese pastors visiting her family in Louisville, Ky. They attended Louisville's Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where Sampson's father was a member of the financial board.

Those childhood experiences "had a tremendous influence on me," Sampson said in an interview during the May 7 sesquicentennial celebration at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va.

"I began reading everything about China I could. Then when I began to ask God what he wanted me to do with my life, it was very clear: 'I want you to go to China.'"

Sampson followed that call. In 1945 she was appointed a missionary to China by the Foreign Mission Board. But she served there only a year, returning home to care for an ill family member as communism advanced across China.

She later did advanced studies in Chinese languages at Yale University in New Haven, Conn., and in the Philippines. In 1951 she returned to missionary service among the Chinese, doing student work and teaching English in Taiwan at Chung Hsing University in Taichung. She retired in 1983.

But that one year in China -- Southern Baptists' first foreign field -- made its mark on her life. She'll never forget the winter of 1945-46, when hordes of refugees arrived in Shanghai, fleeing the communist advance. Sampson lived with other missionaries in a compound surrounded by a high wall.

Refugee families began to settle outside the compound. They wrapped themselves in padded quilts to ward off the bitter cold. Two newborn babies froze to death there that winter.

"We saw their little bodies wrapped in rags the next morning when we opened our gate to go out," she related. "I took those bodies inside, and our cook wrapped them and buried them."

Those memories came alive when Sampson returned to China in the late 1980s as a tourist. She visited the neighborhood where she lived and the church she attended in Shanghai. The house still stands, but the church now is a girls school.

--more--

"It was just tremendous," she said her visit to China. "It was a wonderful experience."

Sampson keeps current through a weekly newspaper on China published in the United States. And she's watched with interest as Southern Baptists have been allowed to work in China in various ways -- such as teaching English -- through Cooperative Services International, a Southern Baptist aid organization.

"I'm deadly envious that I'm 77 years old and I'm not able to volunteer," she said. "I would love to be able -- as an American woman -- to stand in a communist classroom and just by my life give some kind of a witness to Jesus, though I could never mention his name in the classroom."

Sampson can't do that at this stage of her life. But she hopes to leave a little of her Chinese legacy with the mission agency that sent her to China.

She still has some letters from one of the Chinese pastors who wrote to her family after returning to their native China from Louisville. She recalls as a young girl going with her father to ask some Chinese laundry workers in Louisville to translate the letters.

She hopes to turn those letters over to the Foreign Mission Board's archives, which include artifacts related to Southern Baptists' beloved Lottie Moon's service in China.

"My love for China goes back to the story of Lottie Moon and my childhood friendship with those (Chinese) pastors," she said.

Sampson is grateful for that heritage. She recalled her prayer when she answered God's call to China:

"I said, 'Thank you, Lord, that you've given me this background. This is what I want to do.'"

--30--

(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed 5/9/95 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet News Room.

**Historical Commission opposes  
restructuring; elects interim exec**

**Baptist Press  
5/9/95**

**By Herb Hollinger**

AUGUSTA, Ga. (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission voted to oppose the proposed restructuring of the denomination, which would eliminate the agency, and elected an Oklahoma history professor as interim executive director.

The 30-member commission held its annual meeting May 8 in connection with a May 8-10 celebration of the Southern Baptist Convention's birth 150 years ago in Augusta, Ga.

But the possibility of dismantling the 44-year-old agency was not celebrated by the commissioners. A two-page "response" to the Program and Structure Study Committee's recommendation, "Covenant for a New Century," said "we are not in agreement with (the proposal) ... and oppose the recommendation to dissolve this agency." The proposal will reduce the number of agencies in the denomination from 19 to 12. It will require approval from two consecutive annual meetings of the SBC.

Commissioners also elected religion professor Slayden Yarbrough as interim executive director to succeed Lynn E. May Jr., who will retire Aug. 1, 1995. In other action, the trustees approved a 10 percent salary increase as well as a lump sum 5 percent bonus for staff; folded the executive director search committee; approved a "declaration of repentance and rededication;" and adopted budgets for 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Trustees said they were united "in our support" of retiring executive director May's "courageous stand in opposition" to the commission's dissolution.

The response said the restructuring does not sufficiently "reassign all of the work of the commission to other agencies," and commissioners expressed reservations that the concerns of history will not have, in May's words, the "priority they should and must have in order to preserve the total history and heritage of Baptists in general and Southern Baptists in particular."

--more--

Also, trustees said they objected to the "lack of trustees involvement in the study ... a grievous oversight. We are convinced that no argument can justify the lack of involvement by the trustees during the significant stages of the work of the (structure) committee." Trustees charged that a rationale in dissolving the commission -- that it would save funds -- blis the agency's "one-third of one percent" portion of the Cooperative Program allocation annual budget.

Although trustees said they would implement "the will of the convention" in the matter, "we would corporately grieve should the agency cease to exist."

Mark Brister, chairman of the Program and Structure Study Committee, said the trustees concerns were "only natural and appropriate."

"The (study committee) trusts Southern Baptists to see the merits of adopting the entire report recommended by our committee," Brister, a Louisiana pastor, told Baptist Press.

Yarbrough, history professor in the religion department at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, is chairman of the commission's board of trustees. Yarbrough, named "interim" because of the uncertain future of the agency, will be on a leave of absence from OBU until the fall 1996 term. Commissioners did not disclose his salary although he will receive expenses and a special housing allowance for a residence while at the Nashville, Tenn.,-based agency.

Trustees voted to allocate up to \$50,000 from reserves to help fund the two-month overlap of Yarbrough and May as well as the 10 percent salary increase and a 5 percent lump sum bonus, retroactive to March 1, for the agency's 12 full and part-time staff.

Trustees were told the salary increases would send a "strong signal" of encouragement and impetus for staff to stay until "whatever happens." Yarbrough said the agency has not given its employees "everything they've earned."

In other action, trustees:

- approved a retirement gift of \$16,800 for May, \$700 for each of the 24 years of his service.

- folded a search committee which was in the final process of looking at a number of "highly qualified" candidates to succeed May. Trustees were told it would not be "appropriate" to continue "at this time."

- approved a "Declaration of Repentance and Rededication" in which trustees pledged "repentance in order to commit ourselves to be agents of Christ's reconciling peace and to combat publicly the sins of racism." The document is related to the founding of the SBC in 1845 where "the issue of slavery and defense of the right to own slaves was a contributing factor to the formation (of the SBC)." Although the document was approved in whole by the trustees and later was presented to a joint meeting with the Southern Baptist Historical Society for action, the trustees also voted to eliminate three references to "exclusion of others" in a version to be sent to the SBC Committee on Resolutions for consideration at the Atlanta SBC in June.

- adopted a \$579,775 (\$500,395 from the Cooperative Program) budget for 1995-96, a \$20,000 decrease from the current budget, and a \$602,075 budget for 1996-97 in which they will request \$522,695 from the SBC Cooperative Program allocation budget.

- elected Ron Martin, Garden Grove, Calif., chairman; Roy Myers, Meadville, Miss., vice chairman; and Sherry Parish, Davison, Mich., recording secretary. Elizabeth Wells, Birmingham, Ala., and Kathy Sylvest, Alexandria, La., were elected to the board's seven-member administrative (executive) committee

- approved using the board's administrative committee as a transition committee, if needed, in working with the SBC if the restructuring proposal is adopted.

- approved salary and benefits for May to his August retirement date although allowing him to step down earlier if his health requires. May suffers from Parkinson's disease and heart disease.

- approved former assistant executive director Charles W. Dewese as the recipient of the 1995 Distinguished Service Award.



**New Orleans seminary housing  
sustains rainfall damage**

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--In a deluge of rain in the New Orleans area May 8-9, a number of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's ground-floor Gentilly student apartments took on 13 inches of water.

Also, 60-70 cars, mostly those of students, sustained significant damage at the apartments, according to Clay Corvin, the seminary's business administrator. The Gentilly apartments are located about a mile and a half from the main campus.

The seminary was closed May 9, with about half of the campus without electricity, Corvin said.

Corvin said some other apartments on the back side of the main campus received 3 inches of water, resulting from an estimated 18 inches of rainfall in the part of New Orleans where the seminary is located. In some other parts of the city, Corvin said, rainfall totaled 20 inches. "The city has sustained tremendous damage," he stated.

Corvin said the seminary, overall, was fortunate in the midst of the storm that began the evening of May 8. He noted the school is in one of the higher parts of the city, about 5 feet above sea level.

--30--

**Baptist camp, hospital  
hit hard by Texas storms**

By Laura Horne & Ken Camp

Baptist Press  
5/9/95

DALLAS (BP)--A series of killer storms that swept across Texas May 5-7 claimed at least 17 lives, devastated a Baptist encampment and flooded the emergency room at Baylor University Medical Center, Dallas.

A tornado hit High Plains Baptist Assembly, Canyon, Texas, destroying the camp manager's home and the encampment dining hall, leveling at least one cabin and ripping the roofs off several other buildings.

Encampment manager George Hamontree and his family sought shelter before the high winds hit, and there were no injuries reported at the assembly grounds, according to Roy Kornegay, director of missions in Amarillo Baptist Association.

"One day before, we had a big GA group out here and the place was full of girls, but there were no groups here when the tornado came through," Kornegay said. "We're just thankful. These buildings can be replaced. People can't."

About 400 miles to the southeast, local authorities contacted two Texas Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers, Milton Schmidt of First Baptist Church, Dallas, and Les Brown of Hillcrest Baptist Church, Dallas, to join in searching the area around swollen creeks in south Dallas for flood victims.

More than two dozen patients being treated in the emergency room at Baylor University Medical Center, Dallas, had to be moved to higher ground when rising water began to fill the below-ground facility just before 10 p.m. on May 5. The emergency room remained closed throughout the weekend and was expected to be closed for another three or four days.

A few blocks away, the Texas Baptist River Ministry warehouse filled with nearly two feet of water, causing about \$15,000 in damage to supplies, according to Elmin Howell, director of the ministry. Offices of the Baptist General Convention of Texas were not damaged.

In one of Fort Worth's hardest-hit neighborhoods, members of Sagamore Hill Baptist Church quickly came to the rescue. Strong winds, torrential rains and damaging hail hit the Sagamore Hill area just after dark on May 5. Church members went to work almost immediately, securing the church's buildings and patching the first floor. As they worked, they recognized the needs of the surrounding community.

The next day, work teams met at 8 a.m. to take stock of the church's damage. Then about 75 workers were sent door-to-door to find out what needs existed in the area and how they could be met.

--more--

On Sunday morning, adults met for a rally-type Sunday school assembly since the church's educational space was not able to be used. In a brief Sunday morning service, pastor Gary Miller challenged members to "love thy neighbor." Then he sent them home to change into work clothes.

On Sunday afternoon, a job board was set up at the church, created from requests collected in Sunday school and the morning worship service. Volunteers were assigned to teams, given job assignments from the message board and sent out to work. The most pressing needs were addressed first. Evening services were canceled since much of the clean-up work lasted until about 7 p.m.

Workers nailed plywood over broken windows and covered roofs with plastic sheeting. A lot of yard work was needed also, clearing broken limbs and debris.

"Raking leaves may seem insignificant, but for a 94-year-old woman, it is an important job for us to help with," Miller said.

Since damaging hail and winds left windows broken in many homes, several women from Sagamore Hill worked in the neighborhood vacuuming and sweeping up broken glass and mopping up water.

Miller estimated the church would continue to be involved in relief, recovery and repairs in the area throughout May.

"We are trying to use the church as a catalyst," said Miller, noting the church wants to help the neighborhood in any way possible. "A lot of the people in the community are elderly, and there are a lot of rental properties. We've made a commitment to help rebuild the neighborhood in some way."

--30--

Horne, a student at Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas, is working as Texas Baptist Communications Association intern with the Baptist General Convention of Texas news and information service.

**Chowan president accepts  
Samford vice presidency**

**Baptist Press  
5/9/95**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Jerry F. Jackson, president of Chowan College in North Carolina, has been named vice president for university relations at Samford University, Birmingham, Ala.

Jackson, former vice president for development at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, served as Chowan president six years. He led the Murfreesboro, N.C., school from two-year status to four-year ranks and to baccalaureate accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The Clinton, N.C., native, who has served a total of 25 years with three North Carolina Baptist colleges, will join Samford July 1. The university relations vice presidency at Samford includes fund-raising, alumni relations, church relations and media relations.

Jackson was the first vice president for development at the FMB in Richmond, Va., where he served from 1982 until being named Chowan's 20th president in 1989.

Prior to his FMB service, he was vice president for advancement at Wingate College in North Carolina for four years and an administrator and teacher at Campbell University in North Carolina 15 years. He taught history and political science and served as assistant to the academic dean, dean of students and director of admissions at Campbell.

--30--

**ABP board discusses vision,  
strategy, fund-raising**

**By Sarah Zimmerman**

**Baptist Press  
5/9/95**

ATLANTA (BP)--Vision, strategy and funding dominated the Associated Baptist Press board of directors meeting May 6 in Atlanta.

--more--

Associated Baptist Press was started five years ago primarily by state Baptist newspaper editors in response to the firing of two editors for the Southern Baptist Convention's Baptist Press news service.

"We have a niche, but do we have a mission?" Greg Warner, ABP executive editor, asked the board members. "Is it time to refine our mission statement, see our task through a wider lens and in clearer focus?"

Last year, ABP published 635 stories, which appeared 2,008 times in state Baptist newspapers, according to a usage report. More than half of state papers used at least one ABP story, and 10 used 99 or more, according to the report.

"After five years, we have a start, but do we have a course?" Warner asked. "What means will we use to get where we are headed?"

The 12 board members attending the meeting spent an hour in small groups discussing answers to Warner's questions. Their talks ranged from using electronic media to people who could help raise money, but they took no immediate action on the issues.

Earlier in the meeting, board members authorized the strategy committee to develop a vision statement and adopted a three-fold approach to fund-raising. The action involves enlisting professionals to develop a fund-raising strategy, creating a council to implement the strategy and expanding their list of financial supporters.

Chairman Jeff Mobley, a Nashville, Tenn., attorney, said they hope to have fund-raising plan details in place by the fall board meeting, tentatively scheduled Oct. 20-21.

In the budget report, directors were told ABP revenues totaled \$247,017 last year, and this year's budget is \$258,150. More than half of ABP's projected income for 1995 is from "organizations," primarily the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Warner said. State conventions in Texas, North Carolina and Virginia comprise the second largest funding source.

Elected to another three-year-term on the board of directors were Carl Kell, communication and broadcasting professor at Western Kentucky University; Don McGregor, retired state paper editor; Charles Overby, president of the Freedom Forum, Arlington, Va.; Phil Lineberger, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tyler, Texas; and Jimmy Nickell, retired layman from Overland Park, Kan.

--30--

National journal taps  
Arizona pastor for post

Baptist Press  
5/9/95

CAROL STREAM, Ill. (BP)--Leadership Journal, a leading publication for church leaders, has selected Edward K. Rowell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Snowflake, Ariz., as assistant editor, effective June 1.

"Ed brings a great blend of pastoral experience and journalistic energy," said Kevin A. Miller, Leadership Journal's editor, noting Rowell has earned degrees in both communications and divinity.

Leadership currently reaches 120,000 church leaders across North America. Published by Christianity Today, Inc., the journal is the largest paid-circulation publication directed to Protestant pastors.

Rowell assumes his post after nearly four years in Snowflake. Previously he was a church planter in the Phoenix, Ariz., and Kansas City, Mo., areas. In addition, Rowell has published numerous articles in national publications.

A 1985 graduate from William Jewell College, Liberty, Mo., Rowell earned the master of divinity degree in 1990 from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City.

--30--

## ANALYSIS

'Gordy' challenges Hollywood  
toward wholesome family fare

By Phil Boatwright

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (BP)--Is there an audience for family movies? Producer Sybil Robson has put much on the line to develop and present "Gordy," a true family film. Here is a filmmaker who has heard the moral outrage and has attempted to do something about it.

"Gordy" is a cute family comedy about a wise little pig who leaves for the big city in search of his loved ones. While on his quest, he is befriended by a talented singing group, becomes a hero for saving a drowning boy, then is made the head of a corporation! You have to see it to believe it.

This is one film I hope the religious community will support. As a Christian film reviewer, I continually subject myself to the product of an industry that rebels against biblical principles. Many in the church have steadfastly stated, "We shouldn't go to movies."

For those who think the answer is abstinence from film-going, the truth is we are affected by this medium whether we attend or not. And here is an opportunity to send a message and stand alongside a Christian film producer and a film shunning objectionable material -- and one that may lead to other pictures uplifting the spirit of man. If "Gordy" does well at the box office, studios will be assured that once again there is a marketplace for family entertainment.

"Gordy" is rated G and features country singers Doug Stone and Kristy Young and Tom Lester, who played "Eb" on "Green Acres."

Is "Gordy" the best film I ever saw? No. But it may be one of the most important. It stands virtually alone on the entertainment page these days as a film that respects the family.

Other recent films:

**A LITTLE PRINCESS.** The newest version of Frances Hodson Burnett's classic fairy tale outshines all other entries. Young Sarah comes to live at a boarding school in Victorian New York. However, upon her father's supposed death, her world of comfort quickly changes. This Dickens-like story teaches compassion and reinforces the need to believe in things hoped for, yet not seen. G (contains a couple scary scenes that may upset the very little ones if Mom or Dad aren't there to reassure). Little Liesel Matthews will steal your heart.

**THE ENGLISHMAN WHO WENT UP A HILL, BUT CAME DOWN A MOUNTAIN.** If you like laid-back English films, don't miss this one. It's a quirky, gentle tale of two English mapmakers who discover a mountain in Wales is not quite tall enough to be registered on their new chart. The proud villagers scheme to keep the befuddled topographers in their town long enough for height to be added to the mountaintop. Now it may be a little slow for those who like to see things blow-up in the movies, but hang-on -- this features a fabulous ending worth the price of admission. Rated PG, it contains 2 or 3 expletives, but no harsh or profane language. And get this -- the clergyman who is portrayed as a buffoon at first becomes the film's hero.

**CIRCLE OF FRIENDS.** Minnie Driver, Chris O'Donnell. Romance, PG-13 (adult themes, as young Irish Catholics struggle with emotions and desire; 5 or 6 profanities; some drinking, two sexual situations, but no nudity; adultery). In spite of various offenses, this is a lovely film, replete with positive lessons. At one point, the question is asked, "Do you believe in God and Jesus?" The affirmative answer is rare from today's cinema. A dear price is paid for breaking God's commands and, although our heroine "gives in" after discovering she is in love, she repents -- well, kinda. Great storytelling with a few objectionable scenes. Video alternative: The Quiet Man.

**A GOOFY MOVIE.** Disney full-length cartoon. G (I found nothing objectionable). Goofy takes his teen-age son camping. Some positive lessons about parents and children relating. Teaches that lying quickly gets out of hand. This one will be enjoyed mostly by the very young.

--more--

**CRIMSON TIDE.** Denzel Washington, Gene Hackman. Action/thriller, R (a few profanities and several obscenities, some crude sexual remarks, but mostly it receives its rating for the dramatic intensity). A nuclear submarine is dispatched to head off a Russian attack. Energetic performances save this cliché-ridden, albeit well-made action adventure. Super cinematography, great dialogue and high decibel tension make it a rip-snorting movie experience. Still, each dramatic element has been featured in previous doomsday epics. If you do not wish to support a film with obscene language, try these video alternatives: RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP; ON THE BEACH; FAIL SAFE; THE ENEMY BELOW; DR. STRANGELOVE.

**OUTBREAK.** Dustin Hoffman, Rene Russo, Morgan Freeman. Horror/adventure, R (profanity and obscenity; shots of diseased and dying bodies; lots of vomiting; violence, including a very realistic portrayal of a village destroyed by an A-bomb). An unstoppable virus must be stopped! Can Dusty Huffman handle the job? Video alternative: THE UGLY AMERICAN.

--30--

Electrical lineman, family  
recount angelic assurance

By Dana Williamson

Baptist Press  
5/9/95

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--In the movie "It's A Wonderful Life," Jimmy Stewart met an angel named Clarence.

In the real world, Rusty Lathrop met an angel named Jerri Hargis.

At the end of the movie, Clarence got his wings, but no one seems to know what happened to Jerri Hargis.

Actually, Hargis is the second "angel" Lathrop has come in contact with during his 39 years.

After graduating from vo-tech school, Lathrop became an electrical lineman. He worked for Oklahoma Gas & Electric for 16 years and for eight years was called the "grim reaper," because he volunteered to work all the death calls.

As an emergency serviceman, he received a call at 2 one morning that a car had hit a utility pole and there was an electrical outage.

"When I pulled up to the scene, there were firemen, policemen and bystanders around the pole which had broken into two pieces," Lathrop recounted.

"I shined the spotlight down the road, and two poles away, I could see that all the fuses had blown, so I got out of the truck and began to cut the wires that were blocking the roadway."

Lathrop said he was not wearing protective gloves because he could see that all the wires were deadened. He cut five of the wires, and as he was reaching for the sixth one, he said a voice told him not to touch that wire.

"I looked around to see who had said that, but nobody was there," he said.

"I asked a fireman to keep everybody away from the wires, and walked to the pole where the fuses had blown. At first, everything looked normal. Then I spotted a live jumper that had broken off and was touching the wire I was about to cut."

That wire had 2,400 volts going through it.

"After clearing up the jumper and cutting the wire down, I started to shake and thanked the Lord for letting angels work overtime," Lathrop said.

A few years later, on Nov. 1, 1988, Lathrop was working out of a cherry picker bucket truck on some 7,200-volt power lines in Tishomingo, Okla., when the hydraulics bled off and dropped him 10 feet into another 7,200-volt line.

"It happened so fast I didn't feel the bucket move," Lathrop said. "The line hit me at the base of my neck and the top of my shoulders, rolled off the top of my head, and the electricity exited out of my left leg."

When Lathrop awoke two hours later, he was in the emergency room of Johnston County Memorial Hospital.

Lathrop said he had tubes stuck in him everywhere and was strapped to a table.

"I could smell burned flesh, and I asked a nurse what had happened," he recalled. "She said I had been burned by electricity, and when I asked her how bad it was, she said it didn't look good."

--more--

Before he was given medication to put him back to sleep and ease the pain, Lathrop said he made peace with the Lord and "asked him if he would keep me on earth long enough to see my family."

Lathrop was flown to Baptist Burn Center in Oklahoma City, and when he next awoke, he was in a Hubbard tank of water.

"I could see how bad my left leg was and asked the doctor if he could save it," Lathrop said. "The doctor said right now there were more important things to deal with than the leg."

After a long argument with doctors, Lathrop was given a mirror and allowed to look at the back of his neck.

"I could not believe what I saw," he recalled. "The whole back of my neck was gone, my spine was in clear view, my head had been scalped about three inches wide from the base of my skull to the top of my head."

In addition, Lathrop's head was swollen to where his ears were closed off and he could see out of only one eye.

Again, Lathrop prayed the Lord would let him live long enough to see his family. That night in intensive care, he was able to see all the members of his family including his wife, Clovia, and 15-year-old daughter, Regina. His 11-year-old daughter, Brandi, was not allowed in the unit because of her age.

"I thanked the Lord for letting me see my family, and prayed again I could see Brandi."

Lathrop said he had seen several high-voltage electrical burns, so his next prayer was that the Lord would take him quickly so his family would not have to go through more misery.

"For the next two days, every time I was conscious, I prayed about a lot of things, mostly that I could see Brandi before I died."

In the meantime, Lathrop's family was keeping vigil in the waiting room. It was a most somber scene because doctors had told the family he was getting worse, his kidneys were beginning to shut down and other organs would follow.

"We were surprised when a woman none of us knew walked into the waiting area and asked if anyone knew Rusty Lathrop," recalled Lathrop's mother, Lagatha Bookout.

"I told the woman Rusty had been burned very badly and only the immediate family was allowed to see him," explained Bookout.

Bookout said the woman replied, "I know how he's been hurt," and went to the nurses' station to ask to see him.

The nurses told her only immediate family was allowed in ICU, said Bookout, and the woman sat down in the waiting room, took a Bible out of her purse and started reading it.

The woman, whom Bookout described as small and in her late 30s or early 40s, said, "I bet you wonder why I'm here," Bookout related.

Bookout said the woman explained, "The Lord told me I had to come and carry a message from him."

The family was further shocked when the charge nurse came into the waiting room, walked up to the woman and said, "You may see Rusty Lathrop now."

Lathrop reported when the woman walked into the room, where his wife and sister were visiting, the usually cold room took on a warm, golden glow and a totally peaceful atmosphere.

"She started telling me every prayer I had prayed, word for word," Lathrop said. "That surprised me because I had never prayed out loud."

Lathrop said the woman told him to quit praying to die, that the Lord wasn't going to let that happen. "She said I was in the Lord's hands, he was taking care of me and he wasn't through with me yet."

"She then told me I would get to see my youngest daughter the next morning."

While the woman was in the room, Lathrop said he had no pain, but when she left, the pain returned.

"When she left, the room got cold again and the golden glow disappeared," Lathrop said.

"Everyone in the room looked at each other, making sure we had all seen and heard the same thing," he emphasized.

Lathrop said while he had hundreds of questions later, while the woman was in the room, it didn't seem important to question her identity.

Later that day, Lathrop's doctor came in and said he was going to do the first surgery the next morning. Surgeries are usually scheduled five or six days ahead of time, Lathrop said.

The next morning, as he was going to surgery, he got to see Brandi, just as the "angel" had said he would, Lathrop said.

Since that first surgery, Lathrop has had 41 others and 63 units of blood. He ended up losing his left leg after a five-year battle with infections.

"On occasion during those five years, I blamed the Lord for what had happened and for not taking me when that was what I had prayed for," Lathrop admitted.

"But today I am grateful that he didn't take me, and I thank him every day for letting me live."

Bookout, a member of Knob Hill Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, said the accident brought her son, also a member of Knob Hill, closer to the Lord and to his family.

Just over a year ago, Lathrop walked Regina down the aisle at her wedding, and on March 19, she presented him with Alexis, his first grandchild.

And what about the "angel?"

She left the hospital, and no one has been able to find her even though she signed the register for all those entering Lathrop's ICU unit.

The entry reads simply, "Jerri Hargis (the Lord sent me)."

--30--

---

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "SBC Executive Committee, board nominees announced," dated 5/5/95, please note the change concerning Thomas A. Wolf, new member on the Foreign Mission Board trustees. He was incorrectly listed as the senior pastor of The Church on Brady, Los Angeles. He is a professor of missions at Golden Gate Seminary and has a teaching role at the Church on Brady.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

---

**(BP)**

**BAPTIST PRESS**  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, TN 37234

F  
I  
R  
S  
T  
  
C  
L  
A  
S  
S

Southern Baptist Library  
and Archives