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TORONTO--Graham recuperation won't derail Southern Baptist Convention date.
WASHINGTON--Senate votes fines, jail terms for obscenity via cyberspace.
MOSCOW--Yeltsin rejects maneuver to limit religious freedom.
VIRGINIA--FMB names Mary Jane Welch managing editor of The Commission; photo.
VIRGINIA--Summer missionaries to Cuba delayed by U.S. government.

Graham recuperation won't derail
Southern Baptist Convention date

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
6/16/95

TORONTO (BP)--Although doctors have advised Billy Graham to cancel most of his speaking engagements for three months after a sudden illness in Toronto, one exception will be the Southern Baptist Convention June 22.

According to a news release from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Graham will address the closing session of the SBC annual meeting, June 20-22 in Atlanta -- the convention's 150th anniversary observance -- before beginning an extended vacation with family members.

Graham was expected to stay in Toronto for a day or two of rest, following a second round of medical tests June 15 at Toronto East General Hospital.

Graham, 76, fell ill in a noon luncheon June 7 prior to the next day's beginning of Mission Ontario meetings in Toronto's SkyDome. Graham was hospitalized, received multiple blood transfusions for bleeding from his colon and underwent an initial round of medical tests. BGEA associate evangelist Ralph Bell preached in Graham's place. Graham was released from the hospital June 9, addressed a youth rally the next day attended by 73,500 people, then was readmitted for further tests.

Results of the tests "were all normal," Toronto physicians Michael Bentley-Taylor and Kenneth L. Gamble treating Graham said in the BGEA statement June 14. "We have confirmed there were no structural abnormalities and no evidence of any tumor. We suspect aspirin intake played a significant role in Mr. Graham's gastro-intestinal bleeding. There has been no further blood loss during the past seven days. However, we have not yet discovered the cause of his original bleeding. We have suggested that in the next month he be examined again by his doctors at Mayo Clinic or in his home state" of North Carolina.

Graham's "general health is good," the doctors said, "but as he is extremely fatigued, we strongly recommend that he be relieved of most of his speaking engagements for at least three months."

Graham's son, Franklin, was quoted by Associated Press as saying his father is "the sickest he's been in recent years" and that he lost "about a third of his blood" before being admitted to the Toronto hospital.

Graham was quoted in the BGEA news release as saying, "Though I am considerably weakened from the experience of the past week, I feel excellent and am grateful for the prayers of so many people around the world."

The 73,500 attendance at the June 10 youth rally marked the largest gathering of Christians in Canada's history, according to Brian Stiller, executive director of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and honorary co-chair of Mission Ontario. The Toronto crusade meetings averaged 43,600 in attendance and more than 2,600 decisions for Christ at each invitation.

Graham's next crusade is scheduled Oct. 16-22 in Sacramento, Calif.

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Senate votes fines, jail terms
for obscenity via cyberspace

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WASHINGTON (BP)--A measure targeting obscenity sent over computer networks was passed by the U.S. Senate by an 84-16 vote June 14.

The measure -- described by The New York Times as "the most aggressive step yet by Congress to regulate cyberspace" -- sets penalties of up to two years in prison and \$100,000 in fine for computer users who "knowingly make, or make available" obscene communications or who send indecent material over electronic networks accessible to people under the age of 18.

The proposed penalties, sponsored by Sens. James J. Exon, D-Neb., and Dan Coats, R-Ind., were voted on as an amendment to a broad telecommunications bill to deregulate the telephone, cable television and broadcasting industries.

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But in his message to parliament, Yeltsin rejected the entire amendment. He said the Russian Federation's new constitution already makes room for ideological pluralism, and freedom of religion must be allowed in a democracy.

Twice before, Yeltsin has vetoed other proposals to reverse religious freedom. Still, political leaders are continuing to prepare other versions of restrictive proposals. All are designed to offer relief from the lack of order they say has prevailed on the religious landscape since reformers passed a religious freedom law in 1990.

Many Russian Orthodox leaders have reacted sharply to attempts by evangelicals to use any means they can -- especially educational programs in schools -- to teach Christian concepts.

They have backed proposals introduced by hard-liners to limit the new freedom, and lumped evangelicals and cults all into the same category as non-Orthodox and thus, in their interpretation, something other than Russian.

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FMB names Mary Jane Welch
Commission managing editor

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Veteran Foreign Mission Board communicator Mary Jane Welch has been named managing editor of The Commission, the board's bimonthly magazine.

Welch will work with Louis Moore, who will serve as editor of The Commission in his role as the board's associate vice president for communications. Leland Webb retired at the end of February after 15 years as editor of the award-winning publication.

She will officially assume her duties Aug. 1 as The Commission prepares to move in November from bimonthly to monthly publication. "Mary Jane is an outstanding journalist with a long and honored tenure in news and information office at the Foreign Mission Board," said Moore. "She has a vision for the magazine that will help us sustain its long and honored history as well as carry it forward to new heights of journalistic excellence."

David Button, FMB vice president for public relations and development, hailed Welch's selection. "The Commission continues to be one of the most effective channels for communicating the needs of a lost world to Southern Baptists," he said. "When we began our search for a managing editor, we looked for someone who evidenced a high degree of professionalism, had a close relationship with the Lord and could see the importance of the magazine as a tool in ministry. Mary Jane Welch demonstrates all of those qualities. She also has the respect of the people in our organization. We think the magazine is in very capable hands.

"Our challenge is to increase readership, and we think we have found a person who can make that happen," he said. "We're committed to producing a magazine that provides Southern Baptists with an eye on the world and helps them see their role in bringing all peoples of the world to saving faith in Jesus. That can be done by using an inspirational, reader-friendly format that's packed with useful information."

As assistant director of the board's news and information department since 1986, Welch has coordinated the board's channeling of foreign missions stories and information into denominational publications throughout the Southern Baptist Convention. She also has served as office manager.

She has represented the Foreign Mission Board in inter-agency planning for promotion of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and planning of Foreign Mission Studies and other missions curriculum.

Previously, Welch was a staff writer for seven years, writing especially about mission work in Africa. She was founding editor of Focus, the board's newsletter for volunteers and laypeople, for which she won awards from Baptist Public Relations Association and Religious Public Relations Council. She also has written three Foreign Mission Studies for children or youth.

Welch, 43, who grew up in Aberdeen, Miss., is a graduate of Mississippi College, Clinton, and attended the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is married to Timothy S. Turner.

Before coming to the board, Welch worked at the Commercial Appeal daily newspaper and at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, both in Memphis. She is program vice president of Baptist Public Relations Association, from which she has won nine writing and editing awards. Her work also has won three awards from the Religious Public Relations Council.

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(BP) photo (mugshot) mailed 6/15/95 to state Baptist Newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet News Room.

Summer missionaries to Cuba
delayed by U.S. government

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
6/16/95

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Six Texas Baptist student summer missionaries headed to Cuba have been temporarily reassigned to the Dominican Republic because of U.S. government red tape.

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The students were to have traveled June 12 to Cuba to spend eight weeks working in churches in the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba. The Cuban government issued them visas, but they haven't yet received a U.S. Treasury Department license granting them permission to travel to the communist nation.

"I think we're dealing with strained relationships between governments," said Mark Smith, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board area missionary to the Caribbean. "I'm concerned that our efforts to help spread the gospel in Cuba are being caught in the middle of the process of politics."

Smith said the license application was filed well over a month ago, as soon as final student and project information became available. But when the licenses hadn't come through by June 9, he and other project coordinators decided to send the students temporarily to the Dominican Republic.

The six students -- all Spanish speakers -- arrived June 12 in Santo Domingo, the Dominican capital, where they are doing door-to-door evangelism and survey work through local Baptists.

"They'll give the local Baptist churches a boost by trying to find (church membership) prospects and by reaching people for Christ," said Smith, who is based in Davie, Fla.

The license delay has come partly because two Treasury Department officials processing Cuba requests are overwhelmed by the number of applications, Smith said. In addition, license requests for humanitarian projects are being given higher priority than religious requests.

It's the third such delay Smith has experienced since the U.S. government last August began requiring the license of U.S. citizens traveling to Cuba. Smith and several other Foreign Mission Board officials had to cancel a trip to Cuba in early May because licenses did not come through in time. Also, an earlier trip in December was delayed for the same reason. In all cases visas from the Cuban government were granted, Smith said.

"It's not a problem on the Cuba end," he said. "The Cuban government is cooperating."

Smith urged Southern Baptists to pray that the students' licenses would be granted in time for them to get into Cuba this summer. "We're hoping that we'll have the approval from the U.S. Treasury Department in a couple of weeks," he said. "We're still holding onto that as a possibility, looking at (the students') transfer into Cuba maybe around June 26."

If the licenses come through, the students will conduct Vacation Bible Schools, work with youth and help lead services in some of the western Baptist convention's smaller, rural churches. "These churches are ones that haven't received much help from outsiders," said Smith. "They're some of the newest (Baptist) congregations in Cuba."

Last year the convention organized nine new churches, bringing its total churches to 127. Those churches baptized 1,947 new believers, up from the convention's 1993 baptism total of 1,228.

The students working with those churches would be the third consecutive group of Texas Baptist Student Union summer missionaries to serve in Cuba during recent years. Texas students who went in 1993 were the first to serve there as summer missionaries since the early 1960s.

The Texas team includes Laura Arthur, of Dawson; Argelio Bolanos, Arlington; Ada Loera Cordero, from Juarez, Mexico, and a student at South Plains College, Levelland; Gregory Cuellar, Kingsville; Susana Macias, Glen Rose; and Kalaya Minatra, Seguin.