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EDITORS' NOTE: The following six stories relate to ministries planned by Southern Baptists and other evangelicals during the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

Olympics is 'More Than Gold'
to Baptists, other Christians

By James Dotson

Baptist Press
12/21/95

ATLANTA (BP)--Evangelistic ministries during the 1996 Olympics will have more in common than a desire to share the good news of a risen Christ: They will share a theme and witnessing tools influenced largely by Southern Baptists' Atlanta International Ministries (AIM '96) and Home Mission Board.

The theme of "More Than Gold" has been adopted by a consortium of denominations and para-church organizations as the basis for evangelistic ministries related to the Olympics.

And the HMB's "Interactive Pocket Guide '96" -- an evangelistic booklet that also contains Olympic records and previous gold medal winners -- is destined to be the principle witnessing tool for many evangelical organizations.

"It's just really neat to see how this has snowballed," said Toby Frost, HMB associate director of mass evangelism and chairman of the AIM '96 evangelism committee.

"We believe that this "More and Gold" slogan and this array of products that has developed using that slogan gives Christians a kind of united front in Atlanta and other venues without sacrificing our denominational distinctives," he said.

Frost said the consortium of organizations -- the Olympic Outreach Partnership -- was formed out of a larger group called Sports Outreach America to seek ways to coordinate evangelistic ministry efforts. In their first meeting in 1994, Frost said, they discussed possible themes such as "Go For the Gold" or "Champions For Christ."

After the meeting, the AIM evangelism committee settled on the "More Than Gold" theme and began work on designing the Olympic lapel pin and tract with that theme. The partnership at its next meeting decided to go with the same theme.

The pin and pocket guide will be the principle evangelistic tools used by AIM '96 volunteers and others working in association with the Olympics.

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The pin is important because of the enormous popularity of pin trading during the Olympics. Almost every organization, sponsor or sport associated with the Olympics now creates its own pin, and many people collect as many of the pins as possible through trading, Frost said.

"Pin trading is one of the ways that relationships are made during the Olympics, and we wanted to use that," Frost said. "In Barcelona, a huge park right there in the middle of town was designated for pin trading."

The pin -- and the logo it bears -- is designed as a simple witnessing tool in the same way "power bands" with five different colors of beads have been used to share the gospel for years.

The logo also has five colors. The blue represents God's royalty and hope, symbolizing his love for mankind. The dark purple represents darkness, symbolizing separation from God because of sin. Red represents Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Gold, eternal life. And green, growth as a new Christian.

The same means of presenting the gospel is used in the Interactive Pocket Guide '96. The 32-page booklet doesn't look like a traditional tract because it contains Olympic records for selected events, as well as winning countries for all events in 1992. But it also contains a complete gospel presentation.

Frost said the idea was to provide an item people would use and refer to while still including an uncompromising gospel presentation.

"Most Christian materials start where God is," he said. "What I wanted to do with this piece of material is start with where the people were and move them to where the Lord wants them to be. We start on their turf with the Olympic records ... and when they get into it, it's 'more than gold.'"

Also included is a response card that can be mailed to the Home Mission Board indicating whether a person has made a profession of faith or is interested in learning more. Further materials will be sent to respondents, and the AIM committee has made a commitment to send materials and refer to a local church anyone in the world who responds.

Training will be made available through the Home Mission Board in use of both the pin and the pocket guide.

The board made an initial order of 3 million of the pocket guides, and already hundreds of thousands have been purchased by other denominations. The Plymouth Brethren, for example, purchased 150,000 of the tracts before they were even warehoused, Frost said.

The impact of the booklets will go far beyond the actual Olympics. Frost noted two Baptist associations in Indiana plan to canvass their entire area with the booklets. One association in Florida plans to distribute them in their area during the opening ceremonies of the Olympics, providing the guide as both a service to the people and as a means of sharing the gospel. Others are ordering them for their regular visitation programs.

"I would encourage every church ... to order these products and use them for their church's outreach, because the Olympics is not only about Atlanta, it's about the world," Frost said. "And the Olympics is going to be the best bridge to share Christ."

Other denominations also are producing their own specialized materials with the "More Than Gold" theme. Child Evangelism Fellowship, for instance, is producing a Vacation Bible School curriculum; Discovery House publishers is doing a version of its Sports Spectrum magazine with the "More Than Gold" theme; and the International Bible Society plans to produce an Olympics version of its sports New Testament including feature stories on Christian athletes. AIM '96 will be using that New Testament extensively as well in its ministries.

Another item that will be used by AIM is a special version of the "Slip Disc," a flying disk produced by a South Carolina ministry that includes a gospel presentation on the back. The final AIM version, when it is ready, will include the "More Than Gold" logo on the front.

Linda Johnson, executive director of AIM '96, said the disc will be useful with youth, as well as at such venues as beach volleyball. Also, she said, the disc is an item that can be distributed in some areas where traditional published materials might not be allowed.

All the items, in addition to being used by individual churches, will be used by AIM volunteers through its many planned ministries throughout Olympic venue areas. Examples of AIM ministries include hospitality tents, performance teams, witnessing teams, information booths. Materials also will be made available at hotels and other tourist sites.

The "More Than Gold" pin and the Interactive Pocket Guide are currently available through Home Mission Board customer service, 1-800-634-2462. A brochure listing those materials, as well as those produced by other groups with the "More Than Gold" theme, is being prepared for distribution to churches.

For further information, contact AIM '96 offices in Atlanta at (404) 872-0096.

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"More Than Gold" logo is available upon request from AIM '96 offices in Atlanta.

40 puppets & their puppeteers
among Baptist Olympic efforts

By Amanda Phifer

Baptist Press
12/21/95

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--Horace the Horse stands 16 hands high. His escort wears a ringmaster-type vest decorated with green sequins and tall black hat. The colorful duo will lead the "Master's Marionettes" into the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

Master's Marionettes is an outreach ministry team from North Trenholm Baptist Church, Columbia, S.C., and one of many examples of how Southern Baptists and other evangelicals will reach out to the millions of visitors to Atlanta next summer.

About 2,000 Baptists from South Carolina, for example, are expected to participate in the Home Mission Board's Olympic Games ministry, Atlanta International Ministries, or AIM '96.

Mississippi Baptists, meanwhile, have adopted the city of Athens, Ga., and currently is recruiting volunteers to work in hospitality booths where the Olympic soccer, volleyball and rhythmic gymnastics competitions will be held. Baptists in the state also are stuffing 15,000 hospitality bags, including such items as Band-Aids, sunscreen and snacks, to be distributed in the city during the Olympics.

The Master's Marionettes will travel in a fully enclosed wagon, similar in design to the traveling minstrel wagons of the 1800s. Horace the horse, by the way, actually is maneuvered from inside by a puppeteer. The wagon will accommodate the stage, lighting, backdrops and all storage needs for the team's 40 puppets. Like Horace and his escort, the wagon is colorful, to attract the attention of the crowds.

The team consists of church members who have completed a long list of requirements to become a master puppeteer. Several youth also are involved as apprentices.

While the team has several shows up its sleeve, it will perform only two when it ministers at Olympic venues -- "Aladdin," the story recently re-popularized by Disney, and the Bible story of Joseph and his multi-colored coat.

"We do a secular show that will catch their attention," said Philip Lee, director of recreation ministries at the North Trenholm church, "and will earn us the right to share our faith with the people in the crowd."

Children who watch the show will receive a miniature of the wagon that they can color, which pops-up into the shape of the wagon using rubber bands. The gospel is printed on the wagon in words children can understand. North Trenholm also is producing an interactive brochure for both children and adults, using the image of marionettes to explain the plan of salvation.

"Our purpose in going to Atlanta is, and all of us agree, to share the gospel," Lee said.

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In 1996, an estimated 60 percent of the world population will view the Olympics.

"It's been said that this will be the largest evangelism event that Southern Baptists have ever participated in," said Bo Simms, director of missions ministries at the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

Much of the ministry South Carolina churches will do in Atlanta next summer is supported by funds from the Janie Chapman Offering, which is received during the month of September.

Master's Marionettes will work for 10 weeks at both the Olympic and Paralympic games. They will likely be stationed at Stone Mountain State Park, the site of several athletic events and a highly attended laser light show. The team will serve as pre-show entertainment at the entrance to the light show. Team members will mingle between shows, sharing their faith with people in the crowd who will listen.

The marionette ministry was organized in 1994 by Roger Orman, North Trenholm's associate pastor in connection with the church's first annual "Harvest Festival."

Orman sensed that drama was needed at the festival and recalled saving an article on marionettes 10 years earlier while teaching drama at a Baptist college. He dug through his files, found the article, did some additional research -- and Master's Marionettes was soon created.

"This (Olympic) ministry is really another answer to prayer," said Lee, a former football and baseball coach. Two weeks before the festival, pastor Mike Boyd said at a staff meeting the church needed to think about how it could be involved in the Olympics. When Master's Marionettes did "Noah" at the festival, Simms of the state convention saw it and asked if the team would be interested in participating in AIM '96.

North Trenholm applied through the state convention and was the first team from South Carolina to be accepted. Volunteers from South Carolina will work at three locations during the Olympics and Paralympics -- Lake Lanier, Stone Mountain and Savannah.

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(BP) photo available upon request from the public relations office of the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Phifer is a newswriter for the South Carolina Baptist Convention. William H. Perkins Jr. contributed to this article.

Counties plan joint ministry
at Olympic white water events By Lonnie Wilkey

Baptist Press
12/21/95

BENTON, Tenn. (BP)--For three days next summer, the population of rural Polk County, Tenn., will more than double.

The Olympics' slalom canoe and kayak competitions will take place on the Ocoee River in southeast Tennessee July 26-28.

Between 14,000-15,000 people are expected to converge upon the Ocoee River to witness the Olympic events there, topping the county's population of 13,000, said W.L. Shipman, Polk County Baptist Association director of missions.

Polk County Baptists are excited about the ministering opportunities and are taking steps to prepare, Shipman said.

"We feel like the Lord has sent foreign missions to our doorstep. The opportunity has been created and what we do with it will determine the outcome."

Members of the association also realized early on they would need help, Shipman said.

The association glimpsed into the future in 1993 when they called Andy Jordan, a Florida native and recent Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary graduate from Texas as director of the association's Camp Agape and resort ministries supervisor.

And in early 1994, the association contacted neighboring associations including one across the state line in Georgia to discuss ministry opportunities.

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As a result, Whitewater Ministries was formed with a mission to develop "a cooperative ministry plan for the purpose of providing an effective, viable witness for Jesus Christ in the Ocoee River Region leading up to and during the 1996 Olympics."

Whitewater Ministries will seek to provide volunteers with opportunities for service by meeting human needs and sharing a witness for Jesus Christ with people of various languages and cultures, according to Jordan, who also serves as president of Whitewater Ministries.

Whitewater Ministries also is working closely with Atlanta International Ministries, or AIM '96, Southern Baptist outreach gearing up for the Olympics.

Many of the youth groups which served in Polk County association's resort ministries last summer were channeled through AIM and the Home Mission Board, he added.

Whitewater Ministries will attempt to do several things during the Olympics, Shipman said.

Among them will be furnishing housing in private homes to families of Olympic athletes, staffing chaplains at the venue site, providing guides on the buses which will take spectators to the site, manning refreshment stands at shuttle sites and passing out tracts and selected witnessing materials.

"There is no way we could have done it by ourselves," Shipman said, referring to the Whitewater Ministries partnership of Polk County, Bradley, McMinn-Meigs and Copper Basin associations in Tennessee and Morganton association in Georgia.

Woman's Missionary Union members from across Tennessee also have taken part by collecting hospitality bags, with items ranging from box juices to Band-Aids, which were distributed during a pre-Olympic event on the Ocoee River in late August.

In addition, the state WMU has set a goal of providing 75,000 bags to be used during the Olympics next July, Jordan added.

Both Jordan and Shipman are well aware there's much to be done before the Olympics begin.

"Our challenge is to be spiritually prepared for the opportunity we're going to hav ," Jordan said.

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**Kool-Aid fueled ministry
along rustic Ocoee River**

By Lonnie Wilkey

**Baptist Press
12/21/95**

OCOEE, Tenn. (BP)--A little bit of Kool-Aid has gone a long way in Polk County, Tenn. Though it may seem insignificant, Kool-Aid has opened doors for ministry along the Ocoee River that were not open before.

"The Kool-Aid stand has opened up the door for all the other ministry we do," affirmed W.L. Shipman, Polk County Baptist Association director of missions.

For several years, summer missionaries have given Kool-Aid to tour guides who bring rafters down the Ocoee and Hiwassee rivers and cups of cold water to the rafters.

In addition, tracts are available. "We can't hand out the tracts but they are there to be picked up," Shipman said, noting that volunteers at the stands also can share the gospel if others initiate the conversation.

Shipman noted the association has gained the trust of federal and state officials not to overstep church-state considerations.

The relationship "is not a free reign to do everything," Shipman said. The ministry has expanded over the past few years, due in part to the employment of Andy Jordan as full-time director of Camp Agape and resort ministries supervisor.

Rodney Ferguson, a former Southern Baptist Home Mission Board summer missionary at the camp, has seen noticeable growth.

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"When I was here in 1991, we had only th Kool-Aid stand and some campground services," said Ferguson, now an engineer in Decatur, Ala., who still makes the trip to Polk County occasionally to remain active in the ministry. Now, with the added help of churches' youth mission groups, ministries are held in campgrounds and outfitters' posts where people rent rafts to ride down the river.

"I keep coming back because the summer I worked here had an impact on my life," Ferguson said.

It's easy to ask the question, "What's the big deal about Kool-Aid?" he noted.

"Even though it seems small, we are doing it for Christ," Ferguson said. It plants seeds, as people remember the Kool-Aid and that it is a part of Polk County association's resort ministries, he said, adding that some tour guides have even tried to pay him for the Kool-Aid.

"It gives you a chance to say we're giving a cup in Christ's name. It makes an impression on the people."

Though actual numbers would be hard to calculate, Polk County's Shipman is sure of one thing:

"There have been thousands of people touched with a Christian presence and witness on the Ocoee River."

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Sam Mings ready for Olympics
with 2,500 sports missionaries

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press
12/21/95

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Sam Mings plans to bring 2,500 sports missionaries to the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

Next July the founder of Lay Witnesses for Christ International will visit the Olympics for the fourth consecutive time. Mings, who has twice been an official Olympic chaplain, plans to "employ" a sweeping LWCI team to spread the gospel during the games.

Mings and Lay Witnesses for Christ International is working in cooperation with Atlanta International Ministries (AIM '96), the Southern Baptist ministry to Olympic athletes and their families and fans attending the various events.

AIM '96 is a cooperative effort of national, state and local Baptist agencies to focus positive attention on the Christian faith during the Olympics and Paralympics.

"This will be the largest Olympic outreach we've ever had," said Mings, of the LCWI effort. Information about participating in the effort can be obtained by phoning (817) 284-3594 or faxing (817) 284-9874.

Athletes also will be available to speak at church services or youth groups throughout the Atlanta area, with scheduling information available by calling the LWCI office. Additionally, the ministry plans to engage in inner-city and Hispanic outreach as part of its Olympics effort.

"This will be the largest Olympics ever, with the most athletes and the largest viewing audience. We have more athletes than ever committed to sharing their faith in Christ and utilizing their platforms."

Among the duties of the T-shirt-clad LWCI volunteers will be distributing 1 million brochures the ministry plans to have printed in 12 different languages. But Mings, a member of North Richland Hills Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, warned potential volunteers not to get caught up in the glamor of the international event: "We want people who are committed to go on mission, not on vacation."

The LWCI leader said the ministry's goals are to witness to Olympic participants and spectators, build up local churches and minister to the world through Christian athletes' testimonies.

Lay Witnesses' approach includes sponsoring "An Evening With The Stars" services featuring testimonies by top athletes from around the world. The ministry has staged 34 such events over the years and plans another at one of Atlanta's largest churches.

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A satellite TV hook-up is being arranged to broadcast the Atlanta "Evening" to an international viewing audience of 900 million. Such numbers represent the kind of potential only the Lord could orchestrate, he said.

"I think God is so big," he said. "Someone asked me if I expected to be going all over the world. Not in my wildest dreams, but I knew God was so big that he could do anything. When the Lord got ahold of my life, if he could change me, he could change anybody."

Lay Witnesses' origins go back to 1981, when Mings spoke at a Fellowship of Christian Athletes meeting at the University of Tennessee. After All-American track and football player Willie Gault (later to become a pro wide receiver) accepted Jesus as Savior that night, he invited Mings to that spring's NCAA Track and Field Meet in New Orleans.

Dozens of athletes came to salvation at Mings' informal, motel-based meetings. Among the listeners was 12-year-old Clyde Duncan Jr., son of the former world record holder in the 100 meters and then an assistant coach with the University of Houston. The younger Duncan is now training for the '96 Olympics as a sprinter and long jumper.

"I knew about Christ and grew up in church, but when Sam asked, 'If you were to die today, would you go to heaven or hell?' I couldn't answer that question," Duncan recounted. "After that I began to pursue the issue of my salvation. It made me realize I was playing church and pretending to be saved, when I had a long way to go.

"Even at a young age it struck a nerve. I think that's what Lay Witnesses does when we attract athletes -- people see there are things they need to change in their life," Duncan said.

The track star since has become an active ministry volunteer. Mings and his squadron are now a fixture at such well-known track events as the NCAAs, Pan American Games, Goodwill Games, U.S. National Championships and the World Track and Field Championships.

Though sidelined at the 1992 Olympics by a torn knee tendon, Duncan was on the podium for the "Evening With The Stars" in Barcelona, Spain. It included such American champions as Carl Lewis and Leroy Burrell and several athletes from other nations.

"I was able to go to Barcelona with Lay Witnesses, so I turned my tragedy into triumph," said Duncan, of Houston. "I probably reached more people than if I had competed, because I would have been so wrapped up in myself. But I was able to speak, meet with athletes, give testimonies and share the Word."

Mings estimated various services and interviews with Christian athletes in Barcelona touched 150 million viewers via TV and radio. Thousands more read about them via daily newspaper coverage. While team members prayed with several hundred athletes to receive Christ at the '92 Olympics, he said the real numbers won't be known until he reaches heaven.

While it is officially nondenominational, the ministry has Southern Baptist ties. North Richland Hills Baptist Church provides office space and pastor Joe McKinney is a member of LWCI's board of directors. Several groups in the church offer prayer support and some members support the ministry financially.

"They're of great encouragement and our prayer base is tremendous," said Mings, a former landscaping magnate who came to salvation after his business collapsed in the late 1960s. "I feel strongly about a local church."

However, he also noted the Lord has been leading LWCI to reach out to other ministries and do more networking to further the gospel. At its 1995 Christian Athlete of the Year fund-raising banquet, it gave the award to former Olympian Madeline Mims, who has her own ministry. And its "Right Track Award" went to Dal Shealey, president of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

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"God has told us to look out beyond ourselves and try to build up the body," Mings said. "He's shown us to be sure we're not drawing attention to Lay Witnesses, but to him. There are many ministries in the world and we just happen to be one of them."

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(BP) photos available from LWCI at (817) 284-3594 or P.O. Box 127, Hurst, TX 76053-0127.

Lay Witnesses helps athletes
to think ahead -- eternally

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press
12/21/95

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Earlier that year, American sprinter Leroy Burrell had set the world record in the 100 meters. But at the 1991 World Championships in Tokyo, legendary gold medalist Carl Lewis had blazed down the track in 9.88 seconds to set a new mark.

The night, Burrell took the podium at Lay Witnesses for Christ's "Evening With The Stars" and explained how he handled the disappointment: "Being a world champion has been a lifelong dream. But one thing I do before each competition is ask my Father to give me the strength, will and desire to compete to the best of my ability"

"Because I'm a Christian, I am saved and trust in the Lord, I'm not worried. I can handle fear because I did what he asked me to do. All this you may not understand -- why the results come the way they are, but I do. Therefore, I think in representing myself the way he asked me, I represent him and can be a testament to what being a Christian is all about."

Such services may not generate sports-page headlines in the United States; most media attention goes to the fastest times and the best track and field performances. But athletes affiliated with LWCI say the gospel is at work on and off the track.

"It's really making a difference in the lives of a lot of athletes," said Joe DeLoach, 1988 Olympic gold medalist in the 200 meters. "We have a lot of baby Christians in athletics. Many guys' lives have been like mine; they give athletics their first fruits."

"But many overlook the fact that we're not going to be here that long. We try to focus their attention on: What happens if they don't make the team in their event? Or, if they get injured, what are they going to fall back on? We tell them, 'Don't look at your education. In some ways even your education can't help you.'"

DeLoach speaks with credibility on that issue, since a leg injury prevented him from returning to the 1992 Olympics. He is training for a comeback in Atlanta, but regardless of what happens on the track he will continue spreading the gospel.

"We all have one thing we can experience and that's being in the arms of the Father forever," said DeLoach, a part-time youth minister at Joy Tabernacle in Fort Worth, Texas.

"I can't say what the athletes' lives are going to be like afterwards, but one thing I've been able to do with Lay Witnesses is plant seeds. Once we do that, it's up to God to give the increase."

Clyde Duncan Jr., hopes to enter his first Olympics in 1996 after he was injured in '92. Like DeLoach, he feels a call to work with teen-agers and presently volunteers with the youth group at Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church in Houston.

Both were part of an LWCI mission to the Virgin Islands in the fall of '93, where some 3,000 youngsters accepted Christ during the week-long outreach. Duncan said that was one of the highlights of his work with the ministry.

"One night a young island girl, about 12, gave me a little note saying 'thank you,'" he recalled. "That touched me, not the fact that I get to speak to great athletes. The fact I get to speak to young people, if only for a moment. That's my calling."

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That is why he is grateful for the opportunities he has had to travel and speak with LWCI during his long period of recuperation. And, Duncan credits Sam Mings, the Baptist layman who founded LWCI, with the leadership that keeps the group going.

"He's a go-getter and that's what I like about him. The only negative thing I can say about Sam is he doesn't know when to slow down. I think that's what helps the rganization grow, because he doesn't know when to stop. He's touched a lot of lives and used a lot of athletes to spread the gospel."

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Tornado brings tragedy,
hope to Baptist families

By Russell N. Dilday

Baptist Press
12/21/95

DES ARC, Ark. (BP)--Savage winds that swept over the flat Arkansas farmland of Des Arc brought both tragedy and hope to a family, a church and a town Nov. 10.

Following a deadly tornado that night, searchers discovered the bodies of Keith and Donna Walls, members of First Baptist Church, Des Arc, nearly 300 yards from their home.

But the story of the family's crisis did not end with tragedy. The winds that brought death also provided a miracle. Found alive by rescuers just a few yards away from the bodies of his parents was their son, Joshua, now seven months old. Miraculously, Joshua survived the tornado with just a few bruises.

"You had to see the destruction and devastation to understand what a miracle it is that that little boy is still alive," noted Donna Walls' brother, Butch Calhoun. "He could not be alive without God's intervention."

Facing the question: "How does a family of faith deal with tragedy," Melvin York, pastor of the church, said the family's first response was prayer.

Several family members belong to First Baptist, including Donna Walls' mother, Louise Calhoun, as well as her brother and sister-in-law, Butch and Meredith Calhoun. Keith Walls' mother, Sue, also is a First Baptist member.

"The night of the tornado, many friends and family came to the Calhoun house and were supporting them and we were praying together in small groups," York recalled. "Then I went on to the hospital ... I met Sue Walls coming down the hall and she said, 'I want you to go to the chapel with me and pray.'"

York said the first thing that Sue's husband, Jim, said to him at the hospital was, "Preacher, let's go to the chapel. We need to pray."

Affirming the impact of faith amid tragedy, Butch Calhoun remarked, "We've lost Keith and Donna. They're gone and gone on to a better place. I don't see, personally, how Christian people have no hope when something happens. We have hope.

"If I didn't have a strong faith in God, and being a Christian myself and knowing I'll see them again, I would feel real bitter, to be honest," he said. "I'm hurt, but I'm not bitter at God."

Calhoun, a farmer and state representative, said the family has learned a valuable lesson in the deaths of their relatives: "No matter how good you are, life can be short.

"There's a whole lot that's more important in life than work or other things," he add d. "I knew that pretty well and I understood it, but it has come a lot closer to home. When you lose your sister and brother-in-law, the plans we made and the things we talked about doing will never amount to anything. It's all in God's hands, so there's no use worrying about it."

The tragedy, York said, has worked to the benefit of the church and community. "It has done two things to the church. There has been a new awareness of how short life is and how we need to take advantage of the people around us and advantage of opportunities.

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"It also has had a bonding effect," he said. "In this small community, if there is one thing I would identify Des Arc with, it's that it genuinely is the volunteer community that it says on the sign.

When a disaster happens, everybody drops any differences that they may have had over any small thing and pulls completely and totally together to help."

Jim Walls, a farmer who said he attends First United Methodist Church on Sunday mornings and First Baptist Church on Sunday nights, noted the deaths of Keith and Donna Walls has "welded" the two families together "in an unbreakable bond."

Just as Keith and Donna's deaths brought the families and community together, so has the survival of Joshua. "They said at the hospital that, because he was a chunky little fellow, his body temperature stayed warmer a little longer," Jim Walls said, noting his temperature was 90 degrees when rescuers found him.

Another miracle, Walls said, was that the emergency medical technician who rushed Joshua to the hospital "was the number one EMT in the state last year. There was just a phenomenal amount of happenings to save him. How else but with God would the number one EMT in the state find the baby or be in charge of him in the hospital?

"I think God has a purpose for him somewhere down the road," Walls predicted.

Jim and Sue Walls have taken responsibility for raising their grandson. While the couple admitted caring for an infant again is challenging, they emphasized that his life has provided comfort for their grief.

"I don't do any of the things I did before," acknowledged Sue Walls. "The hardest part is being tied down again.

"But I love him and love doing for him and having him there," she added. "He is making this tolerable for us. He has been my saving grace ... I don't have time to dwell on what could have been."

"Without him we would have a hard time," her husband agreed.

Just as the winds brought both death and hope, they also brought a loving response from the community, church members and a larger family of faith, family members declared.

"We've had responses from all over the world, even England," said Jim Walls. "This community is a small community. It's a close-knit community. The people rallied."

Because of that response, he acknowledged, "There's a whole lot more good, Christian people in this world than I thought there were. We were just inundated with ... hundreds and hundreds of responses and we're still getting them right now."

One, he said, was from "a little girl named Laura. She wrote Joshua and said, 'Dear Joshua, my momma and daddy told me about your mom and dad and it made me very sad. My Nana and Papa send me three dollars every week for a McDonald's Happy Meal. This week I am sending it to you. Maybe it will make you happy.'"

"I have had poems written to me by people who are friends," added Louise Calhoun. "It's amazing that people's hearts are just broken over this for us."

According to Joshua's uncle Butch, "Our main concern right now is that little boy and seeing him grow and come to know Christ as his personal Savior."

"It is because of the relationship that all of the family has had with the Lord that they have been able to be as strong as they have," York affirmed. "It really has been wonderful to see their walk with the Lord giving them the strength to get through this."

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Physician's tracts witness
to taxi drivers, passengers

By John Rutledge

Baptist Press
12/21/95

DALLAS (BP)--Claude Frazier is among the world's top allergists, but he can't get rid of one thing that's gotten under his skin -- a passion to place evangelistic tracts in taxis.

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Frazier, of Asheville, N.C., knows how he contracted the condition. He hailed a taxi during a medical convention in Chicago in 1980 and noticed the driver had a Bible under his seat. Frazier started talking to him.

"God spoke to me then," he said, of how good it would be for Scriptures to be available for drivers and passengers in the cabs.

Since then he has exceeded normal perseverance and determination in promoting that ministry. "'Impossible' is not in my vocabulary," he said. But importunity is.

Frazier's tireless pursuit of talking about his idea has gained results at the expense of some people considering him a nuisance.

But Frazier, at a gruff and grizzled age 75, doesn't much care what people think about him, succeeding in launching taxicab Scripture ministries in Atlanta, Chicago, New York and other major cities. In Atlanta alone, 200,000 pieces of literature have been distributed in 300 cabs.

Taxi drivers in most cities represent a rainbow of nationalities, and many are Muslims, he said. With much of their business centered on airports, taxis and their passengers represent a worldwide mission field.

Frazier tells owners of taxi companies that offering Scripture in the cabs can cut down on crime against their drivers, who he says suffer more homicides than any other profession. "One person wrote and said, 'I planned to kill the cab driver and rob him, but I read your tract, and I didn't do it.'"

Others have written Frazier thanking him for the ministry and saying a tract prevented them from committing suicide.

"Any person can do this ministry," he said, "a Sunday school class, a layman, a retired person, a WMU group."

Frazier has designed a cloth apron to hold the tracts, which is simple to make, he said. The first step in getting Scripture tracts into cabs is to call the taxi company managers and tell them about the ministry. Once a cab company has agreed to place the literature, a volunteer sets up the cab with the tract holder and periodically checks it to see if refills are needed. It's also an opportunity for personal witnessing, he said.

Frazier said he has talked with foreign missionaries about placing literature in cabs in foreign cities. And he's got plans for airplanes and police cars, too.

One entire police department has its cars stocked with tracts, thanks to a pastor who was friendly with the county sheriff.

"So many people look to just the preacher to do the ministry," Frazier said. "But each one of us is called to witness. It's one of the things you can't do in heaven; you've got to do it now."

Individuals interested in a taxi tract ministry can write to Frazier at Doctor's Park, Building 4-C, Asheville, NC 28801.

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Baptist association to print,
distribute Bibles in Panama

Baptist Press
12/21/95

MINERAL, Va. (BP)--A Baptist association is preparing to take the gospel to the Kuna Indians in Panama -- literally.

The Goshen Baptist Association, encompassing approximately 40 congregations in central Virginia, has voted to pay for the printing of the Gospel of John in the language of the Kuna tribe, then distribute it next July, according to the association's director of missions, Murphy Terry.

Only recently has the New Testament been translated into the Kuna language, but there are only about 3,000 Baptists among the Kunas and they do not have the means to finance a distribution of Bibles.

The Kunas live in the San Blas islands in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Panama. Their population is 70,000, though only about 5,000 are Christians. Only 17 of the 65 islands have churches, and none have electricity.

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The islands are accessible only by small plane and log canoes. The Virginia Baptist General Board voted in November to pay for four log canoes with 15-horsepower motors to assist in the project.

Next July, 21 men and women from Goshen association churches will carry 50,000 copies of John, each stuffed with a gospel tract printed by Goshen, to the chain of islands for personal distribution. Using generators paid for by the association, the Goshen volunteers also will show a film about Jesus in the Kuna language.

The idea for the project began when Terry made a trip to Panama last August with a survey team from Virginia. Captivated by the opportunity to take the Bible to the Kunas, Terry sought approval from his association and the Virginia board's office of partnership missions.

Other groups will be working among the Kuna tribe, including a medical team from Second Baptist Church in Richmond, which in April will perform cleft palate surgery on children.

Persons interested in knowing more about the Bible distribution project can contact the Goshen Baptist Association at P.O. Box 296, Mineral, VA 23117.

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Arkansas quarterback intends
ongoing witness for Christ

By Trennis Henderson

Baptist Press
12/21/95

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. (BP)--Whether the Razorbacks win or lose Dec. 30 at the Carquest Bowl in Miami, Arkansas quarterback Barry Lunney will conclude his college football career as a winner.

Most Hog fans are well aware Lunney set numerous passing records en route to the team's first winning season in the decade of the '90s. He led the Razorbacks from a dismal 4-7 record a year ago to a surprising 8-3 regular season record this year.

The Hogs scored thrilling victories against such opponents as Alabama and Auburn on their way to a first-place finish in the SEC West. Their game against North Carolina on Dec. 30 -- the Razorbacks' first bowl appearance since 1991 -- follows their first trip to the Southeastern Conference championship game.

But it's not merely his on-field accomplishments this year that make Lunney a winner. The talented young athlete from Fort Smith scored an eternal victory as a fourth-grader when he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

"From day one, my mother and dad were instilling Christian principles in me by the things they did, always representing actions of Christ and great character," Lunney recalled. "Because of the way they lived, I saw a need for myself to have a relationship with the Lord."

Lunney, who excelled in football, basketball and baseball during high school, acknowledged "things came easy to me -- I was in Christian cruise control."

Once he began to experience the pressure of being a major college football quarterback, however, Lunney discovered he was "trying to live my life to please the fans and the coaches."

Enduring a string of disappointing seasons, he admitted, "I was sick and tired of being on an uneven keel -- up and down. It wasn't going like I had planned for it to go."

Realizing the need to "get back to the point of what was important and what wouldn't let me down," the Razorback quarterback sensed "God was drawing me to him." Lunney responded by recommitting his life to Christ midway through his college career.

"I don't think I really understood what it meant to totally rely on the Lord until I went to college," he reflected. "If God is not in total control of your life, it's easy for other things to take priority. I finally came to the point where I told the Lord if I never played another down, I would be totally satisfied just knowing that God loves me and has a plan for me.

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"When I started growing closer to God, I became more energetic and excited about living my life," he added. "No longer was my happiness dictated by how I performed on the field. I found my happiness in Christ alone."

Lunney, a member of First Baptist Church, Fort Smith, also attends First Baptist Church, Springdale, on the weekends he stays on campus. Another significant influence in his Christian growth has been involvement in Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Lunney's dad, who was his high school coach, led an FCA huddle group when Lunney was a youngster. "FCA has been like football in my family -- it's something we've always been a part of.

"FCA really holds a special place in my heart," he continued. "The past two summers, I've been a huddle leader at the FCA national sports camp in Russellville." One of the highlights of his camp experience has been the opportunity to personally help lead youngsters to faith in Christ.

Even amid the renewed focus on his spiritual growth, Lunney remains an intense competitor both on and off the field -- and his immediate goal is to lead the Razorbacks to victory over the Tar Heels in the bowl game.

"To win will be the icing on the cake. We're excited about the opportunity," he declared. "We don't want to end the season on a three-game losing streak."

Assessing the first 12 games of the season, Lunney added, "It's been rewarding to enjoy the year we've had. The highlight is that I finally accomplished something I wanted to do all four years -- have a winning season. I always had a desire in my heart to go out on a winning note."

A frequent speaker at churches, youth rallies and other events, Lunney is confident this year's record-setting season will provide him an ongoing opportunity to share his Christian witness.

"I think I'll always have a platform here in Arkansas," he remarked. "Hopefully because of my success, I can use my platform to affect young people and let them know about the real deal -- and that's Jesus Christ.

"Being a young person today is so hard and it's difficult to reach the potential you have on your own," Lunney noted. "If you have the Solid Rock, the Lord, and that's where your faith and trust are, it makes it easier to reach your potential and accomplish what you want to accomplish."

Becoming a Christian as a young person "is such an advantage and makes growing up so much more enjoyable," Lunney affirmed. "When the Lord started working on me, I realized where my faith was It's taken my faith to another level."

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