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New strategy to 'reclaim' SBC
targets laypeople, committees

By Greg Warner

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- The struggle for control of the Southern Baptist Convention, thought by many to be over, may instead take a new direction -- one that leads straight to the SBC's 38,000 local churches.

A group of SBC moderate-conservatives is hoping that a series of pamphlets aimed at Baptist laypeople will inspire a grass-roots movement to "reclaim" the Southern Baptist Convention from its new "fundamentalist" leaders.

The group, led by Houston millionaire John Baugh, has formed a new organization called Southern Baptist Denominational Relations Information Inc., chartered in Tennessee. Baugh held a press conference May 1 in Fort Worth, Texas, to unveil details of the new strategy.

"Largely, laypeople neither understand the causes (of) or possible solutions available to end the ungodly conflict that is wracking their denomination," Baugh wrote in an April 22 letter announcing the organization.

The idea is to capitalize on the trend among churches toward establishing denominational relations committees, which usually are responsible for leading a church to decide how it will participate in -- and fund -- denominational endeavors.

To convince churches not to support current SBC leaders, the organization will distribute a series of simple, brief pamphlets that Baugh says will show the damaging effects of a decade of "fundamentalist" control of the Southern Baptist Convention and will advise churches on what they can do to reverse the direction.

Patrick Anderson, a Florida layman involved in the new organization, said the group's efforts "will in very simple terms express to Baptist laypeople the changes that have occurred in the denomination -- and they are dramatic changes, but they are only felt by people intimately aware of Baptist heritage and history.

"To me it's a simple calculus," Anderson said prior to the news conference. "If laypeople understand what has taken place, then they will understand that the denomination has been stolen. The more laypeople we inform, the more likely it is that the pendulum can be nudged in the other

direction."

Included in the strategy are plans for several hundred pamphlets, each approximately 500 words in length and written by laypeople. The first 100 pamphlet titles are scheduled to appear this summer -- 25 brochures a month in May, June, July and August.

The organization already has produced its first publication, a 16-page handbook for denominational relations committees titled "Reclaiming the Heritage," which was distributed at the general assembly of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in Fort Worth April 30-May 2. According to the handbook's cover, the publication "defines the problem and offers solutions for consideration by mainline Southern Baptist laypeople."

Critical to the strategy is convincing churches to divert contributions from normal Southern Baptist funding channels, such as the Cooperative Program. "In effect, by redirecting their financial resources from one agency or organization to another, the local church can virtually starve the political machinery of the New Age Fundamentalists," the handbook says.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which offers churches funding channels to bypass the Cooperative Program, is not mentioned in the handbook or other materials. Despite the fact the handbook will be distributed and the news conference will be held during the Fellowship's general assembly, the new organization claims no relationship with the Fellowship or any "denominational endeavor."

Four laypeople are listed as contact persons for the group: Anderson, a professor of criminology from Lakeland, Fla.; Baugh; Randall Fields, an attorney from San Antonio, Texas; and George McCotter, a businessman from Lillington, N.C.

Anderson and Fields appeared with Baugh at the news conference and explained their reasons for getting involved.

"We want Baptist people to realize not only is their heritage gone but they can reclaim it," Anderson said.

"My purpose in this," Fields said, "is...to try to inform laypeople in the church that they have the right to form denominational relations committees." Fields' father, W.C. Fields, was vice president of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee and director of Baptist Press before retirement.

Baugh recounted some of the history of the denominational controversy, accusing "fundamentalists" of "untruths, voting fraud and slander."

"If a good number of churches were to escrow (their Cooperative Program) funds...our heritage could be reclaimed," he said. "Every time we lose a church (to the fundamental-conservative movement), we are getting closer to losing our religious liberty."

A fact sheet distributed by Baugh indicates that the organization's founding directors -- as yet unnamed -- will include six to eight laypeople in each state. They will enlist state-level "Baptist Leadership Boards" to help form and inform denominational relations committees in local churches.

Southern Baptist Denominational Relations Information Inc. promises to conduct no fund-raising, instead relying on the low-cost pamphlets to pay for themselves. The organization, which has acquired a Nashville post office box, will have no employees; all work will be done by volunteers, the fact sheet says.

This latest effort represents a change of tack for moderate-conservatives, who for more than a decade have tried unsuccessfully to wrest control of the SBC from fundamental-conservatives.

Most opponents of the new Southern Baptist leadership have abandoned national political strategies -- such as trying to elect a sympathetic SBC president -- and turned to alternative, non-political organizations such as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Not all moderate-conservatives have been willing to surrender the Southern Baptist Convention to its new leaders, however. But rather than

focusing on controlling the once-a-year Southern Baptist Convention, the latest effort is targeting laypeople directly, bypassing not only the denominational structure but potentially local church pastors.

"The fact of the matter is," Anderson told ABP, "pastors have been insulating laypeople from the truth by saying they don't want to bring the controversy to the church. That goes against Baptist polity by making the pastor the arbiter of information for the church."

Anderson said denominational relations committees, rather than posing a threat to pastors, can help them. "For the pastor who says he doesn't want to do this through the pulpit, this gives him a way to do this through the church organization," Anderson said.

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Ruschlikon president Hopper
resigns as FMB missionary

By Greg Warner and Ray Furr

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- John David Hopper, a Southern Baptist missionary serving as president of the controversial Baptist seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, will resign as a missionary June 1.

Hopper will remain as president of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, which has been at the center of a six-month international controversy over Southern Baptist missions overseas.

Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, which founded the seminary in 1949, cut all FMB funding for Ruschlikon last October after the school hired a temporary professor that trustees considered "liberal." Although trustees deeded the seminary to the European Baptist Federation in 1989, the FMB had agreed to continue to fund the school and supply it with missionaries, who work on the faculty and staff.

Hopper has served as a missionary in Europe for almost 27 years, including four years as Ruschlikon's president. His wife, Jo Ann, is also a missionary and works in the seminary's public relations office.

Hopper announced his resignation in a news conference April 30 in Fort Worth, Texas -- during the annual meeting of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The Fellowship announced it will hire the Hoppers as missionaries so that they can remain at Ruschlikon.

Hopper said the Foreign Mission Board's defunding of Ruschlikon broke a 1988 agreement that pledged financial support, in decreasing amounts, until 2007.

"The withdrawal without warning of 37 percent of Ruschlikon's budget was a blow at the heart of the seminary," he said in resigning.

"As a result of the trustees' decision, we have watched the beginnings of dissension and division among Baptists in Europe," said Hopper. "If the FMB is to keep trust with its Baptist partners abroad, it will need to keep its word."

In the wake of the defunding of Ruschlikon, FMB trustees accused Hopper of raising money for the seminary by speaking in Baptist churches in the United States. Southern Baptist missionaries are prohibited from soliciting money directly.

Hopper denied he was soliciting funds but said his role as Ruschlikon president requires that he speak freely about the seminary and its needs. The seminary has launched a fund-raising campaign in the United States to make up the FMB money lost.

According to Ruschlikon sources, FMB administrators told Hopper he would be fired if he raised money from any Southern Baptist church or participated in the general assembly of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Hopper said the defunding of Ruschlikon and new opportunities for the gospel in Europe compelled him to resign in order to raise money.

"I cannot before God stand by and see this opportunity escape us," he said. "The need for scholarships and teacher stipends demands fund-raising. My obligation as president of the seminary, responsible to the Ruschlikon board of trustees, requires that I be a part of this effort."

The seminary held a breakfast for supporters during the Fellowship meeting.

The Fellowship, which has stated its intention to help replace the FMB money lost by the seminary, has already contributed approximately \$250,000 to the school. Fellowship officials also have met with Hopper to discuss hiring him or other FMB missionaries serving at Ruschlikon. Currently seven FMB missionaries are assigned to the school, but the FMB is no longer sending missionaries there.

Outgoing Fellowship moderator John Hewett said that at a time when "walls and barriers are dropping everywhere," there need to be "historic Baptists" who believe in cooperation, in partnership and in keeping their word.

Several FMB trustees, including Ron Wilson of Thousand Oaks, Calif., were present for Hopper's news conference and afterward defended the trustees' defunding decision. Wilson questioned whether there ever was a firm agreement to fund the seminary prior to 1988.

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Southern trustees deal with
faculty issues, honor Honeycutt

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- In three days of meetings that sometimes lasted into the wee hours of the morning, trustees of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary elected six new faculty members, debated concerns about two current faculty members and honored Roy Honeycutt on his 10th anniversary as president.

During their annual meeting on the seminary's Louisville, Ky., campus, trustees announced plans to name the new campus center building for Roy and June Honeycutt as an anniversary gift.

Trustees joined faculty and staff in honoring the Honeycutts during a special chapel service and at a banquet.

The April 27-29 meeting took on the pace of a marathon as trustees dealt with a packed agenda. It was the last time trustees will meet only once a year; beginning in the fall, the full trustee board will meet for business twice a year.

During the annual session, trustees:

-- Approved six new faculty members, including David Dockery, who earlier had been named dean of the school of theology. The six were approved after two lengthy debates about the role of women in ministry.

-- Reported they found no charges for dismissal of professor Molly Marshall based on criticisms submitted about two lectures she delivered earlier this year at Averett College in Virginia.

-- Named a subcommittee to gather data about possible charges against professor Paul Simmons, who has aggravated some trustees by espousing an abortion-rights position.

-- Declined to deal with a resolution intended to speak strongly against using feminine pronouns in reference to God.

-- Adopted 12 resolutions commending the service of Honeycutt, trustees whose terms are ending, retiring faculty members and Keith Parks, who will

retire as president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in October. A 13th resolution offered a disclaimer that board actions should not be viewed to support women serving as deacons and pastors.

-- Heard a preliminary report on the feasibility of conducting a fund-raising campaign with a goal of \$14 million to \$22 million.

-- Approved a 1992-93 budget of \$15.9 million, including a 3 percent salary increase for faculty and staff and a \$75 increase in student matriculation fees.

-- Approved formation of a task committee to be appointed by the president for the purpose of rewriting the seminary's mission statement.

-- Re-elected the current slate of trustee officers, including Wayne Allen of Tennessee as chairman, Larry Adams of Oklahoma as first vice chairman, Charles Carter of Georgia as second vice chairman and John Hicks of Kentucky as secretary.

The meeting ended on a peculiar note as Rick White, chairman of the academic personnel committee, asked for a point of personal privilege to address the body in executive session.

After about 30 minutes of closed session, the press and other visitors re-entered the room to find some trustees and administrators in tears.

Many of those trustee leaders and administrators had met with the academic personnel committee the previous two nights until as late as 2 a.m. However, any cause for the unusual display of emotion went largely unexplained.

Neither the board chairman nor a seminary spokesman would explain what had transpired, and no statement was offered to the press.

The Western Recorder, newsjournal of Kentucky Baptists, learned afterward that the seminary's faculty association met the day before and took an action apparently critical of something the trustees had done in the opening session of the three-day meeting. That action had been communicated to chairman Allen and trustee White, apparently prompting the tearful session.

Gerald Keown, president of the faculty association, confirmed the faculty had taken an action that was "perceived as inflammatory by the trustees." However, he said that action was taken "on the basis of some rhetoric that was occurring Monday evening" and was later rescinded after the trustee meeting ended Wednesday afternoon.

Keown said the action was rescinded "because of the positive consequence of what happened" later in the meeting.

"Overall, faculty response to the trustee meeting was very positive," he said. "The things that happened on the positive side far outweigh the things that happened on the negative side.

"We still have a number of concerns, some related to colleagues who are under fire, but our hope is that we can maintain dialogue and come to some positive resolution," he added.

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Southern trustees to 'examine' Simmons
but list no charges against Marshall

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- A subcommittee of trustees at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has been appointed to "examine all the relevant data concerning charges against Professor Paul Simmons."

Trustees, apparently displeased with a legal opinion from the seminary's attorney that reportedly would make it difficult to fire the ethics

professor, also agreed to pay for a second legal opinion on the matter.

Chairman Wayne Allen of Tennessee said trustees were not conducting a formal investigation but were "finding out if we have a problem" with Simmons while attempting to follow proper procedure. Simmons has been criticized frequently for his views in favor of abortion rights.

Meanwhile, trustees on the academic personnel committee found "no charges for dismissal" of professor Molly Marshall. However, the committee did ask seminary administration to "pursue areas of clarification" from two lectures Marshall gave at Averett College in Danville, Va., earlier this year.

Marshall, associate professor of Christian theology, and Simmons, professor of Christian ethics, have been frequent targets of criticism by some trustees.

At the outset of the April 27-29 meeting of Southern Seminary's trustees, the academic personnel committee met to address concerns about both professors.

Marshall had been criticized by Virginia pastor Austin Jones and a group of fundamental-conservative pastors from Virginia, who charged Marshall taught heresy during the lectures at Averett.

Rick White, chairman of the academic personnel committee, said the committee studied a transcript of Marshall's lectures and found "no charges for dismissal" based on Jones' accusation.

Specifically, White said, the committee found Marshall did not say Christianity is an insult to women, that the gospel has been unkind to women and that the gospel is a deformed image of God.

However, he also noted the committee raised other issues after studying Marshall's lecture that the seminary's administration should clarify.

That report did not set well with several trustees.

Trustee Tim Piland of Virginia questioned how the transcript used by the committee was obtained.

White answered that Marshall provided a tape of the lecture and the tape had been transcribed by seminary staff.

Piland said he had driven to Averett College to listen to the tape since the school would not release it. "I'm here to testify I believe she did say those things," he said.

Allen then asked Piland and trustee Fred Caffey of Virginia to meet with the academic affairs committee that night and report back to the board.

The next day, both White and Piland said they did not question the integrity of the transcript provided to the committee and would stand by the committee's original report.

Chairman Allen later told reporters the committee's remaining concerns were simply a request for clarification of technical theological language. "She's not in jeopardy of losing her job," he said.

On the third day of the meeting, trustee Jerry Johnson of Colorado presented a resolution he had submitted to the board's resolutions committee. Johnson said he was concerned there might be a perception that trustees "are in favor of the more radical feminist view of using feminine language in reference to God."

In an apparent reference to Marshall's speech at Averett, Johnson explained a rationale for the resolution. "Any professor who uses feminine pronouns for God is out of hand."

The text of Johnson's resolution simply said trustees reaffirmed their commitment to Article 3 of the Abstract of Principles which says, in part, that God reveals himself as "Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Debate ensued, including a charge by one trustee that Johnson was using a "thinly veiled attempt to warn or censure a professor."

Ultimately, trustees voted to postpone indefinitely consideration of the resolution.

Discussion about Simmons occurred on the first day of the trustee meeting and resulted in a closed meeting that lasted more than an hour.

White appointed six trustees to the subcommittee gathering information about Simmons and explained the recommendation was designed to meet three criteria: to protect Simmons' academic freedom, to be clear about correct process, and to guard the board's fiduciary responsibility. The latter was an apparent reference to guarding against legal action from Simmons if he were dismissed improperly.

White said he understands the frustration trustees have felt because they cannot deal with Simmons as quickly as they would like. Although the fundamental-conservative majority on the board has the votes to do what they want, White said, it is wise to move cautiously and slowly.

Johnson then moved that Simmons be given a sabbatical leave beginning Aug. 1, 1992. Simmons has just returned to the classroom from a sabbatical leave.

Trustees voted to go into executive session, where they spent more than an hour debating Johnson's motion. Afterward, chairman Allen told reporters the motion to place Simmons on sabbatic leave failed.

Provost Larry McSwain said he could not discuss details of the session but said the committee's original plan to refer the Simmons matter to a subcommittee was approved.

In an interview after the vote, Johnson explained he made the motion to get Simmons out of the classroom while trustees conduct their investigation.

"I feel Dr. Simmons shouldn't be teaching in the classroom," he said. "It is standard operating procedure anywhere in the world when somebody is being investigated to put them on leave."

Johnson said he wants trustees to follow proper procedure in dealing with Simmons, and that could take time. "At best, it will be a full year until the board makes any decision. We want to follow due process."

Johnson said he wants Simmons to have a chance to say what he really does believe, but it is time for trustees to "put up or shut up."

Trustees previously had asked the seminary's attorney, Joseph Stopher, to advise them on the legal limitations of Simmons' employment.

Although trustees did not publicly discuss Stopher's counsel, it reportedly was not what trustees anxious to dismiss Simmons wanted to hear.

One trustee asked chairman Allen what the cost of the second legal opinion might be. "Are we talking about \$10,000 or \$25,000?" asked Steve Anderson of Tennessee.

"Yes," Allen replied. "We're looking for the wisest, best counsel available, and we don't know what that costs."

A seminary official said the school already has spent about \$10,000 on the first legal opinion.

However, a second opinion likely would be more expensive since another attorney would not have an ongoing relationship with the seminary and would probably be a specialist in contract law.

Simmons was out of town immediately after the board meeting and could not be reached for comment.

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Views on women's roles threaten
faculty nominations at Southern

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- A desire to hire "men who are 100 percent correct" on the role of women rather than "95 percent correct" threatened the election of six faculty members at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

April 27-29.

A majority of trustees approved the six candidates after lengthy debates over whether new faculty members must oppose the concept of women serving as deacons and pastors.

However, before adjourning, trustees adopted a hastily written resolution explaining "no action of this board should be construed as endorsement of women to the role of pastor or deacon."

Trustee David Miller of Arkansas raised the women's issue during debate on the six faculty nominations, which already had been approved by the board's own academic personnel committee.

"This board of trustees will be perceived by the larger family of Southern Baptists as endorsing women deacons," Miller said. "That violates my conscience, and I'm opposed to it."

In an appeal to the chairman of the academic personnel committee, Miller said, "I urge you to find men who are consistent on every point" of concern to trustees. "Why should we be satisfied with men who are 95 percent correct when there are hundreds of men who are 100 percent correct?"

Miller initially raised the question during the nomination of Jack Cunningham to a position as associate professor of Christian education. Cunningham currently serves on the staff of the SBC's Seminary Extension program in Nashville. He holds degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Mid-America Baptist Seminary and Central Baptist College in Arkansas.

Cunningham and two other prospective faculty members had been interviewed the night before in a four-hour academic personnel committee meeting.

The nominees were questioned in depth about specific issues, such as women in ministry, homosexuality, abortion and views of biblical authority. Trustees reportedly asked pointed questions, such as whether the candidate had been abused as a child and whether the candidate believed it sinful for a person to entertain the thought of a homosexual act.

After this interview process, all the candidates were endorsed by the committee.

In the subsequent plenary session, the full board readily approved granting a position with tenure to David Dockery, who earlier this year had been hired as dean of the school of theology and elected to a non-tenured position.

Trustees then elected James Chancellor as professor of Christian missions and world religions with no discussion. Chancellor holds degrees from Duke University, Southern Seminary, the University of Nebraska and Bellevue College in Nebraska. He currently serves as dean of arts and sciences at Colorado Christian University in Littleton.

Cunningham's nomination came next, prompting Miller's question.

Cunningham was not present to answer questions. However, members of the committee explained Cunningham had said he viewed women's service as a local church matter. When pressed further, they reported, he said his view of the Bible would not prevent a woman from serving as a deacon, although he wasn't certain about a woman serving as a pastor.

Miller then asked for Cunningham's nomination to be referred back to the academic affairs committee. After spirited debate, trustees voted down Miller's motion to refer.

Trustees -- almost all describing themselves as conservatives -- argued both sides of the women's issue. Some argued that allowing women to serve as deacons and pastors is not inconsistent with being an evangelical conservative.

Ultimately, Cunningham was elected by a 32-9 vote.

But at that point, members of the academic personnel committee said they felt compelled to report that the two candidates already approved --

Chancellor and Dockery -- hold similar views to Cunningham on women serving as deacons.

More discussion ensued, and then a motion to reconsider Chancellor's election was offered. It failed. A subsequent motion to reconsider Dockery's election died for lack of a second.

Trustees then moved to consider the nomination of Timothy Weber as professor of church history. Weber is professor of church history at Denver Seminary, a Conservative Baptist school. He earned the doctor of philosophy degree from the University of Chicago, with historian Martin Marty as his mentor, and completed earlier degrees at Fuller Theological Seminary and the University of California.

During discussion, a member of the academic personnel committee reported Weber "is 100 percent in favor of women in ministry as a deacon and pastor."

Trustee Graham responded. "I appeal to you. We cannot establish this precedent. We're going to invite men to come in here and teach contrary to Scripture."

Committee chairman White replied, "I am an inerrantist from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet, and I would be delighted to share fellowship with this man and invite students to sit under him."

Before the vote on Weber, seminary Provost Larry McSwain addressed the board. He said Weber told the committee he had come to his view on women "out of his study of the inerrant word of God" and explained "verse by verse and woman by woman" how he came to that position.

"If you don't want the finest, most conservative scholar in church history on the faculty, then vote negatively," McSwain said. He described Weber as "the best qualified candidate you will ever have a chance to elect to this faculty" and said not electing him would be "a great injustice" committed without regard to the seminary's Abstract of Principles.

After McSwain's plea, trustees approved Weber with only four dissenting votes.

However, the women's issue surfaced the next day when the academic personnel committee presented two additional faculty nominations.

James Nogalski was elected assistant professor of Old Testament interpretation, and Charles Scalise was elected assistant professor of church history.

Nogalski currently is an adjunct professor at Anderson College, Erskine College and Lander College, all in South Carolina. He holds degrees from the University of Zurich, the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon (Switzerland), Southern Seminary and Samford University.

Scalise already has been teaching at Southern. He holds degrees from Southern, Yale Divinity School and Princeton University.

After hearing that these two men also would not oppose women serving as deacons or pastors, Miller reiterated his concerns from the day before.

After additional discussion, both candidates were elected with a few negative votes cast.

At the conclusion of the trustee meeting, chairman Wayne Allen of Tennessee told reporters the discussion about women's roles was not a serious break within the board.

"Frankly, some of us were shocked that people with the same high view of Scripture we have hold these views," he explained. "A long-held position among nearly all of us was challenged."

Allen said he had not changed his position opposing women serving as deacons and pastors but was willing to learn from the newly elected faculty members.

Bush signs Africa
famine-relief bill

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- President George Bush has signed a bill that is designed to alleviate hunger and promote peace in the Horn of Africa.

The Horn of Africa -- the region comprising Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Djibouti -- has an inordinate food shortage caused by recurring famines, war, drought and human-rights violations. Approximately 2 million people have died in the region since 1985, and another 8 million have become refugees.

The Horn of Africa Recovery and Food Security Act (S. 985) is designed to provide immediate and long-term solutions to these chronic problems. The law promotes grass-roots development and peacekeeping efforts. The law also stipulates that aid to governments cannot be granted until countries make progress toward peace, democracy and human rights.

The law represents a dramatic shift in U.S. foreign policy to the region, according to Bread for the World, an anti-hunger organization. Bread for the World, one of more than 60 groups that supported the measure, led a year-long campaign to promote democratization and end military aid to the region.

Bread for the World noted the new law's renunciation of military solutions in the Horn of Africa. Instead of providing new money for the region, the law redirects U.S. military aid into grass-roots development that helps the poorest people in the region, according to the organization.

The new law comes on the heels of a historic Horn of Africa Summit Conference held recently in the Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. At the conference, leaders from each Horn country pledged never to use food as a weapon.

"This is the first arms-control agreement for the weapon of food," said Tony Hall, D-Ohio, and chairman of the House Select Committee on Hunger. "It will save lives, and it sets a precedent that other nations around the world can follow."

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-- By Pam Parry

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