

# Chicago: the impossible dream—come true

By Bob Hastings

Editor, Illinois Baptist

CHICAGO—Frank Cofer, 27, grew up on a farm near Snellville, Ga., but he's found his niche as director of student ministries for Chicago Metro association.

His job isn't easy. There are 85 universities and seminaries in Greater Chicago.

Cofer got his first look at northern Illinois in 1971-73, when he served as a US-2 missionary of the Home Mission Board. (A two-year program for college graduates, before they finally decide on a career.)

"Chicago was a whole new picture for me," Cofer said. "It was like a smorgasbord of ethnic culture."

When Cofer arrived in Chicago in the fall of 1971, he found just a "heartbeat" of student work on two cam-

puses—the University of Chicago and Northwestern University. He credits Alvin Wilson (then associate pastor of the Cornell Avenue Baptist Church) for pioneering student work in the Windy City, although Wilson worked only one day a week.

Two years later, Cofer could count 22 Chicago-area campuses with some kind of ongoing Baptist ministry, either on a weekly or monthly basis.

"When my US-2 years ended; I remember driving down the Dan Ryan Expressway in a U-Haul truck, bound for Southern Baptist seminary in Louisville. There was a lump in my throat as I passed the White Sox park. Would I ever be back? I knew it was only a distant dream."

His immediate goal was to marry Lynn

Adam, his college sweetheart from Georgia, and to enroll in seminary.

"However, I soon found my agenda was different from many of the other seminarians," Cofer explained. "After my two-year exposure in Chicago, I felt out of step with many of the students who were oriented toward going back to the South, so they would serve a church with neat, white columns, on Main Street of a county seat town.

"I was discontented. I'd had an experience in Chicago that changed my life, and now I felt out of tune with what was going on in the denomination that sent me up there."

For example, he said, a church in Mississippi ended the year with a \$12,000 balance. For lack of anything else to do they "bought a revolv-

ing chandelier. I knew there had to be a bigger challenge somewhere else."

So he and his wife went to the International Baptist Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, where they studied with 50 other students from 20 nations.

Then it was back to Louisville for the final year of his seminary career, graduation and planning for the future.

To his surprise, Chicago Metro association was ready to employ a full-time student director by February of 1976, and Cofer got the job.

"It was like an impossible dream come true, to be able to come back to Illinois," he said with a wide, almost boyish grin.

"My goal is to open work on three new campuses a year," Cofer said. "And during 1977-78, we did just that . . ." □

## notes

### Son of deaf HMB consultant pastors deaf church

SHREVEPORT, La.—Ray Bearden, son of Carter E. Bearden who is consultant to deaf ministries for the Home Mission Board, will be pastor to the deaf at First Baptist Church in Shreveport. A 1975 graduate from Baylor University, young Bearden is currently a trustee of the Southern Baptist Convention of the Deaf and has served as vice president for the Texas Baptist Athletic Association for the Deaf. He wife, Janna, is interpreter coordinator for the Texas Foundation on Deafness.

### HMB has new logo

ATLANTA—The new Home Mission Board logo depicts the work of the Board reaching out with the gospel of Jesus Christ to the nation. At the bottom of the design is a church and open Bible. "Our churches are based on the Word," explained Tom Baker, director of HMB Art Services, "and the church on the Bible symbolizes that." Also pictured is a flame surrounding a map of the United States symbolizing "evangelism in the HMB's area of work," he said.

### An Act of Love

ATLANTA—A 10-minute film featuring President Jimmy Carter, SBC President Jimmy Allen and HMB Executive Director William G. Tanner—**An Act of Love**—challenges Baptists to volunteer for Mission Service Corps (MSC). The convention's plan to field 5,000

volunteers alongside missionaries at home and abroad by 1982, also is promoted through testimonies of four MSC missionaries. The 16mm color film is available through state convention offices.

### Church offers auditorium for deaf worship

MOBILE, Ala.—When Spring Hill Baptist Church in Mobile built a new auditorium, they offered the old auditorium for deaf worship and Bible study. Today, both black and white, hearing and non-hearing are participants in the deaf service, and have been baptized into the church membership. It is one of more than 650 deaf ministries in the Southern Baptist Convention. Gary Shoemaker, who is totally deaf, is pastor of the new congregation. He is a recent graduate of Harrison-Chilhowee Academy in Seymour, Tenn.

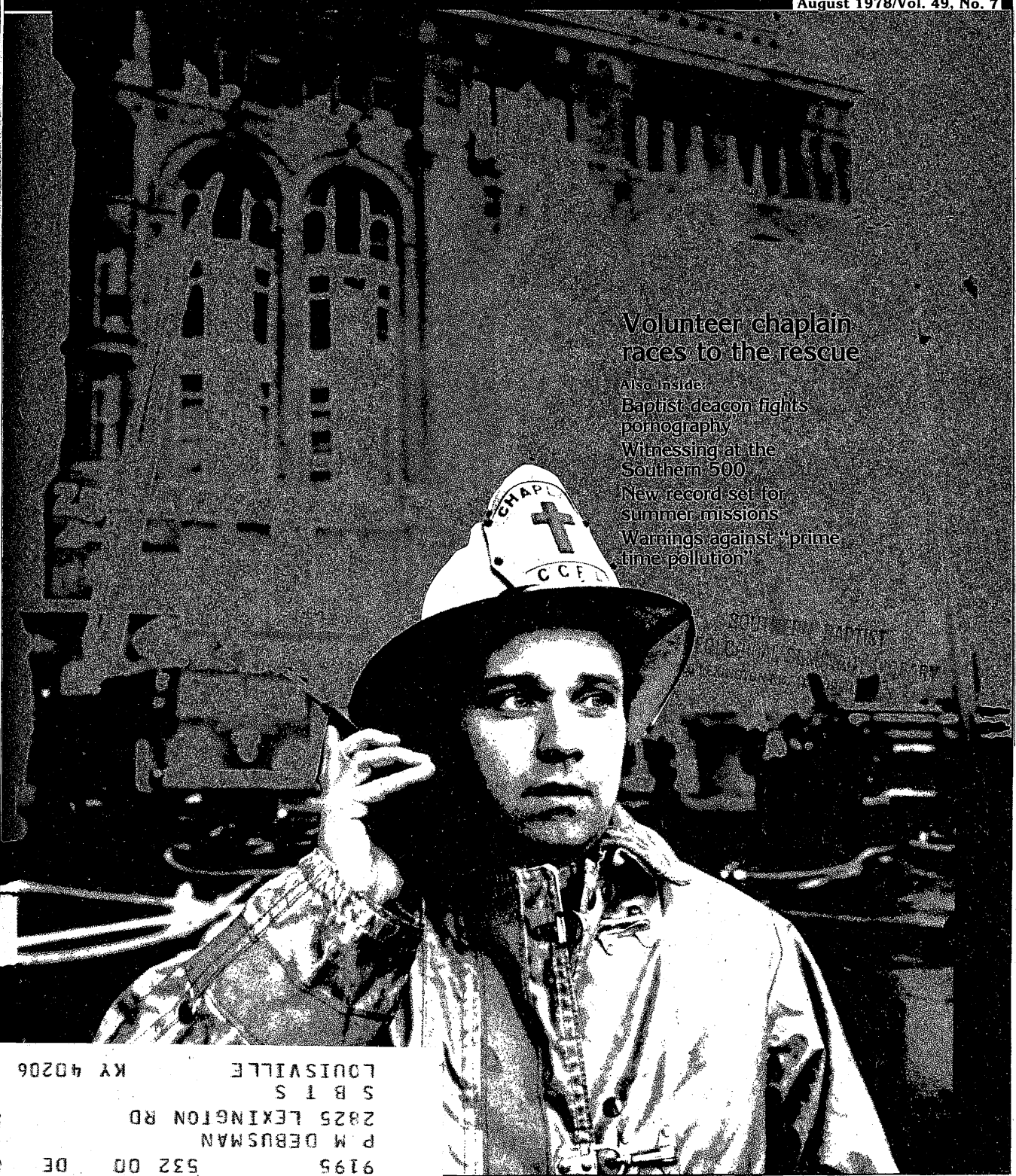
### Sabbatical will pilot counseling project

SAN FRANCISCO—During a four-month sabbatical in California, James Barber, assistant director of Home Mission Board's Christian Social Ministries, will begin a pilot counseling project involving Golden Gate Theological seminary and the Board. Barber will counsel seminary students and pastors in the area, as well as teach introduction to social work and pastoral care. His sabbatical extending from now through December also will include study of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley. □

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# home missions notebook

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3195 532 00 DE  
P M DEBUSMAN  
2825 LEXINGTON RD  
S B T S  
LOUISVILLE KY 40206