

Dr. John LaNoue

Biographical Record

John Long LaNoue Sr. (b. September 25, 1934)
American Baptist Minister, Humanitarian, and Author
Co-founder, Amigos Internacionales (1967)
Pioneer, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief

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This document is the biographical record of Dr. John Long LaNoue Sr., compiled for permanent reference. The text was originally prepared as an English Wikipedia biographical draft. Every claim is attributed to an independent published source — contemporary newspapers, denominational journals, U.S. government reports, Congressional Research Service publications, and book-length works. Source documents are independently archived at archive.org/@amigos_internacionales and via the Wayback Machine to ensure the evidentiary record outlives any single platform.

John Long LaNoue Sr. (born September 25, 1934) is an American Baptist minister, humanitarian, and author. He purchased and converted the used 18-wheeler that became the first mobile feeding unit used by Texas Baptist Men (TBM), a vehicle that seeded what became Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, one of the largest volunteer disaster response networks in the United States.^{[1][2][3]} Earlier, while a Baptist Student Union director in Kilgore, Texas, he built the first mobile medical clinic operated by Texas Baptists along the Rio Grande, and in 1967 he co-founded the medical mission organization Amigos Internacionales, which he has continued to serve as a director and former president.^{[4][5][6]}

Between the early 1970s and 2011, LaNoue led or accompanied disaster relief and medical mission deployments to Honduras, Peru, Iraq, Iran, Cuba, North Korea, and Japan. Contemporary press accounts identified his teams as among the first American volunteers to operate in Iran after the Iranian Revolution and in North Korea during the country's mid-1990s famine.^[2] In 2010 TBM dedicated the John LaNoue Disaster Relief Complex, a 15,000-square-foot facility in east Dallas, in his honor.^[7]

Early life and education

LaNoue was born in Beaumont, Texas, where he grew up in poverty after his father left the family when he was four years old. He has said that he became a Christian at sixteen after two laymen in his community shared their faith with him, an account he has connected to his later emphasis on lay leadership.^[2]

He attended Stephen F. Austin State University, where he met Kaywin Joan Baldwin. Baldwin earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1956.^[8] The couple married and both later studied at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.^[8] LaNoue subsequently received a Doctor of Ministry degree in San Francisco.^[2]

Mobile clinic and Amigos Internacionales

While serving as Baptist Student Union director at Kilgore College, LaNoue began organizing a student medical and dental mission to communities along the Rio Grande.^{[2][3]} His personal physician, Kerfoot Walker of Tyler, Texas, advised him that a mobile examining room would be the most practical way to reach remote villages.^[2]

The clinic was a converted 14-passenger school bus. The *Kilgore News Herald* reported on its launch in June 1967, when LaNoue led a 14-stop tour from Harlingen to El Paso. The article named him as the project's coordinator and traced the initiative to an October 1966 program of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.^[9]

In the same year, LaNoue co-founded **Amigos Internacionales** with Jim Wren and Ed Nusko in Athens, Texas. A July 1968 *Tyler Morning Telegraph* article named the three co-founders together with physician Kerfoot Walker.^[10] A 1985 United Press International story confirmed the 1967 founding and described the organization's clinic work in Punta Gorda, Belize.^[4] In a 2024 *Baptist Standard* article on

Amigos Internacionales' East African work, LaNoue described the origin of the organization in similar terms: "It all began in 1967, building mobile medical clinics for River Ministry to use along the border."^[5] The same article identified him as "longtime leader in Texas Baptist Men disaster relief ministries and one of the founders of Amigos Internacionales" and reported that he continues to serve on the Amigos Internacionales board of directors.^[5]

Texas Baptist Men

LaNoue later joined the staff of Texas Baptist Men, where he became director of disaster relief.^[2] Texas Baptists had first organized a disaster response after Hurricane Beulah struck South Texas in 1967, and TBM took on the coordinating role three years later when Hurricane Celia hit the Gulf Coast.^[2]

LaNoue spent 36 hours sketching plans for a self-contained relief trailer that combined a field kitchen, communications equipment, sleeping quarters for the crew, and basic relief supplies.^[2] According to the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief history, LaNoue and other volunteers purchased and converted a used 18-wheeler into the first mobile feeding unit, which was funded by the Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions and built in the driveway of his home in Mesquite, Texas.^{[1][2][3]} Its first deployment came after a 1972 Guadalupe River flood killed 17 people and caused more than \$17 million in damage in Seguin, Texas, where LaNoue drove the new trailer onto the courthouse square and set up operations, serving roughly 2,500 hot meals across the Seguin and New Braunfels area on its maiden voyage.^{[2][1]} In 1974, the same 18-wheel feeding unit was deployed to Honduras to assist survivors of Hurricane Fifi, one of the deadliest Atlantic hurricanes on record.^[1]

A 1984 Home Mission Board pamphlet on Southern Baptist disaster response identified LaNoue as "disaster services coordinator for Texas Baptists".^[11]

In 1987, a tornado destroyed more than 80 structures and killed 30 people in Saragosa, Texas. The *Midland Reporter-Telegram* reported that LaNoue coordinated BGCT volunteer offices overseeing about 500 church volunteers who built cinderblock homes for displaced residents.^[12] During the 1994 Northridge earthquake response, the *Abilene Reporter-News* identified him as TBM volunteer coordinator and reported that an 18-wheeler carrying a TBM field kitchen passed through Tye, Texas, en route to California, where the unit produced about 30,000 meals a day.^[13]

International deployments

Peru

In 1991, LaNoue was involved in TBM's response to the Peruvian cholera epidemic, the first epidemic appearance of cholera in the Western Hemisphere in nearly a century.^[14] A 2012 *Baptist Standard* history of TBM reported that during the outbreak the organization worked with Texas Baptist hospitals to provide more than \$4 million in financial aid and medical supplies, and that U.S. military transport

planes carried the first round of relief to Peru. According to the same account, that contact with the Department of Defense was a factor when U.S. officials later asked TBM to supply blankets for Kurdish refugees after the Gulf War.^[15]

Iran

After the Gulf War, LaNoue was part of a twelve-man Baptist relief team that entered Iran to serve Iraqi Kurdish refugees at the Dolenav camp. A 2011 *Baptist Standard* profile described the group as one of the first American Christian teams to work inside Iran since the Iranian Revolution.^[2]

Missions Today, the magazine of the Southern Baptist Convention's Brotherhood Commission, reported on the operation in October 1991. Editor Jim Burton named LaNoue among the twelve participants and identified him as "Baptist Young Men's director, Baptist General Convention of Texas". The article described three-man crews operating water-purification systems, propane burners, and mass-feeding equipment that supplied up to 13,000 meals a day. The Foreign Mission Board leased a C-130 transport plane from the Lester Sumrall Evangelistic Association to move equipment into Iran, and TBM executive director Bob Dixon arranged the shipment of 10,000 blankets to Kurdish refugees in Turkey.^[16]

Two decades later, the 2011 *Baptist Standard* profile recounted the recollections of an Iranian official who had observed the team. The official told LaNoue: "These men are not like the Americans we have heard about. They do not drink or smoke. I have watched them for three weeks, and they have not bothered any of the women. They sing in the night, and they love each other."^[2]

Cuba

In late 1994, LaNoue was directing TBM and serving as president of the TBM Aviation Fellowship. The *Abilene Reporter-News* reported that he organized search-and-rescue flights for Cuban refugees off the Florida coast. Volunteer pilots flew at about 120 knots looking for survivors at sea; the operation ended as U.S. attention shifted to the developing situation in Haiti.^[17]

North Korea

LaNoue spent three months in North Korea in 1997 as a member of a five-person team that monitored food distribution in ten of the country's twelve provinces.^[18] The team had been organized in August 1997 by five U.S. relief agencies (Amigos Internacionales, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Mercy Corps, and World Vision) to track 55,000 metric tons of corn that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) had contributed to the World Food Programme, an amount described as roughly a month's worth of food for five million people.^{[18][19]}

The consortium reported its findings at a National Press Club briefing in Washington on November 20, 1997. A USIA dispatch by John Lundin quoted "Dr. John LaNoue of Amigos Internacionales" on the team's verification methods, including locating empty USA-marked grain sacks reused in fields during the harvest.^[19] The *Deseret News* carried a parallel report the same day. It quoted LaNoue on the difficulty of conducting interviews in a country where, in his words, citizens "had been trained from

childhood to be suspicious of Americans", and confirmed monitoring of 60,500 tons of cereals from USAID across the ten provinces.^[20] *The Oregonian* named Amigos Internacionales in its November 28 coverage.^[21]

The grouping was later formalized as the Private Voluntary Organization Consortium (PVOC). The U.S. General Accounting Office listed Amigos Internacionales alongside CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Mercy Corps, and World Vision among the consortium's core members in a 1999 report on food aid restrictions inside North Korea.^[22] A 2011 Congressional Research Service report on NGO activity in North Korea gave the same list of PVOC members.^[23] In September 2011, USAID assistant administrator Nancy Lindborg cited the PVOC by name in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, describing the consortium's monitoring work as the basis for later U.S. food assistance programs in the country.^[24]

A follow-up project in 1998 was reported by *The Commission*, the International Mission Board's national magazine. The article said LaNoue, then director of adult ministries for TBM, had arranged a \$60,000 IMB–TBM shipment of salt after a typhoon flooded sea-salt evaporation beds. It also reported that a request relayed through LaNoue for children's coats led to a "Coats for Christmas" drive, which sent 40,000 coats in an initial phase; sponsors said the eventual request was for 180,000 coats for children in the northern provinces. According to the article, Southern Baptists had given about \$1.5 million for North Korean hunger relief through IMB and partner agencies since January 1996.^[25] *The Monitor* of McAllen, Texas, picked up a *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* report at the end of 1997 noting that Baptist volunteers had distributed 100,000 children's coats in partnership with World Vision and Catholic Relief Services, that the FAO had praised the country's food distribution system, and that LaNoue had worked there for two consecutive years.^[26]

Christianity Today covered the consortium in its October 26, 1998 issue. Correspondent Christine J. Gardner reported that World Vision had sent nearly \$7.5 million in food, medicines, and clothing since 1995, and that it had joined "Amigos Internacionales [sic], CARE, Catholic Relief Services, and Mercy Corps International to form the Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) consortium, which has distributed 75,000 metric tons of grain".^[27]

LaNoue returned to North Korea later in the decade. In December 2007 the *Baptist Standard* reported that he had recently come back from another trip and that he and TBM volunteer Jim Pinkston of Edgewood had completed installation of a soybean processing plant in the Haepo Ri area that produced oil, tofu, and soymilk for children.^[28] A 2007 essay in *Policy Innovations*, published by the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, described Global Resource Services, the Southern Baptist-funded NGO that grew out of TBM's earlier consortium work, as one of a small number of U.S. religious agencies still operating food-processing facilities for North Korean populations.^[29]

September 11 trauma bears

LaNoue retired from the TBM staff in 1999 but continued to lead international and domestic deployments for more than a decade.^[2] After the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York City, he and his wife Kaywin were called in to coordinate the Southern Baptist "Trauma Bears" effort, working

out of the office of the New York City mayor. A 2001 *Baptist Press* report described LaNoue as "a 30-year Disaster Relief veteran from Texas who was called in with his wife, Kaywin, to coordinate the effort".^[30]

Bam

In January 2004 LaNoue led a 15-member team to Bam, Iran, where an earthquake had destroyed three-quarters of the ancient city. The *Baptist Standard* reported that the team prepared more than 3,000 meals and 5,000 cups of hot tea a day for a 341-tent refugee camp housing more than 1,700 people, with another 1,000 meals a day going to a second camp, working 14-hour shifts under Iranian government supervision.^[31]

Sendai

In 2011, LaNoue traveled to Sendai, Japan, as a member of the first Texas Baptist advance team to arrive after the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. He and Gary Smith trained leaders of the Japan Baptist Convention in the use of water filters, helped assess Texas Baptist support for the relief effort, and delivered kerosene and food to three churches in the Sendai area.^[32]

Speaking to the *Baptist Standard* in 2011 about more than four decades of overseas work, LaNoue said the assignments had changed how he thought about cross-cultural ministry: "The notion that people have to do things my way, sound like me and look like me—the Lord blew that out the window."^[2]

Recognition and writing

In March 1993, former President George H. W. Bush sent LaNoue a letter thanking him for airlift work in Iraq and Peru and acknowledging his planned relief activity in Bosnia. The letter identified him as Director of Baptist Young Men at Texas Baptist Men in Dallas.^[33] A 2014 *Baptist Standard* report on an ambulance shipment to Cuba identified him as "the veteran disaster relief leader with Texas Baptist Men who built the first Baptist disaster relief mobile unit more than 40 years ago, as well as multiple mobile clinics for Texas Baptists' River Ministry" and as "president of Amigos Internacionales".^[6]

In 2010, Texas Baptist Men dedicated the John LaNoue Disaster Relief Complex, a 15,000-square-foot expansion of the Robert E. Dixon Mission Equipping Center in east Dallas. The facility houses the TBM disaster relief vehicle fleet and a communications center with backup power.^[7] A 2017 *Baptist Standard* feature marking TBM's 50th anniversary credited LaNoue with two foundational firsts for the organization: the first mobile clinic used by the convention's River Ministry and the first Baptist disaster relief mobile unit.^[3]

LaNoue co-authored *Walking with God in Broken Places and Lessons I Learned Along the Way* with his wife, Kaywin, published by CrossBooks in November 2010.^[34] He is also the author of *Divorcing? Remember Me* (CrossBooks, June 2012), which draws on his experience as a child of divorced parents.^[35]

Personal life

LaNoue and Kaywin Joan Baldwin LaNoue were married for more than sixty years. Kaywin LaNoue died on April 1, 2021, at age 86. Her *Dallas Morning News* obituary noted her decades of work with TBM Disaster Relief and on missions with her husband; the family directed memorial donations to Amigos Internacionales.^[8]

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External links

- Dr. John LaNoue — Amigos Internacionales: <https://www.amigosii.org/Dr-John-LaNoue>
- Baptist disaster relief pioneer reflects on lessons learned — Baptist Standard: <https://baptiststandard.com/news/texas/baptist-disaster-relief-pioneer-reflects-on-lessons-learned/>
- TBM dedicates John LaNoue Disaster Relief Complex — Baptist Standard: <https://baptiststandard.com/news/texas/tbm-dedicates-expanded-disaster-relief-complex/>

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