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NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Art Toalston, Editor
Fax (615) 782-8736
CompuServe ID # 70420,17

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**RU 486 nears approval;
patients face decisions**

By Tom Strode

**Baptist Press
7/25/96**

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WASHINGTON (BP)--As the RU 486 abortion technique nears final approval for use in this country, Southern Baptists and others may face some decisions about their medical care.

"It is time for patients to ask their doctors if they will use RU 486," said Ben Mitchell, consultant on biomedical and life issues for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "If they say 'yes,' then it is time for us to make some choices of our own. We ought to change physicians. If a physician will chemically target unborn babies for death, who knows what else they will do? They are not the kind of doctor you want."

The Population Council, which holds the United States patent to a drug developed by a French company, recently cleared a major hurdle to approval by the Food and Drug Administration. After a day-long hearing, an FDA advisory committee endorsed RU 486 in a 6-0 vote, with two abstentions.

There appears little doubt the FDA will give final approval, possibly by year's end. The agency rarely overturns the recommendations of its advisory committees.

When approval comes, it appears certain to change the dynamic of the abortion battle and to cause further debate in the medical field. A survey released at the hearing by the Kaiser Family Foundation of California showed four of 10 obstetricians who now refuse to perform abortions would prescribe RU 486 for abortion, The Washington Times reported.

"We are facing a fundamental division in modern medicine," Mitchell said. "Either one is a Hippocratic physician who will not intentionally harm patients, or one is a eugenicist who seeks to destroy the weak and vulnerable among us."

"A physician who is worth the title will not use RU 486. Chemical abortion is just as reprehensible and offensive to a good doctor as manual methods of killing babies."

Pro-lifers and pro-choicers seem to agree RU 486 may increase markedly the number of abortions in the country beyond the current 1.5 million a year and could thwart anti-abortion demonstrations targeting clinics and doctors.

Not only will RU 486 kill unborn children, but pro-lifers fear it will endanger women's health.

"We are talking about a molotov cocktail abortion, not an evening sherry," said Helen Donovan, a northern Virginia lawyer who represents women injured by surgical abortion.

"Not only can we expect more injuries and deaths with the use of RU 486, we can also expect that the women who raise claims of injury will have difficulty recovering (damages). The physicians will blame the woman and the manufacturer. The unknown manufacturer is overseas, and the newly invented distributor will conveniently disappear. The injuries will not disappear," Donovan said at a National Right to Life Committee news conference July 18, a day before the advisory committee's action.

The chemical procedure actually may be more traumatic for a mother than a surgical one, said NRLC President Wanda Franz.

Because the mother using RU 486 may abort at home and it is important "she identify the contents of her womb, she must look at the results of the abortion," Franz said at the news conference. "In a surgical procedure, the woman generally does not see the baby. Thus, the privacy that women claim to want may actually be a contributing factor to increasing trauma."

While doctors and pro-lifers have raised several other questions about potential health problems for the pregnant woman, the FDA continues speeding ahead on a timetable "about one-third of the 17 months that fast-track drugs usually take" in a "totally politicized drug approval process," said Richard Glasow, a consultant on RU 486 to pro-life groups.

Wayne Bardin, a consultant for The Population Council, said at the hearing, "We wanted to make sure it was applied for during this administration," The Times reported.

The process began on President Clinton's third day in office in 1993. He directed the FDA to determine if the import ban on RU 486 should be lifted. At the time, pro-life leaders predicted the federal government would do all it could to gain approval for the drug.

In May 1994, The Population Council received the patent by donation from Roussel Uclaf, the French developer of RU 486. Clinical trials involving abortions for more than 2,100 women at 17 clinics were held in 1994-95.

At the July 19 hearing, FDA advisory committee members expressed displeasure with The Population Council's failure to submit complete data, according to The Times.

The application for FDA approval was filed mostly based on data from France, said Sandra Wallman, a spokesperson for The Population Council. The organization provided safety information and preliminary data on the drug's acceptability by U.S. women but did not have complete information on its effectiveness or side effects, Wallman told Baptist Press.

The week before the advisory committee hearing, some pro-lifers asked FDA Commissioner David Kessler to remove as many as six members of the panel for their pro-abortion advocacy or connections. The CLC, NRLC, Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family, Concerned Women for America and Life Issues Institute made such a request.

RU 486, also known as mifepristone, is used with a prostaglandin, misoprostol, to induce abortion in women in the early weeks of pregnancy. RU 486 causes the lining of the uterus to release the baby, who usually suffocates or starves to death. Misoprostol causes the uterus to contract, expelling the child's body.

The procedure requires at least three visits to a clinic. On the first visit, the woman takes three tablets of RU 486, then returns two days later for two tablets of misoprostol. After a four-hour stay at the clinic on this second visit, about 70 percent of women have an abortion, according to the council. The remainder of women will abort after they leave the clinic. Two weeks after the first visit, the woman returns to make sure the abortion is complete. If it is incomplete, a surgical abortion is done.

RU 486 is legal in France, Great Britain and Sweden. While The Population Council has said more than 150,000 women have used RU 486 safely in Europe, the NRLC has said the drug has caused the death of a woman and injuries to others.

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**Gambling panel receives
final congressional OK**

By Tom Strode

**Baptist Press
7/25/96**

WASHINGTON (BP)--A bill establishing a panel to study the effects of gambling on American society is just a presidential signature away from becoming law -- only a few months after appearing it might die in Congress.

The House of Representatives approved by voice vote without opposition the National Gambling Impact Study Commission Act. The House's July 22 action followed by only five days the Senate's approval of the same legislation. The House had passed a slightly different version in March but chose to OK the Senate's version rather than allow the different versions to go to potentially drawn-out negotiations in a House-Senate conference committee.

President Clinton has expressed support for the legislation.

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The bill provides for a nine-member commission to study the social and economic effects of gambling on government, communities, families, businesses and individuals. The commission would be appointed within 60 days after the enactment of the legislation and would make its report no more than two years after its first meeting.

The panel would have three members appointed by the president, three by the Senate majority leader and three by the speaker of the House. The cost of the commission would be about \$5 million, according to a Congressional Budget Office study.

The House action "is a victory for communities and families across America," said Rep. Frank Wolf, R.-Va., chief House sponsor. The commission "will provide governors and mayors, citizens and neighbors with objective information about the effects of gambling so that they are better prepared when making their decisions about the industry."

The last national study of gambling came in 1976, when only Nevada and New Jersey had legalized gambling, Wolf said in a prepared statement. But now only a few states have no form of legal gambling.

The original House version of the legislation granted the commission power to subpoena individuals as well as documents. The final version approved by both houses allows subpoena power only for documents, unless a person is needed to provide an explanation, and it includes disclosure restrictions to protect privacy which the original House version did not.

After the House passed its version in March, the legislation hit a snag in the Senate. Sen. Richard Bryan, D.-Nev., put a hold on the bill, a tactic a senator can use to block action. A Senate committee nearly seriously weakened the commission's power before withdrawing a revised version just prior to a planned vote. In addition, while speaking at an April fund-raiser at a Las Vegas casino, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R.-Ga., said the panel's subpoena power should be removed.

The dynamic changed this summer, however. Sen. Trent Lott, R.-Miss., replaced Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole as majority leader and chose to support the legislation.

Sen. Paul Simon, D.-Ill., was the chief sponsor of the bill in his chamber.

The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission was among the supporters of the legislation. In a letter last September to the 35 members of the House Judiciary Committee, then-Southern Baptist Convention President Jim Henry and CLC President Richard Land urged them to approve the bill, which the committee did in November.

Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in June approved a resolution supporting a gambling commission.

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EDITORS' NOTE: Please make two revisions to (BP) story titled "Historian Lynn May dies, led SBC agency from 1971-95," dated 7/24/96. The first, a comment from Morris Chapman, SBC Executive Committee president and CEO, was received July 25 from Carmel, Calif., where Chapman was attending a meeting of Southern Baptists' Stewardship Development Association. The second lists May's funeral arrangements.

1) Add the following as the fourth and fifth paragraphs:

"Lynn May was a kind and caring Christian gentleman whose devotion to our Lord and love for history and Southern Baptists were inextricably interwoven," said Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee. Chapman recounted when he and his wife, Jodi, moved to Nashville, Tenn., to lead the Executive Committee in 1992, May and his wife, Alta, "were among the first to welcome us and make us feel at home."

"His deep faith and dogged determination to keep going in the face of severe suffering was an inspiration to me and undoubtedly to everyone who knew him," Chapman said. "Our prayers are with Alta and the family."

2) Substitute the following for the final paragraph of the story:

The funeral was scheduled for 11:30 a.m. Friday, July 26, at Crieewood Baptist Church, with burial in Woodlawn Cemetery, Nashville. Visitation was July 25 at Woodlawn Funeral Home, Nashville.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Despite winning gold medals, drugs soon gripped her life

By Jim Johnston

ATLANTA (BP)--Chandra Cheeseborough knows Olympic gold is not synonymous with happiness.

Six months after the Jacksonville, Fla., sprinter won two gold medals and a silver in the 1984 Olympics, she found herself in the grip of depression and a cocaine habit costing her thousands of dollars.

"I was totally lost," she said simply. "I lost my house, all my material goods and almost lost my life."

Twelve years later, Cheeseborough's smile, sense of purpose and hope has returned. Now she's back at the Olympics with a different goal in mind: to help others find Jesus Christ and the abundant life he promises.

"God has given me a purpose in life," the 37-year-old Cheeseborough said. "He's given me an opportunity to serve him in a special way."

Cheeseborough was one of 15 former and current Olympians who gave their testimonies the night of June 21 at a "More Than Gold" rally at New Hope Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Ga.

The rally, organized by the Home Mission Board's evangelism section and Lay Witnesses For Christ interdenominational ministry, was the first of five More Than Gold rallies held in conjunction with the 1996 Olympics in the Atlanta area.

Sprinter Gus Envela, a four-time Olympian from Equatorial Guinea, 200-meter Olympic record holder Joe DeLoach, four-time Olympian Madeline Manning Mims and Olympic long jumper and sprinter Clyde Duncan were among the speakers at New Hope.

Cheeseborough and the same lineup of star athletes joined 1996 Olympic gold medalist Josh Davis of the U.S. Swim Team at a More Than Gold rally at Greenforest Baptist Church the evening of July 24. Davis earned a gold medal July 21 as part of the U.S. 800 meter freestyle relay team.

Cheeseborough became one of the world's top women runners with her three-medal performance at the 1984 Summer Games in Los Angeles, winning gold medals as a member of the 4 x 100 meter and 4 x 400 relay teams and a silver medal in the 400 meters behind teammate Valerie Briscoe-Hooks. The medals and the acclaim she received didn't fill the void in her life, she recounted. Nothing did, especially her drug habit.

The cocaine might have destroyed her life beyond repair, but Cheeseborough's mother would not concede her daughter's life to illegal drugs. Her mother was in the audience at New Hope July 21 and grinned broadly as her daughter told her story. "I think that's a point everybody who has a family member on drugs needs to understand," Cheeseborough said. "Don't give up on them. Love them. Stand by them. They need you."

The saving power of Christ and a mother's love created a miracle in Cheeseborough's life. Her life turned as quickly as she sped around the track in Los Angeles. In 1993, the mother of three children became the women's track coach at Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tenn. She got the job with the help of another gold medalist, Olympic legend Wilma Rudolph.

"Wilma and I met in 1975 and she played an important role in my life," Cheeseborough said. "She was always there for me. She encouraged me and was in my corner when I applied for the Tennessee State job. There were 40 applicants and she called me right away and said I would be one of the top three. She helped make it happen."

Cheeseborough returned the favor in 1994. As Rudolph lay dying in her Nashville home, Cheeseborough visited her daily, giving her encouragement and a dose of God's love. "That was a blessing, being with her at that time," Cheeseborough said. "I had the privilege of ministering to her and hearing her rededicate her life to Christ just before she died."

Now, Cheeseborough's job is cultivating the next generation of Olympians at Tennessee State. She faces a major rebuilding job with the Tiger Belles track team if she is to get them back to NCAA Championship caliber. But while she's improving their speed, she's also attempting to protect them from the problems she faced in her life.

"I've got a huge responsibility with the lives of those young women in my hands," Cheeseborough said. "I try to live out my faith every day. That's what's important. You can say anything. Living like Jesus is what really speaks to them."

Cheeseborough's life must be speaking volumes to her runners. Eight freshman became Christians after joining the Tennessee State track team. Her goal while in Atlanta is to find other runners in need of finding the saving power of Jesus Christ. She is scheduled to speak at four other rallies and will do daily street ministry at the Olympic Games.

"God gave me those medals, and with that, he's given me a platform," Cheeseborough said. "I want to use that platform to bring honor to God."

**Southern Baptists disagree
at religion amendment hearing**

By Tom Strobe

WASHINGTON (BP)--Observing "how many kinds of Southern Baptists there are" was one of the "few entertaining things" about her appearance at a House of Representatives hearing, Carole Shields told committee members July 23.

For Shields, president of People for the American Way and daughter of a former leader in the Southern Baptist Convention, there was plenty to observe at a hearing on a religious freedom amendment.

Appearing in support of a constitutional amendment was Richard Land, president of the SBC's religious liberty and ethics agency, the Christian Life Commission. At least two other witnesses favoring an amendment are members of Southern Baptist churches: Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice, and Craig Parshall, a lawyer representing Concerned Women for America.

Testifying against an amendment were Shields and Oliver "Buzz" Thomas, a Southern Baptist minister and former general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee who now represents the National Council of Churches.

They appeared before the Constitution Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee to testify specifically on House Joint Resolution 184, an amendment its supporters say is designed to provide further protection for religious liberty.

Most "Southern Baptists, and I believe most Americans, do not want continued government censorship and government suppression of the religious speech and activity of students in public schools and citizens acting in their private capacities in public arenas," Land told the subcommittee.

"What they desperately desire, and I am confident they are going eventually to insist upon, is government accommodation of their right as students and citizens to express their religious opinions and to acknowledge their own religious heritage and beliefs in the public arena.

"We do not ask for, and do not want, government's help in expressing our beliefs or acknowledging our religious heritage. In fact, we would oppose such efforts. We believe the most and best government can do is to guarantee a level playing field and then stay off the field."

While Sekulow endorsed H.J. Res. 184, Parshall said it did not go far enough and needed to be amended.

Shields, in describing the proposal as harmful to religious freedom, referred to a positive childhood experience in Oklahoma City and a negative one in Birmingham, Ala., where her father, Grady Cothen, served in pastorates. She decried that the "lives of our children and grandchildren are being used to score political points" by the Christian Coalition through its use of a vote on the amendment in its voter scorecards.

Still a member of a Southern Baptist church, Shields worked as a consultant for the Christian Life Commission in the early 1980s, when it "stood for something very different," she told Baptist Press. She had served as chairman of People for the American Way's board since last November when she was drafted to be president three months ago, she said. PAW is a leading liberal lobbying and education organization in Washington.

Cothen, her father, served as president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Thomas, the NCC's special counsel for religious and civil liberties, told the panel religion needs "more respectful treatment" in the public schools, but the "last thing America needs is a new First Amendment."

The Baptist Joint Committee, former church-state representative for the SBC, led a coalition in expressing opposition to an amendment the day before the hearing. In a prepared statement, the BJC called an amendment unnecessary, politically motivated and a "money grab."

The hearing illustrated the change in the SBC which has occurred since 1979, when the first of a series of biblical inerrantists was elected president of the convention.

The CLC's Land said he has been asked if the different Southern Baptist voices in Washington cause confusion.

"No, it's less confusing in Washington than anywhere else in America, because everybody who serves in elected office in Washington, D.C., was a candidate in an election," Land said in response. "And all of them know they didn't get all the votes in their district or their state, just a majority.

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"They understand that the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission does not claim to speak for all Southern Baptists, but it is clear that we speak for the majority of Southern Baptists, as evidenced by the elections at the annual conventions over the last 18 years.

"And on this issue, the convention passed a resolution in Atlanta in 1995 with no more than 4 or 5 percent dissent, and that's being generous to the opposition. It should be noted, as well, that the majority of Southern Baptists were so unhappy with the Baptist Joint Committee that they severed all relationship with them at the national level and gave the assignment to the Christian Life Commission."

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**Couple's trials of adoption
deepen their love for Samuel**

By Stephen Wilding

**Baptist Press
7/25/96**

RENO, Nev. (BP)--Joe Taylor, pastor of South Reno (Nev.) Baptist Church, and his wife, Julie, are convinced God can make something beautiful out of anything. If you ask them about that something, they'll tell you his name is Samuel.

The Taylors have been married for more than seven years and, like any other couple, they dreamed of having children. But after four years of trying to overcome infertility, they knew adoption was their only viable option.

On Thanksgiving day of 1994, the Taylors were having dinner with relatives in Los Angeles and discussing adoption. Later that day, Joe decided to call and check on his home in Reno. The woman watching the home knew of a pregnant 17-year-old girl who wanted to find a good home for her child.

The girl lived in a different state, thousands of miles away, but the Taylors still were interested. "The fact that God could place a child in somebody else's womb in another state, that he meant to be in our home -- that is awesome," Julie said.

When the Taylors returned to Reno, they contacted a lawyer in the state where the girl lived and waited for the mother to contact him. "According to the laws of that state, our lawyer couldn't contact the mother," Joe said. "So we had to relay the information through a mutual friend and hope that she would call."

Within a few days, the girl called and said she wanted to go through with the adoption. The Taylors were then required to provide two lawyers other than their own; one for the mother and another for the baby. After routine checks to see if they qualified to adopt, the Taylors waited for the baby to be born.

On March 6, 1995, the Taylors received a phone call from their lawyer. They knew it was getting close to the time for the baby's birth. But the news was not what they had hoped to hear. The mother had suffered a seizure and had been found in a pool of blood. The baby's condition was still unknown.

That same afternoon, the Taylors went on what they consider the longest plane ride of their lives. "Our plane was delayed in Reno, we had to wait in Dallas for a hail storm, and we ended up having to land in an ice storm," Joe said. "What should have taken four hours took us from 1 p.m. until midnight."

When the Taylors arrived at the hospital, they learned a baby boy had been born and the doctors were running tests. Joe Taylor had been convinced that the baby would be a girl until the plane ride. "We figured after all the trouble we'd gone through, it just had to be a boy."

The Taylors then waited in an empty hospital room to see the baby they would name Samuel. "We were in a room with two beds and no patients when the nurse brought in this little bundle," Joe said. "I just remember thinking to myself 'I love this baby.'"

The Taylors never got to meet the birth mother. "She had been unconscious during the birth and didn't remember anything about it," Julie said. "When she regained consciousness, she asked to be moved to another floor." After a 72-hour waiting period required by law, the mother signed the paperwork waiving her rights to the baby.

The Taylors, who now included Samuel, were not allowed to return to Reno for nine days. This gave the lawyers time to verify all of the paperwork.

According to the adoption laws agreed upon between the two states, after two weeks Samuel would legally belong to Joe and Julie. Three weeks passed and the mother had not changed her mind. "I really have to respect the mother," Julie said. "She remained rock solid in her decision throughout the whole thing."

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But this was just the beginning of the struggle the Taylors would face in adopting Samuel. On the third week, the biological father challenged the adoption. "After two weeks all rights should have been surrendered," Joe said. "But the courts will give up to four weeks if the parent can prove that he has been seeking legal counsel."

The father, who had remained silent and distant throughout the birth and adoption, would now become the only thing that stood between the Taylors being a family of three. Since the father had challenged the adoption, the court would need proof he was the child's biological father. The judge asked for blood work to be done and set a trial date for May 1997.

The Taylors were faced with a terrible decision. "If God didn't want this child to be in our home, then we didn't want him to be there," Julie said. "We weren't sure if we should hold on or let go. I just had to make a mental decision to love Samuel and if they did take him away, there was nothing I could do about it."

The Taylors petitioned to have the trial moved up for the sake of Samuel. "It just so happened that another trial had been canceled," Joe said. "So the judge moved our trial up to June 1995."

Two weeks later, the father turned in the paperwork that waived his rights to the child. Legally the father is allowed 30 days to change his mind. At the end of those 30 days the father showed up at the court and said he had signed the papers under duress. The trial was again rescheduled for September 1995.

The emotional strain on the Taylors was becoming unbearable. "I just kept repeating Isaiah 41:10 to myself," Julie said. "I even made up songs to it and just focused on the fact that the Lord is my strength."

The Taylors were not allowed to attend the trial that would decide whether they could keep Samuel. They stayed near the phone but tried to keep busy to avoid thinking about what they couldn't control. When the phone finally rang, the Taylors found out the father had not shown up for the trial. "I remember thinking that it was too soon for a decision," Joe said. "Then Julie wrote, 'We Won,' on a piece of paper." By not showing up for the trial, the father lost all rights to Samuel.

The only thing left for the Taylors was to go to court and finalize the adoption. "I asked our lawyer if there was anything that could stop the adoption," Joe said. "His response was 'Maybe a fire or an earthquake or a tornado.' Then when they evacuated the courthouse for a bomb threat, he looked at me and said, 'Or a bomb threat.'"

The Taylors were in tears as they stood in the parking lot of the courthouse. The court proceeding would have to be rescheduled again. "We pleaded for the judge to help us get it over with," Joe said. "He finally agreed and we finalized that day."

Almost a full year from the day they found out about a baby needing a home, the Taylors became Samuel's legal parents.

Both Joe and Julie agree their case was unusual and difficult and would never want to discourage other families who have considered adoption. "We're really glad now that we couldn't have kids," Julie said. "The adoption process was hard, but it just made Samuel more special to us."

The Taylors agree if they were not part of a supportive church family willing to pray and meet their physical needs, they might not have made it through the adoption. "Somebody would come over and offer to mow the lawn or bring dinner," Joe said. "The people who would just sit and listen or ask what they could do were the greatest help."

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