

(BP)---FEATURES

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

produced by Baptist Press

460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Telephone (615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Jim Newton, Assistant Director

January 9, 1969

Caudill, Fite Hopefully
Near End of Pilgrimage

By Dallas Lee

HAVANA, Cuba (BP)--Herbert Caudill and David Fite would have checked off their fourth anniversary as prisoners of the Cuban government here on April 8, 1969.

Now, however, there is a good chance that both Southern Baptist missionaries to Cuba will be in the United States sometime in February.

Communication has been second, third, and fourth-handed regarding the release of the two imprisoned missionaries. As L. D. Wood of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta said at the time of the news: "We don't know what is happening. We are just grateful."

Both men, along with about 50 Cuban Baptist nationals, had been in prison since April 8, 1965, when they were arrested during the night by Cuban security police and charged with espionage.

The news was flashed to the U.S., via an Associated Press bulletin, which triggered prayer vigil that has not yet ceased by Baptists helpless to act directly on Caudill and Fite's behalf.

The U.S. State Department already had broken diplomatic ties with Cuba and had no official communication with the Communist nation. The Swiss ambassador and later the Baptist World Alliance became the eyes and ears of a prayerful Southern Baptist Convention.

Not long after their arrest, Caudill and Fite were convicted--not for spying but for illegal currency exchange, a charge they pleaded guilty to. Apparently they got a good defense. The prosecution had sought a 30-year sentence.

The prosecution had sought a 30-year sentence for Caudill, an 18-year sentence for Fite. The final verdict was 10 years for Caudill, six for Fite.

Caudill, 61 at the time of his arrest, was then superintendent of Southern Baptist work in Cuba. Fite, then 31, had been teaching in the Baptist seminary in Havana and pastoring a church near the capital city.

Due to cautious and limited communication, information about their prison experiences is sketchy and perhaps even unreliable. The Home Mission Board has been able to call directly to the home of Mrs. Caudill in Havana, but has been careful not to abuse this privilege.

There have been heartwarming reports, however, about the two men converting a corner of the cell block at the old La Cabana Fortress near Havana into a prayer room, cellmates giving Caudill a loaf of bread with matches for candles on his birthday, and both Caudill and Fite encouraging their wives on monthly visits "not to panic."

Cuban officials even reacted graciously when David Fite's father, Clifton E. Fite, a Baptist pastor from Waynesboro, Ga., finally gained permission early in 1967 to travel to Cuba to visit his imprisoned son.

The Clifton Fites spent more than a month in Cuba. Officials arranged for frequent visits with David in a living room environment, and government authorities--though noncommittal--listened patiently to the parents' plea for their son's release.

During the time that David's parents were in Cuba pleading his case, Cuban authorities decided to release Caudill conditionally to seek treatment for a detached retina, the ailment that already had blinded him in one eye.

The highly specialized surgery necessary to save his sight apparently was not available in Cuba and when an Atlanta eye surgeon--Dr. William Hagler--volunteered to go to Havana to perform the surgery, he was granted permission by both the U.S. and Cuban governments to do so. The operation, in March, 1967, apparently was a success.

Communication from that point on was skimpy and of little news value. Caudill remained under house arrest to recuperate and was not returned to confinement at La Cabana Fortress.

-more-

David Fite was moved to a prison farm where he could work outdoors and his wife reported him "tan and healthy."

Encouraging news came in the fall of 1968, when the Fites' eldest son, 12-year-old James David Jr., was allowed to leave the country and come to the U.S., where he is now living with David Fite's twin brother, Atlanta Ophthalmologist Donald Fite.

Then, as a flurry of speculation about the possibility of Fite being paroled since he had served half of his sentence began to fade, the announcement of his full pardon reached Baptists in the states three days before Christmas. There was no word at that time about the fate of Caudill and his wife, who also had remained in Cuba.

Early in January, 1969, the Home Mission Board received word that apparently Caudill would be allowed to return home after 35 years of missionary service and nearly four years in prison. The prayer vigil, surely, continues.

-30-

Dallas Baptist College Plans
Computer-Aided Instruction

(1-9-69)

By Robert O'Brien
Baptist Press Staff Writer

DALLAS (BP)--When Dallas Baptist College here dedicates its new \$2½ million Library-Learning Center next September, it will begin an educational program unique in denominational education, and perhaps nationally.

Few, if any, of the center's physical facilities will be new inventions, and the educational theory has been experimented with elsewhere, but college officials don't know of any other schools in the nation attempting to combine technology and theory the way they plan.

Four faculty task forces are at work planning curriculum for the center's target class--the freshmen who will enroll in September. Other task forces will build curriculum for its succeeding years.

The Library-Learning Center will be an imposing, modernistic-looking structure which could well have been projected through a warp in space and time from the 21st century.

In the core of the Learning Center will be library stacks, surrounded by learning "carrels," study booths equipped with audio and video systems. Faculty offices, seminar and conference rooms surround the carrels so students and professors will have close contact.

A student sitting in an individual carrel puts on a stereo headset, dials a code which signals a computer, and tunes in to a lecture by a famous scientist, an inter-collegiate educational television broadcast, a lecture or remedial lesson by his own professor, or a number of other things.

Unlike in present-day classes, if the student doesn't understand, he may redial and start over, progressing at his own speed until he has mastered the material.

"We don't worry about the rapidity of progress under this system," explained C. Ewing Cooley, the Baptist school's director of developmental studies, "as much as with the fact that progress is taking place. The rate will be the student's own, allowing for his abilities, interests, and outside demands."

Actually, students will fail only if they fail themselves by refusing to progress. "Only 20 per cent of the beginning freshmen classes in this country presently make it through graduation," Cooley said. "That's gross inefficiency. In our system, we will recycle students, not fail them in the usual sense."

Programmed instruction, he pointed out, won't rule the student-teacher relationship but become a tool to enrich the relationship and help the student retain more and better develop his full potential.

Although the developing curriculum for the new program has not been designed completely, September's incoming freshmen will tentatively face a situation something like this:

Because of the flexibility of the program, all freshmen may not start at the same point. Entrance tests may show one at sophomore level in English, but a remedial level in math. The combinations are numerous.

-more-



BAPTIST PRESS

460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

RECEIVED
JAN 19 1959
HISTORICAL COMMISSION, SAC

DAVIS C. WOOLLEY 60
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
127 NORTH AVE. N.
NASHVILLE, TENN. 37203