

November 20, 1973

Baptist Television Producer  
Recalls Oswald Slaying

By Bonita Sparrow

FORT WORTH (BP)--Ten historic years ago, Robert Thornton stood a few feet away from accused presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald in the basement of the Dallas County Jail and watched in horror as Dallas businessman Lloyd Ruby shot Oswald to death.

The date was Nov. 24, 1963. Thornton was on the job as news director of WFAA-TV, Dallas.

Thornton, now a television producer at the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth, sat in his office and recalled those black days in Dallas, his reaction to the event, and what has happened in his life since that day.

"My most immediate reaction was trying to remain calm enough to describe it on the tape recorder," he said. "I had a tremendous sense of history and I knew it had to be preserved on tape for the future.

"After I got the events on tape, then I had the problem of getting together enough press credentials to get out of there and get the film and tape back to the television studio.

"It's not a moment you ever forget."

Keen excitement was the rule, rather than the exception of Thornton's job, but it had its lows as well as its high moments.

"After eight years in the news department of a major city television station, I felt I had been exposed to all the raw edges of society," he observed.

"You begin to think the world is going to the dogs. One of the reasons I went to work for the Radio and Television Commission was because I wanted to do something to stop the trend."

Now his job is to keep the sun shining--on Spring Street, USA.

As producer of the Baptist variety television show which the Radio-TV Commission produces for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Thornton must keep peace among artistic temperaments and meet production schedules best suited to the budget he has been allotted.

That's no small task. "You must deal with the artist, with the hundreds of other people involved in each production of Spring Street, then with the time factor and then the budget. You must do it in light of what you want to accomplish with the show."

Thornton, with a television production background that started during college at Baylor University in Waco, Tex., knows what he wants to accomplish.

"I want to reach the largest number of people possible with Spring Street. I want it to change people spiritually, to have some impact and effect on their lives." Spring Street may now be seen on 27 stations throughout the United States.

As Thornton finalizes plans for each Spring Street production, he does so casting an occasional glance above his head toward a newspaper photograph which won the photographer a Pulitzer Prize. It is the photograph of Lee Harvey Oswald grimacing in pain, while onlookers watch in horror. Thornton is in the picture.

He hopes his work with such shows as Spring Street might lessen the chances of such an event happening again.



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**  
SBC Executive Committee  
180 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
(615) 244-2855  
W. C. Fields, Director  
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor  
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

## BUREAUS

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
DALLAS Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996  
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Gomer Lesch, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234  
Telephone (615) 254-5461  
RICHMOND Jesse C. Fletcher, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

November 20, 1973

### S. C. Convention Calls for Warning Label on Booze

CHARLESTON, S. C. (BP)--The South Carolina Baptist Convention in its 153rd annual meeting called for a label to go on all alcoholic beverage containers warning that their contents might be harmful to health, opposed legalized gambling in all forms and urged cooperation with government officials in conserving energy.

In a meeting here that one "messenger" described as "three days of complete harmony with not a dissenting voice," the convention adopted a 1974 Cooperative Program (unified) budget of \$6,375,000, an increase of \$325,000 over the 1973 budget.

Of the Cooperative Program receipts, 34 per cent will go to Southern Baptist Convention causes and 66 per cent for use in South Carolina.

In other action, a committee was given the responsibility for studying the possibility of a new conference center for the convention and was instructed to report at the 1975 meeting.

In the absence of crucial issues, messengers gave primary attention to the program's main speakers, including three laymen.

The lay speakers included SBC President Owen Cooper; Jimmy Carter, governor of Georgia; and the 1973 South Carolina Baptist President Patrick L. Baughman, a Wagner businessman.

Cooper hit hard at what he called "mere token support" for mission endeavors and commended the "great multi-million dollar mission program" of the SBC.

Carter said, "A Christian should allow his Christian influence to show in everything he does. I am a Christian and governor of Georgia, a Christian and a farmer. . ."

Named president of the South Carolina convention for 1974 was James R. Bruce, pastor of First Baptist Church, Inman, and first vice-president of the convention for 1973. Bruce was elected on a third ballot of four persons nominated, a convention spokesman said.

Of three resolutions presented, one by R. H. Patterson called for a label to go on alcoholic beverage containers, somewhat similar to cigarette packages, to warn that contents might be harmful to persons.

The resolution opposing legal gambling referred to a study in the South Carolina legislature on pari-mutuel (horse racing) betting, the spokesman said.

Another resolution on conserving energy called for nothing more specific than cooperating with government officials in the matter, the spokesman said.

The 1974 meeting of the South Carolina convention will be Nov. 12-14 in Township Auditorium, Columbia, S.C.

-30-

Hotel Guests Invited  
For Christmas Dinner

11/20/73

BANGKOK, Thailand (BP)--Spending Christmas day in a hotel in an unfamiliar big city can be lonely.

-more-

That's why members of Calvary Baptist Church here are planning to repeat a Christmas dinner invitation similar to one issued last year to guests at the Atlanta Hotel, across the street from the church.

The Atlanta Hotel, according to Mrs. Charles A. Ray, Southern Baptist missionary to Thailand, is a "hotel that young adult world travellers recommend to each other" as they meet in other large eastern cities, such as Singapore, Hong Kong and Calcutta.

Last year with the permission of the hotel management, Calvary Church members, Southern Baptist missionaries and a youth singing group assembled in the lobby of the hotel singing, "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

Christmas Day guests who gathered on the stairs and in the lobby out of curiosity heard the carolers as they sang and shared testimonies of Christ's love. They were then invited to dinner across the street.

About 30 young adults from nine countries, including the United States, went with the carolers to the church for a homecooked dinner and some Christmas fellowship.

Mrs. Ray said Calvary Church has been able to establish a ministry throughout the year to hotel guests because of their experience last Christmas.

-30-

Florida Jabs Evolution  
Theory, Plans Growth

11/20/73

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--Messengers to the Florida Baptist State Convention took a jab at the theory of evolution, adopted the largest budget in the state convention's history and set up a plan for securing 400 new church sites by 1985.

The convention adopted a \$5.5 million Cooperative Program unified budget and allotted 47 per cent of that amount to Southern Baptist Convention causes--one per cent higher than last year's SBC-leading percentage among state conventions.

The state board of missions was authorized to establish the plan for securing the 400 new sites in advance of population growth and further increase in property costs.

A spokesman said areas of potential church growth include planned communities.

One layman has pledged \$1,000 per site to help with costs and a pastor in the state has pledged \$100 per site, he said.

The evolution resolution said, "There are texts being used in some public schools of Florida that leave the impression that theories regarding the origin of man are fact."

It urged that these theories "be clearly taught as theories in our public schools" and that "the messengers to the Florida Baptist State Convention reaffirm their belief in the biblical account of the origin of man."

The convention instructed that copies of the resolution be sent to state school officials and Florida Governor Reubin Askew.

In other action, messengers elected a pastor, A. R. (Rudy) Fagan of First Baptist Church, Bradenton, as president; a layman, Fred H. Cooper, director of information services for Stetson University, Deland, as first vice-president; and a woman, Mrs. Henry A. Parker, wife of the pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, as second vice-president.

The only action, a spokesman said, which sparked debate during the three-day 112th annual meeting was a successful attempt to change the convention bylaws to instruct the state convention nominating committee to solicit nominees for the state board from executive committees of Baptist associations of churches.

-more-

Some expressed concern this would result in an "un-Baptistic principle" of one Baptist body dictating to another, a spokesman said, although the messengers were informed names submitted by the associations would not be binding on the nominating committee.

The messengers also accepted a recommendation from the convention's state board of missions to sell the West Florida Baptist Assembly property in Panama City and relocate it on the Blue Springs property the convention owns in Marianna.

Resolutions also passed calling on President Nixon to set aside Dec. 7 as a day of prayer for the country, for support of energy crisis programs and for prayerful support to the president on other national leaders.

Next year the Florida convention will meet Nov. 19-21 in Lakeland.

-30-

Four OBU Teachers  
Survive Plane Crash

11/20/73

DENVER (BP)--Four teachers from Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, miraculously escaped with minor injuries when their "iced over" single-engine aircraft broke apart during a forced landing in an open field near Lowry Air Force Base here.

The plane, a Beechcraft Bonanza, piloted by one of the teachers, James Woodward, OBU's dean of fine arts and chairman of the department of church music, skidded across a street after crash landing.

Observers said its engine tore loose and slammed against the rear door of a west-bound car driven by T-Sgt. Patrick Gorman, 38, who was also only slightly injured.

Woodward and three other teachers left Stapleton International Airport, Denver, about 1:15 p.m., Nov. 19, on their way home to Shawnee after attending a music convention. The passengers were Clair R. McGavern, associate dean of fine arts and chairman of the department of piano and organ; Claude P. Bass, chairman of the department of music theory; and Jack A. Pearson, chairman of the voice department.

Woodward, interviewed at the base dispensary after the crash, said the plane began to pick up "a heavy load of ice" about 15 minutes out of Stapleton. "The window was glazed," he said, "and I didn't have any forward visibility, so I decided to return to Stapleton."

On the final approach to Stapleton, Woodward said, ice caused the plane to lose altitude.

"I saw it flying low," said Sgt. James E. Cover, who observed the crash. "It was kind of zigzagging across the sky. A wing tip caught in the ground and it skidded sideways across the field and across the road " after it touched down, he said.

Woodward and McGavern were treated for minor head injuries at the base dispensary. All four teachers and Gorman were taken to Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center for observation.

Bass, commenting on what observers called a miraculous survival, simply said, "Praise the Lord."

-30-