

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**  
SBC Executive Committee  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
(615) 244-2355  
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

August 20, 1974

**Pastor Sees Good Amid  
Agony of Youth's Death**

By Robert O'Brien

NASHVILLE (BP)--About 14 years ago, David Werner shot a deer. "When I saw that animal fall, I made up my mind I would never shoot another living thing--I valued life too much."

Now, Werner, in his first pastorate at Woodbine Baptist Church here, is trying to learn to live with a numbing realization which won't go away.

It started shortly after 1 a.m., August 10, when a Nashville policeman, striding across the parking lot of Woodbine Church, informed him: "You have shot and killed a man."

The 41-year-old pastor, in the days immediately following the death of 17-year-old William N. Swain, "relived the tragic incident many, many times until it had become a nightmare."

He was studying in his home near the church that morning when he "heard an unusual noise--a noise I didn't recognize."

"I got up from my chair," he recalls, "turned off the light and quietly opened the back door. As I stepped out on the back steps, I saw some fellows taking gas from our church bus." The neighborhood had been plagued with previous gas-stealing incidents.

When he saw what was happening, Werner says he went back inside, called the police and then ran to the bedroom to get a 30-30 rifle, a gift which he had never fired.

"I was going to yell 'freeze' or 'stop' and just hold the boys until the police got there," Werner says. "As I went out the door, they apparently heard me. They jumped into their car, and I realized they were going to get away."

Making a quick decision, Werner aimed for the fleeing car's right rear tire. "I meant no harm to any individual. I just wanted to flatten the tire so the police could catch them."

As he aimed at the tire, the speeding vehicle "swerved--literally fishtailed"--into a hard left turn.

"It swerved just as I pulled the trigger, and I couldn't unpull it," he says, wincing at the memory. The bullet ricocheted its way on a zig zag path through the car and then through Swain, who was driving.

The car kept speeding away after Werner fired, and he thought he had missed. "I remember feeling relieved when I thought I had missed," he said in an interview with Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In its high-speed attempt to escape, the car eventually crashed into an embankment. Three other passengers, aged 18, 19 and 22, were not hurt. Police have not filed charges against Werner, and he has refused to press charges against the youths in the car. Nashville authorities say the case will be presented to the grand jury.

"One of the most agonizing things about this is the fact that I love young people," reflects Werner, the father of sons 12, 16, and 20. "Almost all of my life has been spent counseling young people, encouraging young people and guiding young people. Now, I've killed one. I have no desire to handle that rifle, or any other rifle, ever again."

-more-

DARGAN-CARYER LIBRARY  
S. B. C. NATIONAL COMMISSION  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

"I've spent many, many hours in tears--realizing that I've broken the heart of God and of so many people, and I have prayed for forgiveness."

For quite a while, he felt he "would never be able to stand in the pulpit and preach again," but he did so Sunday (August 18), after a "painful spiritual re-examination," which included two days of prayer in the mountains of East Tennessee.

Werner, pastor of Woodbine Church for one year after 13 months on the staff of Nashville's Park Avenue Baptist Church as an associate, said he thanked his congregation for "the love and forgiveness" they have shown him.

"It's the custom," he told them, "to send flowers to a funeral to show love for someone who has died, but we as Christians find it even more beautiful to show our love to people while they are still living--just as Mary Magdalene showed her love for Jesus by anointing his head a week before he died."

In services that day, Werner says, three persons, including two teenagers, made professions of faith in Christ.

"I believe that God has forgiven me," Werner told Baptist Press. "I still haven't completely forgiven myself, but I know that God has forgiven me, as he forgave the ultimate cruelty of those whose sins nailed his son, Jesus Christ, on the cross.

"The beauty of God's forgiveness is that Jesus didn't remain on the cross. Jesus was raised from the dead and is alive today to help us in experiences like this. He has helped me.

"Even the deepest crisis and grief--and I've grieved as I never have before--can have positive results," said the Hanover, Pa., native, who served as associate pastor on church staffs in Maryland and Florida for 12 years before coming to Nashville in 1972.

"Romans 8:28 says, 'We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose,'" Werner said.

Already, he explains, he has sensed that the incident has caused him "to rely more on God and less on my own strength" and that it will make him "a better minister in times of sorrow and grief, because I've experienced grief and can empathize."

Another side effect, Werner says, resulted when three Nashvillians, to whom he had attempted to minister in the past, came to him individually after the tragedy--concerned about the grief he was going through. "I believe that God will use this as a means for me to reach them for Christ," he says.

As he has "agonized through" his own spiritual relationship, Werner says, he has "felt especially concerned about the Swain family" and wishes there was some way he could "minister to them in their grief."

"Members of our church went to the funeral home and attended the funeral. I did not, because I didn't want to intrude. But I attempted to contact them, and Mr. Swain sent word he would talk to me as soon as he felt he could," Werner says. "I would like to meet them and express my grief and sorrow personally.

"I hope that God will continue to use this tragedy, despite the heartache and sorrow it has caused, to bring about positive results."

-30-

Two Armed Gunmen Rob  
Seminary Treasurer's Office

8/20/74

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Two armed gunmen robbed the treasurer's office at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here while most students were vacationing two weeks before the opening of the fall term.

-more-

Approximately \$2,700 was taken by the thieves who forced treasurer, C. Richard Broome, and his staff to lie on the floor while the two men took the money from the office's cash drawer. The amount of money taken was larger than amounts usually kept in the treasurer's office because of an abnormally large amount of undeposited cash receipts.

There were no serious injuries during the incident, which was the first of its kind in the seminary's 116-year history. An incoming student, Paul Stephen Dean of Georgia, in the office to cash a check, received a minor cut on the jaw when one of the thieves kicked him to force him to lie down.

-30-

#### Four Cuban Baptists Visit BWA Offices

WASHINGTON (BP)--Four representatives from the two Baptist conventions in Cuba, visiting offices of the Baptist World Alliance here, reported on continued Baptist activity in Cuba despite that island country's political isolation from much of the western world.

About 15,000 Baptists live on the island. The Baptist Convention of Western Cuba, which once was a mission of the Southern Baptist Convention, largest evangelical-Protestant denomination in the U.S., has 7,500 baptized members, and the Baptist Convention of Eastern Cuba, formerly affiliated with the American Baptist Churches USA, has 7,244.

These figures reflect a net loss of about 3,000 members in the last 10 years, but this is said to be due to emigration from the island. New conversions have offset much of the losses.

The visitors were Manuel Salom Estopara and Humberto Dominguez Castillo, both of Havana, of the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba; and Samuel Entenza R. of Guantanamo and Rafael Gregorich of Camaguey, representing the Baptist Convention of Eastern Cuba.

The four men were guests of the BWA at a luncheon attended also by representatives from both eastern and western Europe and the Alliance staff, according to BWA President V. Carney Hargroves and BWA general secretary, Robert S. Denny.

Denny said it was the first time any Cuban representatives have participated in BWA discussions in the United States in many years, and he viewed the visit as an indication of "bettering relations" between the two countries.

-30-

#### Woman Named Tennessee State Paper Acting Editor

8/20/74

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP)--Mrs. Eura Lannom, assistant to the editor of the Baptist and Reflector, has been named acting editor of the Baptist weekly state paper, according to Ralph E. Norton, executive secretary-treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

Mrs. Lannom is the only woman in the 33 state conventions cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention now holding such a position.

A native of Holland, Ky., she has been employed in the Baptist and Reflector office for 31 years and has served as assistant to the editor since 1971. The paper has been without an editor since the resignation of James Lester in April, 1974.

-30-

