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**Marine Escapes from Vietnam;  
Bride's Refugee Family Aided**

By Tim Nicholas

ATLANTA (BP)--A newspaper account of a U.S. Marine's narrow escape from Vietnam led a Baptist church near here to sponsor his Vietnamese bride's refugee family.

After Marine Sgt. Steve Hasty, 23, escaped from Vietnam with several other marines and 294 Vietnamese refugees in two boats under enemy fire, he returned to his home at Norcross, Ga. to meet with his wife who had escaped separately.

He calls their escape a "miracle."

The escape story was told by the Gwinnett Daily News and relayed to First Baptist Church of Lawrenceville, Ga., where the paper's editor Gainer Bryan, is a member of the church's benevolence committee.

The church, in conference, voted to sponsor Hasty's mother-in-law and three brothers-in-law who are all at Ft. Chaffee, Ark, plus a sister-in-law who is at Camp Pendleton, Calif. She speaks English and worked as a secretary in Vietnam.

Church members have agreed to find lodging for the family, get the three boys into school, find a job for the sister-in-law, and provide general watchcare until they can shift for themselves.

"We're going to hold an old fashioned pounding," said Mrs. Aubrey Graham, who heads the church's benevolence committee. "We'll get them pantry supplies, bedding, furniture, clothes, everything needed to set up housekeeping," she said.

The mother-in-law and brothers-in-law escaped with Hasty, who had been attached to the American consulate at Can Tho, in Vietnam's Mekong Delta.

On April 29, with the fall of Vietnam imminent, Hasty, the five other Marines assigned to him as security men for the consulate, along with 12 American civilians (including Consul General Francis T. McNamara) three Filipinos, and 294 Vietnamese refugees, set out in two crowded Navy landing craft down the Dassac River to the Sea.

On the 16-mile trip, they were fired on by South Vietnamese Navy gunboats and were searched for deserters. They were ambushed by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army with rocket fire.

"We knew we were going to die," Hasty recalled, "no doubt about it.

"Then the miracle happened. A sudden monsoon rain obscured us from the shore. That got us through the worst area--that, plus the fact they were bad shots and we weren't."

The two boats reached the mouth of the river at 7 p.m. expecting air cover and a rescue ship, but neither arrived.

"So we headed out to sea with no maps, charts or compass," said Hasty, who had three years combat time in Indochina.

Seven hours later the two crafts were picked up by an American merchant ship and taken to safety.

Hasty didn't know what had happened to Thuy (pronounced Twee), his bride of four days, or his sister-in-law until he got back to the United States.

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The sister-in-law had escaped on a ship. Hasty's wedding date with Thuy had been moved up from October with the knowledge that South Vietnam wouldn't last long.

So after a civil ceremony at Can Tho, Hasty had sent Thuy, 21, to Saigon with bribe money and their marriage certificate to try to get out of the country.

She made it out and was airlifted through the Philippines, Wake Island, Hawaii, and San Francisco, then to Atlanta where she joined her husband at his parent's home in Norcross.

After applications for sponsorship are approved by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, acting under Church World Service, and Hasty's in-laws are settled in Lawrenceville, just northeast of Atlanta, he will return with his bride to duty at the Naval Air station in Memphis, Tenn.

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**Curt Delays Decision  
On Capital Punishment**

**Baptist Press  
6/24/75**

**By Stan Haste**

WASHINGTON (BP)--Condemned prisoners will have to wait at least another year before the Supreme Court decides whether the death penalty constitutes "cruel and unusual punishment" in violation of the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution.

That is the practical effect of the high court's announcement that it has decided to hear new arguments in the case of Jesse Thurman Fowler against the state of North Carolina. Fowler was convicted of first degree murder in the 1973 killing of long-time acquaintance John Griffin after a disagreement erupted during a dice game.

Oral arguments in the case were heard by the nine justices two months ago. Most observers therefore expected a definitive decision on the constitutionality of the death penalty. Instead, the delay was announced.

Three years ago the high court decided in a narrow 5-4 opinion that the death penalty as it was then being applied by the states was discriminatory and uneven. That action was widely interpreted as a stepping-stone to reaching a position on the validity of capital punishment as such.

Many observers here, including John W. Baker of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, feel that the court's non-decision resulted because the tribunal was badly divided, perhaps 5-4 or 6-3. Baker noted that in many major cases, the court has traditionally sought to obtain a strong majority position before announcing its decision.

Such a situation arose during 1953-54 in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark school desegregation case which was heard twice by the high court before a unanimous decision was announced in the spring of 1954.

Another possible explanation for the delay, although an unlikely one, is that the court split evenly 4-4 with Justice William O. Douglas, who has been recuperating slowly from a stroke suffered last Dec. 31, unable to participate. The brief order announcing the delay, however, did not indicate that Douglas had not participated.

The more likely cause is the court's desire to come down with a decision which constitutional lawyers call "good law," meaning one which carries the strength of a decisive majority of the nine justices and which thus establishes a strong judicial precedent.

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June 24, 1975

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'75 SBC Reflects Quiet,  
'Middle of Road' Stance

By Robert O'Brien

MIAMI BEACH (BP)--The only waves at Miami Beach, according to a sampling of editorial opinion on the annual Southern Baptist Convention sessions here June 10-12, were those which washed ashore along the beach.

And even they were placid, avoiding stinging slaps at swimmers, while SBC messengers at the Miami Beach Convention Center, apparently responding to SBC President Jaroy Weber's pre-convention call for harmony, showed each other the same consideration.

Editors of statewide Baptist newspapers characterized the 118th annual SBC as quiet and harmonious but expressed enthusiasm for the 130-year-old body's emphasis on evangelism, missions and inspirational speakers.

And, generally, they liked the electronic-aided pageantry surrounding the SBC's observance of the 50th anniversary of its Cooperative Program unified budget and the nation's bicentennial.

They applauded adoption of a \$51 million 1975-76 Cooperative Program budget, exceeding the 1974-75 budget by 25 percent.

Although the SBC came and went quietly, it showcased the worldwide thrust of Southern Baptist work on closed-circuit, image-magnified screens before 16, 212 registered "messengers"--third largest registration in SBC history behind Dallas in 1974 (18,190) and New Orleans in 1969 (16,678).

Editors took repeated note of the convention continuing to take a conservative, "middle of the road" stance on issues--swaying neither toward ultra-conservatism nor liberalism.

The convention's "emphasis and agreement on the New Testament as the sole guide for Baptists (was) a statement good enough for most except the ultra-conservatives who want their interpretation," said John Hurt, editor of Texas's Baptist Standard.

James F. Cole, editor of Louisiana's Baptist Message, commented on "a few self-appointed creedalists who tried to get the messengers to say they believe the Bible, while the theme of speakers constituted a plea that Southern Baptists practice the Bible at every level of society."

Joe Odle, editor of Mississippi's Baptist Record and a well-known spokesman for the conservative point of view, declared:

" . . . the Southern Baptist Convention is comprised of Bible-believing, conservative people, who refuse to veer from their center of the road conservatism, either to the right or to the left. They are neither ultra-conservative nor liberal, but must be classified as a theologically-conservative, Bible-accepting people."

The Mississippi editor added: "Any careful observer, watching the actions of the convention, quickly realizes that Southern Baptists continue as the strong conservative body they have always been and that liberalism is having little influence.

"There is even evidence that seminaries and other institutions are listening to the convention's voice as it has spoken in recent years, and are seeking to keep the institutions and agencies right in the middle of the conservative position that the convention holds," Odle said.

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"This does not mean," he said, "that every Southern Baptist would completely agree on the method God used in inspiring the Bible, for they never have done that. Nevertheless, there evidently are few amongst them who do not affirm that the Bible is the Word of God, and who do not accept the New Testament as the final and sole authority in all matters of doctrine and church polity."

"Even the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship, an organization bent on weeding out the 'liberals' of the convention, cancelled their pre-convention rallies for apparent lack of interest," commented Edgar R. Cooper, editor of the Florida Baptist Witness, reflecting on the convention's calmness and absence of the hostility some past conventions have experienced.

"Puzzlement comes in evaluating undercurrents and resolutions that surfaced and didn't surface at Miami Beach," said Jack U. Harwell, editor of Georgia's Christian Index. "For example, the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship didn't get enough people to come to their planned meeting to have a meeting, but one of their leading spokesmen, Adrian Rogers (pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis), was elected president of the Pastors' Conference."

John Roberts, editor of South Carolina's Baptist Courier, said, "The convention may be remembered as much for what it refused to do as for what it did. The messengers repeatedly refused to adopt extremist positions on such issues as abortion, hunger, Communism, doctrine, content of public school textbooks.

"Opportunities came in abundance in the form of resolutions and motions," Roberts said. "The convention held firmly to a course of mainstream moderation. It cited the Baptist Faith and Message doctrinal statements of 1963 and 1925 as adequate and needing no further change. It refused to change an earlier position on abortion. And it chose to work through its agencies on public school textbooks.

Several editors grumbled some over the flood of resolutions which took up convention time but generally recognized the need for the SBC, even with its burgeoning size, to keep the proceedings democratic and accessible to messengers.

"Unless the procedure is improved, the entire resolutions process stands in grave danger to being laughed out of the hall. . .," said Marse Grant, editor of North Carolina's Biblical Recorder. "At their best, resolutions present a sticky, tricky way of trying to reflect the sentiments of 12 1/2 million people. At their worst, they give unbridled opportunity to those who glory in the spotlight year after year.

"This is a subject the SBC Executive Committee might want to explore to see if the process can be saved. It has deteriorated badly in recent conventions and should be improved or eliminated," Grant declared.

Another editor, Jack Gritz of Oklahoma's Baptist Messenger, apparently felt harmony was achieved at the expense of necessary give and take.

"Are we going to continue trying to have an annual business meeting with open discussion from the floor and decisions made by the messengers on important policy matters-- or are we going to try to shunt anything controversial to a board or some special committee and turn the convention into some kind of inspirational pep rally?" he asked.

"In serious controversy, with open debate from the convention floor in the past, we have learned to understand each other better, to reach agreement and to move on together. Our real fear is that if this present effort to discourage discussion persists, messengers will lose interest, attendance will fall off and eventually support of the convention's work will decrease."

SBC President Jaroy Weber of Lubbock, Tex., re-elected for a second term, and First Vice President Stewart Simms of Greer, S. C., drew high marks for their presiding. And Weber drew commendation for his president's message.

Editors gave general support to convention action on two issues, potentially thorny, which slipped into oblivion: Messengers refused to take a hardline against the charismatic movement, defeating a resolution to that effect, and tabled a motion by Mrs. Richard Sappington, wife of a Houston, Tex., pastor, who asked that a committee be appointed to expand on the convention's statement of Baptist Faith and Message.

**OTHER REACTIONS:** Editors generally gave support to the convention's acceptance of a recommendation by its Committee of Seven, which had studied an SBC name change, that no such change be considered at present. . . . At least three editors expressed reservations over the belt-it-out, style of former Miss America, Vonda Kay Van Dyke, who followed the Home Mission Board presentation on Wednesday night. . . . The convention's programming and use of sophisticated electronic techniques to convey its message to messengers drew commendation, mixed with a frustration by some that such approaches may turn the messengers into spectators rather than participants.