



May 4, 1976

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Seminarian Mixes TV News
With Theological Studies

By Michael Duduit

LOUISVILLE(BP)--Jim West lives in two worlds.

One keeps him busy with interviews, film editing and running down news tips. He is a reporter for WHAS-TV, a television station here.

The other world is full of books, tests, and translating Greek and Hebrew. West is a third-year theology student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here. In his "spare time," he is also youth director at a church in New Albany, Indiana, just across the Ohio River from Louisville.

Walking the tightrope between two worlds--the newsroom and the classroom--has not always been easy, West explains:

"In terms of time it has hurt me. I'm sure my grades have suffered. Ask my professors and they'll tell you I'm chronically absent."

West's job at the station is "to update the 6 o'clock news--to cover anything for the 11 o'clock news." He is the only nighttime news reporter at WHAS, and his eight-hour day goes well into the late-night hours.

The New Port Richey, Fla., native's work has given insight and experiences the average seminary student doesn't have. For instance, last fall during anti-busing riots in Louisville, West and another reporter were surrounded by angry demonstrators when they accidentally drove their marked station car too close to the action.

"They surrounded the car and someone threw a brick and smashed the window," West recalls, "I believe they would have killed us if they could have gotten us out of the car."

The seminarian calls the sequence of events leading to WHAS "not so much luck as providential care."

While in high school, West worked for a small radio station, then worked for the campus radio station at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill. When he and his wife Debbie moved to West Palm Beach, Fla., where he attended Palm Beach Atlantic College, he began scouting for jobs, and "as a joke I went to a small TV station to apply," he explains.

West didn't laugh, however, when they hired him. Two months later he was hired by a large West Palm Beach television station and stayed there two-and-a-half years until he was graduated from college in December, 1972.

When the Wests moved to Louisville to attend seminary, "just out of the necessity of having a job, I applied to the TV stations and WHAS had a position open."

How do his peers in what West calls "the most secular, rough profession there is," respond to a seminary student in the newsroom?

"Some of them call me 'preacher!'" says West, "For a long time it was 'hands off.' At first they excluded me from their conversations--maybe I excluded myself. I tried to break through to them, to show that I was human too. Since that time I think we've come to the point where they have a respect for me and I have a respect for them."

In fact, the Wests have at times been viewed as the "chaplains of the newsroom." They have counseled some other station employees on personal and marital problems, and he officiated at a wedding of two radio news reporters.

West recently introduced a new subject area to Louisville's television news scene--religion.

"We've tried to cover things that are of interest to the general public," he explains.

"I think we've shown that religion is a respectable thing to cover, that it can be covered by the secular media and that it can be interesting to people who aren't involved in it."

Features have ranged from the meaning of Hannukah (a Jewish holiday) to a three-part series on the Unification Church of Korean evangelist Sun Myung Moon.

Religion coverage offers a special challenge to West, he says, because "it's hard to keep your objectivity as a reporter. I try to keep my personal convictions out of the story, but it's hard!"

He denies there is a total separation between the ministry and news broadcasting. Rather, he sees them as "very closely related."

"The tools I've used in broadcasting are much like those used in the pastorate," he says, "The basic objective of both is finding the truth, whether it's as a reporter or a minister. In both areas, you analyze your sources, do research, put them together in a summary fashion, and then you present them."

West hopes he has made a positive Christian impact on the WHAS newsroom.

TV news is his world--or at least one of them.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers, 5-1-76

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Kans.-Neb. Conv. Accepts
Bid For New Facilities

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TOPEKA, Kans. (BP)--The executive board of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists accepted a bid of \$476,000 to construct a convention building here with the work to begin "as soon as possible," according to the action.

The final plan and bid call for a two-level structure with a total 17,000 square feet, with the construction to be completed in 330 days.

The Kansas-Nebraska Convention offices are currently housed in a building in Wichita. The Convention voted in 1974 to sell the building and "look with favor" to moving to Topeka. The decision to move was based on a demographic survey that showed 72 percent of the population in the two-states, 85 percent of Southern Baptist churches, and 92 percent of the Southern Baptist membership in a 150-mile radius of Topeka.

The convention adopted a proposal to start a \$520,000 building campaign for the new office building at its Nov. 1975 annual meeting.

In other action, the executive board accepted "clean" audits of the convention's 1975 Foundation books. The audit shows a record financial year for 1975, with total receipts of \$1,443,684 for all causes and from all sources.

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Owen Cooper Recovering
From Heart Surgery

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JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Owen Cooper of Yazoo City, Miss., retired industrialist and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, underwent coronary bypass surgery at the Mississippi Baptist Medical Center here.

His family reported that doctors are pleased with his condition and say that he is making satisfactory progress, although he is expected to remain in the medical center for some time.

Cooper, president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1973-74, was a vice president of the Baptist World Alliance from 1970-75 and is currently a member of the BWA's General Council and secretary of the BWA men's department.

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**NASA Allows Christian
Group Use of Satellite**

By Teresa Shields

RICHMOND (BP)--They call it "Project Look-Up," and it means a \$260 million satellite will be used in a Christian broadcasting experiment aimed toward people in South America.

"They"--persons from 49 Christian organizations, including the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and Radio and Television Commission--asked the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) if the group could use the satellite for experimental community service programming.

NASA said yes.

NASA's satellite, ATS-6, is now in operation over India. It beams instructional television programs to parts of India where they are received and transmitted to television sets centrally located in 2,400 villages.

Last year, the satellite was over the United States, where it was used for medical and educational purposes in Alaska and Southwestern states. The year before it aided school teachers in the Appalachian region.

"Beginning in January 1977, the satellite will be situated where programs can be beamed to Ecuador, Colombia and other South American countries," explained Fred T. Laughon, special assistant to Paul M. Stevens, president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, Fort Worth.

During a symposium on the satellite in August 1975, the participants were told of the proposal to present three hours of programming an evening when the satellite was moved to South America.

For Laughon, who belongs to the project's board of director, and many others associated directly with the project, what they learned at the symposium culminated a dream and the answer to a prayer.

(In 1974, Stevens had predicted that "in next 10 years" such a satellite would be in the sky.)

"This whole project was the initial dream of one man, retired Air Force Col. Lawson P. Wynne," said Laughon. "He knew about the satellite and its experimental nature. He is also a committed Christian and desires for the world to hear the message of Christ. He started talking to the right people. That's why today the window to the world is within our grasp."

Jeffrey Wiebe, former head of mass communications at the University of Minnesota, was elected by the group to be the Project Look-Up director.

"Satellite systems are bringing television programs to people all over the world," wrote Abe G. Thiessen, moderator of the symposium, executive director of International Christian Broadcasters and one of the initial instigators of the project. "Such services will increase greatly. If the church with its message is not programmed in, it will not appear. We feel we cannot afford to be excluded."

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Programs used by the group will deal with the whole man, spiritually, physically and intellectually, according to Laughon. A number of Christian organizations will contribute programs and some will be produced especially for use by the satellite.

"The idea is to present how-to programming-- how to take care of an invalid, how to get rid of rats and lice, how to drink water upstream from your house rather than below where you bathe," Laughon said. "We will air simple, basic things."

The group, with the help of trained nationals in the countries, plans to set up 100 receiving stations. Television sets will be situated centrally, as in India today.

"National leaders will play a large part in the total project," explained Alan W. Compton, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board radio and television representative for Latin America who will also have a part in providing materials to be broadcast. "Hopefully nationals will help in the planning of the programming, the production of the programming and in follow-up work from the programs, such as answering mail or visiting those with needs who contact us," he said.

The Foreign Mission Board appropriated \$3,000 in its March board meeting to help start the satellite experiment, and the Radio and Television Commission has set aside \$1,000 for this project. Other organizations involved in Christian broadcasting have also contributed toward the venture.

Also attending the symposium were persons from denominations such as Assembly of God, Evangelical Covenant Church, and the Episcopal, Methodist and United Presbyterian Churches.

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Justices Bicker About
Hearing Obscenity Cases

Baptist Press
5/4/76

By Stan L. Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--In the latest of a long series of actions dating to 1973, the U. S. Supreme Court declined to hear a case challenging state obscenity laws. What makes the latest action significant is the positioning of new Associate Justice John Paul Stevens.

In a brief written opinion concurring with the court's majority in an Oregon case, Stevens declared that he is unwilling to join with a minority of the court's justices who have consistently voted to hear such cases.

The high court has been badly divided on the obscenity issue. A 5-4 decision in 1973 (Miller v. California) set forth the principles which the court is currently using in deciding all obscenity appeals.

That decision set up a three-part test to help local communities and states decide what written materials and films are obscene. The court said that local authorities may decide whether "the average person, applying contemporary community standards" would find that the work appeals to "prurient interest."

In addition, the court said that states may declare written material and films obscene if sexual conduct is presented in a "patently offensive" way or if the work "lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value."

Because of varying community standards, however, the court has been flooded with appeals to reconsider its 1973 guidelines. Three justices on the high court have consistently voted to hear such cases, but the five-man majority which decided Miller has stood firm.

Justice Stevens' statement makes it clear that he will not side with the minority, although he also indicated he did not know how he might vote on the merits of obscenity cases if and when they reach the court.

"Until a valid reason for voting to grant one of these petitions is put forward," he said, "I shall continue to vote to deny."

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Justice William J. Brennan Jr., who is regularly joined by Justices Potter Stewart and Thurgood Marshall in dissenting from such actions, was indirectly reprimanded by Stevens. Stevens wrote that "in the interest of conserving scarce law library space," he would not repeat his explanation to deny hearings in such cases.

That statement was an obvious reference to a standard dissent which Brennan issues for himself, Stewart, and Marshall each time the court is asked to clarify its position on the matter.

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Court Not To Hear Case
Against Unwed Mothers

Baptist Press
5/4/76

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court reversed an earlier action by announcing it will not hear a Mississippi school board's argument that it should be allowed to deny employment to unwed mothers.

The decision not to hear the case means that five women, either denied employment or fired by the Drew Municipal School District in Sunflower County, Miss., must be given equal consideration with other teachers or potential teachers.

One factor in the unusual action by the high court is a new regulation by the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) that school boards which discriminate on the basis of sex will no longer be eligible for federal funds.

The regulation by HEW resulted from passage by Congress of a controversial section of the education amendments of 1972. Title IX of those amendments states that "No person in the U. S. shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

The Title IX implications were brought to the court's attention by the chief U. S. lawyer at the Supreme Court, Solicitor General Robert H. Bork. He quoted from a recent opinion by Chief Justice Warren E. Burger to support the view that the Mississippi School Board's policy violated the law. The chief justice wrote that unlike unwed mothers, unwed fathers are sometimes hard to find, often deny responsibility for their actions, show little concern for the welfare of the child, and many times are simply not aware that they are fathers.

The National Education Association (NEA) joined the solicitor general in asking the court to reverse its earlier decision to hear the case.

In written legal briefs submitted earlier, the school board argued that its regulation was designed to protect the community's moral standards. It also contended that the rule against unwed mothers as teachers involved a "legitimate government interest" and that it did not "invade any constitutionally protected right" to the women either fired or denied employment.

The five women, all black, argued on the other hand that the rule violated the principle of equal protection under law, that it was a "sex-based classification" which perpetuated the "historic condemnation of the unwed mother," that it was racially discriminatory, and that the rule punished "refusal or inability to use contraception or to have an abortion."

By deciding not to hear the case, the high court fell short of affirming a lower federal court which earlier declared the rule unconstitutional. But the effect of the action is to let the lower court's decision stand.

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