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produced by Baptist Press

SBC Executive Committee
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Nashville, Tennessee 37219
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July 20, 1976

76-117

Operation Turns to Tragedy Which Turns into a Victory

By John Whitman

ALTON, Ill. (BP)--Late last fall, Alton high school junior Carole Showers, 17, entered a hospital for a bronchoscope procedure to find why she sometimes coughed up blood.

The operation was supposed to be so minor that her father Norman went on to Southern-Illinois University (SIU), Edwardsville, where he is an instructor. And her mother Norma even considered going on to her classroom in the local school system.

A suggestion by a nurse that Carole would have some discomfort in her throat caused Norma to decide to stay in the waiting room--a half-hour at the most, she was told. The 30 minutes stretched into three hours, and encouraging smiles from hospital attendants turned into evasive answers about why it was taking so long. Then, blood-spattered, the chest surgeon and attending physician came to say, "We don't think she's going to make it."

During the test, which required an anesthetic, Carole went into convulsions accompanied by three cardiac arrests and fell into a deep coma. These events triggered a fight for her life that involved not only the hospital staff, but relatives, friends and members of the Calvary Baptist Church here, where her family are long-time members. The fight took on both physical and spiritual dimensions.

The medical staff say they still have not determined why the convulsions and heart attacks occurred. Neither have they discovered the key to her remarkable recovery. Dozens of concerned people kept bedside vigils as well as continuous prayer. Her pastor Ed Claybrook called the Illinois Baptist State Association to special prayer in Springfield.

Carole's six days in a coma left specialists saying that even if she lived, her brain would be severely damaged, none daring to describe what sort of person she might be. "I guess we fooled them," Carole later quipped as she left the hospital.

Friends and relatives were also concerned about her mentality. And the tracheotomy tube in her throat didn't help. As she began to regain consciousness, they would say, "Squeeze my hand if you understand."

"I squeezed a hundred hands," she says now. It was her cousin Karen who solved the communications problem. She and Carole had learned sign language from student missionary Kathy Stanfield, who started a deaf ministry at Calvary Church last summer. Carole would finger spell and Karen interpreted. Then Carole learned to talk by putting her finger over the tracheotomy hole. "And she sounded just like herself," her father said.

However, another battle was to be fought. Medication to restore her blood pressure following the cardiac arrests leaked into tissues of her left hand, constricted the blood vessels and cut off circulation. Gangrene became so severe the fingers and part of the hand had to be amputated. Skin grafts have been made to cover the damaged area. "But it was months before I'd look at it," Carole said.

It was during her hospitalization for the amputation, Carole said, that her deepest and only significant depression came.

"I was watching the Lawrence Welk Show. A flute player was on the program, and I had played the flute in Alton high school's Marching One Hundred band. While he played I suddenly realized I would never play the flute again. And I cried."

Carole also played the piano, and the fife in a fife and drum corps. She has since learned to play the piano with one hand and carries the banner for the corps.

Many were influenced by Carole's attitude toward her experience. One who had quit church went back and "was saved." Others saw in her faith something they needed. Dr. Harvey Velt, who is Mrs. Shower's former classmate, directs Carole's fife and drum corps. "I've seen only one other miracle during my medical practice," he said, "but you've had more than one."

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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July 20, 1976

BSU Directors Ask
For Aid, Cooperation

CLINTON, Miss. (BP)--Directors of Baptist student ministries attending their national workshop here called for continued aid and cooperation from Southern Baptist Convention agencies, commissions and seminaries.

Organized into Task Forces to study needs Baptist Student Union (BSU) directors face in dealing with SBC organizations, the directors said communication is the major problem. All the task forces encouraged more communication between BSU directors and the Foreign and Home Mission Boards, Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union (WMU, organization for women and girls) and Brotherhood (organization for men and boys).

The task force assigned to study the Foreign Mission Board called for renewed interest in areas, in addition to evangelism, such as political developments in host countries, conflicts and struggles.

The group asked for the appointment of summer missionaries to work specifically with children of missionaries and other American youth overseas.

"Perhaps a regular youth ministry could be operated for these 'forgotten' persons during the summer months," said a task force spokesman. "We believe students are willing to respond quickly to ever changing world concerns and feel the Foreign Mission Board must equip itself to move rapidly and with flexibility."

"Probably the greatest challenge facing Baptist Student Unions is to utilize every effort possible to involve young men and women in missionary education and ministries," stated Myra Gullledge, director of the Baptist student union at Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, La., and convener of the task force on WMU/ Brotherhood.

Acknowledging that little has been accomplished among collegians in the area of actual missionary education other than summer missions, special mission projects, seminary mission conferences and scattered missions emphases, the task force called for more use of WMU and Brotherhood as a part of campus organization. The group also encouraged BSU directors to use available materials from the two agencies already in print such as "Contempo," "Brotherhood Journal," "Skills for Mission Action Series," "Graded Series Study" and "Group Action Guides."

"Because of a growing need for missionary awareness, WMU and Brotherhood would provide excellent tools, methods, organization and guide lines for training and developing student leaders," added Miss Gullledge.

Concerning the Sunday School Board, general concern was expressed that some way be found to have consultants in the different areas at the board available to help on the college campus, even though they are not specifically assigned that task.

According to a task force on Southern Baptist Convention commissions, these organizations are generally not well known by campus ministers and students. Exceptions were the SBC's Christian Life Commission and its work with hunger and the Historical Commission and its work with the Bicentennial.

The task force called for interaction along two lines, education and specific projects. The campus ministers affirmed, "We should take advantage of these opportunities for interchange in order that we can help the commissions, local churches and our own ministry," according to a paper prepared by the task force.

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The task force on seminaries called for the six Southern Baptist seminaries to promote cooperation, not competitiveness, among themselves by developing joint recruitment projects. It also asked the seminaries to recognize the major role state universities play in producing seminary students and recognize the pastoral as well as educational functions of student ministries.

Also, the need for development of a master of divinity curriculum for student ministries and a doctor of ministries program in student ministries was expressed.

The task force reporting on the Home Mission Board (HMB) expressed a feeling of cooperation between directors of student ministries and the HMB. The HMB identifies missions needs and provides resources; BSU assists in promotion, recruitment and training of students.

"The Home Mission Board is expanding in the area of special projects," said a task force-prepared paper. "More student teams will be needed to assist in meeting needs and requests of missions strategies in key cities, in resort ministries and in unchurched and transitional communities."

The task force recommended that BSU's do a better job in preparing students for meeting missions needs and that the HMB better prepare field supervisors in utilizing the student volunteers in more meaningful and challenging ways.

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'Society & Culture Affect
Religion Among Collegians'

Baptist Press
7/20/76

By Michael D. Chute

CLINTON, Miss. (BP)--Social and cultural changes are having dramatic effects on religion in higher education and on the religious life of students, Baptist Student Union (BSU) directors were told in their national workshop here.

Colleges and universities are "no longer considered ivory towers for abstract scholastic research and teaching," said Harry E. Smith, executive director for the Society for Religion in Higher Education and an associate professor at Yale University Divinity School.

"Higher education is the microcosm of society," Smith said, "responding like a seismograph to the crises of the surrounding culture. . ."

The religious life of students--their current search for the sacred--"clearly reflects what is happening in our culture, in higher education and on the college and university campus," Smith said. Religion in higher education is changing, he warned, because of the effect of social and cultural changes, which put stress on religion to conform, he noted.

Institutions of higher education often respond in such dramatic ways as to become instrumental in hastening change, as in the civil rights and anti-war movements, Smith said.

He cited the temporary closing of massive City University of New York last spring as a vivid reminder of the interrelation of higher education and its social and political environment. The university closed due to New York City's fiscal crisis.

The campus and higher education today are marked, Smith continued, by an "incredible variety of religious experiences" available to today's students. BSUs are in a position to help students with their search for truth, he said.

"In addition to the traditional, mainline denominations, there have long existed various religious cults and sects in America," he added. "Thanks to the media--press and TV publicity--given to these small groups, the unusual little-known beliefs of these cults and sects have now become live options for students."

According to the official calendar at Yale University where Smith teaches, students can participate in as many as 30 different religious gatherings. These encompass everything from the Episcopal evensong and holy communion to the Unification Church, from discussions of "soul travel" and T'ai Chi to meditation as taught by Guru Maharaj Ji, Kundalini Yoga or transcendental meditation.

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"This is a far cry indeed from the day when required congregational worship was the only recognized form of the 'search for the sacred' at Yale," explained Smith.

"One is struck by the large number of students seeking the sacred outside the church or the tradition in which they were raised, in non-ecclesiastical, extra-church groups which acknowledge little or no connection to a denominational tradition.

"However, there is widespread interest in religious questions and the search for religious meaning on our college campuses as evidenced by large enrolments in religion courses. But this is coupled with a growing disaffiliation from any organized church or religious tradition, a finding underscored by the declining percentage of students recording any religious preference, down from 85 percent to 45 percent on many state university campuses."

According to Smith, these changes in religion in higher education are products of social and cultural changes. The social scene is characterized by incredible diversity and growing pluralism. He said the number of options available for individuals to relate to each other and to function in society is unbelievable.

In addition to the norms of marriage and family, today there are a vast range of family styles practiced, including trial marriages, group marriages and childless marriages, to name a few, Smith said. Whereas the Judeo-Christian tradition once constituted the extent of American religion, today there are hundreds of Eastern and quasi-religious movements which are "live" options for many persons, he said.

"The impact of this new social context upon higher education can be readily seen," Smith continued. "There is a broadened understanding of higher education which now exists. Called post-secondary education, it includes not just traditional independent colleges and state universities, but a growing number of community colleges and technical, vocational and proprietary schools."

Smith said that such corporations as Massachusetts General Hospital, Rand Corporation and Arthur D. Little Research Company have established degree-granting programs. Also, he said, Xerox, Motorola, IBM, General Electric, Proctor and Gamble and McDonald's, to give examples, have established extensive educational centers.

"This has meant the development of new clientele in higher education," he said, "as older students, part-time adult learners, women and minority students, traditionally bypassed, are enrolling in institutions, raising the median age. Last year, one-third of all college students were 25 years of age or older.

"Yet even as new clientele emerge, I sense a growing uncertainty about future enrolments. The declining number of 18-24 year olds, plus the declining percentage of 18-24 year olds enrolling in college, threaten to reduce college enrolments drastically. No flood of liberated women, black students or retired folks going back to college can adequately compensate for the expected decrease in traditional enrollments. Colleges struggling for survival proliferate courses and programs inflate grades, lower admission standards and sacrifice quality in the scramble for quantity."

The rising cost of higher education is another crucial factor, explained Smith, especially on private college and university campuses such as Baptist schools, where tuition is used to cover mounting costs of faculty and staff salaries, heating fuel, campus security and maintenance.

These social changes control religious change among college students, Smith concluded.