



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

-- FEATURES

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80-504

Alcohol: It Stole
What Might Have Been

By Rex Hammock

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. (BP)--"I know how good I was. I just wish I could see how good I could have been."

A former U.S. senator and an Episcopal clergyman share that sentiment of Don Newcombe, one of baseball's all-time greats. All three, victims of alcoholism, discussed their bouts with the disease during a recent national conference of religious leaders on abuse of alcohol and other drugs.

Harold Hughes, former senator from Iowa, and David A. Works, an Episcopal clergyman in Boston, Mass., joined Newcombe, a pitching great with the old Brooklyn Dodgers, in discussing their present efforts to help others face similar problems with alcohol.

Newcombe started his professional baseball career full force. In his first season with the Dodgers in 1949, he won 17 games and captured the National League Rookie of the Year honors. During a 10-year career, he earned both the National League's Most Valuable Player Award and the Cy Young Award.

But he recalls his baseball career with regrets.

"I should have been able to play another five or six years," he explained, blaming an excessive use of alcohol for cutting his career short.

"I just wish that I could see how good I could have been without using alcohol."

Newcombe stopped drinking 13 years ago--"When I discovered that my wife was going to divorce me because of my drinking."

He explained that this was when he first discovered how serious an alcohol problem he had. "We (alcoholics) are the last to know that we have a problem," he said, shaking his head.

Newcombe credits his wife's religious convictions with helping him to overcome alcoholism. The experience, he said, "convinced him to believe in the power of prayer."

"I don't know where Don Newcombe would be today if God had not come into my life," said Newcombe, now an active church member in the Garden Grove Community Church in California.

Active in several programs aimed at helping young people understand the "use and non-use" of alcohol, Newcombe explained that he is constantly being challenged to get young people to understand the problems associated with alcohol--problems, he explained, "which supersede our imagination."

Hughes took his last drink 26 years ago.

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"I'm not a 'recovering' alcoholic," Hughes explained, referring to the way most alcoholics who have stopped drinking, including David Works, describe themselves. "I am 'recovered,'" he declared. "I believe men and women can get well," he said. "I know I am well."

Hughes admits, however, that if he drinks again, "I will reinflict myself."

He knows this for a fact.

Two years before he started his road to recovery, Hughes stopped drinking for the first time. "I took the great experiment (tried to drink moderately) and found myself in a jail in Florida."

Things got so bad, he recalled, "that my wife tried to have me committed to a mental institution."

At the end of his rope, Hughes loaded a gun and was prepared to commit suicide.

But Hughes, brought up in a "strict Methodist home," recalled that he decided to pray. "I cried out in agony, 'God help me, I can't help myself.'"

Something happened, he explained. "A great peace settled over me. I had never heard of being 'born again,' but I knew the Lord was touching me."

After success in business, Hughes later became director of the Iowa Department of Commerce and then served as governor of the state for three terms before his election to the U.S. Senate.

"I didn't seek reelection (to the Senate)," he explained, "because I wanted to devote myself fulltime to the lay ministry."

Now living in Maryland, Hughes is active in the Assisi Foundation. "I do a lot of speaking and am very active in several organizations concerned with alcohol."

Works, president of the North Conway Institute, an interfaith association for alcohol education in Boston, attended his first Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting while a student at the Virginia Theological Seminary. "For 34 years of my life, I've made a daily responsible decision not to use alcohol."

He says many people helped him recover from being the "town drunk"--the family, the church, the college and university world, doctors, friends, colleagues and critics.

Works, who celebrated his 59th birthday on Thanksgiving Day, said he now "feels compelled to witness to my profound thanks for my own recovery from the disease of alcoholism."



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80-04

Doctrinal Debate Ranked 1st
At Beginning and End of '70s

By Robert O'Brien

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The decade of the 1970s began and ended with Southern Baptist editors voting doctrinal controversy as the No. 1 story in year-end Top 10 polls of Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention's news service.

The decade's Top 10 stories didn't solely revolve around controversy as state editors and Baptist Press personnel recognized the launching of the SBC's Bold Mission Thrust plan to evangelize the world in this century and took note of such things as Southern Baptists' continued financial and numerical growth and missions expansion.

But seven of the 10 No. 1 stories in the year-end polls--plus 25 other stories in 100 ballot places--involved some sort of internal Southern Baptist strife.

Four of the seven controversial No. 1 stories--and 15 other Top 10 finishers--involved doctrinal problems, such as biblical orthodoxy, creedalism, the charismatic movement, the role of women in ministry, and debate over open communion and acceptance of non-Baptist baptisms in some churches.

The top story of 1970 focused on the SBC meeting in Denver, where biblical orthodoxy debate culminated in messengers asking the Sunday School Board to withdraw Vol. 1 of the Broadman Bible Commentary, mainly because of comments on accounts in Genesis.

Months of politicking, which led to the election at the 1979 SBC in Houston of a president committed to the issue of biblical inerrancy (errorlessness), took the top spot in the decade's final Top 10 poll. It placed ahead of the forced resignation of Paul Stevens, president of the SBC Radio and Television Commission for 26 years.

The decade's opening No. 1 story also beat out a highly publicized one. It involved the controversy surrounding a much misunderstood seminar held by the Christian Life Commission in 1970 in Atlanta which featured a successful debate against Anson Mount's defense of the Playboy philosophy and against situation ethics. The commission subsequently survived an effort at the SBC in Denver to cut its budget.

The debate on the Broadman Commentary consumed much attention in the first three years of the decade, adding a fourth place finish in 1971 and a first place in 1972. In 1971, messengers to the SBC in St. Louis requested the Sunday School Board to obtain a new writer for the Genesis commentary in Vol. 1. In 1972, messengers in Philadelphia declined, by a 4 to 1 margin, to call for withdrawal and rewrite of the entire 12-volume set of the commentary.

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The continuing biblical orthodoxy debate, in some form or another, took a second place in 1973, a fifth in 1975, a seventh in 1976 and a 10th in 1979. The 1973 story included the formation of the controversial Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship, which launched "The Southern Baptist Journal," with the stated purpose of exposing so-called "liberals" in Southern Baptist life.

In 1971 and 1972 the editors selected "Becoming" as the No. 1 and No. 9 stories respectively. That involved controversy which swirled around a decision by Sunday School Board officials to withhold and revise an already printed edition of "Becoming," a church training quarterly for teenagers, because they felt misunderstandings would result from its racial content.

Editors voted a fifth place finish in 1971 to escalating concern among Baptists for racial reconciliation. Other positively-oriented racial stories finished sixth in 1973 and ninth in 1974. But the negative side skyrocketed to number two in 1976 as racial controversy surrounded Clennon King's attempts to integrate the Plains (Ga.) Baptist Church in the year its most celebrated member, Jimmy Carter, sought the nation's presidency.

In 1973, a controversy in the Missouri Baptist Convention ranked as the No. 1 story. The story centered around alleged mismanagement of funds and convention affairs. Earl O. Harding, the Missouri executive secretary, died during the investigation. The convention went through harmonious reorganization the following year to resolve the crisis.

The nation's integrity crisis captured the top place in 1974. Developments surrounding the crisis included the Watergate tragedy, Richard Nixon's resignation as president, Ford's inauguration, Ford's address to Southern Baptists at a Brotherhood Commission-sponsored breakfast in Dallas, and reaction of religious leaders.

Doctrinal debate regained No. 1 in 1975, as disagreement between churches and associations over practice of charismatic "gifts," particularly tongues speaking, cropped up in at least three states. Charismatic debate also finished sixth in 1974 and fourth in 1976.

Also, in 1976, the No. 1 ranking went to the religious dimensions of the U.S. presidential race between Carter, a Southern Baptist deacon and Sunday School teacher, who popularized "born again," and Ford, an Episcopalian, whose son was to become a ministerial student. Ford's address at the SBC annual meeting in Norfolk finished third that year.

The SBC's Bold Mission Thrust goal to proclaim the message of Christ to the entire world in this century first showed up, indirectly, in the 1974 poll. The SBC's vote that year to study mission outreach over the last 25 years of the century, the seedbed of BMT, gained a 10th place. The articulation of the BMT objective captured fifth in 1976, and, in 1977, the amazingly swift formation of Mission Service Corps, part of BMT, swept into first place.

In June of 1977, President Carter, in a videotaped message to the annual SBC meeting, successfully urged Southern Baptists to launch MSC, a plan to place 5,000 volunteers alongside career missionaries for one to two years of service at home and abroad. By October, the first volunteer had been appointed.

Active support of MSC by President Carter and SBC President Jimmy Allen finished fifth in 1978, and escalation of BMT and MSC was fifth in 1979.

In 1978, the No. 1 story chronicled the events surrounding the appearance in Atlanta of anti-homosexual rights crusader Anita Bryant at the SBC Pastors' Conference, which was picketed by 2,000 gays, and her defeat later in the week in the race for SBC first vice president. The SBC voted, however, to commend her for her stance on homosexuality.

Several themes permeated the decade's Top 10 polls--church-state issues (nine places on seven ballots); Southern Baptist response to disaster, hunger and refugees (nine places on six ballots); financial growth despite economic woes (six places on four ballots); missionaries ministering in the midst of tension (six ballot finishes); membership and school enrollment increases in the SBC but generally decreasing enrollments in church program organizations, such as church training (five finishes); and the ups and downs in baptisms (four finishes).

The church-state issues involved Baptist opposition to and governmental and court actions concerning such issues as aid to parochial schools, the proposed prayer amendment, threat to tax deductions and exemptions for religious organizations, tuition tax credits, and government interference in church and denominational institutions.

The baptism issue drew attention in 1971, 1972 and 1979, with reports of baptism upturns, and in 1978, with reports of three straight years of declines. Baptisms failed to increase over the previous year five times in the '70s, but 1972's total set an SBC record.

The human drama in Top 10 ballots of the '70s revolved around response to disaster, hunger and the pitiful plight of Southeast Asian refugees and the response of SBC missionaries to tension. But the continuing growth of missions--called by many the glue which holds Southern Baptists together despite controversy--and the refusal of missionaries to crumble under tension probably provided the most dramatic moments.

Missionaries persevered in the face of war and turmoil, maintaining an uninterrupted presence in most countries, effecting eleventh-hour evacuations and then re-entry of some countries and evacuations of other countries not yet re-entered. The supreme missionary sacrifice came in 1978 with the murder of Archie Dunaway, missionary to Rhodesia, the year's second ranked story.

-30-

Lee Named President
Of Averett College

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DANVILLE, Va. (BP)--Howard W. Lee has been elected president of Averett College, a 121-year-old Virginia Baptist school here.

Lee, acting president since Conwell A. Anderson retired in June, has served the school since 1971 as assistant to the president. He joined Averett as an administrator and professor of Old Testament and sociology. Previously, he was pastor for 27 years of West Main Baptist Church, Danville.

He received his bachelor of arts degree from William Jewell College and master of theology and doctor of philosophy degrees from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

-30-