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80-136

Salt Lake City Sniper
Guns Down Pastor's Son

SALT LAKE CITY (BP)--"I loved my son too much to hate anybody for hurting him," Theodore Fields said.

Fields, pastor of New Pilgrim Baptist Church in Salt Lake City, spoke just before funeral services were held for his son, Ted, 20, who was gunned down by a sniper as he jogged near Liberty Park late Aug. 20.

The younger Fields and a friend, David Martin III, 18, were killed in the fusillade of high-powered rifle shots as they and two young women jogged across a brightly lit intersection.

Both young Fields and Martin were members of the 200-member black Baptist congregation affiliated with the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention.

"No one knows any reason for it," pastor Fields said. "No one knows why anyone would want to hurt Ted or David."

Salt Lake City police are seeking the person who fired six shots at the pair from a field near the intersection. The firm for which both young men worked, Northwest Pipeline Corp., posted a \$25,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the assailant. The Salt Lake City Tribune also posted a \$10,000 reward.

"The police don't have any real leads," the elder Fields said.

Salt Lake City newspapers speculated the sniper "knew who he wanted to kill," and indicated the slayings were "not the work of a random psychopath."

Whether the killings had racial overtones also was being investigated. The elder Fields, however, was reluctant to talk about the possibility the shootings were motivated by the fact the young men were black and their companions were white.

Fields, who has served the church two years, retired from the U.S. Air Force in November 1979, to become full-time pastor. He currently is a member of the Utah-Idaho convention executive board.

He officiated at the funeral for Martin, but decided not to do so for his own son. "I am not strong enough to preach my son's funeral," he said.

"I have lost my son, but I don't have any animosity in my heart toward anyone. I loved my son too much for that. I know he knew the Lord; I have no fear of his salvation. One day, I am going to be with him. That is the strength that keeps me going," Fields said.

Carter Defeats Reagan In Student Straw Poll

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--President Jimmy Carter narrowly defeated former California Governor Ronald Reagan in a presidential straw poll conducted during student week at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center.

Carter received 253 votes to Reagan's 228. Independent candidate John Anderson garnered 37 votes, and seven students indicated they were undecided.

A total of 1,000 ballots were distributed through the conference daily bulletin where students were encouraged to vote and place their ballots in boxes near the doors of Spilman Auditorium. However, only 525 votes were cast.

"It's hard to say why the vote total was so low," said Howard Bramlette, editor in National Student Ministries, sponsor of the conference. Bramlette said the poll was conducted in a low-key manner, and students were invited to vote but "no big deal was made of it."

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Baptist, Methodist Churches
Help Buy Christian Church

Baptist Press
8/27/80

SULPHUR, La. (BP)—A Sulphur, La., Baptist church and an Akron, Ohio, Methodist church have joined hands to help Sherwood Park Baptist Church in Akron buy the property of a disbanded Christian church there.

The cross continental coalition involves a layman, Bill Hanchey, who has been a member of both the Baptist churches. He joined the Sherwood Park church when he was transferred to Akron in 1970. In 1976 when he returned to Louisiana, he joined the First Baptist Church of Maplewood in Sulphur.

This January, when the Christian church in Akron disbanded and offered its property for sale for \$100,000, the Sherwood Park pastor wrote Hanchey to ask if his Louisiana church could help purchase the five acres of land and 3,700 square-foot building.

The Maplewood church pledged \$10,000 to the effort, but managed to raise \$13,000.

The Akron Methodist Church, which got involved "because we have so much confidence in the Baptists," paid \$100 a month to rent the Christian church facilities for a year for the Sherwood Park congregation while it was trying to gather the purchase money.

The Methodist church is a century old and one of the fastest growing in southeast Akron. The Sherwood Park Baptist Church, which was growing out of its 3,000 square-foot building on three acres, has led its association in baptisms for five straight years; helped organize a Romanian Baptist church and hopes to begin an Indian Baptist church soon.

David Young, pastor of the Maplewood church, said, "Baptists respond when there is a real challenge and need. In spite of the recession and the \$13,000 we sent to Ohio, our congregation is \$6,000 ahead of the budget and we will give an additional \$75,000 to missions, including more than \$50,000 through the Cooperative Program."

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Deaf Shirley Hall
Listens With Eyes

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—One of the things Shirley Hall likes best is just "sitting and listening to people talk."

But since Hall is totally deaf, she's forced to "listen with her eyes."

Hall is a people-lover, though, and being deaf has never kept her from reaching out to others and being totally involved in life.

"You've got to use what you've got and do your best," she told women at the Woman's Missionary Union conference at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center.

Hall was there to train approximately 75 leaders of Girls in Action, the Southern Baptist missions organization for girls in grades one through six. Throughout the conference, she stressed listening.

"Respect a girl as a person," she urged the women. "Listen to her. Ask her about her day at school; ask her about her softball game."

Hall doesn't always just sit and listen to the girls. She can often be found out on the softball diamond with them. "I'm the pitcher. It's safer that way," she quips.

Shirley's husband, Ben, is pastor of Providence Baptist Church in Hickory, N.C. They are the parents of three children, ages 15 to 20. She is a teacher's aide for children with reading problems.

Hall was born with a hearing defect and wore a hearing aid during childhood. She went to a special school for a year to learn how to lip read and to improve her diction. Today, her speech is quite good.

She lost what hearing she had suddenly.

"I had been out of college for a month and was going to get married the next month," she said. "I went to visit Ben's parents for a weekend, and it happened then.

"I just thought I needed a more powerful hearing aid, so I went to the doctor. When he turned it on and I couldn't hear, I knew then that I was deaf."

The next few months were traumatic for Hall. She couldn't help wondering if her being deaf would make a difference in the way Ben felt about her.

"There were times when I asked myself, 'Why did it have to be me?'" she said. "But I gradually learned that God is with me."

Experts' Alcohol Arguments Immobilizing Church Efforts

SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP)--Arguing by experts over the causes and solutions of alcohol abuse has immobilized churchmen says an alcohol expert who has called for more people in the church to wake up and do something.

John Wood, who coordinates alcohol education and action for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, told participants from Baptist associations throughout Oklahoma that alcohol abuse is a moral issue and Christians must provide the leadership to solve the problem.

Wood said the emphasis in alcoholism treatment has shifted to less institutionalization and more community involvement. The result is that these alcoholics are now out in the community and many are not getting any help.

"Christians are under the mandate of the gospel to minister to these persons," he said. "The first step for the church is to realize that because we as Christians value people, we can take the leadership in the area of alcohol education and action. We need not be intimidated by the experts. We have the capability for developing expertise in the moral dimensions of alcohol abuse."

Wood said that the church should take the lead in teaching abstinence by having alcohol education in the church. He said competent lay persons can hold workshops in their local church to teach parents how to talk to their children about alcohol. "What better way to do alcohol education than in the climate of love, acceptance and the gospel?" he asked.

In addition to majoring on prevention in alcohol education, Wood urged churches not to fail to minister to families where there are drinking problems.

"Alcohol touches very nearly every single family in the nation in some way," Wood said. "As the church takes seriously the mandate to heal society's hurts, it will find itself working with people who have alcohol-related problems."

"Alcohol abuse is a moral issue and simply stating factual data fails to get to the heart of the matter," Wood stressed.

"The fact that 19 percent of youth 14 to 17 years old are problem drinkers doesn't alarm our generation of young people who have yet to discover that alcohol is an addictive and very dangerous drug."

The Southern Baptist ethicist urged the participants to enter the political arena to combat alcohol. "We need patience and commitment because we are in for a long battle," he said.

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Carter Aide Admits Urging
Smith To Skip Briefing

Baptist Press
8/27/80

WASHINGTON (BP)--Bob Maddox, an aide to President Carter, said he attempted "Baptist to Baptist" to dissuade Bailey Smith, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, from attending a religious-political meeting in Dallas.

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Maddox commented in response to national stories in which Smith told of attempts by Maddox to talk him out of going to the National Affairs Briefing, a meeting sponsored by The Roundtable, a conservative group.

"The bottom line is that when I heard he was going to address the meeting, I called him and said, 'Friend, I hate to see you go to that meeting. They (the organizers) will put you in a position where you don't want to be,'" Maddox told Baptist Press.

Smith recalled Maddox named some leaders of the briefing and quoted the aide as saying: "You don't want to get involved with those men." The SBC president said he responded: "Bob, you just named some of my best friends."

Among the names Smith said Maddox mentioned were Southern Baptist evangelist James Robison of Hurst, a vice president of The Roundtable, and Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis and the man Smith succeeded at the helm of the 13.4 million-member SBC.

Smith said: "I told him (Maddox) that even if the White House didn't want me to go, I had a loyalty to James Robison and that I was not going to let anybody talk me out of a loyalty to my friends."

Maddox, former pastor of First Baptist Church in Calhoun, Ga., added: "The meeting (the National Affairs Briefing) came out about like I thought it would. It was a Ronald Reagan religious pep rally, and after I saw the list of speakers, I knew there would be no attempt to present a balanced view of national affairs."

Maddox emphasized that he spoke only to Smith "Baptist to Baptist." When asked if he spoke on behalf of the White House, the aide replied: "Heavens no. This was strictly on my own. The president would never interfere in something like this."

Smith, who said he is surprised by the attention the story is getting, said he attended the National Affairs Briefing as an attempt to "balance" his appearance a week earlier at the National Democratic Convention in New York City.

"As president of all Southern Baptists, which I promised to be, I felt I needed to be informed on all sides. And now, after my meeting with Carter in the White House and after a personal meeting with Reagan in Dallas, I feel I am informed and can answer questions intelligently," Smith said.