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NATIONAL OFFICESBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor**BUREAUS****ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041**DALLAS** _____, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996**MEMPHIS** Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300**RICHMOND** Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151**WASHINGTON** Stan L. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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80-139

Jackson, Foreign Board
Explore Common Ground

By Robert O'Brien

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board staff and the president of World Evangelism Foundation met in Richmond to explore ways the board can involve a wider cross section of Southern Baptists in worldwide evangelism.

"The impression strongest in my mind after that eight-hour meeting is that the Foreign Mission Board is going to carry out the task of partnership missions around the world," said W.H. (Dub) Jackson Jr., president of the Dallas-based World Evangelism Foundation.

Jackson, who resigned as a Southern Baptist missionary to Japan in 1968 after 17 years' service to set up WEF, came to Richmond at the invitation of Charles Bryan, vice president of the board's overseas operations.

"We realize that we can't reach the world for Christ by ourselves," Bryan said. "We must seek input from many different groups to gain the broad-based contacts and expertise we need to get the job done."

World Evangelism Foundation specializes in "partnership missions," an approach which has placed teams of Southern Baptist pastors and their laymen in evangelistic crusades in churches in 30 foreign countries over the past 12 years, according to Jackson.

Teams from those countries, in turn, have conducted reciprocal evangelistic efforts in Southern Baptist churches in the United States.

Observers of the world evangelism scene, while noting that the Foreign Mission Board and World Evangelism Foundation have had some philosophical differences about methods, point out that the partnership teams have contributed to spiritual revival.

Baptists of varying approaches, faced with the realities of the denomination's Bold Mission Thrust effort to reach the world for Jesus Christ by the year 2000, should seek to work together despite differences, according to R. Keith Parks, board president.

The Foreign Mission Board, he said, will reemphasize efforts through many approaches, such as the meeting with Jackson, to tap the expertise of Southern Baptists from the grassroots to denominational leadership posts.

The meeting with Jackson represents the first in a new round of meetings to accomplish that purpose. The next meeting will be in Irving, Texas, Oct. 3-4. Southern Baptists invited to that session will discuss ways the Foreign Mission Board can "get a handle on the tremendous missions potential of Southern Baptists," Bryan said.

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"We don't have all the know-how," said A. Clark Scanlon, executive assistant to the board's vice president for overseas operations.

"We will have many such meetings with many different persons to see how we can generate bold involvement to reach the world for Christ through Bold Mission Thrust," Scanlon declared. "We want to create an attitude of openness and incorporate more grassroots Southern Baptists in overseas ministries."

Over the years Jackson had felt the board should use more rank-and-file volunteers in overseas evangelism instead of emphasizing use of more highly trained persons. So he has worked directly with Southern Baptist pastors and laymen through WEF.

Board staffers, besides listening to Jackson's suggestions, briefed him on the board's increasing and far-flung use of volunteers. Over 3,800 volunteers served overseas last year. Conservative projections indicate more than 4,000 will go overseas this year and that the annual total will exceed 5,000 by 1983. Jackson said he believes the board has greater resources to accomplish the task overseas than any other organization.

Jackson also learned about the board's new evangelism emphasis which will place regional evangelism and church growth consultants at four strategic points around the world to equip missionaries and nationals. Ervin E. Hastey, the board's evangelism and church growth consultant, will coordinate the effort.

The World Evangelism Foundation president said his organization will do everything possible to undergird Foreign Mission Board efforts and to avoid duplication. "We are going to continue to support the Foreign Mission Board and cooperate with all its efforts," said Jackson. "Who knows, I may even seek reappointment to Japan." His son-in-law and daughter, Bill and Shirley Karr of Dallas, hope to be missionaries to Japan.

Jackson strongly endorsed a statement by Lewis I. Myers Jr., the board's program development director, that proper evangelism is not sharing of information but communicating of personal relationships.

"Personal relationships is the heart of partnership missions," Jackson said. "You don't have to be an expert to share what Christ has done for you. Churches overseas are much more interested in warmhearted people, and they invite teams because of that quality."

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Carter Still Opposes
State-Mandated Prayer

By Stan Hastey

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Judging from his response to a question at a town meeting in Independence, Mo., Sept. 3, President Carter remains opposed to state-written and state-mandated prayers in public schools.

That view was confirmed by presidential assistant Bob Maddox, who said that while the president affirms the right of every student to pray voluntarily and goes so far as to endorse a moment of silence and meditation at the beginning of the school day, he remains "absolutely consistent" in his opposition to "any kind of state-mandated prayer."

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Responding to a request from an American Muslim at Truman High School in Independence that he reexamine his position on school prayer, Carter said that while "there is a place for prayer in the home, in the Oval Office, and in school," government has no place "telling people they have to worship at a certain time and in a certain way."

The president told his questioner, Abdul Muamin Khalifah, "I would not want the government to tell my children that they would have to worship in a Muslim way and you would not want the government to tell your children that they would have to worship just like a Southern Baptist."

Maddox told Baptist Press that Carter's Independence statement was "absolutely consistent with what he has always said" on the volatile subject. The Baptist minister, who serves as a presidential liaison with the religious community, said Carter expressed the same view to a group of evangelical leaders in a recent White House meeting. The group had sought the president's endorsement of a proposal by U.S. Senator Jesse Helms, R-N.C., designed to reverse the effect of the Supreme Court's 1962 and 1963 decisions banning state-mandated prayers.

According to Maddox, Carter "thinks the Supreme Court spoke adequately" in those decisions. Asked if the president would veto the Helms proposal should it reach his desk, Maddox replied that Carter "has indicated that he would not look with favor" on the measure.

Carter is "terribly uncomfortable" with teacher-led oral prayer, Maddox said. The silence and meditation approach he favors has been approved by some state legislatures and upheld by a federal district court in Massachusetts. It has yet to be tested in the Supreme Court.

The Helms language, which would strip federal courts of jurisdiction over state laws or local policies on prayer in schools, remains stymied in a House subcommittee. Although the panel has held two rounds of hearings on the proposal, with another scheduled, the common assumption is that the bill will never emerge from committee for a House vote.

An effort by Congressman Philip Crane, R-Ill., to bypass the committee and force the issue to a vote on the floor of the House, also appears dead. The Senate passed the Helms proposal in April 1979.

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California Church Tries
Solar Heated Baptistry

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ROSAMOND, Calif. (BP)—First Baptist Church of Rosamond has installed a solar heated baptistry with good results.

The baptistry, designed and installed by Howard Wilkerson, a high school agriculture teacher and solar hobbyist, costs about \$650. Wilkerson said any plumber could install it.

Church members were skeptical at first, but since Wilkerson provided the money and initiated the plan, most skepticism gave way to enthusiasm. In fact, many members are contemplating such a system for their own homes.

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Bullets Shatter Klansman's
Schemes, Reshape His Life

By David Wilkinson

Tommy Tarrants had carried the bomb halfway up the driveway when a gunshot shattered the night's stillness.

The terrorist for the White Knights of the Mississippi Ku Klux Klan dropped the bomb and raced toward his car—right into a barrage of gunfire from police sharpshooters and FBI agents hidden behind an embankment.

As he reached the front of the car, a shotgun blast ripped into his upper right leg. When his Klan partner, 29-year-old Kathy Ainsworth, opened the door, a bullet struck her at the base of the neck.

Both Tarrants and Ainsworth were products of Southern Baptist heritage. Ainsworth, a Mississippi schoolteacher, was a member of a Southern Baptist church. Tarrants, who was raised in a Southern Baptist home and joined a Southern Baptist church at age 13, had dropped out of church after he became active in the Klan.

With bullets smashing into the car, Tarrants slammed the accelerator to the floor and sped away, with a police cruiser in quick pursuit.

"We're going to make it; don't worry," he assured his bleeding passenger. There was no answer. The wound had been fatal.

Police shotgun blasts blew out the back window and punctured Tarrants' tires. He grabbed a 9-mm submachine gun from under the seat, jumped out of the car and riddled the cruiser's windshield, wounding one of the patrolmen three times in the chest. As the other patrolman radioed for help, Tarrants dropped the gun and limped behind a house, where he crumpled helplessly to the ground.

Minutes later policemen fired four shots at Tarrants from 10 feet away. Two ripped into his right arm, nearly tearing it off. The other two shots rammed into the ground, inches from his chest.

These gunshots fired 12 years ago in Meridian, Miss., echo through the house as the former terrorist narrates. Now 33, the brown-haired, brown-eyed Tarrants hardly fits the stereotyped image of a terrorist. Dressed in plaid slacks and white sports shirt, the lanky, clean-cut, six-footer looks like he just walked out of a college classroom.

Tarrants doesn't mind talking about the Klan, but he now does so as an outsider. That chapter of his life ended 10 years ago in a six-by-nine-foot cell in Mississippi's Parchman Penitentiary. In the loneliness of solitary confinement, Tarrants met Jesus Christ.

Tarrants grants few interviews and politely requests that references to his whereabouts be kept out of the public record. Although it's been more than 10 years since he renounced the KKK, he is still wary of Klan reprisal. "I can assure you," he explains, "that they'd like nothing better than to eliminate me, if they think they could get away with it."

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Raised in a Southern Baptist home in Mobile, Ala., Tarrants was only 17 when he jumped aboard the "radical Right" movement that eventually carried him to the Meridian gunfight. When a federal court ordered the desegregation of his high school, Tarrants opposed the idea and looked for people of like mind. He found them at a political rally where he met several members of the John Birch Society. During the next year, he read reams of material from the John Birch Society and the National States' Rights Party.

"Before I knew it, I had become indoctrinated with the ideology of the far Right, and this hatred and prejudice began to grow and thrive inside me," he says. "I wasn't content to just read about this stuff and go to meetings. I wanted to get into some action, to really do something about it."

He began by painting swastikas on Jewish synagogues and then progressed to making threatening phone calls and shooting into the homes of Jewish and civil rights leaders. He also became well versed in clandestine tactics and the use of weapons and explosives.

When he migrated to Mississippi and Klan leadership realized he was "a totally devoted fanatic they could trust," Tarrants rose quickly through the ranks. Soon he was orchestrating and participating in bombings and other acts of violence as the leader of a well-trained, highly secretive terrorist group.

Convicted in a speedy trial after the shootout, Tarrants went to Parchman. After an unsuccessful escape attempt and subsequent return to maximum security, he began to read the great philosophers, such as Plato, Aristotle and Hegel. Unintentionally, he began to loosen himself from the "blinding bondage" of Klan ideology.

The next step in the transition was to "seek truth in reality, regardless of any cherished beliefs I might have to sacrifice in the process." He read Christian classics by authors such as Thomas a Kempis and C. S. Lewis.

He also read the Bible. "I had read it before, but I always got bored." This time, however, "it was just like it had been written especially for me." Alone in his cell, Tarrants gave his life to Christ.

The change was dramatic. Through a series of events and new-found friends within the prison system, Tarrants was assigned to work in the chaplains' office and was placed under minimum security.

Paroled in December 1976, he is now involved in a campus ministry with his wife Charlotte, a pretty, 24-year-old brunette he married in May.

He is deeply disturbed by the resurgence in Klan activity—although "I was telling people five years ago it was going to happen."

The Klan, he explains, is closely tied to social conditions, and "the time is ripe for Klan demagogues who can exploit racial, political and economic tensions."