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81-36

Atlanta Blacks Detain
White HMB Photographer

By Marv Knox

ATLANTA (BP)--Wary blacks, frustrated by the murders of 19 local children, apprehended a white Home Mission Board photographer in a southeast Atlanta park and held him captive for more than an hour.

Gary Meek, a college student and part-time photographer for the board, was detained as he worked in the predominantly black neighborhood. All the slain youngsters have been black and from similar neighborhoods. Investigators are searching for two other black children missing in the 19-month ordeal.

Meek was helping to prepare a slide show and received permission from the children before taking their pictures, he said. But almost as soon as he and a male friend from college started work, adults in the area became suspicious.

"The first guy that questioned us was just watching the kids play, and he seemed to understand when we told him why we were there," Meek said.

"Then another guy came by in a car," he continued. "This second gentleman saw us, came over and demanded identification. He called people over to watch us and insisted on keeping our driver's licenses until the police came."

"He didn't directly threaten us, but he implied that if we tried to run off or start something, they'd stop it."

Meek noted the crowd was "very tense" and almost evenly divided on the issue of detaining the two white men or letting them go.

"I was just hoping they wouldn't get violent," he remembered.

The man who started the fracas told the pair they were "really stupid or foolish" for taking photographs in the black community, Meek said. The man also scolded the children for allowing a stranger to take their pictures.

"I thought he overreacted; most of the people there didn't feel as strongly as he did," Meek said. "But I admitted this was bad timing."

Police investigating the incident agreed with that assessment but noted Meek and his friend had done nothing illegal. After verifying their identifications, the police released them.

Reflecting on his adventure, Meek said he would take his camera into that part of the city again if the situation warranted it. But for the slide production, he plans to utilize HMB contacts in the black community or take pictures at local mission centers.

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Ironically, the slide show that caused Meek trouble is being prepared for the board's black church relations department and focuses on pressures confronting black families.

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Strickland Selected
To Head Texas CLC

By Orville Scott

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DALLAS (BP)--Phil Strickland, who has been involved in Texas and national public concerns, has been elected director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Strickland, 39, who has been with the social concerns agency since 1967 as associate for public affairs and citizenship information with the Texas CLC, was elected during a meeting of the 192-member executive board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

The commission interprets practical Christianity in the areas of family life, public morals, race relations, Christian citizenship and economic life. The commission is the Texas committee on public affairs and emphasizes religious liberty through the separation of church and state.

Strickland, a native of Abilene, has been interim director of the commission since James M. Dunn resigned in December to become director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D.C.

Widely known for his work as legislative liaison for the commission, Strickland relates commission positions on issues to state and local officials and the public media.

Also he has served on crucial matters affecting the entire SBC. Last year, he helped amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) of 1974 so employees of Southern Baptist and state convention employees could continue to be included in church retirement plans. Also he was instrumental in the United States Congress passing legislation which provides a \$20,000 tax exemption for foreign missionaries who otherwise would have had to pay double tax on their income.

Strickland received his law degree from the University of Texas and attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

He served as legislative assistant to the lieutenant governor of Texas while in law school and practiced law in Fort Worth before coming to the CLC.

Strickland is a deacon and Sunday school teacher at Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas. He has served as official consultant to the White House, the Southern Baptist CLC and other agencies. He is co-author of books on drug abuse, politics and professional ethics and is author of "Endangered Species," a book which deals with world hunger and the Christian's response to it.

Strickland is married to the former Carolyn Ruth Bone. They have two children, Shannon Michelle and Delaine Patrice.

In another action, the board adopted a resolution opposing pari-mutuel gambling. In its resolution, the 192-member board said it questions the judgment of the Texas Legislature in considering pari-mutuel gambling again because the people of the state time and again have said they do not want pari-mutuel gambling.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Dallas bureau of Baptist Press.

Nashville Church Hosts
'Who's Who' Breakfast

By Frances Meeker

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The guest list read like a "who's who of state and local government." The program was patriotic and inspirational. The decorations were red, white and blue.

The event was the public affairs breakfast at Nashville's First Baptist Church to give recognition to local, state and national public officials.

"We want to tell you that we appreciate you, support you and are praying for you," said Bracey Campbell, secretary of the deacons at First Baptist Church and managing editor of the Nashville Banner. The public officials included the governor, mayor, state supreme court and judiciary members, chief of police, sheriff, a U.S. representative, state senators and representatives and metro council members.

H. Franklin Paschall, pastor of the church, said the "main idea" of the breakfast "was and is to show our government leaders at every level that we know you are there and we want you to know we are here."

He reminded the breakfast guests, which included members of First Baptist Church and Southern Baptist Convention employees, that "we are all working together to make people better off, but we also need to work together to make people better."

He said by working together, citizens and government officials can solve many of society's problems and pointed out there is a "connection" between the government and the religious community. Paschall added government officials "can't do your job without us and the religious communities can't do our job without you."

To prove his contention, Paschall read the 13th chapter of Romans, beginning with: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers for there is no power higher than God and the powers that be are ordained by God."

Campbell, a former news director for the Baptist Sunday School Board, introduced the guests at the head table. They were Gov. Lamar Alexander, former governor Winfield Dunn, state Supreme Court Chief Justice William Harbison, U.S. Rep. Bill Boner, Lt. Gov. John Wilder, Speaker of the House Ned McWhorter, Mayor Richard Fulton, State Comptroller William Snodgrass, Secretary of State Gentry Crowell, Vice Mayor David Scobey, Metro Police Chief Joe Casey, Davidson County Sheriff Fate Thomas and chairman of the Tennessee Republican Party Charles Overby. Joe C. Carr, former secretary of state and First Baptist member, was master of ceremonies.

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(Meeker is religion editor of the Nashville Banner.)

Large Crowds Pack
Crusade Facility

By Susan Cahen

Baptist Press
3/4/81

MEXICO CITY (BP)--Overflow crowds have jammed the Arena Mexico since the opening of the Billy Graham crusade, despite public confusion about the crusade's meeting times and place.

Preceding the crusade word had seemed to change daily regarding the meeting place as church leaders negotiated for a larger government or private facility, a Baptist source reported.

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Yet, more than 19,000 people packed into the 16,000-seat, Madison-Square-Garden-type facility on opening night and an estimated 4,000 more were left standing outside, reported the Graham organization.

The opening night crowd was so large, Southern Baptist press representative David Daniell said, that the more than 1,000 people standing to register decisions could not go forward and counselors were unable to reach them all at their seats in the time allotted.

As a result of the large first-night crowd, two services were planned for succeeding nights of the crusade. But on Monday evening, attendance fell to only about 11,000 for each service.

Daniell attributed the lower attendance to discouragement felt by many not getting inside the stadium the previous evening and services too early for the average Mexican worker arriving home at 7:30 or 8 p.m.

Since the stadium was not filled for either of the Monday services, one three-hour service was planned for Tuesday evening. Seventeen thousand persons attended with 1,358 making decisions, the Graham organization reported.

Nine days before the March 1-8 crusade the Mexican government revoked permission, granted more than a year ago, for evangelicals to use the 60,000-seat Inde Stadium. Government officials cited stricter enforcement of constitutional law requiring separation of church and state in rescinding permission. However, Pope John Paul II received a lavish welcome in Mexico last year and Mexican evangelicals said they felt they should be accorded the same privileges.

Crusade organizers attempted to secure Azteca Stadium, a 100,000-seat private soccer stadium, but officials declined to give their approval. Mexican Baptists felt Roman Catholic Archbishop Corripio Ahumada advised the predominately Catholic groups not to approve.

The length of the interdenominational crusade, part of a major city evangelism emphasis by Mexican Baptists, was shortened when Arena Mexico was available only five of the scheduled eight evenings.

Recordings of the services will be broadcast over 26 evangelical radio stations in Latin America, Daniell said. Also, cassettes will be distributed of the school of evangelism sessions, special music presentations, and Graham's messages.

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Dunn Lists Emphases
For Joint Committee

Baptist Press
3/4/81

WASHINGTON (BP)--In his first meeting with the 46-member Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, new Executive Director-Treasurer James M. Dunn listed emphases he said will characterize his administration.

Dunn, who took over leadership of the committee in January, said emphasis should be placed on action rather than academics, building relationships in government and the denominations, and committing the committee to effectiveness in the public arena.

The committee, composed of representatives of nine cooperating Baptist bodies in the United States and Canada, is charged with safeguarding religious liberty and addressing church-state issues.

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Dunn also noted there has been an "explosion" of controversial issues in the church-state field, necessitating efforts to devise means of enhancing the agency's effectiveness.

Generally, the meeting was devoted to internal matters. Members also heard a report on current issues from Jim Lehrer of Public Broadcasting System's "McNeil -Lehrer Report"; approved the naming of a committee to study criteria for issue selection; adopted procedures for filing friend-of-the-court briefs and adopting new position statements; scheduled a religious liberty conference for this fall; voted to meet once, rather than twice yearly; and adopted a proposed budget of nearly \$385,000 for 1981-82.

In another action committee members expressed concern "as individuals" over the disappearances and deaths of children in Atlanta and pledged to pray for law enforcement officials in their efforts to solve the mystery.

Lehrer, in an off-the-record, one-hour appearance, expressed his views on a variety of economic, political and church-state issues.

A three-person committee composed of Foy Valentine, executive secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission; Anne D. Carlson, a Minnesota attorney representing the North American Baptist Conference; and James Miller, an American Baptist pastor in Rochester, N.Y., will conduct an in-depth study of the agenda of the Baptist Joint Committee and bring recommendations for future criteria for involvement in public issues.

Naming of the panel followed a lengthy discussion by the full committee over the future agenda of the 42-year-old agency. Consensus appeared to form around the idea that while the Baptist Joint Committee must be free to speak to a variety of public issues, staff and budget limitations will compel it to concentrate in the church-state field.

In actions designed to assist the Baptist Joint Committee staff, approval was given to internal procedures for filing friend-of-the-court briefs in church-state cases and updating position statements on current issues. The staff will be expected to take the initiative in both instances, with final approval to be given by the full committee or its executive committee.

"Evangelism and religious liberty" was the topic chosen by the committee members for this fall's biennial religious liberty conference, to be held in Washington in conjunction with a meeting of the North American Baptist Fellowship.

The move to cut back from two full committee meetings annually to one spring meeting was made primarily as a budget-saving measure. The agency's executive committee will meet a second time each year, in the fall.

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Holcomb Joins
Southwestern

Baptist Press
3/4/81

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--James R. Holcomb, former senior executive with the SBC Radio and Television Commission, has joined the development staff of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Holcomb will have major responsibility in the seminary's current fund raising project, VISION/85, a \$25 million effort to provide for construction and operation of a new library center, renovation of the old center and for general endowment.

Since May 1979 Holcomb had been manager of the community services division for Metropolitan Tarrant County United Way in Fort Worth. He was at the Radio and Television Commission 1959-79 and led the commission's "Second Step Campaign" that raised \$3 million to build a new television production studio.

A native Texan, Holcomb is a graduate of Wayland Baptist College. He also attended Southwestern Seminary.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary.