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81-58

Another Child Slaying Torments Atlanta Baptists

By Marv Knox

ATLANTA (BP)—News of Timothy Hill's death surged through the Harris Homes housing project, soon reaching West End Baptist Center, where the youngster had attended Bible studies.

Police had thought the 13-year-old was a runaway, so people still hoped he would come back home. But a medical examiner confirmed the sad truth: the body a canoeist found in the Chattahoochee River was Hill's.

He joined the list of 20 other black children and one black mentally retarded adult male slain in the last 20 months. Investigators still are searching for bodies of two children in related cases.

"The day they identified his body, the children came in saying, 'They found Tim today,'" reported Carolyn Mobley, interim director at West End, a Christian social ministries center.

The children knew Tim, she said. He grew up in their neighborhood and attended Wednesday afternoon Bible studies and recreation times at the center "about two or three years ago."

Most of the children were "obviously shaken" when they heard the news, she added. They came to the center "not wanting, but needing, to talk" about what had happened to the youngster they had known as a friend.

Consoling them wasn't easy. Volunteer staffer Lilly Austin taught Tim when he attended the center, and she had visited his mother when she heard he was missing. But the final news was quite a jolt.

"I didn't even want to mention it to the kids," she recalled. "I was in a state of shock."

Yet consoling was about all the workers had left to do.

Mobley visited Tim's mother the day his body was identified. "She was distraught and weary of details," Mobley said. "She remembered the center and James Beck (the former director). I gave her some material on dealing with grief and let her know we were concerned and praying for her and the families of all the children."

Back at the center, the children experienced a grief they "couldn't express verbally," said Mildred Tucker, another volunteer who once taught Tim. "They didn't really talk about Tim's death a whole lot."

When children did talk about it, the workers counseled them to keep from "letting fear overcome them," Mobley said.

"We've told them that while it's good to be cautious, they can't go through life scared and panicky," she explained. "We've encouraged them to develop a sensitive, controlled awareness."

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Mobley admitted holding back fear has become increasingly hard for the children as the list of their slain peers has grown. She said many of them are keeping closer contact with their parents as they go from school to the center to home, and some parents even walk their children to their destinations.

But the final cure for their peace of mind must come from God, she said. "They've got to understand he's the only one who can give them ultimate security, no matter what anyone else does."

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Hatton Named Mountain
Minister of the Year

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PINEVILLE, Ky. (BP)—Kendall Hatton, pastor of Beaver Creek Baptist Church in Ferguson, N.C., has been named the A. S. Petrey Mountain Minister of the Year by Clear Creek Baptist School.

The award, given in recognition of outstanding service in the Appalachian Mountain area, is named in honor of the late A. S. Petrey, formerly of Hazard, a pioneer Baptist minister in Perry County from 1897 to 1952.

Hatton, a native of Centralia, W. Va., has been pastor of churches in Kentucky, West Virginia and North Carolina.

When he applied for admission to Clear Creek School in 1949, he could not read. It was not lack of intelligence, but because he had been almost blind since a bout with measles at the age of six.

In school, he at first was able to memorize reading lessons by hearing other children read, but within a few years, he dropped out of school. When he felt God's call to the ministry, Hatton searched for a school which would help him learn to read as well as provide theological training. The wife of then Clear Creek president, Mrs. Gladys Kelly, taught Hatton to read.

Within four years, he was able to graduate from the Bible Institute as well as high school. Later, he graduated from Clarke College in Newton, Miss., and Cumberland College in Williamsburg, Ky. He also did graduate work at Eastern Kentucky University.

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Baptist Building Sold
To Criswell Foundation

Baptist Press
4/6/81

DALLAS (BP)—The administrative committee of the Baptist General Convention of Texas has authorized sale of the Baptist Building to the W. A. Criswell Foundation Inc. for \$1.7 million cash.

The terms include placing \$100,000 in escrow with the remainder due at the time of occupancy. Anticipated moving date of the state convention offices is late summer or early fall.

W. A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church, said the building will house the 600 students from the elementary school of the church and give it room to expand.

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With the acquisition of the Baptist Building, First Church and the Foundation own seven square blocks of prime downtown Dallas property valued at more than \$25 million.

In June 1980, the Texas Baptist Executive Board voted to sell the Baptist Building. The five-story building no longer accommodates the convention's offices and a move to the Baptist Annuity Board Building at 511 North Akard was planned.

A realtor was employed and bids accepted. The asking price was \$1.8 million and the Criswell Foundation's bid was the earliest and highest of the three submitted, said James Landes, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"I am happy the building will stay in the hands of those who would use it for Christian purposes, and I am pleased it will stay in the Baptist family," Landes said.

Last year First Baptist completed construction of a downtown parking garage, a facility that cost more than \$7.5 million and cast the church heavily into debt with its interest payments. Criswell in December, however, launched a drive to "liberate the church" from more than \$1 million in interest on money borrowed for construction.

Since then, Criswell said, \$2.2 million in cash contributions has been raised by the congregation. The purchase of the Baptist Building, he said, while it will benefit the congregation, is unrelated to the church's finances.

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Luther Rice Seminary
Names Gene Williams

Baptist Press
4/6/81

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--Gene M. Williams, an evangelist from Hurst, Texas, has been named president-elect of Luther Rice Seminary.

Williams will become president of the 19-year-old institution in May 1982, succeeding Robert Witty, 74, who will become chancellor.

In December, regents of the Jacksonville school called off merger talks with Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, under which it was proposed that Paige Patterson, president of CCBI, would become president of the merged institution.

Williams, a native of Corsicana, Texas, was reared in Houston. He received the A.B. degree from Baylor University and the M.Div. and Th.D. degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

After 13 years as pastor of churches in Texas, Louisiana and Alabama, entered full-time evangelism in 1957. Williams was professor of evangelism in homiletics and chairman of the Division of Theological Education at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Va., from 1973-76.

There are 200 resident students at Luther Rice and some 4,000 external, or correspondence students.

The school, which is not accredited but is seeking accreditation through the American Association of Bible Colleges, is not affiliated with the Florida Baptist Convention or the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Court Sides With Witness
In Compensation Dispute

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--A member of the Jehovah's Witnesses sect who quit his job for religious reasons must be given unemployment compensation benefits, the Supreme Court has ruled.

The high court held 8-1 that Eddie C. Thomas, a practicing member of the controversial sect who left his job at an Indiana foundry rather than produce turrets for military tanks, was denied his free exercise of religion when state authorities refused to provide him with unemployment benefits.

Thomas quit his job at the Blaw-Know Foundry and Machinery Company when he was transferred from a section producing sheet steel for a variety of industrial uses to another department making turrets for tanks. A turret is the uppermost, rotating section of a combat tank and contains guns.

According to court proceedings in the case, Thomas immediately checked to see if non-military work in another department was available. Discovering that the entire plant was producing materials directly related to armaments, he asked for but was denied a layoff. He then quit and applied for unemployment benefits under provisions of Indiana law.

At an administrative hearing, however, the referee assigned to the case denied the request, although agreeing with Thomas that his leaving was in fact based on religious convictions. A state court of appeals reversed that holding, however, ruling that application of the law placed an undue burden on Thomas' religious beliefs.

On further appeal, the Indiana Supreme Court struck down that ruling in a 3-2 decision which held that Thomas had quit voluntarily for personal reasons and did not qualify for the benefits. On the free exercise controversy, the Indiana high court said it found that Thomas' belief was more "personal philosophical choice" than religious belief.

That court ruled further that awarding such benefits to a person who quits his job for religious reasons while denying them to others who leave their jobs for personal, nonreligious reasons, would violate the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

In reversing the Indiana Supreme Court, the nation's high court declared that "religious beliefs need not be acceptable, logical, consistent, or comprehensible to others in order to merit First Amendment protection."

Writing for the 8-1 majority, Chief Justice Warren E. Burger drew heavily on a 1963 case in which a Seventh-Day Adventist was upheld in a similar effort to obtain unemployment compensation benefits from the state of South Carolina. In that case, a woman had been terminated by her employer for refusing to work on Saturday, the day of worship for Seventh-Day Adventists.

Upholding the high court's views in the earlier case, Burger wrote: "Where the state conditions receipt of an important benefit upon conduct proscribed by religious faith, or where it denies such a benefit because of conduct mandated by religious belief...a burden upon religion exists. While the compulsion may be indirect, the infringement upon free exercise is nonetheless substantial."

Burger also rejected Indiana's claim that providing the benefits to Thomas would, in effect, establish religion in violation of the First Amendment. Although acknowledging that Thomas would receive a "benefit" because of his religious beliefs, Burger concluded that "this manifests no more than the tension between the two religious clauses."

The high court's lone dissenter in the case, Justice William H. Rehnquist, expressed the view that the decision "adds mud to the already muddied waters of First Amendment jurisprudence."

Abortion Policy Flap Continues At Hospital

LYNCHBURG, Va. (BP)--Virginia Baptist Hospital has announced a policy on abortions in the wake of controversy over hospital practices.

A news release by the hospital announcing the policy came after a Lynchburg newspaper quoted three nurses from the hospital saying convenience abortions are routinely performed there. One nurse said five or six abortions are performed each week.

George Dawson, executive director of the hospital, declined to release information on the number of abortions performed.

The association (state convention) cut off Cooperative Program funds to the hospital Dec. 1, 1980, after messengers to the annual meeting ordered the action. The hospital had been asked in 1978 to review abortion policies and to cease doing convenience abortions, and at the 1980 meeting, messengers cut off funds, the first time such disciplinary action has been taken in 157 years, and noted "two years is sufficient time to implement" the policies requested.

In the April 1 news release by the hospital, Dawson said he believes the new policy will meet the approval of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, and said it was adopted in January by the board of trustees.

The policy adopted is:

"As a Christian institution, Virginia Baptist Hospital is founded on the principles of the sacredness of human life. The board of trustees, medical staff and employees are dedicated to a ministry of healing for our patients. Our concern for the well-being of our patients includes their mental, emotional and spiritual needs as well as their physical needs. As a Christian institution, we feel it is our duty to deal in a positive manner with the difficult issue of abortion. Accordingly, the board of trustees and medical staff adopts the following policy on abortion for Virginia Baptist Hospital:

"1. Physicians as a part of their professional responsibility discuss alternatives to abortion as well as the psychological and emotional implications of this procedure with patients requesting an abortion.

"2. Counseling for women with problem pregnancies is available through the hospital's department of pastoral care. This counseling program has been developed jointly by the department of obstetrics and gynecology and the department of pastoral care. Physicians inform patients of the availability of this counseling.

"3. Abortions are not performed at Virginia Baptist Hospital on the basis of patient convenience. Abortions are performed only when, in the opinion of the attending physician, they are medically indicated for physical or emotional reasons. When an attending physician determines that an abortion may be medically indicated, he consults with another physician who is acceptable to the patient, who is qualified to review the medical necessity and who agrees as to the medical necessity, before the abortion is performed. The consultation is documented in the hospital records."

Informed sources would not venture a guess on whether the policy will be acceptable to the BGAV. Messengers declined to allow the general board (executive committee) of the association to decide on whether the hospital is in compliance and ruled the matter must be discussed at the 1981 annual meeting.

The association contributes about \$109,000 toward the hospital's annual budget of nearly \$20 million, and names the board of trustees at the facility.