



BAPTIST PRESS

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New Orleans Student Murdered In Robbery

NEW ORLEANS (BP)—George Edgar Abshire, 31, a first-year student in the associate of divinity program at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, was stabbed to death during a robbery near the seminary campus early June 13.

Abshire's death is the second time this year violent death has shocked the Southern Baptist Convention-related seminary. Earlier this year, Mrs. Ray Robbins, wife of a professor of New Testament, was beaten to death in her seminary apartment.

According to seminary spokesmen, Abshire was working as one of the managers of a Bonanza steakhouse about 10 minutes east of the campus on a service road of Interstate 10.

"Mrs. Abshire telephoned her husband about midnight to ask him to pick up some things at a grocery on his way home," said Don Stewart, executive vice president at the seminary. "When she awoke at 3 a.m., and realized he was not at home, she called Bonanza and received no answer."

Stewart said Mrs. Abshire was concerned her husband may have had an accident, and called campus security, asking them to check with New Orleans police and local hospitals.

"When she had no success in locating her husband, she and a neighbor drove to the Bonanza about 6:30 a.m., and found Abshire's car locked on the parking lot. When it started, they suspected foul play and called police," Stewart added.

Police were dispatched to the restaurant and, upon entering the building, found Abshire's body lying just inside the backdoor. Officers said Abshire had been forced to open the safe and had been stabbed in the back. About \$4,000 was missing.

Abshire, a native of Indiana, moved to New Orleans in October 1980 to enter the associate (diploma) program in religious education, moving from Marietta, Ga., where he had been in the restaurant business for a number of years.

He is survived by his wife and five children, ages two and a half to 12.

Memorial services were held on the campus, and funeral and burial was in Marietta.

A memorial fund has been established to help the family. Contributions may be sent to Paul W. Stevens, vice president for student affairs, at New Orleans Seminary, 3939 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70126.

Navajos Fail To Sway Court In Dispute Over Shrines

WASHINGTON (BP)—A group of Navajo Indians lost its bid to protect traditional religious shrines when the Supreme Court announced it will let stand lower court rulings allowing the National Park Service to maintain control of a Utah site.

According to the Navajos, their ability to worship at the shrines has been hampered since 1910, when the federal government set aside land within a Navajo reservation for Rainbow Bridge National Monument.

In earlier legal actions, both a trial court and a federal court of appeals denied Navajo demands to return the land.

Numerous religious groups, including the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., entered the case, asking the Supreme Court to accept it for full argument and decision. Other religious bodies with a combined membership of 56 million Americans joined in, noting that the lands in dispute "contain irreplaceable religious shrines" held holy by Navajos.

The brief said the appeals courts, in denying relief to the Navajos, handed down "a disturbingly rigid interpretation" of the First Amendment when it held that return of the land would have the effect of establishing a religion.

The true issue, the brief continued, is the denial to the Navajos of their free exercise of religion. The court of Appeals "failed to achieve a neutral course" between the religion clauses of the First Amendment, attorneys for the church groups argued.

Besides the Navajos' rights, the lower court decision also "jeopardizes" the freedom of all other citizens "who practice their faiths at religious facilities located on federally managed lands," the argument concluded.

To support that claim, the brief listed more than 125 churches or religious facilities currently operating in national parks.

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Arizona President
Elected to Staff

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PHOENIX (BP)—Wendell Freeze, president of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, has been elected associate executive director-treasurer of the state convention, effective July 1.

Because the ASBC convention prohibits a convention employee from being an officer of the convention, Freeze will relinquish his president's gavel to Charles Pollard, pastor of Twenty-Second Street Baptist Church of Tucson, who has been first vice president.

Prior to his election, Freeze was vice principal of Kofa High School in Yuma.

As associate to executive Jack Johnson, Freeze will be director of business operations and be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the convention business office.

He will also be director of communications and editor of the Baptist Beacon. As editor, Freeze will be administrator and will not be responsible for writing weekly editorials. The day-to-day operation and production of the Beacon will continue to be under the supervision of the assistant editor, Elizabeth Young, who came to the Beacon in June 1980.

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Freeze has been active in SBC activities on local, associational, state and national levels. Currently, he is Arizona's representative on the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention and is a member of the 1981 Committee on Committees. On the state level, he was a trustee of Grand Canyon College for six years and is a member of the ASBC Executive Board.

In Yuma County Association, Freeze has been moderator and chairman of seven different committees. He is a Sunday School teacher and chairman of deacons at First Southern Baptist Church, Yuma.

He received his bachelor's degree from Southwestern State College, Weatherford, Okla., his master's from Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, and his doctorate in educational administration also from NAU.

Freeze's wife, Beth, has taught in Yuma schools for 14 years and is presently employed by the school district as a counseling consultant. They have one son, Steve, who is a junior at Grand Canyon College.

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He's Back on Field
But Battle Continues

By Martha Skelton

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CARNAXIDE, Portugal (BP)—To his doctors, he is a medical phenomenon. "We don't know why you are alive," one told him.

To his wife and children, he is father and husband—but not the one they knew before.

To himself, missionary Ernie Harvey, convalescing after an attack of herpes simplex encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) more than three years ago, he remains the preacher. Whenever his mind functioned at all during his ordeal, preaching and the mission field were always on it, Harvey says.

The Harveys are back in Portugal after two years in the United States due to his illness. Jan (Mrs. Harvey) is treasurer of the Baptist mission in Portugal; Harvey preaches in churches all over Portugal to the extent his health allows.

Adjustments to a new way of living began one mid-October morning in 1977 when 46-year-old Harvey awoke early, went into convulsions, then lapsed into a coma. He returned to the United States in grave condition.

Hospitalization in New York and convalescence in Florida followed. Disorientation, blinding headaches, continuous nausea and agitation ravaged Harvey's body.

"Somebody would ask me, 'who is president?' and I would answer, 'my mother-in-law,'" he relates.

After hospitalization for weeks in critical condition, Harvey was released to his Gainesville, Fla., home. The areas of his brain affected by the encephalitis were identifiable by the losses he experienced--memory blocks, trouble in reasoning, verbal confusion. Some activities, such as dressing himself, had to be relearned.

"I would say 'caboose' when I meant 'cubicle,'" says Harvey. "I would think one thing, and another word would come out." At times, disorientation added to the problem. "I remember saying things like, 'take those tomato plants off my feet,'" he adds.

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Intense, hammering headaches have plagued Harvey ever since. While in Gainesville, he began reacting to the headaches and accompanying restlessness by taking long walks. He always carried their home phone number and a quarter with him—just in case he got lost. For weeks, Mrs. Harvey slept on a pallet in front of the door so Harvey would have to step over her if he went out.

He also experienced periods of hyperactivity—walking in circles, tearing up tissues; he just couldn't keep still.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Harvey took university courses in accounting and business. The Portuguese Baptist mission needed a treasurer. Her ability to fill this position plus Harvey's improving health enabled them to return to the mission field.

When Harvey started talking about preaching again and returning to the field, reactions ranged from "Forget it!" from one doctor to "Try it; see if you can preach again," from another.

"After a while, I would go to church and think, 'Doggone, I want to preach,'" Harvey recalls. He talked it over with Jerry Hayner, pastor of First Baptist Church, Gainesville, who scheduled Harvey to speak at a prayer breakfast. The memory of clearing that hurdle and of the response it evoked from the congregation still brings tears to Mrs. Harvey's eyes as she tries to describe it.

The Harveys returned to Portugal in October 1979. Harvey preached his first sermon in Portamao, at the church they had started before he became ill.

Harvey is quick to credit God's provision—family, friends, and support by the Foreign Mission Board—for making possible his return. "I haven't been mad at God or questioning," he says about the illness.

Jan, daughter Ruthie and son Chuck all stood beside him. Chuck, in college when his dad became sick, took a semester off to be with his parents during the early days of recuperation.

Today the Harveys minister within their separate areas with the coordination needed to accommodate Ernie's continuing physical needs. One bedroom in their home has become a business office for Mrs. Harvey. She drives her husband to his speaking engagements.

Ongoing work and preparing new sermons are now impossible for Harvey. His physical condition runs in cycles, leaving him more ill at some times than at others. His mind still struggles with abstract thought.

More than 20 years of sermons provide him a storehouse from which to work and he does a lot of one-to-one witnessing.

Preaching and being on the field are two keys to his feeling the fulfillment of God's call and leadership in his life.

"If I lived, I wanted to come back to the field," he recalls of the dark days during his battle with encephalitis. "If I couldn't (come back), I didn't want to live."

Despite his continuing nausea and frequent headaches, Harvey now feels he can make a continuing contribution in Portugal. "I'm not well, but I can preach," he asserts.

"I feel the Lord called me to preach. I don't want a gold n spiritual merit badge."

Priest Candidate
Becomes Baptist

By Barbara Little

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)—How does a Catholic altar boy studying for the priesthood become a Southern Baptist seminary student planning to enter the ministry?

In Frank Pritz's case, it took searching, doubting and questioning, and a young Christian woman named Marjorie.

In the ninth grade, Pritz, a student at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, entered a Catholic seminary to become a priest. Raised in Catholic tradition, he was an altar boy, attended parochial schools and truly believed the priesthood was his chosen vocation.

Following six years of study, the Wichita, Kan., native, went on his year of novitiate, a time of seclusion where liturgy and ministry skills are emphasized. During that time, he experienced theological doubts and questions, and dropped out of his studies.

"I had trouble believing that some were holy and others were not," Pritz explains. "I could not see dedicating myself to something I was not wholly committed to."

Re-entering the world brought an adjustment Pritz was not prepared for and he totally rejected all of Christianity. He feels certain that had he been Baptist during this period of his life, his reaction would have been the same.

During an eight-year search through many philosophies, Pritz attended Wichita State University and received a bachelor of arts degree in speech and hearing, and the master of arts degree in audiology.

In his classes, he met a young Baptist woman, Marjorie. When he asked her out, she refused, explaining that she had taken a vow to date only Christians. Their friendship blossomed and soon he began attending her church. He was baptized there before they started dating and later they were married in that very same church, Olivet Southern Baptist Church in Wichita.

Pritz, a master of divinity student at Midwestern, explains his search, saying, "I was moving closer and closer to the truth. I was looking for Christ and not the other types of reasonings. I like to say that I had a reconciliation. I don't like to say salvation experience because I believe I was committed to the Lord as a Catholic. T. S. Eliot referred to exploring as coming back to the point from which we began and knowing it for the first time. I think I was coming back to that point."

Pritz has found Baptists and Catholics to be alike in some ways. "I grew up with Catholics saying, 'Probably some Protestants will get into heaven.' I hear some of the same stereotyping coming from Protestants."