



## **BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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### State Schools 'Morally Neutral' Says Walker

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Now more than ever, it is important that Southern Baptists offer college students an opportunity for quality Christian education, says Arthur L. Walker Jr., executive director of the Southern Baptist Education Commission.

Because state supported colleges and universities have become "morally neutral," the role of transmitting traditional Christian values rests more significantly with denominational colleges, he says.

Writing in the current issue of the Southern Baptist Educator, Walker said the moral neutrality in state educational institutions results from many factors. While most of the early state schools were patterned after existing denominational colleges, "the influence of the Age of Enlightenment and the development of the German research institution" began to change their outlook.

A growing pluralism of American society and the permissiveness which developed following World War II has brought "widespread lack of emphasis on and interest in the moral and religious role of higher education," said Walker.

More recently, increased emphasis on the "establishment clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution has eroded the religious influence of state colleges."

Individual professors at state schools may still give their personal religious testimony, but "official institutional recognition and support" of a particular religious value system "would be challenged on the basis of the 'establishment clause,'" said Walker.

He claimed state institutions have lost, and cannot regain, the "moral and religious role which formerly existed in higher education."

Some adults may be surprised that such a situation exists in state schools, he pointed out. "Within their own lifetime they can remember courses offered and influences exerted on state campuses which differed little from those same courses and influences at denominational colleges. Increasingly, this is not true."

While maintaining the importance of Southern Baptists' strong commitment to campus ministries (BSU) on state campuses, Walker explains that such programs "can never determine the moral stance of the entire institution."

"Only in the non-state supported college does the opportunity exist for a pervasive value-centered education," he said.

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More than 100,000 students currently attend the 53 two- and four-year colleges and universities operated by Southern Baptist state conventions.

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Baptist Chapel Innovates  
When Judges Stop Class

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9/4/81

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Summer vacation grew three weeks for Nashville students when a panel of Cincinnati, Ohio, judges stayed the city's school desegregation plan.

The stay came just two days before classes were to start and threw the city into a turmoil over its schools. Students, geared up to return to classes, had little to do but mark time for three weeks while classes, teacher assignments and bus routes were changed. Entire school buildings, closed in the new plan, had to be reopened and readied.

So Art Williams, public school teacher and music director at Benton Avenue Baptist Chapel, thought, "If we don't have school, we ought to do something for the kids."

Benton Avenue, in a racially mixed, low rent, highrise district, is without a pastor. It has been averaging 25 to 30 in Sunday School.

So members from the chapel and its sponsoring church, Judson Baptist, printed and distributed handbills advertising a special Vacation Bible School-Backyard Bible Club. Prepared for 50 students, Williams said they were overrun with over 100.

"We were shaving the edges off sandwiches," he said. "We needed the Lord to multiply loaves and fishes. Since I didn't have faith, I went to the store and bought more bread."

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Louisiana Church Converted  
To Large Hotel, Restaurant

By Oscar Hoffmeyer Jr.

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MANSFIELD, La. (BP)--One old Baptist church didn't die--it became a hotel.

Riemer Calhoun Sr., the owner, heard Billy Sunday preach there. Calhoun was baptized there when he was nine years old in 1918 and he has been teaching Sunday School at First Baptist since he was 18, except for eight years when he didn't live in Mansfield.

His three children made professions of faith and were baptized in the church as were most of his grandchildren.

First Baptist moved into new facilities and Calhoun bid \$115,000 for the property just to get things moving. No one offered more so Calhoun honored his pledge.

He had no idea what to do with the building, but it didn't take the 72-year-old Baptist layman, in real estate and construction most of his life, long to figure out a use.

With Mansfield, population over 10,000, becoming a boom town, and hotel space at a minimum, he decided to convert the building into an inn and restaurant.

The town is the center of industrial expansion including oil, gas and lignite development and the construction of a \$550 million paper plant.

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Calhoun redesigned the educational and activities buildings into 42 rooms and a restaurant. "We renovated 25,000 square feet of space, sometimes working between floors where there was only 18 inches of space to replace wiring and plumbing," he explained.

He said when the activities building was constructed in the 1920s it included a swimming pool and gymnasium, something few churches had then. "Later we filled in the pool and covered it with concrete," he said. "During the renovation we had to drill down for plumbing and found the fill sand had settled about six inches and without any support the floor fell in."

A major project was to install baths in all of the rooms, he said, which meant new plumbing through all the walls.

The project was complete in about six months and opened for business. The first Sunday 150 people ate in the restaurant.

The restaurant has antique furniture and six of the hotel rooms feature "Early Mansfield" decor and include some of Calhoun's personal furniture.

Light fixtures from the auditorium are in the lobby and a wooden grill that screened the organ pipes now serves as the divider between the buffet serving line and eating area.

Have many resented the idea of the church being used as a hotel and restaurant? "No," Calhoun said. "In fact we have had a number of former members come to Mansfield just to stay here. Some have come from as far as San Antonio, Texas."

William Crosby, First Baptist pastor, said with a smile, "Now they can sleep honestly in church."

Officials of the International Paper Company from New York reserve blocks of rooms when they come to town on business. And salesmen and other travellers have found the new hotel.

What was the cost? "More than I expected, approximately \$560,000 in addition to the purchase price. And we haven't even touched the auditorium building. If business remains good I may add some more rooms in that building and perhaps a museum."

Calhoun readily acknowledges his accomplishments are because of the Lord's goodness. And, according to acquaintances, he is generous in support of Christian causes.

In addition to his church, he helps support evangelists and has sponsored three persons who became Mission Service Corps volunteers.

"But," he said with deep emotion, "only this can I brag about, that the Lord has been so kind and merciful to me. Since I have done so little for him, I can't understand this."

Preacher Gives Self  
For Jail Ministry

By Linda Wall

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Eleven times a week, the 77-year-old preacher carries a Bible in his hand and gives a message from his heart to the prisoners in city and county jails in Birmingham.

"It's God's calling," John Olin Gay says.

To illustrate, Gay says he sees himself a criminal tried in God's court and found guilty of many sins, then placed in a death cell. After desperately trying to escape, he discovered the only way was to free his soul by grace and accept Christ as his Saviour.

At a typical Tuesday night service in the small, dingy, concrete chapel of the Jefferson County jail, amens echoed from a responsive audience of about 50 prisoners as the small white-haired preacher read from Matthew. At times Gay spoke loudly while raising clenched fists and audience attention was intense. Then the dramatic speaker would finish in a soft reassuring tone to a silent audience.

His message? "I shake him down and then I pick him up and he appreciates it," the stern preacher said.

He figuratively compares his method of ministry to a story about a man attempting with great difficulty to break in a spirited and stubborn horse. The man, with the help of another, tried many ways to tame the protesting animal and after beating it and leaving it to lie on the ground, the horse finally stood up with a gentle spirit. (The men referred to are Gay and one of his brothers.)

Many eyes in the audience were fixed on the earthshaking man as he spoke, waving his hands about and raising his voice. Perspiration rolled down his lined face as he took a step toward the audience. "Are you like this horse?" he thundered at the prisoners. "Must you be whipped like this horse before you realize what Christ can mean to you?" Some of the prisoners laughed, others smirked, but many of the faces remained solemn.

Officers stood guard at the chapel doorway as the vibrant, wide-eyed preacher bellowed over the roar of fans that stirred the stuffy air. Jail sounds pushed their way into the chapel--arguing, obscenities and slamming doors. A roach crawled across the floor, up the podium and onto the preacher's sleeve and shoulder. A prisoner stood up and thumped it off. The preacher shrugged his shoulders and went on.

After an hour-long sermon Gay closed with prayer, speaking to the prisoners about their families, the broken hearts of loved ones who needed them. He asked that each man be saved and "through Christ find the ability to say yes to truth and honor and no to evil." As he prayed, one man began to tremble while others put their heads in their hands.

The profound John Olin Gay has dedicated 31 years of his life to the jail ministry. He sacrificed many years because he took no salary while supporting his wife and eight children. He insisted on continuing the ministry even while putting his children through school. He sold two farms to pay for Bibles for the prisoners. He provided hymn books for each prisoner and a library as well.

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There is more to Gay than the jail ministry. Since 1927 he has been pastor of numerous churches. Beginning at age 22 he was pastor of the Shady Grove and Spruce Pine churches. He later ministered in Boston coal mining camp churches and mining communities in Jefferson County such as Flatt Creek, Gorgas and Praco.

There were other mining camp churches of Empire and Sipsy in Walker County where he was pastor. He was pastor of a Baptist church in Roanoke, Flower Hill Church in Hillsborough, Calvary Church in Warrior, Richmond Street Church in Wylam and his last pastorate was at the First Church of Tarrant. He had a radio ministry in Carrollton, Georgia for eight years.

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Miss Wall is an intern for the Alabama Baptist.

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Southwest Baptist  
Adopts New Name

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BOLIVAR, Mo. (BP)--Southwest Baptist College officially became Southwest Baptist University during convocation services Aug. 31.

The 103-year-old Southern Baptist university has four schools: arts and science; business, education and social science; music and fine arts; and the Redford School of Theology and Church Vocations.

SBU has about 1,600 students.

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