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85-125

Baptist Administrator Philpot
Shot, Killed In Mexico City

By Mary Jane Welch and Erich Bridg

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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MEXICO CITY, Mexico (BP)--Southern Baptist representative James Philpot was shot and killed in his car Oct. 11 by two men in another car which sideswiped him in traffic.

Philpot, who was shot in the head, died immediately. An electrician in the car with him was hospitalized with gunshot wounds in the abdomen. As of Oct. 14 no arrests had been made.

Philpot, a native of Polk County, Ark., was chairman of the organization of 102 Southern Baptist representatives in Mexico. He and his wife, the former Jurhee Sheffield of Childress, Texas, had been in Mexico since 1967. He was 46.

Southern Baptist representative Guy Williamson, who arrived at the scene soon after the shooting, said witnesses told police they saw a gray or light blue Volkswagen attempt to pass Philpot on the right at high speed. There wasn't enough room between the right curb and the car Philpot was driving, so the two cars scraped. Molding torn from the left side of the Volkswagen was lying on the ground when he arrived, Williamson said.

Police reports said the two cars stopped and the two men in the Volkswagen got out. One of them approached the right side of the car Philpot was driving and fired through the window. The Mexican electrician was struck twice in the stomach. A single bullet entered Philpot's jaw and came out through his neck.

Medical personnel said Philpot "died immediately," Williamson said, and "perhaps never knew what happened." Empty shell casings and bullet holes in the car roof indicated five or more shots were fired. The two men in the Volkswagen left before police arrived.

The electrician remained in a Mexico City hospital Oct. 14, but Williamson did not know his condition. Mexican Baptist leaders had visited the man during the weekend and were staying in touch with his situation, he said.

A police investigation is proceeding, Williamson reported, and authorities are looking into several "incidents" surrounding the case, including the tampering with the ignition system on Philpot's own car.

But neither Southern Baptist officials nor the police were prepared to suggest any motive for the killing beyond anger surrounding the car accident. Shootings following traffic accidents are common in Mexico. "As far as we know right now it was not premeditated," Williamson said.

According to Sarah Beth Short, Southern Baptist representative from Fort Worth, Texas, who was working at the mission office with Philpot that afternoon, he left the office to go to the home of a ham radio operator to make a call, but discovered his car door lock had been removed and the ignition tampered with.

He returned to the office to get keys for the car assigned to Jean Poe, a volunteer from Salisbury, N.C., and went to get an electrician to fix his ignition.

Ten or 15 minutes later, said Short, she and Poe heard noises down the street. She went out to investigate and saw police cars and a gathering crowd about a block away around a car that resembled Poe's.

As she approached, Short confirmed it was Poe's car and saw two bodies lying in the street, one covered. Recognizing Philpot's clothes, she identified the body for police and went with a police officer to notify Mrs. Philpot.

Short said she and Poe could not see Philpot's car from the office because of a wall, but it appeared he had gotten the electrician and was returning to the shop for a part when the attack occurred.

Southern Baptist representative Lee Baggett, a physician from Vernon, Texas, arrived at the condominium complex where the Philpots and several other Baptist representatives live just as Short and the police arrived to tell Mrs. Philpot. He accompanied her to the site of the shooting.

Philpot was the eighth Southern Baptist missionary murdered on the mission field. The last missionary murdered was Archie G. Dunaway Jr., who was killed by guerrillas in 1978 during Zimbabwe's war for independence. The Foreign Mission Board has more than 3,500 missionaries assigned around the world.

Philpot had been chairman of the organization of Baptist representatives in Mexico since 1977. Before that he was an agricultural consultant and coordinator in Oaxaca.

He received bachelor and master of science degrees from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, and attended Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif. Before his appointment, he was assistant agricultural agent in Independence County, Ark., and Ellis County, Texas.

More than 500 people crowded into a small Mexico City funeral home chapel the evening of Oct. 12 for funeral services. Both Mexican Baptist leaders and Southern Baptist representatives participated. The reaction of the Mexican Baptists was "overwhelming," Williamson said. "(They) gave testimony of how Jim had given so unselfishly, given his life here and given his blood on Mexican soil."

Burial was Oct. 13 in Guadalajara, at Mrs. Philpot's wish. "Jurhee said that Jim loved Mexico so much and he'd lived here and worked here and given his life and it would be inconsistent that he should be taken back to the United States to be buried," Williamson said. The Philpots earlier had buried a son in Guadalajara who died shortly after birth.

"Nobody can replace Jim. Pray for us," Williamson said.

Besides his wife, Philpot is survived by three daughters: Jill, who lived at home, Jodi of Fort Worth, Texas, and Jennifer, a senior at Baylor University, Waco, Texas; his mother, Mrs. Odis Philpot of Mena, Ark.; two brothers, Dr. Nelson Philpot of Homer, La., and Larry Philpot of Heidelberg, Germany, and a sister, Odessa Dann of Livermore, Calif.

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Home Mission Board Holds
Largest Commissioning Service

Baptist Press
10/14/85

DECATUR, Ga. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board commissioned 97 missionaries and 26 chaplains--including the director of board's chaplaincy division--in the largest ever joint commissioning service.

Carl Hart, director of the HMB chaplaincy division who retires in January, presented the certificates to the chaplains, and in a surprise move, was commissioned himself. After retirement, he will become an industrial chaplain for Motor Convoy, Inc., in Decatur, Ga., a suburb of Atlanta. The firm is headed by Guy Rutland Sr., an active member of First Baptist Church, Decatur, where the commissioning service was held.

Gerald Palmer, vice-president for missions at the HMB, presented Hart with a certificate of endorsement before Hart stood to present the new chaplains with their certificates.

Chaplains were sent to 17 different states and missionaries to 24 different states plus Puerto Rico and Canada, at the service. All the 97 missionaries and 26 chaplains already are working in their positions, having been appointed or endorsed earlier this year by the board. Most of the missionaries are joint employees with Baptist state conventions and/or associations.

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Home Mission Board President William G. Tanner told those being commissioned they would probably meet opposition, doubt, ridicule and divisiveness. In the midst of the problems, he challenged them to "be healers: to listen, to understand, to feel the hurt."

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Dallas First Church
Gives Record Offering

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
10/14/85

DALLAS (BP)--A record \$1.85 million offering was given by members of First Baptist Church, Dallas, on pastor W.A. Criswell's 41st anniversary at the church Oct. 6, in what was thought to be the largest one-day cash offering ever taken by a church.

Criswell had appealed to the congregation for a special \$1 million offering to enable the church to meet its budget requirements, noting that "we are behind in the payment of our local program." The church's recently-adopted 1986 budget totals about \$11.2 million.

After receiving offerings during both morning worship services, First Baptist's financial officers spent at least six hours counting \$1.8 million in checks and cash. Approximately \$50,000 was collected at the evening worship service.

Of the total \$1,857,453.44, undesignated budget offerings totalled \$795,165.16. Oran Gentry, director of business and finance at First Baptist Church, would not release information concerning how the remaining \$1,062,288.28 was designated.

In his weekly newsletter column, Criswell had urged church members to participate in the "Day of Agreement" service by making a "sacrifice for the triumph of the day." He reminded members of expenses incurred in maintaining and operating the church's multi-million dollar downtown complex.

"It pleased our Lord to create us earthbound. Our hearts may be in heaven, but our feet are still on the earth," he wrote. "There are bills that we must pay, and to be faithful to them is as much in the praise and service of God as it is to pray or to sing a song."

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Forum Highlights
Small Church Needs

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
10/14/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Emphasizing church growth without alienating small churches represents a major challenge in the Southern Baptist Convention, Hugh Durham told a group of employees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Durham, director of associational missions for the Tryon-Evergreen Baptist Association, Conroe, Texas, spoke at a recent small church/Sunday school forum for editors, consultants and managers in the Sunday school and special ministries departments. He cautioned that convention work needs to be sensitive to the needs of small churches and the impact on small churches of changes brought about by a denomination whose leaders come primarily from large churches.

"We need to be aware of the needs of small churches and the implications of those needs on our services," said Art Burcham, supervisor of the small Sunday school administration and program promotion section and coordinator of the forum.

Because more than 21,000 of the 37,000 SBC churches have memberships under 200, "we still are a convention of small churches," said Jim Williams, associate to the president and director of the office of planning and research at the Sunday School Board.

"It would do us well to develop some brand new strategies for relating to small churches. We must approach these churches with love and sensitivity. Our goal is not to fill empty pews but to reach out to people," Williams said.

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While the forum focus was on the characteristics and needs of small churches, discussion leaders found it difficult to profile a typical small church. A panel of five persons represented the viewpoints of the small rural church, the small urban church, the small new church, the small ethnic church and the small uninvolved church.

Durham cautioned that the small church which may not be growing but contributes to the convention in other ways needs to have a sense of value within a convention that puts a priority on growth.

The most immediate impact of the forum could be in the plans for special conferences next summer at Ridgecrest (N.C.) and Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist conference centers for ASSISTeam (associational Sunday school improvement support team) workers, Burcham said.

One week at each conference center has been designated for training ASSISTeam members who are responsible for Sunday school training in their associations.

The plans for those conferences will be reviewed to ensure the content adequately deals with the needs of small churches, according to T. Frank Smith, coordinator of the associational unit.

The associational unit also will re-evaluate ASSISTeam training plans through 1989 in light of the need to emphasize the small Sunday school, he said.

"The ASSISTeam is a vital link between the Sunday School Board training programs and the small local church. While larger churches have more resources to plan their own training or attend conference center sessions, smaller churches are more likely to depend on training within the association," Smith pointed out.

Although the approach to associational work may be the most immediate impact of the forum, Burcham hopes that will not be the only impact. "I hope this will affect our field service, programming and perhaps our literature," Burcham said.

The task force of Sunday school department workers who planned the forum will make recommendations to Harry Piland, department director, for implementing ideas of the forum.

Jack Still, pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Cullman, Ala., and ASSISTeam director, West Cullman Baptist Association, said small churches must be "plugged into denominational goals if we are going to achieve the goals of Challenge 10/90 (goal to increase SBC Sunday school enrollment to 10 million by 1990). Two-thirds of the small churches are doing all they know how. They have needs. We have resources. We need to plug them together," he said.

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Relationship With Jesus
Top Priority, Stanley Says

Baptist Press
10/14/85

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--A minister's main priority should be developing an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, Southern Baptist Convention President Charles Stanley told students at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., Oct. 10. Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta, was guest speaker during chapel at the seminary.

"The wisest thing you can do as a student is to make your priority developing a warm, personal relationship with Christ. Then you have something to give," Stanley told the audience. Basing his message on Colossians 4:17, Stanley said Paul reminded his readers the call to ministry is an act of God's grace.

Stanley warned students against entering the ministry grudgingly. "Friends, you and I need to see God's calling as an act of wonderful, matchless, incomparable grace. It is an act of God's love that he called you and when the going gets rough, that doesn't mean that the grace has disappeared," he said.

Paul urged ministers to be constant in your service, Stanley noted. "Don't take it (the ministry) for granted and don't be careless about," he said.

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Stanley said he believes when a person commits his or her life to full time ministry, "Satan has beefed up his strategy and his attack on you. The more successful you are in the ministry, the more Satan is going to work you over."

He said Christian servants need each other's prayers and support in battling Satan. "There's no single one of us to reach any level of life where we don't need one another," he said, adding, to be an effective servant, a minister needs to be fruitful, fervent, fearless and faithful.

Stanley related a time in his early ministry at First Baptist, Atlanta. He and his wife spend a week's vacation setting goals for and evaluating their lives and ministry. As they sought God's guidance, Stanley said he kept notes on their decisions and goals. He said he still reads these every four months to evaluate himself.

Stanley urged seminarians to take time for evaluation. He suggested they pray, "show me the truth about me. What do you want me to do with my life?" pointing out, "It will put punch and excitement and fire and enthusiasm in your ministry where you may not be so excited."

Stanley also said a desire to fervently know God deeply is the most important thing in a minister's life. Through dependence upon God, ministers should be fearless in their service, Stanley said. "Fear is devastating in the ministry. It can cause a man to compromise his convictions," he noted.

Stanley also urged ministers to be fearless in their preaching, but warned against dogmatism. "There is only one thing we ought to be dogmatic about: the only way of salvation is the sacrificial, substitutionary, all-sufficient, atoning death of Jesus Christ--period," Stanley stressed. The crowd applauded.

Stanley also noted ministers should be faithful in their service. He said a minister's prayer life supersedes all other activity. "Friend, when that's right, there's no limit to what God can do. When it's not there, forget it."

He reminded students of God's faithfulness as they consider their future ministry, urging, "Quickly come to the place in your life where you are willing to say, 'Lord, I choose to obey you, no matter what,' and God will place you where he wants you, no matter what."

Stanley joined faculty, trustees and staff for lunch and dialogue following chapel. He also spoke in an ethics class of C.W. Scudder, professor of Christian ethics. Stanley had Scudder as a professor while a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

Midwestern has hosted every SBC president since the seminary began class in 1958.

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SBC President
Cuts Activities

Baptist Press
10/14/85

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President Charles F. Stanley has cancelled appearances outside regular church responsibilities until Jan. 1 because of doctor's orders.

Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, told Baptist Press he "picked up a little something" when he drank river water during a hunting trip to Alaska.

"I am feeling fine, but the doctor suggested strongly that I curtail my activities until the end of the year," Stanley said, adding the cancellations included "two or three" state convention sermons.

He indicated he will continue to preach at the church and to conduct his television ministries until the end of the year. "I plan to fulfill my obligations at evangelism conferences in January and February," he added.

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NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION