



BAPTIST PRESS

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October 21, 1985

85-129

**Two Suspects Arrested
 In Mexico Killing**

By Erich Bridges

MEXICO CITY (BP)--Mexican police have arrested two suspects in connection with the murder of Southern Baptist representative James Philpot.

Mexico state police informed Southern Baptist representatives they arrested two men Oct. 14 in connection with the killing of Philpot, who was shot in the head Oct. 11 after the car he was driving was sideswiped by another car. A Mexican man with Philpot was shot and seriously injured. Two men in the other car, one of whom fired the gun, escaped before police arrived.

Police said a witness near the scene of the shooting took down the license plate number of the car containing the two men as it sped away. The license number led to the arrest of the two suspects.

"We presume (the suspects are) the two men in the car, but that's still in police hands," said Don Kammerdiener, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board director for Middle America and the Caribbean, who went to Mexico immediately after Philpot's death. "All the police have said to us is that they have picked up two suspects."

Police have not released the names of the suspects in custody, nor have formal charges been filed publicly. "They cannot do anything that would damage the investigation procedure to document the matter," said Guy Williamson, acting chairman of the Southern Baptist organization in Mexico. "They said just as soon as they had anything documented they'd share it with us."

The gray or light blue Volkswagen carrying the man who shot Philpot had not been located Oct. 18. Baptists don't know whether the murder weapon has been recovered. Mexico state police inspector Damaso Tostado Salazar told Kammerdiener the empty shell casings found at the scene indicated the gun was a nine-millimeter pistol.

Abel Hernandez Figueroa, shot two or three times in the stomach, remains in a military hospital in the Mexico City area. Reports of his condition vary, but he apparently has not been able to give police any substantial information on the shooting.

Meanwhile, a different account of the car accident that preceded the shooting has emerged. Williamson initially reported the car Philpot was driving was sideswiped as the Volkswagen attempted to pass it on the right at high speed. Subsequent reports indicate the Volkswagen emerged from a one-way street as Philpot was driving past. It struck Philpot's car on the right and came to a stop on the curb.

After the shooting, the two men reportedly fled in the Volkswagen, speeding the wrong way back down the one-way street from which they came and nearly colliding head-on with another car. The driver of that car identified the Volkswagen's license plate number.

Kammerdiener emphasized no evidence has emerged to support a motive for the killing other than rage over the car accident. "Up to now the facts as we know them do not warrant any sort of interpretation other than what we know--that the two cars hit and a man jumped out and started shooting," he said.

**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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 Nashville, Tennessee**

Baptists In Mexico Ask:
 Who Can Replace Jim Philpot?

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
 10/21/85

MEXICO CITY (BP)--James Philpot did nothing unusual the day he died.

He spent Oct. 11 juggling the same challenges he'd handled for years as the leader of Southern Baptist representatives in Mexico: national ministry planning, business and personnel matters, the sometimes delicate relations between American and Mexican workers, plus the new demands of coordinating Southern Baptist earthquake disaster relief. All in a day's work.

Only this day was his last. Philpot was shot and killed in the afternoon following a minor car collision, the apparent victim of an enraged Mexican motorist.

Even before Southern Baptists in Mexico and the United States began to cope with their shock and grief, the question emerged: Who can replace Jim Philpot? The 46-year-old administrator wasn't a dynamic, charismatic leader. He just got things done. "As long as Jim was there, everything was all right," said one co-worker.

Colleagues described Philpot as a man ideally suited both for working with Mexican Baptist leaders and for handling the needs and problems of more than 100 Southern Baptist representatives and their families. He didn't hesitate to speak his mind, but he knew how to listen. He was a gentle man, a diplomat. He rarely lost patience either with people or the endless details of administration.

"Jim was a good ol' country boy," said Judy Garrett, another Southern Baptist representative in Mexico City. "He was a very plain man. There was no pretense, nothing fake about Jim. He was very genuine. He was always a peacemaker. He just went around quietly doing his business. And he was very slow to anger; he didn't get riled easily. In Jim's job that was a real asset, really a necessity."

Philpot also worked for years with sometimes excruciating head and neck pain, the result of an ailment from which he had found relief only in recent months. But no one at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board heard him complain about it.

He grew up on a small farm in what he called "the poor and rocky hills of western Arkansas." In those days, he once wrote, "hard times were common." But he formed a love for the land which he never lost.

His family later moved to California, and his father sensed a call to Christian ministry. So did Philpot after a 1959 car crash caused by a drunk driver. He suffered a brain concussion and lay unconscious on a hospital bed for more than two weeks. "God used this experience to bring me to my knees before him," Philpot said.

He studied agriculture and dairy production in college, worked as a county agent in Arkansas and Texas and later attended seminary. He married Jurhee Sheffield in 1961, and the two were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board in 1967. They went to Mexico with two young daughters.

The Philpots first worked in Oaxaca, in southern Mexico, where he helped farmers improve their agricultural methods and increase production. He also worked to strengthen churches throughout the area Baptist association. Philpot wrote that he tried to help farmers "see that we are interested not only in the members of the Baptist church or mission but in everyone living in the village—in helping them to improve their way of life."

"He was very close to the people there," remembered Clark Scanlon, a longtime friend and Foreign Mission Board colleague. "His key word was 'appropriate technology.' He didn't want to teach them to use a tractor when all they could hope for was an ox."

Southern Baptist representatives in Mexico elected Philpot chairman of their organization in 1974, and he moved to Mexico City in 1977 to handle the assignment on a full-time basis. As chairman he led the organization to adopt strategic planning and helped bring about "integration," a gradual unification of Mexican Baptist and Southern Baptist ministries which many believe has helped boost church growth and baptisms.

In death as in life, Philpot brought people together. At his funeral service Oct. 12, Americans and Mexicans found a special unity. "Everybody was hurting together and everybody was remembering together and we were just very united," said Garrett. "I think this just may be a turning point in our relationship as Southern Baptists and nationals."

One personal goal Philpot never accomplished was to start a church in Mexico City. Mrs. Philpot hopes people wanting to send gifts in memory of her husband will send funds to the Foreign Mission Board designated to buy property for a new church in Mexico City.

Several Bible studies have begun among earthquake survivors who've received Baptist relief. One or more may develop into a church. Aid for a new congregation in Philpot's memory would fulfill his dream.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story "Learning Not Just Child's Play, Rigdon Tells Educators," mailed 10/18/85, in fifth paragraph, first sentence, please change the word "meaningless" to "meaningful."

Thank you,
Baptist Press

Liberty Not Threat,
Georgia Layman Says

By Karen Benson

Baptist Press
10/21/85

WACO, Texas (BP)--"Liberty does not produce heresy in a denomination; liberty is the only safeguard against denominational heresy," Norman Cavender told several hundred laypersons.

Cavender, a Georgia chicken farmer and Baptist layman, was the keynote speaker at a laity conference Oct. 19 on the campus of Baylor University.

The Georgian told several hundred laypersons there are "people running around trying to destroy authentic education," who would like to put students in a "fenced-in camp to indoctrinate them," who are making a "calculated, deliberate attempt" to discredit Baptist schools and who don't realize that students at Baptist schools are bright, inquisitive and intelligent--not "bubble-headed teenyboppers."

In the speech on Baptist heritage and liberty, Cavender said: "Listen, listen right now, and you'll hear the sounds of teeth gnashing against our colleges and voices wailing against our seminaries. They claim 'We must abolish freedom to guard against heresy.' They say, 'We must do away with doctrinal freedom to protect the Bible.'

"Please do not let anyone feed you that slab of baloney. That cheap scare tactic has been the stock and trade of dictators since the beginning of history, used to frighten people into surrendering liberty. Liberty does not produce heresy in a denomination. Liberty is the only safeguard against denominational heresy."

Cavender said is is "woefully weary" of people with "private agendas waging wars of half truths and outright untruths" against Baptist schools.

He warned Baptists are losing their cherished principle of liberty. "You can see this clearly in the onslaught against our teaching institutions and publications. Let me remind you, dictators always--always--move first to take over the universities and the press, because these are the forums of liberty, the meeting places of ideas and truth.

"Today's wholesale attacks on our Baptist schools are an assault on the very purpose of education, they are a slander against members of faculty and staff, and they are an insult to Baptist sons and daughters, students in these schools."

Although he didn't mention individuals by name, Cavender nonetheless blamed several recent SBC presidents and other prominent fundamentalist Baptist pastors for the erosion of Baptist liberty.

"Look today as some Baptists try to suppress any differences of thought," he said. "One prominent Baptist leader recently said that if you do not follow his interpretation of the book of Genesis, you are a 'liberal' who must be 'dealt with.' Those were his words. 'You must be dealt with.' He and others would banish from Baptist institutions any opinions except their own, and they would make themselves as masters of the Baptist conscience," Cavender said.

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He reminded the laity of George W. Truett, former longtime pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, who once proclaimed that "bedrock Baptist principle" of separation of church and state. Truett said that such separation is the "inevitable corollary" of the "great doctrine of religious liberty," the "destiny-determining principle" of Baptist people.

"Then listen today as a well-known Baptist preacher, using the same pulpit Dr. Truett once filled, says separation of church and state is the 'imagination' of 'an infidel.' How rapidly we are losing our heritage when such a spokesman of Baptist principles as George W. Truett is now branded an infidel from his own pulpit!"

Cavender reflected on Baptist heritage as he reminded the laity of E.Y. Mullins, who stood in Stockholm in 1923 and preached a sermon on religious liberty to the Baptist World Alliance.

"On the question of written confessions of faith, he said they are 'all right' as long as they are voluntary. Then, he (Mullins) said, 'But when they are laid upon men's conscience by ecclesiastical command, or by a form of human authority, they become a shadow between the soul and God, an intolerable yoke of impertinence and tyranny.' Folks, that's good stuff. That's Baptist stuff," Cavendar said.

But today, a recent SBC president says "now is the time to demand adherence" to a confession of faith, Cavender warned. "When one of our own leaders presumes to make demands upon your sacred conscience, and to impose upon the Baptist conscience statements authored by men in place of the authority of the Bible and the lordship of Jesus Christ, I say to you that Baptist heritage is slipping away beyond the shadow of a doubt."

Cavender pleaded, "Listen to me. Liberty is not a partisan issue. It does not favor one group over another. Liberty is the blessed protector of the rights of every Baptist--fundamentalist or mainstream, conservative or moderate, male or female, clergy or laity--from the smallest church on the country crossroads to the biggest church on the city square."

He urged others to join him in "planting a flag in that rich earth on the field of Christian liberty."

"I am only one person with one little voice. But I have made a personal decision. I will not follow Baptist priest or Baptist pope into a strange land where liberty is alien. My roots are in the Baptist heritage."

Even if he must stand alone, Cavender said, "There will still be at least one flag flying, even over fundamentalist rubble heaps."

Other speakers at the laity conference included John Baugh, president of the Sysco Corp. in Houston and a director of The Baptist Laity Journal; Dallas lawyer Oswin Chrisman; and Paul Powell, pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler who is speculated to be nominated for president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Nov. 5-7.

Others were Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of the Women's Missionary Union; Betty Price, member of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth; Baylor President Herbert H. Reynolds; and Judge Abner V. McCall, president emeritus of Baylor.

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Volunteers Carry Hope
To Baptists In Europe

Baptist Press
10/21/85

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—"Our churches need hope," Scottish pastor Noel McCullins told 111 Southern Baptist volunteers.

The Baptists traveled to Scotland in September to work with 17 churches in partnership evangelism services, witnessing opportunities and home visitation.

McCullins, who leads a church in southern Scotland, told the American visitors at the outset of their Sunday-through-Sunday efforts that they would be sharing hope with Scottish Baptists.

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In five other European countries, an additional 252 Southern Baptist volunteers were at work during September in Foreign Mission Board-coordinated partnership evangelism campaigns. The effort was in response to requests from the organization of Baptist churches in each country.

In some European locales, many Baptist churches are small and somewhat discouraged because they are a minority, explained Bill Peacock, FMB consultant for partnership evangelism. "People do not readily respond to their gospel presentation," he added.

Thus, partnership evangelism groups from the United States can be a source of Christian support, Peacock said. For many European churches, it's "an encouragement to know that there are other people in the world who are concerned and are praying for them."

A team of several volunteers assigned to a church often helps foster a new emphasis on evangelism, Peacock said.

Besides the volunteers in Scotland, another group of 111 Southern Baptists, many of them from the Gaston Baptist Association in North Carolina, worked with 17 churches in England. Seventy-five volunteers worked with 16 Baptist churches in Sweden; 29 worked in nine churches in Norway; 24 in five churches in Denmark, and 13 in three churches in Finland.

Most of the volunteers in Sweden, Denmark and Finland were organized by the Illinois State Baptist Association, and most of those in Norway were channeled by the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention. Forty-five volunteers in Scotland were organized by Ron Barker, associate pastor of the Prairie Creek Baptist Church, Plano, Texas.

In all, 18 states were represented among the volunteers.

One team in Finland had the unusual opportunity of sharing their faith in a bingo hall. For about 10 minutes, the crowd listened to testimonies by Larry Trotter, a pastor, and Lurlie Sharp, a nurse, both from Chicago, Ill., and heard songs from the Americans. Gospel tracts also were distributed. The bingo players responded with applause.

"I shall return home ready and willing to be a bolder witness for Christ," Sharp said after the experience.

Another nurse, Carol Creech of Springfield, Ill., had the opportunity to address a group of doctors and nurses at a hospital in Jakobstad, Finland. She made note of "how the Holy Spirit uses me in my work to show the love of Jesus."

Dale Van Blair of Belleville, Ill., reported a man in Vaasa, Finland, who attended some of the evangelistic services died of a heart attack the night before the visitors left, but not before telling his wife he had entrusted his life to Jesus.

In Malmo, Sweden, one team of clown ministry participants from Illinois donned their costumes to roam the streets and visit in schools.

In several countries, in fact, schools were open, and one team made 16 class visits.

Melody Mosley of Springfield, Ill., said it was "astonishing to realize the number of teenagers in Sweden who have never heard the story of Jesus 'coming alive again.'"

Richard Hazelwood of Nebo, Ill., appreciated that the Malmo Baptist Church "didn't worship by the clock, but rather worshiped with the Spirit."

For Helen Turner of Bowling Green, S.C., insurance money from the accidental death of her husband provided financing for the trip to England for her and her 14-year-old daughter, Jennifer. After seeing Jennifer speak to other youths in Worcester, England, Mrs. Turner said, "Her father would have been very thankful for this."

Perry and Marie Huffstetler of Gastonia, N.C., stayed in the home of a woman whose husband had left her and the pastorate of a church in Birmingham, England. "I believe God used us not only to help her but to encourage the small church to forget the past and press on to greater heights," Huffstetler said.



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