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N-FMB

**Morris Sentenced To Death
By Hanging; Appeal Granted**

SANNIQUELLIE, Liberia (BP)--A sentence of death by hanging was pronounced March 19 for Benjamin M. Morris, a Liberian found guilty of murdering Southern Baptist missionary Libby Senter and her daughter, Rachel.

But Morris has appealed and has been granted another trial during the October term of the Supreme Court, said Bradley Brown, chairman of the 67 Southern Baptist missionaries working in Liberia. Brown said he heard the news over national radio station ELBC.

In pronouncing the sentence, Circuit Court Judge Timothy Swope said the evidence was overwhelming against Morris, and in keeping with Liberian law Morris should be hanged from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. April 6, Brown reported. Swope directed the sheriff to prepare for hanging proceedings, awaiting a death warrant to be issued by President Samuel K. Doe.

Morris, 32, was arrested Nov. 27 near the Liberian border with Ivory Coast after Senter, 47, and her daughter were found dead in their Yekepa, Liberia, home. He later confessed orally and in writing that he killed the two after Senter tried to prevent him from molesting Rachel. Senter was from Shelby, N.C.

A 15-member jury convicted Morris March 6 after hearing five days of testimony from nine prosecution witnesses and Morris. Morris admitted in court to the murders. But departing from his confessions, he claimed Senter's husband, George, had hired him to commit them. Under further questioning, Morris contradicted himself on the dates involved. Jurors returned a verdict in less than 30 minutes, indicating they dismissed Morris' accusation, Brown said.

George Senter, who grew up in North Garden, Va., and worked in Evansville, Ind., before his appointment as a missionary, is a field evangelist and has been working to start and strengthen churches in about 20 villages in Nimba County. Mrs. Senter actively participated in her husband's work. The Senters had lived in Yekepa since they became foreign missionaries in 1980.

The court proceedings have "engendered widespread interest," Brown said. Some of that interest grew out of the much-publicized forgiveness George Senter expressed to Morris just before Morris' initial confession. In published reports, the missionary has attributed his ability to forgive Morris to prayers offered in his behalf by Southern Baptists.

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**Senator Predicts 'Hard Ball'
On Civil Rights Legislation**

By Kathy Palen

N-BJC

Baptist Press
3/20/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--During a debate among Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee members over proposed civil rights legislation, Sen. Lowell P. Weicker, a Republican, declared he is willing to play "hard ball" on the measure, adding that game is better than the "no ball" played during the years when his party held control of the Senate.

The Connecticut senator, who during the committee's hearing on the Civil Rights Restoration Act said he is "aggrieved" such legislation has not yet been passed, promised to support -- both substantively and procedurally -- the efforts of committee chairman Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., to obtain swift passage of the measure.

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The bill would overturn a 1984 Supreme Court decision that narrowed application of four federal civil rights laws. In *Grove City v. Bell*, the high court held an education anti-discrimination ban applied only to the "program or activity" receiving federal funds, not the entire institution. Although that ruling directly restricted Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, it also affected three other civil rights statutes — Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 — because each contained the same "program or activity" language.

Supporters say the legislation would restore the civil rights laws' previous scope by applying the anti-discrimination bans to the entire institution as was Congress' original intent. Opponents contend the bill would broaden the scope of the laws, especially in the area of abortion rights.

Disputes over abortion stalled similar legislation during the last two Congresses. Debate among members of the Senate panel, to which the measure was referred, may foretell comparable roadblocks in the 100th Congress.

Weicker, as well as other proponents, has vowed not to allow the legislation to become "bogged down," especially with abortion-related amendments.

"I know there are some members who believe that the Civil Rights Restoration Act is the appropriate vehicle for furthering other agendas," Weicker said. "Well, that is just plain wrong.

"In the last Congress, this bill died largely because of disputes over abortion. I find it absolutely shameful that a civil rights measure of such magnitude should become the vehicle for attempting to redefine national policy on the reproductive rights of women. It is time to get beyond those disputes — too many have lost too much as a result of the *Grove City* decision to allow the bill to again be sidetracked."

Kennedy, who co-sponsored the bill with Weicker, called it "one of the most important civil rights bills of this decade." He said the legislation is a "restoration act" and includes no changes that would "strengthen civil rights."

"Opponents of civil rights will attempt to derail this bill, as they have in the past, by raising irrelevant, divisive issues," Kennedy said. "The test should be simple — if a proposed amendment would change the law from what it was prior to *Grove City*, we should vigorously oppose it. Those battles can await another bill on another day. The challenge we address here is to enact a law to stop the shameful backsliding on civil rights."

But the committee's ranking Republican member, Sen. Orrin G. Hatch of Utah, said the controversy is not over civil rights but rather the scope of federal regulatory jurisdiction. Hatch included himself among a majority in Congress that he said favors overturning the *Grove City* decision but argued the proposed legislation would "make the federal government omnipresent."

"The real issue," Hatch said, "is whether we believe there is a limit to the power of the federal government to dictate policy for private organizations and state and local governments." He added he is committed to ensuring the effectiveness of federal civil rights laws in a manner that "avoids trammeling other equally important rights and liberties guaranteed by our Constitution."

Another committee member, Sen. Gordon J. Humphrey, R-N.H., argued in favor of the *Grove City* decision, denying it was "a major setback for civil rights." He also contended the legislation, despite its "shrewdly selected title," would "expand," not restore federal regulations.

Humphrey, ignoring several comments by Weicker, questioned witnesses about the potential impact the legislation could have in regard to abortion.

Witnesses appearing before the committee represented a variety of groups and interests, including the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, National Right to Life Committee, American Association of Retired Persons and National Organization for Women. Additional hearings on the legislation are to be held by the committee.

It's 'Fields & Stream' Time
For Retiring (BP) Director

By Marv Knox

F-10

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Wilmer C. Fields has known thousands of interesting people during three decades in Southern Baptist journalism. Now he'd like to meet a lot of nice fish.

Fields retires March 31, following almost 28 years as vice president for public relations of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee, preceded by three years as editor of the Baptist Record, newsjournal of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. His journalistic career followed pastorates in Louisiana, Kentucky and Mississippi.

But his career has been identified with his Executive Committee post, where he has been "Mr. Communications" for Southern Baptists. He has been press representative for the convention and directed Baptist Press, the convention's news service. For almost half his tenure, he also edited The Baptist Program, the Executive Committee's magazine.

However, the Fields era of Baptist journalism -- a time of growth and change -- is ending.

When he took over Baptist Press in the late '50s, Fields and one professional editorial assistant in the Nashville, Tenn., office were "it." News staffs of Baptist agencies were small, under-staffed and, for the most part, poorly trained. Furthermore, the process for disseminating news to Baptist state papers and the secular media was feeble.

Upon Fields' retirement, Baptist Press has five bureaus plus its central office, with a combined staff of more than 30 journalists. The press service is distributed to more than 400 subscribers, including 37 Baptist state papers, several hundred secular newspapers, magazines and TV and radio stations, the major wire services and scores of Baptist leaders worldwide.

Fields continually has been interviewed on television and radio and quoted by newspapers and magazines. For gratis, he wrote an article on Southern Baptists for the Saturday Evening Post that sold more than 1 million reprints. He has presided over the newsroom at 27 Southern Baptist Convention annual meetings that have drawn hundreds of reporters to scrutinize Southern Baptists for a week each June. He has been national president of three major religious news and public relations organizations. His "summer seminars" have introduced denominational journalists to leaders of secular and religious news organizations around the world.

Along the way, he has maintained a strong sense of churchmanship and commitment to young people. That has been evidenced by the 20 years he and his wife, Libby, have served in the college Sunday school department of First Baptist Church of Nashville.

Incurably curious, Fields has travelled in 96 countries. (That's why he's known worldwide as W.C., although in the Orient it's Wubble-Yu Si; in Germany, Vublsee; in West Texas, Dub Cee.) His home is a museum of social anthropology; the walls are covered with hundreds of memorabilia, from a 1,000-year-old Crusader's helmet to an African tribal spear to almost 200 Raggedy Anns and Andys to a wooden airplane propeller.

The latter is appropriate, for Fields has been a pilot since his college days. He has flown everything from a Pan American Airways DC-4 to a Sweitzer 232 glider. An adventurer, he and his wife and children, Randy, Christy and Becky, have camped and hiked in forests from Baja California to Labrador, from Key West to the Pacific coast of Canada.

Fields' curiosity and penchant for words and images, as well as his depth of travel and acquaintances, have made him an inveterate storyteller. An evening in his home or in a restaurant on one of his journeys is filled with tales of travel, from Alaska's Bering Strait to China's Great Wall to a mission church in Africa to the bayous of his native Louisiana.

But in all his stories, the people he has known shine through. His love for and interest in people stand out as he spins his yarns. The stories are filled with names, and not just cronies and big-shots. He's as apt to recall the name and characteristics of a taxi driver or bellboy as he is the president of the Baptist World Alliance.

That's because people matter. "The thing that comes to my mind most are the friendships -- people I've come to know in all kinds of places and circumstances," Fields reflects.

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"These have been great years, with so many exhilarating, memorable activities -- the big meetings, like the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist World Alliance, but also the smaller meetings, like the summer seminars," he notes. "But these have to do with the people there rather than the places where they took place."

And although they have produced his most pleasant memories, people also have generated his biggest task: "At every stage of my career, the challenge has been getting people of different viewpoints to work together. There's a personal challenge in getting along with people -- people who disagree with me and sometimes I with them. That is the key factor of democracy and of any cooperative effort.

"I've always worked with volunteers, people who have to be persuaded to join in cooperative efforts," he adds. "That's the reason the public relations profession is so congenial with the mission of the church. I've felt my role has been to help people find common goals and ways of supporting each other in reaching those goals."

That task has involved difficulties, but Fields has persevered by holding onto an ideal: "We have to remember we're all actually in the missionary situation. We have to be deeply committed, not discouraged by setbacks and undeterred by disagreements. We have to keep moving along, making as much progress as possible and thanking the Lord when it actually happens."

He's been inspired by Southern Baptist missionaries he's met on five continents. "Missionaries are the most patient people in the world," he explains. "They're not easily discouraged; they don't give up easily. Those are qualities I've had to work at, but they are essential in any kind of Christian service."

As much as he's been a people-person, Fields says that's the area he would work on most if he could pursue his career again: "I'd be more concerned about the personal qualities involved than about institutional relationships. I think I'd try to see the individual in clearer perspective among the throngs of people."

Fields apparently has done a better job of that than he gives himself credit, for the "throngs" have recognized him. Both his alma maters have honored him -- Louisiana College with an honorary doctorate and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary with an alumnus of the year award. The Baptist Public Relations Association, over which he presided in 1970-71, voted last year to name its annual awards competition after him.

Although his career has been good to him, Fields expresses no sadness at retirement: "I'm filled with happy thoughts. I really am eager to move into a whole new phase of life, having the leisure time to do the things Libby and I have wanted to do." She will retire this June, following 22 years of teaching at Bass Middle School in Nashville.

"Libby and I have a long list of things we want to do," he says. "Most prominent are fishing, hunting, trailering, canoeing, camping, backpacking and chasing around antique places. Interspersed in all of this will be a lot of time devoted to our seven -- soon to be eight -- grandchildren scattered in Tennessee, Virginia and Texas.

"We're shaping up our summer and fall. We're going to be rambling a good bit." They plan to take their 31-foot travel trailer to Mexico and Canada and even travel overseas a couple of times before the end of the year.

He has turned down five offers to work and plans to heed friends' advice not to get "too deeply involved" in projects immediately following his retirement. But wherever he roams, the roads in Fields' future most likely will lead him back to people.

Like the Apostle Paul, he says, he appreciates all kinds of people. "'I'm a debtor to the Greeks and the barbarians, the wise and the unwise,'" he quotes. "That really captures what I'd like to say -- both to friends and those with whom I have disagreed at times. I have some sense of gratitude to them all."

And if all goes as planned, Fields will have a special sense of gratitude to some guide who introduces him to a really nice mess of fish.

CORRECTION: In BP story titled "Oklahoma Convention Adjusts CP Allocations" dated 3/19/87, please substitute the following for the fourth graf:

Oklahoma has been one of only three state conventions to divide Cooperative Program gifts evenly, 50-50, between state and national conventions. Florida and Georgia are the other state conventions.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Survey Reveals Support
For Cooperative Program

By Orville Scott

N-Texas

Baptist Press
3/20/87

DALLAS (BP)--Ninety-nine percent of Texas Baptists who responded to a statewide survey said their individual church's contribution to missions through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program should increase or remain the same.

Fifty-five percent of respondents to the survey felt their church's contribution should go up and would like to see a sizeable increase.

The study by the marketing department of the Hankamer School of Business at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, included an analysis of 20 selected church budgets, six focus groups at six dissimilar churches and a mail survey using a random sample of 750 Baptist Sunday school leaders in Texas. Responses were received from 210 Sunday school leaders.

The survey was done at no cost to the Baptist General Convention of Texas under the direction of Richard Scott, dean of the Hankamer School of Business, and Charles S. Madden, chairman of the Baylor marketing department.

The Cooperative Program supports about 7,300 Southern Baptist missionaries, six seminaries, and other national and worldwide missions causes. Cooperative Program funds are channelled from local churches to state Baptist conventions to the Southern Baptist Convention-wide causes.

Cooperative Program giving by Texas Baptists grew from \$10.8 million in 1964 to \$56.3 million in 1985. But while giving increased almost six times in dollar amount, the percentage of total receipts Texas churches gave from their budgets to the Cooperative Program declined consistently, hitting 7.44 percent in 1985.

In 1926, the first full year of the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptist congregations as a whole averaged giving 10.86 percent of their receipts through the Cooperative Program. That figure rose to 11.02 percent in 1927. In 1985, the average was about 8.5 percent.

Respondents to the Texas survey said they felt economic factors were the main cause for the percentage decrease in Cooperative Program giving. Other major factors in the decline, they said, are need for education, denominational factionalism and too much power among large churches.

The study showed that while there is overwhelming support for the Cooperative Program, declines in church percentages for the Cooperative Program have resulted because of other priorities in churches that force the Cooperative Program to a lower funding level.

Also, when money is short, the Cooperative Program is sometimes reduced, the survey said. Another reason for the decline, according to the study, is lack of a group or person in the church who is distinctly responsible for maintaining or increasing Cooperative Program support.

The study also concluded the decision to cut is not usually a conscious one, but when funds are reallocated to "pet projects" and building programs, churches have a difficult time raising Cooperative Program giving to the former level.

The survey revealed churches maintain or increase Cooperative Program giving when:

-- Someone protects the Cooperative Program percentage as the "church's tithe."

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- Sensitivity is raised about Cooperative Program without only referring to missions.
- The awareness and knowledge level is high among key leaders in the local church.
- Someone says something at a key time in the budget process and taps the strong support for the Cooperative Program.

Surveyed Baptists ranked Woman's Missionary Union as the greatest source of information about the Cooperative Program, followed by the state Baptist newspaper and pastors. Other sources of information cited include church training, Sunday school and Royal Ambassadors and Girls Auxiliary, the children's missions organizations.

From the study, the survey team recommended Baptists, in order to achieve a Cooperative Program turnaround, should:

- Educate the younger generation and adult converts about the Cooperative Program.
- Use the state paper to broaden knowledge about the Cooperative Program.
- Target key church leaders for sensitivity and awareness of Cooperative Program giving and establish more direct contact with them.
- Create a network of local church "champions" who will emphasize the need to support Cooperative Program during the budget formulation process.

"Those who study the Cooperative Program generally conclude that it is the best way for Southern Baptists to support the mission of the church in the world," said Robert F. Polk, Baptist General Convention of Texas director of Cooperative Promotion.

"This incomparable plan of mission support has served Southern Baptists well since they adopted it 62 years ago. Appreciation for the value of the plan, however, can weaken after awhile to the extent that an appreciation for the genius of the plan needs to be revived," Polk added.

"The findings of this survey will help lead to a renewed appreciation for the genius of the Cooperative Program as well as to a rediscovery of the 'glow' in cooperative mission endeavors."