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87-118

Missionary Troy Waldron Killed In Ethiopia Helicopter Crash

By Marty Croll

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (BP)--The business manager for the Southern Baptist mission in Ethiopia died in a helicopter crash Aug. 4 as he was flying to meet Ethiopian agricultural officials in a remote area. The pilot also was killed.

Police recovered the bodies of missionary Troy M. Waldron Jr. and Steve Bartalsky, the pilot, in a gully in sparsely populated hills near Addis Ababa about 2 p.m.

The craft had just passed over the first range of mountains it would encounter on the trip when the engine apparently failed, said Southern Baptist worker Ed Mason. Parts of the helicopter were strewn over a wide area, he added, and both men apparently died on impact.

Investigators said the crash occurred between 7:45 and 8 a.m. about 11 miles northeast of the Addis Ababa airport, just minutes after the helicopter left. Rural people discovered the crash and reported it to police.

Police took the bodies to Menelik Hospital in Addis Ababa, where they were identified by Mason, who acts as a liaison between government officials and Southern Baptist efforts in the country. Both men are to be buried Aug. 6 in a joint graveside funeral service in Addis Ababa.

The wives of Waldron and Bartalsky decided to bury their husbands on Ethiopian soil as an indication of their love for the people, Mason said. The two families attended the International Evangelical Church in Addis Ababa, where many missionaries and relief workers from outside the country maintain a close fellowship. Between 25 and 50 Ethiopian government officials are expected to attend the funeral service, according to Mason.

"We are stunned, shocked beyond words. We talk about it, and we still can't believe it," Mason said. "We've had a number of mission groups come in and express condolences and support. Some of them stayed with Troy's wife last night, some of them stayed with the pilot's wife."

Waldron, 34, of Silver Spring, Md., was making a one-day trip to the area around the Southern Baptist feeding station at Merhabete, about 45 minutes' flying time from Addis Ababa. He was planning to join Ethiopian officials there and accompany them as they dropped down in several areas to take samples of crops in the Merhabete area, in response to concern over inadequate summer rains.

Mason described Waldron with the Ethiopian word, "gobuz."

"It means you're a 110-volt plugged into a 220-volt socket," he said. "He would go all the time. When he started moving, sparks started flying." Waldron would work six days a week starting at 7 a.m. and continuing until late in the night, getting by on far less sleep than most people, Mason added.

Waldron's wife, the former Deborah Jewell, also of Silver Spring, was preparing dinner for her two sons at their home in Addis Ababa when news came about 5 p.m. that her husband had been killed. Mrs. Waldron, who goes by the name Jewell, will fly home next week. She expects to give birth to her third child next March.

The sixth Southern Baptist missionary to die in an air crash, Waldron is believed the first killed in a helicopter. The others have died since 1951 in five separate plane crashes, all in South America. The most recent was Roger L. Thompson of Linthicum Heights, Md., one of 119 people killed July 11, 1983, as an Ecuadorian airliner slammed into a mountain.

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Waldron was business manager and treasurer for the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in Ethiopia. Bartalsky was a regular pilot with Heli Mission, a Swiss humanitarian agency that provides support to the Ethiopian effort. Mason described the pilot as an extremely cooperative, quiet-mannered man who "leaned over backwards to be supportive to us and other missions here."

The Waldrons came to the United States for furlough last August when the couple participated in a four-month computer course to learn how to process documents in Ethiopian script, planning to use the information to produce training materials and other literature for Ethiopians. They had just returned to Ethiopia about four months ago.

Officials from Ethiopia's civil aeronautics and relief agencies visited the crash site Aug. 5 and will investigate why the helicopter lost power, Mason said. Davis Saunders, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's vice president for Africa, changed his plans to fly home Aug. 4 from Nairobi, Kenya, and instead flew to Addis Ababa to be with Waldron's family and missionaries there.

The pilot appeared to have tried unsuccessfully to use a technique called auto rotation to soften the blow of the craft as it approached the ground, according to a source from the Canadian company Liftair who examined the crash site. With auto rotation, the pilot waits until just before the craft hits the ground to reposition the rotor and slow the descent.

The craft had filled up with fuel from a portable Liftair fuel bladder at the Addis Ababa airport. Liftair officials ruled out fuel contamination as a possible cause for the crash, because one of the seven helicopters they operate in Africa fueled there and flew all day without incident.

Bartalsky was involved in another accident several months ago in which he and three passengers escaped what could have been serious injury, said the manager of international operations for Liftair, Tom Hannah, reached in Ottawa, Canada. Contaminated fuel was blamed for that crash.

Southern Baptist missionaries in Ethiopia are operating five feeding centers accessible only by helicopter and airplane. They are beginning to look to broader development projects rather than feeding stations as a way to provide long-term help for future generations of Ethiopians.

In late July the Foreign Mission Board released \$15,000 for a deposit on its own four-passenger helicopter in Ethiopia, but it has not arrived in the country.

Waldron was born in Washington, D.C., but considered Silver Spring his hometown.

He is survived by his wife; two sons, Nicholas Troy, 4, and Timothy Lee, 2; and his mother, Joyce Waldron, also of Silver Spring.

Waldron received the bachelor of arts degree from Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant and attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., the University of Louisville and the University of Maryland at College Park.

He owned and operated several small businesses in Maryland, Michigan and Kentucky before his appointment as a missionary in 1982.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Mission Board Leaders
Laud, Challenge WMU Members

By Karen Benson

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--The top leaders of the two Southern Baptist mission boards praised the work of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and challenged WMU members to not grow weary in the cause of missions.

Keith Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, and Larry Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, spoke during the annual WMU week July 26-31 at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center. Both paid tribute to the organization, which is about to celebrate its 100th anniversary.

"Of the people I know, the women of Woman's Missionary Union are more kingdom citizens than any other group with whom I work," Parks said.

While others in the denomination have become sidetracked with the years-long controversy that has plagued the Southern Baptist Convention, WMU has "kept your eyes on Jesus," Parks said, and has "continued to see the invisible."

WMU members have had a "spirit of giving that touches generation after generation," Parks said. "Woman's Missionary Union has been and continues to be the greatest source of financial support that any mission board has ever had."

In fact, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions -- which WMU began in 1888 -- far surpasses any other offering in the world, Christian or non-Christian, Parks said.

"It is a spiritual miracle that has been re-enacted for 99 years and is soon to be re-enacted for its century mark," he said. In 1986, more than \$70 million was collected for the Christmas offering. Goal for the 1987 offering is \$75 million.

In addition to being "kingdom builders" financially, WMU members have been "kingdom citizens in the sending of missionaries," Parks said. A large percentage of missionaries appointed to the foreign mission field cite WMU age-level organizations as being the first or most important influence in their Christian pilgrimage, he said.

"There is not a single force that is as productive in shaping hearts and minds to love missions" as the WMU, Parks said.

But perhaps even more important to the cause of missions, Parks said, is the prayer support WMU has given throughout its history. "There is no way to put a percentage on or to evaluate the impact the prayers of WMU have had across the ages for the cause of missions," he said.

"Had it not been for the consistent, faithful prayer support of WMU, we would not have anywhere near the mission effort that Southern Baptists claim today," he said.

"There is no one but God who could place a value on the praying of the women of WMU through the years," Parks said. "The destiny of multitudes around the earth has been changed because you have prayed."

Lewis told WMU members they must continue to be ready and willing to go "heart to heart, house to house and home to home," if future missions endeavors are as successful as those past.

He encouraged WMU members to remember those to whom they are indebted -- and to particularly remember their indebtedness to God. "Every breath we breathe is a gift of God," he said.

He also challenged them to not be ashamed of the gospel, as many within the denomination appear to be. "I am ashamed that it takes 42 of us to win a soul for Jesus," he said.

At least 6,000 Southern Baptist churches didn't report any salvations last year, he said.

"I believe in the authority, authenticity and reliability of the Bible. The message of this gospel is powerful -- more powerful than any army or any bomb concocted in our laboratories."

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Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of national WMU, also challenged members to take their responsibilities as leaders and to accept the gifts God has given them.

As a new church year begins in October, WMU members will celebrate a century of WMU work and will look for ways to "fulfill our future," Weatherford said.

"Remember that that begins at our front doors," she said. "And when you celebrate, celebrate by giving God the credit."

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Americans Urged to Learn
About Chinese Christians

By Scott Collins

Baptist Press
8/5/87

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Americans need to learn the facts about Christianity in China, the pastor of Mu-En Church in Shanghai said in a news conference at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, July 31.

Shi Qigui, who is on a 30-day tour of the United States, said many Americans are unaware of the openness now afforded Christianity in mainland China.

Shi, 58, along with Lei Tong, 60, pastor of All Saints Church in Shanghai, are making a historic visit to the United States through the Foreign Mission Board's Cooperative Services International.

According to Brit Towery, consultant for CSI, this is the first time two Chinese pastors have independently toured a Western nation to preach and share information about the church in China.

"The most important thing is to have a look at our churches, and to visit us," Shi said. Americans must move beyond their misconceptions about the church in China to "understand what Christians are doing."

Shi told stories of Christians touring China who "secretly" smuggle Bibles to Chinese Christians. He said one man threw pamphlets over the balcony of the church during a worship service in an effort to evangelize the Chinese.

Such efforts are unnecessary, Shi said, because Christians are allowed to worship freely and share their faith. And he said that while more Bibles are needed, those available cost less than 80 cents per copy.

Shi said a choir from the United States once came to his church and sang a song about Jesus returning to China after the Cultural Revolution.

"Jesus never left China," Shi told the group. "It's you who has come to China. The church never died."

"We like mutual respect," Shi said. "We are all of the church of Jesus Christ -- the same body."

The pastors said Americans need to understand that "tremendous change" is taking place in China. "Never in church history have so many changes occurred," Lei said.

Change began with the end of the Cultural Revolution, in which Christians and other intellectuals were persecuted. During this dark period, both pastors were persecuted by the Red Guard. Shi worked in a factory along with a blacksmith and Lei worked in a toy factory.

Most Christians were left without even one Bible. But the guards who searched Lei's home while he stood in the corner praying overlooked one Bible on his shelf.

Lei copied his Bible by hand so his wife could have one too. It took him 15 years.

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Since Christians have been allowed to worship again, the church has experienced tremendous growth, the pastors said. They estimate there are 4,000 churches and more than 4 million Christians in China today.

"We can say that our Chinese Christians have a very good future," Lei said.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

Black Pastor Finds Training
In Southern Baptist Convention

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
8/5/87

GREEN LAKE, Wis. (BP)--A Chicago pastor said he believes Southern Baptist Convention agencies provide the best resources in helping black churches to grow and develop, but he is less optimistic about total acceptance of blacks and other minorities within the convention.

"I'm convinced that the only way to grow a church is through the Sunday school," said Eugene Gibson, pastor of Mission of Faith Baptist Church in Chicago's South Side.

That conviction led him to affiliate with the Southern Baptist Convention when he started the church 10 years ago.

Gibson led sessions at a Sunday school leadership conference in Green Lake, Wis., on how to reach the black community through the Sunday school.

He had been pastor of a non-affiliated Baptist church for six years when he said the Lord told him to build a church based on Bible teaching, Gibson said. He started Mission of Faith one week after resigning from his previous church. Within seven months, the church had affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

He immediately began training workers and assigning those he trained to train others.

By 1979 the church was the first in the Illinois Baptist State Association to be recognized as a Standard Sunday school, a certificate granted to churches who meet established requirements in Sunday school training and development.

Also, Mission of Faith is one of ten cited in "Ten Super Sunday Schools In the Black Community" by Sid Smith, manager of black church development at the Sunday School Board.

The church which organized with 72 people now has 17 Sunday school classes with more than 300 average attendance in Sunday school. In order to continue growing, the church will need to move to gain more space. "We needed more space three years ago," Gibson said.

Gibson emphasizes training because he believes when leaders are more knowledgeable they will do a better job. By teaching the principles of growth and Sunday school development, they will be easier to lead, he said.

Training and assistance for black churches have been part of aggressive approaches to reaching black communities by the Sunday School and Home Mission boards, Gibson said.

He cited his involvement as a conference leader as a change in the attitude among Southern Baptist agencies.

Although the boards and agencies are showing a greater openness to blacks, ethnics and women, infighting within the convention signals that the entire convention is not ready to be open to all, Gibson said.

Although he noted the election of Victor Kaneubbe, a Choctaw Native American, as second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Gibson believes it will be many years before a woman or a black hold a convention office.

"If some Southern Baptists can't accept each other because of the way they look at the Bible, acceptance of color and gender are far away," he lamented.

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