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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committ
901 Commerce #7
Nashville, Tennessee 372
(615) 244-23
Alvin C. Shackelford, Direc
Dan Martin, News Edi
Marv Knox, Feature Edi

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041

DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550

NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300

RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

WASHINGTON Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

November 18, 1987

87-175

N-10

SBC Conservative Leaders
Conduct 'Private Meeting'

By Dan Martin

ATLANTA (BP)--Key national leaders of the conservative movement in the Southern Baptist Convention -- including the current SBC president and three past presidents, two past chairmen of the Committee on Boards and two men called the architects of the "conservative resurgence" -- met at an Atlanta airport hotel for an all-day "private fellowship meeting" Nov. 16.

According to a statement released following the closed meeting, "a group of Southern Baptist laypeople and pastors concerned about peace in the convention met together. ... The purpose of the meeting was to discuss appropriate responses to the widespread political activity of the 'moderates' throughout the Southern Baptist Convention."

About 40 people attended, said Homer Lindsay Jr., co-pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., and one of the participants.

Current SBC President Adrian Rogers and all three former SBC presidents since 1979 attended. They included Bailey Smith, evangelist from Atlanta; Jimmy Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas; and Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta.

Others included Lee Roberts, a Marietta, Ga., businessman and chairman of the 1986 Committee on Boards, and Brig. Gen. T.C. Pinckney of Alexandria, Va., a retired Air Force officer, and chairman of the 1987 Committee on Boards. The Committee on Boards nominates people to serve as trustees of the 20 national SBC agencies, including the six seminaries.

Also present were Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, and Paul Pressler, a Texas appellate judge from Houston. Patterson and Pressler are believed to be the chief architects of the nine-year political/theological effort to turn the nation's largest Protestant denomination to a more conservative direction.

Most of those present declined to discuss the purpose of the meeting, who attended, what was discussed or who invited them, saying that an official statement would be released through the Baptist Press office in Nashville by Draper. (See full text of statement following.)

Draper, who said he was not a spokesman for the group but "had just been given the assignment" of releasing the statement, read the 11-paragraph statement which noted, "We are grieved and dismayed at the apparent failure of some to maintain the spirit of the St. Louis convention as reflected by the overwhelming response to the report of the (SBC) Peace Committee."

The statement included "seven general principles" which "were agreed on by the participants," most of which related to the nature of Scripture.

"The issue in the SBC is not an interpretation of Scripture, but rather what Scripture is," said one of the "general principles." It continued, "Believers validly differ on various interpretations, but we must never allow doubts to be cast upon the complete accuracy of the Bible as God's absolutely reliable Word."

Another statement said, "The continued use by 'moderates' of terms such as 'Fundamentalist' to describe conservative evangelicals serves only to obscure and confuse the real issue of biblical authority."

It also said Rogers "was invited to attend and stressed in response his willingness to meet with any group, schedule allowing, interested in establishing the peace and unity of the SBC."

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Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., confirmed he attended and said, "I have met with groups from both sides of the aisle and I hope to continue to do so."

The current SBC president said: "It was a fellowship meeting to assess the state of the SBC, not initiated by me but to which I was invited and was happy to attend. It was a meeting that tried to assess the perceived violations of the Peace Committee's report."

Rogers said since it was a "fellowship" meeting and not an "official meeting," he is "not at liberty to say who called the meeting, who invited me or who attended."

The meeting was held just a few days after moderates in the 14.6 million-member denomination apparently won victories in such Baptist state conventions as Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, Maryland, Virginia, Louisiana and Kentucky.

Draper, however, said the meeting was not in specific response to the state conventions. "It (the meeting) has been on my calendar for at least two weeks," he said.

Draper, who was president of the SBC 1982-84, said there have been a number of moderate political meetings in Texas: "Our concern is that the Peace Committee asked us a year and a half ago not to do that. Their (the Peace Committee's) recommendation was received and approved by the convention, yet it (political activity) has not stopped, it has intensified.

"We were just trying to decide how to respond to it. In light of the aggressive activities of the moderates in the last year, and particularly the last six months, we met to discuss our response and our concerns for the convention. No specific things were decided, but in all candor, we do have to make some response to the aggressive tactics of the moderates and to the continued caricatures and misrepresentations of conservatives."

He said participants discussed, but came to no decision, on whether to refer "the things the moderates have done in the form of meetings and political rallies" to Charles Fuller, chairman of the SBC Peace Committee, "to see what he feels should be done."

Draper added he does not believe the conservative meeting violates the Peace Committee edict against political meetings: "We are trying to find out how we can react in a positive and healthy way. We are not trying to create problems, and in fact some of us have been laying low for the last 18 months in order not to create problems."

In response to a question about whether strategy concerning potential candidates for the SBC presidency in 1988 was discussed, Rogers told Baptist Press: "No decisions were made as to who would be a candidate. Certainly, as any group would do, we discussed a number of people. We are happy there are a number of good possibilities. But we made no decision, nor do we have the right to make decisions of that kind. That decision is for an individual to make."

Draper added the meeting was informal and was "not all that unusual. About once a year some of us -- eight or 10 or a dozen -- get together to talk about what is going on. This was just another one of those meetings. The thing that was a little unusual about this was that there were more people."

The meeting came about, he said, when "different ones of us were talking about what was happening in the different states. We asked Fred Powell (senior associate pastor at First Baptist Church in Atlanta) to set it up for us. I don't know how all of the people got invited; in fact, I didn't even know all of the people there."

Participants apparently decided to release a statement on the meeting after two news reporters showed up at the Airport Marriott to cover the event. Jim Newton, chief of the Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press, requested permission to attend the meeting, but was asked to leave.

"This is a closed meeting of Baptists who are here for fellowship," Newton quoted Patterson as saying in response to his request.

The Marriott daily schedule of events listed the meeting as being scheduled by First Baptist Church of Atlanta. As he left the room, Stanley, pastor of the host church, said the group was "having a little fellowship in there."

Conservative Leaders'
Statement Text Given

N-10

ATLANTA (BP)--The text of a statement released to Baptist Press following a meeting Nov. 16 of key conservative leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention is being released verbatim.

The statement:

A number of Southern Baptist laypeople and pastors concerned about peace in the convention met together at the Airport Marriott in Atlanta, Ga., on Nov. 16. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss appropriate responses to the widespread political activity of the "moderates" throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

We are grieved and dismayed at the apparent failure of some to maintain the spirit of the St. Louis convention as reflected by the overwhelming response to the report of the Peace Committee.

Dr. Adrian Rogers was invited to attend and stressed in response his willingness to meet with any group, schedule allowing, interested in establishing the peace and unity of the SBC.

Seven general principles were agreed on by the participants.

1. The possibility for genuine and enduring peace rests ultimately on the reaffirmation of the total reliability of the Word of God in confession and in action.

2. The burden and opportunity for worldwide missions and evangelism mandates obedience to the lordship of Christ in all matters, including the nature of the Scriptures.

3. Although conservatives themselves have multiple and sometimes differing concerns on many issues, the one substantive issue that cannot be compromised is that the Bible is "not errant in any area of reality." In affirming that the Bible is "truth without mixture of error" we reaffirm the overwhelming action of the 1987 SBC in stating that this includes:

-- Belief in the direct creation of mankind and therefore that Adam and Eve were real people.

-- Belief that the named authors did indeed write the biblical books attributed to them by those books.

-- Belief that the miracles described in Scripture did indeed occur as supernatural events in history.

-- Belief that the historical narratives given by biblical authors are indeed accurate and reliable as given by those authors.

4. The issue in the SBC is not an interpretation of Scripture, but rather what Scripture is. Believers validly differ on various interpretations, but we must never allow doubts to be cast upon the complete accuracy of the Bible as God's absolutely reliable Word.

5. The continued use by "moderates" of terms such as "Fundamentalist" to describe conservative evangelicals serves only to obscure and confuse the real issue of biblical authority.

6. Only obedience to the voice of God and Holy Scripture provides a hopeful foundation for denominational renewal and a possible spiritual awakening in our country.

7. We wish to express to all individual Southern Baptists and to all Southern Baptist churches our great love and our prayers for the richest blessings of God for every godly labor in our Lord.

Florida Baptists Elect Welch
During Tranquil Convention

N- (CO)
(Fla.)

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (BP)--Messengers to the 126th annual Florida Baptist State Convention completed three days of business and inspiration in Daytona Beach with only two contested votes.

The election of local pastor Bobby Welch as president and the removal of former DeLand pastor David Medley from the Committee on Order of Business for alleged indiscretions were the only votes that were not unanimous.

None of the 1,872 messengers voiced objection to the election of three other convention officers, the approval of seven resolutions, the adoption of a \$23 million budget for 1988 and the acceptance of a new five-year budgeting plan for 1989-94.

The 1988 budget continues the convention's record-setting pattern of dividing Baptists' Cooperative Program unified budget half-and-half between Florida and Southern Baptist causes.

That 50/50 division, however, coupled with slow growth in giving by churches, forced the convention to alter the way it spends its portion of cooperative income beginning in 1989. The big loser in the new budgeting plan will be Stetson University, which will forfeit 31 percent of its allotment from Florida Baptists' budget.

But messengers stressed the reduction of funding for Stetson was not "an action of censure or disapproval" of the school. In an unusual move that required the unanimous consent of messengers, the convention instructed the Resolutions Committee, which already had concluded its report, to draft a resolution of support for the school and its new president, H. Douglas Lee.

It was the only resolution requested by the messengers, who submitted no resolutions for consideration ahead of time and offered no amendments or opposition to the six proposed by the committee. Those resolutions expressed opposition to beverage alcohol, drug abuse, pornography and casino gambling as well as appreciation for the host city and the state's public school system.

Although Welch has been a leader of the conservative faction in Florida, there was no mention of denominational politics during his election as convention president. Welch, pastor of First Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, collected 52.6 percent of the vote in his first-ballot victory over Patrick Anderson, a layman from Lakeland who was this year's first vice president, and Hayes Davis Sr., pastor of Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Polk City.

Although the votes for Anderson and Hayes were not announced and not recorded in the minutes, figures from the tellers' committee gave Anderson, the candidate favored by moderates, 42 percent and Hayes 6 percent of the estimated 1,150 votes cast.

The three other officers are Ted Burrell, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Ocala, first vice president; Charles Walker, a layman in Miami Shores Baptist Church in Miami, second vice president; and Joe Folmar, a chaplain at Baptist Medical Center in Jacksonville, recording secretary.

Three times in three sessions, the convention considered action on Medley, a leader of Florida's moderates who resigned as pastor of Stetson Baptist Church in DeLand, amidst allegations of sexual misconduct.

Messengers first postponed, then tabled and finally approved a motion to rescind Medley's 1985 election to a three-year term on the Committee on Order of Business, which sets the program for the annual meeting.

The motion was introduced by Jack Nightingale, pastor of Northside Baptist Church in DeLand. "He is no longer a pastor," Nightingale said. "I don't want to discuss the situation, but indiscretions that might be embarrassing to the convention are involved."

Edgar Cooper of Jacksonville opposed the motion, which he said would put a "stigma on a brother." He suggested Medley be counseled and asked to resign. "We need to reclaim if possible, not condemn," Cooper said.

William Parker, pastor of Markham Woods Baptist Church in Lake Mary, responded that Medley "has been dealt with" and the motion to rescind was necessary. He later told the Florida Baptist Witness, newsjournal of Florida Baptists, Medley had refused to resign.

Medley, who was not at the convention, later denied that charge. Cooper moved that convention President Bill Coffman of Jacksonville take the matter under advisement and seek a solution, but time ran out on the business session before either motion could come to a vote.

Later, Cooper moved that Nightingale's motion to rescind Medley's election be tabled. The motion to table passed on a standing vote, with an estimated 1,000 people present.

The issue resurfaced later, however. Two messengers cited Orlando pastor Jim Henry's convention sermon, in which Henry exhorted messengers to confront sinful Christians.

Nightingale asked that his motion to rescind be removed from the table. A standing vote totaled 267-193 in favor of bringing Nightingale's motion back for consideration.

Messengers showed no inclination to discuss Medley's reported offenses, however, as a motion to end debate quickly won approval. Nightingale's original motion to remove Medley from the committee was settled on another standing vote.

Nightingale later told the Witness Medley's refusal to resign from the committee forced him to act. He said his involvement in the matter had nothing to do with denominational politics, even though Medley campaigned against Nightingale's election to the SBC Committee on Boards in 1986 and Nightingale's nomination of Parker to the SBC Executive Committee in 1987.

"David and I are on opposite sides of the fence in the political controversy, but this had nothing to do with that," Nightingale said. "The issue was not political, it was not a personal thing. Like Jim Henry said, it was time to take a stand."

Contacted by the Witness after the convention, however, Medley said his ouster was politically motivated. "It's a way of publicly embarrassing someone who challenged their fundamentalist views," he said.

He added he was not asked by the Committee on Order of Business or the convention to resign from the committee, although he did discuss resignation with the director of missions in the local association.

Much less debate surfaced in the adoption of the 1988 budget and a five-year plan for redistribution of state convention funds. Both items, which came as recommendations from the State Board of Missions, were approved unanimously.

One of the objectives of the new five-year budget plan is to put the convention's \$617,000 annual debt payments into the basic budget. In past years the payments had been made from advance budget funds. To make room for those payments in the basic budget, the convention reduced the portion of the budget designated for six Florida Baptist agencies, including Stetson, from 16.2 percent to 13.9 percent.

In introducing the new formula to messengers, William Amos of Plantation, chairman of the study committee that made the proposal, said the budget cuts were decided in part by the ability of each agency to recoup the loss elsewhere.

Stetson President Lee later told the Witness the school definitely will feel the impact of reduced funding even though the loss represents only 1.5 percent of Stetson's \$28 million annual budget.

But Lee said he had no quarrel with convention's decision to trim Stetson's share of the budget. "They had a budgetary problem they had to solve," he said. "They didn't have much choice. ... Never did I feel it was a slap at Stetson."

The next meeting of the Florida Baptist State Convention will Nov. 14-16, 1988, in Lakeland.

Supreme Court Rejects
Home Schooling Appeal

N-BJC
By Stan Hastey

WASHINGTON (BP)--Rejecting an appeal by an Ohio couple, the U.S. Supreme Court has declined to enter the legal thicket of home schooling, including the question of whether parents have a religious right to educate their children at home.

Three years ago, Richard and Pamela Schmidt of Columbiana County, Ohio, refused to enroll their daughter, Sara, in either a public or private school as required by Ohio law. Rather, they enrolled the 6-year-old in a home study program sponsored by Winchester Christian Academy of Columbus.

Although Ohio law permits home schooling with the permission of the local superintendent of public schools, the Schmidts did not seek permission for Sara's home schooling because they thought they were in compliance with the law and because they refused on religious grounds to submit their case to a public official.

According to their attorney, Michael P. Farris of Great Falls, Va., the Schmidts refused to seek the necessary permission because "to submit their curriculum and instructional materials to the control of a public school superintendent who works in an environment which necessarily excludes God ... would result in excessive restriction on their religious duty."

Public schooling for Sara was out of the question, Farris elaborated, because of the Schmidts' convictions that the Bible commands parents "to personally train and teach their children according to God's principles" and that the public school system and curricular materials "present a view of the world which is contrary to their religious beliefs."

After failing in repeated efforts to deal with the impasse, school Superintendent Roger Stiller filed a complaint in county court, charging the Schmidts with 20 counts of refusing to send their child to school.

The trial court found the Schmidts guilty on all counts and assessed fines totalling \$800. In addition, the court ordered the couple to enroll Sara in an accredited public or private school. That order has been stayed pending appeals.

Both a state appeals panel and the Ohio Supreme Court affirmed the trial court, specifically refusing to consider the Schmidts' primary argument that the free exercise clause of the First Amendment gave them a constitutional right to educate their child at home. The issue was not addressed, both panels asserted, because the parents had failed to seek Stiller's permission for home schooling, thereby thwarting the possibility permission might be granted.

Farris, president of the Home School Legal Defense Association, asked the nation's high court to review the lower decisions in order to consider the free exercise claim and other legal issues.

Countering his appeal, Columbiana County Prosecutor Robert L. Herron defended the Ohio law, saying it "balances the public's need to assure good education with the uncontrolled withdrawal of students for home instruction which could be claimed by anyone, anytime, for any reason."

If the Schmidts prevailed, Herron said, Ohio's compulsory attendance law "would be a joke."

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High Court To Review
Teen 'Chastity Act'

N-BJC
By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
11/18/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to review the constitutionality of a federal law that provides tax dollars to religious and other groups to discourage teenage pregnancy and abortion.

Enacted in 1981, the Adolescent Family Life Act -- sometimes referred to as the teen "Chastity Act" -- provides funding from the federal treasury "to promote self discipline and other prudent approaches to the problem of adolescent premarital sexual relations, including adolescent pregnancy" and to encourage adoption rather than abortion.

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The law also specifies that these issues are "best approached through a variety of integrated and essential services provided ... by other family members, religious and charitable organizations, voluntary associations and other groups in the private sector," as well as those provided by public units.

Accordingly, the law requires all grantees, religious or not, to seek active participation by religious organizations in all programs funded through the statute. Grants are made by the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

Several taxpayers, supported by the American Civil Liberties Union, challenged the law as an unconstitutional establishment of religion in violation of the First Amendment to the Constitution. Earlier this year, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia agreed, striking down the law on that basis. Later, however, the panel specified the section of the law providing funding for religious groups alone could be severed in order to salvage the rest of the statute.

In its decision, the district court held the law had the primary effect of advancing religion and excessively entangled church and state.

The court noted religious counselors were among recipients of the disputed funds and some programs funded by the law were conducted at locations adorned with religious symbols and administered by members of religious orders.

In addition, the court held, "the risk that ... funds will be used to transmit religious doctrine can be overcome only by government monitoring so continuous that it rises to the level of excessive entanglement."

Justice Department lawyers, headed by U.S. Solicitor General Charles Fried, asked the Supreme Court to review the lower decision in part because it displayed "a systematic hostility to religious organizations," a stance that "offends the First Amendment as much as governmental establishment of religion."

Many other federally funded programs would be threatened by the lower court's analysis, government lawyers added, including programs benefiting the sick, orphaned, delinquent adolescents and the poor.

The lower court also failed, they added, because its judgment precludes a case-by-case examination of each religious organization receiving the funds. Only through such analysis can a court determine if a given program is pervasively religious, they said.

On the other side, ACLU attorneys asked the high court to affirm the district court decision, arguing the challenged law "is a clearer violation of the Establishment Clause than any case ever to reach this court."

Under the Chastity Act, they argued, "millions of federal tax dollars are being paid directly and indirectly to religious institutions which use the funds to teach government approved religious doctrines on sex and family life values and to provide care services to pregnant adolescents."

Because the law specifically requires the involvement of religious organizations, the ACLU lawyers continued, it "authorizes the use of federal funds to subsidize religious indoctrination as a means of opposing premarital sex, abortion and birth control for teenagers."

The district court ruling was justified, they argued, because "the principle of separation of church and state could not be a more basic founding principle of this nation."

Under terms of a limited stay imposed by the district court last May, participating religious organizations were to cease receiving funds as of Oct 1. But in August, Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist issued a stay of his own that allowed funds to continue flowing to all recipients, including religious groups, pending action by the Supreme Court.

Oral arguments in the case will be scheduled later this term, with a final decision expected by late spring or early summer of 1988.

Slain Airman
'Comes Home'

By James Watters

N-60
(NW)

PORTLAND, Ore. (BP)--With a full military escort and a 21-gun salute, U.S. Air Force Sgt. Randy Allen Davis was buried at Willamette National Cemetery Nov. 6. He had gone "home to visit with his father."

Davis had used those exact words at Clark Field Baptist Church in Angeles City, Philippines, just a few days before his death. He was describing his upcoming transfer to the United States that would put him within driving distance of his family in Portland, Ore. Davis and his wife, Lourdes, and their two small children were planning to spend their 30-day leave with his family in his home town.

However, Davis' life was cut short when he was shot Oct. 28 by an unknown assailant, probably one of the terrorist rebel groups in the Philippines seeking to undermine the government of President Corazon Aquino.

Don Jones, a short-term volunteer missionary with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and pastor of the Clark Field Baptist congregation, recalled Davis' words during a memorial service at the church near the huge Philippine air base. Jones had asked Davis about his Nov. 22 departure.

"Randy said he was going home to visit with his father," Jones said. "That is exactly where he has gone."

Davis is well-remembered in Clark Field Baptist Church. He also is well-remembered by his buddies on the air base where he worked as a fighter plane ejection system technician. Most of all he is remembered and missed by his wife, his son, Timothy, 2, and his daughter, Damarise Marie, 17 months.

The Davises were born a half a world apart, he in Saginaw, Mich., and she in Danaue Province, Republic of the Philippines. But according to close friends in the Clark Field church who knew them well, theirs was a sure case of love at first sight.

"Their meeting was a very sweet happening," recalls Deborah Golden, of Brandon, Miss. "Her sister had asked Lourdes to come help during a sickness, to fill in for her at work until she recovered. Lourdes left her family village for the first time to help her sister.

"Through a friend who knew a girl from the same Ifugao tribal village, Randy and Lourdes met at an off-base social club," Deborah says. "They began dating and soon were married."

Mrs. Davis told Tim Stearns, pastor of Peninsula Baptist Church in Portland, who conducted the Nov. 6 funeral service for Davis, that her husband's Christian testimony and the way he lived his life were for her a life-changing witness.

"Since I grew up as a Catholic, I asked Randy to go with me to my church," Mrs. Davis said. "We went to the 10 o'clock Mass but got there early. While we were waiting, Randy excused himself to go get a drink of water. A lady soon came to tell me he had passed out. Of course, I rushed him to the hospital and he had a high fever for several days.

"The next time we talked about going to church he said, 'Why don't you try my church. You will like it.'"

She discovered Baptist people to be pleasant: "I found the Clark Field Baptist Church very friendly. The people are like a family, and they love and take care of each other." She identified with the mixture of American and Filipino Christians.

"If I had not met Randy I would not have become a Baptist," she says. "I would not be a Christian now."

John Dill, former missionary pastor of the Clark Field church, says he remembers the Davises well. She made a profession of faith in Christ in the early part of 1986, and hers was one of the final baptisms Dill performed before transferring to his present church in South Carolina.

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Mrs. Davis says she and her husband felt the full weight of the Baptist congregation's prayer support during critical days after their second child was born four months premature. It was an experience through which their love deepened, as did their love for Christ and their fellow Christians at Clark Field Baptist.

Davis also was a special kind of child, according to his father, Ronald: "To us he was different to the other kids all around. If he met you once and found out your birthday or anniversary, he would remember. You would likely get at least a card on your special day.

"He always seemed able to choose the right kind of friends. And he was the kind of kid who was always asking if he could help. He never seemed to run out of time to do things for others."

The elder Davis tells of a 70-year-old neighbor who recently brought over a three-legged stool his son made for her when he was in grade school: "He didn't have enough material to make a four-legged one, she said. She has used the stool to keep her telephone on all these years."

Friends at Clark Field Baptist say Davis was the same kind of person during his days in the Philippines. Davis was one of the church's ushers and a member of the tally committee, says Carlos Dela Cruz, church secretary and business manager. Davis also did maintenance around the church.

Paul Haynes, a Southern Baptist missionary journeyman who is minister of music and youth at Clark Field Baptist Church, testifies Davis was totally faithful to the congregation. Davis' membership was an every-Sunday and almost every-day-of-the-week affair.

When the pastor asked for help in securing an off-base apartment for Haynes, Davis rented the apartment next door to his own.

"Randy was the first guest to show up at my new apartment," recalls Haynes. "He came early with two big jugs of drinking water to be sure I didn't drink contaminated water. He was that kind of friend."

A close friend on the job, as well as at Clark Field Baptist, describes 23-year-old Davis as "a big guy -- about 6 foot 3 -- not the kind of person you would slap on the shoulder unless you knew him. But I never saw him down. Randy was an even-tempered, kind and well-liked person. He didn't know a stranger -- American or Filipino," says Jerry Golden, the escort officer who accompanied the body of Davis to Portland.

At the memorial service in Portland, Stearns cited Davis as being both a "soldier and a soldier of Christ. He was the kind of Christian who gladly took on tasks others may have avoided, in order to help the situation."

James Slack, veteran Southern Baptist missionary in the Philippines, says the testimony of American service people such as Davis is an important ingredient in the witness Southern Baptists are giving in the Philippines. "These Southern Baptists living with their families overseas deserve a church ministry to support their witness. As they mature in their Christian outreach their service in the name of Christ is a verification of the witness given by our Southern Baptist missionaries. We would not want to allow it to be otherwise."

Slack insists that despite Davis' death the Philippines has not been a hot-spot for Americans: "I have been on the road when people in front and in back of me have been shot at, but as an American I was left unharmed. Having lived in the Philippines with my family for 23 years, I would urge Southern Baptists to determine that if there was ever a time for an unceasing Christian witness in the Philippines, it is now. There is an openness for the gospel in this country that only God could have provided. We must remain faithful in this time of crucial decisions by the Philippine people."

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(Also contributing to this story was Marty Croll of the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.)

Religious Educators Affirm
Women Ministers, Academic Freedom

N- (SBS)
By Pat Cole

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--An association of Southern Baptist religious educators unanimously approved resolutions that affirm women in ministry and endorse academic freedom in Baptist colleges and seminaries.

Meeting recently in Louisville, Ky., members of the Eastern Baptist Religious Education Association passed a resolution noting, "God calls persons to the gospel ministry without regard to gender."

The resolution cited actions taken by a Baptist association in Tennessee and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board as being "contrary to our understanding of the gospel message."

In October, the Shelby Baptist Association disfellowshipped Prescott Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., because it called a woman, Nancy Hastings Sehested, as pastor. In October of 1986, the Home Mission Board voted not to give church pastoral assistance to congregations that call women as pastors.

The religious educators' resolution affirmed the right of local churches to "call whomever they desire under God's leadership."

Another resolution approved said academic freedom and an atmosphere of trust should be the guiding principles for Baptist colleges and seminaries.

In the resolution, EBREA members noted they "have perceived that these principles have been violated or jeopardized with the recent development" at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. Southeastern President Randall Lolley and faculty Dean Morris Ashcraft both announced their resignations after the seminary's board of trustees took steps to ensure that only people who adhere to biblical inerrancy would fill future faculty positions.

The resolutions were passed by 38 religious educators who attended the meeting. EBREA is an organization for Southern Baptist religious educators who serve east of the Mississippi River.

Officers elected by the organization were Bill Johnson, minister of education at Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., president; Bill Clemmons, religious education professor at Southeastern Seminary, president-elect; Janet Fluker, minister of education at Scott Boulevard Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., vice president; Sharon James, minister of education at First Baptist Church in Franklin, Va., secretary-treasurer; and Dwayne Zimmer, retired minister of education at Woodmont Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn., recording secretary.