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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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April 29, 1991

91-65

Bus/RV parking lots
available in Atlanta

ATLANTA (BP)--Because of parking limitations at the Georgia World Congress Center, site of the 1991 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Atlanta in June, officials are urging recreational vehicle owners to use facilities outside the downtown area and ride MARTA.

Campers are advised to use Stone Mountain Park, east of Atlanta, and ride the MARTA bus access/rapid rail to get to the Center. Also available are campsites near Six Flags, McDonough (south), Austell (west) and Kennesaw/Marietta (north).

North Georgia Campers on Mission has made arrangements with a number of Baptist churches in the Atlanta metro area for any group attending the SBC to park RVs in church parking lots. Most churches are offering electrical hook-ups but some offer just parking for fully self-contained units.

For more information on church sites, call George Hugger at (404) 978-1328 or write him at 2382 Junes Court, Snellville, GA 30278. Churches have requested no arrivals before mid-afternoon on the Sunday before the convention.

During the convention sessions there will be a secure lot available at the Atlanta Fulton County Stadium reserved for local SBC volunteers, buses and RVs. However, bus and RV passengers should be dropped off at the WCC and the driver only proceed to the special lot. A shuttle will be provided to the WCC for those drivers and volunteers.

There is no overnight RV parking in the area near the WCC although there are some public parking lots for day use. Parking near the WCC is limited and relatively expensive.

The Stone Mountain Park is on a "first come, first served" basis, said officials, and is \$12.50 per night. There is a \$5 fee each time you leave and re-enter the park.

Other campsites available in the metro area are: Arrowhead Campsites, near Six Flags, (404) 948-7302, \$21.53 per night, \$3 each additional person; KOA South, McDonough, (404) 957-2610, \$19 per night, \$2 each additional person; KOA West, Austell, (404) 427-2406, \$20.50 per night, \$2 each additional person; KOA North, Kennesaw/Marietta, (404) 427-2406, \$19 per night, \$2 each additional person.

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Brotherhood Commission
approves new magazine

By Dave Parker

Baptist Press
4/29/91

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--A new military magazine for enlisted personnel was approved at the April 26-27 meeting of the Brotherhood Commission board of trustees held in Memphis.

The board also approved a statement on political activity, dedicated a new center for global studies and announced the beginning of a relief effort to help Kurds in southern Turkey. Selection of a new president was delayed until June 5.

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

"Full Armor," a magazine geared to reach enlisted people serving in the military, was unveiled the meeting. The prototype for the magazine contains 64 pages of material for and about military personnel. Brotherhood President James H. Smith said he was excited about the magazine's potential.

"The Persian Gulf situation created an awareness of our military that hasn't existed since World War II," he said. "Our staff became aware that there is no Christian publication being produced primarily for enlisted personnel. When this information was shared with the state Brotherhood leaders in January, they came up with more than \$20,000 to produce a magazine."

The proposed budget for the magazine is \$183,000, all to be paid by projected subscriptions. There are 300,000 Baptists in the military, and the magazine will break even if 10,500 of them subscribe. It will be targeted to individuals, and churches will be able to subscribe for their members in the military.

Trustees unanimously approved the magazine. It now goes to messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention for approval.

At last year's SBC meeting, Texas messenger Cactus J. Cagle introduced a motion asking all agencies, institutions, commissions, boards and other entities in the SBC determine if any of its personnel engaged in political activity regarding the convention controversy.

"I want to go on record on this matter," Smith said. "One thing we have attempted to do, and succeeded in doing, is keeping our trustees and personnel out of this haggling. We have the responsibility to attempt to serve the needs of all Southern Baptists and their agencies."

Trustee Walter Barnes of Alabama said the commission should not have to spend its time and resources on such issues.

"I'm highly ticked by the procedure whereby one person can raise the question and waste the time of all the trustees," Barnes said. Trustees should not have to respond to "something that has no official action," he said.

Trustees unanimously approved Smith's statement on political activity.

The McCall Center for Global Studies was dedicated as a learning center, a training center and experimentation center to further missions education. It contains 12 acres, a 3,350-square-foot main house and several smaller structures.

It is the former home of Judge and Mrs. John W. McCall. McCall was chairman of the Brotherhood executive committee when it moved to Memphis. His daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Bethea Sr., were foreign missionaries and his son, Duke McCall, was president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Three grandchildren are presently foreign missionaries.

Earlier, trustees approved three memorials for the property: the Godfrey Cottage, in memory of Norman and Nancy Godfrey; the Lynda Bethea Memorial Garden; and the James H. Smith Prayer Room. Bethea, missionary to Kenya and wife of Ralph Bethea Jr., was killed by robbers in April.

Twelve Brotherhood workers are leaving for southern Turkey May 1 to set up feeding stations, Smith announced. He said Brotherhood's success in getting supplies to Peruvian cholera victims opened the way for this effort to feed Kurds. The 12 men will set up five points, each capable of feeding 20,000 people.

The project is a joint effort of the Brotherhood Commission, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and Texas Baptist Men, and will cost about \$120,000, but he said Texas Baptist Men are funding the entire project.

Brotherhood staff members Jim Burton and Jim Furgerson are among the participants.

In other action, trustees:

-- Heard a report a man has been offered the job as president, but he will not make a decision for two to four weeks. In light of that, trustees voted to meet June 5 to vote on the nominee.

-- Approved a \$4,159,182 budget that includes pay raises for the Brotherhood Commission staff of up to 4 percent. Of the total, \$994,685 comes from the Cooperative Program and the rest is from sales of periodicals, merchandise and registration fees.

-- Heard a report that response to last year's World Changers pilot project was overwhelming, so this year there will be six projects, with 1,600 people already pre-registered. For next year, 10 sites are being considered, including one international site.

-- Approved setting up a policy on preserving records, in response to a request by the Interagency Council.

-- Approved a study to look into setting up a comptroller position, as the money becomes available and subject to approval by the new president.

-- Approved a plan to eliminate at-large members from the board of trustees. At-large positions will be dissolved at the end of the trustees' present terms.

-- Presented Awards of Merit to 16 individuals, four posthumously.

-- Heard plans for the Brotherhood display at the SBC. Included are plans to set up seven Disaster Relief vans, each with the capability of feeding 1,000 persons an hour.

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(Parker is assistant editor of the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger.)

Brotherhood delays
picking new president

By Dave Parker

Baptist Press
4/29/91

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--June 5 is the date set to elect a new president of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, after the presidential search committee decided it needed more time.

That announcement was made at the spring meeting of Brotherhood board of trustees, held in Memphis April 26-27.

Search Committee Chairman Wendell Reed of Virginia told trustees an offer has been extended, but it will be two to four weeks before the man is expected to make a decision.

"We are looking for God's perfect will and not his permissive will," Reed said. "God has been in the forefront of everything we have done. As of two weeks ago, I felt like we would go away with a recommendation. We tried to meet the target date, but we are following God's leadership and his timetable."

"Our target date was this committee meeting, but we felt like if it was not God's will, we would not bring it. The offer has been given and it is between him, the Lord and us."

Although he would not give any details about the man selected, Reed said he is very familiar with Brotherhood. Trustees would be very pleased with the selection, he said, and predicted a near-unanimous vote.

"I feel like this person has vision and is an excellent communicator and motivator," he said. "He can take what we have today and move forward."

Outgoing president James H. Smith, who was honored at a retirement party Saturday night, said he wished the new president well, "whoever he may be."

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"The future of the Brotherhood has never been brighter," Smith said. "God is opening new doors of opportunity daily. This is an awful time to be stepping down."

"Really, I know that it is time for new leadership. I thank God for these almost 12 years of opportunity to serve."

Since the presidential candidate was not picked in time for trustees to vote at this meeting, a meeting was called for Wednesday afternoon, June 5, of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Atlanta.

The meeting bogged down as trustees tried to decide how to take that vote. An original motion to take a vote by mail passed 23-11. After lengthy debate and discussion, Chairman Don Varnado of Louisiana ruled such a ballot would violate Robert's Rules of Order, and called the special meeting.

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(Parker is assistant editor of the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger.)

Historical Commission celebrates
anniversaries, plans pamphlet project By Carol Woodfin

Baptist Press
4/29/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Historical Commission celebrated its 40th anniversary by honoring its executive director, presenting awards in Baptist history, approving a new pamphlet project, and planning for a history writing contest.

The commission honored Lynn E. May Jr., on his 35th anniversary as an employee and his 20th anniversary as executive director. The longest-tenured SBC agency executive since 1987, May has overseen the commission's move to new quarters in the SBC Building, expanded the professional staff from two to seven, and enhanced the agency's programs, services, products, library and archival holdings. He is the agency's third executive director, following Norman W. Cox (1951-59) and Davis C. Woolley (1959-71). May began work at the Historical Commission in 1956 as research director.

In their April 22-24 meeting, commissioners presented May with a "Special 40th Anniversary Distinguished Service Award," and a resolution of appreciation. May was cited for professional and personal integrity, competence and humility. Commissioners called May a "leading advocate of the Historical Commission's role as a service agency to the entire denomination."

Prior to the annual meeting, more than 120 donors contributed \$6,525 to the Lynn E. May Jr., Study Grant Endowment Fund, in honor of the executive director. The fund, now totalling over \$10,000, provides scholarships for selected researchers using the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives.

The commission awarded three scholarships for 1991, and plans to increase that number in the future. The commission also announced an anonymous donation of \$2,500 to a "Designated Study Grant Fund." Scholarships from the designated fund are to be used to support research in the areas of "Baptists and the Peace Movement" and "Baptists and the Separation of Church and State."

The commission presented three awards for excellence in Baptist history. C. Penrose St. Amant received the Distinguished Service Award for Outstanding Contributions to Baptist History. St. Amant, a former commission chairman, has been professor of church history at New Orleans and Southern Baptist Theological seminaries. He was dean of the School of Theology at Southern Seminary, and president and professor of church history at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

The commission lauded St. Amant, a frequent guest lecturer, visiting professor and author of numerous books, essays, and articles, as a "perceptive interpreter of the Baptist vision" and a "model for and motivator of Baptist historians for almost five decades."

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Fred Anderson received the Davis C. Woolley Award for Outstanding Achievement in State Baptist History. Anderson, the first recipient of the new annual award, is executive director of the Virginia Baptist Historical Society. Among its activities in 1990, the society published tour brochures on Virginia Baptist missionary and religious liberty sites. Sidney E. King completed a mural for the society, consisting of 36 original paintings of events in Virginia Baptist history. Anderson's latest book, published in 1990, is Hearts and Hands: Gathering Up the Years, a history of the Woman's Missionary Union of Virginia. In 1990 Anderson presented 45 dramatic monologues featuring personalities from Virginia Baptist history.

Kathy Sylvest, archivist/media library consultant for the Louisiana Baptist Convention, and John Loftis, director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, received certificates of recognition for their work in state Baptist history.

The Norman W. Cox Award for the best article published by the Historical Commission in 1990 went to Bill J. Leonard, professor of church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Leonard's article, "Southern Baptist Relationships with Independent Baptists," appeared in the July 1990 Baptist History and Heritage.

Commissioners approved a new pamphlet project entitled "Understanding Southern Baptists." The eight-pamphlet series, slated for publication in January 1993, will cover selected features in Southern Baptist history from 1845 to the present, with a focus on the 20th century. Geared for the "person in the pew," topics will include worship, ministry, missions, organizations, religious liberty, and responses to a changing world, among others.

In other actions, the commission unveiled plans for a Baptist History Writing Contest as part of the Southern Baptist Convention's Sesquicentennial in 1995, "to encourage Southern Baptists to reflect creatively on their heritage." Categories will include books, local church and associational histories, and unpublished manuscripts.

Commissioners approved a revised 1991-92 budget of \$588,400, down from an original of \$655,145, due to an increase of only one percent (\$5,019) in the Cooperative Program allocation proposed by the SBC Executive Committee. Budget restraints mean a salary and hiring freeze for commission employees, and a limitation of "Documenting the Spirit" (a multi-media approach to recording events and experiences in the life of a church), oral history and microfilming projects. The commission approved a projected 1992-93 budget of \$672,462, including a Cooperative Program allocation request of \$570,762.

The commission adopted a records policy, which says any records produced and maintained by employees in the transaction of agency business are considered denominational records. Those considered permanent records are to be deposited in the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives at the completion of their service. The policy follows last year's recommendation by commissioners that all SBC agencies adopt records policies to prevent loss of valuable historical records.

Commissioners responded to the motion regarding political activities which was referred to all SBC agencies by the Convention in June 1990. They determined no resources of the agency had been "used during the year 1989-90 to engage in any political activity within the Southern Baptist Convention in supporting or opposing candidates for office, directly or indirectly, nor lobbying on any controversial issues scheduled to come before this Convention."

The 1990-91 commission officers were elected for another one-year term. They are Ray Granade, director of library services, Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, Ark., chairman; Jerry L. Tillman, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, Fresno, Calif., vice-chairman; Marlene Hunt Rikard, professor of history, Samford University, Birmingham, Ala., recording secretary; and May, treasurer. The commission presented distinguished service citations to trustees rotating off in 1991.

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The commission met jointly with the Southern Baptist Historical Society April 23-24, for a historical conference on "Religious Education in Southern Baptist Churches." About 180 participants heard addresses on "Teaching in the Life of a Church," "The Minister of Education in Southern Baptist Life," "Training Leaders in the Local Church," "Models of Religious Education: Presenting the Old-Time Religion to the Video Generation," and "The Seed, the Sower and the Soil: Toward a Primitive Curriculum." A panel and the audience discussed "Contemporary Issues and Answers in Religious Education." The conference also included a workshop, "Voices from the Pew: Documenting Religious Life Through Oral History."

The Southern Baptist Historical Society reported a current membership of 982 and elected 1991-92 officers. Chosen were Earl Joiner, professor of religion, Stetson University, DeLand, Fla., president; Fred Anderson, executive director, Virginia Baptist Historical Society, Richmond, vice-president; and May, treasurer.

Next year's Historical Commission and Society meeting is scheduled for April 27-29, 1992, in Birmingham, Ala., under the theme "World Missions: Two Centuries of Baptist Achievement."

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Besieged is word for
Cambodian Christians

By Michael Chute

Baptist Press
4/29/91

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (BP)--Loud bursts of gunfire outside shatter the morning calm.

Inside, the people of Psa Thmai Church collectively duck. The worship leader stops in mid-sentence, finally glancing cautiously out the window at the commotion below.

Government soldiers fire automatic weapons into the air as their convoy speeds out of Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, toward front-line fighting with Khmer Rouge guerrilla forces in western provinces bordering Thailand.

Within moments the motorcade passes. Shots fade in the distance. Psa Thmai Church resumes its worship services. But the memory lingers.

The scene dramatizes the fear gripping Cambodia. The Protestant church feels it too. Christians expect the worst. Like the rest of the country, they're not sure when or how it will come. But they're sure it will come.

Just a year after "official" government recognition, the Protestant church in Cambodia can be characterized by one word: besieged.

Cambodia's communist government wants just one Protestant church to deal with, not several. Buddhist-backed society prefers no Christian church at all. Christian cults want their particular brand of church. Foreign Christians demand to help the existing church. And the 10 house churches meeting in Phnom Penh just want to be left alone.

"We want to help Protestants have a church, but there's no organization willing to help -- either inside or outside Cambodia," claimed one government official who asked not to be identified.

"Through the guidelines of the party's central committee, we want (house churches) to unite into one church in Phnom Penh," added Mey Wam, head of the governing National Front's religious affairs department. "We don't want people to divide themselves into separate groups. It's not good. We don't want so many different groups here."

Mey admitted the government has allowed 50 Buddhist temples to open in Phnom Penh. But Buddhism is the dominant religion. Buddhist Temples reopened in 1979, shortly after Vietnamese troops liberated them from Khmer Rouge domination. Christian churches were only recognized officially last year.

House church leaders don't want to be limited to just one meeting place. Government officials say it's necessary: the country is at war and they fear infiltrators.

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"The government is concerned if (the church) gets to the point where it's a political force -- a partisan sort of thing," said Bill O'Leary, a Catholic Maryknoll priest from the United States. "It's still quite delicate here. They're communists but not atheists."

Government authorities insist official recognition was only a formality. They say churches have been allowed freedom of worship since the 1979 ouster of the Khmer Rouge. Church leaders have their doubts.

"People are really afraid of the government," said one Cambodian who asked for anonymity. "They're fearful the government is going to change -- that (Khmer Rouge leader) Pol Pot will come back -- and they'll be persecuted for being Christians."

Misunderstandings continue to develop concerning the latitude given to Protestants as rumors run rampant through Phnom Penh's house churches. Within a one-week period, rumors claimed foreigners were no longer allowed to attend church services, churches must be registered with the government and ordinances of the church -- baptism and communion -- were now forbidden.

Government authorities insisted all the rumors were untrue. But they admit very little has been made clear, either. In fact, the week the baptism rumor circulated, Psa Thmai Church held its third baptism service in six months, baptizing 65 people in a lake outside Phnom Penh.

"There's no registration yet," Mey Wam stressed. "We're just in the transition time. It's rather difficult to say" what the future holds. "But the government is respectful of all religions."

Still, two churches -- New Market Church and River Church -- registered with the government, filling out biographical data along with photos of each member. A policeman who lives below the New Market house church instructed its leader to register his group.

"It's controlled freedom and it's getting more controlled all the time," said one expatriate teacher in Phnom Penh. The government "wants statistics from everybody. We might end up with a kind of Three-Self Movement" -- a reference to the Protestant organization in China that relates to the government.

Outside Phnom Penh, the situation for Christians varies, depending upon provincial governments. Church leaders cite numerous examples of persecution. In Kompong Speu last November, two Christians were jailed for preaching. They were released only after agreeing not to evangelize.

In another case, Buddhists complained to district authorities a Christian should be removed as head teacher of a primary school. The school is located in a Buddhist temple, as are most primary and secondary schools in Cambodia. Also, children of Christians reportedly are harassed as other school children refuse to socialize with them, calling them "Jesus Children."

Of 50 pastors trained by the Christian and Missionary Alliance -- which began Protestant work in Cambodia in 1923 -- only 10 were still functioning in 1975. Today, there are only two pastors left -- one retired, one living in Kompong Cham -- who survived the brutality of the Khmer Rouge drive to stamp out religion.

Pol Pot's communist Khmer Rouge regime marked Christians for death. Government figures show only 8,000 believers remain in Cambodia -- 2,000 Protestants, 3,000 Catholics and another 3,000 aligned with Christian cults.

Common to every Protestant house church in Phnom Penh are several characteristics. Adequate meeting places are hard to find. Bibles and hymnals are scarce. Training materials and programs are nonexistent.

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Yet, nearly all church observers in Cambodia insist religious cults, particularly the New Apostolic Church from the United States and Canada, posed the greatest threat to Protestants during the past year. Scores of Protestant Christians initially left existing churches, lured by promises of English-language tuition and training courses overseas, which have strong appeal among younger Cambodians. In some cases entire churches aligned themselves with the New Apostolic Church.

"This group wreaked havoc among Protestants," said one Christian worker. "It was a good lure. But a lot (of Protestants) have come back (to house churches) after the initial flood of interest."

Billy Frank Voeun, an overseas Cambodian and New Apostolic minister, said he comes to Cambodia four times a year to do mission work. He added the group operates 16 congregations, with nine ministers, throughout the country.

"Helping is not buying," Voeun said, reacting to Protestant claims his group has bought its way into Cambodia. "The loser complains and the winner is happy."

After several months of pointed discussions with church leaders, the communist government -- apparently not previously attuned to nuances within Christian circles -- now recognizes differences between Protestants and New Apostolics. Church leaders initially feared the government would designate New Apostolics as the one church in Phnom Penh and all Protestants would be forced to align themselves with that group. The government also understands Protestant-Catholic differences.

But Christian distinctions continue to confuse government officials responsible for religious affairs. They often point to Buddha's teachings as the guiding force for Buddhists and say the Bible should guide all Christians. Why differences exist, they are not sure. But now they understand there are differences.

In December the government returned use of a former seminary dormitory to the Catholic church, according to O'Leary. The Khmer Rouge closed the seminary outside Phnom Penh, and since the early 1980s the Vietnamese-backed military had used it as a training camp. Now about 1,000 Catholic parishioners attend Mass there each week.

O'Leary said Catholics also have parishes outside Phnom Penh, mainly in Vietnamese fishing villages. He describes the four Catholic priests -- all foreigners -- as "circuit riders" who serve the entire country. "We have 12 different places that we try to cover in a month," O'Leary said. "There's so few of us, you really can't consider yourself a pastor."

Concerning the church, nearly everyone agrees on one thing: Christians in Cambodia have a long way to go. But then, look at where they have been.

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

Resolutions in Atlanta
needed now by committee

Baptist Press
4/29/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--People seeking to have resolutions considered by Southern Baptist Convention messengers at the annual meeting in Atlanta in June are requested to send them in advance to the Resolutions Committee.

Committee chairman David Hankins, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Lake Charles, La., has asked for proposed resolutions be sent to the committee 30 days in advance of the June 4-6 meeting. According to SBC bylaw 21, the committee has the "duty ... to prepare and submit to the convention resolutions which the committee deems appropriate for adoption and to report on all matters submitted to it by the convention, with or without recommendation or amendments."

"In order for committee members to look carefully at possible resolutions, it would be very helpful to have them in advance," said Hankins. Each of the 10 members of the committee will get a copy of each proposed resolution submitted in advance, said Hankins.

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All proposed resolutions should be sent to the SBC Executive Committee, 901 Commerce St., Suite 750, Nashville, Tenn., 37203, Attention: Committee on Resolutions.

Three members of the Resolutions Committee must be members of the SBC Executive Committee, according to the bylaws. In addition to Hankins, the other two are Gayden Jones, First church, Baton Rouge, La., and Simon Tsoi, pastor of First Chinese church, Phoenix, Ariz.

Others are Hal Lane, pastor of West Side church, Greenwood, S.C.; Bill Merrell, director of missions and member of Country Estates church in Midwest City, Okla.; H.H. "Bud" Jones, insurance/claims and member of First church, Woodway, Waco, Texas; R. Albert Mohler Jr., editor of the Christian Index, newsjournal of the Georgia Baptist Convention, and member of Atkinson Road church, Lawrenceville, Ga.; Mary M. Norman, school teacher and member of First church, Post, Texas; Dean Register, pastor of First church, Gulfport, Miss.; and Larry Thompson, pastor of First church, Merritt Island, Fla.

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