

(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA *Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522*
DALLAS *Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232*
NASHVILLE *127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300*
RICHMOND *Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151*
WASHINGTON *Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223*

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

August 12, 1993

93-134

MEXICO CITY -- Baptists injured, displaced in attack by Mexican Catholics.
ARKANSAS -- Former state Baptist president elected Arkansas lt. governor.
INDIA -- Baptist missionary in India faces medical license hurdle.
ATLANTA -- Sept. 15 set for this year's 'See You at the Pole' effort.
SWITZERLAND -- European Baptist leaders outline evangelism goals.
SOUTH CAROLINA -- Former Sunday school editor Howard Colson dies at 84.
ALABAMA -- PKs cite others' expectations as greatest stress factor.
ALABAMA -- Missionaries credit prayer with saving their lives.

Baptists injured, displaced
in attack by Mexican Catholics By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
8/12/93

MEXICO CITY (BP)--About 30 Mexican Baptists forced to flee their homes after an attack by Roman Catholics have returned to San Nicolas de Guadalupe, Mexico, under military escort.

The Baptists took refuge in a Baptist church in a nearby town for more than a month. Their homes were ransacked and most of their personal belongings stolen.

They are among a group of about 130 Baptists attacked in late June after worship services at a mission church in San Nicolas de Guadalupe. The town is in a Mazahua Indian area in Mexico state, about two hours' drive northwest of Mexico City.

A mob of about 200 Catholics stoned and clubbed the Mexican Baptists while worshippers were eating lunch outdoors, witnesses told Jim Wagoner, Southern Baptist representative working among the Mazahua people. One press report said attackers numbered 400.

About 15 Baptists sustained injuries, mostly lacerations, but none were life-threatening, said Wagoner, an agriculturist from Garland, Texas. The attackers destroyed 11 Baptist-owned cars with stones, clubs and fire. One belonged to a physician from another town who helped start the Baptist mission. Another was a taxi owned by a new Christian.

During the assault Baptists tried to flee to safety inside the house of a church member where the mission congregation meets. The attackers tried to break into the building but failed.

The Baptists, who included leaders visiting from other churches in surrounding Mazahua areas, said they did not attempt to fight back.

"They tried to be as submissive as they could and tried to talk with the attackers," Wagoner said, but the assailants wouldn't listen. "They were angry and stirred up."

The throng included the local Catholic priest, some town leaders and soccer players, several of whom appeared drunk, the Baptists said. The attack apparently was a protest against the presence of evangelicals, he said.

"We don't want evangelical religions in our town!" the attackers shouted, according to a July 28 News Network International report. Government officials in Mexico City have promised Baptist leaders the perpetrators will be punished, the report said.

--more--

Later the 30 Baptists who form the mission congregation were forced from their homes by Catholic neighbors and townspeople. Since their return, Mexican soldiers have guarded their homes, said David Valencia, a leader in the Jezreel Baptist Association.

The mission congregation is part of the Jezreel association, affiliated with the National Baptist Convention of Mexico. Southern Baptist representatives in Mexico relate to the convention.

Wagoner's assignment includes working with the 22 churches in the Jezreel association. New to the job, he will live in Mexico City until he and his family move to the area soon.

Wagoner asked Southern Baptists to pray for his family's safety as they move. He knows of no previous attacks by Catholics against Baptists in the area, but Catholic opposition to evangelicals isn't anything new there.

"Stories of this kind of thing go back as many as 50 years," Wagoner said. "But it always seems to strengthen the (evangelical) churches after something like this happens, because they bond and pull together to better work."

Violence against evangelicals isn't new in some other parts of Mexico, either. It's been strong in the state of Chiapas in southern Mexico and in the central state of Oaxaca, according to press reports. Last summer a Presbyterian lay preacher in Saltillo, Chiapas, was brutally murdered after defying local leaders harassing and trying to expel evangelicals, according to Christianity Today.

Persecution of evangelicals in Mexico and other parts of predominantly Roman Catholic Latin America often involves more than just religion, according to Joe Bruce, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's interim vice president for the Americas.

"There are a few of those isolated places where superstition and tradition are still deeply ingrained and the local priest or bishop exerts tremendous influence and authority over the populace," he said. "But in many cases, it's not just a clear-cut religious question."

Opposition to evangelicals also may be rooted in economic and social issues. "As an evangelical group grows and exerts more political power, that threatens the establishment," he said.

And evangelicals in Mexico -- as in most of Latin America -- are growing rapidly, religion watchers say. Some projections indicate evangelicals could make up as much as 15 percent of Mexico's population by the year 2000.

Meanwhile, Roman Catholicism is still the majority religion in Mexico, where Pope John Paul II visited Aug. 11 for the third time. The pope, en route to Denver, dedicated his stop in the Yucatan peninsula to "indigenous peoples of the American continent." He urged them to forgive injustices they have suffered through the centuries from conquerors and colonizers.

It was the pope's first trip to Mexico since the country re-established diplomatic relations with the Vatican last year and made constitutional changes granting legal recognition to all religious groups.

--30--

Former state Baptist president
elected Arkansas lt. governor By Trennis Henderson

Baptist Press
8/12/93

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--Mike Huckabee, former president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, is Arkansas' new lieutenant governor.

Huckabee, in fact, became the state's acting governor the night of his Aug. 3 inauguration when Gov. Jim Guy Tucker was hospitalized in the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., for chronic gastrointestinal and liver troubles.

Tucker remained hospitalized the second week of August and Huckabee was continuing as acting governor.

Huckabee gained a narrow victory over Democratic candidate Nate Coulter in a July 27 special election called after Tucker moved from lieutenant governor to governor following Bill Clinton's presidential election.

--more--

Huckabee, who served as the state Baptist convention's president from 1989-91, resigned last year as pastor of Beech Street First Baptist Church in Texarkana, for a run, ultimately unsuccessful, against U.S. Sen. Dale Bumpers.

During both campaigns, Huckabee faced critics' charges that he had abandoned a higher calling to pursue secular politics.

"I think we are on dangerous ground when we start saying what God's will is for another person unless we have prayed in that man's shoes," Huckabee responded. "It is inconceivable to think that people are willing to usurp the authority of the Holy Spirit and determine how a person fulfills a call to the ministry.

"I don't have to be in a certain role to be God's person," he said. "Fulfilling God's will is discovering what it is he uniquely wants me to do now."

Noting he preached each Sunday during both campaigns and plans to continue doing so, Huckabee explained, "I don't personally ever see myself as a dichotomy of the minister Huckabee versus the politician Huckabee. God gives us identity as a whole person and I don't think we have to cut ourselves into compartments and pieces to be Christian.

"In fact, I think it is anti-Christian to compartmentalize Christian life versus secular life," he emphasized. "To really be a Christian means that we are salt and light wherever we are and that we never go off the clock as Christians... . The highest calling anyone has is to follow Jesus Christ, not to fill a particular ecclesiastical role."

Huckabee said he decided to seek public office "because we were losing the country economically and morally because of lack of participation by people who didn't want to get involved."

Although he has strong ties to Arkansas Baptists as a former state convention president, former pastor and graduate of Ouachita Baptist University, Huckabee said that was not a key to his recent victory. "There were as many Baptists who were adamantly opposed to what I was doing as there were who were fervently behind what I was doing," he said.

During a prayer service at First Baptist Church of Little Rock prior to Huckabee's inauguration, keynote speaker Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, said the gathering was designed to acknowledge "the blessing of God upon a fellow believer who dared to invade the darkness of secularism."

Moore added, however, "this is not to imply the opposition party or candidate are anti-Christian or anti-spiritual. It is to forcefully say, though, that the system, so wondrously founded upon God's Word and its principles, has been so ignored, rejected and denied that society reflects little kinship to the Light, much less friendship with the Light."

Acknowledging "it has bothered some that a strong Christian leader would give himself for public office," Moore noted James P. Eagle, governor of Arkansas from 1889-93, "was both governor of the state and president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention at the same time" and later served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"According to Scripture, public leaders are ordained of God and purposed by God for the welfare and order of society," Moore said. "This business of strong, spiritual leaders running for public office is not anything new."

Noting "it will create great stress for any believer who takes seriously his responsibility to stand for truth and righteousness in a secular society," Moore said Huckabee "has voluntarily run the risk and paid the price to become a gladiator in an arena where children of light are viewed as obstructors of progress."

"The United States, including Arkansas, has probably never needed dynamic spiritual leadership more than it presently does," Moore declared. "Every believer needs to commit himself to pray for Mike and others like him who sincerely seek to have a spiritual impact upon this society."

Emphasizing "intercession for those in authority is a New Testament command that must not be ignored or neglected," Moore added, "Sometimes we have to do more than pray, but we dare not do less than pray."

Huckabee said the prayer service was "a personal expression of my faith" which provided an opportunity "not only to celebrate, but to begin carefully focusing and preparing my life and my spirit for the task ahead."

Recognizing that a prayer service in a Baptist church prior to his swearing-in ceremony provides additional ammunition for critics, Huckabee said, "Frankly, it is good for them to hear that the lieutenant governor believes in a resurrected Jesus. I don't have any qualms about being very bold in that."

--30--

Baptist missionary in India
faces medical license hurdle

By Donald D. Martin

Baptist Press
8/12/93

BANGALORE, India (BP)--The only Southern Baptist missionary living in India again faces the possibility of losing the government's permission to practice medicine in the country.

Missionary Rebekah Naylor of Fort Worth, Texas, has until Sept. 18 to gain renewal of her Indian medical license. She applied June 17 for the renewal but has not received word -- and may not until her current permit expires.

If authorities deny renewal she will stop performing surgery and other medical work at Bangalore Baptist Hospital, where she has worked 20 years.

"So far there hasn't been any word on the renewal," she said. "The license to practice medicine has generally not been given to foreigners in the last eight to 10 years. It's very difficult to get. I got it in 1991 after so many problems. And now the renewal is coming up and we have no way of knowing what (government officials) will do."

Based on past experiences in India, the chance of Naylor losing her license is high. India's tight restrictions on licenses, work permits and visas have slashed the Southern Baptist missionary force from 18 in the 1980s to one -- Naylor. Some missionaries work in India as itinerants, moving in and out of the country on a short-term basis, but Naylor is the only resident missionary in the south Asian nation of 897 million people.

In 1991 an Indian medical council said it would not grant Naylor a medical license, which forced her to stop practicing. Several months later, however, Naylor got a two-year license after an appeal that involved a U.S. senator, the Indian ambassador in Washington and Southern Baptist pastors in Kentucky.

Naylor believes her current renewal is a test that will reveal how difficult the renewal process may be in the future, she said.

"I think this time is the big test to see what they will do," she said. "They have granted it, and if they then renewed it, it would indicate there would be no hesitation to renew it in the future." Naylor will begin making inquiries about the status of her request soon.

The 143-bed Bangalore hospital where Naylor works opened a new outpatient facility in June, following last year's opening of a 25-bed wing to treat patients in private rooms. Patients in private rooms pay higher rates, subsidizing care for people too poor to pay. About half of the hospital's patients do not pay.

The hospital also has a strong evangelistic witness in Bangalore, a city of 5 million people. In July, for example, hospital staffers helped lead 10 people to profess faith in Christ. The hospital also helped start a church in a nearby village in July; 10 people were baptized.

"To me that's just an example of the effectiveness of medical missions," Naylor said. "People here are responsive and they are open. This is also a reminder of our responsibility. There's so much need and opportunity."

Naylor also sees another India deadline approaching: The beginning of September marks the cut-off for Southern Baptists signing up to participate in India-wide evangelistic crusades in November.

--more--

Baptists in India have asked the Foreign Mission Board to send 400 Southern Baptist volunteers to participate in the crusades, which will commemorate pioneer missionary William Carey's arrival in India two centuries ago. However, only about 100 volunteers have signed up, creating staffing problems for the simultaneous evangelistic crusades scheduled in 120 churches.

"We believe the crusades will strengthen our pastors and leadership and give them a new vision of evangelism," Naylor said. "I believe these crusades can give our churches a new sense of urgency about what we're all here to do."

--30--

Sept. 15 set for this year's
'See You at the Pole' effort

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
8/12/93

ATLANTA (BP)--Sept. 15 is the date for this year's "See You at the Pole" national prayer effort for youth.

The strategy calls for students to gather around their school's flagpole before school and pray for classmates. Alcoholism, drug abuse, violence and suicide among teen-agers underscore the need for the prayer effort, said Dean Finley, youth evangelism specialist for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Reports indicate 120,000 youth participated in "See You at the Pole" last year, though other estimates reach 250,000, Finley said.

Texas Southern Baptists began the "See You at the Pole" emphasis but it is now a multi-denominational campaign.

Rallies on school campuses must be organized and led by students to avoid legal problems, Finley said, noting adults wishing to join the effort should meet off-campus.

To have an ongoing impact, students are encouraged to start or join a campus Christian club to encourage youth in evangelism, Finley said.

Brochures about "See You at the Pole" and how to start a Christian club have been mailed to every Southern Baptist church. Additional copies are available from the Home Mission Board at 1-800-634-2462.

--30--

European Baptist leaders
outline evangelism goals

By Trennis Henderson

Baptist Press
8/12/93

INTERLAKEN, Switzerland (BP)--"I believe the greatest thing that could happen to worldwide Christianity would be revival in Europe," declared Bill Clark Thomas, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Paris, France.

Thomas, who also is the current president of the European Baptist Convention, said revival in Europe is crucial because of the region's "strategic international importance as well as its tremendous spiritual decline."

In addition to recognizing the need for revival, European Baptist leaders are developing strategies to accomplish that goal. Arkansas Baptists will have an opportunity to help implement those strategies through involvement in a proposed Europe-Arkansas partnership to begin in 1994.

The European Baptist Convention (EBC) is an international fellowship of 60 English-language churches in 18 nations. Among the EBC's long-range goals for 1994-96 are to proclaim the gospel, to plant English-language Baptist churches in Europe and to promote local and world missions through a program of missions education and mission action.

The EBC's primary outreach strategy is to establish international English-language Baptist congregations in major cities throughout Europe. That vision, which has gradually unfolded during the past decade, has been heightened by the drawdown of U.S. military troops across Europe.

--more--

During the first 20 years of the EBC's existence, churches were established near U.S. military bases and often were composed primarily of Americans. Today, however, nearly half of all EBC churches include the word "international" in their name, indicating an openness to worshippers from around the world. Even among churches without the "international" label, members are responding to growing international ministry opportunities.

According to EBC general secretary John Merritt, "The primary motivating factor is the Great Commission." He noted that internationals who attend EBC churches "will have an opportunity to hear the gospel in a language they can understand -- an opportunity they may have missed in their home country. We're not just repeating the gospel for people who have heard it all their lives."

Although "new church planting near U.S. military bases, I think, is over," Merritt added, "As long as there are military people here, we want to have a ministry among them."

But the primary focus for the future is reaching internationals and the key to attracting internationals to EBC churches is the appeal of the English language.

"English is obviously the international language of the future," Thomas pointed out. "When Europeans meet together, they usually speak English."

"The minority groups who move into European countries often come speaking English," the EBC president explained. "We feel there is a tremendous opportunity to minister to these diverse groups who are united primarily by their ability to speak English."

In addition to ministering to internationals who speak English, the EBC is seeking to minister to internationals who desire to speak English. Ray and Helen Reynolds, church planting consultants for the EBC, see English as a second language classes as a vital ministry tool.

"We believe teaching English is a tool for reaching people for Christ," Reynolds said. "We believe this opportunity to teach English gives us an unparalleled opportunity to reach some people who would never otherwise darken the door of a church."

"It's a tremendous witness," Mrs. Reynolds agreed. "Internationals can get ahead if they learn English. We are helping them help themselves. Through the relationship, they see what Christianity is on a firsthand basis."

The Reynoldses also are actively involved in helping start new churches throughout Europe. They use demographic data, telephone surveys and other tools to help determine where to plant new congregations in Europe's major cities.

"The Lord has been retooling us, teaching us and stretching us," Reynolds shared. "It's been an adventure in faith." So far, the effort has resulted in nine new churches, with a goal of starting 20 churches in the next few years.

"God has opened the doors, the European Baptist Convention has the vision and we're seeking to respond to the opportunity," Reynolds emphasized. "God's Spirit is the catalyst. When God's Spirit is working, there is an open door."

Arkansas Baptists' roles in the next few years will include providing volunteers to assist in church planting efforts, leadership training, simultaneous revivals and other ministry projects. A stateside intercessory prayer network is another key component of the partnership plans.

Floyd Lewis, pastor of First Baptist Church in El Dorado, Ark., was part of the Arkansas Baptist team which participated in a recent partnership planning session with EBC leaders in Interlaken, Switzerland. "I think Arkansas Baptists can make a contribution to work in Europe," he said. "There are exciting possibilities."

Noting "part of our success may be dependent on our willingness to do different kinds of things than we did in Guatemala and Brazil" during previous partnership efforts, Lewis added, "We're going to have to come into this as learners and if we learn quickly, some great things can happen."

"I'm convinced that churches in the States can make a difference in other churches around the world if we're willing to be a part of these kinds of ventures," Lewis said. "If we refuse to be a part of what God is doing in the world, we forfeit some incredible experiences."

According to Arkansas Woman's Missionary Union director Julia Ketner, "The new church planting is going to provide a tremendous opportunity for our people to serve. We've never had the opportunity to touch so much of the world as we will there."

--30--

Former Sunday school editor
Howard Colson dies at 84

Baptist Press
8/12/93

DARLINGTON, S.C. (BP)--Howard Colson, 84, retired editorial secretary for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, died Aug. 12 in a Darlington, S.C., nursing home after a lengthy illness.

Colson joined the Sunday School Board in 1949 as editorial associate. Later he served as editor in chief of Sunday school lesson courses, director of editorial services and editorial services staff consultant.

From 1969 until his retirement in 1975, Colson was editorial secretary for the church services and materials division.

Colson, an Illinois native, earned master of theology and doctor of philosophy degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Before joining the board, he was pastor of churches in Tennessee, Indiana, Kentucky and Missouri.

He is survived by his wife, Mary, who resides in Bethea Nursing Home in Darlington; and three children, Rosemary Colson of Philadelphia; Rachel Gilmer of Tallahassee, Fla.; and William Colson of Fort Worth, Texas.

Funeral services are incomplete.

--30--

PKs cite others' expectations
as greatest stress factor

By Wendy Weatherspoon

Baptist Press
8/12/93

TALLADEGA, Ala. (BP)--"Everyone expects us to be perfect," said the daughter of an Alabama Baptist minister. Her peers, other PKs ("preacher's kids"), nodded in agreement.

They said the high expectations of others is the No. 1 stress factor they face.

One pastor's son, who asked to remain anonymous, described the difficulty he faced as a PK in a small town: "I was born and raised in a big city but my dad moved to a small town for a preaching job. Small-town people are different from city people. There's not much privacy."

The PKs expressed their frustrations while attending Alabama Baptists' third annual Ministers' Adolescents Support Happening (MASH), held recently at Shocco Springs Baptist Assembly near Talladega.

Faculty member Wes Haley, minister of music at Dalraida Baptist Church in Montgomery and a PK himself, explained the purpose of MASH as helping ministers' children "deal with the roles into which they are thrust."

John Long, a discipleship training staff member with the Baptist State Board of Missions and another PK who coordinated the conference, said, "It's helpful for these kids to find out they're not alone. Most come from small towns and don't know other ministers' kids."

Of the 28 youth participating, 21 were there for the first time. Long, who led worship services each night, told the youth, "We can ask a lot of questions, but the answer is always the same. God is there for us."

The primary activity was adventure recreation on the ropes course, where the youth learned about trusting themselves and each other.

Before the daily afternoon time on the ropes, the youth spent morning time with Shocco recreation director Fritz Wilson preparing for the ropes and doing trust exercises.

--more--

The ropes were the best part for Jami Brooks of First Baptist Church in Selma, who added, "It was an incredibly great week."

When they were not on the ropes course, the youth met in family groups with the adult faculty, where they discussed relationships among friends and family and the church. They also did a study called "Champions" on succeeding in the Christian life.

Renee Butler of Liberty Baptist Church in Tallassee, Ala., talked about the difficulties of being a PK but noted the support she received at MASH: "Everyone expects us to be perfect. If you do something wrong, it's all over town. But we can all talk here. We can talk out our problems."

Despite its challenges, the PKs said being in a preacher's family isn't all bad.

"We have a dad who can help us with spiritual problems," said Jamye Hopkins of Chapel Hill Baptist Church in Fayette.

"Your parents understand your problems," said Ryland Underwood of Nanafalia (Ala.) Baptist Church.

Fellowship was another emphasis of MASH. "I came last year, and I enjoyed the reunion with old friends," said Rachael Felkins of Maytown Baptist Church. "I also loved meeting new ones."

--30--

Weatherspoon is a communications intern at Shocco Springs Baptist Assembly.

Missionaries credit prayer
with saving their lives

By Mark Baggett

Baptist Press
8/12/93

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Ruth Nolen couldn't get Ed and Linda Ables out of her mind. Ruth and her husband, Steve, are Southern Baptist missionaries in Mendosa, Argentina, 600 miles west of Buenos Aires, where the Ableses are missionaries.

Ruth felt such an impression to pray for the Ableses that she kept trying to call, starting at 10:30 that night, but failing to get through.

Tragically, her fears were well-founded. When Ruth finally reached another missionary in the area, she learned Ed and Linda were in a hospital emergency room being treated for wounds and bruises from a robbery and beatings in their home.

"At the same time that Ruth was praying for us, one of the robbers had cocked a pistol, put it to my head and snapped the trigger," said Ed about the June 15 attack in which he was hit in the head at least a dozen times and in which Linda was struck on the head and in the face.

He figured the gun used by the robbers was empty but police later told him a person could not pull the trigger on such a gun unless it had shells in it. In fact, the gun simply misfired.

"I really feel like the gun didn't go off because she was praying," said Ed, who has served 25 years in Argentina, with Linda. The Alabama couple has four children.

The Ableses returned to Birmingham, Ala., June 24 for an extended stay and are living in the missionary house of Lakeside Baptist Church in Birmingham as they recover from the robbery and its violence. Police in Buenos Aires, who later killed three of the robbers in a confrontation, have described the robbery as drug-related.

Choosing the Ableses' home was a matter of sheer opportunism. At 10 p.m. on June 15, Ed had just returned from leading a conference on cults at a local Baptist church. As he was pulling down his garage door, two men rushed inside, brandishing automatic pistols and demanding money. Two other men joined them and they forced Ed inside the house, where he was repeatedly beaten with the butts of their pistols and a sawed-off shotgun. Linda, who was knitting a sweater in a back room, came in to investigate and the youngest attacker, perhaps 18 years old, hit her in the face, saying he wanted jewelry and money. In all, the robbers took at least \$500.

--more--

Ed believes the response of their son, Ralph, 17, saved his and Linda's lives. Ralph was in his bedroom in a separate building behind the house with a friend. When they heard noises, he ran to the back door but found it locked. He broke a window to try to get inside. When he saw the men, he ran to a neighbor's house to call police. To get there, Ralph, who will be a high school senior, had to catch hold of a 10-foot-high wall that separates the house from neighbors, but he managed to do it. The noise of glass breaking scared the thieves, who left in a getaway car driven by a woman lookout.

"The thing I can't get away from is the peace I felt the whole time," Ed recounted. "I know that it was OK no matter how it ended. When the man cocked the gun and held it to my head, I knew what he was doing. I really thought I was gone. It's hard to explain because it happened so fast, but I felt God's presence the whole time, and it was OK."

The Ableses feel sorry for their attackers. Ed, who was told several of the young men come from good families, had hoped police could arrest them so that he could talk to them.

"We've prayed for them," he noted. "We're going to get over it. They've destroyed their lives and have nothing to show for it."

Ed and Linda didn't get home from the hospital that night until 2:30 a.m. and could not find a comfortable way to sleep. Ed suffered from dizzy spells. He is just now able to wear glasses over his ears. Linda suffered a broken nose, chipped tooth and possibly a cracked bone in her jaw.

"Has it hardened me?" Ed asked. "On one hand, the law needs to be enforced rigorously, with less leniency. This type of criminal doesn't need to be out in the streets. On the other hand, it reminds us to be more effective in our witness and more loving in our approach to treating people. I separate the two. The law has a purpose, and we have a commission."

HOUSE MAIL



BAPTIST PRESS

901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

HOUSE MAIL

So. Baptist Library & Archives
901 Commerce
Nashville, TN 37203