



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

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

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

## BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522, CompuServe 70420,250  
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232, CompuServe 70420,115  
NASHVILLE Linda Lawson, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300, CompuServe 70420,57  
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151, CompuServe 70420,72  
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223, CompuServe 71173,316

July 27, 1994

94-125

VIRGINIA--American resident returns after detainment in Iran.  
WASHINGTON--Senate tells EEOC to delete religion from guidelines.  
ATLANTA--Graveyard shift can bring somber moments, chaplain says.  
NORWAY--Eastern bloc nations join EBF congress for first time.  
ARGENTINA--Volunteer remains in coma, doctors predict disability.  
NEW MEXICO--Help single parents build self-esteem, say professors.  
DALLAS--Annuity Board expands toll-free services.

American resident returns  
after detainment in Iran

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press  
7/27/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--An Iranian-born American resident imprisoned in Iran for 12 days returned to his Boise, Idaho, home July 22 telling his family he knows God like he never knew him before.

The resident, Hassan Shahjamali, had visited in Iran with family members and friends, including Christian leader Mehdi Dibaj. Dibaj, an Assemblies of God minister, and Tateos Michaelian, chairman of the Council of Protestant Ministers in Iran, were found murdered in early July.

Shahjamali, a Christian convert from Islam, left the United States for Iran May 29 to visit his family, encourage Iranian Christians and share the gospel with interested Iranians. But at an airport in Shiraz, Iran, July 1, police arrested him and jailed him for 12 days.

His wife, Sylvia, a native American Navajo from Arizona, said she didn't even recognize him when he flew into Los Angeles July 22. "They had shaved his head completely bald," she said. "They had shaved his mustache."

Except for one news conference in Boise upon his return, Shahjamali is declining interviews until he recuperates. "I'm sure you understand it's been very stressful for him," said his wife.

"They kept him blindfolded ... and came and threatened him. He told them they could not touch him unless God allows it. And he said, 'I have asked God to not let you touch me.' He said it seemed like they were afraid of him."

After his release from prison, Iranian officials escorted him to Tehran, the capital. During his ordeal he met with high government leaders. They told him they wished there were Muslims like him, she said.

Upon his return, his wife said she felt the presence of God when she was with her husband. "That night when I was with him ... I literally shook because I could feel the presence of God was so enveloping him."

Shahjamali told those close to him he had sensed he was "in a fire" -- but fully protected -- while in prison. He likened his experience to that of the Old Testament characters Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when they were persecuted by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar for their allegiance to the Hebrew God.

Shahjamali works as a supervisor for an engineering group at Micron Semi-Conductors in Boise. He was a fighter pilot for the Shah of Iran in 1976 when he met his wife. She was in the U.S. Air Force, and he was training in Texas for the Shah's military. They have been married 16 years and have three children.

--more--

One source said Iranian officials took Shahjamali's passport away from him even after he was released from prison. He battled Iranian bureaucracy about a week for permission to leave. The official Iranian government news agency denied the government had imprisoned him.

"We are praising the Lord ... that they let him go," the source said. He added diplomatic efforts by countries other than the United States -- prompted by the U.S. State Department -- played a key role in his release.

The source questioned Iran in its blaming of government opposition groups for the wave of violence against Christians. He called that an attempt to "make the rest of the world believe they (Iranian government) actually respect the rights of Christians."

International concern for Shahjamali was high because of the two murders and indications of a new wave of violence against Protestants inside Iran. The violence forms a pattern of ongoing persecution against Christians in the predominately Muslim nation. Christians charge that government surveillance of Iranian believers, particularly of Muslim converts, has intensified during recent weeks.

Dibaj, who was found murdered while Shahjamali was in prison, made headlines worldwide last December when Iranian authorities announced he would be executed for the "crime" of abandoning Islam. But following an international outcry -- including a protest from the U.S. State Department -- he was released from prison Jan. 16.

--30--

Senate tells EEOC to delete  
religion from guidelines

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
7/27/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--While the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission continues to ponder the future of its proposed religious harassment guidelines, Congress keeps sending signals -- and most recently, a command -- about its desires.

The Senate approved an amendment ordering the EEOC to delete the category of religion from guidelines on harassment in the workplace. Critics have charged the inclusion of religion in the proposed guidelines will result in a ban on religious expression on the job, largely because of employers' fear of lawsuits.

The amendment, which was passed without opposition by voice vote July 22, must survive a conference committee of members from both the Senate and House of Representatives. The House already had passed the same spending bill with an EEOC amendment, but its measure prohibits the use of funds for implementation of the guidelines if they are not changed. The House approved the amendment 366-37.

A spokesman for Sen. Howell Heflin, D.-Ala., who was joined by Sen. Hank Brown, R.-Colo., in introducing the amendment, said there is not a lot of concern about its place in the final bill.

"I don't think there's going to be too much debate as to whether to keep it in," said Tom McMahon, Heflin's press secretary.

"This is exactly what we wanted Congress to do," said James A. Smith, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's director of government relations. "So we are quite pleased that both the House and Senate have clearly demonstrated their displeasure with these guidelines. We're going to contact the conferees and ask them to go with the Heflin-Brown language as the most permanent solution to the problem."

The strong Senate action followed a mid-June vote of 94-0 in the same body approving a nonbinding resolution calling for religion to be deleted from the guidelines.

The latest Senate amendment also followed by a day congressional testimony by three new appointees to the five-member EEOC. Because none of the three would express agreement or disagreement with the Senate's mid-June resolution, it was important to send a strong message to the EEOC, Heflin said in offering the amendment.

--more--

It is uncertain how soon the Labor and Human Resources Committee or full Senate will vote on Gilbert Casellas as chairman and Paul Miller and Paul Igasaki as the other commissioners, a committee spokesperson said.

The EEOC, meanwhile, not only has to wait on Senate approval of the appointees, but it has to work its way through the largest volume of comments in the history of the commission. Between mid-February and mid-June, the EEOC received more than 100,000 comments, a commission spokesperson said. The office of legal counsel has to review those comments, helping make it uncertain when the final guidelines will be issued, he said.

Although the guidelines were proposed last September, concerns about the impact on religious expression did not become widely known until February. Evangelicals Christians led the way in opposing the inclusion of religion.

Southern Baptists and their public policy agency, the Christian Life Commission, are among those calling for removal of religion from the guidelines.

CLC general counsel Michael Whitehead, testifying in early June before a Senate subcommittee chaired by Heflin, called for religion to be handled separately from the consolidated guidelines.

"The one-size-fits-all guidelines relegate religion to generic coverage alongside racist slurs and sexual vulgarity," Whitehead testified. "The potential convenience of consolidation is far outweighed by the potential confusion to the public, which is already being realized, and the potential danger to free religious expression."

A week later, messengers to the annual SBC meeting in Orlando approved a resolution requesting removal of religion from the guidelines and separate handling of rules on religious discrimination.

On the eve of the SBC action on the EEOC resolution, President Clinton sent letters to SBC President Ed Young and CLC Executive Director Richard Land assuring them of his commitment to religious liberty and his willingness to work with the CLC and others on such issues. Whitehead said the letter was not satisfactory, because Clinton did not commit to have religion removed.

A week after the SBC meeting, Whitehead expressed the same concerns to Clinton administration lawyers in a meeting at the White House. Among other religious liberty lawyers in the meeting were Brent Walker, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, and Steve McFarland of the Christian Legal Society. Clinton attended the last portion of the meeting.

Groups such as the BJC, the National Council of Churches and Americans United for Separation of Church and State have called for retention of religion in the guidelines but have said revisions should be made by the EEOC to protect religious expression.

The harassment guidelines, which also cover race, color, gender, national origin, age and disability, could result in harassment charges against employees or employers for witnessing to fellow workers or subordinates, or for displaying religious art or literature, the CLC and others have warned.

The Heflin-Brown amendment not only directs the EEOC to delete religion but calls for any new guidelines on religious harassment to be written in such a way as to clarify "that symbols or expression of religious belief consistent with the first amendment and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 are not to be restricted and do not constitute proof of harassment." The amendment also directs the commission to hold public hearings and receive additional comment on such guidelines.

The amendment was attached to an appropriations bill for the Commerce, Justice and State departments.

Casellas, the nominee for EEOC chairman, now serves as general counsel of the U.S. Air Force. Miller is White House liaison to the disabled community, while Igasaki is executive director of the Asian Law Caucus in San Francisco. The current commissioners are R. Gaul Silberman and Joyce Tucker.

**Graveyard shift can bring  
somber moments, chaplain says**      **By David Winfrey**

ATLANTA (BP)--Handling caskets all day can affect a person's spiritual life, says National Guard chaplain Eduardo Docampo.

Docampo, working in Georgia's flooded region, has counseled guardsmen in a variety of settings, including graves registration: the recovery and replacement of more than 400 caskets that floated from an Albany cemetery during the July storms.

"You have people dealing with the morbidity of something that should have been gone forever and resting in peace now coming up and floating down," says Docampo, 41.

Such situations can become opportunities to meet the spiritual needs of soldiers who volunteer for the task, he adds.

Guardsmen work alongside morticians and other professionals to identify the caskets, locate their plot in the cemetery and bury them. Because of the sensitive nature of their work, chaplains visit the site twice each day.

"They (the workers) start opening up about their idea of life after death and eternity," Docampo says. "Once they get to that point then they're able to open up more to you and then they realize that, 'Hey, maybe I do need to step back and have a Scripture read to me and pray together.' And that helps them to deal with the next day and the next batch."

Docampo is one of a dozen chaplains working with more than 2,000 national guardsmen in the area. When not on active duty, he works with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board as an associate director for language church starting.

Local Southern Baptist churches have been heavily involved in the damaged areas, he says. "Every time I've asked for help from a Baptist church I've always gotten a positive answer."

Docampo says his primary role during relief efforts is "to take care of our soldiers," keeping commanding officers informed about guardsmen's needs and morale.

While the military doesn't regularly work with local clergy during operations, chaplains and pastors cooperated so soldiers could attend local church services, Docampo says.

"This is radical because we're actually asking the community to help us serve the needs of our soldiers," he says. "The amazing thing was the military people went along with it."

Guardsmen's duties vary from baby-sitting a radio truck to clearing debris from sun up to sun down. "Almost everywhere I go as a chaplain, they're very happy to see me," he says, estimating he has given away more than 400 Bibles or Scripture portions.

--30--

**Eastern bloc nations join  
EBF congress for first time**

Baptist Press  
7/27/94

LILLEHAMMER, Norway (BP)--European Baptists' 11th congress opened July 26 with a new twist: participation from representatives in former eastern bloc nations.

In fact, about half of the 5,000 delegates at the six-day assembly were thought to be from Eastern Europe.

The roll call of 34 countries signaled Europe's drastic changes since the last congress five years ago.

For the first time Baptists from Albania took part. At the last congress in Budapest, Hungary, no one knew of Baptists in Albania; only a few known Christians were identified. Atheistic Albania then was considered one of the communist nations most hostile to Christianity.

Since freedom has arrived, dozens of Baptist congregations have sprung up in Albania.

--more--

"This is the first time many Baptists from Eastern European countries could ever attend such a congress," said Karl-Hinz Walter, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation. "They have all come because they want to see what it feels like to be a part of the (Baptist) family; they want to be part of this celebration."

The congress theme -- Christian unity -- signals a Baptist response to the breakdown of long-standing barriers that once severed Europe.

"God has done wonders on our continent so it's possible for the first time to meet like this," said Danish Baptist leader Knud Wumpelmann, president of the Baptist World Alliance and former EBF general secretary.

Wumpelmann brought greetings from the BWA, a body of 38 million Baptists in more than 150,000 congregations on six continents -- a total Baptist "family" of about 60 million, including unbaptized children.

Lillehammer is the lakeside city of 30,000 people that played host to the Winter Olympic Games in February. Baptists almost filled Kristins Hall, an Olympic events site, as people continued registering late into the evening July 26. Many people are staying in facilities built to house Olympic athletes.

--30--

Mike Creswell and Marty Croll contributed to this story

Volunteer remains in coma,  
doctors predict disability

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist press  
7/27/94

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (BP)--Southern Baptist volunteer Paul Sutherland remains in a coma in critical condition in a Buenos Aires hospital after suffering a brain contusion in a July 20 fall.

Physicians at Buenos Aires' British Hospital told Sutherland's family he will be disabled if he recovers, Kathleen Clark, Southern Baptist missionary in Argentina, said July 27.

But even as Sutherland, 66, a layman from Sanford, N.C., lay in intensive care, missionaries saw the first results of his Christian testimony. An Argentine man Sutherland had witnessed to in an airport sought out Baptists for further spiritual guidance.

As for Sutherland's physical condition, "there's no improvement, really," said Clark of Pineville, La. "But (doctors) said perhaps he'll be stabilized enough to be evacuated (to the United States) in about 10 days."

Sutherland suffered head injuries July 20 when he fell from a ladder while painting the library at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires. On July 21 he underwent two surgeries in less than 24 hours -- one to remove a large blood clot from the right side of his brain, the other in part to relieve pressure caused by swelling around the brain.

After surgery Sutherland was able to begin breathing without the aid of a respirator July 23. He was breathing with the assistance of supplemental oxygen when Clark last visited him July 26.

Clark and her husband, Stanley, from Olla, La., opened their home to Sutherland's wife, Julie, after she flew into Buenos Aires July 22 to be with her husband. Mrs. Sutherland stayed with the missionaries until her son, Steve, arrived July 26, and they moved into guest housing at the Baptist seminary.

"She obviously has very strong personal resources and remarkable maturity in her Christian experience," said Stanley Clark of Mrs. Sutherland. "One of the first things she said when we were leaving the airport (after picking her up) was that if Paul should not survive, she would be grateful he had gone to be with th Lord while he was doing something he enjoyed so much."

Sutherland was part of a team with 13 other Southern Baptist volunteers doing maintenance work at the Baptist seminary in Buenos Aires. The other team members, all from Broadmoor Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., continued their assignment after Sutherland's accident, returning home July 25.

--more--

Sutherland, a member of Cool Springs Baptist Church in Sanford, has participated in at least nine other volunteer mission trips through the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. He also has done volunteer missions in the United States.

Mrs. Sutherland said her husband always carries evangelistic tracts with him wherever he goes. He took a supply of Spanish-language tracts with him to Argentina, and his wife has been sharing them with families of other patients in the intensive care waiting room.

En route to Argentina, Sutherland gave a tract to an Argentine the volunteers met at the Miami airport. They were practicing speaking Spanish to the man, Rodolfo Luminoso, while waiting to board their flight. The volunteers told him about their faith in Jesus Christ and gave him the phone number at the Baptist seminary in Buenos Aires.

On July 22, two days after Sutherland's accident, Luminoso visited the seminary. He met Southern Baptist missionary Gene Vincent, who had ridden with Sutherland in the ambulance to the hospital, and seminarian Juan Pablo Rodriguez. The men shared their Christian faith with Luminoso.

"After lengthy conversation and testimony, he voiced his own prayer, asking for the Lord's grace in his life," said Clark, rector of the seminary. "We'll see what that means in terms of translating into a decision (to accept Christ).

"But it was a remarkable encouragement to the team and to Mrs. Sutherland. ... She recognized that was exactly the sort of thing that would thrill Paul."

--30--

Help single parents build  
self-esteem, say professors

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press  
7/27/94

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Improved self-esteem is one of the greatest needs among single parents and an area where churches can help the most, said two professors.

Single-parent families are one of society's fastest-growing segments, Jeanine and Welby Bozeman said during a home missions conference at the Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

Mrs. Bozeman is associate professor of social work at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and Bozeman is associate professor of religion at Louisiana College in Pineville, La.

One of every three children will live in a single-parent household before they are 18, said Mrs. Bozeman. Divorce is the most common creator of single-parent families, although they also include parents with children out of wedlock, single adults who adopt and a parent whose spouse dies, she said.

Divorce's impact on a person's self-esteem is greatly determined by who sought the divorce, Mrs. Bozeman said. The self-esteem of the person who decided to leave is usually not as damaged as that of the person who was left.

"Being left by the most significant person in your life is devastating to your self-image," Bozeman said.

Churches can help by showing how being a Christian improves self-image, he added. "I am significant because God created me, created me in his image and redeemed me through Christ."

Churches also should help people recall God's grace. "We teach we are saved by faith, but we are so legalistic we expect a state of perfection," Bozeman said. "We need an in-depth understanding of God's grace -- that God loves us and accepts us and hugs us to himself as we are."

Self-image also can be enhanced by reminding people of others who value them or by focusing on areas of success and achievement, he said.

In addition to improving self-esteem, Mrs. Bozeman recommended the following ministries to single parents:

-- Help them deal with grief. "We know how to handle death, but not divorce."

--mor --

-- Remember many single parents face financial hardships. Help make them aware of such resources as day care, food stamps and affordable housing.

-- Be extra sensitive during the holidays when they are establishing new traditions.

-- Be sensitive to their needs for fellowship. Churches can provide "a parent group for them to struggle together. Overload is one of their main problems because they have no one to share with."

-- Include them in church activities and responsibilities.

-- Help them learn to discipline their children in love rather than anger.

-- Church members can be adult role models for the children of single parents, including senior adults who may serve as surrogate grandparents for the children.

--30--

**Annuity Board expands  
toll-free services**

Baptist Press

7/27/94

DALLAS (BP)--Beginning Aug. 1, the Southern Baptist Annuity Board's 800 toll-free line will receive calls on an extended day, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Central time.

This customer service expansion recognizes the board's primary service area extends from the Eastern time zone to the Hawaii time zone. When the lines open at the Annuity Board, it will be 8 a.m. in Augusta, Maine, and 2 a.m. in Honolulu. At the close of the day, it will be 7 p.m. in Maine and 1 p.m. in Hawaii.

"Automated tracking of calls revealed we were missing calls before we open and after we close," said Paul Powell, Annuity Board president. "Expanding the service is one more way we can demonstrate commitment to meet the needs of our customers," he said.

In May the Annuity Board also enlarged the 800 service by increasing the number of telephone lines by 70 percent and hiring additional customer service specialists.

--30--

**(BP)**

**BAPTIST PRESS**  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, TN 37234

F  
I  
R  
S  
T  
  
C  
L  
A  
S  
S

Southern Baptist Library  
and Archives