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IN THIS ISSUE:

- Crash victim Payne Stewart credited faith for success in golf**
- Baptists Today editor steps down over 'radical difference' over content**
- Tobacco companies increasingly blamed for smoking-related illnesses, Gallup says**
- Fatherhood being redefined by special interests, scholars say**

**Crash victim Payne Stewart
credited faith for success in golf**

By Bob Allen

ORLANDO, Fla. (ABP) -- U.S. Open winner Payne Stewart, killed in a plane crash with five others Oct. 25, had credited his Christian faith with helping him turn his career around, making him one of golf's most respected champions.

Stewart, 42, was one of six people killed when a Lear jet they were aboard flew out of control for hours before crashing in South Dakota. Investigators suspected a loss of cabin pressure caused the pilot and passengers to black out.

Stewart's trademark knickers and English-style caps made him one of the most recognizable golfers on the PGA Tour. This had been Stewart's best season in a 19-year career. He won two major tournaments in 1999 after a long drought during much of the 1990s and qualified for a U.S. Ryder Cup team that beat Europe in September in Brookline, Mass.

"I'm proud of the fact that my faith in God is so much stronger and I'm so much more at peace with myself than I've ever been in my life," Stewart said after winning his second U.S. Open championship in June.

Stewart, who lived in Orlando, Fla., was described in press reports as being actively involved at the city's First Baptist Church, where he spoke just 10 days before his death.

"He was a wonderful Christian who had Christ in his life and somehow in his death," Jim Henry, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Orlando, told Associated Press. "That brought a great sense of peace to his family in a difficult and tragic time."

A memorial service was set for Friday, Oct. 29 at First Baptist Church.

A spokesman for the church did not immediately return a phone call to Associated Baptist Press.

J.B. Hollingsworth, the church's assistant pastor to young-married adults, described Stewart on CNN as "a regular guy" who "had a heart for people" and a good sense of humor.

"I've been blessed with an ability. I think God chose me to play golf," Stewart told a crowd at the Orlando church Oct. 15. He said what excited him as much as winning "is being able to make a difference in people's lives."

Once known for being rude and arrogant with sports writers and autograph seekers, Stewart had in recent years become calmer and quieter. He spoke of finding "inner peace" and had been persuaded by his children, Chelsea, 13, and Aaron, 10, to start attending church.

"Payne Stewart died just when he was learning to live," wrote sports columnist Mike Bianchi in the Florida Times-Union in Jacksonville, Fla.

"He didn't wear his newfound Christianity on his sleeve, but he did wear it on his wrist," Bianchi wrote. "He had been seen in a recent tournament wearing a WWJD bracelet, the letters standing for What Would Jesus Do?"

USA Today reported that Stewart began to change after cancer struck close to him a second time in 1994. Ten years earlier, it had taken his father, and Stewart reacted angrily. When it also struck his good friend Paul Azinger, he responded differently.

"I started talking to Paul about it and saw that he had this unbelievable faith," Stewart said. "That started me going in a more spiritual direction."

Recently, the paper said, Stewart and his wife of 18 years, Tracey, donated, with little fanfare, \$500,000 to the First Foundation, the fund-raising arm of First Baptist Church in Orlando. He became involved in the church through experiences of his children at the church's First Academy private school.

"In recent years, Stewart has been more content, more at peace with himself and perhaps it prepared him better for his death," wrote Steve Hershey for USA Today.

-30-

Baptists Today editor steps down over 'radical difference' over content

By Bob Allen

MACON, Ga. (ABP) -- The executive editor of Baptists Today says he resigned Oct. 1 over "a radical difference" with his board of directors over the newspaper's future.

A news release posted on the Baptists Today Web site describes the board's "vision for the future" of the independent national newspaper founded for moderate Southern Baptists in 1983.

Board chairman James McAfee said some readers "would encourage us to continue to focus on Baptist battles," and others would prefer a "more academic publication" geared toward pastors, educators and denominational leaders.

"While both of these are perhaps suitable visions for a publication, the board firmly believes that there is a more appropriate vision for the paper," McAfee said. "Our desire is that Baptists Today assist Baptist Christians and their churches as they prepare for life and ministry in the next century."

Rather than "duplicate the work of Baptist state papers," McAfee said the periodical would instead focus on individual Baptists and creative ministries of local churches. "We want to help lay people who are searching for quality information, inspiration and insight from a Baptist perspective," he said.

McAfee said readers have responded well to changes made during the last year. Circulation has grown from a low of 6,900 to nearly 9,000, and advertising revenue tripled over the previous year, he said.

An earlier news release dated Oct. 6 announced, without explanation, Bob Ballance's resignation as executive editor.

In an interview with Associated Baptist Press, Ballance said he quit because he disagreed with changes being made in the paper, such as reducing its news hole.

Ballance, 41, said he took the job a year ago knowing some changes would be made in the newspaper, which has suffered in recent years from declining circulation and advertising revenues. He said he stepped down, however, because "I was not comfortable going where they wanted to go."

The newspaper's board of directors voted in July to pay an Atlanta marketing firm a reported \$350,000 for a campaign aimed at more than doubling circulation in 18 months.

Creative Media Services, Inc., launched the campaign in August with a goal of having 20,000 subscribers and annual revenues of \$150,000 by December 2000. Directors say meeting those goals would enable the publication to become self-sustaining.

The campaign, aimed at both retaining the paper's mostly over-50 current readership while attracting new younger readers, will include additional changes in appearance and content, some of which are already being implemented.

"I think in a year Baptists Today is going to look very different," Ballance said. He said there is talk of changing from a newsprint format to a glossy cover and changing the focus from news to a church-resource magazine.

Ballance's resignation has also raised questions about the newspaper's relationship with Smyth and Helwys Publishers, a Macon, Ga., business with which Baptists Today has contracted for production and business affairs.

The year-old agreement makes Smyth and Helwys, an independent, for-profit publisher of books and educational materials, responsible for backroom operations of Baptists Today including payroll, accounting, mailing, printing, layout and graphics. The paper's editors are responsible to directors of Baptists Today, a non-profit organization. The editorial staff works in rented offices at Smyth and Helwys' headquarters. According to a recent Baptists Today audit, the contract calls for Smyth and Helwys "to perform all management functions" for the newspaper.

In a written report to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's Baptist Principles Ministry Group in September, however, Ballance said the board chairman has started referring to Smyth and Helwys as the paper's "publisher," giving the business "more control over the paper's content and format."

In a meeting with the Baptist Principles group, the vice chairman of Baptists Today's board of directors said he doubted McAfee intended to imply editorial control by using the word publisher but probably meant it in the broader definition as "one who publishes."

Vice chairman Tommy Boland said the board "has no concern" about Smyth and Helwys encroaching onto editorial turf under the arrangement. Asked by a reporter if Baptists Today directors would be concerned about evidence of editorial interference, Boland said, "Absolutely."

In addition to Ballance's resignation, Baptists Today's managing editor, Oby Brown, has also stepped down. Brown has accepted a job as features editor at the Macon Telegraph, where he worked before joining the staff of Baptists Today last year.

According to a press release, Brown will continue to relate to Baptists Today as an "editorial consultant."

Supporters of Baptists Today had hoped Ballance's hiring last October signaled a brighter day for the newspaper, which months earlier had been on the brink of folding.

Following the retirement of editor Jack Harwell in 1997, the paper restructured its board of directors, electing McAfee, an Atlanta businessman and philanthropist, as chairman. The former board members stepped down, endorsing the change, to become the core of an advisory committee known as the board of trustees.

The board of directors expanded recently. Current members are McAfee; Boland, a retired bank executive from Alpharetta, Ga.; Jimmy Allen, a retired Southern Baptist Convention executive and now a pastor in Big Canoe, Ga.; Wilma Cosper, a retired educator in Cullowhee, N.C.; Carolyn Weatherford

Crumpler, retired executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, SBC; James Dunn, who recently retired as head of the Baptist Joint Committee in Washington; Charles Overby, chief executive officer of the Freedom Forum in Arlington, Va.; and John Cash Smith, an attorney in Orange, Texas.

Boland said Baptists Today had raised about \$250,000 in private gifts since late last year, not including \$50,000 the CBF Coordinating Council took from reserves in February as an emergency contribution to help with marketing of Baptists Today. That came in addition to \$44,000 previously budgeted by CBF for ongoing support of Baptists Today.

According to an independent audit report dated June 30, Baptists Today finished its 1998-99 fiscal year \$27,531 in the black. Boland said it was the first time in "seven or eight years" the organization did not run a deficit.

Baptists Today, originally called SBC Today, was founded in 1983 by Walker Knight, who took early retirement from a job with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board to start the independent, autonomous journal of news and opinion.

Knight edited the paper five years and worked another five part-time as publisher. He was succeeded by Jack Harwell, former editor of the Georgia Baptist newspaper The Christian Index, who edited Baptists Today 1988-97.

Under Knight and Harwell, the paper became the flagship publication for moderates in the Southern Baptist Convention in their unsuccessful bid to oppose a conservative takeover of the denomination in the 1980s.

In 1991, directors voted to change the paper's name to Baptists Today to reflect a broader focus and closer ties to the newly formed Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Among changes announced last year were the formation of a site on the World Wide Web, which now receives about 10,000 hits a month, and a change from spot-color to a full-color format.

The press release announcing Ballance's hiring said the paper intended to "build ... on its heritage" as a journal of news and opinion for moderate and progressive Baptists to focus "even more on meeting the needs of Baptists and their churches across the country."

During the past year, the newspaper has featured less news and commentary about SBC issues and politics, more articles offering resources for local churches and has added news about non-SBC Baptist groups including American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.

-30-

Tobacco companies increasingly blamed for smoking-related illnesses, Gallup says

By Sarah Griffith

PRINCETON, N.J. (ABP) -- Americans tend to lay the blame for health problems associated with smoking with individual smokers and not tobacco companies, but that may be changing, according to an Oct. 14 Gallup poll.

"Virtually all Americans (95 percent) think cigarette smoking is harmful," said a report from Gallup News Service. Nine out of 10 Americans surveyed recently said they believe smoking causes lung cancer, compared to just four out of 10 in 1954.

The percentage of Americans who blame smokers for smoking-related illness, however, declined from 64 percent to 55 percent between 1994 and 1999. The percentage of those blaming tobacco companies, meanwhile, rose from 25 percent to 30 percent.

"The new figures suggest that the public may be shifting the blame somewhat toward the tobacco companies," the report said.

Fifty-one percent of Americans said they support a lawsuit filed by the United States Justice Department against tobacco that seeks to regain billions of federal dollars lost in health costs for smoking-related illnesses, the survey said.

Americans are also becoming less tolerant of smoking in public places. One third said they would ban smoking in workplaces while four in 10 would ban it in restaurants.

"These views are little changed from five years ago but represent at least a twofold increase in opposition to smoking in public places over that recorded in a Gallup poll in 1987," the report said.

Seventy-seven percent of smokers said they feel they could quit, but "the difficulty of quitting is highlighted by the fact that only 13 percent of smokers say that if they had to do it all over again, they would take up the smoking habit," the report said.

A Baptist ethicist said the poll indicates both an increased concern about public health and a growing awareness that tobacco companies share the blame for smoking-related problems.

The poll results "represent another sign of both the nation's growing pro-health movement and the increasing public disfavor of the tobacco companies" said Robert Parham, the executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics. "Yet the tobacco industry remains one of the foremost enemies of public health at home and around the world."

The Gallup poll results were compiled from random telephone interviews with 1,039 adults between Sept. 23 and Sept. 29. The margin of error was plus-or-minus 3 percent.

-30-

Fatherhood being redefined by special interests, scholars say

By Sarah Griffith

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Special interests such as fathers' rights and welfare reform are causing the fatherhood movement to lose its way, according to an article by two nationally recognized family scholars.

The fatherhood movement started in the early 1990s advocating responsible fathers as a way to combat juvenile crime, child poverty, and teen pregnancy, write Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Popenoe.

But that movement is now becoming "focused almost entirely on divorced and unwed fathers who live apart from their children," they write in "Defining Daddy Down," in the Sept./Oct. issue of The American Enterprise magazine.

Fathers'-rights activists argue for the rights of divorced fathers, claiming the courts and child support system are biased against fathers, write Whitehead and Popenoe. These arguments focus on the father's interests rather than the well being of the child, they contended.

"Their rhetoric is pro-child but their agenda is pro-divorced dads," they say. "The fatherhood movement has created its own set of victims --not fatherless children but dads who live apart from their children."

Welfare reform has contributed to the problem, they argue, as "46 states link their fatherhood agenda to welfare reform." Those reforms include paternity-establishment programs, supervised visitation for fathers accused of abuse, and license-revocation programs for parents not paying child support.

Ignored in these movements is the concept that being a good husband is a defining characteristic of fatherhood, according to Whitehead and Popenoe.

The definition of fatherhood being used to set public policy expects fathers to share financial responsibility for their children, establish legal paternity, and share in the emotional and physical care of children.

"Nowhere does the definition suggest that a responsible father has anything more significant than a financial arrangement with the mother of his children," write Whitehead and Popenoe.

Editing marriage out of the equation creates a definition of fatherhood that "may fit the requirements of the government and the capacities of living-apart fathers" but leaves children with "economic needs and emotional hungers," they argue.

Whitehead and Popenoe cite feminist Barbara Ehrenreich as suggesting marriage will be replaced in the future by a "parenting contract" between a living-apart man and woman who have a child.

"The fatherhood movement should be thinking of ways to prevent unwed and divorced fatherhood, rather than advancing efforts to defend and sustain it," write Whitehead and Popenoe.

-30-

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