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**Auto crash kills
Baptist journalist (revised)**

--EDITOR'S NOTE: This story contains slight revisions in the 4th, 10th, 11th and 16th paragraphs from the one filed yesterday and new information about funeral arrangements in the next-to-last paragraph.

By Bob Allen

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- A veteran denominational journalist once hailed as a hero for press freedom in the Southern Baptist Convention died July 23 from injuries sustained in a car accident.

Al Shackelford, 68, was the lone fatality in an afternoon head-on collision involving three cars on a two-lane state highway not far from his home in Franklin, Tenn. His wife, Tommye, and daughter, Dee Cochran, were hospitalized. Two grandchildren also in the car, Ben Cochran, 4, and his 2-year-old sister, Rachel, were not seriously injured.

The Tennessee Highway Patrol said several passengers in one of the other vehicles were also hurt, but none fatally.

Shackelford's career as a Baptist journalist spanned more than 40 years, the last eight as editor-in-chief of *Mature Living*, a magazine published by LifeWay Christian Resources. He was best known, however, for being fired 10 years ago as director of Baptist Press, the SBC's official news service.

In a dramatic closed-door meeting secured by armed guards, the SBC Executive Committee voted July 17, 1990, to fire, without cause, both Shackelford, the vice president in charge of Baptist Press, and Dan Martin, the service's news editor.

While supporters of the firing said the two journalists were biased against conservatives, others called the move an effort to censor the denomination's news. A few weeks earlier, Martin reportedly refused to kill a story containing comments critical of a powerful Executive Committee member. Shackelford backed up the decision, and both refused to resign in an effort to head off their firing.

The firings prompted the formation of Associated Baptist Press, an independent news service. Shackelford was a founding member of ABP's board of directors, serving about two years before resigning.

Greg Warner, executive editor of the decade-old news service now located in Jacksonville, Fla., said: "This is a tremendous loss for all of us who were privileged to know Al. He was one of the gentlest and truest of souls who became the undeserving target of denominational zeal and vitriol. Yet through it all, his tender heart and purity of calling reminded us what is truly important in life. We will always remember what Al contributed to the founding of ABP but, more importantly, what he taught us about the spirit of Christ."

After his firing at Baptist Press, Shackleford went nearly two years unable to find steady work, including 10 months where he earned \$4.60 an hour as a clerk at a Kroger store.

Eventually, he was hired by the SBC's publishing arm, LifeWay Christian Resources, to edit a monthly magazine for senior adults. He reportedly planned to retire later this year.

LifeWay President Jimmy Draper, who offered him the job in 1992, said Shackleford "did a superb job as editor of Mature Living."

"I loved and appreciated Al for many reasons, including his strong belief system and commitment to the truth of God's word," Draper said. "I know I speak for all who knew and worked with him when I say we will miss him greatly and are praying for his family as they deal with their grief and for the healing of those injured in the accident."

Shackleford worked just more than three years at Baptist Press, after being narrowly elected to the position in February 1987. He went there after 11 years as editor of the Tennessee Baptist newsjournal Baptist and Reflector and 11 years before that as editor of the Indiana Baptist.

Tom Madden, who was the Tennessee Baptist Convention's executive director during most of Shackleford's tenure there, commented: "I always felt Al was called to be a journalist. He represented both sides of an issue to the best of his ability. He was a supporter of all Baptist causes. I enjoyed working with him and feel a distinct personal loss."

Harold Bennett, former president of the SBC Executive Committee and Shackleford's supervisor at Baptist Press, described him as "one of the most gracious and skilled workers in Southern Baptist life." Shackleford worked for Baptist Press "hard and diligently and with great integrity," Bennett said.

Fletcher Allen, who succeeded Shackleford as editor of the Tennessee newspaper, called Shackleford "a kindred spirit" whom he admired for "his high moral standards" and his commitment to his church and family. "He was one of my mentors and it was an honor to follow him as editor of the B and R," said Allen, who is now retired.

Lonnie Wilkey, the paper's current editor, wrote in this week's editorial: "Al Shackleford leaves behind a legacy that should encourage those who knew him well. He faced adversity head-on and continued his walk with the Lord. He was faithful to the end."

Dan Martin, the other fired Baptist Press editor, now works as a news writer for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

A native of Franklin, Ga., Shackleford was a graduate of Mercer University in Macon, Ga., the University of Georgia in Athens, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Tommye Shackleford was released July 24 from Vanderbilt Medical Center. Dee Cochran was taken to Williamson Medical Center and was expected to be released July 25.

Funeral services were scheduled at 2 p.m., Wednesday, July 26 at Brentwood Baptist Church in Brentwood, Tenn., with burial at Williamson Memorial Gardens. Financial gifts may be made to the Al Shackleford Memorial Fund at Brentwood Baptist Church.

In addition to his wife, injured daughter and the two grandchildren, Shackleford is survived by another daughter, Tina Shackleford of Iowa City, Iowa; a brother, Nat Shackleford of Carrollton, Ga.; and a son-in-law, Bill Cochran.

Leading Baptist historian William Estep dies of cancer

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- One of Southern Baptists' foremost church historians died July 15.

William Estep, 80, who taught 40 years at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary before stepping down in 1994, died at his home in Fort Worth, Texas, of pancreatic cancer.

Estep, the author of 16 books, was best known for his groundbreaking study of Anabaptists in the 16th century and their influence on modern Baptists.

A colleague described him as one of the four leading American scholars in the 20th century on Anabaptists.

Memorials may be made to Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in Atlanta or the Library for Historical Work in the Acquisition of Anabaptist Materials at Southwestern Seminary.

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-- By ABP staff

State convention offers severance to employees

By Tim Palmer

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- The Missouri Baptist Convention executive board approved July 11 a severance plan for workers who choose to quit their jobs during implementation of a new strategic plan.

The severance offer, which is open to employees who leave their jobs between Aug. 1 and Dec. 31, "is not targeting anyone," said Jim Hill, executive director of the state convention. "There is no one on our staff that I would like to see leave."

However, Hill said, some workers have had a hard time adapting to changes under the "New Directions" staff reorganization. On Jan. 1, he noted, all convention employees got a new job description and many got a new supervisor.

Under the plan, employees with less than 10 years experience will receive two weeks' salary and benefits for each year they have worked with the convention. Employees with more than 10 years of service would get five months' compensation plus a week's salary for every year of service.

Hill did not say how many people he expects to leave, but he told the board's administrative committee, "I hope there are very few who choose to do this."

The strategic plan, which emphasizes field-generated strategies and customized responses to expressed needs, is six months into a two-year implementation. "We have more field staff now than we have ever had," Hill reported.

Hill said Missouri Baptists' fractured political life is making implementation more difficult. "I can't figure out a way to bring a united spirit of cooperation to head us in a new direction," he said, "but I believe it is possible through the Spirit of God."

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Church-state group criticizes Catholic anti-abortion campaign

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A church-state battle is brewing over an upcoming anti-abortion campaign by a New York-based Catholic group.

Priests for Life, a tax-exempt organization, announced a \$1 million project to place newspaper advertisements before the November elections.

The effort is drawing attention from a church-state watchdog group that warns the campaign may violate federal tax law.

Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said the campaign appears to target specific candidates and is designed to "pressure candidates to accept the anti-abortion position of the Roman Catholic bishops." IRS rules prohibit tax-exempt religious groups from taking sides in political elections.

But Father Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, disagreed with Lynn. "We know the tax law and we fully intend to obey it." He told Associated Baptist Press that specific candidates will not be named. "We want to exercise our role as clergy to prepare our people for the elections," Pavone added,

Lynn said AU would watch the ad campaign closely. "When churches try to force dogma on all Americans through the political process, it seriously undermines the separation of church and state," he said.

Pavone, however, said church-state separation "does not mean the separation of morality from the state."

"There are some people in this country who want Christians to go back into the catacombs, and they have to get used to the fact that we are not going anywhere," he said.

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Some conservatives, even, don't like new faith statement

By Steve DeVane

RALEIGH, N.C. (ABP) -- Most reactions to recent revisions in the "Baptist Faith and Message" have been predictable, with conservative churches applauding the changes and moderate churches challenging them.

But not all reaction follows theological lines. At least one prominent conservative pastor has spoken publicly against one of the changes.

Joe B. Brown, pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., spoke on the issue of women preachers in the church's evening service June 18.

Brown said the Bible does not say for women to "shut up," alluding to a new phrase in Southern Baptists' official faith statement limiting the role of senior pastor to men.

"If you say women can't preach, you've got a problem," Brown said. "You've got a problem with Scripture."

Brown explained how women "prophesied" in the Bible and quoted a New Testament passage that says in Christ there is neither male nor female.

"What God wants us to do is quit putting people in categories," he said.

Brown said "proof texts" that are used against women preachers "don't hold water."

He said it's hypocritical for the Southern Baptist Convention to say women can go to SBC seminaries for master-of-divinity degrees but not preach.

He also said if the SBC is going to use one passage from First Timothy to set its rules, it shouldn't allow women to wear necklaces, which is also forbidden in the same book.

"You can use this Bible to beat people, or you can use this Bible to encourage people," he said. "I believe we should use it to encourage people.

Brown said he wasn't speaking out for his church members or even for himself.

"I'm doing this for that little girl who came up here on this stage, because I want her to be all that she can be under God," he said. "And I'm not going to tell her that she can't be all that God -- notice that I said 'all that God' -- calls her to be."

A western North Carolina church with a pastor who preaches only from the King James Version of the Bible decided to stop sending money to the SBC because of the revisions.

Charles Dean, pastor of East Sylva Baptist Church in Sylva, said his church voted to move its gifts to the Baptist state convention's unified budget to Plan C, which forwards no money to the SBC.

"We said we'd prefer to be known as an old-time missionary Baptist church," he said. "We didn't leave the SBC. They left us."

The motion to change giving plans passed with only one dissenting vote, Dean said. About 250 people attended the meeting.

"I'll bow down to King Jesus, but I will never bow down to King James," he said.

Dean said his church is conservative theologically, but some may think of it as moderate because it is open to women ministers.

"I really think of us as Baptists used to be thought of," he said.

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