

**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Nashville, Tennessee**

Associated Baptist Press

August 15, 2003 Volume: 03-76

AUG 18 2003

In this issue:

- 'Ten Commandments Judge' vows to defy federal court orders
- From 'bad girl' to 'earth angel,' job corp graduate now gives back
- Briefs from ABP's Washington Bureau

**'Ten Commandments Judge' vows
to defy federal court orders**

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Civil-liberties groups -- and one of his colleagues -- reacted quickly and negatively to Aug. 14 news that Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore has vowed to defy a federal court order.

And another of Moore's allies -- himself embroiled in political controversy -- refused to help Moore violate the order.

In a press conference, Moore announced he does not intend to comply with a federal judge's injunction to remove a massive monument to the Ten Commandments from the rotunda of the state's judicial building in Montgomery.

In November, U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson declared the 5,280-lb. monument an unconstitutional state endorsement of religion. Moore had the monument placed in the building's rotunda in July 2001, shortly after he was elected to the state's highest judicial post. Moore had campaigned as the "Ten Commandments Judge" after gaining notoriety through earlier court battles over display of the commandments in his courtroom while he was an Etowah County magistrate.

In July, a panel of the Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously upheld Thompson's ruling. Thompson then issued the order to remove the monument. The deadline he set is Aug. 20, after which he said he would levy "substantial fines" against the state for every day the monument remained in place illegally.

In an Aug. 14 press conference, Moore said that "Alabama will never give up its right to acknowledge God" and that federal courts had no authority to force him to do something he believed would violate the Alabama Constitution. "I have no intention of removing the monument," he noted. "To do so would, in effect, result in the disestablishment of our system of justice in this state. This I cannot and will not do."

But Moore's senior associate justice, Gorman Houston, said his fellow justices would meet to determine a

8/15/03

course of action. In a statement, Houston said the eight remaining justices would "take whatever steps necessary...to assure that the state of Alabama is a government of laws and not men." A majority of them could overrule Moore's action and force the removal of the statue.

That may not end the controversy, though. Moore has said he would not object to demonstrations and other peaceful civil disobedience to prevent the removal of the monument. Some Religious Right groups supporting Moore have encouraged their followers in Alabama to join in protests opposing the action.

Additionally, Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor -- whose nomination to a seat on the 11th Circuit is stalled in the Senate in part due to controversy over his past support of Moore's actions -- said Aug. 14 that he would use his power to make sure Moore obeyed the order. "I will not violate nor assist any person in the violation of this injunction," he said in a press release.

Moore, a Southern Baptist layman, had the monument placed in the building in the middle of the night and without the knowledge or consent of his fellow justices. Privately raised funds paid for the sculpture, but Moore allowed a film crew from Coral Ridge Ministries -- the Religious Right organization run by Florida-based television evangelist D. James Kennedy -- to tape footage of the monument's construction and placement. Coral Ridge later sold the videotape as a fundraiser, and has paid for Moore's legal defense.

Moore has said he acted secretly to protect his fellow justices from being named in the lawsuit he was certain would result from his actions.

Moore's expectation became reality shortly thereafter, when Montgomery lawyer Stephen Glassroth filed suit in federal court. Two other Montgomery attorneys joined Glassroth in the suit. Attorneys for three civil-rights groups -- Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the American Civil Liberties Union and the Southern Poverty Law Center, argued the case for Glassroth and his co-plaintiffs.

Moore has promised to appeal the 11th Circuit's ruling to the Supreme Court, and said he would file a request with the U.S. Supreme Court Aug. 15 asking them to stay the removal order pending his appeal.

Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United, said Moore should "stop filing writs and call it quits." In a statement, he went on to say, "He simply doesn't understand or respect this country's Constitution, and he should resign from office. Moore has put Alabama citizens through enough."

-30-

From 'bad girl' to 'earth angel,' job corp graduate now gives back

By Ken Camp

AMARILLO, Texas (ABP) – The low-income women who participate in a Baptist-led job training program in Amarillo like to hear stories about the "bad girls" of the Bible. "They can relate," says Janie Braddock-Gafford, one of the group's leaders.

It's not that Braddock-Gafford thinks the women are bad, she points out. But some of the women who seek help from the Amarillo Christian Women's Job Corps have made bad choices in life or been trapped in bad relationships. And they all want to see examples of imperfect women of faith who overcame past problems by

8/15/03

God's grace, said Braddock-Gafford.

Not all the examples come from the Bible however. Braddock-Gafford has stories of her own to tell.

"I let them get to know me before I talk about it," explained Braddock-Gafford, a graduate of the program who now helps coordinate the Amarillo branch of the ministry. "They think I'm a churchy lady. Then when we're in Bible study, they learn about my past. That's when they say, 'Wow! She's just like me. If she can do it, I can, too.'"

Christian Women's Job Corps is a national ministry of the Alabama-based Woman's Missionary Union. The program teaches job skills and life skills in a Christian context to low-income women. There are 26 such programs in Texas cities like Amarillo, supported by funds from the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Braddock-Gafford, who found out about the job training program from a flyer posted at a Laundromat, tells the women about the physical abuse she suffered from her father when she was a child. At age 12, she attended a Baptist summer camp where she made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. "My life changed drastically after that. I went home and told my father he could not hurt me anymore because I belonged to God, and through divine grace, he didn't," she said.

But that childhood experience with Christ did not prevent her from making some unfortunate choices as a young adult. She married, divorced, and then became involved in fraud in an attempt to secure medical attention and food for her four children. Later, when she became engaged again, she said her fiancé violently abused her.

Even so, Braddock-Gafford said, God never stopped loving her. As far as she was concerned, God continued to send what she called "earth angels" into her life to help her. "The Lord put people in my path every day," she said.

She said God also directed her attention to the flier she saw advertising computer classes at the Amarillo Christian Women's Job Corps.

She was out of work because health problems prevented her from continuing the heavy lifting required of a home health-care worker. A combination of arthritis and two hip replacement operations left her temporarily confined to a wheelchair.

"I went to Christian Women's Job Corps to acquire the computer skills I needed to change professions. I came out uplifted and self-assured," she said.

Braddock-Gafford considered the daily Bible studies at Christian Women's Job Corps "wonderful" and the computer classes invaluable. But she said the most significant part of the program for her was the relationships she established with classmates.

"I made lifelong friends," she said. "There's a real bonding that takes place, and we benefit from the encouragement that we give each other."

When she completed the program, she felt a strong sense that God was leading her to "give back" to the ministry. She received that opportunity when she was invited to join the Christian Women's Job Corps staff.

Now she shares the responsibilities of site coordinator with Sylvia Jordan, enlisting teachers, matching mentors with students and promoting the ministry in churches throughout the area. She particularly enjoys interacting with students and rejoicing in their personal victories. To date, 60 women have completed the program at the

Amarillo site and three are attending college.

"I try to be an inspiration to all of the ladies who come through our doors," said Braddock-Gafford. "I tell them, 'If I can do it and come from where I came from, you can do it too.'"

In her self-estimation, she's gone from "bad girl" to "earth angel."

-30-

Briefs from ABP's Washington Bureau

By Robert Marus

Muslims, ecumenical, civil-liberties groups protest Pipes

WASHINGTON -- President Bush allowed a controversial nominee to a federal panel to be appointed without the Senate's approval, and some groups are hopping mad.

With an August "recess appointment," Bush side-stepped the normal nomination process and placed Daniel Pipes on the board of the United States Institute of Peace. The institute is a federal "think tank" devoted to creating non-military solutions to global conflicts.

Muslim-American groups have strenuously opposed the nomination of the Middle East scholar because of what they say are his extremist anti-Muslim and anti-Arab views. The Muslim critics have been joined by the Interfaith Alliance and civil-liberties groups in opposing Pipes' nomination, which has been tied up for months in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

The recess-appointment process allows presidents to fill slots on federal panels without the usual Senate approval when the Senate is in recess, as the chamber will be until after Labor Day.

VMI prayer case may be headed to Supreme Court

WASHINGTON -- A school-prayer case may be headed to the Supreme Court. The Richmond-based 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals deadlocked 6-6 on whether to rehear a case on dinnertime prayers offered at the state-funded Virginia Military Institute in Lexington.

The Aug. 13 ruling means that an earlier ruling by a panel of the court outlawing the prayers will stand. The majority in the January decision said the school's "cadets are plainly coerced into participating in a religious exercise" by being forced to listen to the prayers in a military-like environment that heavily emphasizes loyalty and conformity.

The prayers reportedly do not mention Jesus by name, and attorneys for the Commonwealth of Virginia have argued the prayers were thus "secular."

This is the third time a federal court has ruled that the practice violates the federal Constitution's ban on state support for religion. Virginia Attorney General Jerry Kilgore (R) said he will appeal the decision to the Supreme Court. (ABP)

8/15/03

Baptist named head of Washington 'pro-family' group

WASHINGTON -- A Southern Baptist state lawmaker from Louisiana has been named the new head of one of Washington's most influential Religious Right groups.

Directors of the Family Research Council announced Aug. 13 that they have named Tony Perkins as the organization's president. Perkins, a Republican member of the Louisiana House of Representatives, is a member of Greenwell Springs Baptist Church in the Baton Rouge area.

Perkins will begin responsibilities in Washington Sept. 1. He was the author of the legislation that created the state's controversial "covenant marriage" law. He also authored legislation that forced the state's prison system to work more closely with religious charities.

Southern Baptist Convention Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission head Richard Land hailed Perkins' appointment in a news release. "Tony brings a powerful combination of deep commitment to moral reformation in our nation as well as tremendous political experience and skill," said Land.

Perkins, a graduate of Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., is married and has four children. He has served as a Marine and a police officer. (ABP)

Commission cancels trip to China

WASHINGTON -- A federal panel charged with monitoring religious-freedom conditions around the world has canceled a scheduled trip to China.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom announced in an Aug. 8 statement that it was canceling the fact-finding trip "due to unacceptable last-minute conditions imposed upon the commission's visit by the Chinese government."

The statement went on to note that Chinese authorities informed them only two weeks before the scheduled trip that commissioners were "strongly discouraged" from visiting Hong Kong even though it had been part of the itinerary since they began negotiating with the Chinese government for the trip in February.

The commission recently returned from a visit to another hot spot, Afghanistan, where they met with senior officials of the country's provisional government in Kabul Aug. 8-13. In a statement, panel chairman Michael Young said, "There are troubling indications that Afghanistan is being reconstructed, without serious U.S. opposition, as a state in which an extreme interpretation of [Islamic law] would be enforced by a government which the United States supports and with which our nation is closely identified." (ABP)