

Florida Baptist Historical Society Biography Collection

This link provides the specific resource information which documents and undergirds the biographical resource information on a specific Florida Baptist pastors, church staff or significant laity leaders.

The link you have chosen connects to the specific individual's resource files that provide the basis for information which the Historical Society has used to develop the respective biographical profile. The sources attached may include copies of articles gleaned from back issues of the *Florida Baptist Witness* and other news publications. Other resources include books, historical journal articles and church histories that are cited as documentation for the biography.

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Schubert, Shari served as a news editor for the *Florida Baptist Witness*, 1996-2000. Previously she had served as a news writer for the Missouri Baptist's *Word and Way* newspaper.

Witness gives commission upbeat report

The Board of Commissioners for the Florida Baptist Witness, during their recent semi-annual meeting in Ocala, adopted a 1997 budget of \$809,404, which reflects no increase over the 1996 budget.

Witness Commissioners also heard reports circulation had increased by 1,100 the first six months of 1996, and advertising revenue for 1996 is projected to double over the 1995 figure.

The Witness State Baptist newspaper also received an outstanding audit from Peat Marwick with no recommendations, only one of two

Florida Baptist State Convention agencies this year to earn that distinction.

Michael Chute, Witness editor manager, reported to commissioners that the change of the paper to tabloid format has given the Witness greater flexibility in serving Florida Baptist churches through its Church Newsletter Service.

"We are now able to offer a number of options for churches to use the Witness' Church Newsletter Service to communicate with their church members," Chute said.

"All we need from a church is the mailing list of those members they

want to get the newsletter and the date they want to start. Our staff is available to help answer questions about the Church Newsletter Service and to give advice or training to churches on laying out their newsletter pages," he said.

Commissioners learned that the Witness is able to better serve churches through its newsletter service by providing a range of options, including:

- A full page or half page on the back cover of the Witness.

- A two-page or four-page "wrap" in which the church's news is printed on a separate sheet of paper and then folded around the regular Witness paper.

- A four-page, eight-page or 16-page insert printed as the center section of the Witness.

In the first six months of 1996, two more churches have joined over 30 Florida Baptist churches and associations using the Church Newsletter Service.

The two new subscribers to the church newsletter service include Sheridan Hills Baptist Church in Hollywood, where Bill Billingsley is pastor, and Moultrie Baptist Church in St. Augustine, where Michael Mott, chairman of the Witness Commission, is pastor.

Four other Florida churches have indicated they will join the Church Newsletter Service in October.

In their annual evaluation of the Witness, the commissioners unanimously expressed support for Chute's leadership as editor of the Witness and the newspaper's direction in covering more news of Florida Baptists—reporting what

individuals, churches and associations are doing in missions and ministry statewide, nationally and internationally.

In other actions, the commissioners approved the job description for a newly created News Editor position for the Baptist state newspaper and approved up to a four percent merit increase for staff, following State Board of Missions action for convention personnel.

Chute informed the commissioners that Brian Schubert had accepted the newly created News Editor position, joining the Witness staff effective Sept. 25.

For the past 10 years, Schubert has served as a news writer for Word and Way, the state newspaper of the Missouri Baptist Convention based in Jefferson City.

As outlined in the new editor's job description, Schubert will write and edit news and feature articles for publication, supervise the paper's newswriters, assist the editor-manager in planning, producing and evaluating news and feature content of the Witness, and coordinate production of the printing of the Witness.

Schubert fills a slot vacated by Keith Hinson, former associate editor who resigned that position the end of July.

Hinson returned to Alabama, resuming his vocational pastorate at Dogwood Grove Baptist Church, Montevallo, and freelance writing assignments.

The next meeting of the Witness Commission is scheduled for Nov. 15, 1996, during the Florida Baptist State Convention in Lakeland.

TRAINING UPDATE

Seminar teaches church long-range planning

The Church Long-Range Planning Seminar will be held Oct. 10-11 at the Holiday Inn, DeLand. The seminar is sponsored by the Church Development Division.

During the two-day event, pastors, church staff and church planning leaders will learn to lead their churches to discover their unique purposes, identify growth potential, establish measurable goals for three to five years, select growth strategies and events, and learn to best use their church's resources.

The conference will begin with registration at 9:30 a.m. Thursday and conclude at 5 p.m. Friday. Cost for the event is \$60 and will include registration fees and all conference materials. For more information, contact the Church Development Division, ext. 8171.

Ministers' wives to open 'doors of discovery'

"Doors to Discovery" will be the theme of the first Florida Baptist Ministers' Wives Retreat Oct. 25-26 at Lake Yale Baptist Assembly, sponsored by the Women's Missions and Ministries Department.

Motivational speaker Jo Ann Leavell will keynote nightly worship services. She is the wife of Landrum Leavell, former president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. She will be joined by conference leaders Catherine Hukem, First Baptist Church, Delray Beach; Shirley Lindsey, First Baptist Church, Jacksonville; Ginny Whitten, Idlewild Baptist Church, Tampa; Sonja Robertson, First Baptist Church, Interlachen; Brenda McCollum, Florida Baptist Financial Services, Jacksonville; and Shugie Collingsworth, First Baptist Church, Orlando.

The retreat begins with registration Friday at 5 p.m. and will conclude with lunch on Saturday. Cost is \$40 and includes lodging, three meals and registration fees. For more information, contact the Women's Missions and Ministries Department, ext. 8281.

Conference offers resort ministry opportunities

Evangelistic opportunities in resort and leisure communities will highlight the 1996 Florida Baptist Resort Conference Oct. 25-26 at the Granada Inn, Ormond Beach.

Centered around the theme "Through Every Door" in the Leisure Community, the two-day event will address new opportunities and settings for evangelism and ministry.

"There are many doors of opportunity to share the gospel with the world," said Wayne Taylor, director of volunteerism and leisure ministries. The conference is designed to "help people see these new doors and to get practical help in meeting these needs."

Cost for the two-day conference is \$10 and will include registration fee and the banquet. Lodging arrangements can be made at the Granada Inn, (800) 228-8089. For more information, contact Taylor, ext. 8275.

Single Adults called to excellence at retreat

Single adults will be "Called to Excellence" during two 1996 fall retreats Oct. 18-20 at Lake Yale Assembly and Nov. 1-5 at Blue Springs Assembly.

Bob Mounts, director of the Family Life Department, said the retreat will challenge singles to strive for excellence in their relationships, lifestyles, spiritual life and ministry.

Ron Churchhill, pastor of First Baptist Church, Plant City, will direct the Lake Yale event. He will be joined by First Church's Pete Battaglia, who will present a musical concert. The Blue Springs retreat will be led by Doug Dortch, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tallahassee.

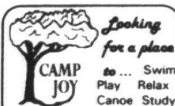
Cost for the retreat is \$80. For more information, contact the Family Life Department, ext. 8242.

Rankin to speak at ministers' wives luncheon

Bobbe Rankin, wife of Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin, will be speaking during the Florida Baptist Ministers' Wives luncheon, Nov. 12 at historic First Church, Lakeland.

Tickets are \$12.50 and may be purchased in advance by sending a stamped self-addressed envelope to Sheila Crouch, 302 N. Edgewood Dr., Ft. Meade, FL 33841.

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FLORIDA BAPTIST

Witness

NEWMAGAZINE OF THE FLORIDA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION

OCTOBER 12, 2000

Charred face tells story of Ambon unrest

A banner at the airstrip in Ambon, a tiny dot in Indonesia's Maluku island chain, quotes passages from both the Christian Bible and the Muslim Koran calling for peace. But look into the charred face

of Frendy Nunemete and you will see that peace is a concept far from being realized here in the cradle of the Spice Islands where Muslim-Christian battles have raged for nearly two years. The assault on his Christian village

happened quickly. The village's defenders were immediately overrun by attackers wielding automatic weapons, mortar rounds and grenades. As his brother fell dead from a gunshot, Frendy climbed onto a roof to hide. The attackers searched for him below then tossed grenades into the house and set it afire. To escape the flames, Frendy dove into a large container of water, which soon became unbearably hot. As he climbed

out and tried to lunge through the blaze, heat and fire consumed his flesh. Three months after the attack, Frendy spoke with Baptist representatives in his hospital room—in a ward also housing victims of a Sept. 19 gun battle.

His burned scalp is wrapped in gauze. Pink, puffy, scarred flesh roughly resembles a face, most of which is burned away. Gauze covers the cavity, which once was a nose. His ears are charred, his eyes swollen and red with no eyelids to protect them. He can barely speak through a mangled mouth and swollen lips.

'I don't understand why we are being killed. I'm just thankful to God that I am still alive.'
—Frendy Nunemete, Ambonese Christian

he rasped. "I don't understand why we are being killed. I'm just thankful to God that I am still alive."

Frendy's response echoes among many in the communities of Ambon, where the majority of the population historically has been Christian in an overwhelmingly Muslim nation. A battle has raged here for two years. Muslim and Christian communities that coexisted peacefully for generations now stand divided by sandbags and barbed wire barricades in the road—and blood on the ground.

Explanations are few and blame is rampant. Outwardly, the world hears of Christians being slaughtered by their Muslim neighbors.

A religious cleansing, some say. But by whose authority?

In early 1999, a dispute between a Christian and a Muslim sparked riots on Ambon. Some allege the incident was a trapwire that perhaps was planned. Soon after, Christians charge

See **AMBONESE**, Page 7



CRY OF THE PEOPLE—Christian demonstrators protest outside the provincial governor's office in Ambon City, Indonesia. They want to know why the government offers them no protection from deadly attacks by well-equipped Muslim "jihad" warriors, backed by elements of the Indonesian military. *BP photo by Warren Johnson*

Shari Schubert resigns as Florida Baptist Witness associate editor

Shari Schubert, associate editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness*, has resigned effective Oct. 20. She is returning to her home state of Missouri to be closer to immediate family.

Shari has been a valuable asset to the *Witness* and Florida Baptists will surely miss her contributions in the communication ministry of the paper, said Editor Michael Chute. She has served the Lord faithfully these past four years among Florida Baptists and we wish her well as she returns home to opportunities God has in store for her there.

Before joining the *Witness* staff in 1996, Schubert was a newswriter for

World & Way, journal of the Missouri Baptist Convention. Earlier, she worked for Allied Telephone Co. (now Alltel) in Little Rock, Ark., and for Finley Engineering Co. in Lamar, Mo.

"I am grateful for having had the opportunity to see Florida beyond the Disney World postcards and Miami Vice, to understand better the missions and ministry needs of this state and to meet some truly wonderful people along the way," Schubert said.

Florida Baptists will continue to be in my prayers.

It is my hope that my paths will cross with others whom God is calling to the Florida mission field, and that I will be able to share with them about the needs and ministry opportunities here.

Florida Baptist friends who would like to stay in touch with Schubert may write her at PO Box 10055, Columbia, MO 65205.



Schubert

Miami to be 'Strategic Focus City'

Miami is one of two cities that will receive special attention in evangelism and church planting, beginning next year and continuing through 2006. Miami and New York—two of the world's largest cities—were announced as the North American Mission Board's next Strategic Focus Cities during the Sept. 27 regular meeting of NAMB trustees.

"Strategies will be specifically and uniquely put together for those cities," said NAMB president Robert E. Record. "The groundwork is already being laid." Harry Watkins has been named director of "For You Miami"—the name given locally to the Strategic Focus effort. Watkins has served on the staff of Miami Baptist Association for more

than seven years, most recently as director of English missions.

Watkins said the Miami effort will have four major areas of emphasis: prayer, evangelism, church starting and leadership development.

NAMB's designation of Miami as a Strategic Focus City will bring two major resources to the effort: funding—approximately \$2.5 million over five years, Watkins said—and volunteers. A coordinated effort will be made to bring volunteers to Miami from all over Florida and across the United States.

NAMB's previously announced Strategic Focus Cities efforts have focused on implementation during a particular year, with two years each devoted to planning and follow-up efforts.

Chicago and Phoenix were the first two cities to be implemented this year. Boston and Las Vegas are scheduled for next year, while implementation efforts will be focused on Seattle and Philadelphia in 2002.

The strategies for Miami and New York will include extensive preparation time and pilot projects, but major events and other implementation will be spread over a longer period than just one year, said Doug Metzger, director of NAMB's Strategic Focus Cities team.

"I would refer to them as

See **MIAMI**, Page 5

INSIDE:

Supreme Court sends Florida school prayer case back to district, p. 4

Serving God, humanity 'one job' of Palatka pastor, mayor-elect, p. 9

Hispanic Baptists consider challenge of ministry in postmodern age, p. 11

Photo: Warren Johnson



FLORIDA BAPTIST
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LEGACY

Our Mission: Researching, preserving and promoting the Legacy of Florida Baptists

Vol. 13

September, 2021

No. 9

LEGACY, as the monthly newsletter of the Florida Baptist Historical Society, has as its mission to highlight the legacy forged by the people, churches and events in Florida Baptist history. During the next several months this newsletter will feature the story of the development and ministry of the state Baptist news journal, *The Florida Baptist Witness*. The *Witness* was officially adopted and served as an entity of the Florida Baptist State Convention from 1884 until 2017 when it was dissolved as a State Convention agency. During its 133-year history the *Witness* had 33 editors (plus a number of associate editors) and its ownership moved on several occasions between private owners to control by the Convention corporation.

FLORIDA BAPTIST

Witness

Michael D. Chute 1995 – 2001

The brief six-year period of Michael Chute's editorship of the *Florida Baptist Witness* likely could be characterized as an era of calm over chaos, trust over suspicion and confidence over confrontation. Chute's focus upon traditional Baptist news provided a stark contrast to the final years of former editor Jack Brymer (see August, *LEGACY*). And although Chute was a strong advocate of diverse Florida Baptists' and Southern Baptists' news and feature stories – particularly international missions – his efforts did not appreciably affect the subscriber base of the *Witness* which remained in the mid-40,000 range.



Michael Chute (b. 1950), came to the *Witness* editorship from Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU), where he led the journalism department as a professor of journalism. Chute, who was on an extended leave from the SBC International Mission Board, also was working to complete requirements for a doctorate in mass communications. Up until his study leave at OBU, Chute had served 13 years as an SBC missionary in Brazil and then Hong Kong. In those roles he was both an overseas correspondent reporting on Southern Baptist mission work, as well as a communications consultant to missionary personnel. Previously, between 1978 and 1982, he served as the managing editor of the *Word and Way*, the state newspaper for Missouri Baptists.

When the Florida Baptist Witness Commission considered Chute for the *Witness* position, one of the strongest recommendations came from Bob Terry, editor of the *Word and Way*. Terry wrote,

“Mike [Chutes’] public image is that of a foreign missionary.” Terry went on to stress, “He would bring no political baggage with him to the editorship of the *Florida Baptist Witness*. As a foreign missionary, he would represent that which is the glue of our denomination.” Chute subsequently edited the *Witness* from June, 1995 to February, 2001.

A Missionary’s Heart

Without question, Michael Chute’s international missions’ experience was reflected in his editorials, the news stories selected for the *Witness*, and his efforts to promote subscriptions. In his June 8, 1995, editorial titled, “The *Witness*, a witness,” Chute set the tone of his viewpoint. He wrote, “A witness. That’s who Florida Baptists are. That’s what the churches are. That’s who the *Witness* commissioners are. And that’s who I am.” He went on to write that, “The goal of the *Florida Baptist Witness* will be to provide Florida Baptists with a resource for living out the Christian faith.” A review of the pages of the *Florida Baptist Witness* under Chute’s leadership revealed a heavy emphasis upon news coverage about international missions, home missions and the ministries of Florida Baptists. Denominational news, from outside Florida, was typically limited to reports on the sermons and business transacted during the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. It was evident that the *Witness*’ former coverage of controversial SBC news was a thing of the past. Now the emphasis was upon positive Baptist news, as Chute declared, because Florida Baptists “want to know what God is doing and in knowing are compelled by the Holy Spirit to do something to help.”

A Refreshed Appearance

In an effort to increase circulation, Chute redesigned the newspaper and worked hard to secure increased subscriptions. The 16-pages enhanced the *Witness*’ physical size which he increased to 11 inches by 17 inches – called a tabloid format – from the long-standing size of 8-1/2 by 11 inches. An increased use of color photographs and graphs were used in about one-third of the total issues. The enlarged format provided more space for news and feature articles, as well as space for revenue-generating advertisements.

In his efforts to promote the *Witness*, Chute made a continuing tour of the state’s Baptist associations seeking to garner awareness, confidence and trust in both the editor and the news published in the *Witness*. He used his international missions’ experiences as the basis for his appeals to potential subscribers for the weekly newspaper. However by the end of his tenure in 2001 the circulation of the *Witness* was still in the 43,000 range. Although, Chute claimed that the circulation figure represented 120,000 weekly readers.

Increased Staff

As Editor Chute travelled across Florida to promote the newspaper and to gather story material, he needed help to maintain the weekly publishing schedule. Lindsey Bergstrom, who had served as the acting editor-manager until Chute was employed, was assigned to a re-defined position as the assistant editor. Bergstrom served until February, 1996. A young news writer, Bonnie Verlander, was employed to develop Florida-oriented stories. In March, 1996 the *Witness* Board of Commissioners approved the employment of Keith Hinson of Alabama, to serve as associate editor. Unfortunately within five months, Hinson resigned to return to Alabama to resume service as a bi-vocational pastor.

In September, 1996, Shari Schubert, a news writer for the Missouri Baptist’s *Word and Way* newspaper, was named as the *Witness* news editor. Schubert supervised several news writers and field correspondents until October, 2000, when she resigned to return to Missouri. In early February, 2001, two women – Janice Backer and Sherry Selph – were employed to serve as assistant editors.

However by mid-February, 2001, Chute had resigned to accept a teaching and administrative position with William Carey College in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. By now Chute had completed the doctoral degree in mass communications from the University of Southern Mississippi. This terminal degree complemented his B.A. degree from OBU and the M.A. degree from Southwest Missouri State University. A family man, Michael and his spouse Katherine Marie Benge, have two children.

A Farewell Observation

In his final editorial Michael Chute provided a self-evaluation of the impact of the *Florida Baptist Witness*, under his editorship. “Throughout the state, people liked the new tone, direction and unapologetic missions’ emphasis of the paper. We got calls from other states asking about our success with advertising sales and circulation, as ours was one of the few state Baptist newspapers holding its own and not losing subscribers.” He went on to conclude, “Thank you for your help, your encouragement and your support in building a stronger state Baptist newspaper in Florida.”

– Series continues next month –