

HONORING PASTOR RODNEY H. TRAVIS

HON. JAMES M. TALENT

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 15, 1999

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with the honor and pleasure of recognizing Pastor Rodney H. Travis of the First Baptist Church in Ellisville, Missouri. Pastor Travis will open today's session of the United States House of Representatives with the invocation. Pastor Travis is a generous and eloquent man, and he offers a moving invocation.

Pastor Travis is an outstanding member of the St. Louis community. Pastor Travis and his wife Karen Sue and their children Shawn Renae and Tiffany Hope have been in Missouri since 1982, serving at the First Baptist Church in Jackson, Missouri before coming to Ellisville in 1995. Over the last four years, he has diligently served his congregation and the community.

Pastor Travis has served God in many ways since receiving his Master of Divinity from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1979 and later his Doctor of Ministry from Vanderbilt University in 1979. He has served as Trustee of Missouri Baptist College and has held numerous positions with the Missouri Baptist Convention, including serving as President from 1991-1992. He has volunteered as chaplain in Tennessee prison system and as a Police Department Chaplain. His words have served as inspiration to thousands through the Sunday School lessons he wrote for the Baptist publication *World and Way* and for the Baptist Sunday School Board "Listening in Prayer." He also has been named to the International Mission Board Trustee and will serve in this capacity until 2003.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to be able to introduce Pastor Travis to the United States House of Representatives, and I am moved that he has accepted this honor and will share with us his blessing.

IN SUPPORT OF THE MORTGAGE INTEREST DEDUCTION

HON. LOIS CAPPS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 15, 1999

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, today is April 15th, tax day. It's a good day to take a thoughtful look at our tax policy.

Yes, we must reduce our tax burden, bring more fairness to our tax law, and simplify the tax code. But today we must also be very wary of gimmicks, schemes, and risky proposals.

I am particularly concerned about proposals like the flat tax that would eliminate the mortgage interest deduction.

This tax policy has greatly improved the quality of life for millions of middle class families across our nation. It has enabled countless families in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties to raise their children in stable, secure neighborhoods. Home ownership is on the increase across America, and with this increase comes better schools, less crime, and more civic participation.

Owning a home contributes enormously to the financial security of our families. Nothing symbolizes the American dream more than owning a home. For this reason, I am the proud cosponsor of a Congressional resolution expressing strong support for the protection of the home mortgage interest tax deduction. On tax day, let's commit ourselves to making the ideal of home ownership a reality for all Americans.

EXPOSING RACISM

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 15, 1999

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, in my continuing efforts to document and expose racism in America, I submit the following articles into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES ARRESTS IN INDIANA CHURCH BURNINGS

(By Rex W. Huppke)

INDIANAPOLIS (AP).—A man charged with seven Indiana church fires may be responsible for up to 50 such arsons across the Midwest and South, including Mississippi.

Probable cause affidavits accompanying the formal charges brought against Jay Scott Ballinger paint a picture of a 36-year-old who burned churches at random while traveling with his girlfriend, an exotic dancer.

The U.S. Department of Justice announced Tuesday that Ballinger had been arrested and charged with setting seven Indiana church fires dating back to 1994. The Yorktown man was being held in federal custody in Indianapolis while a multi-agency investigation continues.

Charged with one count each of arson are Angela Wood, 24, of Atlanta, Ga., and Donald A. Puckett, 37, of Lebanon, Ind. Wood is in federal custody in Macon, Ga., and Puckett is being held in Indianapolis.

Wood has admitted to serving as a lookout during some of the other fires Ballinger allegedly set, according to the affidavit, and both Wood and Puckett are believed to have helped Ballinger burn down the Concord Church of Christ in Lebanon, Ind., in 1994.

U.S. Attorney Judith A. Stewart would not give information on a motive for the arsons. She said that because the charges are part of a federal criminal complaint she couldn't comment on the investigation until formal charges were brought before a grand jury.

All three arrested are white and most of the church burnings in Indiana have involved rural churches with predominately white congregations.

"When someone sets fire to a house of worship, they are not just setting fire to a building, but to an entire community," said Bill Lann Lee, assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's civil rights division.

The arrests stemmed from the work of the National Church Arson Task Force, established in 1996 after a series of fires at black churches in the South.

An affidavit from a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agent says that searches of Ballinger's central Indiana residence turned up a gasoline container and satanic books and writings. Also found were credit card statements showing purchases made in Indiana and other states on or about the dates of church fires in those areas.

The affidavit says Ballinger admitted to setting "a total of approximately thirty to

fifty" church fires in Indiana and other states.

Jerry Singer, a special agent with the ATF, said the fires involve 11 states, including Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama, all of which were mentioned in the affidavits. Singer would not identify the other four states involved.

He said that in his 21 years with the ATF, this is the largest serial arson case he's seen.

The affidavit details the events that led to Ballinger's arrest: On Feb. 6, 1999, a church in Brookville, Ohio, was burned. Three days later, a detective from the Ball State University Police Department in Muncie overheard an emergency radio call for medical assistance at the Ballinger residence in Yorktown, a few miles west of Muncie.

The officer recognized the last name from a previous church arson investigation. He went to Ball Memorial Hospital in Muncie and interviewed Ballinger's father, who said his son was badly burned when he came home early in the morning on Feb. 7.

The officer notified federal investigators of the incident at the hospital. During interviews with law enforcement officials Feb. 19-21, Ballinger admitted to the various arsons.

Ballinger had at least one prior offense—a 1993 arrest on charges of contributing to the delinquency of a minor. According to court records, he was arrested near Daleville for allowing two teen-agers to consume alcohol in his car.

A warrant was issued for his arrest in Delaware County in 1994 after he failed to show up at a court hearing on those charges.

One of the affidavits in the church arson case said that Puckett admitted that he, Ballinger and Wood set fire to the Concord Church of Christ in Lebanon, Ind., in January 1994.

According to the affidavit, Ballinger and Wood met at Puckett's home, mixed several flammable liquids together then left to find a church to burn.

They picked the Concord Church of Christ at random. Wood allegedly wrote satanic symbols on the porch, Puckett sprayed the flammable mixture and Ballinger lit the fire. The church was destroyed.

JURY AWARDS \$720,000 TO COUPLE IN CROSS-BURNING CASE

CHICAGO (AP).—A federal jury has awarded \$720,000 in damages to a black couple whose suburban home was targeted by a white neighbor with a cross-burning.

After a one-day hearing, jurors deliberated about an hour Monday before deciding in favor of Andre Bailey and Sharon Henderson of Blue Island, who are married, and who filed the lawsuit against Thomas Budlove Jr.

Budlove has failed to respond to the lawsuit or appear in court, prompting a judge to rule last year that his conduct amounted to a tacit admission to the cross burning.

The incident occurred less than a year after Bailey and Henderson moved into the rented bungalow in the predominantly white neighborhood in September 1995. The couple alleged Budlove regularly shouted racial slurs at them from his property. Their tires were slashed, windows were broken, their dog wounded by gunfire and leaves burned on their front porch.

On June 13, 1996, Bailey said that as he stepped from his house to start his car, he was confronted by a 6-foot cross burning in the yard.

Lawyers for the couple and their two children sought at least \$300,000 in damages from Budlove. Attorneys for the family told the jury they doubted Budlove has that amount of money. But they urged the jury to send a message that hate crimes won't be tolerated.