

DAILY LIVING

TRANSFORMERS

It was easy to buy presents for my boys when they were young. 4

INSIDE

PROCLAMATION OF GOSPEL CENTRAL TO LIFE, BANDY SAYS

Sitting in a favela—a slum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil—Alan Bandy said he could barely keep from gagging at the stench emanating from the closet-sized shack and the woman who lived there. 8

MISSIONS

THE VILLAGE PEOPLE

During my third term as a journeyman, I had the awesome opportunity to work with a UPG (unreached people group) in East Asia. 5

THE BAPTIST MESSENGER



SERVING THE CHURCH AND ADVANCING THE GOSPEL, SINCE 1912 • www.baptistmessenger.com • September 23, 2010

“Heaven’s Rain”: Forgiveness finally comes

Oklahoma tragedy remembered in new film

by Douglas E. Baker
Executive Editor

A knock at the door is nothing unusual for a pastor. People in need of everything from driving directions to daily food somehow find their way to a pastor’s home. When a knock came on the evening of Oct. 15, 1979 at the home of Oklahoma City, Putnam City’s pastor, Richard Douglass, nothing out of the ordinary was apparent. Two men simply needed to use the phone. They were welcomed into the house and the Douglass family went about their business—until the sounds of a bullet being loaded into the chamber of a shotgun caused them to realize the unthinkable was about to happen.

Glenn Burton Ake (then 24) and Steven Keith Hatch (then 26) began a more than four-hour reign of terror in the lives of Richard (43), his wife Marilyn (36) and their children Brooks (16) and Leslie (12). Richard, Marilyn and Brooks were forced to the floor, bound hand and foot as Leslie was led upstairs and repeatedly raped as her family listened helplessly below. Even at 12, Leslie knew what was about to happen. After the violent rampage was over, she asked almost in a whimper if she

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PHOTO COURTESY BROOKS DOUGLASS
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT:

Kelly Curran, Brooks Douglass, Nicholas Braico, and Taylor Pigeon as the Douglass Family in Heaven’s Rain.

Mike Vogel as the young Senator Brooks Douglass.

Mike Vogel, left, and Taryn Manning as Brooks and Leslie Douglass.

Annual Meeting Nov. 15-16 features IMB commissioning

by Bob Nigh
Managing Editor

Messengers to the 104th Annual Meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma will help observe Oklahoma Baptist University’s (OBU) Centennial and witness the commissioning of 15 new missionaries by the Southern Baptist Convention’s International Mission Board, Nov. 15-16 in Shawnee.

The theme for the annual gathering of Oklahoma Baptists is “Empowered to Act,” based on Acts 4:31, “After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly.” (NIV)

General sessions of the Annual Meeting will be held in Potter Auditorium of Raley Chapel on the OBU campus. In conjunction with the university’s Centennial, students will be featured during the two-day meeting reading Scripture and leading in prayer.

Featured speakers include Ed Stetzer, director for the North American Mission Board’s (NAMB) Center for Missional Research, who will close out Monday evening’s session, and Doug Melton, pastor of Oklahoma City, Southern Hills, who will present the Convention’s Annual

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Forward “Momentum” for 2010

by Hillary Glaze

Baptist Collegiate Ministries’ Momentum 2010 was a fantastic depiction of what a group of collegiate students dedicated to the Lord look like. The representation of more than 1,000 students from 37 Oklahoma colleges made for an exciting bunch.

Momentum is not just a time for stu-

dents to get away from their campus for the evening; it is a time for students to praise God, hear His Word presented and enjoy fellowship with one another.

The Jeff Johnson Band started the conference by leading the students in passionate worship. His transparency and ability to relate to the students got

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HEAVEN'S RAIN

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could go to the bathroom. They refused. There was little comfort for the little girl whose inner world would never be the same again.

She was finally tied up along with her family as all of them listened to a debate between the two men as to whether they would live or die. As Ake and Hatch ate the family's dinner, the decision was made: they would die. One by one, they were shot. The couple's wedding rings were taken and a total of \$43 in cash. As they sped away, Brooks and Leslie—both severely wounded—drove to the home of a nearby doctor and collapsed.

Of Memories and Meaning

Thirty years later, the story still stings. Oklahomans still recoil with horror as it stands as one of the most heinous crimes ever committed on state soil. The aftermath, however, few really remember—until now. A new motion picture, "Heaven's Rain," has been made chronicling the details of that night. And yet the film is more than a mere retelling of the story. Rather, it is the unveiling of the inner world of Brooks Douglass and his sister, Leslie, as they struggle to simply survive after experiencing intense emotional trauma.

Mike Vogel, who plays the role of Brooks Douglass, currently can be seen on a new CBS series, "Miami Medical"—produced by one of Hollywood's most famous producers, Jerry Bruckheimer. Vogel's portrayal of Brooks Douglass peers behind the walls of his heart and reveals a young man still suffering from the memory of that night in his youth.

Frustrated with the legal system which trivialized the rights of victims, Douglass made the decision to go to law school at night. The Oklahoma City University law graduate soon made his way to the Oklahoma State Senate. His first initiative as a newly minted senator was to champion a bill that would not simply memorialize his parents, but establish a law that would protect future crime victims who, in Douglass' words that now ring famous on the floor of the Oklahoma senate chamber, "step over the bodies of the victims" in an effort to seek justice for their murderers.

Vogel captures the upheaval in Brooks Douglass' life as he finds himself penniless, curled up in a sleeping bag by candlelight listening to the tape of a sermon by his father. The sound of the recorded words made the distance of death seem less. It had been years since he had seen

his father, but something in that sermon still resonated with him. The message of forgiveness preached by his Dad was not a soft message of live and let live. To the contrary, his father's sermon sounded forth a note of praise for God's judgment.

"God's judgment is precious," he said from the Putnam City pulpit. He then carefully explained the forgiveness that must wash over the lives of those who encounter the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Abandoned by his wife and largely alone as the days passed toward the time when he would watch one of the killers be executed, Vogel skillfully reveals aspects of Douglass' life and emotional state once hidden from his own sister. It was from that sermon that "heaven's rain" is first heard as the memorable phrase inside Brooks' head. Over and over again, it raised its voice through the corridors of time to a mourning son never quite able to move past what happened when he was 16 years old.

Quality and Clarity

For a relatively low-budget film, it is remarkable in its quality and clarity. The pace of the movie is such that while flashbacks interact with more current scenes, there is never a hint of confusion as anyone who sits to watch the film will discover. The movie opened to rave reviews last week in Los Angeles, where Brooks Douglass now lives. The cast represents some of the movie industry's best talent for a film that was largely produced through private funding and a smattering of extras and volunteers.

Douglass, (now 46), also steps in front of the camera to play the role of his father. With ease, he assumes the character of a man he greatly loved. Richard Douglass was a missionary to Brazil with the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board (as it was then named) and was, at bottom, a theologian. One of the scenes also showcases the character of a man who trusted in



Brooks Douglass portrays his father, Richard, as he preaches the now famous sermon of "Heaven's Rain".

PHOTO COURTESY BROOKS DOUGLASS



Scene from "Heaven's Rain" with Brooks Douglass and Mike Vogel.

PHOTO COURTESY BROOKS DOUGLASS

God's providence and was seldom shaken by life's difficult days.

Soon after the last ring of a bell on a small manual typewriter was heard, the missionary/pastor Richard Douglass finished his doctoral thesis. A celebration was in order as Richard and Marilyn briefly left their children for some time together. As they returned home, they found the walls covered with snowflakes which Brooks and Leslie had made. On closer examination, Richard discovered that the paper from which these snowflakes came to life was none other than the pages of a doctoral thesis. Before the days of computers, this meant that years of work was lost. As Brooks apologized, his father took him in his arms and simply asked that next time he needed some paper for a project to simply ask before he started to work.

Courage and Consequence

"Heaven's Rain" penetrates beyond the surface scenes of a man fighting for the cause of victim's rights to the depths of anguish between him and his sister; him and the memories of his past; and ultimately to an encounter with the essence of evil itself until, almost unexpectedly, forgiveness emerges through years of struggle as a healing balm to a troubled soul. Far more than simply a "decision" to forgive, forgiveness for Brooks Douglass is perhaps best personified as walking through the valley of the shadow of death and emerging on the other side more prepared to live as one redeemed, restored and forgiven

through the power of Jesus Christ.

Immediately after some of the news media recently saw the film for the first time, Douglass himself stood to take questions. He cuts the figure of a man who has grown content in his work and calm in his demeanor.

"During the days when we were filming the scene of my father's death, I realized I was experiencing the moments of my Dad's final moments on this Earth," he said.

For him, it seemed both riveting and revolting because that night has forever shaped his life. Those memories have set the direction of his work, and now he stands as a man able to share his story of "Heaven's Rain" in a way that is both captivating and compelling.

Years have passed since Richard and Marilyn Douglass departed this life. The lives of their children have, in many ways, been a series of twists and turns leading up to this project where they courageously tell the story of their broken lives. The film's real value is as a roadmap through suffering where trust and perseverance finally find their end in forgiveness as the key to peace in the midst of great sorrow. For Brooks Douglass and his sister, Leslie, heaven's rain continues to fall.

For more information on the film: www.heavensrainmovie.com.

The film opens in Oklahoma City and Kingfisher on Sept. 17.

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Brooks Douglass and Mike Vogel discuss a scene in the movie "Heaven's Rain".

PHOTO COURTESY BROOKS DOUGLASS