

NATION

Suspect asks judge's advice in abortion doctor's murder

PENSACOLA, Fla. (AP)—A former minister seemed relaxed — almost nonchalant — as he asked for the judge's advice yesterday about finding a lawyer to defend him in the killings of a doctor and his bodyguard outside an abortion clinic.

Escambia County Judge James Roark III asked Paul Hill if he wanted a public defender or planned to use a private lawyer.

"I haven't decided as of yet, sir," said the 40-year-old, strawberry blond defendant. "I don't know how the system works here."

Then Mr. Hill asked the judge: "What would be the wisest thing to do?"

Judge Roark advised him to take a public defender with the understanding that he could change to a private attorney later.

"OK, I'll try that," Mr. Hill said.

Mr. Hill's demeanor angered some who came to watch the proceedings.

"He had no apparent distress in what he has been charged with doing," said Caroline Tesche, a lawyer for the Feminist Majority, an abortion-rights group.

She came to Pensacola to urge federal, state and local authorities to investigate possible connections

among acts of anti-abortion violence across the nation. A multi-jurisdictional investigation would allow authorities to determine if there are any connections between attacks on doctors.

The slayings Friday of Dr. John Bayard Britton and retired Air Force Lt. Col. James Herman Barrett came nearly 17 months after Dr. David Gunn was shot to death at another Pensacola clinic.

Mr. Hill, who had advocated the killing of abortion doctors as "justifiable homicide," appeared before Judge Roark in a small courtroom at the Escambia County Jail.

When the judge asked if he had anything else to say, Mr. Hill mused: "Hmmm... may I keep this arrest report?"

He explained he wanted to see what he was charged with.

The charges are two counts of murder and one count of attempted murder. Col. Barrett's wife, June, was wounded in the arm.

Mrs. Barrett, 68, a retired nurse, was in good condition yesterday at Baptist Hospital.

A grand jury is expected to review the case to determine if Mr. Hill should be indicted and the degree of any charges.

He could face the death penalty if convicted of first-degree murder. Michael Griffin was sentenced to life with a minimum of 25 years before parole in the shooting of Dr. Gunn.

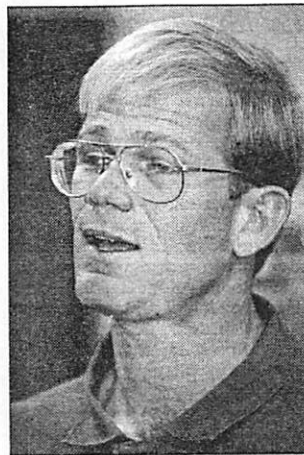
Mr. Hill's next court appearance was scheduled for Aug. 19.

Sheriff's Lt. Ron McNesby said Mr. Hill was being held alone in a cell separate from the rest of the jail population and under a suicide watch — standard procedure in high-profile cases.

Multiple shotgun blasts through the windshield and windows of a pickup truck killed Dr. Britton, 69, and Col. Barrett, 74, in the parking lot of the Ladies Center for Abortion.

Col. Barrett had complained recently to Escambia County sheriff's deputies that he was being stalked and harassed, said Chicky Desmarais, another clinic bodyguard. Lt. McNesby said yesterday that he could find no record of such complaints, but additional files will be searched tomorrow.

Mr. Hill was arrested at the clinic July 17 and charged with disturbing the peace and a noise violation for shouting anti-abortion messages. Police said they were well aware of his militant



Murder suspect Paul Hill interacts with Judge James Roark III.

views.

"We've done the best we can to be there and see that everyone's rights are protected," said police Sgt. Jerry Potts.

Mr. Hill, who grew up in the Miami area, has shown a violent streak in the past, according to a Coral Gables police report.

When he was 17, his father, Oscar Hill, signed a warrant against him for assault, telling police he wanted to force him to get treatment for a drug problem. When police searched Mr. Hill, a small bag of marijuana fell from his clothing and his father turned over 11 more, the report said.

Retired officers mourn murder of friend in Florida

By Shannon Robertson
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Annapolis chapter of the Retired Officers Association meeting was a somber scene yesterday as members discussed the death of retired Air Force Lt. Col. James Herman Barrett.

Col. Barrett, 74, a former Annapolis resident and organizer of the association, was gunned down in Pensacola, Fla., Friday morning while escorting Dr. John Bayard Britton to the Ladies Center for Abortion clinic. He and Dr. Britton both died from gunshot wounds to the head.

Col. Barrett was an aviator in the Army during World War II. He moved to the Air Force after it was created in the postwar era. He also served in the Korean War, retiring as a lieutenant colonel in the late 1970s.

He taught elementary school for 13 years in Maryland after retiring.

He re-established the Annapolis branch of the Retired Officers Association in the late 1980s.

"He was instrumental in reforming the association. He was the president for almost three years," retired Army Col. Dave Hoagland, a member of the group, said.

Col. Barrett's wife, June, who was also wounded in the Friday shooting, was listed in good condition yesterday at a Florida hospital recuperating from a wound to the arm. The couple worked as volunteer escorts, who shielded employees from protesters outside the clinic.

Col. Barrett married Mrs. Barrett less than five years ago, Col. Hoagland said.

"They were both appointed to the [association's] board and that's how they met," Col. Hoagland said. "They were both widowers."

Mrs. Barrett, 68, is a retired

captain with the U.S. Public Health Service. She spent 20 years working on Indian reservations to improve the health of residents.

Friends were surprised when the couple announced in 1992 that they were moving to Pensacola.

"He was really proud of living in Annapolis. He used to tell stories about Annapolis when he was young and it was a small town," Col. Hoagland said. "We were all shocked when they moved."

Bruce Barrett of Annapolis said yesterday the escorting work had become a part of his father's life in Florida.

"My father was simply a volunteer trying to get doctors safely from the airport to the clinic," Mr. Barrett. "And even on days he didn't escort doctors, he escorted the ladies."

Col. Hoagland believes crime and violence in the Annapolis area may have prompted the Barretts to relocate to a Florida retirement community.

"About a year or a year and a half before he left town, he was mugged. After that he was on his guard," Col. Hoagland said. "That kind of thing happening to him really shocked him. Maybe that took him to Pensacola."

Col. Hoagland remembers Col. Barrett as a man involved in community groups and charities and still active in his retirement.

"He had a zest for a lot of things. He was still taking planes up in his 70s," he said.

Col. Hoagland described the killings as "just a cowardly act by a real devious idiot down there."

"To say you are out to save children, but you waste the lives of good-hearted adults... I just don't understand," he said.

Paul Hill has been charged with two counts of murder and one count of attempted murder in the shootings.

Federal probe searches for pro-life conspiracy

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Federal agents will investigate whether any organized group is behind the shooting death of a doctor and a volunteer at a Florida abortion clinic, Attorney General Janet Reno says.

"We have and we will continue to pursue every investigative lead to determine if there is any organized activity producing this violence," she told reporters.

Even before Friday's shooting, federal agents were looking into whether a conspiracy existed, Jus-

tice Department officials said. Miss Reno declined to say whether any evidence of an organized scheme has been found.

The Pensacola, Fla., shooting came on the heels of a federal statute against blocking entrances to abortion clinics or using violence or threats against clinic workers. President Clinton signed it into law in May.

Miss Reno said charges under that law might be brought in the shooting, depending on "what is best for the case."

Abortion opponents bristled at the suggestion that there was a conspiracy behind the shooting and other violence by pro-life activists.

"I strongly resent the implication that all these groups need to be investigated because there's this nationwide conspiracy out there," said the Rev. Pat Mahoney, a national leader of Operation Rescue. "It simply is not the case."

But Eleanor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority, told reporters: "This is not an isolated event.

We have called repeatedly for a national investigation."

She also asked for federal marshals to escort employees and patients into abortion clinics threatened by violence.

The National Right to Life Committee issued a statement denouncing the violence but declaring that the group will not tone down its rhetoric. "It is false and offensive to suggest, as some pro-abortion groups have done, that speaking in favor of the right to life somehow causes violence," the statement said.