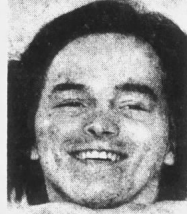


14A THE KANSAS CITY STAR Sunday, April 10, 1977

Faith, Brother Brace Bedridden Athlete

Continued From Page 1A
four of his five sisters still live. His other sister is in Colorado. Pat's father died in May, 1974, and his mother is remarried.
Rosebud and the Upper Room church don't have much to do with one another. The church sits right in the middle of town, but most of its members come from towns to the east, particularly Union, Mo. Mike Bickle's church is looked on as just a bit odd and, he says, rejected by the town.
But to know about Pat Bickle, to try to understand him, it's important to know about Mike and his church.
It's a pretty fundamentalist group. Mike says it's almost a "charismatic" group. Charismatic Christians believe that certain "gifts of the spirit," such as the power of healing and the ability to speak in tongues, are given today to some persons as they were in biblical times.



PAT BICKLE
... still smiling

Mike, who is not an ordained minister, says he and Pat and others in the church have studied the scriptural basis for healing and they say they are on sound theological ground to believe that Pat, if he deeply believes in God and his power, can be physically healed. Pat says he already is spiritually healed.

Pat and others say that what they believe about healing is best expressed by an author named E.W. Kenyon, who says:

"Before we are able to understand healing we must understand the origin of disease, sickness and death. We have seen that as a result of Adam's Crime of High Treason, Spiritual Death gained an entrance into the spirit of man."

"This Spiritual Death, which has reigned in the human race, has been the soul out of which has grown the reign of sin, disease and death over man. Sickness, disease and death in man's physical body are but the manifestation of Spiritual Death within the spirit. If man had never died spiritually, disease and death would never have had a part in man's physical body."

"In conclusion, sin and death are twins, born of Spiritual Death. They are both the work of Satan. Sin is a disease of the spirit; sickness, as we see it, is a disease of the physical body."

"Christ's ministry proclaimed healing and blessing to the physical part of man's nature, as well as to the spiritual side."

Mike believes as deeply as Pat does that his brother will ultimately have good health.

"I believe very firmly God's going to heal him," he says. "I really do. I guess that's foreign to a lot of people, but I've been around healing so much that it's not weird."

"My mom thinks I'm screwed on backward, too optimistic, building false hope in Pat. But I understand that. I expect it, so it's easy to handle."

But the mother of Pat and Mike, Mrs. Peggy Callahan, says she doesn't believe as Mike says she does.

"I have my own feelings," she said, "but that (optimism) is great for Pat. When Pat comes home now he's more content and happy than he's ever been."

Pat's life these days is almost totally wrapped up in his brother and in religion.

"All we do is read the Bible," says Pat.
That is not exactly true, but he does spend a lot of his bed-strapped hours thinking about how it is that he's lying here, contemplating the goodness of God.

"It's kind of hard to figure out what God is doing sometimes," Pat admits. "I don't like it (being paralyzed)."

Pat says, "I'd do almost anything, really, to get out of it, but I really have more peace and sometimes I have joy. I say, 'Hey, man, I don't want to have joy. I want to feel sorry for myself.' It's really amazing."

Pat even says something that sounds nearly incredible to people with healthy bodies:

"I'm kind of glad right now that I got

hurt. I'm really glad, because now I know what God really is."

When he's based in Rosebud Pat lies most of the time on his bed in the front room of the small brick manse. There's a television nearby and he watches a lot of sports programs. And he has a device by which he can read, if someone turns the pages.

Several young men live in the manse from time to time with Pat and Mike.

They generally describe themselves as persons who had gone astray and who were led to Jesus by Mike. There's a young man from Boston and his friend from Oklahoma City who, they say, used to be speed freaks. Mike picked them up hitchhiking and turned around their lives.

There is always someone in the house with Pat, "just in case of trouble," says one of the young men.

Several times a week Pat is put on a tilttable and carried to a blue van. He goes with Mike and other young men to religious rallies and meetings.

On the way, says a friend, Pat usually talks about how he's going to tell everyone how important Jesus is in his life, but by the time they arrive he has gotten shy.

"I'm kind of bashful," Pat admits. "But I'm going to do it (speak) more when I get more courage." And then he laughs a bit.

Periodically someone exercises Pat's flaccid legs and arms. His weight—once about 160—is a bit more than half that now, a friend says. It is important that he be moved and exercised to prevent bed sores, which are difficult to heal. Pat checks into a hospital once in a while for a checkup. He says doctors worry a bit about his kidneys—often a problem with quadriplegics—but he says so far it's nothing serious.

"I know my kidneys aren't going to be messed up," he insists. "I just know it."

Sometimes Pat thinks about that head-on tackle in the Oak Park Center football game at North Kansas City field, a tackle that injured some verte-

brae and his spinal cord. But more often these days he thinks about something that happened a few days before that 1973 game.

"One day," he says, "I really can't remember exactly when, like just a couple of days before I got hurt, for some reason I got very serious. I prayed to God, 'God, if there's any way that you want me to get closer to you, if there's any way, God, I'll do it.'"

"I asked him to get me closer. And I believe that if I hadn't prayed to ask God to get me closer I'd never have got hurt."

But Pat doesn't blame God for his injury, not at all. He says it was his fault. And he doesn't think God chose him to be injured, exactly.

Trying to understand total paralysis is terribly difficult. It's hard for Pat to describe his physical life. It's hard to imagine lying on a bed for 3½ years, able to feel nothing below one's neck.

"I definitely can't feel anything," Pat says, "but my mind still thinks there's a body."
Sometimes his mind plays little tricks on him, like when he's thinking about being able to walk, or when he wakes up and thinks about getting up to go about baskets. He says that when he's awake he now sees himself as paralyzed, but he doesn't dwell on it.

"I definitely see myself lying in bed," he says, "but I'm always thinking about what I'm going to do when I'm not, you know, what I'm going to do when I get up. I don't see myself playing football or anything like that any more. I always see myself doing something to let people know about God, or what God wants me to do."

He says, however, that it's impossible to form definite plans "because I really believe that what's going to happen." He just wants to tell people that someday "there's going to be fire and there's going to be hell and I don't really want that for anybody because God loves everybody. God doesn't want to play games. He's very serious about all this."

The Bickle brothers were close growing up. They would play football together for hours on end, Pat rifling fast, accurate passes to Mike's sure hands. So it is not particularly surprising that Mike would elect to change his college plans and the direction of his life to be with Pat.

Mike says before their father died they promised each other that one of them would stay with Pat as long as necessary.

"Wherever he goes and wherever I go," says Mike, "we'll be at peace about it. I really believe he's going to be walking, and when he's walking he's out. Out." Then Mike laughs and jostles Pat's bed.

"No," Mike adds, "it's the one who would kick me out."
I don't really see myself as though I've helped Pat," Mike says. "It's not like that at all."

"Yeah," adds Pat, "it's not like I owe him anything."

A lot of people have put me on a plateau and said, 'Gee, you're such a great brother,'" Mike said. "It's not that I'm such a great brother, it's just that others are lousy brothers."

Mike says Pat has learned about the importance of God from him, but Mike also says he gains inspiration from Pat and something else that's hard to talk about. It's a kind of huge relief, a massive appreciation of Pat's predicament.

"He helps me in... oh, I see where he's at," Mike says, pointing toward his immobile brother, "and it humbles me. It really does."

"I'm so glad, just so glad I'm not like that—sorry about that. Pat—plus our friendship together has been a real help in my own life. I guess we really do have a love for each other that really is deep."

So it's different now than it was that first awful year, when "morons," as Mike calls them, would come in off the street and tell Pat that on such-and-such a day Pat would walk again.

There aren't any more crazies with their separate pipelines to the Lord coming around, depressing Pat, offering him hope out of a vacuum, hope that was finite, terminal, hope that dissolved.

It takes a while to know that He's going to help you," he says, "I definitely still get frustrated. But if He knows what he's doing, you know, I'm going to take it."

"Because I believe that this life, it's really important, but I think the life ahead is what it's all about."

Mathematics Group Elects President

Dr. Shirley A. Hill, professor of education and mathematics at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, has been elected president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

She will serve one year as president-elect, then begin a 2-year term as president of the group, which has about 48,000 educators in its membership.

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