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Academy President
Smothers Dies In Fire

SEYMOUR, Tenn. (BP)--Hubert B. Smothers, president of Harrison-Chilhowee Baptist Academy in Seymour, Tenn., died early Jan. 1 in a fire which destroyed the president's home on the academy campus.

Smothers, 59, apparently was overcome by smoke when he returned to the two-story home thinking one of his grandchildren was still inside the burning house.

According to reports, five of the six Smothers children and their families were spending New Year's weekend at the Smothers' home. About 1:30 a.m., a son-in-law, Bob Hammonds, discovered the kitchen/family room engulfed in flames.

Hammonds alerted other family members and all 13 were able to escape. However, in the confusion, Smothers thought one of the grandchildren was still inside and went back.

When members of the Seymour Volunteer Fire Department were able to enter the home--about an hour later--they found Smothers. He was rushed to the East Tennessee Baptist Hospital in nearby Knoxville, but all efforts to revive him were unsuccessful.

Fire officials said the fire apparently started from a fireplace in the family room. An investigation, required by Tennessee law in all fires which involve a fatality, will be conducted this week.

Smothers had been president of the high-school level boarding school since September 1970. The school is part of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

He was a graduate of HCBA, Cumberland College in Lebanon, Tenn., and George Peabody College for Teachers (now a part of Vanderbilt University) in Nashville. After serving as coach and teacher at Greenbrier High School in Greenbrier, Tenn., he became director of public relations for Belmont College in Nashville.

In 1958, he became personnel supervisor at the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, and was director of the service division of the BSSB when he became HCBA president.

The family has requested memorials be made to HCBA. The Hubert B. Smothers Memorial Fund has been created at First Baptist Church of Seymour, where Smothers was a deacon.

Following Smothers' death, the executive committee of the HCBA board of trustees held a called meeting to make arrangements for the continuing operation of the school. Mrs. Jane Ellison of Knoxville, trustee chairman, with advice of the executive committee, will serve as the academy administrator until an interim president is named.