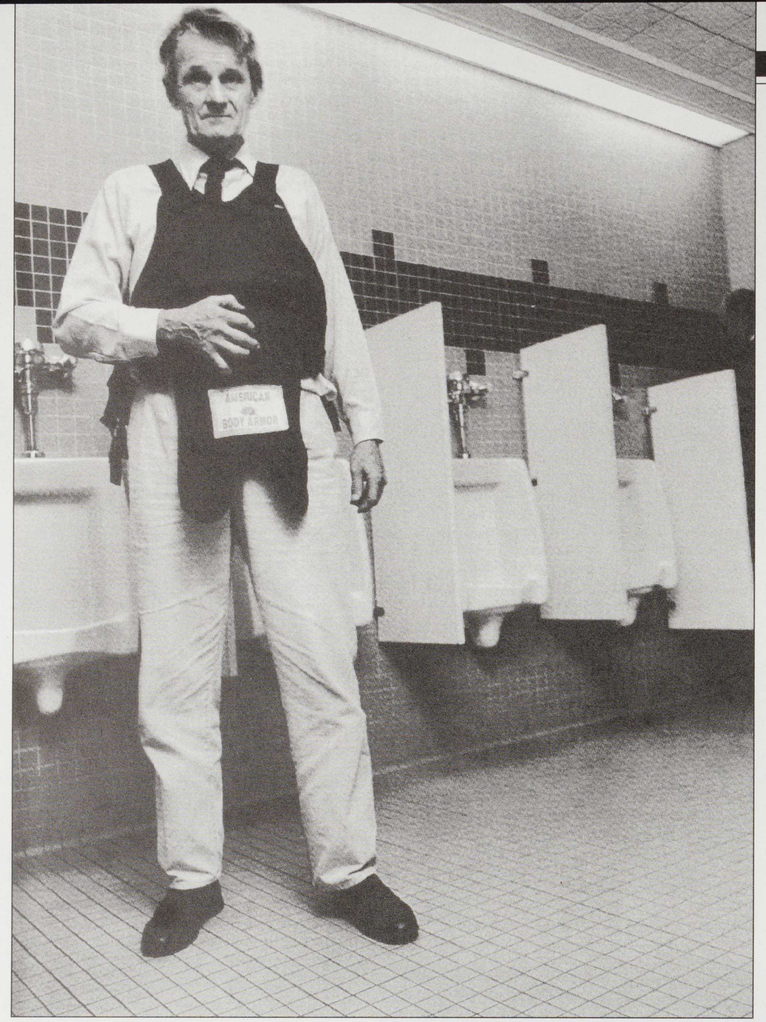


Abortionist Britton dons his bulletproof vest at the Pensacola airport.

— even though the government and pro-abortionists said there was. The conclusion was forgone.

He formed a letterhead organization called Defensive Action and issued a public statement to that effect calling for the acquittal of Michael Griffin. He had mustered a list of approximately 30 ministers, priests, and pro-life leaders to sign on in agreement.

Later, when Shelley Shannon shot and wounded abortionist George Tiller in Wichita, Kansas, Hill issued a similar philosophical statement.

While in Wichita for the Shannon trial, Hill, as he had affirmed in the past, said that he did not intend to actually kill an abortionist.

"It is largely a matter of calling," he said. "I've taken up the weapon I'm most comfortable with. I've taken up the weapon of the Spirit."

Critics, many of them pro-life leaders, accused him of hypocrisy saying that if he really believed in the pronouncements he made, then he should act on them.

Now he apparently has.

Meanwhile, Hill stood before Escambia County Judge James G. Rourk III at a preliminary hearing the day after the shooting. He asked the judge what was the best thing to do since he was "not familiar with the system." The judge advised and appointed an attorney, ruled that no bail would be set, and scheduled August 19 for Hill's arraignment.

Hill, appearing calm and confident, was led from the courtroom.

John Bayard Britton was not one you might choose for your doctor. He was sort of a physician-of-ill-repute.

After the slaying of abortionist David Gunn, the clinics on Gunn's circuit were desperate for a replacement but no one was available until they ran across Britton of Fernandina Beach, Florida.

Tall, gaunt, and looking like a refugee from a mortician's convention, Britton joined the team. He had been doing abortions ever since *Roe v Wade* and already had a "circuit" established that ran through Orlando, Melbourne, and Tallahassee. He added Pensacola's Ladies Center to the list. The other clinic in town, Pensacola Women's Medical Center, site of the Gunn shooting, brought on abortionist Phillip Keene, who was recently accused of having caused the death of Pamela Colson, 30, when she came to him for an abortion.

Britton had little success in the medical profession in his 69 years. Hospitals refused to grant him residency, no practice would hire him. The promise of good income in the medical profession escaped him. He had an office in nearby Jacksonville that was described as "seedy."

Excuses abound about how "Doc" just had ideas of helping the poor and that other doctors disliked him for it. But he spent two years on probation for prescribing Percodan and Percocet to a drug addict, and the state medical board once described him as "being unable to practice medicine with reasonable skill and safety."

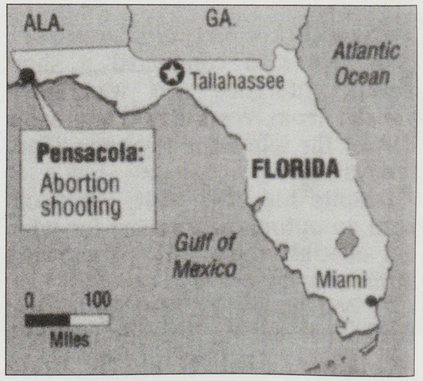
The hospital in Fernanda Beach kicked him off staff for violating hospital rules — including, according to a former patient who asked not to be named, for doing illegal abortions.

Living in a ramshackle house surrounded by rusting cars and home appliances, Britton had barely eked out a living until the "job" offer. He became the offscouring of the medical community — an abortionist.

After the shooting death of Gunn, it was dangerous, but the money was good — an estimated $1,600 each Friday at the Ladies Center.

In a *GQ* magazine article earlier this year, Britton was featured. While the author tried to put the best spin possible on the facts, the true man shone through — that of an incompetent failure grasping at his chance at financial success.

Traveling, wearing a homemade bulletproof vest which he constructed from castoffs from a vest manufacturer's dumpster, and carrying a .357 magnum pistol in his car,



The shot-punctured truck and Britton's body (covered) beside it.

Britton made his "rounds" to several abortuaries.

The *GQ* article also indicated that Britton, knowing his enemies might come to kill him, would want to kill them first — perhaps with the gun he is seen holding in the contents page of the magazine.

To get to the Pensacola clinic, Britton had to fly in. He was met by a volunteer bodyguard who rode to the clinic with him. James Herman Barrett and his wife, June, the couple who were shot with Britton, were assigned to pick him up on Fridays.

On Friday, July 29, Britton was wearing his bulletproof vest. He was shot in the head.

When James and June Barrett first heard of the shooting of the Pensacola abortionist, David Gunn, they decided to "do their part" and volunteer to help. But to call them "escorts," as the media tended to do, was a misrepresentation.

James was a 74-year-old retired Air Force lieutenant colonel. His military background surely informed him of the potential danger of the situation — similar, in a wartime analogy — to a driver delivering fresh troops to the front lines.

He also carried a gun. Bodyguard is the appropriate term.

"Jim was just doing what he believed in," said June Barrett from her hospital bed where she stayed for one day. "He believed in a woman's right to choose."

But James was no sweetheart. The *GQ* magazine article talked about him too.

He was a dangerous — and possibly fanatical — individual.

"I keep an eye on those peckerheads," he told *GQ* of the pro-lifers around the clinic. "I didn't go to Korea and serve my country for twenty-five years in the service so that these peckerheads can shoot doctors."

At this point he became, if it were possible, even more bellicose.

"It won't happen while I'm around," he added. "I do not miss. These hands are small but I know where to put them. I have survived this long because I shoot first."

His question to those who opposed what he did: "Is [your] dislike of what I am doing here worth dying for?"

When June, after the shooting, described the events, she told of seeing her husband getting out of the passenger side door. Was he drawing his weapon, which he usually kept beside him in the vehicle and later would keep in a box on the abortuary deck?

If so, this might change the nature of what Hill is accused of doing and whether there was justification for shooting the bodyguard.

James Barrett was apparently spoiling for a fight.

He got one.

The Place

What is it about Pensacola, Florida that draws such extreme acts?

That is the question on the minds of many in the small, unobtrusive city along the "American Riviera" — the northern Gulf Coast of the state.

"This event [the shooting of Britton] is not at all reflective of our community," intoned Mayor John Fogg. "There is no broad-based sentiment for this kind of thing."

Yet Pensacola is considered the "Buckle of the Bible Belt" and there is a strong pro-life sentiment there.

The town has been the site of bombings, burnings, and shootings over the years.

The Ladies Center abortuary, where Britton was shot, was formerly located several miles away but was bombed in June of 1984.