



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**FEATUERS**

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New Orleans Hippies Get  
The Word on Soul Power

by John D. Carter

"Cat" testified that Jesus had come into his heart. Twenty minutes later, "cat" got busted.

Two of New Orleans' finest pushed the skinny Negro into the back seat of a squad car--sideways.

He didn't bend that way, but there he was inside, like a ship in a bottle, and you wondered how the policemen did it.

Down the street, car #155 sat three feet from the curb, motor running. A tall cop was rummaging around inside a girl's purse.

"Do you smoke grass?" his lips hardly moved.

"No"

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"Have you ever smoked grass?"

"No"

Hunkered down on the sidewalk, Arthur Blessitt was witnessing to an obese, but tough-looking guy. They knelt to pray. Sidewalk traffic flowed around them in both directions.

California evangelist Blessitt, billed as the minister to the Sunset Strip, was leading a "soul service" at a Hippie hang-out called "The Bank," near Jackson Square. The love-in for Christ promised free food and drink (how would you like a Hawaiian punch?), groovy music and hip messages from members of the Blessitt team.

The service was the kick-off for the Vieux Carre Ministry of Leo Humphrey, a former associate to Bob Harrington, the chaplain of Bourbon Street. In the audience were hippie types who dropped in to hear sounds generated by the scheduled band, and also present were a generous supply of curious newsmen, pastors and laymen from the Southern Baptist Convention session a few blocks away at the Rivergate Exhibition Center.

Included among the testimonies was that of Alvin Solo, a former dope addict and black militant now a member of Blessitt's staff.

Benito, the proprietor of "The Bank," claims that Blessitt won him to Christ during the convention week. "I told Arthur that he could use my place for services. I really believe, and I want to do anything to help," he said.

Another recent convert to Blessitt's ministry was a nondescript young black man known simply as "cat." He was slightly embarrassed as he was introduced and Blessitt had to lead him along at first with a few questions concerning his conversion experience, but "cat" finally told the crowd that he had assurance,

A few minutes later, "cat" was risking one of his nine lives, fighting off two policemen. No reasons were given for the arrest, but it was rumored that he was wanted for suspicion of robbery.

One onlooker suggested that an undercover policeman in the audience may have "fingered cat" because he answered the general description of the robbery suspect.

A television news team came by to film the scene and recorded conflicting interviews as to whether police brutality was involved in the arrest. A large group of grim-visaged policemen watched the filming.

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"Man, this is the most heat I've ever seen at one time," said Gene, manager of an acid-rock group called "The Pill."

"There are more cops here than I've ever seen in the Quarter in one spot before."

Questioned about his reaction to the sermons of Blessitt and Humphrey, Gene said, "I just don't dig it. All they do is walk around and talk. We usually get 20 to 25 dollars for a night of playing and now they are cutting in our time. I wish they would get off the stage. I've got a wife and kid to support."

Nearby, a long-haired but clean-cut boy was protesting to a middle-aged man, "put away your Bible, I don't believe in that book. Talk to me if you want to, but pulling out the book don't (sic) mean a thing to me, man."

Humphrey, who has taken on the challenge of witnessing to these young men and women, admitted the road will be hard. "But, there is no ministry in the French Quarter especially tailored to these kid's needs. It's vitally needed. Bob Harrington ministeres to a very different aduience on Bourbon Street, plus he spends a lot of time away from The Quarter on crusades. We need a continuing, constant soul-winning ministry among the alenated youth here."

The slim, blond evangelist said that he has received support from 15 Southern Baptist churches in beginning the work, and that several have also volunteered to accept Hippie converts as members of their churches and follow up on the evangelist's contacts.

As Humphrey talked, Arthur Blessitt was inside--sometimes standing tall on the psychedelic stage, or leaning on the giant black amplifiers, or jumping down to the florescent floor, begging a group that could truly be termed "the great unwashed" to "take a trip with Jesus."

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June 18, 1969

**High Court Agrees to Hear  
Church Tax Exemption Case**

WASHINGTON (BP)-- The United States Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case that challenges tax exemption for property owned by religious organizations and which is used exclusively for religious purposes.

Frederick Walz of New York City contends that such exemption is a violation of his religious freedom as well as that of all others similarly situated. Specifically, he claims that the first amendment and the fourteenth amendment of the federal constitution are violated by tax exemption of property owned by religious bodies and which is used exclusively for religious purposes.

The first amendment prohibits an establishment of religion and guarantees religious liberty. The fourteenth provides for "due process of law" for all citizens.

Walz claims that tax exemption for church real estate forces an involuntary payment by non-members. He contends that such payments are in effect a confiscation of property without due process of law.

The case arose in the tax commission of the city of New York in 1967 when Walz challenged the New York law allowing real estate tax exemption to religious organizations. After the commission denied his claim, he appealed to the special term of the supreme court of New York and later to the appellate division. Both courts upheld the tax commission.

The New York Supreme Court said, "such exemptions are granted in pursuance of long-standing public policy of this state, under a statute which is presumptively constitutional."

It was the position of the tax commission that Walz was neither aggrieved by church property tax exemption now was he deprived of any rights sufficient to state a cause of action.

Walz describes himself as "a religious person," a christian, but not a member of any religious organization. He rejects religious organizations as "hostile."

Walz is a New York property owner, an attorney and is arguing his own case before the courts.

In his appeal to the Supreme Court Walz posed the question: "Did the court of appeals err in holding that the real property tax exemption of religious organizations is not in violation of the first and the fourteenth amendments of the federal constitution

He pointed out in his appeal that neither the trial court nor the appellate division in New York cited any authority against his contentions.

Although the court of appeals cited a number of cases, Walz contended that none of them dealt with the point of religious freedom that he raised.

The Supreme Court will hear arguments in the case next fall or winter and will probably announce its decision next spring.

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Mission 70 Vocation  
Conference Set in '69

6/18/69

ATLANTA (BP)--Plans are nearing completion for the largest, most comprehensive conference on missions and church vocations ever conducted in the Southern Baptist Convention.

The conference is called Mission 70, and will be held in the new Atlanta Civic Center, Dec. 28-31.

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Participation will be limited to 4,500 college and seminary students, young career people, and youth leaders.

The scope of the conference is reflected in the five sponsoring Southern Baptist agencies--Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board, Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood Commission. State Baptist student-work offices also are involved.

"We hope to make Mission 70 an event to remember," said Ed Seabough of the Home Mission Board, noting that film drama and folk-opera would be used to present the program material.

Music will be provided by members of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and several choral groups lining the perimeter of the huge Civic Center Auditorium, creating an unusual stereophonic effect.

Seabough noted: "much of the conference will be conducted outside the auditorium, in an elaborate exposition area similar to those used at the New York and Montreal Worlds Fairs, and in discussion groups of various sizes at eight downtown Atlanta churches. In addition, there will be vocational counseling services available in the afternoons."

The closing session will be a New Year's Eve midnight service of celebration and dedication as the decade of the 1970's begins.

Housing for the delegates will be in several large Atlanta hotels, most of which have established special rates for the conference.

"This is the first time we have coordinated our efforts to focus for our young adults the opportunities open to them in church vocations in a time of desperate need for creative and dedicated men and women involved in the work of the church," Seabough said.

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Catholic Work Leader Retires;  
Jewish Work Vacancy Filled

6/18/69

ATLANTA (BP)-- Home Mission Board directors recently elected a former missionary to direct work with Jews and accepted the early retirement of a man who "brought to Southern Baptist leadership a unique understanding of Roman Catholicism."

Bob Adams, once a missionary to Chile, was elected an assistant in the department of work with nonevangelicals to supervise Southern Baptist ministry to Jews and Judaism.

Petitioning for early retirement was W. E. (Bill) Burke, a former Roman Catholic Priest who for nine years has supervised the department's work with Catholics.

Adams, 39, holds a bachelor degree in education and social sciences; a bachelor of divinity degree in biblical languages; and is a doctoral candidate at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, majoring in Christian Social Ethics.

J. R. Estes, head of the nonevangelical ministries, said that Adams can "contribute significantly to home missions work." He indicated three factors that qualified Adams especially for homeland work: Knowledge gained in the preparation of a thesis on the subject of Jewish-Baptist relations; missionary concern evidenced in his five years in Chile; and being a former pastor of an interracial church.

Effective Sept. 1, Adams is assigned to research the area of Jews and Judaism and through writing and program approaches provide Baptists a clearer understanding of this race and religion.

A native of Olyphant, Pa., Burke is a graduate of St. Bonaventures College and Seminary in New York. Before coming with Southern Baptists he was director of the Evangelical Information Center and coeditor of Convert Magazine in Covington, Ky. In 1954 he was appointed as a field worker for the Home Mission Board, and in 1961 he was named to direct Catholic work.

"The last 15 years have been the most enjoyable of the years of my life in church work," Burke said. "I will be living near relatives in Dickson City, Pa., a predominately Catholic neighborhood and eventually will be in a position to witness to Roman Catholics."

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Burke, 65, would have retired at the end of this year. However, the death of his wife, Margaret, in March prompted him to return to his homestate.

Estes said that Burke "in his spiritual lifetime has seen major transitions in Roman Catholicism and has been most able to appreciate the new spirit because of his own experience in past years." He indicated that the department plans to utilize Burke in seminars and consultation.

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