



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

---FEATURES

produced by Baptist Press

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August 12, 1969

"Surfs Up" Cry Means
Bigger Church Crowd

by Larry Jerden

LAKE JACKSON, Tex. (BP)--There aren't many Baptist missions where attendance rises and falls with the surf, but at Surfside Baptist Mission near Freeport and Lake Jackson, the crowd of the evening is reckoned by the size of the waves.

Six days a week this summer, Surfside Baptist Mission sponsored by First Baptist Church of Lake Jackson, has been known as "The Anchor."

And "The Anchor" has become the "in" place at night along the surf. It's a coffee house that serves soft drinks, popcorn, candy, coffee and music.

Attendance is based on the size of the waves. "Surf's pretty low today, so we probably w n't have but about 85 tonight," ran the estimate on a recent Saturday. When the surf's up, the already crowded Anchor is jammed with 250 persons a night.

The Anchor doesn't look like a church or a mission. At night, it's a dark place with psychedelic lighting, and ultra-violet lights on "mod" wall signs declaring thoughts such as "Life is Infinite," "Fight Sanity," and "Exist."

Behind the stage is a painting that at first glance looks as if someone spilled ink on white paper. It comes into focus as the face of Christ.

Patrons sit on squares of carpet scattered over a plywood floor, and tables are empty cable spools turned on end.

The music ranges through rock, folk, country, and spiritual. Words put to "now generation" music admonish the listeners to:

"Take Hold of Christ,
He'll turn you on for good
He'll make you want to do
the things you should.
He'll make your life more real."

Another song tells would-be dope takers to try Christ--"He'll fill you with soul appeal."

The songs are performed live by the "Hang Ten," a group of 11 Baptist Student Union summer missionaries who were selected to spend their vacation in the resort ministry.

The Anchor's popularity among the beach set is directly attributable to the students who serve there. The students are more than just another religious folk group. The members are truly missionaries. They have come to be trusted and accepted by young people whose trust is not easily won.

The young people who frequent The Anchor are mostly surfers, the majority from Houston or the Gulf Coast area. But there are many from across Texas and from out of state who are on the beach for a week or two.

The majority are not Christians. Some have been on drugs. Some are boys who have hitchhiked from beach to beach, "looking for the action." These spend the summer roaming from Malibu to Miami, putting on a wild front, hitting the night spots.

Anchor patrons have included a 27-year-old ex-convict and a sailor stationed in San Francisco who files in every other weekend.

They come to Surfside, hearing there is some action, and when they come in from riding a wave they find a college girl asking them if they'd like to come to The Anchor.

At some point, whether it's their first night or their 20th, many are touched. Interspersed between "Aquarius" and "Folsom Prison Blues," one of the singers, perhaps Vickie Dean of Lamar Tech College, Rodney Craig of Howard Payne College, or Mike Combs of Lamar Tech, tells the audience about "the greatest thing in my life."

And while Linda Maedke of Steven F. Austin is singing a solo, Meredith Wood of A & I or Jerry Bob Tuck of Midwestern is out in the audience, talking to a surfer.

One night a boy talked with Alvie Allison of John Tarleton State until The Anchor closed at 11 p.m. The two continued to talk past midnight, but the boy, perhaps named Bill, would not commit himself.

The two parted, and Allison knew that Bill would leave for Houston early in the morning. He thought perhaps he would make a decision later, but he would never know about it.

When the Hang 10 went to The Anchor the next morning to help with the day camp for 6-12 year-olds, there was a three-word message scrawled in crayon on the porch:

"Alvie--

Yes

--Bill"

Two weeks later a letter came to The Anchor from Bill's mother, thanking the team for what they had done.

During the afternoons the team members are on the beach, inviting people to The Anchor and witnessing. They used a "Beach Religious Survey" as an entree for the invitation.

Winn Crenshaw of Stephen F. Austin tells of a day when he was discouraged, having approached four surfers and meeting only apathy. He prayed that God would lead him to someone who was prepared to receive the "Good News."

He began giving the survey questions to another young man on the beach, and when asked his religious affiliation, the boy said, "Methodist, and today was the first day I've gone in a long time."

When asked if he knew how to become a Christian, the boy replied, "No, but I'd like to know."

A little later the boy made a profession of faith in Christ.

"We've talked to a lot of people," Crenshaw said. "We've shared a lot and sown a lot. And it seems like so few receive Him. Maybe 40 for the summer."

"So many of these kids know about God," related Sandy Hudson of Sam Houston State, "and yet they are not Christians."

An evening at The Anchor always begins with a rocking secular song. Immediately after it's over, the Hang 10 gives its purpose.

"We're here to entertain you and to get to know you. But mainly we want to tell you what Jesus Christ means to us."

One night as soon as the group had stated their purpose, a girl sitting in the front blurted out that she wanted to discuss belief in God. For three hours, the discussion went on in a back room. Out of the discussion came two conversions, including the girl who began it.

Not all attempts to witness are successful. One girl thought a boy had accepted Christ, but was told by another, "Don't you know he couldn't have made a decision? He's on acid (LSD), and when he's on it you can't talk to him and when he's off you can't talk to him."

One night the boy came in with dark shades on, saying he had to wear them because the roof was going to fall in.

One boy heard about "The Anchor Lounge" and came in looking for a bar. He became a permanent fixture at The Anchor and became a Christian not long afterwards.

The assumption that a Christian attraction can't successfully compete with a secular one has been disproved in the mind of Meredith Wood.

"The young people would rather come there than the dance and beer place a few yards away," she said.

Lest the routine get dull, a situation with about zero probability, the BSUers permit guest performances.

An effort as successful as The Anchor does not just happen. It is the result of hard work and the support of many.

Pastor James Mahoney of First Baptist Church, Lake Jackson, has given leadership as his church sponsored the summer effort. He spends an hour or more each day with the BSU team, leading them in a Bible study that most of them say has been the highlight of their summer.

For The Anchor crew, Bob and Angie Brannan have been "God parents" for the summer. They are members of Surfside Mission who have a beach house across from The Anchor. It has been the scene of relaxation, Bible study, gripe sessions, and refreshments for the team.

The missions committee of the church, led by Ned Lester, is the agency through which the church worked with the team. There was a natural amount of resistance to the idea of using Surfside Baptist Mission as a hangout for surfers listening to rock music, but after seeing the response, there is not a person on the committee who does not desire a similar effort next year.

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August 12, 1969

**Ultra-Extremism Eroding
Democracy, Professor Says**

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Religious, political and racial ultra-extremism is eroding the democratic life like tape worms in the bowels of the body politic, sapping its strength and making it sick unto death, a Southern Baptist seminary professor said here.

Henlee H. Barnette, professor of Christian ethics at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, told a nation-wide Baptist conference on "Extremism--Left and Right," that both left and right extremists are actually "twin brothers whose mother is frustration and whose father is fear."

"Extremism is a style of life characterized by an irrational response to reality motivated by frustration, fear, and hate," said Barnette in defining extremism at the conference sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention Christian Life Commission.

"Jesus was an 'extremist,' but not by this definition," Barnette said. "His 'extremism' was related to love, not hate; faith, not fear; the dignity of man, not his dehumanization."

"The problem," the professor explained, "is to maintain some sort of balance between two extremes. This is the basic issue of the century--how to achieve a balance between the freedom of the individual and the order of the community."

Barnette proposed that if a balance is to be achieved, it will be by a "creative center."

A "creative center" would bring change through democratic means, said Barnette. "Much of our tensions and many of our social issues could be resolved by a more imaginative and aggressive center and this would have the effect of taking the steam out of the fanatics on the fringes."

In the "creative center" there should be a rearrangement of priorities so as to achieve a more humanized society, Barnette stressed.

Characterizing the radical rightists as people who are angry and tend to locate the cause of their troubles outside themselves, Barnette explained that "super-patriotism is one panacea offered by the radical right for the problems of our nation. But it is a narrow, blind patriotism in terms of the mother-God-country syndrome."

"The watchword of the super-patriots is 'my country, right or wrong'", he said.

"Ultra-rightist groups use sharp tactics to accomplish their goals," observed Barnette. "Favorite weapons are spreading of rumors, engaging in slander, guilt by association, character assassination, disruption of meetings, threatening phone calls, anonymous letters, and violence," he said.

"A 'Niagra of Noxious' literature flows from rightist persons and agencies to infect the blood stream of people. Even the sermons of some rightists are filled with invectives, hate, and threats. There is little of the gospel of love and understanding in their messages," Barnette said.

Extremism on the left was also the target of critical evaluation. "The new-leftists are utopian, idealistic and sectarian," said Barnette, "and, when the structures fail to yield to non-violent action, the idealistic radical becomes bitter, disillusioned, and hence turns to the revolutionary tactics of disruption and violence."

A dogmatism and an arrogance equal to that of the extreme rightists are manifested by the left," observed Barnette. "Leftists reject the past and loathe the present. Future-oriented, they violently and recklessly deal with the present, Proud of what they have rejected . . . they have only a vague notion as to what they really want," he continued.

The radical leftist resorts to the use of violence to achieve his goals, according to Barnette. The professor listed these methods used by the leftist: revolutionary rhetoric, vandalism, disruption, personal assault, and political guerrilla warfare.

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"Leftists hold that they are justified in their use of violence on the grounds that it is the establishment which is really violent," reported Barnette.

Comparing both left and right Barnette said: "Freedom is the watchword of the new left, but as in the case of the rightists, the leftists are reluctant to grant freedom to those who who disagree with them."

Barnette predicted that unless Americans who stand for peace and progress through democratic means enter more vigorously into the struggle for a more just society, the extremists--both left and right--will continue to flourish.

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