

January 15, 1974

Noel (Paul) Stookey

'Jesus--He's Where
It's At,' Says Singer

By Tim Nicholas

NASHVILLE (BP)--Noel (Paul) Stookey, the singing, comedic and guitar playing one-third of the now defunct Peter, Paul and Mary folk-singing group, says the world-famous trio parted company partly because, "All I wanted to do was talk about Jesus.

"We were all headed in different directions. I felt I was being called to work in other areas--like my family and being at home," he says.

Stookey has magnetism now and he had it when he sang with the group, but he says the source changed for him four years ago when he became a Christian.

He was applauded wildly for a performance of his "Wedding Song," during recent taping of segments for a guest spot on Spring Street, USA, the syndicated evangelistic program produced for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board by the convention's Radio and Television Commission.

The singer, who says the name Paul was invented because, "Peter, Noel and Mary sounded funny," related his Christian experience to members of the studio audience here between takes for the Southern Baptist program.

His conversion experience was the end of a search. "I had gotten into marijuana a lot in 1967, but I never did anything harder because I was using it as a tool like you would use a knife to whittle," he said.

"Every time I got high I would ask all the questions I could about where "it was at"--"it" being life, the world, what life was about." Stookey said he couldn't come up with any answers.

"Truth was about the closest I could get. If you could tell the truth all the time you were really ahead of the game. The poor people we met who didn't know that fact. Guess how they suffered with guilt and trying to cover up lies."

Stookey's search continued into the rock music festival at the now legendary Woodstock, N.Y. He asked folksinger and poet laureate of the counterculture, Bob Dylan, where he thought "it was at. Dylan was beautiful," Stookey chuckled. "He said, 'Where do you think it's at?'

"So I started reading the Bible and shortly after, as if in answer to prayer at a show in Austin, Tex., a boy came backstage and asked if he could talk to me about the Lord.

"He was a bit more somber than most of the other kids at the concert, and he told me he didn't even have a ticket. The Lord had gotten him past the security guards into the back hall," Stookey said.

"On one hand I was signing autographs and on the other this guy was telling me about Jesus. I was saying, 'Wow, fantastic!'

"We went back to my hotel room to talk and before long I was down on my knees asking the Lord to come into my life."

Stookey's music changed and so did his life.

"Now instead of a vague generality of wanting to do good or better the world condition, suddenly I knew a specific down in my heart, and I began relating that."

"Wedding Song" is one result of his new life. Stookey wrote it for the wedding of Peter Yarrow, also of Peter, Paul and Mary fame.

He's "left the road" but Stookey is far from retired. He performs locally, singing in churches and local high schools.

"I feel more accountable when I work in the neighborhood. People can call me up and ask questions or comment on my music. It makes me feel more like a contributing member of the neighborhood and not just a jet setter."

In a few months Stookey will move even further from the jet set life when he leaves his present residence just outside New York City and moves to a farm he has purchased in Blue Hill, Maine.

"I'll grow living things right out of the ground," he said. Stookey said he expects to grow even closer to his wife, Betty, their daughter, Elizabeth, 8, and two-year-old twins, Kate and Anna.

Stookey said he has completed his third solo album and has a Warner Brothers contract for three more. He plans to expand into the field of animation where he recently discovered a talent in art "I never knew I had." Money still comes in from radio playing of old Peter, Paul and Mary songs like "I Dig Rock and Roll Music."

"When you have less you live on less," he philosophized. "Some would say I'd hit the skids, but its the happiest skids I've ever been on."

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BP PHOTO mailed to state Baptist paper editors; others on request.

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Spring Street Completes
Last Scheduled Taping

1/15/74

NASHVILLE (BP)--The last scheduled taping of the evangelistic television program, Spring Street, USA, was completed here in January.

No new taping is scheduled unless new funds become available, a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board spokesman said.

The eight half-hour shows taped here bring the total in circulation to 34, televised on stations across the nation.

Guest stars for the final eight shows included: Jeannie C. Riley, country singer; Paul Anderson, weightlifter; Noel (Paul) Stookey (formerly of Peter, Paul and Mary) and Gene Cotton, folk singer; Mary Costa, opera singer; Ray Hildebrand and Myrtle Hall, gospel singers; and William "Fishbait" Miller, doorkeeper of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The program is produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission for the Home Mission Board.

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**BAPTIST PRESS**

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January 15, 1974

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**Texas Baptist Schools May
Lose Tuition Equalization**By Charles R. Richardson
for Baptist Press

Eight colleges operated by the Baptist General Convention of Texas may be disqualified for tuition equalization grants and students may lose up to \$1,395,000 in aid.

Texas Atty. Gen. John Hill said that church-related colleges which require their faculties, staffs and trustees to hold certain religious beliefs are not eligible to receive state financial aid.

Tuition equalization grants up to \$600 are awarded by the Texas College Coordinating Board to students at fully-accredited private colleges. Grants are based on family income and an enrolment formula of the school.

Houston Baptist University was identified by the Associated Press as refusing to hire a Jewish woman as a staff member because of her religion.

"We have no knowledge of that," said Don Looser, administrative assistant to Houston Baptist president, W. H. (Bill) Hinton. The official said the Southern Baptist college was not aware of the person mentioned in connection with the ruling.

Bevington Reed, state commissioner of higher education, asked for the ruling because of the alleged action on the part of Houston Baptist University.

The attorney general's opinion is not the final word on the matter, however, as the decision on Houston Baptist University and other private schools in the state lies with the coordinating board and the courts.

The Associated Press quoted Hill as saying, "In our opinion, discrimination among staff members on the basis of religious affiliation or religious views, in policy or in practice, is very strong evidence that the institution is sectarian and that funds channeled through it would be used to promote or inhibit religion."

Students from various religious and ethnic backgrounds attend Texas Baptist schools. All the schools seek Baptist faculty and staff members but do employ other than Baptists.

An earlier opinion by Hill said such grants were constitutional so long as they were administered in a way that avoided the use of public funds for the benefit of religious sects, seminaries or societies.

Robert D. Hunter of Abilene, executive vice president of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas Inc. and vice president of public relations and development at Abilene Christian College, strongly objected to the attorney general's ruling concerning Houston Baptist University.

Hunter said Hinton has denied the allegation. Hunter said the leadership of his organization feels that the allegation was accepted as fact and the attorney general has "wrongly interpreted" the issue.

He said he also feels the ruling came at a rather inappropriate time as delegates to a constitutional convention are now at work in Austin, the state capital, attempting to draw up a new constitution which may have different implications on state aid to students at private schools.

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Baylor University President Abner V. McCall, an attorney and former justice on the Texas Supreme Court, said he felt in a "poor position" to respond to the issue until he sees the ruling by Hill.

"None of the Baptist schools (in Texas) require the students to be Baptists," he said. "They have various requirements for faculty and staff."

McCall explained that about 60 to 65 per cent of the faculty at Baylor are Baptists and "most of all our top administrators are Baptists." But, he explained, at Baylor and all other Baptist schools, Texas Baptist convention policy requires that all trustees be Baptists.

If the tuition equalization program is eliminated for Baptist schools, McCall said he feels that some students and parents will be affected. "I don't think it will have any major effect on any Baptist school," he said, "but they will feel it."

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Charles R. Richardson is an associate on the Baptist Standard, news publication of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

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WMU, Baptist Leaders Pay
Tribute to Alma Hunt

1/15/74

BIRMINGHAM (BP)--Alma Hunt, who will step down Oct. 5 after 26 years as executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, was honored here by the WMU's executive board and leaders of Baptist agencies.

Miss Hunt was hailed at a dinner attended by nearly 400 persons as a leader of integrity, courage, love, principle and competence. She has headed the woman's auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention longer than the chief executive of any other SBC-related agency.

The WMU executive board's finance and personnel committee is seeking Miss Hunt's successor and will possibly report its nominee at the board's next scheduled meeting, June 8, before the WMU annual meeting at the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas, according to Mrs. R. L. Mathis, WMU president. The board will elect Miss Hunt's successor.

Among speakers honoring Miss Hunt were Owen Cooper, SBC president; Baker James Cauthen, executive secretary of the SBC Foreign Mission Board; Arthur B. Rutledge, executive director of the SBC Home Mission Board; V. Carney Hargroves, president of the Baptist World Alliance; Porter Routh, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee; and Mrs. L. S. Casazza, president of the North American Baptist Women's Union.

They cited her leadership as a major factor in SBC growth in home and foreign missions and in giving to the Cooperative Program and special mission offerings and praised her overall contributions to worldwide Baptist efforts.

Since she came to Birmingham in 1948, giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions has increased from \$684,000 to \$6,884,000 and giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions has increased from \$1.6 million to \$19.6 million. Both offerings are sponsored by WMU.

WMU enrollment increased from 875,000 to 1,125,000 during that period.

Miss Hunt is vice president of the Baptist World Alliance and has served on BWA commissions and committees continuously since 1950. She is a past president of the North American Baptist Women's Union.

Retirement gifts from the WMU executive board included a 1974 automobile, a trip to the 1975 Baptist World Congress in Stockholm, several pieces of furniture and a silver plate with an engraving of the WMU building, acquired soon after she became executive secretary.

The dinner concluded the WMU board's annual meeting with state WMU staff members for promotional planning. Earlier in the week, the WMU executive board adopted the dated WMU program plans for 1975-76 and refined the base design of the WMU program from 1975 on.

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"Whoever Reads This Letter
Please Pray for Me"

By Catherine Allen

BIRMINGHAM (BP)--Thirteen-year-old Katherine Williamson of Sumter, S. C., got a new box of stationery for Christmas and sat down to write a letter to Nashville, Tenn.

She had decided to become a missionary--perhaps to Hong Kong--and wanted some helpful literature. "I don't know who is going to read my letter," she wrote, "but whoever does, I hope you will please pray for me."

Little did Katherine know that her letter would be heard by almost 400 missions leaders and other guests at a retirement dinner in Birmingham, honoring Alma Hunt, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

Porter Routh, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, received Katherine's letter and used it to pay tribute to Miss Hunt for leading WMU and encouraging mission volunteers in promoting missions and churches.

Katherine wrote the three-page letter on Christmas Day on her brand new girlish stationery, using bright red ink. Now it rests in a gold frame and will be hung in Miss Hunt's home as a symbol of her work.

The letter told how Katherine felt "God's call" on November 14 last year to be a missionary and of her decision announced at her church, Northside Baptist Church, Sumter, S. C., on Dec. 2. The decision came on the day Miss Zella Woody, state Baptist Young Women's director for the South Carolina WMU, spoke in her church.

Katherine credited her church and its Acteens (girls' mission education organization sponsored by WMU) for her decision.

"I've got a great church with a great preacher (Robert F. Craig) and family. My Acteens leader (Mrs. R. F. Prichard) had a lot to do with my calling."

"This is what your work is all about," Routh told Miss Hunt. "It's about preachers and churches and calls to God's work and little girls who get a vision."

Katherine added a P.S. to her letter which seemed appropriate on the eve of Miss Hunt's retirement after 26 years of service: "Have a happy new year and many more to come."