



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

---FEATURES

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Wrote, 'Hey, Paula'

60's Rock Star
Sings for Jesus

By Tim Nicholas

NASHVILLE (BP)--The song "Hey, Paula" skyrocketed a young Southern Baptist to rock music fame in the mid-sixties.

The writer and performer of the song, which sold more than three million copies, was Ray Hildebrand. He wrote the song while working as a lifeguard between his junior and senior years at Howard Payne college in Brownwood, Tex.

Several months after the record hit the charts, he and his singing partner Jill Jackson (billed as Paul and Paula) began traveling over the United States, Europe and Japan.

In midstream of a national tour in 1964, Hildebrand quit.

"I was tired of chasing around the world after something I wasn't even sure I wanted," he said in an interview here.

"'Hey, Paula' gave me everything I ever wanted--fortune, fame, beautiful girls at my beck and call. My mother and daddy were proud of me."

Yet, though he "was nominally a Christian, I knew I was an empty person. I accepted Jesus Christ on faith," Hildebrand recalled.

Hildebrand cut a few more secular records, then turned almost exclusively to writing songs about Jesus.

He began using his music in a ministry for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). Having attended college on a basketball scholarship, he now continues his athletic affiliations behind a guitar and playing "an occasional game of tennis or paddleball."

Immediately after the recent taping of a guest appearance on Southern Baptists' nationally syndicated television program, "Spring Street, USA", Hildebrand flew from Nashville to San Francisco to entertain at a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) track coaches' convention.

He travels less now than in former years, and more of his time is spent at the national offices of FCA in Kansas City, Mo., where he is a director of personnel and special programs. The Hildebrand family--including Hildebrand, his wife, Judy, and their children Heidi and Mike--attend Nall Avenue Baptist Church in Overland Park, Kans.

A natural for the FCA with his love for and experience in sports, Hildebrand recalled, "Sports was a god to me. I just couldn't walk away from the game and leave it."

Though sports is no longer his god, the former rock-idol-basketball player relates his experience to the athletes with whom he works.

"I think now athletes are tired and are taking long hard looks at themselves. Now, more than ever, athletics is open to Christianity," he added.

But, Hildebrand continued, the same openness doesn't necessarily hold true for popular music. "It's tough to get into the pop field with a Christian song, unless Jesus happens to be 'in,'" he said. "Jesus was kinda' in when 'Jesus Was a Soul Man' and 'Amazing Grace' came in, but I don't know how much longer He's going to be 'in' with pop music.

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"I think you can communicate the gospel in a song, but the problem is getting the disc jockey to play it," Hildebrand said.

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

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President Nixon Asks
Nation to Honor Clergy

1/30/74

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Richard Nixon proclaimed the week beginning February 3 as International Clergy Week in the United States.

For nearly a dozen years, Civitan International has sponsored programs in communities across the nation in recognition of the dedication of members of the clergy through this special observance. The idea was inspired by the sacrificial act of four chaplains in World War II.

Thirty-one years ago on February 3, the troop ship Dorchester was torpedoed and sunk in the icy waters of the North Atlantic off the coast of Greenland. Aboard the ship were more than 600 servicemen and four chaplains--a rabbi, a priest and two Protestant ministers.

Disregarding their own safety, the chaplains gave up their lifejackets to soldiers who had lost theirs. In so doing the chaplains gave up their lives that the soldiers might live. As they died, they stood hand in hand praying to God for the safety of those who were fleeing the sinking ship.

In his proclamation, President Nixon paid tribute to the clergy of the nation. He said:

"From the ancient days of the prophets, God has worked through men and woman of faith to extend His truth, His love and His peace to other people. Today, as in the time of Abraham, the clergy of the world minister to a world torn between the temporal and the spiritual.

"Wherever they can, those who are members of the clergy try to stand fast on the borders between right and wrong, reminding us of both God's judgement and His mercy. They call upon us to choose what we will be, and they challenge us to be more than we have been."

The president called on "all our people to honor these servants of God and man through appropriate activities and ceremonies."

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Council Authorizes Baptist
Council on the Aging

1/30/74

NASHVILLE (BP)--A resolution by a 23-year-old seminary student urging Baptists to seek ways to meet the needs of senior citizens has taken another step along the pathway to completion.

The Southern Baptist Inter-Agency Council, in its January meeting, authorized a special committee to plan a Southern Baptist Conference on the Aging sometime later this year.

The two-day conference will be designed to provide information on which SBC agencies and state conventions may act in the future, increase denominational awareness of the problem and present some guidelines for developing future programs and projects.

The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention referred the matter to the Inter-Agency Council last September to study what Southern Baptists can do and report back to the Executive Committee in 1975.

A group of students, led by Gary Cook, a second-year master of divinity candidate at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, initiated the proceedings last June with a resolution at the annual Southern Baptist Convention sessions in Portland. The SBC passed a resolution asking the Executive Committee "to do a feasibility study on the need for a major survey of present and future ministry to and with senior adults and to take appropriate action."

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The man who first advised Cook to take his concern to the convention in the form of a resolution, Albert McClellan, will chair the special committee. McClellan is program planning secretary and associate executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee.

Leonard E. Hill, managing editor of the Baptist Program, who completed an initial study on the aging situation for the Executive Committee, will serve as a member on and consultant to McClellan's committee.

In other action, the Inter-Agency Council elected Grady Cothen, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, chairman, and named James E. Wood Jr., executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, vice chairman. Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the SBC Christian Life Commission, was elected secretary-treasurer.