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Nebraska Trucker Tunes
'Jammers' Into Gospel

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By Jon Cook

OMAHA, Neb. (BP)--The roar of a big diesel rig and the grinding of its shifting gears cues truck driver Bill Payne, a Baptist minister, for his opening remarks on "Just for Jammers," a radio show created by Payne and his son, Jeff, to expose truckers to the message of Jesus Christ.

Jammers are truck drivers--"gear jammers." Payne, 49, has been a jammer for Pacific Intermountain Express for the past 21 years.

As an ordained minister and evangelist, he began to study for the pastoral ministry 15 years ago in Illinois. However, problems seemed to plague his efforts. "As a door to a good pastorate opened, God would shut it," Payne says.

"It took the Lord about 14 years to get it through my thick head that he wanted me to preach to drivers. A year and a half ago I finally accepted the fact that this is where the Lord wanted to use me," he adds.

Payne began taping the show a few months ago in his own recording studio. He equipped a small room in his basement, using his own money. He tapes the show on his day off. Jeff is the show's announcer and technician.

"Just for Jammers" is now on three radio stations, covering 16 states, once a week. KJLP in North Platte, Neb.; KRVN in Lexington, Neb.; and WDMP in Dodgeville, Wis., carry his show. Coverage includes an area ranging from Western Minnesota through Texas and to the West Coast.

Payne would like to have the show broadcast all over the country every night of the week.

"We're interested in the stations that truck drivers listen to, not just the big ones. There is big competition among stations for truckers," says Payne.

Payne uses short messages or sermonettes of no longer than a minute and a half in the show. "They won't sit still for a lot of preaching. The man has to relate to it or he'll turn it off.

"The music is strictly country-gospel. Most truckers won't listen to anything else, Payne says. The name of the artist has to ring a bell, too," he adds. Payne points out that finding usable music that fits the show's format is one of his more difficult problems. Payne says his standard performers include Wanda Jackson, Charlie Pride, Tammy Wynette, Sunshine Brothers, Jake Hess, and the Cathedral Quartet.

Payne emphasizes the need for his type of radio program. "Truckers are constantly listening to their radios from midnight to six," he says. He knows of nothing else in the way of religious programming directed specifically toward truckers.

"I never mention money on the program. That is what sticks in their throats most about radio preachers. I made up my mind that if we were going into this broadcast and it was going to be God's work, then He was going to have to supply the funds."

Lack of funds is the only obstacle that holds back program expansion, Payne says. Incorporation as a religious non-profit organization helps, but not enough, he adds.

Payne feels that the show must be natural in order to appeal to truckers. "We use the jammers' vernacular," he says. His examples are "buckets" for pistons, "pots" for a trucks' rear end, "running barefoot" for driving on snow packed roads without chains.

"I imagine truckers' slang is frustrating to the people who listen to the show and don't understand what is going on," he says.

Payne is an active trucker while producing his radio show. He drives twin trailers or "double-bottoms" on a division run between Omaha and Cheyenne, Wyo., three times a week covering 500 miles each way.

Another of his projects is a Gear Jammers' Guide to the Bible. "Guys have said to me, 'I've tried reading the Bible and can't make heads or tails of it.'" Payne feels their problem is that they try to read the Bible straight through. Payne wants his guide to be trucker oriented, using truckers' slang. "I want to point out the interesting features and outline the Bible," he says.

Payne dropped out of high school in the tenth grade. He joined the Air Force where he passed his high school equivalency tests. Most of his theological training is in the books on the shelves in his home. He is now enrolled with the Moody Bible Institute, studying Greek.

Payne's ultimate goal is to go into radio work full time. He wants to equip a truck and attend truckers' rodeos and association meetings. "There is a greater opportunity now than ever before to talk about Jesus," he believes.

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Author Says

'Neo-Pentecostal Move Now
Emphasizing Evangelism'

By Maryneal Jones

GREENVILLE, S. C. (BP)--The new Pentecostal movement has "matured" and is now emphasizing "evangelism for Jesus," a neo-Pentecostal author told an interdenominational audience representing both sides of the church's current charismatic phenomenon, at Furman University here.

Speaking during an emotion-charged symposium on evangelism and the new Pentecostalism at the Baptist school here, John L. Sherrill, author of "They Speak with Other Tongues," said the movement is "uniting under Jesus instead of tongues, prophecy or other offices."

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Formal address by Sherrill and by T. C. Smith, New Testament scholar of the Furman University religion department, preceded open discussion in which adherents and antagonists went at each other in verbal assault.

The event, sponsored by the South Carolina Baptist Convention's department of evangelism, the Greenville Baptist Association and Furman Pastor's School, drew people from at least 12 states.

Although some participants came to argue, to take sides rather than remain open to another point of view, many apparently came to try to affirm their own experience in the charismatic movement and others came in a desire for a life of the spirit. A Church of God pastor from Anderson, S. C. expressed appreciation for the opportunity "to study the Baptism of the Holy Ghost on the campus of a Baptist university." He said, "This is remarkable."

Glossalalia (speaking in tongues) dominated Smith's presentation and the open discussion, but the original aim of the symposium had been to discuss how the new Pentecostalism affects evangelism in the church today. Smith's was basically an opposing view.

Sherrill traced four phases of the Pentecostal movement from the turn of the century to the present. Until the mid-1950s there was persecution of the charismatic movement, he said. A second phase was secrecy by adherents -- people who had the experience but wanted to remain in traditional churches and therefore did not talk about it.

Sherrill said the next phase was an overflowing, new, dynamic expression of Jesus meeting people's needs today, bursting forth in Brazil and Chile and in America, especially among Full Gospel Business Men. The fervor, life and excitement of the movement brought people to churches "in flocks," Sherrill said.

The movement is now into its fourth phase, Sherrill said, to evangelize for Christ.

"We have been negligent of evangelism into the church itself and we have emphasized Pentecost too much," Sherrill said. "The movement is changing emphasis. It has reached a level of security within itself and can now evangelize for Jesus instead of for Pentecost."

Sherrill said he sees a fusion of the movement and traditional Christendom.

"Something new is growing out of what's been happening and I feel something extraordinary special the Lord is doing today through the Pentecostal Movement in the Christian church."

Smith followed Sherrill and prefaced a scholarly discussion of glossalalia by

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saying the great danger which always faces the church "is the attempt by some Christians to overrate the value of abnormal phenomenon." He said, "There are those who never sense the experience of awe and wonder in the normal course of things but are dazzled by the striking and exceptional.

"They continue to be childlike in their faith and accept immature forms of religious expression. They tend to exclude others who have advanced beyond this stage and are far more mature in their faith."

Smith said ecstatic gibberish, unintelligible speech, broken murmurs, incoherent chants and inarticulate utterances were not limited to the experiences of the early Christian church, but antedated Christianity.

He said the practice was not normal in the early Christian community and that only the church at Corinth was plagued with glossalalia. He spoke of the influence of the Greeks and Romans and the pagan priestess at Delphi, near Corinth.

Speaking in tongues, Smith said, "is of little value in the furtherance of the Gospel" and urged intelligible speech to confront the secular society of today.

Contrasting prophecy and glossalalia, Smith said prophecy speaks to men, edifies the church, is controlled by the prophet and leads to conviction of the non-believer. He said glossalalia speaks to God (but that God needs no speech except the intent of the heart), edifies the speaker, is uncontrolled and confirms the non-believer in his non-belief.

Later in the open discussion a "classic pentecostal" challenged Smith on glossalalia being unintelligible. The man told of having prayed in Cantonese, a language he had not learned. He said, "What God is doing in today's world cannot be resolved by seminars. It can only be experienced and entered into by faith."

The conference ended on the note of an elderly black college professor from another state. "This meeting has been too argumentative," he said. "We have made cafeteria use of the Bible. You can prove anything by the Bible, just let me choose my own verse."