

Witnessing for Jesus on the  
'World's Most Famous Beach'

By Larry Jerden

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (BP)--Bumper stickers proclaim it "The Most Famous Beach in the World."

When a major auto race, a mid-summer holiday and the appeal of surf and sand combine to cram up to 200,000 visitors into its streets, motels and boardwalk, it is easy to believe the claim.

This summer, Daytona Beach has a unique "family" occupying an old, two-story frame house just across the street from the famous strip of sand.

The "Family" includes the "real" family of Dave Bennett, a campus minister at Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield,--his wife and three children--but add eight university students.

Their purpose in spending the summer in the Florida resort city is to bring a Christian witness to the thousands of tourists who flock here.

Bennett's crew of students form a music group called the "Eternal Generation," sponsored by the Missouri Baptist Student Union, the Florida Baptist Convention, the Home Mission Board and some individual churches, including First Baptist, Ferguson, Mo. Team members are all students at Southwest Missouri state, except one boy who transferred to Kansas State University, Manhattan.

The team has a good location for its musical witness--the house is across the street from the city amphitheater.

Calvary Baptist Church of Daytona provides the house and has secured the amphitheater for the team's use every Thursday night during the summer.

"Our music is soul rock," explained Bennett, "and it will draw the young college crowd from two blocks away."

The Thursday programs start about dusk, and when the music starts, a crowd gathers. As the music drifts down the crowded boardwalk, the young people, make their way toward the open air stage.

Some take places on the wooden benches, while others sit on the rock walls or simply stand against them. It takes only a few moments for passers-by to understand what the message is, and those who aren't interested move on.

But many stay, and when the singing and testimonies are over, Bennett speaks for a few minutes.

His talk is not that of a "preacher," or just another layman. He speaks to the audience, largely students, as a professor of world religions who has read widely, studied the options, and has come to the conclusion that Christ was who he said he was.

When the brief invitation is given, there are always some who remain for further discussion. They are usually those whom the summer missionaries have talked to before, because the music, while it draws the crowd, is only one facet of a multifaceted ministry.

One of the more visible ministries is working with Calvary's beach minister, Jim Scott, who drives the church's "God Squad" van up and down the beach and nearby streets.

Accompanied by one or two team members, he drives the van with its back doors open and stereo music rolling out the rear.

"They drive 20 minutes, then get out and witness," Bennett explained. "Then they drive a little more, play some more music, stop and witness some more."

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With or without the van, all the team members, including Bennett, walk the beaches and streets daily, meeting people, sharing Christ, inviting them to the concerts.

"One evening, we had prayed specifically that the Lord would lead us to a guy," Bennett remembered.

"Well, we walked along and saw a guy, so we walked up to him. Before we could say more than a few words, he blurted out, 'God sent you here, didn't he?'"

Among others was a homosexual man who made a profession of faith in Christ. Another was a prostitute who worked the beach area. After Bennett and another team member talked to her one evening, she was on the front row at the concert the next Thursday night and stayed to talk following the invitation.

Bennett's team had a "spring rehearsal" for the summer when 36 youths and two sponsors came to Daytona for Easter. When they returned to Missouri a week later, 73 people had been won to Christ.

Other facets of the summer ministry include a one-act play, a puppet ministry, a three-screen multimedia presentation, and a series of concerts in churches and shopping centers.

One ministry that was delayed was a coffee house. Because the city had had some negative experiences with religious coffee houses in the past, they required a special vote of the city council to authorize the Eternal Generation to have one. The crucial vote was not taken until the week after July 4, the biggest weekend of the year.

But another special ministry has been going well all summer.

"The different thing this year is that the Lord has given me a 'life-discipline notebook' that I teach each team member," Bennett, a veteran summer mission worker, said.

"I teach them the nine-hour course, then they teach it to others they have won through their beach witnessing."

Bennett said the course includes Bible study, prayer, and how to lead a disciplined, Christian, life, "even down to paying your bills on time.

"We are teaching how to disciple, and we hope to leave a strong corps who will teach a whole new generation after we are gone."

One activity was not really intended to be an outreach witness but has developed into one. Each evening, the whole team gathers for a devotional.

"We've had neighbors, kids, 'freaks' and middle-age men come join us," Bennett said.

All the team's ministries have opened the door to another, that of counseling.

As the thousands of youths drift up and down the Florida coast during the long summer, stopping for a day or week in Daytona, Bennett has had ample opportunity for counseling with a variety of problems.

One night, for example, an unmarried couple, traveling together, got into an argument--he wanted to throw her out. A couple of Eternal Generation members were on hand and called Bennett. Working late into the night, he was able to "talk them down," counsel with them and talk with them about Jesus Christ.

Even on "the most famous beach in the world" there are problems--and lost people. This year, there are also Christians who care.



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FCC Rejects Petition  
On Religious Broadcasting

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) unanimously rejected a petition by two California men seeking a freeze on applications for educational television and FM radio channels by religious organizations.

The FCC decision on the petition is subject to appeal. A Washington attorney who represents the petitioners, Jeremy D. Lansman and Lorenzo W. Milam, said here that he does not know whether his clients will appeal.

The unanimous decision by the federal agency, which regulates the nation's airwaves, follows an avalanche of public reaction, both through the mail and over the telephone. The FCC noted in a press release, however, that "the vast majority of letters were premised on the mistaken view that the petition proposed to ban all religious broadcasting, which was not the case."

An officer in the public information department of the agency told Baptist Press that estimates on the pieces of mail received ranged from 70,000 to 700,000. In addition, he said, the agency has received "thousands" of protest telephone calls.

He emphasized, nevertheless, that most of the mail and calls demonstrated a lack of knowledge about the petition. His evaluation is consistent with that of staff members of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs here, who have also been deluged with inquiries about the petition.

John W. Baker, associate director in charge of research services for the Washington-based Baptist agency, has repeatedly stated that this information about the petition has been distributed by certain religious spokesmen, including some broadcasters themselves.

Thousands of forms were distributed throughout the country seeking signatures to urge the FCC not to "ban religious broadcasting from the airwaves," an action which the federal agency has, in fact, never considered.

Among those who sponsored the massive drive for signatures were the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) and Christian Crusade of Tulsa, Okla. Christian Crusade, which was headed until recently by Billy James Hargis, urged those to whom the group wrote to contribute money to carry on the fight before the FCC.

Baker related that one day recently he received a call from a Baptist associational director of missions, asking about the appeal for money, because a Baptist woman was in his office with \$150 to send to the Tulsa group. The director of missions, upon learning that the appeal was based on unfounded rumor and misinformation, then suggested to the woman that she invest her money in the Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists.

In its action denying the Lansman-Milam petition, the FCC noted that the two California men "would have us disqualify all religiously-affiliated organizations and institutions from eligibility to operate on reserve channels." That, the agency ruled, would constitute "discrimination."

"As a government agency," the ruling continued, "the commission is enjoined by the First Amendment to observe a stance of neutrality toward religion, acting neither to promote nor to inhibit religion."

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Because of its neutral stance, the ruling stated, the FCC will consider applications from religious and secular groups for reserved stations on an equitable basis. In that context, the agency found that the Lansman-Milam petition is "an impermissible proposition."

The rejected Lansman-Milam petition did not challenge the right of religious groups to make use of the commercial airwaves, but it dealt only with the propriety of religious programming on stations owned by religious organizations and devoted exclusively to religious programming. Their petition questioned whether such religious broadcasters are abiding by the FCC's "Fairness Doctrine," which requires that broadcasters expressing opinions on any controversial issue of public importance give the other side the opportunity to reply. It was the failure to comply with that regulation which last year cost fundamentalist radio preacher Carl McIntire his license.

The FCC spokesman told Baptist Press that the agency "intends to continue its vigilance in enforcing the Fairness Doctrine." He noted, however, that the federal agency is not required actively to police the 9,000 licensed broadcasters throughout the nation. Such a task would be practically unfeasible, he said. What the FCC does to enforce the Fairness Doctrine is to act on specific complaints against individual broadcasters.

In commenting on the FCC ruling on the Lansman-Milam petition, Baker expressed appreciation for the decision. "When I first read the petition," he said, "I didn't expect the FCC could respond favorably to it. The FCC decision was exactly what I had anticipated."

Baker continued, "The great outpouring of protests to the FCC shows a commendable concern by religious people for freedom in this country. However, it is a good illustration that thousands of people can be frightened into action by a misunderstanding of the facts."

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1974-75 SBC Cooperative  
Program Outstrips 1973-74

Baptist Press  
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NASHVILLE (BP)--Through the first 10 months of the 1974-75 fiscal year, the national Cooperative Program unified budget receipts of the Southern Baptist Convention continued to forge ahead of 1973-74.

Undesignated Cooperative Program receipts from 33 state conventions covering all 50 states totaled \$34,299,849 through July. That's a \$2.6 million or 8.15 percent increase over receipts at the same point last year.

Total gifts through July, combining an additional \$34,567,612 in designated gifts, amounted to \$68,867,461--more than \$5.2 million or 8.19 percent above \$63,654,694 received through July, 1974. Designated gifts were up 8.23 percent.

For the month of July, alone, 1975 undesignated Cooperative Program receipts soared 15.15 percent ahead of 1974. July, 1975, Cooperative Program receipts for the month registered \$3,390,821, as opposed to \$2,944,777 in July 1974.

Total gifts in July, including designated contributions, totaled \$4,132,910--a 12.30 percent increase over total receipts of \$3,680,311 in July, 1974.

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