

**Here's One Occupation
With Strings Attached**

By David A. Risinger

BELTON, Tex. (BP)--Bunny Martin's profession definitely has some strings attached.

Martin is the world's undisputed yo-yo champion. He won the honor in 1951 at the ripe old age of 16, in the first --and only--worldwide yo-yo competition ever held.

Today, the 40-year-old "Christian entertainer" has honed his many talents to a fine, professional art. Complementing his stringed act are such feats as juggling, magic, singing and playing guitar, and spinning funny stories about growing up in a Baptist parsonage.

Four years ago, the world champion packaged his talents, resigned a job with Mary Hardin-Baylor College, a Baptist school here, and stepped into the world of Christian entertainment.

"A Christian entertainer," says Martin, who lives in Belton, "is a person who is in this industry primarily to use it as a tool for witnessing."

This is different from popular entertainers who happen also to be outstanding Christians such as Pat Boone and Anita Bryant, he opines.

"In 1974, I played 211 engagements. One half of these were other than church-related programs. But I always take an opportunity to give a logical witness for Jesus Christ. It might be as short as one minute."

Martin is emphatic about where he will and will not perform:

"I refuse to play nightclubs though some good offers have come. I just don't feel an effective witness can be given in that atmosphere."

The yo-yo craze hit Martin's hometown of Houston when he was 12-years-old.

"I remember buying my first one with lunch money," he says.

Four years later, at the world-wide yo-yo competition in Toronto, he won over 500 other contestants.

A few years later, Martin was offered a one-of-a-kind scholarship to Howard Payne College, a Baptist school in Brownwood, Tex.

"I guess I had the only yo-yo scholarship ever to be given," he quips.

"The school gave me \$75 per semester to go out to area churches, give a little yo-yo demonstration and then promote the school."

Martin was too shy, in those days, to announce his own act. So that was taken over by a bouncy Howard Payne twirler, Mary Etta Lawrence, who today is Martin's wife.

He confesses to a real inner struggle over what career to follow, initially.

"For some reason I fought going into full time church work. My daddy (Everett S. Martin) was a Baptist minister but he always let me know what fun it was to be a Christian."

After a short period of rebellion during high school, Martin renewed his spiritual commitment during college.

The doors Martin wanted to open--those into the entertainment world--didn't at that time. But the doors to full time church work did. So, during the next few years Martin guided youth ministries for churches in San Antonio, Shreveport and Oklahoma City.

Later, he switched to recruitment and public relations at Mary Hardin-Baylor. During those years, however, Martin spent week-ends and other off-duty time performing for church and secular engagements.

"The last six months at Mary Hardin Baylor, I felt my job could be done by anyone. I was spending all my free time on the road, doing shows all over the country," he explains.

Martin enjoys all types of engagements--churches, revivals, shopping centers, coll ges, network television and performing for professional athletic teams.

"I talk a lot about success in my act. You know, people today are looking for successful Christians. And there are a lot of them around," says Martin.

In fact, one of his goals is to start a Christian talent agency so that churches, other religious organizations or just anyone wanting good, clean entertainment can be assured of getting just that.

Belton townspeople don't seem to know just how successful this one neighbor is. They grew so used to Martin traveling with his college job and entertainment sideline that many still don't realize he moved into full time Christian entertainment four years ago.

He still maintains his home here for his wife, two sons and 250 yo-yos collected from around the world because he likes his neighbors, and major airports are "within a short flying distance."

Martin grins when he talks about a yo-yo champion encountering such antedotes as:

"He's got the world on a string... and the ups and downs of his job..."

His favorite antedote happened several years ago at a magician's convention in Dallas.

Following Martin's yo-yo act, a man about 70-years-old complimented the entertainer.

"But young man," he almost whispered, "There's one thing you should know about your routine. I could see the strings."

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(BP) Photos mailed to Baptist state papers.

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Accused Baptist Preacher
Converts Member of Jury

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ORANGE COUNTY, Va., 1767(BP)--A Baptist preacher charged by a grand jury here with unlawful preaching made such an able defense of his position that one of the jurors later was converted by his testimony.

The juror who said he found the preacher's testimony irrefutable is John Waller. Once known as "Swearing John Waller" to his friends and a man hostile to all forms of religion, the new Baptist convert said he wrestled with his conscience for some eight months before making a profession of faith.

Following his recent baptism, Waller began preaching almost immediately and is beginning to arouse the displeasure of the state church of Virginia, observers note.

The Baptist preacher whose arguments won Waller is Lewis Craig, also a recent convert to the Baptist faith. Craig's zeal promptly stirred the ire of the state church, and he was presented to the grand jury, of which Waller was a member, to face charges of preaching and conducting unlawful worship services.

After indicting Craig, the jury retired to a tavern where they were confronted by the accused. He had come "to thank them for their sudden attention."

"When I was into all finds of folly and vice, the courts took no notice of me," Craig told the grand jury. "But now that I have forsaken all these vices and am warning men to forsake and repent of their sins, you bring me to the bar as a common criminal. How do you explain all this?"

Craig's boldness and the soundness of his argument left the surprised jurors speechless. But Waller later said it prompted him to begin some earnest soul searching. Waller said he recognized that the Baptist preacher had a strength of character which he lacked, but for which he longed. He began to listen to other Baptist preachers at every opportunity.

About eight months after he had joined in indicting Craig for preaching the gospel, Waller was a Baptist himself. And now he is engaged in spreading the same good news.

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Women Released, Appeal For Georgi Vins' Freedom

KESTON, England (BP)--Five reform Baptist women, recently released from a Soviet prison, began an immediate appeal for the release of dissident reform Baptist minister and leader Georgi Vins, Keston News Service (KNS) said here.

Another development, reported by KNS, indicates that the Kiev Church, of which Vins is an elected officer, is enjoying an unheralded measure of freedom for churches under Soviet communism.

The five women, Ida Korotun, Tatyana Kozhemyakina, Zinaida Tarasova, Yekaterina Gritsenko and Nadezhda Lvova, were arrested as workers on a secret printing press discovered by the K.G.B. (Russian secret police) last autumn in Latvia. They were freed on June 27 in connection with International Women's Year, according to the news service of Keston College, Center for the Study of Religion and Communism.

Following their release, the women wrote a letter to Christians of the world, "praising God for their release" and thanking those who "by their earnest prayers and appeals" helped to gain their release, KNS reported.

The women appealed particularly for Vins and for two men arrested with them, also workers of the "Christian" printing press still in prison, and other Christians they said are still in Soviet prisons.

KNS reports Vins is in a prison camp near Yakutsk in the Soviet Far East. A recent visit by his mother and eldest daughter found him "beaming and sprightly" but in bad health, suffering from neck and chest pains, KNS noted.

Vins was convicted in January of "illegal religious action" and sentenced to five years in jail and five in "internal exile." He previously served a three-year sentence and was released in 1969 in broken health. His father, also a minister, died in prison camp and his mother ended a three-year sentence in 1973.

Vins, KNS said, told his relatives he traveled to Yakutsk in a special railway car for prisoners and that "he did not see daylight" for three months until arrival at a transit camp in Irkutsk.

From there, Vins reported, he was flown to Yakutsk on an ordinary scheduled flight, handcuffed to an escort, so that a stewardess had to feed him with a spoon.

Vins' prison identity card is marked with a special red stripe, KNS reported, which means he is considered liable to attempt to escape. It also means, the news service said, "stricter treatment."

Vins, according to KNS, is searched four times daily, while other prisoners are searched twice. He has already been moved to three different camps and, under conditions of his sentence, will have to wait "many months for another visit from his family," KNS said.

KNS reported some good news, however for the Kiev Church to which Vins belongs. The news service said the church "has been registered unconditionally, enabling it to function freely without the usual restrictions imposed by the State." No reason or explanation of the action was given by KNS.

But Christian believers in Kiev noted it is the first instance of its kind in the Soviet Union. The church's 500 members have been meeting in the woods but now have a church building, which they are renovating themselves, KNS said.

Alexei Bichkov, secretary-general of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, said at the Baptist World Alliance meeting in Stockholm in July that the printing press, confiscated when the five women and other Christian workers were arrested, had been returned to the reform Baptists. KNS said this has not been confirmed.

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E.A. McDowell, Retired
Seminary Prof., Dies at 77

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ATLANTA (BP)--Edward Allison McDowell, 77, retired seminary professor, Atlanta minister and Mercer University professor, died here August 25.

The South Carolina native was professor Greek and New Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., 1935-1952.

He then taught at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., until 1964, when he became minister of teaching at First Baptist Church in Atlanta. McDowell later became distinguished professor of Christianity at Mercer University in Atlanta until his retirement in 1974.

Funeral services were held Aug. 27 in Atlanta. Burial was to be at Wake Forest, N.C. The family request that in lieu of flowers gifts be made to the E.A. McDowell Chair of Applied Christianity at Furman University, Greenville, S.C.

Survivors include his widow, the former Doris Price; a son, Edward A. McDowell III, of Gaithersburg, Md.; a daughter, Mrs. A. Robert Smith of Washington Grove, Md.; a brother, two sisters and nine grandchildren.

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No Change in Premium Rates
For Church Medical in 1976

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DALLAS (BP)--At a time when inflation is forcing prices upward in practically every category, members in the church medical insurance plan are getting some good news from the Southern Baptist Convention's Annuity Board--no premium rate increases between now and the end of 1976.

Darold H. Morgan, board president, confirmed the "no rate increase" during the next 16 months came from Aetna Life Insurance Company when bids were opened and compared for the church medical plan.

He said the stabilized rate placed Aetna ahead of six other major insurance companies which had submitted bids. Out of 21 major insurance firms, 15 declined to bid. They indicated they could not underwrite the kind of program ministers and church staff members needed or they felt they could not offer a plan at rates competitive to Aetna's, Morgan said.

"Since moving the church medical plan to Aetna in late July, we have been striving for stability in benefits and rates. We believe we have achieved our goal, especially when we look at how inflation is forcing medical costs upward throughout the nation," he said.

Morgan said also that applications for the church medical plan in July are up 15 per cent over July, 1974.

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Dallas Baptist College
Gets Challenge Grants

Baptist Press
8/27/75

DALLAS (BP)--A Dallas businessman has challenged financially-plagued Dallas Baptist College here to raise \$750,000 and says he will match it in two stages.

W.E. Thorn, the college's new president, said A. Webb Roberts, a businessman and trustee of the school, will give the college \$250,000 in unrestricted cash if the college raises \$500,000 by February 1. Roberts will then add an additional challenge gift of \$500,000 in endowment funds if the school can raise an additional \$250,000.

"This will allow us to pay off our most burdensome debts," Thorn said.

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