



-- FEATURES

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Ed Seabough: A Writer
With A 'Need to Create'

By Toby Druin

ATLANTA (BP)--"Yes, yes, I search for a yes.

"I search in a world of no's;

"I'd like to know, I've gotta know,

"Is there an eternal yes?"

That question, posed in one of the songs in the youth musical, "Encounter," had its origin in a newspaper story. A reporter quoted a young girl who had been caught up in the counter-culture as "hoping someday to find a yes."

Ed Seabough read the story and mentally filed away the girl's remark. Later when he was writing the lyrics for "Encounter," her quest surfaced in the words to "I Search for a Yes."

Seabough does a lot of "filing away" of those kinds of thoughts and phrases and ideas--mentally and in a horde of note books he keeps.

"I clip articles from newspapers and magazines and file them," Seabough says, "I sit in church and write notes on what the preacher says. I don't care who he is, I take notes on what he says, because every now and then I find a phrase."

And many of those phrases--like "I Search for a Yes"--have found their way into Seabough's lyrics or poetry. He's written three books--After the Riot and Other Debris, Babble On and Other Ruins, and So You're Going to College--and lyrics for more than a half dozen musicals, such as "Encounter", "Joy", "No Hassle", "The Family of God", "The Common Cup", "Share" and "The Call of God."

His latest works include "Reconciliation", a gospel musical drama he and Buryl Red did for 1975 Baptist World Alliance, and "The Fabric of Freedom", a musical drama for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Bicentennial emphasis in which he combined his writing talents with composer Bill Cates.

"Fabric" had its debut at Home Missions weeks at Glorieta and Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Centers last summer and will be performed again at FREEDOM 76 at San Antonio, Tex., Dec. 28-31. Seabough is chairman of promotion and registration for the big event which is expected to draw some 10,000 students and single and married young adults.

Seabough uses his involvement in events such as FREEDOM 76, seminary conferences and student conventions and retreats--he spoke at five Baptist Student Union (BSU) conventions in as many weeks this fall--and his lyrics, poetry and other writing help him get his job done at the Home Mission Board.

That job officially is director of personnel recruitment services in the division of personnel. As the title implies, his responsibility is recruiting missionaries and other persons needed for the work of home missions. But it's more than simply finding a particular person to fit a particular job opening or need.

Through his writing and leadership in conventions, conferences and retreats he is attempting to raise the level of awareness of the challenge of home missions and show Southern Baptists--whether they be potential career missionaries or unpaid volunteers--that they can help meet it.

But his writing is his avocation as well as vocation. "I really have a tremendous need to create," he says, "and find expression through my writing."

That "need" and a respect for the written word were ingrained in him as a youth, he says, when his mother used to read daily to him and his brothers and sisters. Every birthday and Christmas he got one or two books.

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He is native Missourian but lived in West Virginia during his first few years in school and during that time began writing poetry. Later, back in Missouri, he was editor of the high school annual, reported for the school paper and was president of the board.

The summer he graduated from high school, he felt God wanted him in a church-related vocation.

"But I didn't think it was the preaching ministry," he says.

With the help of a voice teacher who told him he didn't have the "vocal instrument" for solo work, he decided it wasn't the music ministry, either.

"So I began to look around," he recalls. "I have never been the sort of a person to make a show of my commitments--I've never walked an aisle about it. I've just said something to the Lord and went on in the direction he has led. So in February of that year I decided to do student work."

Seabough majored in drama and minored in sociology at Southwest Baptist College and did three stints as a summer missionary in Oregon-Washington. After graduation from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1956 he was named state BSU and music secretary for the Oregon-Washington Convention (now the Northwest Baptist Convention.)

During his first year there he needed a theme song for the BSU convention and wrote both the words and music.

"It was terrible," he says. "The name of it was 'Christ in Me the Hope,' and I borrowed every lyric and line of the music."

But the next year he wrote a theme interpretation for a spring retreat and then began doing it for all of his retreats and conventions.

"I began to realize that what I did was really poetic narrative and even if it were prose, it had structure and meter," he says, "Somehow, out of whatever background or training I have, it just naturally happens."

In 1958 he was asked by the Student Department at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board to do the opening night drama for Student Week at Ridgecrest. And in 1960, he became the student department's director of work in new convention areas.

His writing assignments increased to where he was writing the opening night dramas almost every year for student and Woman's Missionary Union publications.

In 1967 he combined talents with William Reynolds on his first song, "God's World Today," for a youth conference at Ridgecrest. "That opened new doors for me," he says. "I found I could create on assignment, not just out of the inspiration of the moment, and it was very satisfying."

Other musical assignments have followed--"One World, One Witness" for the Baptist Youth World Conference in Switzerland, "Here is My Life" for Mission 70, "The Call of God" for the Texas BSU convention. "The Common Cup", for the 1974 BWA youth conference in Portland, "Reconciliation" for the 1975 BWA, "The Fabric of Freedom", and others.

Three of his songs--"God's World Today"; "One World, One Lord, One Witness"; and "Here Is My Life"--are in the new Baptist Hymnal. He's combined his lyric-writing talents with the music of some of the SBC's better known composers--Reynolds, Buryl Red, Bill Cates, Bob Burroughs, Gene Bartlett, and Greg Sewell.

Seabough insists that his lyrics relate correct theological concepts. "I have a feeling that the lyrics in any musical work ought to be theologically correct," he says, "and I think there ought to be a teaching aspect to them--not just something that is a performance and then you forget it."

The work is demanding. "I do more Bible study now than I ever did in my life," Seabough says. "In the 'Call of God', though it is in a contemporary setting, I ran down every reference to any word used for 'call.'"

"In working on 'Reconciliation', which is based on four Biblical stories, I probably spent four weeks just doing Bible study before I ever began to write anything."

Seabough hopes that through the things he writes people will somehow have a new worship experience. "I have no need to be so far out that it offends people. For me to be on the cutting edge is to still speak to people, and to help bring them along in their Christian growth."



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Students Start Project To Aid Bangladesh

NASHVILLE(BP)--Students concerned about world hunger have set a goal of raising \$150,000 for the people of Bangladesh this year, according to Charles Roselle, secretary of National Student Ministries of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Roselle said the "Student Bangladesh Hunger Project" will be sponsored mostly by Baptist Student Unions (BSU) on a potential of 970 campuses around the country. Money gathered will be channeled through state Baptist convention offices for use by Southern Baptist foreign missionaries already on the field in Bangladesh.

The missionaries then will allocate the money to begin work on predetermined needs in the country.

One of the projects will be to build 10 vegetable gardens in the Feni area, which will assist 350 families for a six-month period. Money will be used by missionaries to rent land, buy seed and supply fertilizer. Money sent from the students will feed the workers and their families while the gardens are growing. Workers will receive some cash each day for working in the gardens as well as a share of the vegetables harvested.

Another project is to purchase five rice mills in the Feni area to save farmers the expense and time of hauling rice to town for milling.

A fish pond project is designed to aid marginal or non land-owning families to supplement their income and add protein to the diet of the families. This project will help 5,000 families start a commercial fish pond.

In a food for work project, Baptist missionaries would be involved in assisting seven areas of Bangladesh in cooperation with the Bangladesh government. Workers will be assigned tasks and receive a daily ration of food in exchange for labor. Baptist missionaries will direct these projects in cooperation with a government official.

Of the \$150,000, the vegetable gardens project would receive \$50,000; the rice mills \$15,000; the fish pond project \$50,000; and the food for work project \$35,000.

All of the money given by students will go directly to provide relief in Bangladesh through the projects included in the plan. These in turn are done in cooperation with the government of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh government prefers projects such as these requiring work for food and money to help provide incentive for work instead of free handouts.

National Student Ministries will serve as an information center, gathering ideas from campus groups to share with other Baptist Student Unions on possible ways to promote participation in the "Student Bangladesh Hunger Project."

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Alcohol A Major Problem,
HEW Spokesman Declares

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Baptist Press

FORT WORTH (BP)--The cure for alcoholism in this country is not prohibition, but education, members of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission's board of trustees were told here.

Ninety-five million people out of 220 million in this country "are using alcohol in some form and you are going to have a hard time legislating against its education is the key," said Donald G. Phelps, who directs the division of prevention of the U.S. Health, Education and Welfare Department's National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

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He said the local county and state tax on alcohol is one of the three main sources of government revenue. It ranks up there along with personal income tax.

He praised the Radio-TV Commission's recent series of radiobroadcasts detailing the problems of alcohol use and abuse. The series aired concurrently on the commission's Powerline, Mastercontrol, Country Crossroads and Soul-Searchers programs.

"Your commission's radio department assumed an important leadership role in this area," he said. "You will touch millions of casual listeners and a hidden population of alcohol users, many of them active in their churches."

Phelps said some of the most devastating effects of alcohol are the myths about it and the refusal to deal with it realistically. He said 500,000 Americans a year are classified as alcoholics, many of them teenagers.

"But we learned something significant in a recent survey of more than 13,000 teenagers from the 7th through the 12th grades. We found that in the traditional Bible Belt of the South, youngsters are less apt to be alcohol users and abusers than their counterparts in the north. This has something significant to say about the roles of the family and the church in the community," he said.

"Of the 95 million people in this country who drink, 85 million have no apparent problem," he said. "But 10 million people drink to excess and each of these people has direct impact on the lives of at least four others."

"Thus 40 million Americans are directly affected negatively from alcohol. Half of all the nation's traffic fatalities are directly related to the misuse of alcohol, 48 per cent of the violent crimes in society are alcohol-related."

Phelps said young people are turning from illicit drugs to alcohol because "alcohol is cheaper in this country than anywhere else in the world. We all seem to understand something about alcohol so we don't hassle the kids about it too much. And the quality of the high from liquor is more 'dependable' than the quality of the high from marijuana or other drugs."

Lowering the legal drinking age to 18 has brought problems, he said. "Those people who wanted the legal drinking age lowered should have looked at where this drinking was going to take place," he said.

"Our survey showed that 10 per cent of the 13-year-old boys who drink, drink in cars--some of them moving cars. In my own home county in Maryland, 18 year-olds are not drinking at home, but on shopping mall parking lots, creating problems that the police have great difficulty controlling."

He deplored the social custom of "come over to my house for a drink" and personally thinks "we should replace the cocktail hour with social hours and fellowship hours, much like the churches do." He said 32 percent of the American population does not drink at all...and they should not be stigmatized because of it.

Phelps expressed concern about professional athletes publicly endorsing alcoholic beverages. "Where you have a Mickey Mantle talking about being in the 'Beer Drinkers Hall of Fame' it would be helpful if people like yourselves could present counter advertising about the effects of alcohol."

He said his agency has done some counter advertising featuring former baseball player Don Newcombe. "He talks about losing a million dollar baseball career and almost losing his wife and family to alcohol," Phelps said.

In a later conversation, Phelps said the willingness of Arkansas Congressman Wilbur Mills to speak publicly about his tragedy is in the best interest of people who might be in the same boat.

"I'm here today because of Senator Harold Hughes who is a non-drinking alcoholic. He pushed legislation through Congress which created our division of HEW."

Baptists who hesitate to speak up against alcohol because somebody might sneer--"He's a Baptist and they're traditionally against drinking"--should speak up anyhow, Phelps said.

The mere fact that a person is a member of some faith group that traditionally abstains does not mean that he abstains. There are many Christians, drinking behind closed doors, who may have more of a problem than the person without any faith. The Christian's problem is compounded by his own guilty conscience."

FORT WORTH(BP)--Leon Edwards, the convicted murderer who became a committed Christian while serving a life term in a Caribbean jail, has been released.

God unlocked the cell door. Leon died, at age 32, in his sleep sometime during the night of October 10. But his death will not end a dramatic impact on Christian missions on the Caribbean island of Grenada, which resulted because of his life. In fact, it's just begun.

Missionary Manget Herrin, who had just begun Baptist work on Grenada, reported the death to J.P. Allen of the Radio and Television Commission, Leon's "father in Christ," and Allen reported it to the commission meeting here.

Leon Edwards and Allen became friends when Leon wrote a letter which came to the Radio and Television Commission's counseling department, which Allen heads as vice president of audience research and response.

He asked for more information about how to be a "soldier for Christ." Thus began a correspondence that spanned several years and was highlighted three years ago when Edwards was featured in a film telling the story of the commission's counseling ministry to people in prison.

Leon's death apparently was from natural causes, although there had been no known illness or symptoms.

Herrin was with the prison group on Sunday, the previous day. He said Leon had been in good spirits, had sung with the prison trio and had given his Christian testimony. The highlight of the service, Herrin said, was when Leon sang his theme song--"He Touched Me."

Leon--responding to the Christ who touched him--touched many others before he died.

Recently, the second "chapter" of Leon's story was related by Paul M. Stevens, Radio and TV Commission president, who reported that Leon had become the acknowledged leader of a group of Christians in prison and a widening circle of former prisoners because of his continuing witness.

In a letter to Allen, Herrin said he had reached the mission field, met Leon, other Christians in the prison, and the prison superintendent Ben Roberts.

"Leon was looking for me on the basis of your letters," Herrin wrote Allen. "You and your dealings with superintendent Roberts have opened the door for us."

Roberts' interest in the opening of Baptist work was of particular value to the Baptist missionary. He "took charge" of Herrin, seeing that he met all the right people on the island. He also arranged a 15-minute interview over Radio Grenada, which Paul Roberts, the superintendent's son, conducted.

"Within the next few days the station repeated the interview four times," Herrin wrote. "They may have used it more. Roberts also assisted our Baptist mission with customs, as well as arranging an appointment with the prime minister."

Herrin said the prison door remains open. "When the first Baptist services are inaugurated in the city it has already been decided that the men of the prison group will be free to attend the morning worship."

Herrin told Allen that some of the men who have been recently released from prison have visited him, arranging for the beginning of Bible study groups in their part of the island.

Herrin has purchased spot announcements about the Grenada mission on three Radio and Television Commission programs, aired on the island, because "they are so well known and listened to by everyone."

The Radio and Television Commission has given the same amount of time, 30 seconds, at the opening of each program to further help the listener identify with Baptist work in Grenada.

"There can be no question that radio has been used to open many doors here on this island," Herrin wrote Allen. "I must admit that I personally have much high regard for the work you are doing."

"This is not the end of Leon's story," Allen said. "Chapter three is already in preparation. Men met Leon in prison and his spirit and profound experiences with Christ led many to open discipleship. Already the seed is being sown in Grenada. The missionary there is cultivating. Harvest is certain."