



FEATURES

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'Orange Blossom Special' &
A Ring of the WBAP Cowbell

By Larry Jerden

FORT WORTH (BP)--Every weeknight, in a soundproof room here a short, 42-year-old disc jockey becomes a co-worker and co-driver to thousands of listeners while most of America sleeps.

At midnight, with the strains of the "Orange Blossom Special" and a ring of the WBAP cowbell, country-and-western DJ Bill Mack begins his "Open Road Show" on the 50,000-watt, clear channel C&W station. The popular DJ also co-hosts "Country Crossroads," a Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission-produced Christian radio show, with Grand Ole Opry comedian Jerry Clower and country entertainer Leroy Van Dyke.

For truckers and other night workers, listening to Mack is a nightly ritual. To Mack, a Southern Baptist layman from Fort Worth's Travis Avenue Baptist Church, the shows are a childhood dream come true. "I've wanted to be a disc jockey since I was 12," Mack admitted during one of his recent Open Road Shows.

Mack--his real name is Bill Mack Smith--got his chance in 1952. He has never left radio. As his career progressed--playing C&W--Mack moved to Amarillo, Wichita Falls and San Antonio, Tex. He came to WBAP in 1968 as the station was making the transition to C&W from "middle of the road" popular music. In his years with WBAP the national popularity of country music has increased dramatically. In that same time, he has been named "Country Music DJ of the Year" and has had a recording on the top country charts.

"Since about 1969 there's been a real increase in the popularity of country and western music," Mack said. "One reason is that we've had better songs. Also there have been more 50,000-watt stations broadcasting it. But I guess the real reason for its popularity is that country music communicates. It relates to life, and people can identify with it."

"Country Crossroads," which Mack has co-hosted since 1969, has grown from an initial 30 stations to more than 900 around the world, according to Jim Rupe, the producer. A country format show with a "soft-sell" gospel approach, the program is carried overseas by American Armed Forces Network, in Europe by the Canadian military network, and in several other countries on both AM and shortwave stations. Mail response is the main audience indicator, and after several years of soliciting response with special offers the Crossroads crew was forced to stop because they couldn't keep up with it.

"When we had regular features offered for people to write in, we'd get about 8,000 letters per month," said Rupe. With that mail indicating an audience of about 20 million by an NBC estimate, the offers were discontinued for about a year. "Last October, we ran another special, offering a Country and Western Music Calendar," Rupe said. "We had 25,000 printed up in advance. And we had to go to two more printings, eventually mailing out about 70,000 calendars."

A brochure on how to become a Christian continues to be offered and Rupe said there are about 200 requests per month for it. In addition, there are about 30 "serious counseling requests" following each weekly show.

Many people, however, call in during Mack's all-night show on WBAP. "A woman might call in to tell her husband out on the road about their new baby, for instance . . . I've had people call in with dope problems, and I've had them call in saying they were going to commit suicide. I don't have all the answers, but I keep in touch with those who do. When I get problems I can't handle, I refer them to clergymen or others."

Mack said he tries to make his WBAP show "fun," but, "The night people are lonelier. They come to think they know us personally, and they call the nighttime DJs more than daytime listeners do. And they call more often with their problems.

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Mack has developed a great affinity with the nation's truckers, and many of his calls are from and to truck drivers. "Truckers used to have a roughneck image," he related. "But I've met a lot of them and it's just not true. Many have college degrees--they are businessmen. I call them the knights of the road. If someone stops to help you on the highway, nine times out of ten it'll be a trucker."

Mack has a rapport with his unseen audience that is hard to find. It is the same whether he is broadcasting on WBAP or Country Crossroads. Perhaps it is his genuineness. "I became a Christian when I was 15 years old," he declared, "but about three years ago, I realized I was putting my emphasis on money and professional success . . . I was doing well, but I didn't have any peace . . . I rededicated my life to Christ, and now I have peace I didn't have before."

With his commitment to Christ, Mack has found his career means even more to him, and he has found in country music others who have traveled and are traveling the same road he has been down. "I've met some fine people in country music, some fine Christians, "There are really too many to mention, but Jerry Clower and Jeannie C. Riley have really been a help to me. And country musician Jerry Lee Lewis. That doesn't fit his image, but . . . he's helped me a lot just talking to him."

This summer, Mack was criticized by a Texas Baptist pastor who said he had heard the DJ on a beer commercial and that in a promotion for a Hawaii tour Mack was conducting, a cocktail party had been advertised. Paul Stevens, Radio-TV Commission executive director, said the commercial was made 10 years ago, before Mack's rededication. The cocktail party ad was carried by mistake, Stevens said, after Mack had told the ad agency to delete it.

"Powerline," the Radio and Television Commission's show for teens, also drew fire for using rock music. "You can't communicate with teens except at their level," Mack countered. The commission puts the message in with the music, so they (teens) hear it. The mail they are getting is unbelievable.

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Adapted from September 1976 World Mission Journal.

(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers.

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\$1 Million Gift Largest
In Texas School's History

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MARSHALL, Tex. (BP)--East Texas Baptist College here has received a bequest of more than \$1 million, the largest in the school's history, from the estate of the late Mrs. Mayme Patterson Jarrett of Garrison, Tex.

Mrs. Jarrett's estate consists of stocks and bonds, cash, rare coins and 1,500 acres of timber land. Her will asked that money from the sale of the land be used for buildings and furnishings at the college.

Mrs. Jarrett, who died last year, is survived by her husband, N. H. Jarrett.

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William Carey College
To Open Coast Campus

Baptist Press
7/19/76

HATTIESBURG, Miss. (BP)--William Carey College will open a 20-acre beach-front campus on the Gulf Coast, in addition to its facilities here, to enrol about 300 upper level and graduate students for the fall semester, 1976, the Baptist school's president announced here.

William Carey College on the Coast, as the facility is now known, was owned formerly by Gulf Coast Military Academy. William P. Osborn, administrative dean and a native Mississippian, will direct the coastal facility, according to William Carey President J. Ralph Noonkester. The school has used borrowed facilities on the Coast for three years, he said. The Baptist school opened an auxiliary campus in New Orleans five years ago when the Carey School of Nursing joined forces with Southern Baptist Hospital of New Orleans to offer the bachelor of nursing degree.

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NOTE: Baptist Press has been requested to rerun the story below, as a number of copies mailed 7/16/76 were unreadable.-- Thanks, Baptist Press

Cruz and Golonka Recall
Carter 'Back When'

By Robert O'Brien

NEW YORK (BP)--Two immigrants--one Cuban and the other Polish--watched their television sets with a mixture of awe and excitement as Jimmy Carter, a man they first met in 1968 during a Southern Baptist evangelistic crusade to ethnics in New England, accepted the Democratic presidential nomination here.

Carter is believed to be the second Southern Baptist to win a U. S. presidential nomination. The other, Harry S. Truman, was less active in church and denominational affairs. The former Georgia governor is a deacon, part-time Sunday School teacher and serves as a trustee of a national Southern Baptist Convention agency, the Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn.

In November, he and his running mate, U. S. Sen. Walter F. Mondale (D.-Minn.), the son of a Methodist minister, may run against a Republican ticket including President Gerald R. Ford, an Episcopalian, and/or Ronald Reagan, a Presbyterian.

Eloy Cruz, pastor of Iglesia Bautista El Calvario (Calvary Baptist Church), Brooklyn, said in a telephone interview that the nomination of his fellow Southern Baptist evoked especially strong impressions.

Cruz, who came from Cuba 19 years ago, and Carter were among a group of men who took part in a multilingual evangelistic effort in Springfield, Mass., in November, 1968. Different teams went to different ethnic communities to discuss their faith with the residents. Carter, who speaks Spanish, and Cruz were teamed together.

When the two-week evangelistic effort ended, Cruz, recalls, Carter personally drove him back to his home in Brooklyn, where Carter, then a Georgia state senator, planned to spend the night before returning to his home in Plains, Ga.

"We arrived in Brooklyn about 1 a.m.," Cruz said, speaking through an interpreter. "Before he went to bed, Jimmy went into the bedrooms of each of my three children and kissed them. That's when my heart really went out to Jimmy Carter."

Elias Golonka, now a Southern Baptist missionary to the United Nations, organized the Springfield crusade while he was assistant secretary of language missions for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta.

Based on his observations of Carter in Springfield, and during his term as Georgia governor, when both men lived in Atlanta, Golonka, who immigrated 26 years ago from Poland, commented in another telephone interview:

"The Jimmy Carter I saw on television during the Democratic Convention is the same Jimmy Carter I have always known. He has always impressed me with his concern for people, his honesty, his intellect and his ability to cross social, cultural, economic and racial barriers.

"He has shown increasing maturity and personal and spiritual growth over the years, but he is still a down-to-earth individual from the grass roots of American life."

Both Golonka and Cruz rate Carter highly as a Christian.

Cruz, who is mentioned in Carter's book, "Why Not the Best?," and has maintained fairly close contact over the years, says: "He is a man of God--a great Christian. He has a very high concept of the gospel of Jesus Christ and is not ashamed to admit he is a Christian."

Golonka noted that many in the media have seemed puzzled about the compatibility of Carter's political toughness and his stance as a Christian who believes in love and compassion.

"Anyone who thinks a Christian must be weak is operating under a stereotype," Golonka said. "His toughness can be explained in that he is a man of principle, convictions and discipline. And he comes from a farmer's background. In a farmer's life there is self discipline.

"He is a man with empathy--an ability to listen and identify with needs," adds Golonka. "I have already heard favorable response from representatives of several United Nations delegations about Carter as a man.

"They are impressed by his directness . . . that he is an ordinary man of the soil from a place called Plains, Ga.," added Golonka, who is fluent in seven languages and can communicate in five others. "The people in socialist countries will have a special interest that a man from such a background--a peanut farmer from Georgia--could be president of our 'capitalistic' country."