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Dal Evans 'Rode Into Town'  
Via Jet to Talk about Christ

By David A. Risinger

DALLAS (BP)--Long time cowgirl, movie and TV star Dale Evans Rogers "rode 'into town" to give her Christian testimony here.

She has dropped her 'cowgirl' image to emerge as a woman whose vivaciousness, contagious charm and energy belie her 63 years.

Now, she jets across the country to tell her story, recounting in churches, crusades and other religious and secular meetings, of trials, triumphs and a staunch faith.

"Most of my requests for Christian talks come from the South, Midwest and East Coast," she said, "and many are from Southern Baptists."

Miss Evans feels at home in Southern Baptist meetings, since she was raised one herself in Texas and Arkansas. She now belongs, with husband Roy Rogers--a longtime western film and TV cowboy star--to a Presbyterian church in Apple Valley, Calif., a desert resort some 90 miles from Los Angeles.

She admits her heavy schedule of giving religious talks cuts down on secular jobs in Hollywood.

"When you get heavily involved in Christian work, its automatically done for you. They gradually get to think of you as being religious," she said. "Its not a matter of being religious--I'm just committed to the Lord.

"I do secular work when it comes up, but its difficult to get work and be selective. I will not take a job that will dishonor Christ."

Miss Evans has a busy schedule, nonetheless, that offers not only direct witnessing opportunities but appearances with her husband of 28 years, at state fairs, two guests spots on "Hee Haw", a spot on the "Donny and Marie" (Osmond) show, and a possible Christmas TV special.

"Roy and I will also act as grand marshals at the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena on Jan 1 (1977)," she said.

In addition, the Rogers-Evans duo is preparing to tape a new opening for the half-hour western series they did for five years back in the 1950s. The show will be offered in syndication to television stations across the country.

Further, she recently completed cutting a country-gospel album in Nashville for Word Records and has written her 15th book.

"So I'm still diversified, but my emphasis is the Lord," she noted.

"I really do get tired from all the traveling..." Miss Evans said, "but when I get up to give my testimony and to sing for the Lord, I seem to gain new strength. The more you witness, the more you commit yourself. I feel such fulfillment and freedom that I never experienced in the entertainment industry."

Miss Evans has worn many professional hats--movie actress, television star, live performer, author, composer--and still holds to one burning ambition.

"I would love to do a strong dramatic role, but it would have to be the right role or the right film in something like a Billy Graham movie," she said.

"I always played a brittle character--a society gal or smart alecky reporter in pictures with Roy," she added.

Miss Evans admits that she and Rogers work hard at not becoming another Hollywood divorce statistic.

"I don't accept every offer that comes my way, because I realize my husband deserves some attention. But he enjoys traveling for business and hunting, and he understands my commitment to witnessing," she said.

"But periodically, we decide to regroup and balance our schedules so we can spend more time together."

The people who turn out to hear her witness mostly want to hear about the tragedies she has overcome through faith.

In an honest, direct way, Dale Evans recounts two broken marriages, a desperate climb up the ladder of Hollywood success, marriage to co-star Roy Rogers, the adoption of an international family and the untimely deaths of three children.

The faith of the Rogers household is still called on to be strong, like last May when her mother died, followed two weeks later by the death of a week-old great grandchild.

"Sometimes I think I'll change my talk and tell what God is doing in my life right now and how I feel about current events," said Miss Evans.

"But then I realize that people come out to hear me tell my story. They have probably read about it all in my books. But they still want to hear it again from me."

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers # # #

Metrochurch Will Remain  
Independent, Says Hogue

Baptist Press  
10/28/76

EDMOND, Okla. (BP)--Former Southern Baptist evangelist Richard Hogue who became founder-pastor of the "transdenominational" Metrochurch here a year ago has said that the congregation will remain an independent, non-denominational church for the foreseeable future rather than affiliate with Southern Baptists.

When the church was founded in October 1975, the church's leadership indicated they were interested in petitioning the local Baptist association and state convention for membership.

Since that time, Hogue said, the church has developed along lines that more accurately reflect a non-denominational stance, and he feels that the membership and church goals would be best served by remaining independent.

"Therefore," a statement from the church cited, "the church will not petition the Capital Baptist Association or the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma for membership."

Hogue said he and many on his staff who came from Southern Baptist backgrounds will always hold the highest regard for the denomination's churches and individuals and that he would encourage cooperation with other churches, where practically possible.

Although the church earlier claimed to be Southern Baptist-affiliated, the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger cited, "Metrochurch has not petitioned Capital (Baptist) Association for membership as Hogue said it would, and it has not contributed financially to Southern Baptist missions through either the association or the state convention."

A check by Baptist Press revealed that the church is not affiliated with Southern Baptists nationally and has not contributed to national causes of the denomination through the Cooperative Program unified budget.

Hogue, a former student at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, is still accepting revivals in Southern Baptist churches, the Messenger said.

The church is reportedly a theocracy with Hogue as the church's "spiritual authority" who makes decisions he thinks best, with only the board of elders (other staff members) approving major transactions.

The church does not have business meetings and the members do not vote on church actions, according to a report in the Edmond Sun.

Hogue is also president of the corporation owning the site, where the church is constructing its first plant. They have been meeting in temporary facilities.

The 894-member church, according to its Sept. 29 bulletin, had recorded 422 baptisms since its founding. A survey by the Messenger of Edmond-area churches of all denominations showed that the most members lost by any one of them was about 40.

Some pastors said many of the converts baptized by Hogue's church were already church members. One pastor said some members leaving his church were "rebaptized" and some were not.

One non-Baptist pastor said families his church lost to Metroch "hadn't been doing much in our church for a long time."

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"The Church"--A  
Brand New Thing?

Baptist Press  
10/28/76

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--A longtime evangelist and former Southern Baptist pastor from Del City, Okla., says he has severed all ties with the denomination and is "now brand new in a brand new thing."

The "brand new thing," for Jerry Reimer, a former member (not pastor) of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, is a movement called, "The Church," according to the Baptist Messenger, weekly newsmagazine of Oklahoma Baptists.

"The Church" reportedly has churches in over 30 U.S. cities, including Oklahoma City, San Diego and Los Angeles, Calif., Dallas, Houston and Austin, Tex., and sometimes sends as many as 50-100 lay members to a new location to form a nucleus.

The group, which has elders instead of pastors, believes it is God's voice on earth today. Since God doesn't want his body of believers divided, all denominations are symbols of division and should be united in "The Church," the Messenger quoted sources as saying.

"All I feel at liberty to say is that I'm no longer a Southern Baptist," Reimer said. "My family and I are no longer members of First Southern (Baptist) Church, Del City, and I have (voluntarily) returned my ordination certificate."

Reimer, 41, a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, and of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, was ordained to the gospel ministry by Hughes (Okla.) Baptist Church.

Having served as a pastor, and as staff evangelist for two other Oklahoma Baptist churches, the past few years Reimer has taught Bible studies, supplied pulpits and led revivals in several Oklahoma churches.

"I have terminated my Southern Baptist life in a good and legitimate way," noting that his new involvement is "not anything mystic or occult."

"The Church," says one source, traces its beginnings to a church formed 14 years ago in Anaheim, Calif., by Witness Lee, an associate of Watchman Nee, famed Chinese who headed Christian movements in China from the 1920s to the 1960s.

Nee wrote only one book, but many other booklets have been printed using translations of sermons and lectures published in magazines he edited. He was imprisoned by the Communists in 1952 and died June 1, 1972, in Anhwei Province.

"The Church's" members believe there is only one true New Testament church in each locality or city, one Oklahoma City source was quoted by the Messenger. That belief is a perversion of a Nee teaching, the source said.

But Leslie T. Lyall, in a foreword to the Nee biography, "Against the Tide," wrote: "Nee was not free from human error and human frailty. His insistence on the 'one locality one church' principle led into separatism and a denunciation of all churches other than his own, and this inevitably caused deep division in the Body of Christ."

An Oklahoma City couple attended a meeting at a son's request. The mother said some 200 persons from across the country were present. She described the sermon as generally dencouncing denominations, labeling the organizations of current churches as corrupt.

Many attending were "younger people" who "seemed like a happy group," she noted. Most giving testimonies said they had been Christians a long time but had become disenchanted and had not really known the meaning of their salvation until they joined "The Church," she added.

The woman said she observed no hint of what might be considered charismatic movement tendencies, but noted that they "sing like Pentecostals, using books with no tunes, but with new words sung spontaneously without a song leader."

At least two other men involved in the movement, in Oklahoma City are former Southern Baptist ministers, the Messenger said. They were identified as Terry Risenhoover, licensed to preach by Del City, First Southern a few years ago, and Jack Watson, former Baptist pastor and music minister. Reimer, Risenhoover and Watson are identified as elders in the organization, the Messenger said.