

RHYTHM FINDS IT'S GROOVE

FIRST pronouncements are important. When interviewed on the radio following his election as General, Albert Orsborn likened post-war Salvationists to efficient bulldozers, then to be seen on the streets of London clearing the rubble and helping to rebuild the city. The slogan he gave was, 'Put the Army on its heels, and if necessary on wings'.

Seventeen years later General Frederick Coutts, in similar circumstances expressed the hope that The Salvation Army might show a more modern approach to the old task of bringing the message of the Christian faith to the 'man in the street'. Pressed further by the interviewer, the newly-elected General said that, alongside the ministry of the brass band, it should be possible to take the message of salvation to coffee bars with electric guitars if this proved to be an effective method. Next morning the daily newspapers 'went to town'. Cartoonists had a field day. One of them depicted a group holding an open-air meeting while disillusioned bandsmen retreated with battered brass instruments underneath their arms, the guitars of the usurpers clumsily plugged into the street lighting system by means of exaggerated lengths of electric lead.

The whole idea attracted considerable publicity and the Press wanted to see photographs of Salvationists using the new sound'. The officer at International Headquarters responsible for such liaison matters was nonplussed. There were no groups, but the request provided too good a chance to miss. What could he do~

The International Training College at Denmark Hill supplied an answer. On the staff was a capable young officer, Captain Joy Webb. Possessed of a good singing voice and gifted with an aptitude for anything musical, the Captain was asked to find some girls who had brought guitars with them into training. This was done, and the unsuspecting victims, with Captain Webb, were taken on a round tour of Westminster to find a suitable background.

Joy Webb remembers: 'Time magazine put us outside No. 10 Downing Street and right on to their front cover. We were taken along to the Houses of Parliament and photographed at all angles with Big Ben in the background. There was no end to it.' This was not the first attempt of modern Salvationists to get 'with it'

Later that month similar group, with Captain Webb on her accordion, appeared on BBC television.

This was the situation at the time of General Coutts's election and pronouncement. An invitation to appear on the BBC feature 'Tonight' was accepted with reasonable nervousness. It was difficult for Cliff Michelmores to introduce the cadets because they had no name. The idea had never occurred to them or anyone else.

As they sang their songs that evening a director of the EMI company was viewing and listening in his home. He liked what he saw and heard, and set the ball rolling. A week or two later, Joy Webb and the cadets were asked to go to the studios to make a test recording. The group's first record, a forty-five single disc, was released on 14 February 1964. The songs were 'We're going to set the world a singing' and 'It's an open secret', both written and composed by Joy Webb. The second song came to birth in a meeting at the college when the wife of the Training Principal, Mrs Wiseman, shared with the staff some words from a book of paraphrased New Testament readings. Paul had written, 'Our love for Christ is an open secret'. That first disc has another claim to Army music history.

On it appeared the name 'Joystings' for the first time. It was Mr Robert Dockerill, of EMI and a good Army friend for many years, who said the group must have a name for recording purposes. As Colonel Bernard Adams, Manager of the Music Publications and Instruments Department at Salvationist Publishing and Supplies Ltd, Colonel Charles Skinner, Head of the International Music Editorial Department, and Robert Dockerill discussed the matter over a cup of tea the inspired title was born.

Not that the name could be used extensively. It was officially taboo for a long time. Army periodicals were instructed to refer merely to 'The International Training College Rhythm Group'. In bolder moments editors were courageous enough to add 'for recording purposes known as the Joystings'. The record made an immediate impact. 'Captain Joy' became a national figure overnight. Her first 'solo' appearance on radio was on Jimmy Young's 'Saturday Special'. The record was played and the Captain was interviewed next came a request to record for another radio programme. It was 24 February 1964. The scene was the EMI Studios in London's West End.

There was an audience. The crowd of teenagers hoping for admission, although they had been unsuccessful in securing tickets could not believe their eyes as they saw a group of eight young people in Salvation Army uniform approaching. 'Are you playing here tonight?', they asked incredulously as the Salvationists made their way through the throng toward the entrance.

Inside the low-roofed theatre-studio some 100 young pop enthusiasts prepared to enjoy and participate in the sixty-minute 'Friday Spectacular' show to be broadcast from Radio Luxembourg that week. Toward the end of the show the Joystings were generously introduced by the compere, Shaw Taylor, and were listened to with reservation which soon turned to unanimous approval as 'It's an open secret' proceeded. The storm of applause which greeted the group at the record's conclusion was overwhelming, prompting a 'Wow! Wow!' from the compère.

The Joystings could hold their heads high. That day their first disc had reached a place on the national charts. They had invaded the pop empire and conquered. A double success. When Joy Webb appeared on the Jimmy Young show the group was given a 'plug' by the announcement that their first public performance was to take place at Camberwell. This no doubt helped to pack the hall with an audience sixty per cent of which were estimated to be teenagers. The 'performance' ended with a Bible reading, words of appeal and several young people kneeling at the Penitent-form. This memorable meeting set the pattern for all meetings and campaigns conducted by the Joystings.

The invitation to play in the cabaret at the 'Blue Angel' Club 4 made headlines in the Press all over the world. The group was permitted to accept to play for three nights. The first appearance is vividly described by Joy:

"At midnight we made our way to the club, and about 3 am were standing in the wings waiting to go on. It was a sight to remember. One fellow, commenting on the crush, said, "I've been to some opening nights. but I've never seen so many pressmen in the 'Blue Angel' Club—ever before, for anything! The club was packed far beyond capacity,. Pressmen hung from parts of the structure of the room Television and film lights beat down mercilessly in an atmosphere already overcharged with heat, Marlene Dietrich gazed out of her picture with (was it my imagination?) mild amazement.'

Others shared the German film star's amazement. Among these were those, with tongues loosened by liquor, who stayed behind to talk with the Salvationists, sharing

confidences, seeking spiritual advice, and asking help in unraveling domestic problems. There was the blonde girl who was having trouble with her stiletto heels catching in the lace hem of her evening gown. She had imbibed too much drink, but was not too drunk to say, 'I never go to church, but I want to tell you that you dig the craziest and most wonderful gospel I've ever heard'. Then there was the man who passed his menu nervously to the group to be autographed. he seemed in no hurry to leave. After chatting about the music for a time he suddenly blurted "of course. I used to be a Salvationist and you've made me remember the old days—and a lot more!"

It was not envisaged that the life of the Joystings would last five years. Their days were, in fact, officially numbered at the time of the Army's Centenary Celebrations in the summer of 1965. Commissioner William Cooper, then the British Commissioner, had other ideas. A 'reprieve' was granted.

Following the commissioning of two members, Peter Dalziel and Bill Davidson, as officers, the group was transformed to serve under the Commissioner's jurisdiction at National Headquarters. Other valued members were Lieutenant Sylvia Gair and Mrs Lieutenant Pauline Banks. In the three ensuing years the Joystings reached their finest hour. At the time of their transfer to National Headquarters administration, under the direction of the National Secretary for Bands and Songster Brigades, opposition to the joystings was at its strongest. Some Salvationists and other Christian friends were not wholly convinced of the rightness of the group's activity. One minister thought it necessary to rededicate his, church after it had been 'desecrated' by joystings music the night before!

Such experiences were frustrating and discouraging to these sensitive young Christians, whose transparent sincerity was a feature of their service. They were not professional musicians, although it has been stated more than once that each member could have earned a fortune under different and less committed circumstances. They were first and foremost evangelists who believed that the high standard of sustained efficiency they set had but one intention to win souls for the Kingdom. They were dedicated 'to serve the present age'.

They took to the road—and never looked back! Programmes were planned to make an impact upon Salvationist audiences and in secular settings. Although the group rightly felt that its main ministry was to unchurched youth, they recognized that they had a function to fulfill so far as commit young Christians were concerned. The twin

spearhead of attack worked and worked miraculously, as their record of spiritual successes shows.

The final appearance of the Joystings was in the Fairfield Halls, Croydon, in July 1969. The years had done much for the members. ~ Major Webb herself had developed gifts of which she had not been aware, especially in the way of songwriting and musical composition. They took into retirement many memories: Continental tours; countless television appearances; numerous seekers in meetings; knowledge of some who had become Salvation Army officers through their ministry; many more who decided to be Christians and linked up ~ with Army corps or other centres of worship, speaking with Queen Elizabeth at a royal garden party at Buckingham Palace; riding in a vintage car in London's Lord Mayor's Show and taking part in performances at the Mermaid Theatre encouraged by Sir Bernard Miles, always their champion.

But they had opened the door to progressive thought and action. Their desire to be 'with it was just the beginning of new enterprises and of official encouragement for all such experiments.