



"Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.5, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

06/26/08

Program 42 "Mississippi Squirrel Revival" © C.W. Kalb, Jr. and Carlene Kalb

Revivalism in early America is a fascinating study. Embedded in it are the roots of several present-day church denominations, and the footprints of saints who enjoyed thriving ministries during the country's four "Great Awakenings". Long before televangelists, mega-churches and the internet, renowned circuit riders such as Bishop Francis Asbury and Peter Cartwright carried the message of the Gospel to remote pioneering settlements throughout the fledgling United States, often in the face of great danger. Great revival meetings took place, such as the famous one at Cane Ridge (KY) in 1801. England's Wesley brothers, John and Charles, along with George Whitefield visited America to fuel the fires of revival. Charles G. Finney, generally considered "America's foremost revivalist", introduced principles and methodologies for conducting meetings, many of which are practiced in crusades and church camp meetings to this day. Revivalism marched into and through the 20th century in the shoes of such figures as Dwight L. Moody, Billy Sunday and Billy Graham. We encourage you to look into some of this history, and consider how God used ordinary people in extraordinary ways to further His cause and kingdom. And He still does!

The Artist – Ray Stevens ¹ –

This is the second time in this series that we have featured Country music and pop singer-songwriter Ray Stevens. Additional information on Stevens is available in the notes for Cross Connection Program 34, "Everything Is Beautiful".

- One of the most popular and enduring novelty artists of all time
- Enjoyed a stretch of charting singles -- some of them major hits -- spanning four decades
- Comic songs were his bread and butter; in addition to songs listed in the Program 34 notes:
 - "Santa Claus is Watching You", "Bridget the Midget (Queen of the Blues)", "Sgt. Preston of the Yukon," "Indian Love Call," "Honky Tonk Waltz", "I Saw Elvis in a U.F.O", "The Haircut Song", "Erik the Awful", "I Need Your Help Barry Manilow", and "(Get your tongue out of my mouth 'cause) I'm Kissin' You Goodbye"
- Opened his own theater in Branson, MO in 1991, and played regularly there until 1993
- In 1992, he assembled a video collection of some of his best-known material and began a direct marketing campaign via television, selling over 3 million copies
- Remains active writing songs, recording and performing

The Song ^{2,3} --

- This particular number clearly exemplifies why Stevens is widely known for his novelty songs
- Loosely based on a story by the late Southern Gospel comedian "Wendy" Bagwell
 - In Bagwell's story, a Freewill Baptist church in the deep south is thrown into chaos when 3 German shepherd seeing-eye dogs, belonging to an all-blind gospel singing group, spot a stray yellow cat entering the small sanctuary during a crowded homecoming service.
- Became a Top 20 hit in 1984
- Was also produced as a hilarious video, which can be played on YouTube

¹ http://www.starpulse.com/Music/Stevens_Ray/Biography/

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi_Squirrel_Revival

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ray_Stevens

Well, when I was a kid I'd take a trip
 every summer down to Mississippi
 To visit my granny in her antebellum world
 I'd run barefooted all day long climbin' trees free as a song
 And one day I happened to catch myself a squirrel
 Well, I stuffed him down in an old shoe box,
 punched a couple of holes in the top
 And when Sunday came I snuck him into church
 I was sittin' way back in the very last pew
 showin' him to my good buddy Hugh
 When that squirrel got loose and went totally berserk
 Well, what happened next is hard to tell
 Some thought it was heaven others thought it was hell
 But the fact that something was among us was plain to see
 As the choir sang "I Surrender All"
 the squirrel ran up Harv Newlan's coveralls
 Harv leaped to his feet and said,
 "Somethin's got a hold on me", Yeow!

As a kid, how did you behave in church?
 What did Mom and Dad instruct you to do, or not do?

Do any of you recall stories like this? I remember the night my parents were singing special music, when a bat flew in the back door and started swooping the congregation. No revival broke out, but I believe a few folks had to repent for their language that evening!

Chorus:

The day the squirrel went berserk
 In the First Self-Righteous Church
 In the sleepy little town of Pascagoula
 It was a fight for survival that broke out in revival
 They were jumpin' pews and shoutin' Hallelujah!

Well, Harv hit the aisles dancin' and screamin'
 Some thought he had religion others thought he had a demon
 And Harv thought he had a weed eater
 loose in his Fruit-Of-The-Looms
 He fell to his knees to plead and beg
 and the squirrel ran out of his britches leg
 Unobserved to the other side of the room
 All the way down to the amen pew
 where sat Sister Bertha better-than-you
 Who'd been watchin' all the commotion with sadistic glee
 But you should've seen the look in her eyes
 When that squirrel jumped her garters and crossed her thighs
 She jumped to her feet and said "Lord have mercy on me"
 As the squirrel made laps inside her dress
 She began to cry and then to confess
 to sins that would make a sailor blush with shame
 She told of gossip and church dissension
 but the thing that got the most attention
 Was when she talked about her love life
 and then she started naming names!!

(Chorus Repeats)

Well seven deacons and the pastor got saved,
 Twenty-five thousand dollars was raised
 and fifty volunteered for missions in the Congo on the spot

Just what *IS* a revival?

Revival is a Supernatural Experience ⁴

- Revival is more than a series of services.
- Revival is more than an evangelist -- or special speaker.
- Revival is more than a good sermon
- The evangelist does not bring a revival in his suitcase -- or in his personality -- or even in his preaching no matter how good that preaching may be! The source of revival is found in God alone!
- Human manipulation can gather crowds - bring in offerings -- whip up a display of enthusiasm. -- But only God can revive the soul

Revival comes from God -- as God's people pray & seek the Lord!

Someone once asked evangelist Gipsy Smith what was the "the best method of starting a spiritual awakening in their church."

Gipsy Smith replied: -- "Go home & lock yourself in your room. Take a piece of chalk & draw a circle on the floor. Get down on your knees inside that circle; - confess all your known sins & ask God's forgiveness. Determine to follow the Lord wherever He directs. -- Ask Him to begin a revival in you! -- When this prayer is answered - the revival will be on!"

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" – Matthew 7:29, NIV

⁴ <http://www.wynnechapel.org/Sermons/2004/10312004.htm>

Even without an invitation
there were at least five hundred rededications
And we *all* got re-baptized whether we needed it or not!
Now you've heard the Bible story I guess
How he parted the waters for Moses to pass
Oh the miracles God has wrought in this old world
But the one I'll remember 'til my dyin' day
Is how he put that Church back on the narrow way
With a half crazed Mississippi squirrel!

Revival can be personal or collective

"Behold, I long for Your precepts; Revive me through Your righteousness"
– Psalm 119:40, NASV

"Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?"
– Psalm 85:6, NIV

(Chorus Repeats)

Final thoughts:

I wonder how many of you have ever heard or remarked, "God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform"? I've heard that quote from people all my life, and it might certainly apply to the fable that Ray Stevens spins in this song. But did you ever wonder where it comes from? The Bible? Poor Richard's Almanac? It actually comes from an old hymn entitled "God Moves In Mysterious Ways", by William Cowper – the same 18th century English songwriter who penned "There Is A Fountain". Who's to say what God can or cannot do, will or will not do to get the attention of souls for whom He died? Nonetheless, we should all seek revival of a close, vibrant relationship with God. Let's make sure we proceed with recommitment and prayer!



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5 http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://hevjules.files.wordpress.com/2007/09/squirrel_07-0508-001_f_8x10_w.jpg&imgrefurl=http://hevjules.wordpress.com/2007/09/08/dancing-squirrel/&h=438&w=350&sz=37&hl=en&start=47&um=1&tbnid=iZE-Wx9f7ExF2M:&tbnh=127&tbnw=101&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dsquirrel%26start%3D40%26ndsp%3D20%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN