THEY FIND A DRUMMER

IF General Coutts went to his bed on the night he became the international leader of The Salvation Army, not knowing what he had started in Army music by his first press interview, the Joystrings came away from their first broadcast completely unaware of what they had set going!

Letters poured into Broadcasting House asking for more of the Salvation Army group. They were "in", without having any idea of what being "in" meant. Unbelievable as it was to the little team of young Salvationist musicians trying their hand at a new way of singing and playing, the public seemed to have fallen in love with every foot-tap, every chord and discord, every slap of the string bass which had been taken into the original group thinking and Planning skiffle-wise.

"Why? What's it all about?" they asked in bewilderment. "Don't people know that only a few weeks ago we began with a few choruses Joy sketched out, writing the guitar fingering above the words?"

"Why worry about why?" replied one B.B.C. man. "If the public want more, then why worry? You're in!"

"You're sincere!" said another, who had discerned the real reason for their unexpected popularity.

The Joystrings were sincere. They were young Christian evangelists. They meant every word they sang, their hearts were in every attempt to get the new style. They were as sincere as those happy, noisy, early-day Salvationists who sang at the tops of their voices:

The Devil and me—we can't agree
GLORY! HALLELUJAH!

By the time the second invitation arrived from the B.B.C. the first "strings" had found time, in between their pressing studies and duties at the Training College, to go over their whole presentation: to think out exactly what they were trying to do.

This resulted in some changes. Their first step was to cut down on guitar strength, leaving Joy, Peter and Bill as the three remaining instrumentalists. The three girls who were in the original group, Thelma, Brenda and Lilian, formed a good vocal trio which later became the "backing" to most of their early recordings.

But they lacked a drummer. And what is a beat group without a drummer! Imagine the Beatles without Bingo, or Dave Clark without Dave Clark! Salvationists, young and old, have a mental outfitting of good advice, handy Christian ideas, warnings, truths and exhortations expressed in their singing. They sing as they pray. They hum songs and choruses as they hurry to school or to work.

One of these widely-known aids to Christian faith says:

What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!

The pioneer Joystrings obeyed this “line in the mind”. Their “everything” included the drummer problem. They prayed, and believed, and put on their thinking caps. They remembered one of the first efforts at music in the modem idiom, when a group of young instrumentalists, encouraged by the College Principal of the time, gave an experimental programme at Thornton Heath (London) Youth Club. The clue was followed and one day they turned up at rehearsal to find Wycliffe Noble, complete with beard, sitting at a large set of white drums, ready for action. He had no idea in his head except that of giving a helping hand to a few young Salvationists who were short of his kind of drummer. They wanted a “backing” for a broadcast. He knew how to give it.

Most of Wyc’s life had been preparing him for this moment. As with Joy, Peter and Bill, that life had begun in a Salvation Army officer’s quarters. Earlier in this book we described the life of a Salvation Army corps officer. Wycliffe’s parents were serving in the north of Scotland when he was born. Amongst his earliest memories are those of the fishing boats at Wick on the Moray Firth. He would watch them, and they spoke to something within him which has done much to mould his life. The sea in all its moods whispered and thundered in his ears. Moving with his parents at frequent intervals, as Major and Mrs. Charles Noble continued their work amongst the people, he arrived in Liverpool. Yes, yet another Joystring once lived in Liverpool!

It was there that he took his first lessons on the piano, and there he joined the Kensington Salvation Army Young People’s Band. He soon became adept on the side drum. By June, 1939, The Musician, a weekly paper published for Salvationist musicians, was describing him under the heading:

YOUTHFUL PERCUSSIONIST

Young People’s Band-Member Wycliffe Noble, only son of Major and Mrs. Charles Noble of Wealdstone, is making steady headway as a versatile percussionist. As well as playing side drum in the Young People’s Band, he also contributes drumming exhibitions in the Senior Band’s programmes. Wycliffe is a cousin of Bandsman Ken Noble, side drummer of Luton Citadel, and frequently goes out as an exhibition drummer. In addition to the side drum, he plays the tubular bells, cornet, xylophone and piano accordion. He received his first certificate for Pianoforte from the London Trinity College of Music before he was eight years of age. In the accompanying picture, boy Wycliffe looks very smart in his knee-length knickers, long stockings and a big smile.

About this time those deep-voiced drums made of copper with parchment heads, known as tympani, began to appear in Salvation Army bands. Many of the bandsmen had become familiar with them while on military service. Influenced by the tympani, drums began to receive attention as instruments of music rather than mere measures of the beat. Show bands were appearing with a new, big sound. Wycliffe was greatly interested. His ear loved the sonorous tones which the great copper bowls could give. He began to study “modern tone drumming” under professional guidance. Meanwhile, his studies as an architect were being influenced by his childhood in a Salvation Army officer’s quarters.

“There,” he says, “without my being at all aware of it, we were always thinking of people! Poor people, unhappy people! People in tears, people asking for help—people surrounded us all the time! Everything had to give way to ‘the people’.”

Successful in his architect's examinations, Wycliffe turned his attention to the needs of physically handicapped people. At a club for handicapped children he learned that medicine and architecture could work together, to help crippled people to live happily and usefully. He does not talk a great deal about this side of his life. But if you were to question him he would explain that a boy, who, by some accident or disease, has been deprived of the full use of his limbs, receives great help from the doctor and the specialist known as the physiotherapist. But the boy needs to get out and about to meet people and to do things for himself.

So the architect who sees himself as an ally to the medical doctors can design doors and place door handles within reach of the handicapped. He can design rooms, floors, doors, in such a way that a handicapped person can use them. If, he argues, a boy has to stay in a wheel chair all day, we can design the doorway and its approaches in such a way that he can get to the door, open it and go through it, still in his chair.

This drummer who is an architect in private practice has traveled the world on behalf of the handicapped and has become well known for his work. He has designed new style Salvation Army halls and is still busy expressing the midtwentieth century Army in architecture.

He now sees how fortunate it is that Joystring Wycliffe Noble decided to be an architect in private practice. This means that he works for himself, in his own house and when and how he likes. Had he been employed by a firm of architects he would not have been able to arrange his work to fit in with the growing demands of the Joystrings. His marriage to a daughter of Salvation Army officers also helps the situation. She knows the "people first" way of living.

If you should wonder how an architect can be playing on the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral at dinner time, travelling all night to some distant "night spot", spending long hours in recording studios, popping up with his beard, his sticks, his drums and his sparkling eyes in all kinds of places, at all times of the day, the answer is that he can toil all night to catch up with his work as an architect, if he has need to do.

He feels that he is "called" to the Joystrings for a double purpose. First to help with the "breakthrough" to thousands of young people who are not interested in church going, by speaking about God in music and language to which they will listen. He feels it of particular value that this kind of thing is going on. After a Joystrings appearance on the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral, in the City of London, a young Salvationist was returning to his office in the company of a non-Christian office mate. Enquiring what his friend thought of the Joystrings, he was intrigued to hear him say:

"I think it's fantastic! Of course, it's very subtle, isn't it? After all, you're listening to them and thinking it's great, and suddenly after a while, it hits you: who are they singing about? It makes you think."

"So, after all," says Joy of the Joystrings commenting on her work after one of her innumerable discussions with the other "strings" of the group, "we are back where we started. To make people think—is not this what we are all after? We don't want mere approval, or even support and appreciation—we need to make folk think, about themselves, about the world and about God."

Then the drummer sees another purpose. The Joystrings rub shoulders with the world of commercial pop-music and with “theatricals”. They meet on equal footing in broadcasting and recording studios, behind stage, while recording, rehearsing, waiting around; they do a lot of talking in a busy, tense world in which religion has no recognized place. Many of that world would never be on easy talking terms with a minister of religion. But they have much in common with Joy and her group.

On one occasion the Joystrings found themselves among animal trainers, trapeze artists, gymnasts, bandsmen and the trick-turn stunt people of the circus, such as the girl who dances with the fire coining out of her mouth. There was a lot of friendly mingling and conversation. These professionals are very friendly people.

Talking about this experience Wycliffe the drummer says: “I remembered that there was no Christian mission to the circus people, nor to the theatrical folk, carried right into the backstage area. And there we were—back-stage with the whole lot. There was a tight-rope walker who had to walk up a rope stretched from the tent floor to the ceiling—a task that almost stopped our hearts as we thought about it. You could look right up the rope until it seemed to disappear in the distance. We talked to the tightrope walker and asked him if he ever managed to get to the top.”

“I’m always trying to get higher,” he said, very seriously admitting that it was dangerous work. The Joystrings felt that in a few words this man of the sawdust had spoken to them about their dedication to “the highest”. They exchanged with him moments which were in the deepest sense “religious”.

In recording this aspect of the Joystrings’ mission, the writer recalls his task, many years ago, of accompanying General Bramwell Booth to Sunday campaigns in theatres and music halls. Quite often we ran into theatrical people who were clearing up and getting ready for their next engagement, or coming in ready for the week ahead in the theatre. The General never failed to talk with them. He seemed to have a special understanding of their lives and would say, “We must pray for them. They live a hard life and have few who really care about their welfare.”

One can imagine General Bramwell Booth, son of General William Booth who founded The Salvation Army, giving his blessing to the Joystrings’ “back-stage mission”.

THE JOYSTRINGS’ SONGS

WITH a drummer equal to all occasions, the Joystrings leaped into the opportunity so unexpectedly opened up to them. Their first songs were old Salvation Army ballads which came into existence in the way already described. Then Joy, the leader, discovered that she could write original songs in the new style. As usual, the discovery was made after painful disappointment. Most of the old songs in Joy’s memory were too “square” for the guitar. Joy had not then learned that her musical instrument was of very wide range. Great guitarists could handle the most intricate music, bringing rich and varied rhythms out of their few strings, or loud, crashing chords, or melodies so tender that they seemed to weep as they were born.

At this stage Joy was much like a little girl with a large pianoforte tutor propped up over an enormous keyboard, trying to make her fingers walk over the keys to "One—two— three—four! One—two-—three—four!" while the frown on her face shows how much she hates it all.

Joy, as a matter of fact, was brought up on the "One—two—three—four" rhythm. Her father's big drums rang down the street at four beats to a bar, something like this: Bandmaster's whistle: Pip, pip! (Pause), Drummer's stick: Bang-bang! One! Two! Three! (Blank). One! Two! Three! (Blank).
Full Band: Ta! Rah! Tucketty—Tacketty—Tip! and the big noise fills the whole street.

March around the room doing that and you will find that you are making music at four beats to a bar, often known as "common time". There was another favourite rhythm among early day Salvationists, known to many as "waltz time"—three beats to a bar. You can dance to it. You can clap your hands to it. But you cannot march to it. This became a favourite Army song rhythm because it was much used in the dance halls and music halls which many had attended before they gave their hearts to Jesus and turned away from their old way of life. Try this one—at a brisk "one—two—three, one—two—three" rhythm. Get your friend to tap out one—two—three, one—two—three, on the table while you say:
123 123 123 123
Ever near to bless and cheer
In the darkest hour

Many Salvationists in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, France and elsewhere, have long played guitars and used this rhythm constantly. In Britain, the march and waltz times, dear to brass bands, had great influence. But now Joy wanted something different; she prayed for help.

So her first Joystrings' song was born, minutes after she heard that her little new guitar group was to record on a tape for the Canadian Broadcasting Company. The song was "given" to her and, in the opinion of the Joystrings, was rather a prayer than a promise. This new thing in Christian music had brought with it a vision of a great opportunity, the "break-through" to many people who were no longer interested in gathering in the streets to hear a band play, and who had no intention of going to church. There were other things to occupy the people's leisure time—radio, TV, motor bikes, jalopies, bingo halls and the rest.

Perhaps, thought Joy, they will listen if we can sing our good news in the same way that they like to hear their bad news—their loneliness, their longing for someone to love them, and all the other things people sing about, especially young people. They might listen long enough to get interested.
We must remember that Joy was a Captain appointed to train Army officers in their work of living for and speaking about Jesus. In one way, they were like the early Christians who stood out against all corners, telling them that their world was going to be turned upside down. So the first Joystrings song to be widely heard was written, swiftly and prayerfully:

We have a song to sing you,
We have a theme to bring you,
We have a message from the Gospel to proclaim!
We have a song to sing you,
We have a theme to bring you,
We have a Saviour and Jesus is His name.

We're going to set the world a-singing,
We're going to set those joy-bells ringing,
We're going to set the world a-singing of our Lord!
We're going to beat out the music of sins forgiven,
Set everybody on the way to Heaven!
We're going to set the world a-singing of our Lord.

It must not be supposed that all Salvation Army people liked the song, or the style in which it was sung. There had to be terrific "beat" in it to attract any teenager attention. And the beat does things to the words. So Joy found herself in a group belting out We're going to beat out the music of sins forgiven, Set everybody on the way to Heaven! as though they had been to New Orleans to study the blues, accent, facial expression and all.

"What's all this about?" some people cried." But the young people are listening," said Joy. Of course, there had to be choruses for any Salvation Army affair. Originally a chorus was a statement summing up what a song is about, or laying emphasis on some special point. Today a chorus can be any short, easily learned, easily sung bit of melody with words. For the Joystrings first recording, on tape for the CBC, the word was "Only time for one chorus." So Joy wrote:

Everybody ought to know who Jesus is

and the little tune repeated the idea several times. That's all, but it meant a great deal. It means

a. That Jesus who died for all, should be known about by all.
b. He isn't known by all, because there are not enough people talking and singing and speaking about Him.
c. When they know who He is, people generally want to know more about Him.
d. When they start enquiring for themselves, He comes to them.

If you are learning music you might like to know how this first Joystring song was written down. The new little group, much more at home with comets and drums than guitars, only knew a few chords on their strings. So Joy typed out on plain white paper the chord names with the words underneath, like this. The "G" and "D7" indicated how their nervous fingers were to be placed.

G. G. G.
Everybody ought to know

G.
Who Jesus is.

It is all so much like the beginnings of Salvation Army music over a hundred years ago that some Salvationists cannot help getting excited over this mid-twentieth century musical adventure.

Thus equipped, with three chords and a great spirit, the Joystrings ventured forth, making their songs as they went. One of the favourites was called, "It's an open secret". The idea came to Joy as she sat in a meeting where the wife of the Training Principal, Mrs. Commissioner Wiseman, spoke about the love of God as "an open secret", quoting from one of the modem

translations of the Bible. The phrase to Joy had all the originality and surprise that is needed for a Pop title. Would the public hearing it and then seeing the title on a record list, buy it? They have done so. Imagine that learned scholar working out his modem translation, trying to put into twentieth-century language what a writer of nearly two thousand years ago thought, hitting on a phrase which went spinning out to the “hit parade”. Who says that Christianity isn’t exciting?

Perhaps the Joystrings’ best song story came out of the “Blue Angel” night club in the “swinging” west end of London. Night clubs are places where people go for the dancing and singing, for the company, for the drinking. Police keep a close watch on some of them. Drug peddling, crime and violence can hang around a night club. The people there are, for the great part, no worse than anyone else, but they would no more expect to hear anything religious there than we would expect to hear night club songs sung in church.

But when you are a crusading Christian, you never know~ Joy accepted an invitation to take her new group into the “Blue Angel”. The manager was interested in Salvation Army night club music. That night the resident group, the Don Claude Quartet, played a little “Blue-Beat” number. “Blue-Beat” has a strong “off beat”. It is a style which came here from the Southern United States, where the negro people have for many years sung about their hopes and fears and sufferings. It has in it something of the primitive African music, and a lot of the North American slave music. It expresses, sometimes quite savagely, the torments of slavery as well as the undying hopes which a Christian belief gives. In 1964, or thereabouts, this “beat” came to Britain and was popular for a time.

Joy listened to the professionals in their dim, night-club setting. She was nervous about her own group, for they were to be the last number, a place of honour reserved for the Big Hit, given to the guests by the courtesy of the management. But Joy was praying, quite intensely, that some good should come out of this midnight adventure.

The “Blue-Beat” drummed in her brain, as they drove home from the club at about four o’clock in the morning. Joy went to bed for a couple of hours, but could not settle down. The “beat” began to find itself a tune. She sat up in bed, reached for a piece of paper, and began to write:

“I want to sing it”.

The tune that came to her has all the bounce of the original West Indian Blue songs. It was born to express the strong desire of the Christian to make the good news of the Gospel heard above the din of the modern way of life, for which in one sense the night club stands.

I want to sing it! I want to sing it!
I want to tell you all about
The love of Jesus.

Little did the man who invited the Joystrings to play at the “Blue Angel” know that his generous gesture would be used to send a new kind of Gospel song around the world. Are you interested to hear how “Love that’s in my heart”, the first “Beatle style” song of the Joystrings was written? Its setting is again in a dark place, but a different kind of dark place. It marks the beginning of a change of Joystrings style, from “rhythm” to “beat”, and is the third Joystrings song to be written

after “Set the world” and “Open secret”. It was written by Peter and Bill. “Lights out” had been signalled in the Training College where they were cadets. That meant no more sounds likely to keep anyone awake. No more music! But an idea was needling the boys of the Joystrings. So Bill crept into Peter’s room and, with all lights out, they whispered about it. Little by little, all hush-hush, the two conspirators in the gloom got the new song on to paper in the dark.

“It was ahead of its time,” says Bill. “It had a key change in the verse, and was written in E—four sharps.” The Joystrings had left “G” and “D” behind them and were now creeping out ahead. As this book is being written another change is coming over the Joystrings’ style. But that’s the story of Nigel.

There are at the time of writing this book about a hundred Salvation Army rhythm groups operating in Britain and many others overseas, each of them commenced by local initiative. Usually one young person is greatly interested and he or she “enthuses” others. In New Zealand, for instance, they were encouraged by a Territorial Commander who refused to acknowledge that this was something new in the life of the Army in the land of the Long White Cloud.

“You would only be going back to what the Army’s pioneers in New Zealand did very successfully,” he said. Turning up the early copies of The War Cry published in New Zealand, he found pictures of large bands, of banjoes, mandolins, violins, guitars, concertinas and tambourines. Some of the groups were dressed in costume. Several had Maori vocalists and instrumentalists.

Re-publishing some of these photos, he encouraged the talented young Salvationists to “do it again”. And they had a go! Their elders were not always pleased. In one case, the corps Bandmaster, a famous Salvationist of long service, was horrified to find his son tinkering with a guitar and greatly disturbed when a few of his friends gathered round him, formed a rhythm group, and conducted public meetings. They drew large crowds and the Gospel was preached.

One day the Bandmaster consented to attend one of these presentations. He saw the hail packed with people. He recognized how skillfully and how reverently the young musicians handled their new-style music, and his opposition melted away.
In Stockport, England, seventeen-year-old Nigel Robson, yet another officer’s son with considerable talent for music, joined a rhythm group. They attended a Christian youth rally in Trafalgar Square, and were awarded special recognition for their item. The Joystrings got interested in the teenage leader. Soon afterwards Nigel went to London, and added his talent for pop music to the Joystrings at a time when a new sound was needed.

Nigel, Bill, Peter, on vocal and guitars, with Joy singing and playing organ, and Wycliffe on the drums, entered 1967 with a host of invitations for “live” and TV appointments. Bill and Peter had joined Joy in writing their songs.

GETTING “WITH IT”

WE must get back to the beginning when the pioneer Joystrings were told over and over again that they were “with it”. “With what?” they asked. No one seemed to know how to put it into words. But the result of being “with it” meant more and more requests for them to play.

They were quite clear about one point. They were young Salvation Army officers before they were musicians. They knew that in the Army's early days crowds had attended its street and hall meetings, for fun, or to kick up a row, or because there was nowhere else to go, or because they were genuinely interested in the remarkable change in the lives of some of the people they knew, or just because they liked this friendly, informal kind of religious worship. But those days were gone, as were the old-time free and easy methods. Army music on the streets was now in most places acceptable to the ear; in some it was quite brilliant. Army bands figured in important civic and national events. But fewer people stopped to listen.

There were many reasons for this, none of them particularly arising from Salvation Army causes. Few churches were able to keep their congregations. The world wars, the change in an attitude toward authority, the march of ideas which taught that the Christian faith was dangerous rather than helpful to people, the arrival of radio and TV into millions of homes— these and many other factors were changing the habits of people.

"How can we reach those who once surrounded us?" was a question often discussed. And here were the Joystrings being asked for by the people. A sense of responsibility for something greater than they had dreamed of came over them. And there were new challenges, one of them in the simple question, "Why don't you make a record?" That gave them cold feet. They knew that radio, TV and "live" programmes in front of an audience had one redeeming feature. Whatever went wrong, it was soon gone for ever, only to be remembered as an awful blunder or an "off-night". The most cruel critic could only report it, regret it, perhaps sneer about it.

But to make records which would be listened to again and again was a less comfortable prospect, although recording was by no means new to The Salvation Army. A brass band made one around the end of the last century, although this is now only a memory. It is said that the original soon melted! That band must have played really hot music.

The present contract is with E.M.I. under the Regal Zonophone label. E.M.I. claims to be "the greatest recording company in the world", and when they stepped under this banner the Joystrings felt an altogether new kind of nervousness. Previously "nerves", from which most musicians suffer, could be handled by various methods according to the temperament being tortured, either to tap, or wiggle, or roll one's eyes with great zeal, or to make no outward sign but handle that hard, cold solid fear inside one with grim discipline and many desperate prayers. But could such methods stand up in the recording studio into which one day the rather pale-faced Joystrings entered?

Such places being "Private" to all except those working there, we will ask Bill Davidson to tell the story of the young lady, well-known in the Pop world, who asked, "How does it feel to have a record in the charts?" "As this was the first I had heard of record sales charts, I thought her question was some kind of show-business way of easing the massive inferiority complex that sat heavily on the Joystrings. But after receiving due proof that we were 'in the charts', I could merely state that I was afraid I didn't seem to 'feel' anything!

"Here was I, a boy who had followed the fortunes of Lonnie Donegan, Tommy Steele, Bill Haley, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, and now had some part in a hit record—and it didn't seem to matter! "We were very mixed-up people. "Life at the International Training College was becoming a strange mixture of study, examinations, over-night train rides which took us from the windy quadrangle at Denmark Hill to the stifling heat of some far-distant TV. studio. Monday would see us in the lecture hall and by Friday we would be, say, in Newcastle, playing to 2,000 youngsters in the City Hall.

"Just what effect this kind of existence has had on us we will never appreciate. No one will be able to say what kind of people we would have been had this adventure never begun. Many wise people feared for our general attitude to the everyday things of life. They quite rightly thought that there was a possibility of our becoming 'too big for our boots'. "I can hardly be the one to say whether this has or has not happened, for this in itself involves a certain amount of pride. But I do say that I feel the very first fact in the Pop world has been a good, stabilizing influence. That is the fact, that the Pop business is ninety per cent hidden hard slog, and ten per cent stage work. A fraction of this last ten per cent is the so called 'glory' that is said to follow Pop personalities wherever they go.

"However professional a group or an individual (remember a group is only a few individuals!) may appear, and however easy the 'style' may appear to come to them, there is still a tremendous amount of wear and tear on that individual every time he appears in public. "The Joystrings know what it is to work eight hours in the T.V. studios and realize only at the end how exhausted they have been during the last six of the eight hours. Tiredness overtakes not only the body, but the mind and spirit. Even the smile that has stamped the 'Joy' into the Joystrings is often difficult to find. I have often wondered when on stage what exactly I am so happy about, or at least why I should appear to be happy.

"There is, of course, an answer. We have often said what a worry show-business must be to those who depend for their living on its lucky breaks and their knowledge of the right people. We have never had to worry about how much money we were making. As officers, we have the frugal allowance made to all who have the same rank as ourselves. Wycliffe, the drummer, gets nothing. He gives his services as we officers have given our whole lives. All Joystring 'income' goes directly into Salvation Army funds and the great cost of our instruments, equipment, etc. is borne by the Army. That is one burden off our minds! Also (and this is going a lot deeper), a Christian has many things to be happy about, and, whatever comes along, these things last.

"The natural follow-up to a hit record is the personal appearance, and this fact came to the mind of Captain Donald Pyman who, when we began, was the local Salvation Army officer in Camberwell. The Army hall in Camberwell seats about a thousand people and is often used for the many public meetings held in connection with the College. This was to be the location for our first 'live' appearance. "It's a full house,' said Captain Pyman with obvious delight on the night. The good news was lost on us. I fancy we secretly hoped that it might have been an 'empty house', and we could have all gone home! "But the crowd cheered until the music itself was drowned (which was a great mercy to all concerned!) and, all in all, the evening was a great success ."At the conclusion, as we now always do, we made it clear that all our songs contained a direct Christian message, and that if any young person wished to know more of this there were those around ready to talk to them. Many young folk made further enquiries about the Christian Faith that night.

"The amazing fact now came to our minds. We had been launched out into the world around us and people actually seemed to like what we were doing. What is more, some folk were reviving long forgotten ideals and beliefs because of our work. The 'big world' wasn't so bad after all!

"One of the most exhausting chapters in the one great, tiring experience of being a Joystring was the six-week tour performed by the group in the first summer of its existence. We had to endure a big swap-round. Our three girl vocalists, Brenda, Thelma and Lilian, who had

then finished their course of training for Army officership, were transferred to other work and three replacements were found. These three girls were thrown in at the deep end of Joystring life, for only a few days after they completed their first rehearsal they were plunged into this exhausting tour.
"They were Pauline Jane, Sylvia Gair and Ruth Swainsbury. Bass player Captain Handel Everett was appointed to other work in the West country, so Swedish bassist Lars Dunberg added his skilful touch for the duration of the tour."

Partly because the Joystrings were at first Cadets, later commissioned as Salvation Army officers of what is known as the British Territory, quite a few members came and went. Sylvia Gair remained the longest and did much for the Joystrings. While drummer Wyc feels that the seashore of North Scotland had a definite influence upon his childhood, vocalist Sylvia's earliest memories are of living on the seafront at Blyth, Northumberland. She loved to run barefooted on the beach, to race up and down the sandy hills, to climb the trees and collect shells from the wave-swept shore.

Slipping off her shoes and socks as she left the house, this light-footed little girl would scratch and cut her feet as she darted amongst the beloved objects on her wide, sea-singing playground. But she cared little for that. Freedom was making music in her heart, freedom amongst the great winds and waves, and friendship with the little creatures of the shore. She loved to turn the big stones and find sand lizards blinking at her. Does it spoil the story to include her confession that she would not dare to touch one now?

Oddly enough, the barefooted sprite on the shore also loved going to school. She never missed a day, being one of those rare and fortunate persons who have never had a serious illness, not even mumps or measles. People who have worked with her since she became a young woman and have recognized her natural strength and her ability to "get into character" to suit any situation, nod their heads when they learn of her physical good fortune. She is small, compact and wiry. Asked to describe her primary school days, she replies, "The smell of plasticine, and singing 'God make my life a little light, wherever I may go'. "One of the favourite play-places for Sylvia and her friends was a disused look-out, erected on the shore during the war. It was rather like a large ship's deck, looking out to sea; built of concrete, with winding stairs and dim rooms underneath, it was ideal for playing pirates or hide and seek.

Sylvia lost her sea-shore delights when she was seven. Her family moved to the village of Rainton in the county of Durham. But her swift mind and keen eyes soon found satisfying substitutes for sand lizards, seaweed and driftwood on the beach. Wild flowers became her friends and she learned much about them. Her fine collection became a beloved treasure. As the months went by she found out-of doors many of the living things she learned about in biology and zoology. There were quiet moments when her mind opened up to the colour and beauty of the world around her, and others when laughter swept in gales across her path.

She recalls the day when a big sow from the nearby farm across the road, and her nine piglets, made a dash for liberty and the joys of rooting in the garden of Sylvia's home. Sylvia and her brother had a glorious time joining in the chase with the farmer, his helpers, her mother and the farmer's wife, all out to catch the pig family. Her pets included cats, dogs, rabbits, mice, guinea pigs, lizards and frogs. Some of these she would find on the way home from school and put them into her pocket for safe keeping. Her mother would jump up on a chair as the pocketed visitors were allowed to run or hop around the kitchen. Loud were the orders to "Take them away!" But Sylvia never understood why.

Tying all her days together with a silver thread was her love for music. She lived to sing, and out of her life of song came all her childhood longings. Sylvia wanted to be on the stage. One reason for this was her family tradition. An uncle was an old-time music hall singer, who went from place to place delighting the people with comic songs about people in trouble, and ballads about places remembered for their beauty. Sylvia wanted to be a ballet dancer, or a famous pianist, or an operatic singer.

As she grew toward teenage, her hobbies all expressed her love of graceful movement, and her gift for song and laughter. Dancing, ice-skating, sports and drawing occupied her attention. She spent much time sketching new designs for clothes. She found nothing boring, and most things interesting. Her mother and grandmother were Salvationists and when she was ten years old Sylvia Gair went to The Salvation Army Sunday School. At Whitley Bay, she had been "given back to God" by her mother, in what is known in The Salvation Army as the "dedication service". As soon as it was possible for her to join the Rainton Corps, her voice and aliveness made her a valuable recruit to the girl vocalists. The Army's many opportunities for music-making delighted her. She became a timbrellist, wielding a tambourine with great precision and accurate rhythm, and later learned to play a cornet in the band. When she was fourteen or fifteen years old, a new delight came into her life, one which made a great difference to her. "Skiffle" was born, with its wash-boards, bass fiddles and the rest. She liked the "sound" and was soon making great strides in producing it. A skiffle group, formed in the nearby boys' school by five boys with guitars, drums and extras, looked around for a girl soloist.

Sylvia had already come to their attention when she contributed a solo spot between acts in the school pantomime. She joined up with delight, feeling that she was on the way toward the fulfillment of her dreams. She stopped going to The Salvation Army. "I forgot my commitments," says Sylvia. "I forgot for eighteen months. Then one day I realized that my life was not what I thought it would be. I had expected to be satisfied with what I was doing with my life. But I was not. I was still at school, but all the ambition I had for the stage and the music had gone. I did not know where to go."

Being, however, a clear-thinking girl of action, Sylvia Gair finished her work with the skiffle group and rejoined The Salvation Army. "I re-accepted the commitments I had previously made and then set aside," she says. "Soon afterwards I offered myself to God for service as a Salvation Army officer. It was as simple as that. I had no great feeling of being called by God. It was just the right thing for me to do. As the Army group to which I belonged was very small, I saw the great need for people to give themselves to the work of service and witness. I also knew many of the hardships encountered in Army officership. But this made me more determined than ever to do what I knew I should do. "The little girl running swiftly amongst the rocks on the shore had become the determined young woman, capable, quiet and skilled, and yet anxious to learn more in order that she might "do what she knew she should do".

In August, 1963, Sylvia went to the International Training College of The Salvation Army, stepping without knowing it into a place for which her temperament, talent and obedience specially suited her. She greatly enjoyed her first year of training. Her second saw the birth of the Joystrings, with the sudden call for a singer, and an excited welcome for one who had been trained in a rhythm group. Sylvia is now Lieutenant Sylvia Gair, the Salvation Army officer at New Addington, Surrey, a neighbourhood which greatly needs her—perhaps even more than the Joystrings do. Joy speaks of Sylvia as a great strength. She threw herself into the

Joystring work, adapted her skills, sang and sang, and studied and prayed. “Sylvia is an important part of our beginnings,” says Joy.

The other Joystrings, all born into the homes of Salvation Army officers, are glad to think of her as proof that you do not have to be a “born Salvationist” in order to succeed. “She is a ‘natural’, this girl Sylvia,” say the cameramen, the reporters, the producers, the talent scouts, the Pop stars She is a “natural Salvationist”, as are many others who never met the Army until they were much older than Sylvia was when she joined up.

MAKING A RECORD

BILL comes up from the black depths of troubled sleep. He groans, gasps, turns over—and then the truth hits him so hard he groans again.

Today is the day for the L.P. recording! It is ten times worse—for Bill—than if he had that day to pass all the exams he has ever faced, and get through without losing one mark. He says a lot of prayers as he gets quickly into his clothes and ends up with a few words he seems to have known always: “For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory!” Then he feels better. It’s Kingdom business, God’s business, he and the other Joystrings have to be on.

The studio is waiting for the Joystrings. As they enter, Bill feels again that mixture of awe and terror with which he always goes through those doors into the hushed, echoless room with its glass panels, straddled microphone arms, and snaking coils of covered electric cable. The place seems curiously “dead”. The few sounds that are heard, from a cough to the faint thud of a closing door, only whisper and are dead, as though they had no right to live in such a place.

Engineers move a chair here, a “mike” there. All details have already been discussed. The plan is made. All is ready to go, so that the music will be captured by those silent arms and transmitted to the cutting edge which writes it into tiny grooves in the wax disc, known as “the master”. Here Bill remembers there is only one standard. It is—Perfection! Out there in the noise of the world are thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of waiting ears, ready to catch the slightest flaw, the tiniest untunefulness, the split-second irregularity in the new L.P. and to hurl their criticisms to friends, neighbours, clubs, newspapers, even radio listeners. A “bad press” will be like throwing thousands of pounds into the fire. Whoever would choose this ordeal? But for the Joystrings it is a God-given opportunity.

Joy glances round at her team. Bill looks as though he has been caught stealing apples. Peter looks as though he couldn’t care less, except for those tell-tale lines at the corners of his mouth. Wycliffe looks like a judge about to put on his black cap—grim, grave but ready to do his duty. Nigel, his hair straying all ways, looks as though he has wandered in by mistake. He’s just a talented, unworried boy. A hand moves behind the glass window of the recording room. They’re away, on the “A” side of the Joystrings L.P. record, beginning with the song “Keep me in your love”, one of a mixture of numbers from the regular Joystrings’ repertoire.

The “backing track” is made first. This is a tape recording of the instrumental sounds, to which the singers later add their voices as it goes on to the “master”. This is done so that vocalists can concentrate on their singing, without having to think about playing their instruments, as they must

do in public performances. In other words, they play the accompaniment and then sing to it. Nigel plays lead guitar, bringing out the sound nearest to the melody. Bill puts in the accented rhythm. Peter adds the bass, those rich, deep notes which give the depth in sound most people like.

Two verses are played in this way. Then, for the third, Joy takes a deep breath and sends out one clear single note, lasting throughout the third verse, and adding another attractive quality to the setting. All the time, the drums are busy; Wycliffe's hands and his beard never getting mixed up, though they might often appear to be so doing. This first round eventually earning a quiet "O.K." from the engineers, the Joystrings put down their instruments, in order to sing to the accompaniment they have made already. They listen to themselves playing as they sing, Peter taking the main lead in his high tenor voice and concentrating on the words. It is for "the message" that the whole exacting, scientific process is in action. Peter hasn't time to think about it, but he could, without much imagination, hear William Booth chuckle at this new way of capturing "tunes" to spread the Gospel.

At the second verse Bill and Nigel "come in" with an "AH!" sound, to build up to the third verse, when they all sing in three-part harmony. It is in the recording studio that the reason why all Joystrings must be "naturals" (able to improvise, able to hold a part dead in tune against any sound being made by another member of the party) is most clearly seen. Speak about this gift to Nigel, or to the old troopers, Joy, Peter, Bill and Wyc, and they will shrug their shoulders and change the subject. But the recording studio staffs know it and the long, hard, discipline to which even outstanding talent has to be subject. Time speeds on in the echoless studio. For "backing track" of the second number on "A", which is called "He is near":

HE IS NEAR

When the light has ceased to shine,
And the darkness is around me,
I shall know His hand in mine
And his lovin' care surround me;
And my heaven, my heaven can be here;
Just to know that He is near.
When my heart is most afraid, And I cannot see the way,
Every promise He has made,
I shall whisper as I pray;
And my heaven, my heaven will be here; Just to know that He is near!

Nigel plays the lead guitar, Bill putting in chords on an acoustic guitar, thus giving the "sound depth" required by the critical ear. By this time the load of apprehension is lifting. The studio staff are encouraging and helpful. Things have started well. A change is provided by the lead guitar playing a counter melody to the voice which is not yet recorded, while the rhythm guitar (Bill) plays the basic chording. Again Peter handles the bass and Wyc contributes gentle cymbal strokes, not nearly so easy as you might think, for they have to be in perfect time with voices that have not yet been heard.

Yet another feature is the introduction by means of tape of a group of voices giving a grand chorale effect in the second and third verses. The choralists are members of the Upper Norwood Salvation Army Songster Brigade, all busy at their work in various posts in London while their blended voices are taken on to the Joystrings L.P. Now comes "No time to lose"

NO TIME TO LOSE

Days are flying fast,
And there is no time to lose.
Years will hurry past,
And there is no time to lose.
Note the clock
For time won't stop.
You'll need to hurry
Or you will bury
Your chance.

While your youth remains
Life holds much that is new,
Choice of many gains
All lie open to you.

Note the clock
For time won't stop.
You'll need to hurry
Or you will bury
Your chance.

You'll regret tomorrow your delay;
No time to lose, No time to lose.

CAN TELL YOU SOMEONE WHO WILL HELP YOU CHANGE YOUR WAY,
HELP MAKE GOOD THE PROMISES THAT COME WITH EVERY DAY.
HE FACED LIFE TOO, AND JUST LIKE YOU
HE FOUND THERE WAS NO TIME TO LOSE.

Questions will arise
There is no time to lose.
Ask no reason why
While there's time to choose.

Note the clock
For time won't stop.
You'll need to hurry
Or you will bury
Your chance.

No time to lose...

This is described as "a good example of the more complicated studio work". Nigel takes lead guitar, Bill handles the rhythm, Wyc the drums for verse 1. For verse 2, another backing track is made with Nigel at the piano and Bill playing the tambourine. Then come the vocal tracks. In No. 1, Bill sings the lead with Nigel and Peter singing occasionally, making three-part harmony in places. Vocal track No. 2 provides a background "Ah!" part by Nigel, Peter and Bill. This makes the finished record sound as though six people were singing together. If by this time you feel

a trifle dizzy and unbelieving, hold on, for they are not through yet. The “finished sound” is all repeated, to give the completed record the effect of twelve voices singing together.

Pause for a moment to consider what skill, accuracy and patience is needed to get the perfection required for a record aiming at the top of the pops, and then listen to Bill’s casual comment, “This is quite usual in the average Pop!” Say goodbye to the idea that Pop singers don’t work, they only sing and play! The Joystrings often meet the professionals and admire their talent, toil and tenacity, as well as understanding their many temptations.

So the recording session goes on, with many coffee-breaks to relieve the tension. The studio staff know that Joystrings are restricted to coffee, tea and strictly non-alcoholic drinks; and that they will decline the proferred cigarettes with a smile. But the comradeship of skills prevails. The staff are friendly, helpful people, say the Salvationists. Now and again the conversation goes serious and the Joystrings find themselves witnessing for Christ in the record studios. Now they are very tired. One more to go! The last item has an appropriate title for the occasion. It is called “Where will it end?”

Seeds have to die
Before the wheat can grow.
Rivers spring in mountains
Before to oceans they flow.
Man has to stop
Before he starts to go.
How much time can he spend?
Where will this journey end?

For this song, written and worked out by Peter, backing track No. 1 is Peter on guitar, Bill on bass and Wyc on drums. No. 2 is Peter playing a piano solo on top of the existing sound. Vocal track No. 1 is by Joy and Sylvia with Bill singing a vocal backing. For vocal track No. 2 Peter sings his main lead. Once more the alert is given. Once more the Joystrings sound is engraved on the “master”. The weary musicians go home in their minibus, too tired to do much thinking, and the recording magicians hand over their precious discs to the equally skilled and expensive processing departments. Soon there will be a new issue of sleeved gramophone records, spreading in their thousands and perhaps tens of thousands out into the world. To entertain? Yes, of course! To be enjoyed, to be thrown aside unused, to be laughed at, to be condemned? Yes, all of that, in many lands. But also to speak to the hearts of people who do not go to worship, or sing the hymns of the Church.

If a contemporary artist drew a picture of the Sower who, in the Bible story, “went forth to sow”, dressing him as a Joystring and putting little discs in a basket shaped like a record cabinet, do you think it would be untrue?

POP WITH A PURPOSE

One of the many “techniques” the Joystrings have had to learn is when to stop singing and start talking. And how to talk to gain a hearing by teenagers. Cadets for Army

officership are taught to be ready for anything. A good many of them go to work amongst people they have never known before and must learn their “wavelength”. But neither Joy nor her team had even dreamed that they would be faced with such a task as getting non-religious teenagers to listen to something in which they had no interest.

They learned that one way was to go along with the teenage habit of pin-up heroes and heroines. Teenagers have always had their heroes. But the cult of the pop star had reached fantastic proportions. If that’s the way, said the Joystrings, we must not ignore it. So Joy began to talk to their audiences in her friendly way, about Peter and Bill and Wyc, and these modest, self-effacing troubadours had to learn how to accept the wild noises of interest and admiration which were offered to them.

When some religious folk were rather shocked at this, these young evangelists with a purpose remembered that in the Army’s early days there had been similar attempts to “get with” the people, and they included the use of highly pictorial names, ranging from Steamroller Andrews to Nancy Dickybird. First, the desired “sound”; then an acceptance of a personal link between audience and singer; then—and always this moment found a fastbeating, Joystrings heart beneath an apparently smiling, carefree face—the words in the silence after the big noise. Not anything like a sermon, and always personal—good news about something which had happened—to Bill, to Peter, to Wyc, to Joy. On most of these highly unusual occasions, this word about Jesus occurs twice. Quite often there is an appeal for “decision”.

The Joystrings believe that something can happen to any person who “wants to be good” in
a vague sort of way, even although at first there is little understanding of what it is all about. They believe also that all teenagers have their moments of longing to be different from what they are. They know now, also, how difficult it is to help people into faith in God when they have no idea of what certain words mean. Joy and her group, always so smiling in public, have their sad moments, for they are dedicated evangelists. They know what the missionary in non-Christian lands must go through when there is no language for communication. If a girl says quite sincerely, “I don’t know what you mean by my conscience,” or “How can I pray when there’s no one to pray to?” what do you say?

So they have endeavoured to devise a system of local counsellors to whom these deciders or enquirers can speak quite often. And they have learned never to be too disappointed if their programme seems to have failed. When they get downhearted they can think of the increasing number of people who are deeply grateful that the Joystrings came their way. They can think, for instance, of the family in Gloucester, for whom things were going wrong. They were aware of it, and felt quite helpless— father, mother, Michael, aged eighteen, Jeanette, aged sixteen, Christopher, aged fourteen, Margaret, aged eleven, and Martin, aged four. News got round that the Joystrings were visiting the city, to give a Friday evening programme in a large church. Local Salvationists were busy distributing

admission tickets. One of them, a part-time assistant in a shop, had a few tickets for distribution and there were many who would like to have had them. But two tickets, she felt, had to be offered to the family in which things were going wrong.

That night the father and his eldest son listened to the Joystrings, who were having a miserable time. To begin with, churches are not the best place for pop music, especially the more "with it" style. Then the lighting was not as good as they liked, nor the amplification. To cap all the minor disadvantages, a train derailment bad held up the drummer. Until half way through the programme they were without percussion. Can you imagine what that feels like to a pop group? - -

So they came with heavy hearts to the place in the programme where the music was hushed and a member of the group talked in simple language about the love of Jesus and the time for decision. The music began again, repeating the refrain "Have faith in God", written by
Joy:

Have faith in God, Look up and hope again; He understands the wayward hearts of men.
Have faith in God,
Learn to believe again;
His love wilt never fail.
Look to the future and face it without fear;
A mighty God has promised to be near.
Commit your life to Him;
Have faith in God;
His love will never fail.

As the music softly filled the church, a determined looking man stood to his feet, and with straight back and strong step walked down the aisle and into the vestry. He was the father of the family in which things were going wrong. There he knelt in prayer with a Salvation Army officer. During the next week or two all the members of the family decided to give themselves to Christ. The trouble had all gone. Not long afterwards Joy tore herself away from the busy group which she leads to hurry back to Gloucester, this time to act as a woman minister, conducting the public receiving into the Salvation Army congregation of the entire family. Every one of them was soon at work for God, amongst the adults, or amongst the children, or making music and spreading the good news of the joy that comes when there is faith in God. "It was an off-night," says Joy, "so far as we were concerned as musicians. But we have learned that God has His own way of working. Out of our bad time that night He made a good time for a whole family.

The Joystrings never know what new demand will next be made upon them. Recently they were invited to spend a few days in France, to do a programme which ranged from playing on the barge anchored in the River Seine where homeless hungry men are cared for every night by the Army, to an appearance at a famous night club.

If they could sing in French—someone ventured! Why not? They had done some French at school and they had the services of a competent translator who had worked for years in Paris. So the French songs were learned and, in the true Joystrings way, put into a programme with smiling faces and heavy hearts. But the wild enthusiasm with which these offerings were received again rewarded their courage. By the end of that brief tour, with so many delighted French folk earnestly improving their accent every time they sang, they really went over big. The only trouble was that listeners to such clear, confident French singing could not understand why conversation in the same language was rather difficult.

Now other overseas tours are "in the air" and, as we write, Joy is contemplating tackling songs in Swedish. Where next? Judging by what has been done since 1964, it might well be Japan. And, all the time, it is Pop with a Purpose.

JOY SAYS "WHAT NEXT?"

Joy of the Joystrings still has her wonderful smile that warms the hearts of the most crusty old cynics. She can still lose herself completely in thoughts about other people, in which lost condition she seems to gather to herself a kind of radiance, a radiance which comes to people who completely forget themselves

.

The Joystrings, as you might expect, have a big mail, although there is not yet a Joystrings Fan Club. As often as possible, the "strings" get down to their mail, answering letters which mostly fall into one of three kinds. First come the critical letters, mostly written by so-called Christian people, although by the way some of them write you might think they had dipped their pens in vinegar. They sure hate the Joystrings and all their works! They hate the sound of the music, they hate the drums, they hate the expressions on their faces, they hate their happiness. They have got used to religious music of a very different kind and just cannot stand all this heathen or worldly stuff!

They never seem to say to themselves, "This is not for me, but if I were taking the Bible to Daleks, I would have to talk Dalek to them." That is what the Joystrings are doing. Would such people write if they knew how much they hurt? Perhaps they would. Other letters come from the collectors of photos, signatures, souvenirs, records, etc. A few are different. Someone has heard that Joy is ill. Can it be true? Joy mustn't get ill! She mustn't die! Some ask for advice. These letters receive a lot of attention. Joy and her group pray over them, for these are the seekers for that which is beyond them. They must be carefully "moved over" to thoughts about Jesus. Some ask for prayers. The writers have made a mess of their lives. They want help and where shall they go? Over these the Joystrings say more prayers, for the writers, and for some way of developing the Evangelism of which they are the "preevangelists". We are not close enough to young people, thinks Joy. If only we could be in the beat clubs with them—or if our men could be, for the best dubs are almost entirely male. There is no room for girls. The Christians among the best groups, like Cliff Richard, are far better placed than we are. Their witness for Christ is accepted.

So she broods, with her eyebrows drawing a deep little valley between her eyes. She is wondering what to do next with her music and her music-makers. She now knows that her Joystrings songs

are only an introduction to ideas. Teenagers (and that expression can mean eleven-year-olds as much as nineteen-year-olds) are her mission field. She has learned that the missionary must first win a hearing before he can hope to begin with his message.

This, of course, is the great lesson all missionaries have had to learn during this century. It is the reason why medical doctors have taken their pills and bandages, antibiotics and operating tables, to people before they have begun to talk to them about the love of God. All this is in Joy's blood, as we say, almost without her realizing it. She is a William Booth girl. It was William Booth who insisted upon having a wooden floor in his first preaching hail in London. When his helpers pointed out that there was a good stone floor, good enough for the poor, he declared that you had to make the feet of the poor warm before they could be expected to have warm hearts.

"We have discovered," says Joy, "that we're not just evangelists. We are doing a preevangelism job. Our business is to arrest attention, to get a hearing from a public which has no reason to want to listen to religious songs which mean nothing to them. When we began, we put the same old thing into a new musical dress— texts put into verse, Bible bits riding on a melody. And it's no use. "We must offer ideas which meet something the listeners already know about. They know what it is, for instance, to choose between what they think is right and what they think is wrong. They know what it means to be aimless, unhappy and lonely."

In this Joy is echoing one of the most profound truths in the Bible, one with which Saint Paul wrestled. But her teenagers have never taken any notice of what Paul says, at least, not the Paul in the Bible. But they know, as Joy says, what it is to be aimless, to have no sense of purpose, to be depressed and feel fit to throw up everything. That's why some of them try to get "high" with drugs. "So," says Joy, "we are now trying to write and offer songs with ideas, such as the one which keeps repeating 'There will be God! Whatever happens to us—there will be God.' "The idea, we hope, will stick. Here and there it will haunt a mind until a boy or girl wants to know more about it. "That's part of our job! We're 'pre-evangelists'!"

Perhaps some who have read about the Joystrings will make up their minds to continue the work begun by these pre-evangelists and dedicate their hearts and their skills to music "for Christ's sake".