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Former television cook serves up new lifestyle

By Sally Hodgkinson
Of the Emerald

It's an old story — a millionaire is unhappy despite his wealth and abandons his material lifestyle to develop the spiritual side of his life. But this one has a twist: in addition to adopting Christianity, Graham Kerr has put his money where his mouth is.

Seven years ago, Kerr was at the pinnacle of success as television's Galloping Gourmet. He made \$1,000 an hour, had 200 suits in his closet and was seen by 200 million people a week.

Today he shops at thrift stores, puts a brick in the toilet to save on the water bill and heads Project LORD, a program aiming to link the resources of Americans to the needs of Third World families.

While the Galloping Gourmet, Kerr says "frankly, I thought I was terrific... I got to be very big on myself."

But underneath the glitter of success, Kerr says he was an "egocentric maniac" who was destroying himself and those around him. His daughter tried to blow up his car — with him in it. His son began drinking at 12. His wife was drinking, taking 12 Valiums a day and was committed to a mental institution.

Then his life reversed. His wife became a Christian and "changed overnight." Kerr says he was desperate for the new-found joy his wife showed. "For the first time in my life, I was hungry and thirsty." Kerr then "committed myself to God."

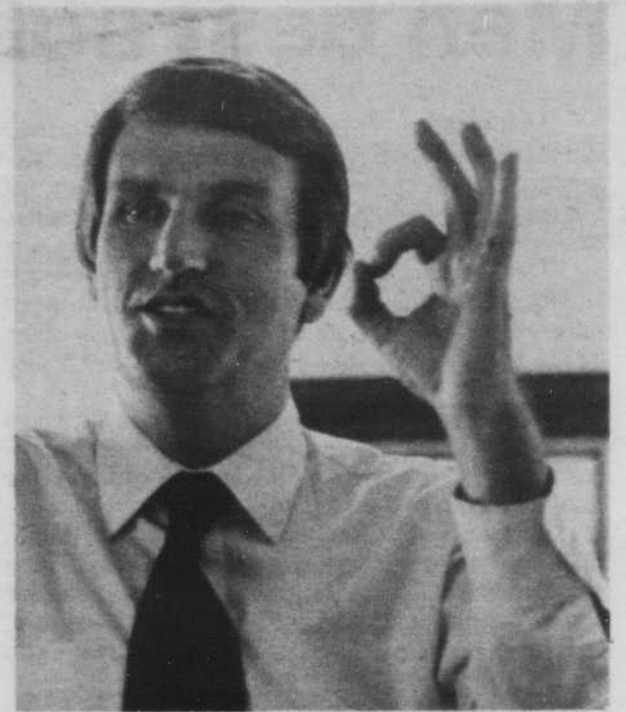
His television show was cancelled when the producers refused to let him place a small bible verse in the show's credits. So he embarked on a course of "downward mobility," selling his house, suits and other possessions in a "Christian Going Out of Business Sale."

"I have very little now but I'm the happiest person on two feet," he says.

Kerr enforces his beliefs in Project LORD. In order to make a donation, an individual must adopt a simplified lifestyle, not just give from sentiment.

"We are the most consumption-oriented people in the world," Kerr says. "Americans can live better for less." He adds that giving from a simple lifestyle follows the example of Jesus. "He owned everything, but he was a carpenter's son."

Kerr says Project LORD recently rejected a million-dollar donation because the donor's



Graham Kerr

Photo by David Corey

lifestyle wasn't going to change.

"You who are Christians are thoroughly insulated people," Kerr says. "You're not willfully selfish — you just can't hear. We are seduced into more and more comforts."

The Christian church is called on to meet the physical as well as spiritual needs of people, he says, adding that 57 children die of malnutrition every minute. "I can't tell someone who's starving, 'Isn't that neat, you've received Jesus Christ as Savior, bye.'"

In addition to bringing the gospel to Third World people, Project LORD establishes "micro farms" to help families become self-sufficient.

When given the resources to start a quarter-acre farm, a Third-World family can make eight times the income from working in the fields and grow enough food to feed 24 people, Kerr says.

While Project LORD tries to stay non-political, Kerr says any type of land reform is political in most Third World countries.

"But when you're working in the field, you don't want to be right or left."

Kerr's University appearance was part of the Campus Restoration Ministry's weekly Mars Hill Forum.

Camp opens counseling jobs

Applications are now available for 12 paid positions and 20 volunteer spots this summer at the Easter Seals camp for handicapped children near Coos Bay.

Camping experience is desired, but not necessary, says Byron Krog, state program director for the Easter Seals Society.

Paid counselors receive \$700

in addition to room and board from June 14 to Aug. 28. Volunteers may be able to receive college credit. The camp also needs a registered nurse who would be paid \$1,300 plus room and board.

Krog recommends that volunteers be more than 16 years old and counselors be over 20.

Activities include "anything

any other camp would do except it is designed for handicapped children who might need the assistance of counselors," Krog says.

Easter Seals will be accepting applications through the middle of May, but hope to have their counselors selected by May 1. Applications are available from Easter Seals at 3565 Donald.

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