

# Father Divine Still Draws Horde of Devoted Followers

Philadelphia—(UPI)—A tall 14-year-old girl came into the room with a bowl of red and white roses and placed it in front of the little man who sat like a small bronze Buddha at the head of the table.

He smiled. The 100 women and dozen men seated and standing around the long banquet table smiled with him. "He smiled," a woman murmured. "Wonderful!" exclaimed several softly. "God Almighty!"

This was the man who signs his name "Rev. M. J. Divine, M.S.D., D.D. (better known as Father Divine)," the Negro evangelist who made headlines in New York's Harlem in the depression 1930's and, by worldly standards, should now be somewhere between 84 and 95 years old. He has recently been reported dead, or far gone in senility.

But he has rung a heavy dinner bell with vigor, greeted a guest in a soft but clear voice and eaten his chop suey and baked apple without evident tremor. He now sat with five shaving mirrors in a semi-circle before him and a mirrored buffet behind, with Mother Divine, his 35-year-old "Holy spotless virgin bride" at his right hand and a blue-eyed, red haired secretary, Miss Dorothy Darling, on his left.

**Birth of Freedom**  
His followers began to sing: "We have a new birth of freedom . . . only God can give . . . Abraham Lincoln spoke about it; Father Divine brought it about . . . now we have a new birth of freedom, under God."

They clapped in rhythm and stamped their feet, repeating the verse, over and over, in hypnotic crescendo.

A woman broke from the standing crowd in a writhing primitive dance, crying out her love for God. A young white woman with a pale, pinched face looked briefly over her shoulder at the commotion and continued singing quietly, her hands primly folded. A tambourine joined the din. After 10 minutes the singing ended.

The man had sat without expression. Then the girl, Trudi Pincock, wearing the pink satin dancing dress in which she had just been graduated from Junior High school, stood up in her place and began to speak to him:

"I want to thank you for finishing nine years of school. If it wasn't for you I wouldn't have finished. Thank you for blessing me further on to finish high school, too. I just want to say, Father dear, that I love you with all my heart."

Father Divine spoke for the first time. "So glad!" he said.

**Party at Home**  
Trudi gulped down a sob and went on: "The children in school asked me was I staying for the party. I said un-unh. . . I was going to have my party at home."

Trudi could hardly have wanted for partners at a ninth grade dance. But her party was the 2 p.m. Holy Communion banquet at the Circle Mission church of Philadelphia.

She is one of Father Divine's "Rosebuds," pledged to make "every deed and action express virginity." She wears, on occasion, a scarlet jacket emblazoned with a large white letter V.

Father wore a rosebud in the buttonhole of his blue-gray business suit, above a small brass star, one of several emblems lining his lapels. "And everyone called him 'God.'"

The sect has retreated from the public eye, perhaps deliberately, since the years before World War II when the "Angels" turned out 8,000 strong for a razzle-dazzle Easter parade in New York's Harlem, enchanted employers with their scrupulous honesty and heavenly names—Sweet Peace, Sunshine Flowers, Jerusalem Phaise (a more recent convert, Miss Peaceful Integration)—and gave colloquial currency to their standard greetings: "Peace," "peace brother," "peace, it's wonderful!"

**15 Million Followers**  
One estimated during this period numbered the followers at 15 million. In the early 1940s, Father Divine left New York rather than pay a \$4,478 judgment won by a defected angel who claimed she had contributed that sum to the Communal Heaven and wanted to take it with her. He set up residence in Philadelphia.

In 1946, he married a 21-year-old blonde Canadian, Edna Rose Ritchings, a "Rosebud" who, his followers have said, acquired the spirit of the first mother Divine when she asked Father to relieve her of immortality.

In 1953 the group purchased a steel magnate's mansion on Philadelphia's main line as headquarters, home

and holy shrine. It is known as "Woodmont."

In 1953, Father emerged from seeming retirement to order his followers to stop using the New Jersey turnpike, because of what he considered an unjust speeding fine.

Last year he was reported admitted to a Philadelphia hospital in a diabetic coma, and released a week later, recovered.

Philadelphia civic leaders, questioned about the group today, reply almost in chorus: "Haven't heard anything about them for years."

**Very Premature**  
But the suggestion of demise appears very premature. The sect keeps no membership rolls. Its members will not specify even the number of chairs around the banquet table for the years of their age.

"It may sound really silly to you," said Miss St. Mary Bloom, "but we don't count our blessings."

Real estate records and the group's own publications indicate that as of today, the Divine churches, which are incorporated, and groups of Divine followers own and operate 23 churches, schools and residences in Philadelphia, ranging from a 400-room hotel to converted private homes.

In addition, there are 14 similar establishments in New York City and surrounding counties, 10 in Newark, N.J., smaller churches in Chicago and Los Angeles and establishments of varying size in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, The Canal Zone and the Republic of Panama.

On hand for Trudi's party—she herself came from Panama with her mother some years ago—were women on pilgrimage visit from Australia and Switzerland. A 21-year-old German boy, Siegfried Kranich Goeppinger, said he had come as an immigrant to live with the group.

**Hallelujah Revivalism**  
Theologically, the cult appears to have borrowed bits and pieces of Hallelujah revivalism, Christian Science healing, Mormon sharing and Roman Catholic celibate marriage to the church. Peculiar to it also are a fervid American patriotism, apparently expected even of foreign followers, and a conscious working demonstration of racial integration.

Followers refuse to use what they call "segregated words" such as white and negro. Negroes only slightly outnumbered whites as participants at the recent 2 p.m. banquet this writer attended.

The faith is not handed down from father to son. One tenet of the "International modest code (CAPS I, M, C) who which all followers must adhere reads: "No undue mixing of sexes." This means no relationship except on neces-

sary business. In the group's establishments, men and women are housed on separate floors and occupy separate sitting rooms. They sit at the same table, but in groups by sex.

Miss Darling notes realistically that there are still plenty of people being born to keep the faith going, and anyway "Father doesn't advocate death."

Other tenets of the code are: "No smoking, no drinking, no obscenity, no vulgarity, no profanity, no receiving of gifts, presents, tips or bribes."

**Mostly Women**  
About 90 per cent of the followers appear to be women, who call their god "Darling," "Dearest," and "Sweet."

"We believe as the nuns do across the street," said Miss Darling, "that we're married to the church."

The followers admit no mortal history for Father Divine, and carry a chip on their shoulders toward reporters who insist on recording such facts as are known.

Early records indicate he was born George Baker near Savannah, Ga., and about the turn of the century was working in Baltimore as a handyman when he came under the spell of another evangelist and joined him as a helper.

In 1919, in the name of Major J. Divine and wife, Penninah, he purchased the home at Sayville, N.Y., and began gathering followers. The name became Divine some years later.

Then as now, the Holy Communion banquet was the sect's only rite. Members sat down to lavish meals—fried chicken, pork chops, salads, vegetables and desserts of all descriptions—blessed by Father as the platters started down the table with a crack from his heavily ringed hands or the plopping of a serving spoon into the dish.

**Hordes of Pilgrims**  
As the depression hit Harlem in the early 1930s, word of this and Father's success in getting jobs for his followers, brought hordes of pilgrims to Sayville. The neighbors rebelled at the heavy traffic and Divine was sentenced to jail for maintaining a public nuisance. If the cult had needed a boost, this provided it. Supreme Court Justice Lewis J. Smith, apparently in the best of health when he sentenced Divine on June 5, 1932, died four days later.

"Our Lord done struck down the judge!" cried the devoted followers. Released on appeal a few months later, Divine moved into the city's teeming Negro slum in lavish style.

Followers contributed their savings and earnings to the movement, as they still do, set up cooperative businesses of all kinds, as they still do, and weathered both the depression and its particular Harlem bitterness.



**EVANGELIST**—Father Divine, the Negro evangelist who made headlines in New York's Harlem in the depression 1930's, is now living in Philadelphia where this recent photo was made. His age is estimated at between 84 and 95 years. (UPI Telephoto)

## Fast Drying of Red Alder Wood Studied

Increased production of kiln-dried red alder lumber and reduction in cost of drying may result from a study being made at the Oregon Forest Research center, Corvallis, according to C. J. Kozlik, in charge of studies on wood seasoning. Preliminary results have indicated that drying time for red alder may be greatly reduced without loss in quality of wood.

Red alder has been the major species of the expanding hardwood industry in Oregon during recent years. Length of drying time and loss of quality of wood dried improperly have been serious problems to the lumber industry, stated Kozlik.

Past work at the Research center indicated that red alder could tolerate kiln conditions more severe than those usually followed. Test charges of red alder were dried at temperatures up to 200 degrees F. after an initial treat-

ment to raise the temperature of the wood, Kozlik explained. A drying period following this initial treatment lowered the moisture content of red alder lumber to seven per cent, with degrade equal to or less than that obtained by present commercial methods of drying. Air velocity within kilns also has been studied.

Research in seasoning of wood by scientists at the Research center is financed by a tax on timber harvested in Oregon.

## UP IN AIR OVER ROOFS

Nara, Japan—(UPI)—Priests in this ancient city have complained they have difficulty in keeping the roofs of their two temples on. Sightseers are continually stripping off the tiles for ashtrays, they reported.

## American Speller Has New Popularity

Pepperell, Mass.—(UPI)—A Massachusetts woman artist has given a 178-year-old best seller a new lease on life. Noah Webster's quaint "American Speller" was first published in 1783. Eventually more than 100 million copies were sold—a record equaled only by the Bible.

Several years ago, Mrs. Barbara Cooney Porter, an artist, came across a copy of the old speller. She got the idea of reprinting it, with illustrations, and her modernized speller now is sharing some of the popularity of the original.

## IN TRAINING

Army Pvt. James Materic, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Materic, 213 Girard dr., is undergoing basic infantry training at Ft. Ord, Calif. He is a graduate of Oregon State college.

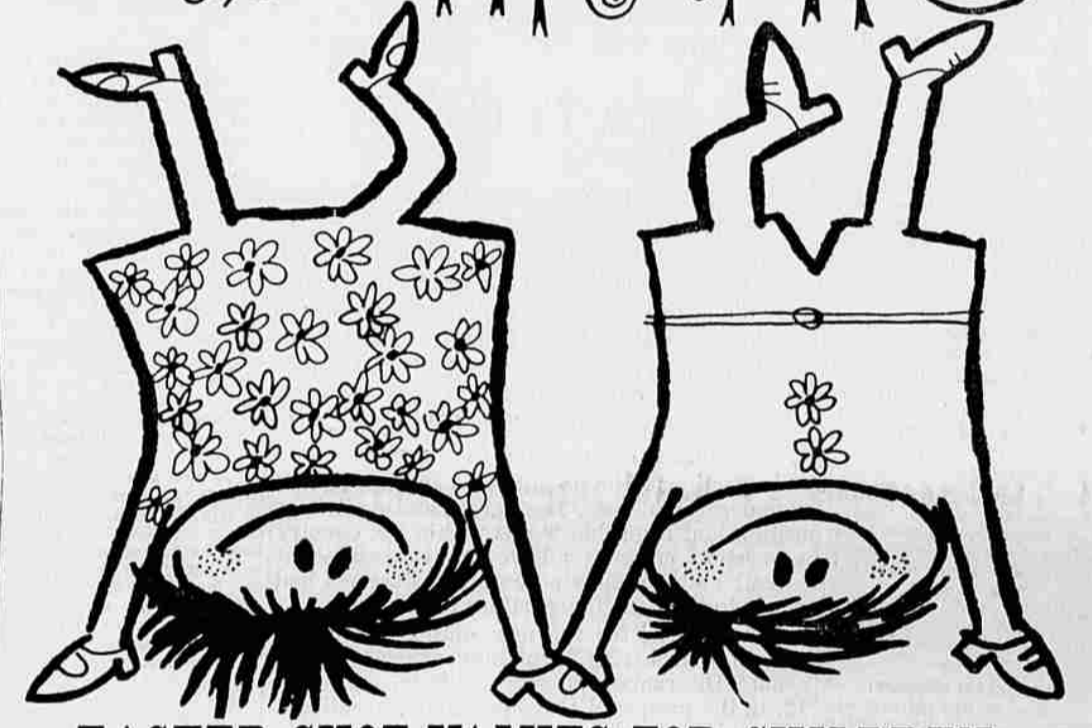
## 356,104,702 Tons of State Ore Shipped

St. Paul, Minn.—(UPI)—From the time of the first shipment of Minnesota-owned ore in 1893, until June 30, 1966, a total of 356,104,702 tons of ore has been shipped from state-owned properties.

Of this amount, 24,792,597 tons were crude taconite. Converting this tonnage of iron ore to steel and the steel into automobiles, the amount of iron ore that has been produced from state-owned mines in Minnesota would amount to 15 rows of automobiles, bumper to bumper, circling the world at the equator.

## Jacksonville, Fla.—(UPI)—The Florida School Board Association adopted a resolution Wednesday favoring daily prayers and other religious observances in state public schools. The resolution said the association would "oppose any move to deny the youth of Florida the spiritual heritage which is rightfully theirs."

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## BLM's 1962 Timber Sale Plans To Be Reviewed

A preview of the 1962 timber sale plan will be presented at a public meeting scheduled Tuesday, March 21, at 1:30 p.m., according to Ross A. Youngblood, district manager of the bureau of land management.

An annual event, such public meetings give interested persons the opportunity to offer comments concerning proposed timber harvests, according to Youngblood.

The BLM, which is an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, administers approximately 905,000 acres of land which constitute the Medford district. These lands include remnants of the original public domain and Oregon and California railroad grant lands which were revested by the federal government.

## Steel Room To House 22-Inch Cyclotron

Davis, Calif.—(UPI)—A 20-ton steel room has been placed on the Davis campus of the University of California to house a 22-inch cyclotron which is scheduled for operation next fall.

The room was built in Sacramento of 1½-inch steel. It is 12 by 12 by 8 feet in size and will act as a magnetic shield to keep the cyclotron's magnetic radiation from interfering with the beta ray spectrometer already in use in the physics department.

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