

**The original documents are located in Box 45, folder “Friends - Zeoli, Billy” of the Sheila Weidenfeld Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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QUOTES - Mrs. Ford

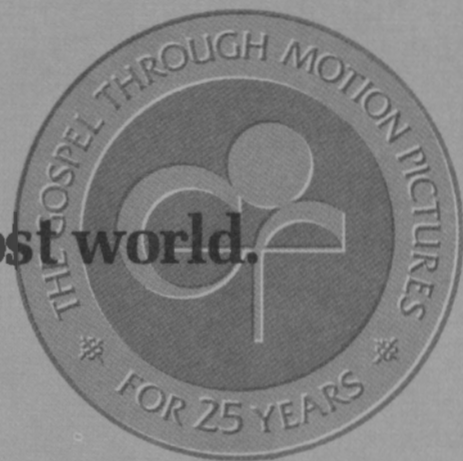


On Billy and Marilyn Zeoli

He is the type of man ~~h~~ who doesn't actually need a church to speak in. He more or less carries his church with him. Mrs. Ford said she is very fond of Marilyn as well.



**GOSPEL FILMS... opening eyes in a lost world.**



*To open their eyes . . . to the truth . . .  
So that they may receive forgiveness . . .  
and live in the light of God instead of darkness . . .*

ACTS 26:18 (Living Bible)



*Gospel Films, Inc.*

*Post Office Box 455*

*Muskegon, Michigan 49443*

*616/773-3361*



OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY DAVID KENNERLY



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

September 3, 1974

Dear Billy:

I would like to personally congratulate both you and Gospel Films on this your 25th anniversary. Your organization is making a major impact upon America and the world as it builds Christian principles and moral fibre into the lives of people through a strong emphasis upon the importance of church and family life.

As you know, Billy, church has always meant much to me. The closeness of my family is also a great source of inspiration and challenge as we share our Christian faith. I'm thankful too, for the opportunity that I've had to serve my country for more than 25 years.

Because I've trusted Christ to be my Saviour, my life is His. Often, as I walk into my office, I realize that man's wisdom and strength are not sufficient, so I try to practice the truth of Proverbs 3:5-6:

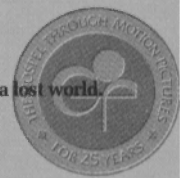
"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart;  
Lean not unto thine own understanding.  
In all thy ways acknowledge Him,  
And He shall direct thy path."

And Billy, I've experienced His leadership just as you have! Again, my congratulations and best wishes to you and your co-workers in Gospel Films for 25 years of His direction, and I want also to thank you for taking time to help me learn more about our Saviour.

Sincerely,

Reverend Billy Zeoli  
Gospel Films, Inc.  
Post Office Box. 455  
Muskegon, Michigan 49443

GOSPEL FILMS...opening eyes in a lost world.



# A Quarter Century of Ministry

- 1950 Our first films: *Regions Beyond* and *Forgotten Valley*.
- 1952 Our first studio.
- 1955 Our first full-length youth dramatic: *Seventeen*.
- 1959 Our first overseas production, *Something To Die For*, which launched a full-scale overseas ministry.
- 1960 A new studio.
- 1962 Christian film-making's first musical: *The Tony Fontane Story*.
- 1963 Films begin going to military bases all over the world — free.  
Pro sports ministry begins.
- 1968 Films begin going directly to U.S. high schools — free.
- 1971 A new distribution center added to Muskegon offices.
- 1974 Our first Vice-Presidential Prayer Luncheon.
- 1975 Our 25th Anniversary.

Among the New Releases to be released in 1975-76 . . .  
A new series: *The Rise and Decline of Western Culture and Thought* with Dr. Francis Schaeffer  
*The John Peterson Story* — A dramatic of the great music composer's life.

A



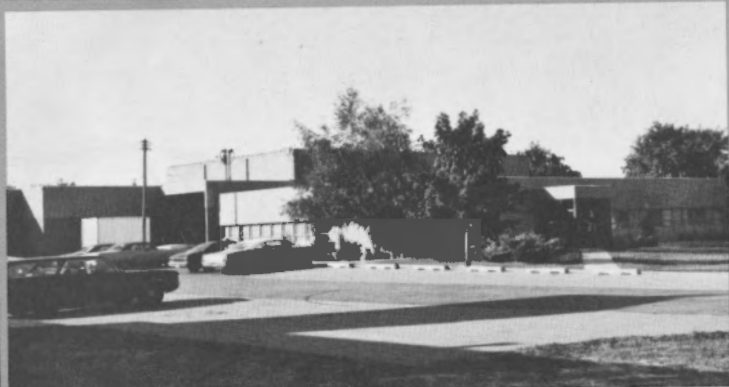
D·E



H



GOSPEL FILMS...opening eyes in a lost world



F·G

A Gospel Films' First Studio in Muskegon, Michigan

B Gospel Films' First Board . . .  
*left to right:* Bob Geerdes, Morry Carlson, Chuck Peterman, Dr. Ted W. Engstrom, Jack Sonneveldt, Ted Essenburg, Richard Luth, Chuck Werner — Standing: Stan Taylor, Ken Anderson

C Tony Fontane

D Scene from the film *Seventeen*

E Bobby Richardson, then of the New York Yankees

F Scene from the film *Regions Beyond*

G The Present Office and Studio in Muskegon, Michigan

H Scene from the film *Something To Die For*

I Billy Zeoli, Al Kuhnle, Joe Weatherly, Chuck Peterman receiving awards for Gospel Films

J *Left to right:* Raymond Berry — Star Receiver for the Baltimore Colts, Mrs. Berry, Billy Zeoli, Mrs. Wade, Mr. Bill Wade — Quarterback for the World Champion Chicago Bears.

The  
Good  
News  
Goes...

Today, Gospel Films is a leader in its field . . . more than

**137,880**

total showings in the last twelve months in:

- Churches
- Schools
- Homes (Via Television)
- Hospitals
- Military Bases
- Prisons
- Evangelistic Crusades

Film is one of the most powerful media known — it commands both sight and hearing, and it blacks out almost all distraction.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the most powerful message known — it brings hope and peace to a confused world.

Why should the power of film be wasted on trivia?

Why should the power of the Gospel be diluted by poor communication?

Gospel Films has dedicated itself to unleashing God's good news on film.

And all over the world, eyes are coming open.

## ... To Churches

Churches were the first to show Gospel Films. Back in 1950, some churches weren't sure God could bless "the movies." Others had no projectors, no screens.

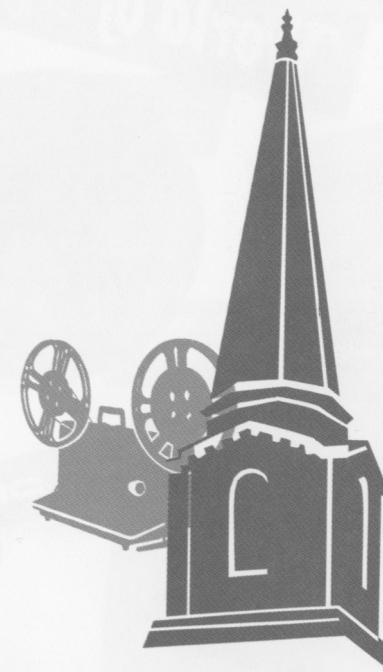
Many were uncertain how to promote a Christian film.

But they tried anyway. And over the years we've tried to help them in every way we could.

We've printed special posters, bulletin inserts, and news releases for churches to personalize and use.

We've persuaded the Singer Corporation to let us offer Graflex projectors to churches at the wholesale price (more than 6,000 distributed in the last five years).

GOSPEL FILMS... opening eyes in a lost world



We've made sure pastors know about new films and how to get them (we currently send a million pieces of mail to pastors each year).

Thousands of churches show our films, regularly.

Only God will know the number of changed lives.



evangelistic films

World of the Seance

"Six Hundred, Sixty-Six"

like a mighty army

To Planet Earth With Love

A Man and His Men

The Tony Fontane Story

teaching/training films  
1 challenge to witness  
2 the gospel presentation  
3 on the job training  
4 follow-up



Silent Witness

The Return

Something to Die For

so long joey

The Rapture

No Need To Hide

youth films

GOING STEADY

MISFIT

Lost in the Crowd

GOAL TO GO

FAST WAY NOWHERE

TEENAGE ROCK

Eighteen

Face the Music

WORLDS APART

THE BIG BLAST

Seventeen

personality films

WEEKEND OF CHAMPIONS

PLAY FOR KEEPS

Riding the Pulpit

THE \*SOUNDS OF LOVE

A Film for Every Need



Hey There, Vonda!

Billy Sunday

so long joey

THE Bobby Richardson STORY

world mission films

Through Gates of Splendor

ANGRY JUNGLE

The Paul Carlson Story

Martyred Men

Suicide Mountain

A NIGHT OF TERROR

DAKTAR

PEACE CHILD

Highest Mountain

Regions Beyond

church growth films

How to GROW a church

Centerville Awakening

Visitors Only

like a mighty army

Reach Out and Grow

A Film for Every Need

GOSPEL FILMS... opening eyes in a lost world



**The Christian Home**

*Crimson Shadows*

**The Final Hour**

*He Restoreth My Soul*

**The OCCULT**

*Satan On The Loose*

**Discipline in the Home**

**DARK VALLEY**

*in the beginning*

**THE LIVING BIBLE**

*High on the Campus*

**A FOUR LETTER WORD**

**TV TIME**

*In Times Like These*

*The Son Worshipers*

**CREATION vs. EVOLUTION**

**SANDCASTLES**

*The Temple*

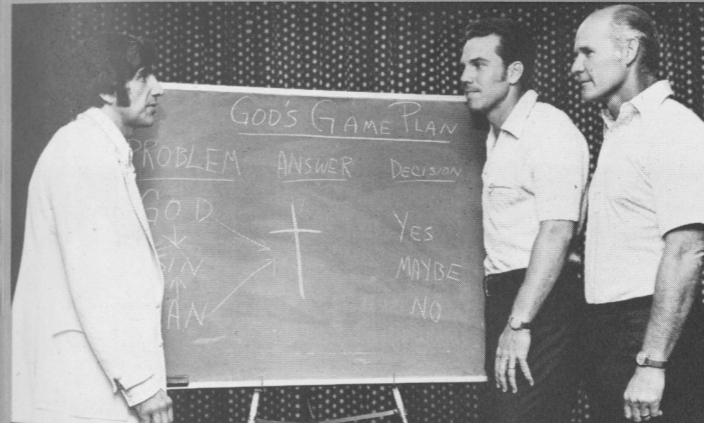
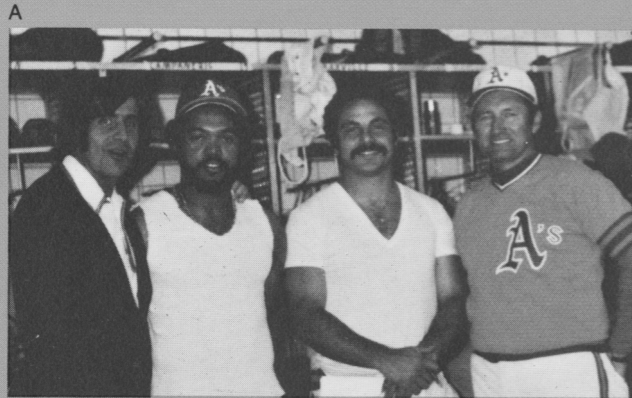
**IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES**

*Though I Walk Through The Valley*

contemporary issue films



GOSPEL FILMS... opening eyes in a lost world.



A Reggie Jackson, Sal Bando and Alvin Dark of the World Champion Oakland A's with Billy Zeoli.  
 B First Lady, Mrs. Betty Ford and Marilyn Zeoli at the White House.  
OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY DAVID KENNERLY  
 C Mel Farr and Lem Barney of the Detroit Lions with Billy Zeoli at one of the NFL Football Devotionals.

D Mike Ford, Gospel Films Vice Chairman, Rich DeVos, President Gerald Ford, Billy Zeoli at the Vice-Presidential Prayer Luncheon sponsored by Gospel Films.  
 E President Gerald Ford with Gospel Films Board Chairman, Elmer Lago.  
 F Billy Zeoli with Dallas Cowboys Coach, Tom Landry and Quarterback Roger Staubach at one of the many NFL football team devotionals led by Zeoli.

G Billy Zeoli with Dave Boyer while filming SO LONG, JOEY!  
 H Coach Don Shula of World Champion Miami Dolphins receiving a special trophy from Gospel Films.  
 I Art Linkletter — being welcomed to Muskegon for the "We Care Rally" by Joe Weatherly.

Gospel Films has long had an unusual ministry to leaders — not only through our films, but through our personal lives. *Time Magazine* recently noted how President Ford "has nurtured a close friendship with the Rev. Billy Zeoli, an evangelical minister who is head of Gospel Films, Inc., of Muskegon, Michigan and peripatetic chaplain to a number of professional sports teams." (August 26, 1974)

Indeed, most Sunday mornings of the year finds us leading chapel services for professional sports teams. Personalities such as Art Linkletter, Vonda Kay Van Dyke, Dave Boyer, Bobby Richardson and a host of professional athletes are familiar faces around GF functions; they in turn have appeared in our films.

...To Leaders



*"... I preached the Gospel to far more people than in all my previous 24 years put together. This does not mean that I had not been busy those other years. The difference can be explained in two words — "Gospel Films."*

REX JACKSON — Missionary  
Enugu, Nigeria

*"... Across the world GF has helped YFC workers by providing projectors and films. As a result there are countless hundreds of young people in Korea, Singapore, Lebanon, Hong Kong, South Africa, in the countries of Europe and all across South America who've come to know the Savior."*

JIM WILSON  
Executive Director, Youth for Christ International  
Geneva, Switzerland

It is safe to say that every minute of every day, a Gospel Film is being shown somewhere. Our films have been shown in 161 nations of the world, often at our expense. The first eight months of 1974 tallied live foreign audiences of 3,927,527, with 55,863 of them making decisions to follow Christ as a result.

Add to that scores of television showings — often to an entire country at a time — and the total number of overseas viewers is incalculable.

Who uses Gospel Films abroad? The list of denominations and mission groups runs to 318 — from Aborigines Inland Mission of Australia to Youth for Christ (Uruguay).

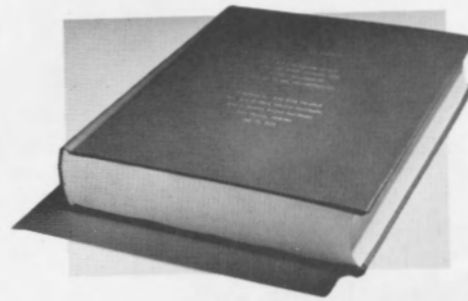
People in other lands have been exposed to enough trashy American films. When a Gospel Film comes to their city or village, they get a new picture of the United States — and a clear challenge to follow the Savior who died for them.

### Gospel Films are produced in 40 languages

- |           |            |             |
|-----------|------------|-------------|
| Afrikaans | Indonesian | Spanish     |
| Amharic   | Italian    | Sudan Negro |
| Arabic    | Japanese   | Swahili     |
| Bantu     | Kiswahili  | Swedish     |
| Cantonese | Korean     | Tagalog     |
| Creole    | Lamba      | Tamil       |
| Danish    | Laotian    | Telugu      |
| Dutch     | Mandarin   | Thai        |
| English   | Marathi    | Urdu        |
| Finnish   | Mayan      | Vietnamese  |
| French    | Norwegian  | Yoruba      |
| German    | Papiamento | Zulu        |
| Greek     | Portuguese |             |
| Hausa     | Shona      |             |



... To the  
World



If you're a high-school student, it's not unusual to find a film in your classroom. What's unpredictable is whether it will be a good film or a bad one, interesting or boring, well-made or a joke. You never know.

If you're a high-school teacher or principal, Gospel Films has taken some of the guesswork out of choosing. The 12 films currently being offered free to any junior or senior high school in America have earned a reputation: they're contemporary, they entertain and they carry a positive spiritual message.

Every school day of 1973-74 brought another 400 showings of Gospel Films.

That can't help but make a difference!



Here's what Dr. Ted Ward and John Stewart, co-directors of *The Values Development Educational Program* at Michigan State University wrote after conducting an extensive scientific study of our free film program for schools:

"The films enjoy a wide, general, and high level of acceptance by administrators, teachers, and students. There is no question about the fact that most of the people who book, authorize, show and view these films believe that they are valuable, effective, and of high quality."

"... Gospel Films, to an unusual degree, appears to make every effort to live and be the message they are spreading... It is an unusually fine manifestation of Christianity in a very secular world."

(The full report runs 412 pages; copies of the abstract are available upon request).

... To  
Young  
People



What does it all mean?

- ... the miles of celluloid,
- ... the reams of publicity,
- ... the ever-rising postage costs,
- ... the ever-widening search for creative talent —  
for what goal?

When new eyes focus in on the Light of the World, it's worth it all.



"During my formative teen-age years, nothing brought more excitement to my Christian life than those nights when the lights dimmed, the music soared and another Gospel Film filled the screen. There is no way to measure their impact on my life and career today."

MEL WHITE — Pasadena, California



"I came to know the Lord as a teenager in Singapore after seeing the film SEVENTEEN. Later, as Director of Singapore Youth for Christ and now as a missionary in Hong Kong, I make good use of Gospel Films. No one knows better than I, the life-changing impact they make on a young heart."

DANNY EE — Hong Kong



"I made a decision to have Jesus come into my life as Lord and Saviour after seeing the film FACE THE MUSIC. I find that I cannot live without Him. He is a constant source of strength and help throughout my day and the best organizer our home could ever have."

KATHY DARLING SWAB — Lansing, Michigan



When I was asked by Gospel Films to play the part of Dr. James Kennedy in LIKE A MIGHTY ARMY, I was a confirmed agnostic.

During the filming, I had many conversations with Dr. Kennedy and Billy Zeoli, but I was not really convinced of Christ's message.

Shortly after the filming, my wife, Phyllis, became a Christian and after a long period of Bible study and discussion, I finally gave my life to Christ with Dr. Kennedy's help.

Within a year I was involved in the witnessing program at the Coral Ridge Church — sharing Christ in people's homes.

CHRIS ROBINSON — Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

Now  
I  
See

I cannot close my eyes to a darkened world. This earth is covered by a mass of people who are

- ... confused
- ... frightened
- ... lost.

One of the answers to communicating the Gospel to these millions is the intelligent use of media. For a quarter of a century our own staff and distributors have been proclaiming the Gospel through motion pictures — and people have been transformed by the Light of the Gospel.

But... We can't stop now.  
We can't do it alone.

We need people

- ... to care
- ... to pray
- ... to give.

We need you.

## A Message from the President

In His love and mine,

*Billy Zeoli*  
Billy Zeoli



PAUL BUITEN, C.P.A.  
Partner, DeGraaf & Buiten Agency

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Vice-President, Gospel Films, Inc.

O. PAUL CORLEY  
Exec. Vice-President of American  
Oil Company

RICHARD DE VOS  
President, Amway Corporation

TED ESSENBURG  
Director of Development  
Gospel Films, Inc.

FRANK W. GROTENHUIS  
President, F.W. Grotenhuis  
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Real Estate, Investments, Broadcasting

CHARLES PETERMAN  
Vice-President, Gospel Films, Inc.

JOHN W. PETERSON  
Composer

CLAUDE VAN ANDEL, D.O.  
Physician and Surgeon

DON VAN DER SCHIE  
President, Van Der Schie Heating Co.

JOE WEATHERLY  
Vice-President, Gospel Films, Inc.

BILLY ZEOLI  
President, Gospel Films, Inc.



Actually, Gospel Films is not so much celluloid as it is people.

And we love the bewildered,  
quietly frightened people of our planet,  
young and old, black and white, American and foreign,  
whose eyes are ever scanning the horizon  
for a flicker of good news.

*"Let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth."*

I JOHN 3:18



left to right:  
TED ESSENBURG — Director of Development  
DON CRAYMER — Vice President, Operations  
BILLY ZEOLI — President  
CHARLES PETERMAN — Vice President, Distribution  
ZEN C. HANGER — Director of Accounting  
WENDY COLLINS — Vice President, Development  
JOE WEATHERLY — Vice President, Overseas

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Mr. and Mrs. Morrie Younts  
Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Zeoli  
Mr. and Mrs. Billy Zeoli

...THESE PEOPLE MADE THIS BOOKLET POSSIBLE.

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# UP FRONT



# MAIL

It is futile to rail at medical pretenders such as Carlton Fredericks, other than to point out that he is without scientific credentials. He is entitled to his opinions. But it is of the utmost urgency that PEOPLE tell its readers that the medical/scientific community does not support his charges against sugar. To say that sugar "is killing us by the millions" is simply a lie. The minutes of the National Academy of Sciences' recent symposium on sweeteners will bear this out.

G. Norris Bollenback  
The Sugar Association, Inc.  
Washington, D.C.

### Counter-Gridiron Party

I wouldn't pay 2¢ for a kiss from Barbara Howar. Selling kisses while smoking? Yuk.

Tom Luty  
Anaheim, Calif.

### Beverly Sills

As a member of the Connecticut Opera House, I have had the pleasure of working with Miss Sills. Not only is she a great singer-actress, but she is a warm human being. To be on stage with her is pure joy.

Gloria Campbell  
Hartford

### Star Tracks

Arthur Rubinstein (PEOPLE, March 31) is wearing earphones while listening to a UNESCO debate with Isaac Stern. Why? Rubinstein speaks Polish, Russian, French, English, German, Italian and Spanish. Was the Chinese representative speaking? Or is Rubinstein, at 88, finally getting hard of hearing? Please reassure me.

Rudolph S. Rauch  
Buenos Aires

*Rubinstein says he hears as well as ever but adds "at UNESCO they are always talking in unusual languages, and I can hardly be expected to know all African and Arab dialects. Besides, everyone normally wears earphones to get rid of peripheral noise."*—ED.

PEOPLE welcomes letters to the editors, but we regret that because of the volume of mail received, we cannot acknowledge them. Letters for publication should be addressed to PEOPLE, Time & Life Building, Rockefeller Center, New York, N.Y. 10020.

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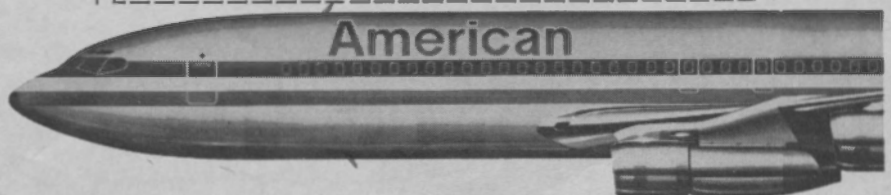
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P-455



# THERE'S A REVEREND BILLY IN THE WHITE HOUSE AGAIN, BUT IT'S ZEOLI, NOT GRAHAM

Every Monday morning the envelope arrives at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue and is placed on President Gerald Ford's desk. It contains a passage from the Bible and a copyrighted prayer. The prayer is inspirational, colloquial and almost always fiercely cozy. "My dear God, why don't you just come and sit down in this chair and tell me what to do?" asks a recent example. "Love forgets mistakes," another one goes; "nagging about them hurts the best of friends."

These guileless missiles are sent to the White House by the Rev. William Judson (Billy) Zeoli, 42, who has emerged as Ford's unofficial spiritual guide. A resident of Michigan, Zeoli met the future President on a visit to Wash-

ington when Ford was a congressman from Grand Rapids. "That was 15 years ago, and the friendship has matured, mellowed and grown," says Zeoli.

Since Ford took office eight months ago, the mod, long-haired interdenominational preacher has been making monthly visits to the President's quarters on the second floor of the White House. "We spend time reading the Bible and praying together," says Zeoli. "He's never told anybody that I know of about our time together, and I haven't either. It leaked out. We want this to be a private thing." In turn, the President recently said, "I have never been one to be ostentatious about my religious views. But I don't hesitate to say that Billy has had an impact on my perspective."

"Mr. Ford and I," says Zeoli, "have

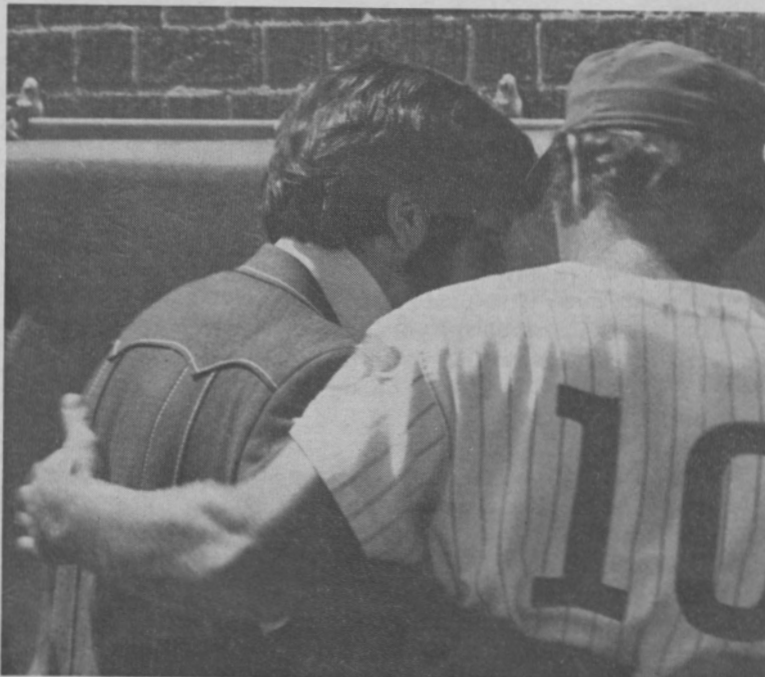
our common interests besides Christianity. In Washington there hasn't been an odd story about Jerry Ford doing something in 25 years. You haven't heard that about me either. We love our wives, we love our kids. When we're together, it's like two friends meeting to talk about issues and sports. Every football game we argued about last fall, he won. Fortunately I wasn't betting any hymn books."

Over the years, Zeoli has become a close friend to the First Family. Arriving in Washington shortly before Betty Ford ("my children are just crazy about her," says Zeoli) went into the hospital for cancer surgery, he held a private prayer session with her. (There is a report that the buoyant Zeoli tried to cheer up the Ford family with a soft-shoe dance in the hospital while

**The Rev. Billy Zeoli amuses and entralls his audience at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Lafayette, Ind.**



**Zeoli prays with then-Vice-President Ford at a pro athletes' prayer luncheon last year. Behind Zeoli is wife, Marilyn.**



**Zeoli, who ministers to many athletes, prays with Ron Santo, then with the Chicago Cubs, before a game.**



*At the White House: Close friends President Ford and the Rev. Billy Zeoli confer regularly. The minister sends Ford a weekly memorandum with a prayer and a Bible passage.*

## REV. BILLY ZEOLI:

---

# President Ford's Spiritual Adviser

by Gerald Strober

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

**W**hen Mrs. Betty Ford underwent her recent cancer surgery, one of the few non-family members gathered anxiously at the Bethesda Naval Hospital was a 42-year-old minister and film company executive named Billy Zeoli.

The modishly dressed Zeoli, who calls himself an "ambassador to Christ," held a private prayer session with Mrs. Ford in her hospital room just before the operation and remained with the family for most of the next four days.

Says Michael Ford, the President's eldest son: "Billy helped us as a family to integrate and temper our emotions. He provided great strength."

Says Mrs. Ford, through her chief aide, Nancy Howe: "Billy carries his church with him. He doesn't need a building to make you feel close to God; he finds his little sanctuary for Christ wherever he is. My children all adore him. He makes God feel human to the young. He's quite a man."

Billy Zeoli has been a friend of the Ford family since 1960, when he first met the then Representative from Mich-

igan on a visit to Washington. Their relationship has grown even closer since Mr. Ford's ascension to the Vice Presidency and then to the Presidency.

Each week, Zeoli, who describes Mr. Ford as "a man who lives the Gospel in daily life," sends a one-page prayer memorandum to the President. They're mailed from Muskegon, Mich., where Zeoli works, on Friday, and placed on Mr. Ford's desk the following Monday. The memorandums, entitled "God's Got a Better Idea," consist of a Bible verse or passage along with a prayer composed by Zeoli. A typical recent Zeoli prayer said in part: "My Dear God, why don't you just come and sit down in this chair and tell me what to do? It would be so easy if you would come and be with me and tell me the kind of things that I should do in life and what moves I should make."

### The President's note

Wrote President Ford to Zeoli last Sept. 3, a few days after taking office: "As you know, Billy, church has always meant much to me. The closeness of my family is also a great source of inspira-

# When your child can't sit still, is it nervousness or is it Pin-Worms?

Fidgeting, distraction, fitful scratching of rectal itch—many people don't know these "nervous habits" can be caused by Pin-Worms. These almost invisible parasites are so common, medical authorities have said 1 out of 3 children examined, and many parents, may have Pin-Worms.

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On an outing with the Zeolis: Marilyn and Billy Zeoli with their children, Steven, 14; Patty, 11; David, 9. They live in Grand Rapids, Ford's home town.

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# The Dallas Morning News

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Dallas, Texas, Tuesday, September 3, 1974

4 Sections ★★★★★

## A New Billy at the White House

By HELEN PARMLEY

"To: Jerry  
"From: Billy  
"Subject: God has a better idea."

This prayer memo is laid on President Gerald Ford's desk every Monday morning.

Two of the names on it are household words and the third will be soon. For it is probably just a matter of

Billy has had an impact on my perspective."

Zeoli's association with Ford, an Episcopalian, reaches far deeper than the weekly prayer gram. The evangelist has stood with the President during several recent crises, including the Agnew resignation and Mrs. Ford's surgery. He attends Washington prayer breakfasts, he gave the opening prayer for the last session of

Zeoli recalls he dropped by Ford's office one day "just to meet my congressman and soon the visits became a regular thing."

Their conversations drifted from sports toward spiritual concerns.

Last Wednesday, shortly before his first nationally-televized press conference since becoming President, Ford met with Zeoli for prayer and Bible

is quite smart. He does pray and he does heed the Word of God."

The relationship between these two men is clearly reflected in a letter Ford wrote to Zeoli last week.

"... Because I've trusted Christ to be my Savior," wrote Ford, "my life is His."

"Often, as I walk into my office, I realize that man's wisdom and strength are not sufficient, so I try to



file for Sheila



**'SOMETHING CLICKED,'** says the Rev. Billy Zeoli about his relationship with his friend President Ford. 'We have some good vibes. It's a good feeling.' Every week Zeoli writes a verse and a prayer and sends them to the President.

## Unconventional Preacher Is Friend to the President

By WILLIAM GILDEA  
Washington Post Service

WASHINGTON — They met in 1960. Billy Zeoli had moved to Grand Rapids, Mich., and one day decided it was time to meet his congressman. Billy Zeoli is like that, friendly and extroverted. So he walked in to see Gerald Ford, talked sports and gave him a Bible. The two have been fast friends ever since.

Shortly after their first meeting, Ford came to Zeoli at work, preaching about Christ.

Zeoli is a minister, an unusual one. He operates what he says is one of the largest religious film companies in the world. He keeps company with professional athletes and has delivered pregame sermons to players at the last five Super Bowls. He wears his hair longish, likes flashy clothes, talks fast, seldom stands still.

"Something clicked," said the 42-year-old Zeoli about his relationship with his friend, the President. "We have good vibes. It's a good feeling . . ."

THE PRESIDENT, as well as the entire Ford family, is extremely fond of Zeoli. Before Mrs. Ford underwent cancer surgery, Zeoli said prayers with her in her hospital room. He and a White House official

guages, and claims 137,880 showings last year, including about 8,000 on New Year's Eve alone. Titles include "High on the Campus," an antidrug film; "He Restoreth My Soul," about a young man being rehabilitated after a plane crash; "In the Presence of Mine Enemies," about a longtime Vietnam war prisoner. Zeoli said films provide the chance "to talk about Christ" to far more people than he otherwise could and to do it economically.

The company grossed \$1.7 million for 1973, according to Zeoli, who also said his income was "roughly \$15,000" annually.

TWO FORMER athletes, Bobby Richardson of the New York Yankees and Bill Glass of the Cleveland Browns, introduced Zeoli to pro sports. "I remember going to Cleveland the first time like Harry Hotshot, thinking I'll be talking to the Cleveland Browns, the whole team, in the dressing room, the whole bit. Well, I had an audience of two in Glass' hotel room, and I got a third because he walked out of the bathroom right into the prayer meeting."

More recently, the pro leagues have gotten religion and Zeoli recalled Miami coach Don Shula telling him before a meeting with most of the Dolphin team, "You're 11-0, kid, keep it up."

"A three hours' sleep-a-night man," according to

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 1975

B1

## And Now the White House Has ... Another Reverend Billy

By William Gildea

They met in 1960. Billy Zeoli had moved to Grand Rapids, Mich., and one day decided it was time to meet his congressman. Billy Zeoli is like that, friendly and extroverted. So he walked in to see Gerald Ford, talked sports and gave him a Bible. The two have been fast friends ever since.

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sermons to players at the last five Super Bowls. He wears his hair longish, likes flashy clothes, talks fast, seldom stands still.

"Something clicked," said the 42-year-old Zeoli about his relationship with his friend, the President. "We have good vibes. It's a good feeling. I felt it today." This was apparent yesterday morning from his buoyant step to a contented smile as he escorted Mr. Ford in to the National Religious Broadcasters Association prayer breakfast at the Washington Hilton, where they were the featured speakers.

It is equally obvious that the President, as well as the entire Ford fami-

ly, is extremely fond of Zeoli. When Mrs. Ford underwent cancer surgery Zeoli said prayers with her in her hospital room before the operation. To help lighten the mood, he and a White House official even did an impromptu soft shoe in the hospital while the family awaited word on the outcome of the surgery. The Ford family credits Zeoli with helping it through a difficult period.

Every week, Zeoli writes a verse and a prayer and sends them to the President, who reads them on Monday mornings. Shortly after he became President, Mr. Ford wrote Zeoli a letter in which he thanked the minister "for taking time to help me learn more about our Savior."

"I think the President likes somebody who's open, relaxed, makes him laugh," said Wendell Collins, a close friend of Zeoli's and the vice president of Gospel Films Inc., in explaining the relationship.

Billy Zeoli is easy to like, explained his wife, Marilyn. They met as juniors at Wheaton College in Illinois. After their first date, she recalled "my jaw ached," she had talked and laughed so much. "I thought 'th





## Lester Kinsolving

Houston Post 1-4-75

# A new preacher comes to White House

Billy Graham, who has been invited to the White House by every President since Harry Truman, has not been invited by President Ford.

The world-famous evangelist has not been invited to San Clemente, either, even when

Gospel Films, Inc., of Muskegon, Mich. He recently spent four days with the Fords, and conducted prayers in Mrs. Ford's hospital room just prior to her operation.

Every Monday morning a Zeoli prayer memorandum

in the National Football League.

Zeoli, a former leader of the Youth For Christ of Indianapolis and graduate of Philadelphia College of the Bible and Wheaton College in Illinois was one of the first of

there is Norm Evans, lineman for the Miami Dolphins and author of the book, "On God's Squad." One excerpt from this book is of particular note to those who regret the absence of any bona fide description of what Jesus Christ actually

Yes, He would make it with the Miami Dolphins today and he would be a star in this league."

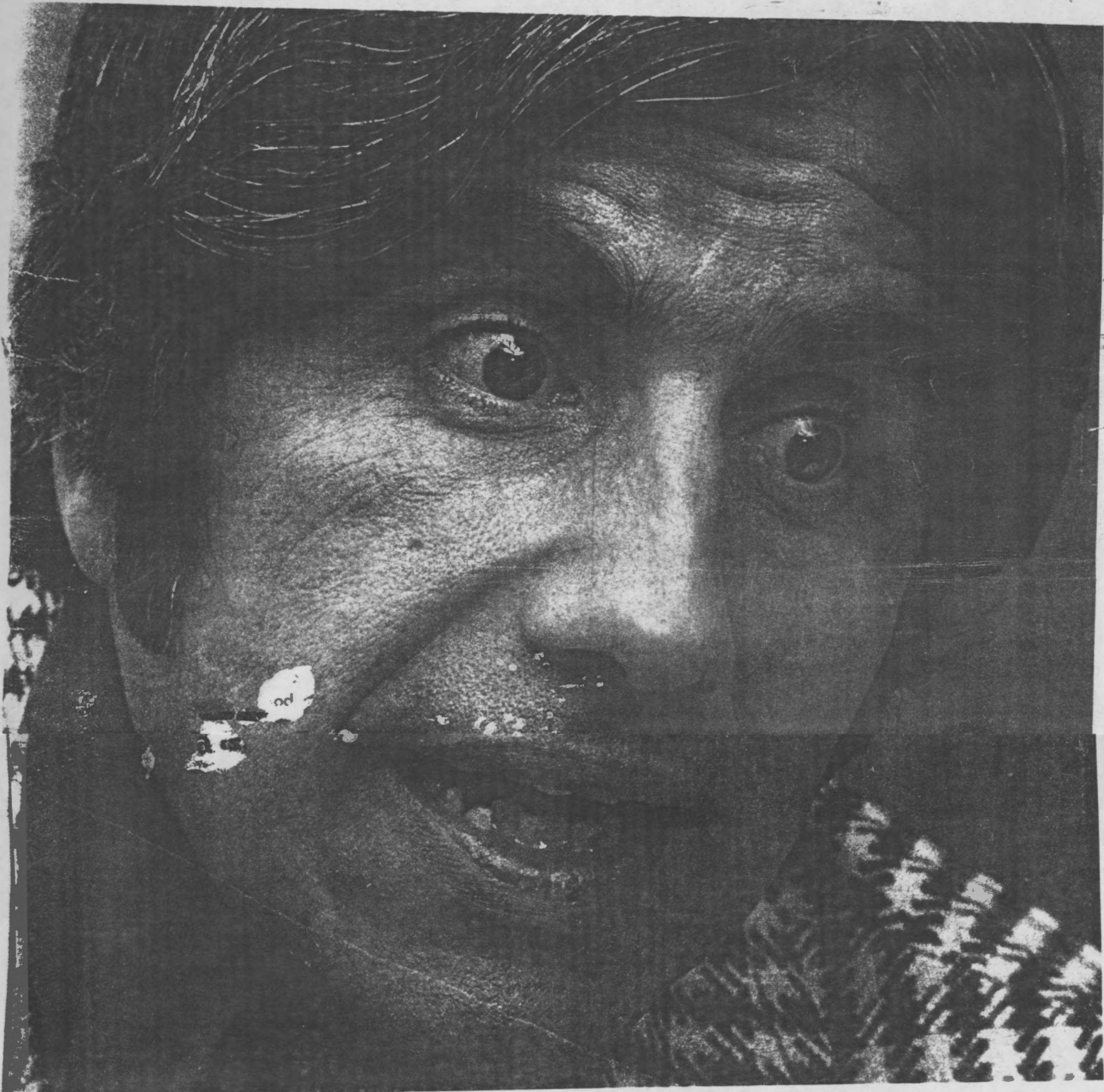
But former pro Peter Gent, in his novel Dallas North Forty, has drawn a poignant picture of religious football in

The Sunday News  
**SUNDAY MAGAZINE**

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

DECEMBER 10, 1972

- A Wives' Guide To Men's Clothes
- A Talk with 'The Dingbat'



**Billy Z, Maker of God-Rated Films**  
He's the Nation's Most Prolific Producer of Evangelistic Movies



# **Billy Z, God-Rated Film Maker**

***Muskegon's Mod Evangelist  
Is the Nation's Top  
Producer of Gospel Movies***

Photography by JIM POWELL





By **WILLIAM T. NOBLE**

Sunday Magazine Writer

### MUSKEGON

**I**N THE SCREENING ROOM of a movie studio a tall, handsome man sits in the flickering light of the projector and studies the action of a teen-age girl as a scene unfolds.

The girl is stretched out on a bed handling the telephone, that electronic security blanket of contemporary teens, with all the skill of a diva.

"Look at her eyes and the way she wiggles her toes," says the man known to everyone here as Billy Z, "a real pro."

He watches the rest of the movie and except for a minor scene involving a pair of adult amateur actors, he is content with results.

"We'll let it go," he says, unwrapping his legs from a chair, flicking on the lights and heading for another office. But he keeps talking about the perils of moviemaking and the problems.

"In one scene the actors just amateurs, froze. That's what happens when you don't use pros. You could spot the difference between that girl in the bed-

room and the adults in that other scene. And remember that nightclub scene? I think one of the girls in that one gets a revelation too soon. We should have dragged it out a little. Yet . . ."

Talking almost as rapidly as he walks, Billy Z . . . the Rev. Billy Zeoli . . . was appraising one of his latest movies and checking on the status of others in various stages of production.

An erstwhile associate of the Rev. Billy Graham and the son of a former drug addict and burglar, Mr. Zeoli, a colorful evangelist, has in the last few years become this city's Cecil B. DeMille.

He produces religious and youth films. They are not rated PG, X or R, but God-rated. Only an atheist or drug pusher would feel uncomfortable at one of his Gospel Films screenings. And the producer himself has all the qualities any Hollywood film tycoon would quickly recognize as "box office."

He has the smoldering good looks of Joe Namath, or perhaps Marcello Mastroianni, more appropos since both are Italian. He wears his hair stylishly long. His well-cut sports coat, flared trousers and ankle high boots blend

well with his hip-rich vocabulary. He looks, acts and talks more like a movie star than a producer. He is as much at home with a parlorful of millionaires as he is with a locker room of athletes or a gaggle of teen-agers. Which is important, because all three groups are seeing more and more of this Michigan evangelist-film maker.

His latest movie, "Flip Side," will be shown in 7,000 high schools, thousands of churches and service clubs across the country. It will be added to a growing number of professional movies that are produced here with Hollywood and New York actors. It has made this brawny industrial city the world's largest distributor of religious films. Last year there were 48,805 bookings.

The mod-dressed evangelist, who can make a passage from Hebrew sound like the page from a current novel, complete with the latest colloquialisms, has given religion a new look and sound.

**I**T WAS the enthusiasm and persuasion of this Philadelphia-born evangelist that 13 years ago radically changed the fortunes of a faltering Gospel Films.

Now 40, Mr. Zeoli was executive secretary of Billy Graham's Crusade when in 1959 Charles Peterman, an executive of Gospel Films, urged him to leave the Crusade and breathe more spiritual and financial fire into the non-profit organization that had been established in 1951.

"These fine men," says Mr. Zeoli, "were owners of small restaurants and other businesses and contributing generously from their limited funds to fulfill a dream. But costs were becoming increasingly heavy."

So heavy, the company was nearly bankrupt. And there were other problems. Yet, Mr. Zeoli liked the idea of bringing a message of hope to millions of people through films. He reasoned that if the movies were expertly done they could be as efficacious as personal evangelism.

In one of the original Gospel Films amateur actors made up as Pilgrims were besieged by Max-Factored Indians. But when the Pilgrims turned their heads upwards for help from above, 20th century telephone wires crisscrossed the sky.

Such gaffes and the deus ex machina aspect in plots were eliminated, and

*Continued on Next Page*

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NEWS

Ford Recommends Extension Of Auto Emission Standards

President Ford Friday recommended Congress amend the Clean Air Act by extending the current automobile emission standards until 1981. Ford said the action would have no significant impact on the nation's efforts to achieve the statute's objectives.

The proposed action is necessary, the President said, to avoid certain recently recognized potential health risks associated with catalytic converters and to permit substantially greater fuel efficiencies over the next five years.

Energy Administrator, Frank Zarb, denied (on NBC film) the action would reduce environmental priorities. The President's decision was taken against the advice of the EPA, NBC reported.

"Conserving energy and helping the economy seemed the main reasons President Ford postponed the target date for cleaning up the Nation's air," Irving R. Levine (NBC) reported. -- AP; UPI; Networks (6/27/75)

White House Refuses Comment on NSA Articles

The White House refused to comment Friday on a published report in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that the National Security Agency may have been listening in without permission on the telephone calls of American citizens, CBS reported.

An agency spokesman declined to comment on the report, CBS added. -- CBS (6/26/75)

✓ Ford's Spiritual Adviser is "Mod Squad" Minister

Judging from his attire, Rev. Billy Zeoli of Grand Rapids, Mich., President Ford's spiritual adviser, is a refugee from the mod squad, Steven Hill (ABC) said in a nine-minute feature report.

Zeoli explained although he and the President do not dress alike, they have many other things in common. Both are Christians, family men, and individuals who like to laugh, Zeoli said. They "hit it off as people," Zeoli said.



N-10

Asked about criticism that he "uses" the President, Zeoli said, "I consider myself a friend, a private friend, and I would like to be able to have time to be alone with him and just be able to share." -- ABC AM America (6/27/75)

Arthur Schlesinger Compared Ford to Hoover

"It is not too hard to see parallels between President Ford and Herbert Hoover," Arthur Schlesinger said Friday in an ABC interview.

"I think you have, in both cases, ... a certain lack of ability to visualize what's going on in human terms," Schlesinger said. "Both Hoover and Ford see unemployment as a lot of statistics. I think someone like Roosevelt saw it in terms of suffering...."

Asked whether President Ford sees this suffering, Schlesinger said, "I think I may do him an injustice, but if he does, he doesn't convey it..."

Ford is more responsive to good middle class people like himself, rather than the jobless workers, Schlesinger said. Since the Ford Administration decided that in order to reduce inflation unemployment must rise and will rise until 1980, the government should provide a job program, Schlesinger said. He suggested something like the W.P.A. of the New Deal. -- ABC AM America (6/27/75)

Arab-Americans Praise Ford

Leaders of an Arab-American group had words of praise and encouragement for President Ford after a brief meeting at the White House. "We're behind him 100%," Edward Howar, President of the National Association of Arab-Americans, said after the 20-minute session Thursday with the President. In a statement distributed after the meeting, the group praised Ford for his "bold and courageous steps" and "fair and even-handed approach" to problems of the Middle East. -- CBS Morning News; AP (6/27/75)



Also, the President is transmitting to the Congress the Annual Report of the National Foundation on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. There is a letter from the President and the full reports are available in the Press Office.

The President has signed a proclamation designating October 15 as White Cane Safety Day for 1975.

We also have given you the fact sheets, the letter of transmittal and the report on refugees. As you know, I mentioned to you the other day, there is a requirement in law that the President submit this report periodically and this is the first one. There will be a briefing by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Refugees at 3 o'clock in the second floor press briefing room at the State Department so they will answer your questions.

Q Ron, of course I have not read this thing here but there are reports. I have some queries about the refugees. Is it true that the policy of the United States Government is that none of these people are allowed to take office in the Federal Government?

MR. NESSEN: Sarah, I do think that it would be profitable to first of all read the report and then secondly to attend that briefing.

Q You think this is going to be covered?

MR. NESSEN: It will be if you ask it.

Q Do you expect the President to formally declare his candidacy at the press conference?

MR. NESSEN: I don't.

Q Ron, I have a question about a page 1 story in the Star on Sunday. It listed as among the private or secret visitors the Reverend Billy Zeoli. Since the Reverend Zeoli has never been one to hide his light under a bushel, I was wondering who is it that wants this concealed, and are these visits a kind of a substitute for attending church for the President?

MR. NESSEN: Reverend Zeoli is an old friend from Grand Rapids and on occasion drops in to see the President.

Q But why are his visits concealed is my question and does the President feel that this is a substitute for attending church any more?

MR. NESSEN: It is not a substitute for attending church.

MORE

#253



Q When did he last attend?

MR. NESSEN: I don't keep a record of that, Les.

Q Is there any way of finding out?

MR. NESSEN: We could review the schedule or you could review the schedule, whichever is faster.

Q The question is, why are Zeoli's visits concealed?

MR. NESSEN: I would not use the word "concealed," Les.

Q Not listed on the public list. It is the same problem we had for three or four days. Why is it a private visit instead of a public visit?

MR. NESSEN: He is a personal friend of the President's, as I say, and like other personal friends of the President drops in occasionally.

Q How often does he drop in?

MR. NESSEN: Oh, I would say in my nine months here he has probably been here twice or three times.

Q In his spiritual role does he come by?

MR. NESSEN: I think some of you know that when Mrs. Ford had her operation Reverend Zeoli did help to console the family and on other occasions his visits were not private because, as you know, the President attended, I believe, one prayer breakfast at one of the hotels at which Reverend Zeoli was one of the speakers.

Q Ron, does the President retain full confidence in William Colby as CIA Director?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Ron, is the CIA assassination material going to the Church committee or must committee members and staff come here and make notes? Has any material at all been sent to the committee?

MR. NESSEN: Well, let me say first of all that there has been no complaint from the Church committee or the staff as far as I know. There have been no complaints.

There was this weekend made available the full material on assassination. The members and staff could come in any time this weekend, that is 24 hours around the