Summer of Missions' participants travelled by caravan with R.V.s, tent trailers, cars and vans. by Joanne Holder

Pro-life activism covers California during Operation Rescue's month-long "camping trip"

by Joanne Holden

Los Angeles, CA—On June 25, pro-lifers from around the nation joined Operation Rescue for a four week camping and baby-saving tour, called the Summer of Missions. Jeff White, director of Operation Rescue of California, led pro-lifers in a caravan throughout the Golden State. This month-long pro-life activism blitz began in Southern California in San Francisco, and spanned the coast as far north as Redding and Eureka. The caravan covered over 2,500 miles and more than forty cities.

Operation Rescue set out to demonstrate to local pro-lifers that there is still much they can do to get out the truth about abortion, despite recent unconstitutional laws and rulings, such as FACE and Madson. OR accomplished this by prayerfully picketing abortion mills, abortionists' neighborhoods, and pro-abortion churches in cities throughout California. Many new laborers and veteran pro-lifers were motivated to action at rallies featuring national leaders such as Joseph Scheidler, Randall Terry, Pat Mahoney, Flip Benham and Joseph Foreman. Depending on the day of the week, fifty to sixty pro-lifers were part of the caravan, and everywhere OR went, local pro-lifers joined them on the streets.

One major victory occurred in San Jose on July 9, 1994 when Operation Rescue challenged an unconstitutional residential picketing law. The previous summer, During Operation Rescue's Cities of Refuge campaign, 31 pro-lifers were arrested for quietly picketing within a 300 foot bubble zone around an abortionists home in San Jose. Now, one year later during the Summer of Missions, OR challenged the same law by doing exactly what the 31 pro-lifers had done the year before. This year, there were no arrests.

"Because they were willing to risk arrest for their right to tell the truth about abortion, one year later we have won back our First Amendment rights in San Jose," said White. "Not only that, but OR is suing the city of San Jose for violating the constitutional rights of the pro-lifers who were arrested in 1993."

Operation Rescue is still in the business of calling the church to repentance, they said—now with an added creative twist.

On Sunday, June 26, sixty summer missionaries picketed the First Presbyterian Church in Anaheim where senior pastor Stephen Mather is also the area director for Planned Parenthood of Orange and San Bernardino Counties. A dozen pro-lifers attended the 10:30 am service, placing plastic preborn baby models and letters to Reverend Mather into the offering plate. Knowing that OR was coming to town, the Anaheim Police Department was out in full force, set up to process arrests even though the activities OR engaged in were legal.

During his sermon, Mather thanked board members from Planned Parenthood who were there to show support for him. He spoke of how the Pharisees rejected Christ, alluding to parallels between himself and Christ and the pro-lifers as Pharisees.

After the service, picketers handed pro-life literature to members of the congregation and had opportunities to talk with them. One pro-lifer was escorted by police off church property when he began speaking to Mather, warning him that he was leading his church into apostasy.

On Sunday, July 3, OR's caravan joined Santa Barbara pro-lifers in picketing at the First Presbyterian Church. Abortionist Fritz Bradley is an elder there and serves communion with the same hands with which he kills children. Outside at the steps of the church, Jeff White read from God's Word and preached to the largely unhearing congregation inside. As parishioners exited the church, he pleaded with them not to receive the body of Christ in communion from the hands of this child-killer, begging them to confront the sin in their midst.

The classic rescue tactic of blocking doors to save children was not utilized during the Summer of Missions in an effort to encourage pro-lifers who have become fearful since FACE.

"Those sidewalk counselors who have retreated to their homes need to know that they can and must continue their vital work." said White, "We prayed, picketed, chanted, sidewalk counseled and sang praises to God. We took full advantage of our right to free speech and everywhere we went, we encouraged other pro-lifers to do the same."

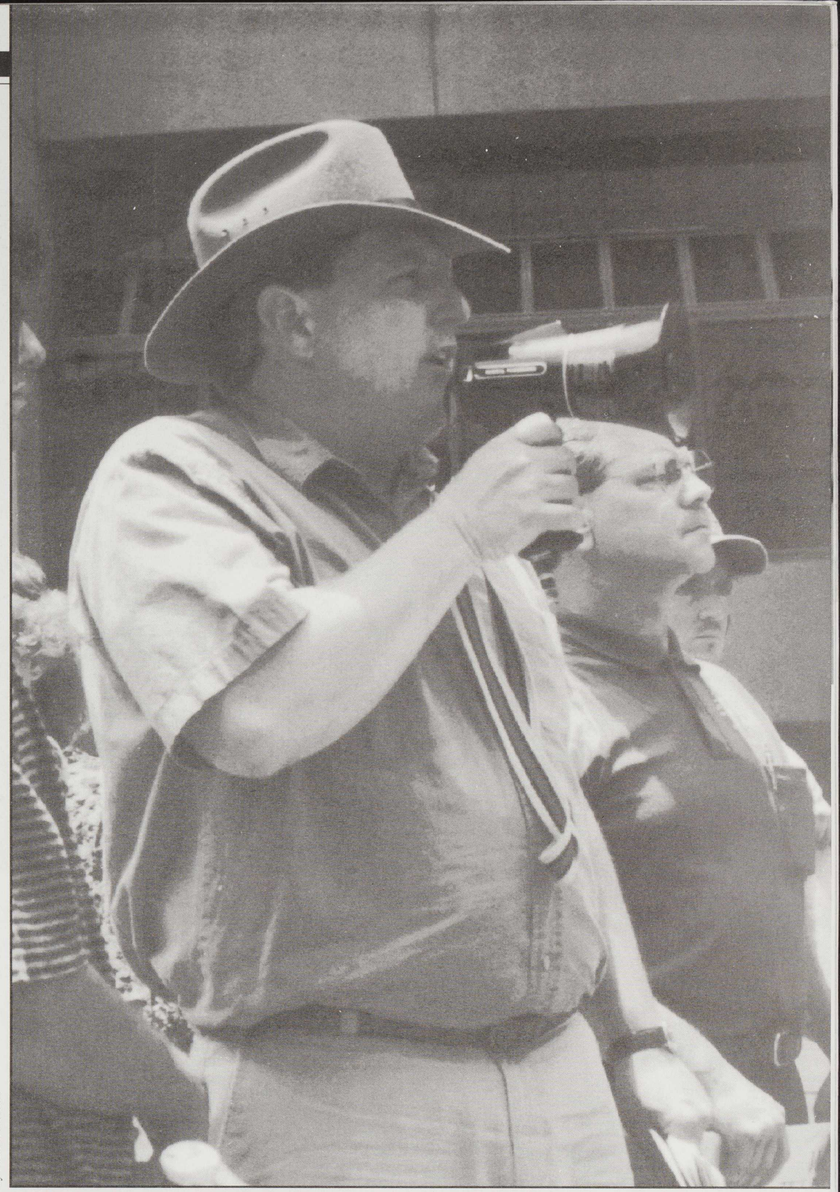
Wherever the Summer of Missions caravan stopped, picketers confronted misconceptions about what demonstrating activities are still legal. Rescuers arrived in Greenfield, California on July 7, only to be met by the Chief of Police himself threatening arrest if picketers stepped inside the fluorescent orange spray painted marks on the sidewalk, demarcating a 36 foot bubble zone. The Chief said he was only enforcing the "new federal law." During a stormy confrontation Jeff White informed the Chief about the specifics of the Madson ruling, explaining it only applied to one abortion mill in Florida and there was no such bubble zone at Greenfield's Planned Parenthood. Just as arrests seemed imminent, the Chief of Police relented. The pro-lifers freely picketed.

On Monday, July 11, eight adults and three minors were arrested while picketing outside of Planned Parenthood in Vallejo. They were charged with violating an injunction despite the fact that the injunction did not apply to them. Planned Parenthood lied to the California Supreme Court saying that the injunction only applied to specific named Vallejo activists, yet used the injunction to have the picketers arrested. This was the second time Operation Rescue challenged this unjust application of the injunction. Early in the summer, Jeff White and another pro-lifer were arrested there under the same circumstances. Later, the charges were dropped.

This time, a sergeant with the Vallejo Police Department and the City Attorney asserted that the injunction's wording "acting in concert with" means "doing the same thing as." Jeff White maintained the picketers were not acting in concert with the named parties and that their interpretation of "acting in concert" was not legally valid. The eleven rescues were cited and released the day of the arrest. Now Operation Rescue is suing Planned Parenthood of Vallejo for civil rights violations. OR is persistently pursuing their right to picket in Vallejo.

One baby rescued during the Summer of Missions was saved outside of the Pregnancy Control Medical Clinic in Stockton, California. The grandmother of the child about to be killed had tried to talk the mother, Lydia, out of aborting her grandchild, but when she saw Lydia was determined to go through with the abortion, she resigned herself to driving Lydia to the death center.

When they arrived at the clinic, pro-abortion zealots lined the driveway, attempting to block OR's sidewalk counselors from distributing pro-life literature. Rescuers prayed and picketed on either side of the driveway. When the grandmother saw the blocked entrance to the parking lot, she refused to drive past the pro-abortion demonstrators. When Lydia was afraid to go through alone, side-



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Jeff White, director of Operation Rescue California, kicks off the summer of Missions in front of the San Diego court house.