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EVANGELICAL GROUP STIRS CONTROVERSY

By George Vecsey

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STONY BROOK, LI., June 9—They serve bagels and cream cheese to visitors. Many of their names are Jewish sounding. They dance the Nora during religious services, and many wear the Star of David.

B'nai Yeshua Opens Meeting on L.I. Amid Protests Concerning Its Proselyting of Jewish Youth

Soecial to The New York Times

They are also a goad to many Jews in their community, because they call themselves B'nai Yeshua—Hebrew for “Sons of Jesus.”

This small, intense and controversial group began its annual conference last night. Ruth Carter Stapleton, the President's sister, who had been scheduled to be the keynote speaker, dropped out because of criticism of B'nai Yeshua. And members of the militant Jewish Defense League briefly interrupted the first meeting.

But even in the face of criticism and hostility, B'nai Yeshu members said they would continue to witness their newfound faith.

“We see our fellow Jews as living in a burning house,” said Fred Neuer, a staff member. “If you saw that wouldn't you tell them there is a safe house across the street?”

‘We Don't Have Rock Parties’

Officials of several Jewish and Christian groups have criticized B'nai Yeshua *members* for their zeal and tactics of evangelizing. But B'nai Yeshua members insist they have a religious responsibility and a legal right to preach their faith.

Mike Evans, the leader of B'nai Yeshua. said: “I've read we use rock music and parties and don't identify our group. But you can't go 20 feet onto our property' without seeing a sign that we are Jews who accepted the Messiah. We dog t have rock parties. We're very strict here.”

Mr. Evans, who claims he has JeWirzil ancestry, formed B'nai Yeshua in 1972 in Texas. He says the organization has 3,000 members spread around the United States, and 50 staff members here. The group is believed to be financed by wealthy evangelicals from the Southwest. In 1976, he moved the group to a former girls' boarding school on Long Island, which has one of the largest Jewish populations in the world.

'Real Threat Is Ignorance'

Mr. Evans said, "We take offense 'at being called 'ex-Jews.'"

The conference began last night with Hebrew songs, bearded men dancing in the aisles and people waving both hands in the air, an evangelical gesture of blessing.

Meanwhile, the police permitted a picket line at the main entrance by 25 college-age people. Yisroel Neuberger 01 North Woodmere, L.I., from the Jewish activist group Hineni, said: "The real

- threat to Jews is not these people, but Jewish ignorance."

Some Jewish leaders, conceding that Jewish young people with week religious training join various cults at a disproportionately high rate, are upgrading their educational efforts.

Demonstrators Seize Stage

Last night's service was quiet until the substitute keynote speaker, Jamie Buck-

ingham, a noted evangelical figure, spoke about the "enemies of Christianity."

Twenty demonstrators released live mice on the floor and then seized the stage, chanting: "Never again"—the motto of the Jewish Defense League—and "Not one Jewish soul."

There was no violence, as B'nai Yeshua people linked arms, danced the Nora 'n place and sang Hebrew hymns. Finally, as police officers edged in, Mr. Evans, agreed to give the demonstrators five minutes to present their case.

The leader of the demonstrations, Howard Barbanel, using terms such as

“so-called Jews” and “house of iniquity,” said: “This is just the beginning. You may be allowed to sweat bullets. The long arm of the Jewish Defense League will reach out to you.”

Later, Mr. Barbanel denied making “any threats.” After leaving the hall voluntarily, he and three colleagues refused to leave the grounds and were arrested for trespassing.