

# ***Going Through... Even if the Door is Closed***

by Bill Bathman

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*Cover photograph: Checkpoint Charlie, 1961 (A main crossing point in the divided city of Berlin)*

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**Iron Curtain Countries, 1946** (map courtesy of the book *Cold War*)

## Acknowledgements

Most of my journeys to Eastern Europe since 1961 have been by automobile. This enabled me to take more supplies to the Christians living there than would have been possible had I travelled by train or plane. It has also meant that I could take with me some very choice, active and concerned Christian leaders from the West and put them in touch with some very precious saints in the East.

Along the way the car became a classroom of sorts. I shared with my special passengers the historical, cultural, spiritual and political background of each country we visited. As I recounted blessings and experiences from previous years some of my guests were kind enough to suggest that I write a book.

After traveling with me through Poland, Hungary and Romania, Bob Evers, Chairman of the ITMI Board and whom I had known from university days, was adamant: "You must write a book." He left no wiggle room, plus he's my "boss." Bob took a tape recorder and began recording some of my 'war stories.' Judy Duncan transcribed the tapes. That was the beginning.

In 1995 the ITMI Board of Directors commissioned this book. Since that time I have had non-stop encouragement from the ITMI team and many others. Harriett, my wife of 48 years, has been a tremendous help, even taking on some of my administrative responsibilities to free me up for writing.

One of the hardest parts of writing a book like this is knowing when to stop. Three years after beginning the manuscript I was still working on our East European experiences. Peter Hammond, my son-in-law, himself a prolific writer, had the perfect solution. “Why don’t you conclude with the coming down of the Berlin Wall and save the Africa and India parts for a sequel?” Suddenly I could see ‘light at the end of the tunnel.’ Peter also provided invaluable counsel as to content and has proofread the manuscript.

Miriam Cain read the composition while on furlough in Colorado. Her textual critic was a tremendous help. Others to whom I am grateful for their efforts in proofreading include my daughter Lenora, Rob Zins and Glendon McGill. Special thanks to Fred Moore for the many hours he spent completing the book and to Charles Boyle for the cover design.

## Dedication

To 20th Century Christian Martyrs *“of whom the world was not worthy . . .”* (Hebrews 11:38) Our Brothers and Sisters in Christ who, having counted the cost and weighed the risks, despised not the criticism of unbelievers, the scorn of atheists, the misunderstanding by friends, the imposition of their chains; who refused to compromise or to simply “play church,” and demonstrated by their sacrificial lives that Jesus Christ is risen indeed.

***“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”*** 2 Corinthians 4:7-10

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## Testimonials

Over the years I have been blessed and encouraged by the many Pastors and Christian leaders who cared enough for their persecuted Brothers and Sisters in Christ to travel with me to Eastern Europe and minister to their needs, both physically and spiritually. Several have written a brief note about their experiences.

“To travel with Bill Bathman was an experience, an adventure, danger, intrigue and spiritual ministry all tied into one. He knew no fear, he walked into the lion’s den like Daniel, trusting God. Bill and Harriett will live long in my memory as a couple who were committed to sharing the only Good News that really matters - Jesus Christ and His love for a lost world. You’re in for a great adventure in reading this book.”

**Rev. Guy A. Davidson**, Pastor, Arizona Community Church, Tempe, Arizona

“Bill invited me to accompany him to Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, well before the violent collapse of communism, and my encounter with God’s people in Romania was mine-bending, soul-shaking, and life-changing - in just a few days. You are holding in your hand a treasure of the Twentieth Century, a chronicle of decades of Book-of-Acts-like experiences in the life of a singularly dedicated man of God.”

**Dr. Gary D. Kinnaman**, Pastor and author. Word of Grace Church, Mesa, Arizona

“There have been few experiences that have affected my life as much as the trips that I have taken with Bill Bathman into Eastern Europe during the days of communist control. I saw doors, that I thought were closed to the Gospel, crack open. I had fellowship with believers who had to count the cost of following Christ. I experienced the marvelous

hand of the Lord in protection, guidance and blessing as I travelled into those Eastern Europe countries. My life has never been the same since those trips.”

**Dr. Don Engram**, Pastor, Palmcroft Baptist Church, Phoenix, Arizona

“Bill and Harriett Bathman are people that God has quickly used. Their stories about what happened behind closed doors gives us both a deep appreciation for the way God did the “impossible” for them and encourages us to trust God even if it seems to us the door is closed.”

**Dr. Larry Finch**, Senior Pastor, Grace Community Church, Tempe, Arizona

“I have known Bill and Harriett Bathman for over 40 years. It has been my privilege to accompany Bill in ten countries and to drive over 1,000 miles into the Communist world in the late 70s, when its iron grip was at its tightest. I have been with him when delivering money, medicine, medical equipment and visiting persecuted believers. I know Bill to be a man of integrity, compassion and one who, in the ultimate sense of the term, has lived his life to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ. You will be blessed by this book.”

**Dr. William T. (Bill) Monroe**, Pastor, Florence Baptist Temple, Florence, SC

“To accompany Bill Bathman on trips into Eastern Europe is without question one of the greatest highlights of my life. Now you have the opportunity to “travel” with Bill as he highlights God’s story over the past five decades. You’ll catch his passion to serve Christ, “Even if the Door is Closed.”

**Rev. Donald B. Miller**, Senior Pastor, Westover Church, Greensboro, NC

“I travelled with Bill Bathman into the Eastern bloc countries to visit the persecuted church in the spring of 1981. My life as a pastor was radically changed by that brief visit. I came back home and gave myself to the task of equipping the body of Christ.”

**Dr. Darrell L. Farney**, Faith Evangelical Free Church, Milford, Ohio

“I’ve travelled thousands of miles by car with Bill Bathman in Eastern Europe and I have felt like Timothy did with Paul. The experience has radically changed my life and my vision for the mission field.”

**Don Christensen**, National partner with Ron Blue & Co.

## **Foreword**

*by Peter Hammond*

***Going Through*** takes you on an exciting adventure of missionary exploits in Europe during the dramatic events of the Cold War.

In this superficial age of short term religious tourism, ***Going Through*** comes as an invigorating tonic - showing what real missions are all about. Bill and Harriett Bathman have clearly demonstrated what wholehearted, lifelong commitment is all about. While this adventure of discipleship begins with a Summer outreach - it doesn't stop there. For almost 50 years the Bathmans have given everything they have into the cause of evangelism, and serving the persecuted church. They immersed themselves in the lives of the people amongst whom they had been called to serve. They were 22 years into their ministry in Europe before they took their first furlough. They show us what it means to "*endure hardship*," "*stand firm to the end*" and "*persevere under trial*."

In missions, obstacles abound. Disappointments, dangers, difficulties and discouragements are occupational hazards of cross cultural missions. Missionaries need to know that they're called of God and they need to persevere in that call - willingly enduring hardships, discomfort, opposition and worse. As ***Going Through*** so powerfully illustrates: **Sacrificial service is more eloquent than many sermons.**

When I've been privileged to accompany my Father-in-law, Rev. Bill Bathman, on ministry trips to Eastern Europe (both before and after the walls came down) - I've been struck by how much the people there love him. In Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania, it was inspiring to see with what overwhelming joy he was welcomed by the pastors, and to see the sea of devoted, shining faces of the members of each congregation as they stood or sat in rapt attention, riveted and hanging on every word of their beloved "Brother Bill."

Time and again, the precious believers in Eastern Europe eagerly related to me how Bill Bathman had been the first Christian from the West to visit them, how he had visited them the most, stayed the longest, given the

most, and had come back again and again. And he came through when their need was the greatest, during the darkest years, when it was the most dangerous, when few others seemed to care or to dare - Bill Bathman was there for them.

Bill Bathman is a world class preacher, but you could never compare his preaching in the West with the incredibly anointed ministry God poured through him in Eastern Europe. Leaders in Romania attributed the outbreak of revival in Romania to God's gracious working through Bill Bathman during a particularly powerful series of sermons delivered in January 1983 for a special crusade in Oradea.

It often seems that modern missionary volunteers just want to dabble in missions - for the experience. ***Going Through*** presents an inspiring example of dedicated discipleship and serious service, not splashing in the shallows - but delving into the deep. Spiritually speaking, missions need long-distance marathon runners - not short distance sprinters.

***"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."*** Hebrews 12:1



This book also demonstrates the importance of training. Too many volunteers for missions seem to want to take the short cut, bypassing training. Bill Bathman relates the importance both of formal theological training at college and apprenticeship under an experienced evangelist in the field. Even more important, ***Going Through*** emphasises the vital necessity of asking lots of questions, listening to and learning from the people to whom you're sent to minister. Most important of all how we need to be sensitive to the Lord's leading.

***"He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way."*** Psalm 25:9

***"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying "This is the way; walk in it."*** Isaiah 30:21

What also impressed me from this book is the vital importance of ongoing "*prayer without ceasing.*" As the incredible true stories recounted in this book confirm: God does answer prayer! We serve an all powerful God! God guides. God protects. And God provides. Miracles happen - when one prayerfully steps out in faith and obedience to the Great Commission.

***"I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them."*** Isaiah 42:16

So, don't be satisfied with being a spectator. Do you really want to get to the end of your life and talk about what you could have done, and what you would have done, and what you should have done, but what you actually never did?

As Theodore Roosevelt challenged us:

"It is not the critic who counts -

**Nor** the man who points out how the strong man stumbled;

**Nor** where the doer of deeds could have done better:

The credit belongs to the man -

**Who** is actually in the arena;

**Whose** face is marred by dust and sweat and blood;

**Who** strives valiantly;

**Who** errs and comes short again and again;

**Who** knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions and spends himself in a worthy cause;

**Who** at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement and:

**Who** at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while doing greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat!"

No excuses. Get informed. Get interceding. And get involved.

Dr. Peter Hammond

Director, Frontline Fellowship

Cape Town, 5 April 1999

## Introduction

This is a book that had to be written. I had to tell the story. It's not about me, although much of it is written in the first person. It is about God. *"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever."* (Romans 11:36) In short, I want this book to bring honor to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In light of the truth in verse 36, the Apostle Paul immediately goes on to urge the Christians at Rome to ". . . present ('offer' NIV) your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1)

This book is a collection of stories spanning half a century of preaching the Gospel and 48 years of missionary work, much of which (during the Cold War) was in communist and other restricted-access countries.

### **The four-fold purpose of the book is to portray:**

#### **(1) His POSITIVE guidance.**

The great Creator of heaven and earth is concerned about the way we take.

#### **(2) His PERFECT timing.**

Things don't just "happen" by chance or coincidence. There is a Divine plan.

#### **(3) His PROVISION for every need.**

"Do you mean to tell me that an Almighty, all powerful God is concerned with what I eat, what I wear, by what means I travel and where I sleep?" **Yes!**

#### **(4) His PROTECTION in times of danger.**

Each of the stories will, I hope, serve to illustrate one or more of the above truths about our wonderful Lord and Savior, and to give thanks for His mercy and grace.

***“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.”*** Revelation 5:12

## **Part I**

### **The Right Place at the Right Time**

***“Where He leads me, I will follow”***

Czechoslovakia August 21, 1968

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#### **1**

### **Guns in the Garden**

Our room on the fifth floor was dark, but the window was open. It was late August and we needed some relief from the heat. Most rooms in Prague were dark that night unless you wanted a bullet through the window. A curfew was in effect from 10 p.m. and no one wanted to deliberately aggravate the Soviet occupation forces.

The streets were deserted, except for the Warsaw Pact troops on patrol. Occasional, sporadic gunfire punctuated the silence of the night. Tracer bullets carved up the darkness as Russian soldiers fired their automatic Kalashnikovs (AK-47s) into the air in short, staccato bursts of three to five rounds.

My thoughts went back to three months earlier, in May 1968, as Russian troops massed along the Polish-Czech border for Warsaw Pact maneuvers. At that time our team was a couple of miles away in the picturesque little mountain town of Jablonec. There, a Christian orchestra made up of several families from the local church gave us a special concert.

It was on that trip throughout Czechoslovakia that we realized the extent to which the liberalization, under Alexander Dubcek, had affected the daily lives of Christians. Many believers who had been in prison for their faith had been released. New churches had been opened. Normal precautions could safely be dispensed with, such as parking half a mile away and walking to secret meetings in the believers' homes. Indeed, the pastor in Jablonec told us, “Park right in front of the church. When people see the foreign car,” he reasoned, “they may, out of curiosity, come inside and thereby hear the Gospel.”

We called our team the PIONEERS. The principal focus of this ministry was evangelism in communist countries and to serve persecuted Christians in Eastern Europe. We were an Anglo-American team: Brian and Gwynne Bounds, the musical part of the team, were from Birmingham, England. Their daughter, Wendy, was almost four years old at the time of Russia's invasion. Brian's beautiful tenor voice was complimented by Gwynne's skillful accompaniment on the piano. Their recordings made top of the charts in Britain's Christian music industry.

Certainly the meetings in Czechoslovakia during the "Prague Spring" were no secret. In Brno the pastor placed a sandwich board outside the church advertising the meetings and all afternoon one of our records blared over a loudspeaker.

We participated in a weekend youth conference in Ashe, which attracted approximately 300 young people from all over Bohemia. In addition to large public meetings conducted in a spacious neutral hall, we held open air meetings in a barren strip of no-man's land along the border.

We could see the Czech border guards in the towers watching us through their binoculars. After a while, two guards carrying automatic rifles over their shoulders and with patrol dogs at their sides, left the towers and came down to listen from the edge of the crowd to what we were saying. No attempt whatsoever was made to stop us from preaching.

The springtime of liberalization gave way to summer. By now we were making regular trips, taking Bibles and preaching the Word in an ever-widening circle. Though excited with the taste of new freedom, Czech Christians felt a sense of urgency in their witness. They knew that the sudden freedom they had enjoyed so briefly could, just as suddenly, be taken away.

Then, shortly before midnight on Tuesday August 20th, a Soviet military jet, posing as a passenger airliner, requested permission for an emergency landing at Prague's international airport. The passengers were the elite paramilitary units of the KGB, the Soviet Secret Police, whose mission was to secure the capital's airfield, railroad stations, cable office and broadcast centers. Before long, giant Tupelov transports began landing at one minute intervals disgorging tanks, and armored personnel carriers.

By sunrise on August 21st, a quarter of a million troops from five neighbor nations had taken the country in one of the swiftest military operations in history. Within a week the number had doubled to half a million troops, whose presence confirmed Soviet Russia's intention of ending Alexander Dubcek's eight month old experiment to humanize communism.

One week before the invasion we had been on a mission trip to Czechoslovakia with a visiting pastor from America. Our next scheduled trip behind the Iron Curtain, from our Austrian base, was to Hungary. At daybreak on August 21st our car was already loaded with Hungarian Bibles. The seven o'clock news that morning changed everything.

My radio was tuned to AFN (Armed Forces Network) the broadcast media serving American military personnel stationed in West Germany. "The Soviet Union and four of its allies invaded and overran Czechoslovakia during the night." The sombre voice of the announcer continued, "Street fighting reportedly has broken out in Prague. The official Czech news agency, CTK, says 'Prague citizens are trying to stop Soviet tanks with their bodies.' Prague Radio says shooting is being heard in front of its studios. An announcer said, 'The final end is near.' Tanks and troops of the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, East Germany and Bulgaria poured into Czechoslovakia shortly before midnight."

I switched to Radio Vienna and heard, "The Austrian Interior Ministry says, 'Travel to Czechoslovakia from the West has been barred.' The Ministry says, 'Travel to Hungary from Austria also has been stopped.'" I called Dave Foster, Director of EuroVangelism in Switzerland, who traveled with me on my first trip behind the Iron Curtain, but he was on another assignment. I phoned my long time friend, Anné van der Bijl (Brother Andrew) in Holland and told him we were leaving within an hour. He said, "I'll meet you in Prague." I didn't ask "how?"

By the time we finished breakfast Radio Vienna's announcer reported, "An official of the Ministry says that tanks are blocking the bridge at Bratislava."

If your neighbor's house is on fire, you don't settle back and watch TV. You do all you can to help. We reloaded with Czech and Russian Bibles and prepared to leave immediately from our mission base in Salzburg, Austria for the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. On the way we heard this news from the BBC by our short-wave radio: "Czechoslovakia's borders have been sealed in many areas by Soviet forces; travel to and from the West has been halted."

Now we were in a marvelous position. As far as man was concerned, equipped only with human resources, we faced an impossible situation. Troops from five nations had committed armed aggression against our neighbor to the north; tanks were in the streets, heavy artillery in the suburbs and fighter aircraft overhead. Did we really have our signals straight? Was God really telling us to "Go?"

Down through the ages God's people have faced countless impossible situations. Each one has been an opportunity to prove that "with God, all things are possible." This was no exception.

With all the Austrian/Czech borders sealed, we detoured about 300 kilometers (187 miles) through West Germany to the little Bavarian village of Waidhaus, a small frontier post not yet occupied by the Russians. By the time we arrived everything was closed for the night.

The Czech officer was polite, but firm. "It's impossible tonight," he said. Then seeing our obvious disappointment added, "but you can try again tomorrow morning." We found out later that anything moving during the night was shot at on Czech roads.

We spent the night in the Gasthaus Weisses Kreuz, a small hotel just down the road from the frontier. It was already full when we arrived, but when the plump German frau behind the bar saw Wendy asleep in her Daddy's arms, she managed to find two beds free in a three-bed room. Imagine our surprise to find an elderly man already sound asleep and snoring. We've often wondered what he must have thought when he awakened to find four more people in the room!

Early the next morning we presented ourselves again at the border. The West German authorities said we wouldn't be able to get through. We could see, across the no-man's land, cars rented from Hertz and Avis by various Western news agencies - AP and UPI - with the correspondents and cameramen waiting patiently for permission to enter.

"We'd like to try, sir, if you don't mind," I said.

The officer nodded to the soldier standing at the red and white steel pole blocking the road. Slowly he raised the "peppermint" barrier. We drove the quarter mile to the Czech frontier and pulled alongside the waiting journalists.

Brian and I got out of the car, walked inside the office, put our passports on the table and requested a "tourist" visa.

The Russians had not reached this border crossing yet. The senior officer was a Czech major. He was understandably exhausted from the ordeal his country was experiencing and it appeared as though he hadn't slept for hours. He looked at us in disbelief. "Don't you know what is happening to our country?" he asked incredulously.

"We understand that Goliath has come to your country," I responded, "and we're on the side of David."

Tears welled up in his eyes as he remembered the familiar Bible story from his childhood. "But, aren't you afraid to visit our country at this time?" he asked. "We have many friends here," Brian replied. "We're not afraid to be with our friends." Those indoctrinated with materialism find it hard to believe that *perfect love casteth out fear*.

With that he reached under the counter and pulled out the visa forms. We completed all the necessary formalities and in just under an hour we were on our way - rejoicing! We had seen the Lord work a miracle.

The waiting correspondents and cameramen looked on in amazement. "How'd you do that?" one man asked.

"It all depends on Who you know," I replied, with a one-way finger pointing toward heaven.

The Czechoslovakia we were now in was completely different from the one we had known before. Forty-eight hours of occupation had changed the face of the country, disillusioned the citizenry and welded the nation together as one man. No longer did

they regard themselves as Czechs or Slovaks, but as Czechoslovakians. Yesterday, their “enemy” was the West. Today, their “friends” had stabbed them in the back.

Everywhere you looked there were slogans: written on the walls, gates of factories, even on the streets. All proclaimed loyalty to Party leader Alexander Dubcek and President Ludwig Svoboda. Navigation was a nightmare. All road signs had been taken down or painted over. Even street names and house numbers had disappeared. In the apartment buildings family names were removed from the doors, making it virtually impossible for the Soviet Secret Police to track down members of the Government, writers, intellectuals and others undesirable to a totalitarian form of administration.

Against the background of Soviet tanks, people signed protests calling for the removal of all foreign troops. Every Czech seemed to want to register a complaint in any way possible against the presence of their unwanted and uninvited “guests.” Writing slogans on walls in graffiti form seemed to be the logical outlet and often revealed a keen sense of humor. “Lenin wake up, Brezhnev has gone mad” was one of the most popular. The Russian Circus, a traditional form of outstanding entertainment, had been in Prague earlier that summer. Soon slogans appeared everywhere saying, “The Russian Circus is again in Prague. Please do not feed or annoy the animals!”

On a wall outside the Prague Maternity Hospital, “Leonid [Brezhnev], send 10 more tanks - 20 counter-revolutionaries arrived today!” This one was frequently seen: “1938-1968” a reference to Hitler’s invasion thirty years before. And, of course, “Russian, GO HOME!” written in several languages. A hand-drawn poster showed a Russian soldier, holding a magnifying glass looking under a rock: the caption read, “Searching for counter-revolutionaries.”

For years, the Russians had assured the Czechs that they were Slavic and socialist brothers. That made the following slogan, painted on the wall along a main street, even more revealing: “Cain and Abel were also brothers.” After all the years of atheistic teaching they still remembered their Bible stories.

The Soviet tanks hit town at 35 miles per hour. While that may not seem fast in relation to the velocity of your morning commute, it’s an awesome speed for a heavily armored combat vehicle designed for destruction. We parked our car on the sidewalk rather than at the curb because many vehicles were mangled or had their sides sheared off as the tanks rumbled through the narrow streets.

Although the street signs in Prague had been taken down and house numbers removed, we found our way to Chorvatska, Number 12 and climbed the 102 steps to the fifth floor apartment of Pastor Milos Solc. His wife, Bohumila, opened the door. They could hardly believe their eyes. They hugged us and kissed us and wept openly for joy to know that we’d cared enough to come.

The Solc’s fifth floor apartment became our base of operations for the next few days. Milos had contacts all over Prague and across the country. He had managed to stay out

of prison because he had never compromised with the authorities. (Later I will describe three kinds of pastors, only one of which can stay out of jail.)

The invasion caught us completely unprepared. During the previous two years we had taken in hundreds of Bibles and New Testaments, but only a handful of tracts. When we saw Wenceslas Square, packed with scores of thousands of people and saw how eagerly they grabbed anything they could get their hands on to read, we rebuked ourselves for a lack of faith in not bringing in more `ammunition.'

Milos was able to get a couple thousand Gospel leaflets printed on a hand duplicator. By pre-arrangement we met up with Brother Andrew in Prague. He had a large quantity of tracts with him. We all stood together in front of the Bohemian National Museum, near the statue of King Wenceslas, distributing the precious pamphlets and watched our meager supply vanish like a drop of water on a hot stove. As we gave out the literature my eye spotted an old familiar sight that brought back a flood of memories. At the top of Wenceslas Square, on the left-hand side (if you're facing the Bohemian National Museum) is the Azfoto Agfa No. 53, a camera shop located at 815 Nové Mesto, Praha 1. Because of the favorable rate of exchange between American dollars and Czech Koruna, I could buy film from the West cheaper in Czechoslovakia than in Austria.

Many months before the invasion I had gone into this little shop to see if they had any of the brand I wanted. On that occasion I had waited until an appropriate opportunity came when there were no other customers in the room and then asked the manager if he had any film.

"No," he replied tersely.

"Oh, that's a shame," I said. "I'm a visitor to your country and I would like to take some pictures of the beautiful churches in Prague, the historic places of Bohemian culture, the rich green forests of Moravia and the High Tatra Mountains of Slovakia."

We had been speaking in German and by this time he realized that I was not a German. "Are you an American?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied.

Then, looking around to be certain no one else would hear his question, he asked, "Are you a communist?"

"Certainly not!" I responded sternly.

His eyes appraised me carefully while a wry smile crept across his face. "How many rolls of film would you like?" he inquired. I asked for five, which would last me about a month, whereupon he disappeared behind a curtain and emerged a moment later with the required number.

We became good friends. On subsequent trips to Czechoslovakia, I visited the little shop each time I was in Prague. Over the next few months I purchased a Flexoret, the



Czech made camera very similar to the German Rolleiflex, a wide-angle lens for my 35mm Minolta, assorted filters and other accessories.

On one visit, about a year later, a question suddenly occurred to me. "You know I've been coming into your shop about once a month each time I visit Prague," I reminded him. "Is there something you might appreciate that I could bring you from the West?"

His response was instantaneous. "Yes!" he blurted, as though he'd been waiting ages for me to ask. I wondered what on earth I'd let myself in for. What could he want so earnestly that he felt I alone could supply?

A lot of possibilities raced through my mind, but nothing could have prepared me for his request.

"The next time you come to Prague," he implored, "would you bring me," he paused a thoughtful moment and then continued, ". . . an American flag?"

I reflected on this experience as I stood shoulder to shoulder with Milos and Brother Andrew giving out Christian literature in Wenceslas Square during those fateful August days as Russian tanks blocked all the side streets.

Seeing four tanks on every corner was more emotional than frightening. Our Czech friends had been violated. The presence of Warsaw Pact troops and armor confirmed Soviet Russia's intention to end Alexander Dubcek's experiment in giving communism a human face. Milos could sense my grief.

"It's alright Brother Bill," he said. "God has sent these men to us."

"What on earth do you mean, Milos?" I protested.

"Years ago the Lord opened the door between our countries so that we could freely go into the Soviet Union," he explained. "We could have taken the Gospel to them then. We thought that situation would last forever. We did not take advantage of our opportunity. Then the door closed and the opportunity was lost. Now - just look," he exclaimed, "the Lord has brought them to us and we are giving them the Word of God."

Czechs are both inventive and ingenious. The resistance took on many forms with the most crucial role being played by the radio and television service. As Russian tanks rumbled through the cobbled streets of Vinohradska toward the Prague Radio building, transportation workers parked big city buses across the street and at intersections, as a barricade against the behemoths. The tanks simply lowered their guns and blasted away, setting fire to the bus, then drove over the smoldering wreckage. However, the obstruction worked as a delaying tactic.

During the twenty-five minute holdup the television workers and crew were able to remove much of the equipment. A truck, with outside telecast and radio equipment normally used to cover football games, was parked behind the broadcast center. As the Russians came in the front door, producer Mirek Lang and reporter Jiri Kanturek left by

the back door along with a volunteer crew of technicians. They drove the truck through the back streets of Prague to a forest on the outskirts of the city. They remained, hidden in the forest, until darkness had settled over the "City of a hundred spires." Then they made their way back through the narrow, winding streets to a half-finished, twelve story apartment building on Na Petrinach Street in the suburb of Petriny. They set up their studio in the kitchen of an unfinished apartment on the twelfth floor. Windows were blocked with tar-paper so that no one could see that the lights were on inside. Czech Army signal technicians arrived and mounted the parabolic antenna (from the outside broadcast truck) on the roof.

There is an ancient rite in northern and central Europe known as "topping out." When a building is nearing completion, but not yet occupied, the builders put a tree, usually a cedar, on the roof. The evil spirits are supposed to think that the building is already occupied and will not enter it themselves. Fortunately the builders of the apartment on Na Petrinach had chosen quite a large tree for this occasion. It adequately concealed all the wires and parabolic antenna which was then beamed toward the small village of Bukova, fifty miles (80 km) away.

Bukova is the location for Pilsen's local television transmitter. From here the signal entered the national grid by a microwave link and was broadcast across the country.

The Russians did not know how (or if) the signal was coming from Prague, and had no idea how it was being fed into the national grid. By the second week of occupation they were reduced to systematically visiting every television transmitter in a vain effort to find the source of the mysterious broadcasts.

Clandestine radio was technologically less spectacular, but just as important in uniting Czechoslovak resistance. Some communication gear had been removed from the main Prague studio before the Russian troops took over, but the majority of mobile transmitting equipment was supplied by the Czech Army.

In a small country like Czechoslovakia, everyone knows everyone in his or her professional field. Many radio people had served in the army, so cooperation between civilian and military specialists was quickly and easily arranged.

They used the same wavelengths and called themselves by the same name as the regular Czech broadcasting system: Radio Prague, Czechoslovakia One, North Bohemia, and so on. Although the announcers did not identify themselves by name their voices were familiar to every Czech. There was no question of authenticity. To protect the personnel all programs were taped in remote areas and then taken in cars or on bicycles by volunteer groups of students and Boy Scouts (a new organization introduced in January '68 by the Dubcek administration).

Passive resistance was organized by these clandestine broadcasts. At an appointed hour sirens wailed, car horns blared, bells tolled, people shouted and clanged pots and pans. This noise went on for several minutes. Then, silence: all traffic stopped. Pedestrians stood still. No one moved or made a sound. An eerie silence fell over the

entire metropolitan area. This psychological tactic spooked many of the young Russian soldiers who just didn't know what was going on.

It was the radio stations that united the Czechs in defiance at this troubled time. Licence plate numbers of cars belonging to the Secret Police were broadcast so that people would be warned on arrival. Many such cars were destroyed.

When it was learned that a Russian freight train - engine number 5599 - loaded with radio and television tracking equipment was on its way to Prague, the clandestine radio station in Olomouc began its transmission: "Here is a report that will mainly concern railwaymen." The word went out about the train and the obvious intention of the invaders to track down and silence the broadcasts. "It stands to reason," the announcer said, "that the longer the train takes the better."

The stations appeals became more urgent as the day continued. "Railwaymen, and all of you who are listening - stop that train." Every few miles ahead, along the track, rails were loosened and removed. By evening the train was stuck in Kraslikov, having made less than twenty miles that day. The spontaneous resistance among the people both delayed and annoyed the invaders.

It took the train ten days to go less than 100 miles. Eventually, the frustrated Russians brought in a heavy lift helicopter, off-loaded the equipment and moved it by air to Prague. Shortly afterwards the broadcasts stopped.

Czech resistance was mostly passive. They knew there was no chance of repulsing such an overwhelming military force. Dubcek had been taken to Moscow in handcuffs. There he was told by Russia's Lenoird Brezhnev that the alternatives were drastic if he refused to accept the Kremlin's terms. "We will do anything to protect our system," the Soviet leader informed him, "even if it means destroying the 14 million inhabitants of Czechoslovakia." First Party Secretary Alexander Dubcek did not need reminding that the Soviet Union had killed many more than 14 million of its own citizens to "protect the system," and what would it matter if there were a few more cancelled Czechs? "We will split your country," Brezhnev threatened, "and absorb Slovakia into the Soviet Union" - an idea first proposed by Stalin in 1946. "Czech and Slovak lands will be completely repopulated with Soviet citizens," he continued.

Many Czech Christians we talked with during those days told horror stories about Russian callousness toward life. One eyewitness said, "Tanks rumbled down a main road with people crowded in the street. When the driver of the lead tank slowed up to give them time to get out of the way, the tank commander [a Russian] drew his pistol and shot the driver [also a Russian] in the head. His lifeless body was pulled aside, another driver took his place and the column moved on." Doubtless the dead driver's body was shipped back to Russia and given full military honors befitting one who had died defending the rodina, his motherland. Russians needed a body count to justify their invasion because the Czechs offered virtually no armed resistance.

One family we visited in Slovakia told of their daughter who had a penpal in Leningrad with whom she had corresponded for several years. One day, about two months after the invasion, she received a letter from her Russian friend which read: "I do not want to write to you any longer. The counter revolutionaries in your country have killed my father."

The Slovakian family were saddened by the news of her loss. Can you imagine their surprise a few days later when a knock came on the door and they opened it to see a Russian soldier standing there with a small bouquet of flowers in his hand. He smiled and explained that he was stationed two kilometers away and realized that his daughter had a pen pal in this village and that he would like to meet the family.

They invited him into their home and prepared some tea. After a brief visit they showed him the letter from Leningrad. He recognized his daughter's handwriting and when he finished reading the message he bowed his head and wept. The family were shocked when, between his sobs, he explained, "Now I know that I have been scheduled to die but they haven't gotten around to doing it yet. But my family has already been notified!"

On the highway, between towns as we travelled across the country, we would frequently encounter a roadblock. As our car rounded a curve we could see two Russian tanks parked at a 45° angle across the road with their 105mm cannon pointed at our windshield. The officer would signal for us to "Stop." We didn't argue. Their purpose was to check papers and keep track of who was going where. After examining our passports and automobile documents they would wave us on.

At that point, I would smile and offer them a New Testament or Gospel of John, in Russian. No one was smiling at the Russians during those days. They didn't know how to react. I opened the book to the third chapter of John and pointed to verse 16. It was always a surprise to the officer to see something written in his language and to understand that it was our gift for him. It was always a thrill to us as we drove away to see, in our rear-view mirror, several soldiers crowded around the tank commander, reading the third chapter of the Gospel of John.

We discovered that in spite of the foreign troops and tanks, Czechs are proud of their country. To them it's like a garden. They viewed the electrified barbed wire fence as the "Garden Wall." Winston Churchill called it the *Iron Curtain*.

Our ministry in Czechoslovakia on that visit (during the invasion period) was drawing to a close. We had travelled to several cities and towns, preached in many churches, distributed Bibles and Christian literature and met with scores of believers. One Pastor asked, "Is it a dream, or are you really here?" Now it was time to head back to Austria and resupply. We stopped in Prague to say *na shledanou* to Milos and his family.

Several months before the invasion, Milos had been invited to preach in England. He had planned to leave the following week. Josef, his second son, had been given permission to study theology in Switzerland. In the presence of tanks and armor it

looked like those opportunities were lost. They had given up hope of fulfilling this long-time dream. We discussed the situation over lunch.

We had no way of knowing it, but at that very moment Alexander Dubcek was boarding a Tupelov aircraft in Moscow for his return flight to Czechoslovakia. Soon the capital city would be closed to anyone entering or leaving as a precaution against demonstrations. While washing down Wienerschnitzel with cups of Russian tea, we encouraged Milos and Josef to return with us to the West. They had considered it before, so it took them only a few minutes to decide.

We cleared Prague only two hours before the city was sealed off; raced across the country through Pilsen to the frontier where we had entered from West Germany, five days earlier. The Czech major remembered us, smiled and stamped the exit permits for Milos and Josef. Later, while listening to the BBC, we learned that 25 minutes after we left the border, Russian troops arrived and replaced the Czech guards.

If the Russians had been on the frontier it would have been, humanly speaking, impossible for our Czech friends to leave with us. How wonderful to experience the Lord's guidance and perfect timing. In a small way, we knew the experience of David when, upon deliverance from the hands of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul, he wrote in Psalm 18 verse 29, *"For by thee have I run through a troop and by my God have I leaped over a wall."*

### **For a Christian, things don't just `happen.'**

The One who planned the universe and created the heavens and earth has a purpose for each of us. We are important to Him.

That's why Proverbs 3:6 enjoins us to, ***"... in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths."***

Come with me, back to 1951, and let me share with you how

He began to direct my paths towards Europe.

## **Part II**

### **How Did I Get There?**

***"... I being in the way, the LORD led me."*** Genesis 24-27

This was the testimony of Abraham's servant ... when he was sent to find a bride for Isaac.

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## 2

### The "Call" – Knowing The Will of God

I wanted to fly. All my life I'd been fascinated by airplanes. Someone who knew me well said, "He learned to walk, hanging onto a tail skid and drank prop-wash instead of milk." Flying was certainly a very important part of my life. Maybe you could say that I was dedicated to the Lord, but on my terms.

After my conversion to Christ, one of the first things I wanted to grasp was, "How can I know the will of God for my life?" I searched the Word and I asked others.

Friends spoke, sometimes rather glibly, about the Lord's leading. "I think the Lord's leading me to go down to the Hut for a pizza," someone said. And another, "The Lord led me to McDonald's for a burger, coke and fries."

Wait a minute. This is serious business. Can we really be so casual when considering one of the most important attributes of the living Creator God of the universe; namely, His desire to be involved in the affairs of men?

At that time in my life I felt deep in my heart that the Lord wanted me to fly as a missionary pilot somewhere in Latin America. I understood there was a need in that area and it seemed logical that I might be able to fit in. With two years of Spanish in high school and a little practical experience while in the Navy, I spoke un poquito espanol. I've always thought it to be a beautiful language and would love to speak it fluently.

Harriett, my fiancé, was a nurse, and medical personnel were needed. I had several hundred hours as a pilot and was working toward a commercial license. I wanted to fly and serve the Lord in missionary aviation. The Lord had other plans. Even though I was a pilot and loved to play in the clouds, His ways are higher.

***"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."*** Isaiah 55:8, 9

The first inkling I had that the Lord might have some other plan for my life came in the autumn of 1950. It was my junior year at university. There was an announcement on the bulletin board about some summer classes in Scandinavia. "Europe," I thought, "interesting but not for me." Then other articles about Europe came to my attention.

Soon it seemed that everywhere I looked I was confronted with something about Europe. Traditionally, I have had a fairly wide range of interests and at first I passed it off as curiosity about the continent. But there was more.

Little by little I began to feel that the Lord was trying to say something to me. I had the uncomfortable feeling that whatever it was would change the direction of my life.

My Dad and little sister, Becky, lived in New Jersey at that time and I was looking forward to spending Christmas with them. (My Mother had gone to be with the Lord in 1948.) They lived in a large, tree-shaded two-storied home on Maple Avenue in Glen Rock.

It was during the Christmas holidays, while I was away from books and lectures, that the Lord really began to seriously challenge me concerning Europe. I argued with the Lord.

“Europe isn’t a mission field,” I assured the Lord. “Why, Europe is the birthplace of the Reformation, the fountainhead of many great revivals that have engulfed the continent, jumped the Atlantic and spread across America.” I was really wound up. “Most of our great mainline denominations in the United States have their roots in Europe,” I told Him - as if He didn’t know.

It’s OK to argue with the Lord. You don’t argue with someone who isn’t real, some figment of your imagination. The Lord Jesus Christ is very real to me. Sometimes I argue with Him. You can, too, but let me warn you. He always wins!

Europe. The burden persisted, intensified and finally consumed me. My argument turned to agreement, provisionally at first because I bargained with the Lord. It was like Gideon and his fleece (Judges 6:36-40).

“If you really want me in Europe, dear Lord, then let me go **this summer**,” I prayed, “between my junior and senior years at the university.”

It made sense. I had worked hard during the first three years to get most of the credit hours needed for graduation behind me. In this way I could concentrate my last year on courses that would help me most in the final field of His choosing. But it was also impossible. I didn’t have two dimes to rub together for a trip to Europe. Like one old fella down South said, “I was as broke as the Ten Commandments.” Having been in the United States Navy for two years, I was entitled to three years (36 months) of GI Bill benefits. By interrupting the benefits at the end of each academic year (9 months) I was able to have the GI Bill for all four years at university. I trusted the Lord for some kind of work or ministry during the summer months that would help financially to augment the meager sum from Uncle Sam. There was nothing in that kind of budget for a trip to Europe. Still, I prayed.

God heard my prayer and graciously, yes, abundantly, began to meet the need. Having settled things with the Lord concerning my field of service, I began telling relatives and close friends about my “call to Europe” and my plans to travel there in the summer of

1951. Even before leaving New Jersey to start back for South Carolina, the Lord had sent in \$50 or more.

If you are really interested in knowing God's will for your life and you feel He is leading you in a certain direction, first of all tell Him - in prayer - exactly what you think He is saying to you even if you don't agree with Him. Then, get up off your knees and start doing what you think He is leading you to do. Take the first step. It may involve writing a letter, making a phone call or telling your pastor, but do it. Finally, trust Him to stop you ... if it is not His will.

Looking back on those days I remember little vignettes that serve to add color to the tapestry of life. God works in marvellous ways.

It was before the advent of interstate highways. Under the best conditions it was about an eighteen hour drive, across seven eastern seaboard states, from Glen Rock, New Jersey to Greenville, South Carolina. On the way I was listening to my car radio; our troops were waging battle against the North Korean communists along the 38th parallel; Drew Pearson and Senator Joe McCarthy were going after each other again, and the weather man reported a winter storm sweeping in from the northwest.

In my mind's-eye I could follow the path of the blizzard as it worked its way eastward. If I pushed my Chevy a little harder I might just get far enough south to miss the bad weather. I thought it was worth a try, but it didn't work.

I was just coming out of Danville, Virginia, on old U.S. 29, past the long rows of cotton mills where some of the finest towels in the world are made, when I ran straight into the driving snow. Within seconds visibility was down to a few yards and the road was like an ice rink. I slowed down immediately but pressed on, straining my concentration to avoid an accident. Eventually, I passed the little hamlet of Pellham, then Ruffin. I was down to a crawl.

It is twenty-four miles from Danville, Virginia to Reidsville, North Carolina. That portion of my journey had consumed two hours. I had already been driving about ten hours when I hit the storm. I was exhausted, but not ready to quit. The Lord had other plans.

Just as I entered Reidsville, my car began to fish-tail on the icy road. Suddenly, like watching something in slow motion, I felt my Chevy do a 360° spin and slide off the road into a shallow ditch. I was stuck in an eighteen-inch snow bank, but there was no damage to the car, not even a scratch.

"Thank you Lord," I whispered. "Guess I'd better pack it in for tonight." But where? The Lord had that detail taken care of too.

My eyes adjusted to the darkness as I got out of the car. I surveyed my predicament and realized that getting out of the ditch would have to wait until morning. Just then I noticed a house near the road. A light was still on. "They haven't gone to bed yet," I thought. "Maybe, just maybe."



An elderly gentleman with a friendly smile answered my knock at the door.

"I've just slipped off the road, sir." I explained. "I'm a ministerial student on my way back to Bob Jones University in Greenville. I've been driving about twelve hours today and won't be able to go any further tonight in this weather. Would you let me sleep on your living room floor or on a couch or something? I'd be real grateful!"

"Brother!" the old gentleman exclaimed with outstretched arms, "Come into this house and get warm."

He and his wife were born-again Christians. Like many of their neighbors, in the rural deep South, they were Baptist. They were also interested in mission work. While enjoying a hot bowl of homemade soup before going to bed, I shared with them some of the ways the Lord had been directing in my life during the holidays.

The next morning, over a plate of fresh baked biscuits, fried eggs, grits and gravy, I waxed enthusiastic about Europe. I told them just how the Lord had been dealing with me and how He had brought me to this decision in my life. I went on about the strategic importance of Europe, and the desperate spiritual needs of a continent without Christ. I was talking to Mom and Dad. Quite honestly I wasn't paying any attention to the eleven-year-old boy, quietly eating his Corn Flakes at the end of the breakfast table.

That boy, Frank Carroll, grew up. He graduated from Bob Jones University, learned the French language and eleven years later, almost to the month, joined our evangelistic team to serve God in Europe. Thanks Lord, even for blizzards.

In addition to carrying a full load at the university, I was away from campus preaching each weekend. During January and February there were meetings in Atlanta, Georgia; Spartanburg, Mullins and Greenville, in South Carolina, plus Swansboro, Havelock and Apex in North Carolina. Not big places, mind you, but very important to God.

The spring of 1951 was just as hectic. As the weather improved, I was able to travel a little further afield to include weekend missions in Tennessee towns like Johnson City, Knoxville and Chattanooga. I was president of the Flight Club that year, so whenever the weather was favorable I took the plane, a little Piper Vagabond. In each place I preached the gospel and shared the need for mission work in Europe, and my plans to minister there "this summer."

As word got around on campus that I was planning to go to Europe during the summer months, several friends began to pray about going with me. The first was Bill Leslie, a talented young man proficient in both sports and music. He had a winsome personality, and we hit it off great. Soon three other young men had committed to the team: Dave Hoy, a gifted illusionist; Jack Moore, whose mellow trombone completed the musical part of our team; and Leo Schlegel, a preacher-boy whom the Lord used in a unique way.

It became necessary to draw up a budget of some sort. Based on Youth For Christ estimates for summer teams in 1950, and considering that we would handle our own

affairs, thus cutting out the administrative cost, we decided we'd need about \$1,000 each. That was to cover round-trip passage on the ship and our living expenses for three months in Europe.

Whenever possible I arranged services in the Atlanta area. I had spent my teenage years in and around Decatur, and there were many of my high school friends that I wanted to introduce to my newfound Savior. There was also a "sweet young thing" who answered to the name of Harriett, whom I'd met the first week home following my discharge from the Navy.

Our courtship had been primarily through the U.S. Mail service. She was in nurse's training at the Georgia Baptist Hospital in Atlanta, and I was 160 miles away, in Greenville, South Carolina, preparing for the ministry. In spite of the distance, (or maybe because of it) our friendship had grown. We really got to know about each other's ideals, philosophy, dreams and goals for life through a regular exchange of correspondence, even if our times together were infrequent. Without our knowing it the Lord was preparing us for many long periods of separation in the years to come.

I had proposed to her in the summer of 1950, just before leaving for three months of evangelistic crusades in the western U.S.A. To my delight she accepted. I gave her a ring, but we didn't set a specific date. Student nurses were not allowed to be married in those days, so we knew it would have to be after her graduation. We had the summer to think about that.

During the following school year, Harriett and I planned our wedding for Sunday, September 2nd, three days after I was to return from overseas. You think that was cutting it kinda close? Consider this: Harriett was not due to graduate until September 24th. She had accumulated three weeks of vacation, which she arranged to take at the end of her training program. Weekly work schedules were not finalized until a month ahead. If she asked for her "day off" that week to coincide with the last day of her obligation to GBH, then we could be married on Sunday instead of Monday.

That was important because she had to attend a mandatory staff meeting at the BJU infirmary in Greenville, on Monday. The plan was for her to work part time at the University hospital, during my senior year, and take some graduate studies in Bible. That's how young people plan things.

Meanwhile, our Team was struggling to raise the funds for our summer ministry in Europe. One weekend we drove as far as Evansville, Indiana, where Dave's Dad, Clarence Hoy, ran a State Farm Insurance agency and pastored a small church. What a fabulous family, the Hoys. They put up the entire Team in their big old three-story frame house at 112 East Franklin Street.

Dave's younger brother, Phil, was full of enthusiasm for the Lord and admiration for his older brother. His kid sister, Margie, was a cute, bespectacled all-American girl. Her sweetheart, Bill, led the singing at Pilgrim Baptist church. It was in many ways a Norman Rockwell American home.

Clarence Hoy was an inspiration to me. His close walk with the Lord and down-home common sense made him attractive to all who knew him. His wife, Margaret, was the incarnation of a saint “given to hospitality.” She reminded me so much of my Mother (now with the Lord) that I respectfully and lovingly called her Mom. To this day she is still “Mom Hoy” to me.

The weekend trips were fruitful. Many precious souls trusted Christ. Our Team was beginning to blend and bond together. As we presented the challenge of Europe and told of our plans to minister there during the summer months, we were greatly encouraged by the Lord to see the funds gradually begin to come in.

Some doubts began to come in too. It’s all very well to have great plans and dream great dreams, but what about the practical side of things? What would we actually do in Europe for three months?

That was easy. We would preach the Gospel and win people to Christ. Fine. Where? Europe was composed of over twenty countries and was home to a quarter of the earth’s population. We knew that there were over two dozen languages and a multitude of dialects spoken on the continent.

Whom do you know in Europe?

No one, Lord.

Has even one man said to you, “*Come over and help us?*”

No, not really.

The more we learned about the magnitude of the sphere for our potential summer ministry, the more sober was our appraisal of the task ahead. We confessed our inadequacies to the Lord. We would need to trust Him in ways we had not previously considered and for things we had not anticipated.

About that time I found a tract, written by a man named John Capper who lived in Cardiff, Wales. It had a crystal clear presentation of the plan of salvation. I wrote to him and said that I’d read his tract and it was obvious that he knew and loved the same Lord Jesus Christ whom we loved and wanted to serve. I told him about our forthcoming trip, and the dates we would be in Europe, and asked if there was any way we could be of service to him.

John Capper responded immediately. He invited us to come to his church for Sunday services the first weekend after our arrival. We accepted, and our European itinerary was born.

My roommate at the university, Julian Courteol, with whom I had traveled all over the western United States the previous summer, suggested I get in touch with a former pastor of his, a Reverend J. J. Penner. Brother Penner was of German background, and

was going to Germany for ministry that summer. Maybe we could link up with him for meetings somewhere.

Someone else put us in contact with Major Grube, a chaplain in the Army serving U.S. Forces stationed in Berlin. In response to my inquiries he said he would appreciate some help during the summer. Dates were confirmed to follow our time in the British Isles. Our itinerary was taking shape.

Meanwhile the finances began to slow down. In those days it was much cheaper to go by sea than by air. We had arranged our trans-Atlantic passage with the Cunard Steamship Company. We were booked to sail from New York City aboard the MV GEORGIC on Thursday, May 31, 1951. Our passage was confirmed to return by the same ship, leaving Southampton, England the third week of August. Fare for the round trip passage was \$340. These dates were fixtures. We were committed to Europe for that timeframe. By the middle of May we only had about \$500 each toward our goal of \$1,000. What should we do?

One thing was certain. We would never have embarked upon this venture if we had not been absolutely convinced that the Lord was involved. At times, when our faith would waver, we took comfort in the assurance that, *"Faithful is He who has called you, who also will do it."* He always did. Another \$250 each, came in the last week. That was only three quarters of our budget, which was already lower than the YFC teams in 1950.

The last few days before departure were a blur. We had term papers to write, final exams to contend with, last minute shopping and details to see to, plus packing all the things we anticipated needing for the next three months.

Nylon shirts were the latest thing then. You could wash them out in the sink and hang them on a coat hanger. They would dry in a little over an hour and, most importantly, needed no ironing! Just the thing for five young men constantly on the move and living out of suitcases for three months.

The Lord put it all together. Brimming with faith and decked out with new light grey suits to match, we boarded that great ocean liner for the adventure of our lives. We thought we were America's answer to Europe's need. In reality we had much to learn from Him during the next few weeks.

We had no idea how to travel light. I'm sure the Lord smiled that Thursday afternoon as we struggled up the gangway from Pier 92 at the foot of New York's West 52nd Street. Between the five of us we had seventeen cases, including musical instruments, camera bags, Dave's "magic" equipment and a steamer trunk full of Gospel literature and tracts in four languages.

The MV GEORGIC was a British Government Transport carrier under charter to the Cunard Line on an austerity basis. It had been used in World War II as a troop transport. It was a one class vessel, which meant we could explore the entire ship. During the next eight days we took full advantage of that opportunity.

After getting settled in our state room, D 56, I went along to the ship's office and introduced myself to the Purser. Explaining that we were an evangelistic Team, I asked permission to conduct services each night on board. He graciously granted my request. A room seating about 120 people was made available. Notice of the special meetings was published in the ship's daily newspaper and announcements were made over the loudspeaker system about twenty minutes before the services began each evening.

It was an eight-day crossing. The meetings were packed every night. Bill Leslie led the singing and, together with Jack Moore, provided special music. Dave Hoy rivetted their attention with Gospel illustrations by "magic." Leo and I shared the preaching. By the time we landed at Southampton, we were fully functional as a Team. More importantly, seventeen people had given their hearts to Christ.

The Captain scheduled a talent show for the fifth evening at sea. It was to be held in the main lounge. Anyone on board who had any sort of talent was invited to sing, perform or play. When you have 1,250 passengers aboard there are bound to be some celebrities among them. We prayed about this opportunity.

Dave was the only professional among us, and he was really good. His presentation of the Gospel was clear and without apology. We registered our "act" with the Purser, and I suggested that it would be good for Dave to be last since there would be confetti and possibly other debris to clean up. It would also conclude the concert on an upbeat, and that would be better than finishing "after the Fat Lady sings." The Purser agreed.

When the big night arrived the main lounge was packed. The program progressed smoothly. Each artist performed in turn. The butterflies were working overtime in our tummies as we got closer to the time for the "Dave Hoy Show" to begin.

At last, we were on. Bill and Jack gave a terrific brass fanfare with trumpet and trombone. I stepped to the mike and announced, "From Greenville, in South Carolina, Bob Jones University presents - DAVE HOY!" Immediately Bill and Jack blasted away with a theme from the *"Greatest Show on Earth."*

Dave entered flamboyantly from the right, firing a blank cartridge pistol. The crowd roared with approval and anticipation. He asked for a newspaper which one of the passengers provided. Folding it carefully he began cutting with scissors, dramatically removed from his coat pocket, while keeping up a constant patter of jokes. Eventually he unfolded the complicated mess to reveal a pair of pants and suggested they might be appropriate for the passenger who provided the paper. The audience loved it.

Gradually, and with truly professional skill, Dave worked toward more serious themes. Borrowing a hat from another passenger and showing it to be empty, he placed it upside down on the piano, and walked back to his table. He had three brightly colored wooden cubes, each with a hole through the middle. "This yellow cube represents man," he explained, putting the block on a perpendicular dowel. Next he placed a red cube on top of the yellow one and said, "This red block represents sin." Finally he put a blue cube on top of the other two. "The blue block represents God. Now you will notice that 'man' is

separated from `God' by `sin.' The most important thing in the world is to get God and man together in a right relationship. How can that be accomplished?" Dave queried.

Removing a large red silk handkerchief from his pocket and placing it dramatically over the stack of three cubes, Dave continued. "The Bible tells us that *'the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.'* Let us imagine this handkerchief represents the blood of Christ. Remember, it is covering man's sin that separates him from God."

With a grand flourish Dave whipped off the handkerchief. The astonished passengers saw that the red block had disappeared. The blue and yellow blocks were together. "Man is now in his proper relationship with God and sin has been removed. But what happened to it?" Dave asked.

"We're traveling from west to east on this ocean liner," he reminded his audience. "The Bible tells us that when we trust Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, our sins are removed, *'as far as the east is from the west.'* Let us imagine that the pile of blocks on this table represent the west, and the hat over there on the piano is the east."

At this point he asked someone from the audience to go over to the piano and examine the hat. You guessed it. The red block was inside the hat.

Dave concluded the evening with a powerful illustration. It consisted of an alarm clock on a tray. He went on for a while about his alarm clock, how accurate it was, and (pulling the stem on the top to start the loud ringing) how it faithfully awakened him each morning. Then, placing a black cloth over the clock, he lifted it off the tray. He held it up in mid-air, still ringing away, and raised the cloth so the audience could see the clock face.

Then, as every illusionist does sometime in a program, he counted, "one, two, three," and snapped the cloth. The ringing stopped abruptly. A full size, everyday, ordinary alarm clock had vanished before our eyes. He showed the audience both sides of the cloth and then wadded it up and tossed it aside.

"It looked like I had plenty of time," Dave pointed out. "Time on my hands, so to speak. Then - one, two, three [he snapped his fingers] and time was gone! The Bible says, you *'know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then [with another snap of his finger] vanisheth away.'*"

The audience was stunned into a thoughtful silence, then burst into spontaneous applause.

At three o'clock the next morning there was a knock at our stateroom door. It was Charles, one of the passengers who shared our table in the dining room. He looked a bit disheveled and obviously hadn't slept.

"Can I talk to you a minute?" he asked.

“Of course,” I replied. I grabbed my raincoat, closed the door quietly behind me and together we walked down the narrow passage way. I knew in my heart he was troubled. We’d spent hours together, many of them playing chess, on the trip across. I had talked with him about the Lord and carefully explained the plan of salvation. At the end of the passageway we turned and went up the steps, then turned again through a hatch and emerged about mid-ship on the starboard side of the promenade deck.

He’d been to several of our evening meetings and was no stranger to the Gospel. “I thought you guys were some kind of nuts when I first met you,” he confessed. “There we were, sitting at our assigned tables in the dining room, and you bow your heads and give thanks for the food. I thought, ‘Jesus Christ, what are we in for this trip?’”

His last phrase wasn’t exactly a prayer of inquiry, but I picked up on it. “Charlie, you mentioned a Friend of mine by name - Jesus Christ. He is my Friend, because He’s the Friend of sinners and I fall into that category.”

“I know. We’ve talked about that before. You believe in Him and you’re ‘saved’ or something. All I know is you’re different. All of you guys. I’ve watched you every day this week. Believe me, I’d give a million dollars to have the peace you guys have.”

A million dollars?

“But Charlie, we’re not redeemed with things like money or silver or gold,” I reminded him. “If that was the case then only the rich would get to heaven. The Bible tells us we are redeemed, saved, call it what you like, by the ‘*precious blood of Christ*’ who died on the cross to purchase our salvation. You just need to ask Jesus to forgive you and trust Him as your own personal Savior. It’s that simple. You could do that right now, out here under the stars on the starboard side.”

Again he repeated, “I’d give a million dollars to be able to believe that. No, I’ve made up my mind. When I get back to New York I’m going to see a psychologist. If he can’t help me, then I’m going to end it all.”

The first port of call in Europe was Le Havre, France. Continental passengers would disembark there while the rest of us remained on board for the final leg to Southampton, England. Charlie was leaving the ship in Le Havre. His parents had an apartment in Paris and he planned to spend most of the summer there. When I learned who his family were (a household name you would recognize in America), I realized that his mention of a million dollars would, for him, be small change for the peace we enjoyed as a free gift. “Charlie, you can end your life in this life, but you can’t end it in the next one,” I warned him.

We talked on until the sun eased noiselessly out of its eastern bed and threw buckets of gold against the tall red and white stacks of the MV GEORGIC slipping into harbor.

Later that morning I watched him walk down the gangway and into France. He didn’t see me wave *au revoir*. He never looked back.



Summer Team enroute to Europe 1951.  
From left to right: Jack Moore, Bill Bathman,  
Dave Hoy, Leo Schlegel, Bill Leslie.

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### 3

## No Trains to Cardiff

***Midnight Saturday, June 9, 1951 - Southampton, England***

One long blast on the ship's deep-throated fog horn signaled our arrival in England. It was after ten o'clock in the evening when the seamen secured the hawsers to the bollards on the pier.

"ALL PASSENGERS WILL REMAIN ON BOARD THIS EVENING. DISEMBARKATION WILL COMMENCE AFTER BREAKFAST IN THE MORNING. Thank you." Click. It was the voice of the Purser echoing throughout the ship on the Tannoy (intercom) system.

There was something authoritarian and final about the announcement, almost as if God had spoken. Perhaps it was what we Americans regard as the English accent. (They say it is we who have the "accent." After all, they invented the language!) Even the simplest of pronouncements often seem unchallengeable if uttered correctly and with proper English tones. Such is the Queen's English.



We were all packed and ready to go. The ship was scheduled to have arrived at noon on Saturday, but a storm at sea had delayed us. It was now after 10 p.m. We had to leave the ship that evening because we were booked to speak at John Capper's church in Newport, near Cardiff, the next morning.

"I understand your problem," the Purser assured me when I confronted him. "But there are no trains at this time of night. You'll be stuck in the dock yard area and not able to get anywhere. Just settle down on board and we'll get you off first thing in the morning."

"Sir, this is the country that invented the steam train. I can't believe that there are not trains running everywhere at all hours of the night." I protested. "We must disembark tonight. Right now."

What the Purser said made good sense. It was both a courtesy and convenience to allow the passengers to remain aboard overnight. Our situation was unique, however. We didn't want to miss or even be late for our first-ever meeting in the British Isles.

"Very well," he said with a hint of exasperation. "I can't keep you on board. You're not prisoners on my ship. I'll see if I can organize a Customs officer to assist you."

"Nothing to declare?" asked the incredulous Customs officer when he saw our seventeen bags.

"No sir," we affirmed, along with some information we volunteered about why we had come, and where we had to get to by the next morning.

"But there are no trains to Cardiff at this time of night, lad."

It was beginning to sound like a broken record.

"We'll manage somehow, sir. Thanks for getting us through customs tonight." With that we borrowed a porter's dolly, loaded our baggage onto it, and pushed it out to the front of the dock area. We checked the information board to see when the next train left.

"Guess what?" I announced to the rest of the Team.

"There are no trains to Cardiff tonight!" the guys responded in unison.

"Right. Let's pray."

Someone once said, "When all else fails, pray." We hadn't failed - not yet anyway. I prayed, "Lord Jesus, you have brought us together as a Team. You have supplied our needs for this trip. You have brought us safely across the Atlantic Ocean and through a terrible storm. You don't sleep or even take a coffee break. You are God, and You are in charge, and we are here in the 'land of fish 'n chips' at Your leading and direction. This is Your problem Lord - not ours."

Just about that time a lone taxi came prowling past the dock yards.

## 4

### Driving Through The Night

“Taxi!”

The jet-black Austin cab made a remarkably tight U-turn and pulled up at the curb where we stood.

“Where to, mate?” the cab driver enquired with a friendly grin.

“Newport,” I responded.

A puzzled look came over the cabby’s face. You could almost see him thinking, *“Newport? Never heard of it. That’s not a suburb of Southampton.”*

“Where’s that sir?” he queried.

“Near Cardiff - in Wales,” I answered. “We need to be there by tomorrow morning.”

“Cardiff, Wales! Cor Blimey, I’ll have to tell me guv’nor it’ll be me last trip tonight,” he mused.

The British have a gift for understatement.

The first thing on the agenda was to agree on a price. It was 160 miles one way from Southampton, England, to Cardiff, Wales. Given the narrow, winding lanes traversing the English landscape (there were no motorways in those days) it was comparable to 400 miles in the United States. We had yet to learn that gas (petrol) was rationed. In fact, we had a lot to learn.

“How much?” I asked.

He thought for a moment, reckoning up the distance to be covered, fuel required and time involved. “How’s three quid apiece?”

Three quid? We’d tried to familiarize ourselves with British currency while on board the ship. We knew that the medium of exchange was the pound sterling; that each pound was divided into twenty shillings, and each shilling into twelve pence. The penny was further divided into a couple of half pennies and each of those into two farthings. A quid? Our education was just beginning.

On inquiry we discovered from our new friend that ‘quid’ was another word for a pound sterling. We’d only been in the country thirty minutes and we were getting the hang of

things. Now we had some reckoning to do. Three times five - fifteen pounds; the train would cost us that much, and there were no trains to Cardiff tonight, remember?

"Let's do it," we agreed.

There were handshakes all around and we introduced ourselves to the man, Jake Curtis, with whom we would spend the next seven hours.

The taxi was hardly big enough for all five of us, but we could just manage to squeeze in. When Jake saw the seventeen bags he began to have definite second thoughts. Some discussion followed. We agreed that the steamer trunk with the literature in European languages was not needed and a couple of other cases could be stored in the baggage claim (left luggage) area. We'd pick them up again as we left England on our way to the Continent.

The heavy stuff was tied on top. Musical instruments were inside. Jack's trombone was too wide for the parcel shelf behind the back seat, so it stood on the transmission tunnel at a rakish angle between his knees. We were ready to roll.

The driver had to go by his depot, sign out for the night and fill his tank for the long trip ahead.

"We can't start without a cup of tea," Jake informed us. "I'll call me wife and `ave `er put the kettle on."

We didn't understand why we "couldn't start without a cup of tea" but then we didn't understand about English hospitality. Fifteen minutes later the taxi pulled up in front of a neat little red brick terraced home. Five American boys disengaged themselves and stood on the sidewalk before the door. The cabby introduced us to his wife, Ruth. She was a shy young woman clothed in a dressing gown and apologizing for her hair in curlers. We were not prepared for what we found inside the home.

It was a typical working class English dwelling - two up and two down. Two rooms and a kitchen downstairs. Two bedrooms and a bath upstairs. Downstairs the front room (sitting room) was seldom used. All the action was reserved for the dining room, which was connected directly to the kitchen by a serving hatch.

With only a quarter of an hour's notice, this dear woman had prepared a feast. The dining table was loaded with benefits. There were little triangular sandwiches, homemade cakes and cookies (biscuits) and a bowl of jello layered with custard and all kinds of fruit in it. We later learned that this is called "trifle."

By now it was one o'clock in the morning. Our last meal had been aboard ship around 6 pm. A lot had happened since then. We were young, and we were hungry. We gratefully accepted their hospitality and enthusiastically cleaned off the table.

Jake and Ruth both seemed genuinely pleased that we had enjoyed our first meal in an English home. We expressed our appreciation, said farewell to Ruth, and squeezed back into the taxi that seemed even smaller now. A “cup of tea” - indeed.

On the way out of Southampton, Jake took us through an area severely damaged by German bombs during the Second World War. “Jerry hit us pretty hard,” he said. “See that school? Jerry dropped a firecracker down on it and lots of kiddies died.”

The trip to Newport was uneventful. There wasn't much to see for most of the way because of darkness. Some tried to sleep sitting up but with little success. It was a long night. At last the dawn, breaking behind us, seemed to push the darkness further west. As we rolled into Cardiff the sun was full against the old castle. None of us had ever seen anything like this. The reality of actually being overseas in a foreign country was overwhelming. The castle reminded us that we were available to serve the King of kings.

Our driver dropped us at John Capper's door. He knew about the storm and the ship's delay and figured we wouldn't be able to make it in time because there were no trains to Cardiff. We wondered why he should be so startled that we arrived by taxi.

Many days passed during which we learned more and more about these wonderful, war-weary British people. We learned that food was rationed: one egg per person, per week; a quarter of a pound of butter and a cup of sugar per week. Those are the ingredients that go to make up things like cakes and cookies for Sunday Tea. We learned how important Sunday Tea is to a family - something they look forward to all week, a little culinary splurge after six days of austere fare.

Then we remembered the cabby, Jake, and his wife, Ruth, and that beautiful midnight meal. Suddenly we realized the truth. She had baked all those goodies with rationed ingredients for her family's Sunday Tea.

We could have understood the welcome perhaps if we had been British travelers coming home after a long journey. It would have been easier to understand if they had been Christians and welcomed us as brothers in Christ. But we were not British and as far as we know they were not Christians, at least in the sense of the New Testament term. It was our introduction to England. This anonymous family was used by the Lord to endear the entire nation to our hearts.

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## 5

### European Summer

The plan unfolded like a flower opening to the morning sun. After almost every service someone would invite us to come to their church next for a meeting. There were more invitations than we could accept. Some were put on hold, especially in Scotland, until the end of the summer just before we sailed back to the United States.

We crossed the English Channel from Dover to Oostende, Belgium and made our way to Brussels. We had meetings arranged by missionaries in the area, then moved on by train through Holland and Luxembourg to Frankfurt, Germany.

Chaplain Grube welcomed us warmly to the Rhine-Main Air Force Base and his assistant, Sergeant Byrd, took us all over Frankfurt in his car. He also helped us to buy *occupation script*, a special issue military currency, used to purchase food and other necessities.

The next morning we discovered that our script was no good. The military authorities had changed it overnight. It was not an uncommon thing to happen and helped to prevent illegal use on the black market. However, it was a shock to us to learn that our money was worthless. We were the only ones who didn't seem to know what was going on. We did manage to use some of it for a taxi. Later, at lunch time, Bill Leslie and I walked into the Army PX restaurant, ordered a big steak and washed it down with a quart of milk. We couldn't hold another bite, and they accepted our old *script*. Thank you, Lord!

We took the airline's bus out to Rhine-Main air terminal and departed for Berlin at 2 p.m. on PanAm flight 188. Because of the Russian blockade, flying was the only practical way to get into Berlin, which was 110 miles behind the Iron Curtain. Fred Richardson, YFC representative in the divided City, met us at Tempelhof Aerodrome and took us to Allied HQ.

We met the U.S. Army Chaplain in West Berlin and he outlined our program. We preached to troops stationed in the American, British and French sectors, held open air meetings and ministered in the refugee camps. Ken Debus, who worked for Armed Forces Network, arranged for us to minister by radio over AFN.

Berlin was the world's largest rubble heap following World War II. The devastation was unbelievable. For the last months of the war, when the Luftwaffe had been swept from the sky, the city had endured round-the-clock bombing with over 1,000 allied planes on each sortie. There was no discrimination of targets. *Der Führer* had even used churches to store arms and ammunition. The population survived only by living in underground bunkers. In this way they managed to escape the fire storm that engulfed the metropolis night after night.

We drove for over fifteen miles across the heart of this once proud capitol city of Hitler's Third Reich, without seeing one single structure still standing. Everywhere we looked and for as far as the eye could see there were shells of bombed-out buildings. Steel girders jutted at grotesque angles from burned and gutted dwellings. The streets were cluttered with debris.

Much of our ministry was in the open air. We would select a spot near a U-Bahn (subway) station where people were coming and going. Bill Leslie and Jack Moore would gracefully swing their trumpet and trombone up to a positive angle and blast away. Within minutes a crowd of 300 or more people would gather around. While one of us preached (with an interpreter), the others would mingle with the listeners and distribute tracts.

We spent a lot of time riding the U-Bahn. We'd get on at one station and make our way through the car, distributing tracts to each passenger. When the train stopped at the next station we'd get off and immediately enter the next car. This was repeated until we got to the end of the line or ran out of "ammunition." The terminal for the U-Bahn system was in the Russian sector and they controlled the trains.

There were some eighty-five refugee camps in Berlin. Many families were displaced by the war. Some had escaped from behind the Iron Curtain. All were hoping for a better life in the West. We were able to introduce them to the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Seldom, in all my ministry, have I seen such spiritual hunger and openness to the truth of God's Word.

The first Russian I ever met was in one of these camps. When he learned that I was an American he came up and grabbed me by my shoulders and shook me. "Why are you helping those who torture and kill us?" he demanded.

"Wait a minute, friend!" I responded. "Back off! Tell me what your problem is."

His story tumbled out. He was a farmer. The farm had belonged to his family for many generations. Then the communists had taken over. They nationalized all private industry, disarmed the population and collectivized the farms. If any one complained, they were shot. Sabotage was their only weapon since he and his contemporaries had no guns with which to fight back.

"We set fire to our wheat fields " he explained, "knowing that if we were caught it would mean a firing squad, and if we were not caught we'd face starvation, but we did it to bring the government to its knees. And what do you Americans do?" he asked rhetorically. "You send us wheat. Your foreign aid is propping up the very system we are trying desperately to bring down."

Needless to say, I've never forgotten the first Russian citizen I ever met. I only hope I will never forget the lesson he tried so earnestly to teach me that afternoon when I visited his camp.

My first trip to Berlin was ten years before the Soviets built the infamous Wall. You could move back and forth quite freely between East and West by simply crossing a street. The city was divided into four sectors: American, British, French, and Russian. It was relatively easy to tell which sector you were in by the uniform of occupation soldiers. In addition, the Russian sector was unmistakable because of its propaganda. There were slogans and banners everywhere.

We were introduced that summer to *Wienerschnitzel*. You could buy one for five Deutsch Mark (DM 5.-). The official exchange rate was DM 4.15 to a dollar, but you could often get a little more trading privately. This option disappeared very soon as the economy began to stabilize. (The Deutsch Mark remained constant around the 4 to 1 level until the late 60's when it strengthened to around DM 3.7 to \$1. In the early 70's President Nixon "floated" the dollar on the world market and the DM climbed to 2.45 to a dollar. It has gained strength ever since: currently \$1 = DM 1.42)

From the divided, quadra-party city of Berlin we moved on to southern Europe. We had a four-day break in our series of meetings so the Team divided up.

Bill Leslie and I went to Switzerland. My great-grandfather came to America from the little village of Amsoldingen, in the Bernese Oberland. Perhaps it was a search for my roots. I remember being impressed with how clean and neat everything was. The entire countryside looked manicured, from the gardens in the valley to the glaciers on the mountain side. We traveled mostly by train, but our Swiss transportation ticket was also good for a bus or boat. We used all three.

The contrast between the rubble of Berlin and the remarkable beauty of Bern was more than we could imagine. Untouched by the war, the center of Old Town still maintained its medieval charm. The famed Zytgloggeturm or Clock Tower, has given Bernese the time of day - plus an hourly display of animated figures - for over 400 years. Dating from 1191, when Duke Berchtold V built a wall across the narrow head of land moated by the Horseshoe curve of the Aare River, Bern became the eighth canton to link its destiny to the Swiss Confederation in 1353. In 1848 it was designated the federal city by the Constitution.

Neutral Switzerland is synonymous with peace. Not since the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 has the country been in armed conflict. The Swiss believe their neutrality must be backed by a strong military force. Every able-bodied man is conscripted for national service at 18 years of age and afterwards, until he is 50, spends two or three weeks a year on military maneuvers. In an emergency 600,000 men could be mustered within 36 hours. The Swiss have enough frozen food buried in the glaciers for the entire nation to live on for five years in case they were cut off from the outside world. In addition, every major tunnel and bridge is designed to be blown up in the face of an enemy invasion.

We learned that for centuries Swiss soldiers were considered the best in Europe, and were undaunted by being outnumbered. There is the story about Kaiser Wilhelm's visit to Zürich shortly before World War I. While inspecting a turnout of the Swiss Army at a

review in his honor, the Kaiser was impressed. He paused for a moment and jokingly asked one soldier, "What could you really do if the great German Army were to invade your country, with a force twice as strong?"

"In that case, sir," the soldier replied, "each of us would have to fire twice."

Swiss financiers are frequently called "the gnomes of Zürich" because of their behind-the-scenes influence on international banking affairs. They often help to prop up the shaky currencies of other nations. In the shops, multi-lingual sales people were ready to help a customer in whatever language he spoke. Whether you spend a franc or a fortune when you've finished they will politely walk you to the door and wish you "*Auf Wiedersehen.*"

From Bern we took a train to Thun, and from there a paddle-wheeled passenger steamer across the Thuner See. It pulled in to each of the little villages along the way: Oberhofen, Gunten, Merligen and finally Beattenbucht. In my journal I wrote, "It's like floating on a dream come true. This lake is bounded on all sides by stately Swiss Alps keeping eternal watch over the valleys below. Little villages cling to the mountain side and extend right down to the water's edge. Ivy creeps over the rock wall and reaches down as if to drink from the crystal clear water of this magnificent alpine lake."

We disembarked at Beattenbucht and walked through the narrow, picturesque, cobblestone streets. Every home had flower boxes, just below the windows or on the balconies, overflowing with geraniums. I particularly admired the thick-walled stone houses with their distinctive, seven foot wide eaves.

We took the cable car up the mountain to Beattenburg. From there we rode the Postbus to the Bibelheim (Bible Home) where we were greeted cordially by Miss König and Sister Rösli Hasler, two very precious saints in the Lutheran church. Frau Dr. Wasserzug, whom we had met in Greenville at the Spring Bible Conference, was away in Germany.

Our bedroom window at the Bibel Heim looked out over the lake 5,000 feet below and on to the Jungfrau, towering majestically in the distance. The Alps: a snow-capped serrated profile marking the ramparts of Europe. It was breathtaking. "Thank you, Lord, for letting us stumble over this pleasure on the road of duty."

The next morning we sampled the view from the Niederhorn before catching a boat and crossing the Thuner See to Spiez. Our plan was to reach Milano, Italy by evening. We had to change trains in Brig, so we left our heavy stuff there and travelled light.

Shortly after the train left Brig it disappeared into a long tunnel through the Alps. When it emerged on the other side we were in another world - Italy.

What a contrast! The country bore the scars of war. Buildings were broken down and in need of repair. People looked quite poor, compared to their Swiss cousins, but appeared to be in good health. Maybe it's all that ravioli and Valpolicella. Bill and I stayed in a nice hotel. A room for two, with service, cost 3,850 lire which came to \$6.31.



That was 1951. Those days are gone forever! I liked the quaint little shops in arcades along the main streets, the sidewalk cafés with musicians strolling along to serenade the customers, and any others who would listen. What a wonderful people! These were precious souls for whom Christ died and they are lost. They have a religion but not a relationship.

We returned to Switzerland, picked up the luggage we had left in Brig, and continued by train to Visp, where we took the cog railway up the mountain to Zermatt. This delightful little mountain town had not yet been invaded by the automobile. We were met at the train station by a horse-drawn carriage and taken to the Hotel Perren. A double room with bath and three meals cost 52 francs, or \$12 per day. Those days are certainly gone forever.

The next morning we bought long wool socks, rented hiking boots, spiked crampons, rope, ice axes and - you guessed it - climbed the Matterhorn. While not the highest peak in Switzerland, it is perhaps the most famous and certainly the most photographed. It was first scaled in 1865 by a group of Englishmen. Its familiar profile has been a challenge to climbers ever since.

The near vertical, high-alpine pastures are bright with gentians and buttercups at that time of year. The lush green carpet provided abundant food for grazing sheep. With their heads down and busy with the business of munching, they cared less that their thick fleeces helped feed the looms of Switzerland's textile factories. In the distance a gentle toll of giant cowbells hanging from the necks of cattle kept the farmer aware of where they were on the unfenced hillsides.

Our four-day Alpine break was over. We headed north; back to Germany, to resume our summer ministry.

After leaving Switzerland, we traveled through the Black Forest, appropriately named for the darkness due to the density of its lofty fir trees. The first place of any real importance was the university town of Freiburg, which boasts one of Germany's most splendid medieval cathedrals. This area was occupied by the French Army.

It was good to be back in Deutschland for, among other things, economic reasons. Bill Leslie and I had a steak dinner with all the trimmings for DM 3 (less than 75¢). There was an eight-hour layover between trains in Freiburg, and we were pretty tired after climbing the Matterhorn.

In the restaurant we met a French soldier who said we could sleep for awhile in his barracks, provided we had some "official" identification. A card in my wallet showed that I had completed a period of active duty service in the United States Navy and had been honorably discharged. Bill Leslie had his Ohio State driver's license. We calmly flashed these official documents and the French guard, who probably couldn't read English, admitted us to the barracks area.

We slept soundly on wooden bunks and straw mattresses while drunken French soldiers sang their bawdy songs just outside the window. I guess you might say that we got what we didn't have to pay for.

We realized later that Bill's Ohio driver's license had expired.

So much for French security.



The Berlin Wall... a concrete example of when people have a choice they choose to be free (map courtesy of Cold War)

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## 6

### Midsummer Marathon

We had a heavy schedule of meetings every day for the next month in southwestern Germany in a picturesque area known as Baden Württemberg. We campaigned from

the Black Forest to the Bodensee, also known as Lake Constance. Our most fruitful ministry was in and around the Tübingen area in such out-of-the-way places as Schwenningen, Donaueshinnigen, Villigen and Trossigen, where the Hohner harmonicas and accordions are made.

We visited the Hohner factory one day and they gave us a grand tour. Our guide told us that the factory had never been bombed during the war. It was used however by American pilots as a landmark to guide them toward Stuttgart, a more vital target.

“Each day eleven bombers would come in from the southwest,” he told us, “and turn north for the final leg to Stuttgart. Forty-five minutes later they would return from the north and head southwest.” It happened every day. Factory employees, disrupted by the air raid sirens, called them the “Lucky Eleven” because they always came back safely from their raid over Stuttgart.

A few days after the war was over the “Lucky Eleven” returned. This time, instead of heading toward Stuttgart, they circled the factory then came in low over the trees, dumped their flaps and landing gear and touched down in a field near the main building. The employees ran out to meet them.

“We didn’t bomb your factory during the war,” the flight commander said, “so we’d like to see how you make those wonderful musical instruments.”

The entire Hohner personnel and staff turned out to welcome the “Yanks” and to thank them for sparing their factory. The Americans were then given a royal tour of the facilities, treated to a sumptuous dinner and each one presented with a beautiful new Hohner accordion.

Most wars really don’t make a lot of sense. During the summer of 1951, I remember being in an English home with a Christian family and seeing a picture on the mantelpiece of a handsome young man in an RAF uniform. There was an empty chair at the table. Just a few days later I was in the home of a Christian family in Germany. On the *klavier* (piano) there was a picture of a handsome young man in a Luftwaffe uniform. There was an empty chair at the dining table.

\* \* \* \*

While we were in and around Constance for several days of meetings, I noticed that each afternoon my German interpreter would ask me, “What are you preaching on tonight?” I would give him the text and he would look it up. One evening, after the service, a bilingual university student asked me, “Do you know that your interpreter is preaching a completely different message?” Well, as a matter of fact, I didn’t know that but at least I understood then why he was always interested in my “text” for the evening. His knowledge of English was limited, so he would begin with my text and then proceed to preach his own sermon.

When you are in meetings every day and night for three months, with the same guys, you really get to know each other quite well. Each of us had given his personal

testimony so many times that all the other guys in the team knew it by heart. We were in a different place almost every night, so of course it was always new to the folks who were hearing for the first time.

On Saturday evening we were in Tübingen. One of us (I can't remember for certain, but it could have been me) after being introduced proceeded to give the next guy's testimony in complete detail, right down to the punchline. It was interesting to study the expression on Jack's face as his life story was being told, in the first person, by Bill. Not to be outdone, Jack stood up and without blinking an eye gave Dave's testimony verbatim. Dave rose to the occasion and gave Leo's testimony word for word. By now Leo caught on and when it was his turn managed to flawlessly recite Bill Leslie's testimony. We had gone full circle. Everyone's "testimony" had been heard - only the names had been changed to protect the guilty.

The summer moved on and so did we. After six weeks of meetings in Germany, we went to France for a 'Youth for Christ' Rally in Paris. There we met John Benson, one of the most outstanding pianists I'd ever heard. John had come to Europe with YFC for the summer and somehow was stuck in Paris ("the most expensive city in Europe") without being assigned to any group. He had about twelve days free before joining a team in Germany.

We were leaving immediately after the YFC Rally Saturday on the overnight train for Britain. We had Sunday services in Barry, Wales the next day. When we were there in June, Pastor Paul Tucker had invited us back to the Princess Street Mission for a 15 day crusade "at the end of the summer." We had accepted his invitation.

When I saw John's disappointment with his current inactivity and knew that he had the next 12 days free, and knew that we had so many meetings waiting for us in Wales that we would have to divide the Team to take all of them, I said, "John, don't ask me any questions - I'll explain everything later. Pack your things quickly and meet us at the *Gare du Nord*. Our train leaves for London in just under two hours."

John raced back to his room, threw everything into his suitcase, took a taxi to the station, bought a ticket and swung onto the train as we pulled out. On the way to Calais, I explained that we were invited to be in two places at the same time and that our Team would divide up for the next two weeks. Leo, Dave and Jack were going to Treharris, Wales an important mining town in one of the Welsh valleys. Bill Leslie and I would be in the seacoast town of Barry, in the county of Glamorganshire. Each team had three members now as John joined the two Bills.

Those were unforgettable days. We mobilized the young people into witness teams and took them with us everywhere. In addition to the evangelistic meetings scheduled each evening, we had children's meetings at 6 p.m. plus an open air meeting before that. During the day we held beach services and other types of outreach. After the evening meeting we would go into the Pubs and dance halls to sing and give testimony. We had seventy services in fourteen days.

As a result of the Crusade, the young people of Princess Street Mission in Barry, Wales formed an outreach team which they called the “Fishers of Men Club” and continued the outreach ministry for many years. Some time afterwards, Pastor Paul Tucker accepted the call to a church in East London and later served as a member of the board for National Evangelistic Teams. But I’ll get to that story later on.

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## 7

### Train of Thought

Our last meetings in Britain that summer were in Glasgow, Scotland at the Tent Hall. This famous old landmark was built to host the Moody-Sankey meetings which previously had been conducted in a large tent. The building seats around 2,200 and it was packed for the weekend services.

After the Sunday evening service we walked down to the Central Station in Glasgow for the overnight train to London. From there we would catch the boat-train to Southampton, where the Cunard liner was waiting to take us back to New York. Tent Hall director, John Moore traveled down with us. He had just written the song, “*Burdens are lifted at Calvary*” and was on his way to confer with a London publisher.

A large crowd from the Tent Hall gathered on the platform to ‘sing us off.’ It was very moving. They walked along beside the train as the big iron horse got underway. We hung out the window waving in time with their farewell. Gradually the group of believers receded in the distance and finally a curve in the track hid them from our view.

I knew, deep down in my heart, that I would return one day to this glorious land. I did not know then what a strategic part it would play in the future course of my ministry and the life of my family.

All six of us settled into a no-smoking compartment on the train and began to sing John’s new song. In a few minutes another passenger came along the corridor and stopped to listen. His six foot 240 pound mass was framed by the door to our compartment. He stood there scowling and was apparently annoyed about something.

“What’s all this noise and *din* about?” he demanded. “Have you no respect for a man’s peace and quiet?”

“Come in, sir.” John invited. “We’re singing about the love of Jesus, and all that He can do for us.”

“What’s all this Christianity-bit about anyway?” the man enquired with some disdain.

Imagine asking missionaries a question like that. It was like saying, “Sic `em” to a dog. We all started in at once with personal testimonies to what the Lord had done in our lives. A long discussion followed.

Something in the nature of the man’s questions made me feel that he wasn’t what he pretended to be. His questions were logical and specific. Each question set us up for the next answer. He was in fact leading the direction of the conversation, not us.

Some time later the conductor came along the corridor. “Tickets. May I have your tickets, please?”

As we surrendered our tickets to his outstretched hand, John Moore asked, “Can you tell me, sir, where I can get a ticket to Heaven?”

The conductor was startled and mumbled something about not knowing anything “about that.”

John was polite but carried on. “Let me tell you the only way there is to get to Heaven.” Then followed a clear and concise explanation of God’s plan of salvation.

The stranger in the doorway was still listening. Finally the conductor turned to him and asked, “Are you with these people? Are you a Christian, too?”

All conversation in the compartment stopped abruptly. We wondered what on earth the man would say in response to such a clear and direct question.

“Indeed to goodness I am.” he affirmed.

Our mouths must have dropped open as we stared at him.

Without a moment’s hesitation he went on with a very positive testimony delivered in a beautiful Scottish brogue. “Twenty years ago, I emigrated to the United States of America from the Highlands here in my native land. I ended up in Chicago, about as far from the Lord as a man can go. One day I heard the good news that God loved me and Christ died for my sins. I trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as me own personal Saviour and He made all the difference in the world to me.”

The conductor shrugged and said he had to get on with his job.

As he left the stranger came into our compartment, introduced himself and sat down. “I heard the folks singing on the platform as we pulled out,” he said. “I knew right then I’d have to find out who you are and what you’re all about.”

We were more interested in finding out who he was and what he was all about. He shared with us that he had heard the Gospel from a Moody Bible Institute outreach team. Afterwards he had started attending the Moody Church in Chicago and was now a Sunday School teacher there.

This was the first trip back to his native Scotland in 20 years. Fellowship! The trip down to London was too short.

**Footnote:** Four years later, when we were permanent residents in Britain, I was on my way home by train to Eastbourne, Sussex in the south of England, from a series of evangelistic meetings up north. The midland city of Crewe was an important rail junction and I needed to change trains there. I had a tight connection and as we pulled into the station I asked someone, "Which is the train to London?" He indicated a train that was ready to pull out and I swung on board.

Twenty minutes later the conductor came through the car asking for our tickets. I remembered being impressed with John Moore's natural and sincere way of witnessing to the conductor, so I said, "Sir, can you tell me how to get a ticket to Heaven?"

The conductor looked at my ticket and then at me and replied, "I don't know about that - but this isn't the train to London. You're on the wrong train!"

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## 8

### Hunting with The Gospel Gun

Among my earliest memories, as a small boy, was an awareness that God was calling me to preach. On Sunday evenings all my aunts and uncles would come to our house for a visit. Sometime during the evening, when everyone was together in the living room, I would turn an orange crate up on end for a pulpit, open up a Bible and (before I learned to read) recite a verse I'd memorized that morning in Sunday School. Then we'd sing a song. That was "church." I was the preacher.

My mother came from a large family, but neither her sister nor any of her brothers had children until after I was around seven years old. My sister, Becky Lou, was born when I was nine, so in those early years there was no competition. I was the center of attraction and all my relatives would listen with admiration to "the preacher." The problem was I did not know the Lord.

My parents, members of a mainline denominational church, were nominal Christians. Dad (George Ellis Bathman) was very friendly and outgoing. He never met a stranger. Everyone liked him. He was saved in a "Billy Sunday Crusade" in Chattanooga.

Dad was an avid outdoors-man, a charter member of the first Boy Scout troop in Tennessee, an Eagle Scout and eventually Scout Master. I can remember camping trips with him in my pre-teens. We would hunt during the day and play chess by the camp fire at night. Dad was an expert marksman, but he never killed an animal or bird for sport. We always ate what we shot. We went to shooting matches in the Great Smoky Mountains. By age eight I could handle a muzzle loader. He gave me my first high-powered rifle on my eleventh birthday.

My mother, Lenora (Johnson), was a very deep and quiet person. Trained as a school teacher, she had given her heart to Jesus as a sixteen year old girl in an old fashioned "brush arbor" meeting near the family's summer home in Grandview, Tennessee. Lenora and Ellis were married October 3rd, 1926. I made my appearance on December 1st, 1927. Dad used to say that I came on the first of the month with all the rest of the 'bills.'

During the Great Depression thousands of men were out of work. My Dad managed to keep his engineering job because he was willing to take a fifty percent cut in salary. My Mom washed clothes. I sold newspapers on the street corner at seven years old, saved up enough money to buy a bicycle, and got a paper route. I had arrived. I was now a businessman!

When I moved into my teens the calling, leading (phrase it as you will) to preach persisted. The only role model I had for a minister, however, was the pastor of our church. I did not understand at the time that he was very liberal in his theology. The only thing I clearly understood was that I did not want to be like "him." My solution to this conflict was similar to Jonah's; to run as far as I could from the Lord.

While I was not swallowed by a whale, I was engulfed with all the adventure and excitement the world can offer. Seven days after I turned fourteen, The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and America was plunged into World War II. I wanted to enlist. "I'm every inch a fighting man," I told the recruiting sergeant. "That's fine, son," he replied. "Come back in four years when there are a few more inches."

Jobs, usually considered for grown ups, became available to boys because so many men were called away to fight in the war overseas. At fifteen years old I drove a grocery truck; at sixteen a laundry truck. When I turned seventeen, a prominent Atlanta businessman hired me as his chauffeur. All these jobs helped me support my "habit" - stock car racing.

Between fifteen and eighteen years old I had five different cars, and raced each one in dirt-track competitions. I can vividly remember working on my engine before a race, when the wrench slipped and I tore the skin off the back of my hand. Blood and oil mixed in the wound and the air was "blue." Afterwards I laughed and said to the other guys with me in the garage, "Never mind fellows, one day I'll be a preacher!"

The place erupted in laughter because the juxtaposition of the profanity I had just used, alongside some nonsense about being a preacher, was humorous to my unbelieving colleagues. Instantly it felt like a knife had gone deep into my heart because I knew it was true: one day I would be a preacher. It was scary.

I enlisted in the U.S. Navy when I turned eighteen and was deferred five months until the end of my senior year in High School. The weekend before leaving for boot camp in Maryland, I was climbing with some pals in the North Georgia mountains near Dablonega. At one point we had to cross Cain Creek, just above the waterfalls.



The stream wasn't very wide, maybe thirty feet, and only about two feet deep. I took off my boots, rolled up my pants and started across. I had not considered how swift the current was. Nor had I anticipated how slick and smooth the rocks were below the surface. Half way across my bare foot slipped on a glassy stone. I was swept off my feet and carried downstream - toward the falls!

The torrent was irresistible. I was a strong swimmer, but I struggled in vain to reach the shore. Every second brought me closer to the precipice. It was panic-city! Then, suddenly, I was swept over the falls to what I thought was certain doom.

They say that when you are facing death all the bad things you have ever done in life flash before your eyes. That did not happen to me. The falls were not high enough for me to remember all my sins. I do remember having one very clear, vivid and terrifying thought: "Any second now your head is going to hit on the rocks below, you're going to die, and you are not ready to meet God." That was the most frightening moment in all my eighteen years.

I'd had many close calls while racing cars. Before that, I'd done some pretty wild things on my bicycle. The inscription under my picture in the High School year book read, "*I bear a charmed life.*" Was this how it would end?

Fortunately for me, there were no rocks below. The pool was deepest where the water hit. I bobbed to the surface and swam toward shore. Before I reached the embankment, however, I prayed - something like this: "OK Lord, you win. I'll answer your call to preach."

That evening, at a Methodist youth camp meeting amid the tall pines in North Georgia, while the congregation sang "*A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify,*" I went forward and dedicated my life to full-time Christian service without even knowing what it meant to be a Christian.

Within thirty-six hours I was sworn into the United States Navy and left immediately for boot camp at Bainbridge, Maryland. I knew that Christians were not supposed to cuss, drink or commit adultery. Consequently I stopped using profanity immediately. All during my time in the service I kept my virtue and refrained from getting drunk. I told my shipmates that I was going to study for the ministry when I got out of the navy.

Our home port was New Orleans, Louisiana. My ship was the USS ENGLISH (DD 696). My battle station was combat information center (CIC) located just below the bridge. I was a radarman. We operated throughout the Caribbean and in the Gulf of Mexico. Later I went to Sonar school in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Our most frequent ports of call were Kingston, Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Nassau in the Bahamas and the Panama Canal.

During my time in New Orleans, I met several ministerial students at the Baptist Theological Seminary. Some pastored churches in the area. When they learned of my plans to study for the ministry after leaving the navy, I was frequently asked to preach. One church was near the shore of Lake Pontchartrain.

One of my shipmates named Smith was from Lowell, Massachusetts. All his friends called him Smitty. "Hey, Smitty, I'm preaching at a Baptist Church out in Pontchartrain on Sunday night," I informed him. "You wanna go?"

"Sure," he replied enthusiastically.

My text on Sunday evening was John chapter three. I had chosen this chapter because it was a long one. I always enjoyed reading the Bible. I read the entire chapter, slowly and with feeling because I really didn't have much of anything else to say. I wanted to make the world a better place in which to live. I wanted to help people. I was sincere. But I did not know what it meant to be "born again." The entire 'message' including the Scripture reading, lasted about twelve minutes.

The next morning, Smitty came up to me on the gun deck and said, "Bill, I thought you might like to know; when I came back to the ship last night I got down on my knees by my bunk and prayed and asked Jesus to come into my heart and save me."

I wondered, "What on earth is he talking about?" I didn't have a clue. I didn't know anything about asking Jesus to come into my heart or about "being saved." Saved from what? The only thing I could think of to say to him was, "Well, good luck Smitty!" That was the extent of my counsel. It was several months later before I discovered the joy that Smitty found that night on his knees by his bunk.

Reflecting on that incident has convinced me of the power and importance of God's Word. Smitty had grown up in an evangelical church. He had heard the Gospel many times, but had not repented of his sin and trusted Christ to save him. Then, on a Sunday evening fourteen hundred miles from home, he heard someone read an old familiar story from the Bible. The Holy Spirit used the scripture to convict *him of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.*

It was a story about a religious man who came to visit Jesus on a windy night in Jerusalem. Smitty was reminded of the imperative to be "*born again.*" With the words, ". . . as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up," he recalled messages he'd heard about the cross. The cross was a picture of God's love: "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.*" He remembered that his name - "Smitty" - could be inserted in place of "whosoever" and if he truly believed in Jesus Christ he would "*not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

I was not sensitive that night of the fact that "*the Word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" (Hebrews 4:12) My ignorance did not change the fact. The Holy Spirit used the Word of God, like a sword, to pierce the heart of a sailor-boy and bring him to his knees by his bunk. What would it take to get "the preacher" there?

One bright Sunday afternoon in New Orleans I accepted the invitation of a pretty, young Presbyterian girl to a Youth Meeting at her church. The speaker was Vincent Cervera, a student from Bob Jones University. It was not a Gospel service. His message was

devotional in nature with a challenge to full time Christian service. It appealed to me because I was planning to study for the ministry. I had never heard anyone speak so convincingly before. He was informed, articulate and knew his Bible.

Afterwards I thanked him for his message and said, "I want to be a preacher just like you."

"No you don't," Vince replied. "You want to be the kind of preacher God wants you to be."

"Well, I don't know about that," I said, "but where did you go to school?"

"Bob Jones University," he affirmed, "in Greenville, South Carolina."

I had never heard of the "university" but I remembered a Bob Jones College. At that time, in the late '30s, we lived in Chattanooga, Tennessee. My Mother used to listen to a radio program on Sunday afternoons. The speaker would say, "This is Doctor Bob Jones Senior, broadcasting from the Margaret Mack auditorium at Bob Jones College in Cleveland, Tennessee. Bob Jones College is an interdenominational college that stands without apology for the old time religion and the absolute authority of the Word of God."

That was all I ever heard. It was during my rebellious years when I was running from the Lord. By the time he finished that intro, I was out the door. Mom always prayed for me.

Perhaps the college had moved to Greenville, I thought. "Is that the school that stands without apology for the old time religion and the absolute authority of the Word of God?" I enquired.

"That's it!" he agreed. He must have thought I was a Christian to use those kind of terms. At my request he gave me the address of the university.

That night, back on the ship, I wrote a letter to BJU. I told them I had answered the call to preach; that I would be discharged from the Navy in the summer and asked whether or not there was a place for me in the Fall semester. I put a 3¢ stamp on the envelope and dropped it in the mailbox.

The letter went out from New Orleans on Monday morning. It arrived in Greenville, South Carolina the next day. Later I would learn that it was the policy of the school to answer each letter the day it arrived. On Wednesday's "mail call" there was a letter for me from the founder and President of the university, Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. I was amazed!

Several months before I had applied to the University of Georgia for acceptance in the Fall semester. My letter was never acknowledged. To have a reply from BJU by return mail was very impressive.

In his letter, Dr. Bob said (among other things), "Young man, if God has called you to preach, we'll teach you how to load the 'Gospel gun' and shoot it."

That did it. I figured if the president of a university could communicate in such a down-to-earth, clear and precise way, then I must attend that school. I sent a deposit along with my registration and made plans to enroll in September.

Two months later, in May 1948, I was transferred from my ship to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola, Florida to be honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy. I returned home to civilian life in Decatur, Georgia. My Mother had cancer and her health was failing. I'd been away for a long time, so I planned to stay around for the summer.

A few days after I got home the phone rang. It was my old high school buddy, Dick Rollins. We used to race cars together. "Glad you're back Bill," he said. "There's a big shin-dig on Friday night. Get a date, and we'll double-date."

"Fine," I said, "I'll call you back."

It was then that I began to realize how long I had been gone. I phoned every girl I had known from Alice to Zella. Each one was already spoken for, otherwise engaged, married or away at some college or university. My little black book was very much "out of date" and it looked like I was going to be as well.

I phoned Dick and told him that I was obsolete.

"That's what I figured," he said, "but don't worry. My girlfriend has a friend."

A blind date? That had never appealed to me. I figured you had to be blind to date someone like that. But I really wanted to go to that dance on Friday night. "OK," I said after a thoughtful pause. "Fix me up."

An hour later he phoned back to say that everything was arranged. He gave me her name and address and told me to pick her up at 7 p.m. on Friday. Then he laughed.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

Dick began to give me a verbal picture of this, this 'creature.' "I forgot to tell you Bill, she's cross-eyed. If all her freckles got together she'd have a great coat of tan. Oh, and she's so bow-legged that when she sits around the house, she literally sits around the house!" On and on he went. "You are hooked, man!"

It was racer's revenge. What should I do?

Friday night came too soon. I drove across town to her home, parked in front of the house, but left the engine running in case I had to make a quick get-away. The young lady that answered my knock at the door was not at all like the girl Dick had described. Standing before me in the doorway was the most gorgeous hunk of feminine pulchritude I had ever laid eyes on. She was five feet two, with bright hazel eyes and a generous, friendly smile. Her long, wavy, golden hair curled in just below her shoulders. She was petite and beautiful!

"I'm sorry, I must have the wrong house," I apologized. "Where is 305 Columbia Drive?"

"This is 305 Columbia Drive."

"Are - are you Harriett?" I enquired in wide-eyed disbelief.

"Yes. Are you Bill?" she purred.

(Gulp!) "Yeah!" I blurted.

We became friends that evening. Both of us enjoyed dancing the "Jitter-bug." It was very aerobic. We talked nonstop during the intermission. I shared with her my call to the ministry and plans to go to BJU in South Carolina. She was active in the youth group at the First Baptist Church. I knew where it was although I had never been there. She was planning to go into nurse's training in September at the Georgia Baptist Hospital in Atlanta.

It was apparent to me on our first date that here was a young lady with an admirable depth of character. She was a "real lady" in the old-fashioned genteel, deep-South sense of the term. I wanted to get to know her better, but I wasn't ready for a "steady." The entire summer was spread out before us.

It was almost two weeks before I phoned Harriett. We arranged to go to church on Sunday evening and afterwards to the Youth fellowship at someone's home. They had a "rumpus room" in the basement where we could dance to music from a record player, talk, and enjoy some refreshments.

We dated frequently that summer. Our friendship deepened and by the time September came we had an understanding. We were going steady. It would be a long distance relationship. She moved into the Nurses Dorm at Georgia Baptist Hospital in Atlanta and I left for BJU in Greenville, South Carolina.

It was September 8, 1948 when I arrived on campus at Bob Jones University. It was like stepping into another world. Everyone was so helpful and friendly. The students were clean-cut, well groomed and neatly (but not extravagantly) dressed. Men wore slack pants, ties and a sport coat. The ladies wore dresses or a skirt and blouse. It was remarkably easy to distinguish between male and female. There were smiles and greetings everywhere. There was no hazing. Everyone, faculty and old students alike, seemed genuinely glad to welcome the new students. I felt at home immediately. It was the nearest I could imagine to heaven on earth.

The school had moved the previous year from the old campus in Cleveland, Tennessee. All the buildings were brand new. I registered at the Administration Building, got my room assignment, made my way to the dorm and unpacked. Soon it was dinner time and I joined the flow of hungry young men crossing the campus to the dining common. Off to the right I could see a similar line of girls headed in the same direction. Eighteen hundred young people filed into the Dixon-McKenzie dining common, went to their assigned tables, and waited for someone to say grace. Immediately following the

“Amen,” doors burst open from the central kitchen and scores of waiters and waitresses came out carrying trays loaded with food. It was delicious!

The waiters and waitresses were part of the Student Loan work program which made it possible for them to pay their way through school. No one was ever denied a place simply for lack of funds. Because of my military service I was eligible for the G. I. Bill of rights, which covered room, board, books and tuition. Music, art and speech were all included without additional charge above the basic academic tuition. I didn't know life could be so good, but it got better!

After the second-shift dinner everyone moved toward the Rodeheaver Auditorium, a huge, cream brick building atop a knoll in the center of the campus complex. It was billed as a welcome and orientation meeting. Every student was required to attend. The place was packed with over 3,000 students. I found a seat in the balcony five rows back from the rail and to the right of the projection booth. This was God's place and time. My life was about to be changed forever.

Nothing was taken for granted at BJU. They did not “assume” that because you chose to attend a Christian university that you were, in fact a Christian. You can sleep in a garage, but that doesn't make you an automobile. Every semester began with several days of evangelistic meetings. This was no exception and I am exceptionally and eternally grateful for that.

The meeting began with several joyful songs. I had never heard so many people singing together before. This was followed by a sincere welcome to all the new students, some announcements, a pep-talk type of orientation and then, Dr. Bob Jones, Senior came to the pulpit.

This was my first glimpse of the man who had answered my letter the day it arrived. The man who said, “if God has called you to preach, we'll teach you how to load the ‘Gospel gun’ and shoot it.” This man had both my respect and my attention before he spoke his first word that night.

Dr. Bob opened his Bible and read a text. Then he began to talk about it. His words made the Bible come alive to me in a way I had never before experienced. His down-home illustrations were something practical we could all relate to. He interjected humor. We all laughed. It was a disarming tactic. Immediately he quoted another scripture that the Holy Spirit used to drive home a biblical truth with devastating force. His words went straight to my heart.

I had never heard a man preach like this before. It was authoritative, powerful, convincing and convicting. He knew his subject and dealt with it. He identified sin, labelling its cause and pointing to its cure. His eye contact with the audience was so effective that I felt as though he was preaching straight at me. In fact, after twenty minutes I was certain that someone had told him all about me before the service. I grew uncomfortable.

My discomfort changed to anger. What have I done? What kind of place is this? Who has told him all these things? Doesn't he know I'm on God's side? I've done God a big favor by joining His team. God should be pleased that I've answered the call to preach. I'm not such a bad guy. I don't cuss, drink, smoke, gamble or sleep around. I was almost ready to get up and leave when I realized that he was digging deeper than all those surface things.

Slowly it dawned on me that he was right. *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* I couldn't argue with that. If he was right - then I was wrong. "I hope he will tell me what to do," I thought. At that point I was looking straight down the barrel of the 'Gospel gun.'

Tumbling down a waterfall in the North Georgia mountains I had realized that I wasn't ready to meet God. Now, with all my works of righteousness being revealed for what they were, "filthy rags," I realized I was still not good enough to meet God. Later on I would discover that a jailkeeper in the city of Philippi had a midnight question just like the agonizing one racing through my mind: *"What must I do to be saved?"* (Acts 16:31)

Dr. Bob continued, *"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."* BANG! The shot went straight to my heart.

I was almost twenty-one years old. All my conscious life I had believed in the historical Jesus, the miracle-working Jesus, the "gentle Jesus meek and mild." But I had never received Him as my own personal

Lord and Savior. Most of my life I had been conscious of a "call to preach." I had answered that call two years before. I had even preached in several Louisiana and Georgia pulpits. Under my 'ministry' and in spite of myself, the Holy Spirit had used the Word of God to bring Smitty to Christ. Somehow, until now, I had missed it. My preaching was simply from the head, not from the heart. That was about to change.

The song leader said, "Let's stand and sing, 'Just as I am.'" Mechanically I rose to my feet. Dr. Bob was saying, "If you want to repent of your sin, and trust Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior tonight, I want you to come down here to the front so we can pray with you." It seemed that I was the only person in that vast auditorium, but that night four hundred other young people came forward; some to rededicate their lives to Jesus and some - like me, to become a *new creature in Christ*.

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## Born Again

By the grace of God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I was born again at about 9:15 p.m. on September 8, 1948. It was my first full day at university and it was the first time in my life that I heard the Gospel. It made a world of difference in my life. Now, I could preach from my heart! Now I have two birthdays: one physical and one spiritual. Looking back I can see that on that night my heart became a "Bethlehem" into which Christ was born. September 8th is my personal Christmas.

Everything was so new and refreshing. The apostle Peter tells us, "*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.*" I was a babe in Christ. I had a desire, passion, hunger to get into the Word of God; to hide it in my heart and to learn more about my Savior. I began to grow in Christ during that first semester.

Seven weeks after my conversion I received a telegram from my Dad: "Mother is very sick. Doctor says it's serious. Please come!" I covered the 160 miles as quickly as I could. My Mom smiled as I walked into the room. She had prayed many years for me and now, even in her pain, was pleased to know that I had surrendered my life to Christ.

I sat by her bed and held her hand through the long night as she slowly slipped away. I will never forget the smile of peace that came sometime in the early morning hours as she went to sleep in this life and woke up in the arms of Jesus. It was the unanimous decision of the family that I should preach at her funeral. It was one of the first sermons from my heart.

We had a Chapel program every morning during the week at BJU. For me this was the most important ingredient in my Christian education. The messages were inspiring, challenging, convicting and always spurred us on to greater depths of dedication to the Lord.

Sometimes we had well known speakers visit the campus and share, but mostly we heard from one of the Dr. Bobs - Junior or Senior. Dr. Bob Sr. often reminded us of a secret he'd learned from an old preacher "down in Alabama" on how to run a successful Christian school: "Keep your Chapel platform HOT!" He did!

Every weekend during the first semester I was out preaching and sharing my new found faith. I was also sharing what I'd learned that week, both in class and at Chapel. In fact, by Friday afternoon I was so "full" I felt I would explode. On Sunday afternoon several of us would go to the Greenville jail and preach to the inmates. Most were just in overnight for drunkenness or some misdemeanor.

One week I went to the jail on Saturday morning. The sergeant remembered me from all the previous visits. "Where do you get most of your 'customers' from on Saturday



night?" I asked. "Maybe if I get to them before they get drunk, I can spoil some of your business."

He smiled and told me of an area, near the train station, where they usually had a lot of trouble. "You don't wanna go down there," he warned. "That's a really tough neighborhood."

Actually, that was exactly where I wanted to go.

Saturday evening I drove to the area, parked my car several blocks away, and walked along the street towards the train station. Soon I came to a place with some very loud music. It came from a bar, downstairs, in a basement. I went down the steps, pushed back the door, and entered a smoke-filled room packed with about two hundred people, mostly men. It was 'standing room only.'

The bartender was a portly chap, balding somewhat and cleverly concealing the fact by combing his hair over the top of his head. "What would you like to drink?" he asked as I approached him.

I introduced myself, told him where I was from and said, "Some of your patrons may be a little late for Sunday School tomorrow morning. I'd like to tell them about Jesus tonight. Just give me five minutes."

He shrugged, but to my delight he reached over and pulled the plug out of the jukebox. The music stopped instantly. Everyone looked up in surprise. With a gesture toward the 'congregation' he signaled permission for me to preach.

What should I do now? I'm only five feet nine inches tall. If I stood on the floor to preach, no one could hear or see me. I would be a *voice crying in the wilderness*. The bar was the only clear space in the room. Quickly I climbed on top of the bar counter and shouted, "You've all heard that old song *Give Me Five Minutes More*, that's all the time I need to tell you about Jesus Christ."

For the next three and a half minutes I preached - sin, universal: hell, hot: eternity, long - but before I could get to salvation in Christ, an old drunk picked up the plug to the jukebox. "This ain't no church!" he protested.

Weaving unsteadily he managed to insert the plug into the electrical socket. Immediately the mega-decibel music blasted away.

Now what should I do? I could have said, "You, unplug that. The manager has given me five minutes to share my faith and I still have a couple of minutes." That was an option, but I would have lost the crowd. If there was a dispute they would have taken sides with their old pal. Instead I said, "Wow, I can't compete with the music, but I'm not finished yet. I still have a few minutes and I need to tell you about my Savior, Jesus Christ. If anyone is interested, follow me outside and I'll continue."

It was amazing. Fifty people followed me up the steps and out on to the street. Now there was no time constraint of five minutes. Fifty people! A crowd draws a crowd. Soon there were two hundred people standing on the sidewalk that autumn evening, listening for over 20 minutes to a young man preach Christ!

Several men and not a few women gave their hearts to the Lord that night. One young man told me later, "I left my mother with tears in her eyes, sitting in her rocking chair on the front porch, because she knew I was on my way down to this hell-hole to live in sin tonight. Thank God, I heard you preaching on the street before I went down those steps. I've asked Jesus to save me tonight."



Harriett's graduation, 1951

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## 10

### **A Parallel Work**

Harriett and I corresponded frequently that first semester. She told me all about her life as a student nurse at the Georgia Baptist Hospital. It was her first time away from home

and she was finding it tough going. The discipline was strict. The courses were demanding. The supervisor was sometimes frightening. But there was one bright spot that gave her hope and courage. It was the weekly Bible study.

Her teacher, Marian Dougherty, was a graduate of Moody Bible Institute, in Chicago. Under her tutelage the Bible came alive for Harriett and made her *hunger and thirst for righteousness*.

Meanwhile, as I grew in Christ it became apparent that I must rethink my relationship with Harriett. She was lots of fun to be with. She was cultured and refined. She was a good person; a church member even, but against the background of my experience of Christ, and what I had learned about separation, there seemed to be no real evidence of her salvation.

The Bible was clear concerning the danger of a Christian marrying an unsaved person. *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?”* (2 Corinthians 6:14) It would be a disaster for a minister of the Gospel to have an unsaved wife.

I was in turmoil. I wanted to write her about it, but “would she understand?” I considered breaking off our relationship, but to do it by letter - hiding as it were behind a 3¢ stamp - seemed a cowardly thing to do. I decided to wait until I was home for the Christmas holidays. We could talk about it then.

In Atlanta, one hundred and sixty miles away, Harriett had asked her Bible teacher if they could have a second study each week instead of just one. She had come to realize that Marian had something that she didn't have. There was a peace and joy and assurance in Miss Dougherty's life that was lacking in her own.

One afternoon in October, Harriett had to face reality. She had heard the Gospel preached at her church, but imagined that repentance was only for “very wicked sinners.” She was a church member and a good person, but she had never repented of her sin and surrendered to Jesus Christ. That afternoon she went to her room and knelt by her bed and prayed that she might know the reality of the same risen Savior about whom Marian Dougherty was so enthusiastic and sure.

As Harriett grew each day in Christ, she began to have second thoughts about our relationship. Her pastor had often warned about the dangers of being *unequally yoked together with unbelievers*.

“Bill is lots of fun,” she thought. “We dance very well together. He says he's going to be a preacher, but there's no evidence of his salvation - and *what communion hath light with darkness?* I am not ready to marry an unsaved man, even if he says he's going to be a preacher.”

She was in some turmoil. She wanted to write me about it, but “would he understand?” She pondered breaking off our relationship, but to do it by letter - hiding as it were

behind a 3¢ stamp - seemed a cowardly thing to do. She decided to wait until I came home for Christmas. We could talk about it then.

Shortly after I arrived home for the Christmas Holidays, I phoned Harriett and we made a date for Sunday night. As usual, we went to church together, sat in the balcony and at one point I held her hand.

Things seemed a bit strained between us, but I figured it was because we hadn't seen each other for some time. After the service we joined with the other young people and went to someone's home for fellowship. I was beginning to feel uncomfortable. As we went down the stairs to the rumpus room I heard the music and knew that everyone would be dancing and would expect us to be out on the floor, jitter-bugging as usual.

Instead of turning onto the dance floor, I took Harriett by the hand and we went over by the fireplace. "I've got something on my heart I must tell you," I said.

She stood before me with her long, beautiful golden hair flowing gently around her shoulders. She was holding my hand and looking up into my eyes and I heard her say, "Yes, I have something wonderful to share with you too."

For the next - I don't know how long - we just stood there, pouring out our hearts, sharing our testimonies, explaining what had happened, talking at the same time, interrupting each other, trying desperately to find the right words that would make the ending of our relationship a little easier. And then, almost in unison, we exclaimed...

"What's that? You've asked Jesus to come into your heart? You've been saved!"

We were talking simultaneously. The realization of what had happened since September was overpowering; that we had both come to know Jesus Christ in a deeper, closer, more intimate way as our own personal Savior.

From somewhere in the background, off-stage, seemingly from another world we heard someone ask, "Hey Bill, Harriett, aren't you going to dance?"

Not tonight. We had been friends since the beginning of summer. Now we had discovered a new relationship as brother and sister in Christ. We had some serious catching up to do.



Harriet's photos helped inspire frequent correspondence

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## 11

### Ode to Byford

In the Summer of 1950 I followed Horace Greely's advice to "Go West young man." I formed an evangelistic team and traveled 12,000 miles, through 30 states and literally from coast to coast and from Mexico to Canada. Julian Courteol, my roommate at university, had a beautiful baritone voice and could lead singing. He was from Arizona and arranged most of the western portion of our itinerary. Ed White, our pianist, had just graduated from BJU with a double major: Music and Business Administration. He was fabulous at both. In addition to concert class music, Ed provided the transportation - his brand new Chevy. We were ready for the road.

We had many blessings that summer. In Nebraska a businessman we led to Christ later became a minister and pastored a Bible Church for many years. Recently, due to ill health, he resigned as Senior Pastor. I wrote the following on the occasion of his retirement.

### Ode to Byford Lockard

It was a year of double-breasted suits and wide ties, bobby-sox, wrap-around bumpers and windshields. Gasoline was 27¢ a gallon. There were no McDonalds or microwave ovens, no pocket calculators or computers . . . but there was Byford. It was 1950.

Byford Lockard was something of a legend in Falls City, Nebraska. In fact, Byford was something. Period! He was built like an inverted pyramid; broad shoulders, bulging biceps, footballs for muscles. He was recently married to a sweet young thing that answered to the name of Loretta. They had one son, just a tiny baby. They called him "Butch." Probably his Dad's idea.

Byford was manager of the Firestone Store in Falls City. He was a respected businessman. You'd better respect him, or he'd break your face! Tough? Yeah. Brutal? Sometimes. Like the time a guy came in with a shotgun to rob him. Byford took the weapon away from him, broke it over his knee, handed the two pieces back to the man with the warning,

"Get outa here! The next time you try that, I'll wrap the barrel around your neck!" There may have been a few other choice words sandwiched into that rebuke which will remain unrecorded.

How I ever managed to happen into town, and ultimately into range of Byford, is still something of a mystery to me. I'm the opposite of Byford. I'm like the little "before" guy in those "before and after" ads. You know, the one that always gets sand kicked in his face - the one with golf balls for muscles.

I'd been saved less than two years, and thought I was a preacher. During the summer of 1950, three of us students from Bob Jones University were travelling through the western US of A on an evangelistic tour. We'd been invited to hold an eight-day evangelistic Crusade at the First Baptist church. I was staying with the pastor at 1515 Morton Street. That's where I almost got killed, - but I'm getting ahead of my story.

It was Sunday, the first day of the Crusade. I didn't know any better but to just preach the Word and let the chips fall where they may. I called sin, "Sin." Unbeknownst to me the Holy Spirit was at work, doing what He always does: convicting of sin, and of righteousness and of judgement. Also, unbeknown to me, Loretta was there - with li'l Butch.

Now the Holy Spirit got after Loretta big time, and she got right with the Lord. What's more, she marched straight home and told Byford. That's when the earth shook. I would start shaking a little later.

That afternoon I was sitting peacefully in the living room talking with the pastor when I heard a car roaring down Morton Street. I thought, "Who on earth is that crazy nut - driving like a mad man?" It was a mad, man! The car screamed to a stop right in front of the pastor's house. Blue smoke was pouring out from under the wheel wells from the abused tires. I thought the door would break off from the un-gentle way the driver slammed it when he got out. The driver's eyes were aflame; smoke was coming out of his ears and nose. His look of rage and determination was my first indication that something was wrong.

The ground shook as he pounded up the front walk and approached the stairs to the porch. "Who's that?" I asked the pastor.

“That there is Byford Lockard,” the pastor responded, “and he don’t look too happy!” It was an understatement.

My survival instinct told me it might be a prudent move to disappear, but my feet were AWOL. I thought, “We must lead this man to Jesus Christ. It’s a matter of life or death. MY life or MY death!”

Byford burst through the front door of the parsonage with all the finesse of a bull in a China shop. “Where’s that Evangelist?” he demanded. The pastor was speechless. From back in one of the bedrooms, and from under the bed, I said, “Here I am.”

What should I say to this troubled man? How should I begin a rational conversation? Fortunately, I didn’t have to. Byford spoke (make that “roared”) first.

“What’s wrong with smoking?” he demanded.

It was my opportunity. “Byford, all the cigarettes, cigars and pipes in the world won’t send one man to hell,” I told him. “The only thing that will condemn a man is rejecting Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.”

Byford collapsed his massive frame into a big upholstered chair in the pastor’s living room - and listened to the Gospel. That afternoon he was saved. In fact we both were. Byford was saved for eternity by putting his faith in the shed blood of our risen Savior, Jesus Christ. I was saved from Byford.

Over the 49 years I have seen Byford and Loretta grow in Christ. I’ve seen God at work in their lives. I’ve seen them bounce back from disaster - as when their grocery store burned that bitter winter, when the water froze as it came out of the hose. From a distance I’ve seen their family grow, their children mature, and their grand children come to know the Lord. I saw his testimony make an impact in the southeastern part of Nebraska and beyond. I rejoiced that the Lord used him to win many precious souls to Christ. I was thrilled when Byford answered the call to preach and delighted when he became Pastor of Bible Fellowship Church in Falls City.

Now, it’s time to pass the torch. This will be the toughest test in your lifetime, Byford. It is a wise move. Your health has not been too good recently, and you need to “be still and know that He is God.”

And we need you. We still need your wisdom and experience and above all your godly example to believers and unbelievers alike. It’s just good to know that you are there - when we need you. I know your family loves you - like a mother platypus loves her young, even when no one else can. But, just for the record: I love you too, my Brother.

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## 12

### Adventure in Lost Creek

*"I once was lost, but now I'm found."*

One weekend my friend and classmate, Rusty Sherwood, whom I had baptized in the Atlantic Ocean, went on a mission trip with me. Our destination was deep in Daniel Boone territory, to a rural Kentucky community known as Lost Creek. Believe me, it was appropriately named.

We had been invited to come up for some meetings at a little church in this mountain hamlet. It was a long and tiring ten hour drive by car and I reckoned we could make it in about two hours and ten minutes in the plane. The little Piper had no equipment for flying in instrument weather conditions. We had to fly what pilots call VFR, visual flight rules.

I wrote ahead of time to say that we would fly in, weather permitting, and asked them to prepare a landing strip. I suggested they plow under twelve rows of corn, make it 900 feet long and drive a truck over it a few times to pack it down. Our host agreed.

Friday noon the weather enroute looked reasonable: overcast at 15,000 feet and spotted clouds at 10,000 feet. The highest mountain-pass was just over 5,000 feet. We took off from Greenville, South Carolina and climbed slowly but steadily northward. Our planned route took us over Asheville, North Carolina.

By the time we reached our cruising altitude of 7,000 feet I could see the old US 25 winding its way up one side of the mountain and down the other. In fact, I could see the entire road from Asheville to Greenville, sixty miles or more. I saw trucks coming up one side of the mountain, their driver's totally unaware of what was coming toward them a few miles away on the other side. I thought, that's an illustration of how my Heavenly Father knows what lies ahead for His children. Perhaps it was a good thing we didn't know what was ahead for us.

As we crossed over Asheville, I could see Mt. Mitchell off my right wing in the distance. It's the highest point in North Carolina. I noticed the bottom of the clouds were just touching the 6,684 ft. summit. That meant the ceiling had dropped. The 5,000 foot pass was still ahead of us. It was going to be marginal and I made a point of not flying in marginal weather.

"Rusty, let's turn northwest and use that lower pass we came through last week on our way back from Johnson City," I suggested.

My trusty navigator, agreed.

I put the plane in a gradual turn for a new heading of 330° and descended to 6,000 feet.



Soon we spotted the familiar valley and followed the French Broad River northwest. In another few minutes we reached a bend in the river which we recognized from our "exploration" the week before. Here was the place we needed to turn due north.

The pass ahead was about 2,300 feet above sea level. We were just under 6,000 feet, with the cloud layer a thousand feet above us. It seemed safe enough when we started through the gap. Although our altitude remained the same, the terrain seemed to be coming up to meet us. As we reached the middle of the mountain pass, I noticed little fluffs of cloud rushing past us. Obviously the ceiling was beginning to drop.

"This is not good, Rusty," I said. "Let's go back."

I moved the stick to the left and pulled it back, putting the plane into a steep 180° turn. As we rolled out, on a southern heading, I could see that the weather had completely closed in behind us. Visibility was virtually zero! I repeated the manoeuvre immediately to put us back on our original course. We were committed to fly through the pass.

A verses of Scripture kept flashing across my mind: "*The eternal God is thy refuge and strength and underneath are the everlasting arms.*" I particularly appreciated that part about His arms being underneath us. We were beginning to wonder if His arms were about to transport us straight to glory! (That would have been OK too. We were ready.) But the Lord had other plans.

Soon we began to periodically lose sight of the ground as soft, scuddy, broken clouds passed beneath us. In a few moments we were enveloped by the mist. Without proper instruments for flying in this kind of weather you can become disoriented very quickly. There is no point of reference to tell you what the aircraft is doing. I held the stick as firmly as I could, but had no idea what the attitude of the plane was.

It was a surprise, therefore, when the airspeed began to increase and the needle inside the little compass on top of the meager instrument panel began to rotate. I had thought we were flying straight and level, but obviously we were in some kind of diving turn! We prayed!

I pulled on the carburetor heat, to keep the engine from stalling, as I chopped the throttle. If we were in a diving turn I preferred it to be a slow one. Suddenly we broke out of the cloud and I could see the ground rushing up toward us. I laid the stick back in my lap and walked on the rudder-pedals to steady our course. We were low. Right beneath us a little dirt road wound its way through the pass. We were just above the treetops.

Following that road seemed our only hope. By now we both had our heads out the windows. "I've got the road on my side," Rusty shouted. I banked to the right. Then I could see it on my side again and dipped the wing to the left. This procedure went on for what seemed an eternity, but in reality was probably not more that a minute or two. Then it happened.

"I've got the road on my side, Rusty," I yelled, pushing the stick left. "Well, I've got it on my side!" he bellowed.

Instantly I realized we'd come to a fork in the road. "Which way Lord?" I prayed. It seemed as though my hand felt warm. It was certainly His hand on mine. I continued the turn, keeping the road in view. Almost immediately we were through the pass and headed down, out of the mountain's grasp and into a broad green valley. But, where were we?

Nothing seemed familiar. We could see for miles but there were no towns in sight. We were lost. I kept on a northern heading and eventually spotted a highway. I followed it for a few miles, looking for a place to land the plane.

Presently I found a field that looked promising and began to slowly circle it. The hay had been recently cut. There were no farm vehicles in the way or drainage ditches. The cows, standing in the next field, indicated which way the wind was blowing. Setting up my approach to land into the wind, I came in low, parallel to the road and over a fence on the west side of the field. The wheels caressed the top of the grass and we eased in smoothly.

Two potential missionaries were unbelievably glad to have their feet firmly planted once again on *terra firma*. The fact that we had not a clue where we were didn't matter. We were in one place, each in one piece!

A car stopped by the side of the road, fifty feet away. "Need any help?" the driver asked.

"We've lost our way," I replied. "Can you tell us where we are?"

"Ah thas easy," he responded, with a pleasant east-Tennessee accent. "Yor `bout a mile `n haf from Tusculum."

"Tusculum?" I asked.

"Yep. Thas `bout four mile from Greenville."

Four miles from Greenville! We had been flying for just over two hours, been trapped in instrument weather without instruments and had come through a hair-raising, near-death situation in the Smoky Mountains and we were only four miles from Greenville! I couldn't believe my ears. "What State is this?" I asked.

My new friend looked at me in bewilderment. I could just imagine what was going across his mind. *How could any feller that can operate a contraption like that not know whar he's at?*

"This here's Tennessee," he answered proudly, giving me a *I-may-look-dumb-but-I-ain't-lost* look.

Fortunately he had a road map in his glove compartment. We spread it out on the hood of his black '41 Ford and he pointed to Greenville, Tennessee. It's on US 321, east of Knoxville and west of Johnson City. Immediately the words of John Newton's *Amazing*

Grace came to my mind: "I once was lost, but now I'm found." What a relief to know where we were.

We pumped the hand of our helpful friend and thanked him sincerely. He stood beside his car and watched as we crossed the stubble-field to the waiting Piper. Painted on the side of its bright yellow fuselage was a silver-winged disc. The words, "Vagabond Flight Club" formed a ring around a cross in the middle of the circle. On the cross was written, "Jesus Saves." How very true, in more than one way.

Before taking off again we got out the flight chart to pin-point our present location and to plan our course from there. We could see the pass we had just come through. The little dirt road we'd followed was also shown. Then, we spotted the fork in the road, where the Lord's hand had guided us safely out into the green valley. What about that "other way?" The right-hand fork was a seldom used logging-road that led up the mountain side to an old, abandoned saw mill. If we had taken that road, it would have led back up the mountain, into the cloud and certain death. We thanked God for His ". . . *everlasting arms.*" The Tri-City airport served three east-Tennessee communities, Kingsport, Bristol and Johnson City. It was only twenty minutes away from the little hay field where we had landed. We stopped in Tri-City long enough to refuel and file a new flight plan. Then it was off again, in search of Lost Creek.

Lost Creek, Kentucky is approximately sixteen miles (by air) north-northwest of Hazard. It's a lot farther than that by road as Rusty found out later.

It was mid-afternoon when we came in over the valley. On the second pass I spotted the field they had prepared. I was astonished to see how very short it was. They got the width correct, twelve rows, but it was only about 600 feet long! I checked the smoke curling up from a log cabin's chimney to verify which way the wind was blowing through the valley, and lined up our little plane accordingly. The tiny landing strip looked somewhat like a stick of chewing gum - Dentyne at that!

The Vagabond had no flaps. Pulling on the carburetor heat, I eased the throttle back, stood on the right rudder pedal and dipped the joy-stick to the left. We slipped sideways. The left wing was pointed down almost directly toward the runway. I put just a bit of back pressure on the stick to keep the nose from dropping. I didn't want to pick up any extra air-speed at this point. The Lord's hand must have been covering mine again and we managed to get in safely. After we landed I said to Rusty, "I don't know how we're going to get out of here."

We unloaded the supplies brought with us in the plane for the children at the orphanage; groceries and various other things. We preached that weekend and did all that we had gone up there to do. God blessed His Word to hungry and grateful hearts.

At the end of the weekend when we were ready to leave, I said to Rusty, "There's no way we can get that plane out of here with both of us in it. You need to get up to the highway and then hitchhike to Hazard. I'll pick you up at the airport over there."

We emptied the plane of every non-essential. I didn't want any extra weight on board. I even drained the gas tank of all but enough fuel to get me over the mountain to Hazard.

Rusty took the few personal things I had with me, (a small bag with toilet kit and pajamas) and literally rode a mule up to the highway. From there he hitchhiked to Hazard.

Some local folks helped me push the plane to the end of the field.

The tail of the Vagabond was off in the grass at the end of the strip. I started the engine and let it warm up. I went through my cockpit check (the mags, the carburetor-heat and all those things) with extra care. Everything was ready. I ran up full power with the brakes on.

When I released the brakes the little Piper started off immediately, bouncing along the improvised dirt runway, with the engine screaming at full revs. I eased the stick forward to get the tail off the ground and reduce the drag.

The fence at the end of the field was coming up fast. I needed 55 miles an hour to fly. With less than seventy-five feet to go, I was still only doing about 50 mph. At the last instant I jerked the stick back in my lap and shot it forward immediately. The plane just popped off the ground. It shuddered momentarily, hanging on the prop, but because I shoved the stick forward right away it dropped the nose and trimmed it up. I had cleared the fence and was flying level, right across the top of the corn in the next field!

As the Vagabond gained speed, I began to pull up and gradually climbed out of the valley and over the mountain to the airport in Hazard. The Lord didn't let me die in a plane crash, but one day He was going to ask me to "die" to flying.



Bill at Flight School with the Piper J-3 that he soloed in

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## Part III

### What Did the Lord Do When He Got Me There?

***“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord . . . being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”***<sup>1</sup> Corinthians 15:58, Philipians 1:6

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## 13

### Heart to Hart

***“Two are better than one.”*** Ecclesiastes 4:9

A few weeks after I graduated from university in 1952, Harriett and I left for Europe. We had been married for less than a year. We had one suitcase each, “his” and “hers.” It was basically a follow-up on my ministry there the previous summer. Several churches had asked for a return visit for ministry and evangelism. We were invited to participate in the Youth for Christ World Congress on Evangelism in Belfast, plus I had been invited to Berlin to lead a six week evangelistic crusade in the divided city.

We had military travel orders, issued by Berlin-command, with authorization to transit, by rail, the 110 mile Russian-controlled corridor through communist East Germany which locals preferred to call the Deutsche Democratic Republic. The venue for the “Berlin for Christ” crusade was a large, 800-seater tent, strategically pitched in the French zone, adjacent to the British and American zones. A forty piece mandolin orchestra had been arranged to provide the music. One of the key organizers was an army sergeant, Ken Debus, an AFN announcer whose voice was familiar to everyone in the former capital of the Reich. He made sure the word was out about the crusade. During the daytime we would work in some of the many refugee camps with Harold Englehardt. This was nine years before they built the Berlin Wall.

There was no time constraint of three months as there had been in 1951. We were free to travel wherever God led us, and to stay as long as He directed. We had no idea what that commitment would mean as we boarded the great Cunard liner in New York in mid-summer and sailed for Southampton, England.

This was my third (and Harriett's first) trans-Atlantic crossing. As soon as we had put the suitcases in our stateroom, I went along to the Purser and requested permission to conduct evangelistic services each evening. He remembered me from the previous year and kindly obliged. As before, a room with seating for about 120 people was made available to us for the eight day crossing. The meetings were advertised in the ship's newspaper each day and shortly before 7 p.m. an announcement was made over the loudspeaker system.

In addition to an immediate evangelistic opportunity, the meetings each night provided a rendezvous for fellow-missionaries traveling abroad. Among them were two very dedicated Canadians, Fletcher and Vernita Tink, who were returning from a short furlough. Fletcher was pastor of Speke Hall, a mission church in one of London's most neglected areas. He was brilliant at the piano and Vernita was a master on the cornet. They both had a great sense of humor. (When they had first begun their ministry in London a local newspaper ran the headline: "Mr. Tink tinkles while Mrs. Tink toots.") We became instant friends. Their music was a definite attraction for the other passengers.

One day, while strolling on the promenade deck, Fletcher asked me, "What are you going to do when we get to England?" I explained about the Congress in Belfast and the Crusade in Berlin, but noted that we didn't have any plans for the first week we were there. My plan was to stay somewhere in London for a few days and show my bride some interesting historical sites before going to Belfast.

"Where will you stay in London?" he pressed.

"I don't know," I replied, "but we'll find some place."

"You already have," Fletcher assured me. "You will stay with us." What a generous offer. I'm sure he had no idea at the time how much we needed a place to stay. Funds were always scarce. We had not given it a lot of thought but we did have a full week without any meetings or obligations.

"Thank you," I said. "We'll do it on one condition."

"What's that?" Fletcher questioned.

"Put us to work," I explained. "Let's have evangelistic meetings every night."

"Great idea!" Fletcher enthused. "We were planning to start a daily Vacation Bible School for the children the day after we return. We'll print up some hand bills announcing the evening meetings and have the children take them home and invite their parents."

It worked. We helped the Tinks with DVBS during the mornings and night after night attendance increased as I preached the Word. During the afternoons Harriett and I would explore the many wonderful historical sites that London offers: Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament topped by Big Ben, Scotland Yard, Nelson's column at

Trafalgar Square, the Admiralty Arch, the Royal Mile, Buckingham Palace, and Oxford Street to name a few. I even preached at the speakers' corner in Hyde Park.

One afternoon it rained. That in itself is not remarkable for London, but what followed literally changed our lives forever. Sight-seeing was not appropriate in the inclement weather so I decided to browse in Fletcher's library. He had an impressive collection of perhaps 2,500 books. I soon found a slim volume with the intriguing title, "World Travel With the Living God," by George Hart. The rest of that day was spent devouring the contents.

It was a fascinating story of faith and adventure. George Hart had left Scotland in 1916, before the Bolshevik Revolution, with half a crown (about one dollar) in his pocket and literally preached his way around the world. He crossed Europe, Africa, India, Asia, Australia and America and returned to his native Scotland with half a crown in his pocket. God is so faithful.

Europe was very much on my heart but, like John Wesley, I felt that "the world is my parish." After all, the Lord did say, "Go, into all the world." Was there any place that He did not want me to preach the Gospel?

Harriett and I had a vague plan in the back of our minds. When we finished the Berlin for Christ Crusade on October 6th, we would take some meetings in southern Europe and then cross over to Africa. Almost the whole of East Africa is English-speaking, so we planned to work our way south through Egypt, Kenya and Rhodesia to South Africa. When we finished there, we would head for India and Australia and literally preach our way around the English speaking world. You can see how the title of George Hart's book appealed to our grand plan.

On Friday evening, the last night of the meetings in London's Speke Hall, I preached on "The Cross." I closed the service with an invitation for people to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ. Several came forward. Fletcher and I dealt with each one individually. Out of the corner of my eye I noticed a thin, silver-haired gentleman of medium height, waiting patiently at the rear of the Hall.

When I finished dealing with those who had responded to the Gospel, the old man came forward. He was immaculately dressed in a black suit, starched white shirt with wing-tipped collar and black tie. He wore a friendly smile beneath a trim gray mustache. His eyes were penetrating. He tipped his bowler hat and said in a broad Scottish accent, "Aye, young man, the Lord Jesus Christ has put it on me heart to ask you to come to Glasgow, Scotland for a fortnight crusade."

There was something compelling about his invitation. He seemed so certain that "the Lord had put it on his heart." I had never met this man before. He could not know that we were leaving the next morning for Belfast and after that going straight to Berlin where we were booked until October 6.

"Sir, if the Lord has put that on your heart, what are the dates?" I asked.

“The last fortnight in October,” he said emphatically.

I was astonished. Only the Lord could have known what my schedule was and when I would be available for meetings in Scotland. I was certain that God had arranged our itinerary to Belfast and Berlin. This was perfect. We would have a few days free to recharge our batteries after Berlin before beginning mid-October in Glasgow. “Sir, what is your name?” I inquired.

“George Hart,” he responded.

George Hart! He was the author of the book I had just finished reading. A book I had selected on a rainy afternoon from approximately 1,500 volumes in the library of a man whom I met among some 1,200 passengers on an ocean liner in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. “This must be of the Lord,” I thought. “There is no bookie on earth that would give you those kind of odds.”

That’s how I met George Hart.

Glasgow would be a life-changing experience.

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## 14

### **Belfast, Berlin and Beyond**

We left the next morning by train from London’s Liverpool Street Station. Our journey took us northwest across England to the port of Heysham. From there we crossed the Irish Sea by night-ferry to Belfast. We were about to find out what most Britishers already knew: that this is a perpetually tempestuous 130 mile stretch of water.

I considered myself an “old salt” after two years aboard a destroyer in the U.S. Navy, but this was the roughest voyage I’d ever been on. The pounding of the sea was relentless. The constant rolling and pitching of the ship threw us from one bulkhead to the other. Every passenger was seasick. It was too cold and windy to stay outside on deck (where the fresh air and action would keep you from getting sick), so we spent a sleepless night inside and endured the stench rather than risk being swept overboard by a wave.

Seldom has a harbor looked so beautiful as Belfast the next morning when we sailed up the River Lagan and docked at Queen’s Quay. We decided we would spend the rest of our lives in Ireland if we couldn’t find an alternative route back to England.

Belfast, capital of Northern Ireland, was host city for the “Youth for Christ Fifth World Congress on Evangelism” in the summer of 1952. Harriett and I wanted to attend since I



had worked a lot with YFC during my university years. Two of my favorite “Dr. Bobs” were there: Pierce and Cook. We met classmates Nick and Rose Leonovich, serving with the Slavic Gospel Association (later our paths would cross again in Morocco and Monte Carlo). Meetings were held in various churches across the city from Wellington Hall to the Great Victoria Street Baptist Church. The musical Palermo Brothers led the “March of Witness” parade to the Windsor Park Stadium where over 35,000 people attended the final rally.

After the Congress we managed to find a shorter and less turbulent alternative route. From Larne, on the beautifully rugged Antrim Coast, it is only about twenty-five miles across the North Channel to Stranraer in the Scottish lowlands. It was relatively calm the morning we crossed. From Scotland we took a train to London and Dover, then crossed the English Channel to Oostende, Belgium.

After a meeting at the Belgium Gospel Mission in Brussels we moved on to Luxembourg for two days. The military train through the East German corridor left Frankfurt in the evening and travelled during the night to West Berlin. We had the distinct feeling that the communists didn’t want us to see their country. They need not have bothered. There wasn’t anything spectacular to see.

In 1952 - nine years before they built “the Wall” - West Berlin was a mecca for refugees. Over one thousand people a day `voted with their feet’ and fled from Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and further afield from Romania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. In those days it was simply a matter of walking across the street from the Russian zone into the British, French or American sector of the divided city. After checking into a refugee center they would be screened and processed before being flown out of Tempelhof to West Germany.

The Allied authorities could only process about 700 of the one thousand or more arriving each day. And that was on the good days. If there was any political unrest or a communist clamp down in the East, the number would swell to three thousand or more each day. Empty promises of building a “Workers Paradise” could not stop the human hemorrhage.

While waiting for space on a flight out of West Berlin, the refugees were housed in various bunkers Hitler had built during the war as underground air raid shelters. There were approximately eighty shelters scattered around the city. The growing backlog of people remaining to be evacuated threatened to overwhelm the existing temporary facilities.

While in Berlin we rented a room in Steglitz. Andrews Barrack, an American military base, was one block away. Our travel-orders allowed us to eat at the snack bar, do a limited amount of shopping at the PX and to use the bathing facilities. This was helpful because three quarters of the house we lived in (including the bathroom) had been blown away during the war.

A large part of each day was spent going from one refugee camp to another. Our interpreter was Hildegard Gensch, a brave young Christian lady who crossed over each morning from East Berlin to translate for us.

Later we were able to help her get out of Berlin and to America, where she ultimately graduated from Bob Jones University.

The traditional picture one has of refugees is both bleak and demeaning. Yes, they were poor. They had left behind every material thing they owned and fled for their lives. Some had only the clothes on their back. One man was bare footed and wearing his pajamas when I met him. He had jumped out of his bedroom window and fled when he heard the Volkspolizei (Secret Police) knock at his door in the middle of the night. Bleak yes, but demeaning?

Many tend to think of refugees as being on the lowest rung on the social ladder, because they look on the outward appearance and judge them for their lack of material possessions. That is unfortunate and a gross misrepresentation. The people coming out of Eastern Europe were primarily hard working citizens, the most industrious, talented and best educated in their country. Some were persecuted by the atheists for their Christian faith, but all prized freedom and life more than possessions. They constituted a serious "brain drain." By August 1961, the communists could no longer tolerate the exodus and built the Wall.

We spent hours in conversation, counseling with and preaching to these precious people. It was easy to see how the Lord was moved with compassion when He saw the multitudes. They were as ". . . *sheep, having no shepherd.*" We had the joy of leading many of these hungry souls to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Our friend, Harold Englehardt, left a lucrative Berlin office job and devoted all his time to reaching refugees.

The "Berlin for Christ" meetings in the big tent were very fruitful. The forty piece mandolin orchestra was a great attraction. The Holy Spirit fulfilled His ministry and drew men to Christ each evening as I preached the Word. Scores of precious souls surrendered their lives to the Lord during the weeks we were there.

News about the Crusade must have reached the communist officials in East Berlin, because after the first week of meetings they started sending up fireworks each night just about the time I was giving the invitation. The explosions were deafening. The tent was only about 400 yards from the border. We figured they were inadvertently helping the angels to rejoice over so many precious souls coming to Christ.

For months before the Germans surrendered, Allied forces made thousand-bomber raids around the clock, day after day and night after night, reducing Berlin to the world's largest rubble heap. It's hard to imagine a thousand aircraft constantly overhead. Harder still to comprehend the destruction that followed. For seventeen miles across the heart of the once proud Reich capital there was not one building left standing.

As far as the eye could see there was an unending vista of the burnt-out shells of office buildings with their twisted steel girders projecting at various angles from piles of smoldering, broken bricks. I have film of German workers knocking cement off of one brick at a time to reclaim as much as possible. Private homes as well as government quarters all went up in flames. Hildegard told us that she and her family lived in an underground bunker for the last six months of the war.

Much of the rubble was carried away and piled high in areas where they did not intend to rebuild. These were called, "Mountains of Tears." Some of the hills were 200 feet high. In time they were covered with topsoil; afterwards grass and trees were planted.

Harriett and I celebrated our first wedding anniversary in Berlin. Ken Debus found out about it and surprised us with dinner at the brand new Hotel Kempinski on the recently rebuilt Kurfürsten Damm. Ku-Damm, as the Berliners call it, was the center of West Berlin. It became a showpiece for technology and tourism in the post-WWII days.

October was upon us before we realized it. Reluctantly we said "auf Wiedersehen" to the divided city and returned to West Germany. Once again we made our way by train across Europe to the English Channel. Then by rail to London and eventually to Glasgow, Scotland for George Hart's fortnight crusade.

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## 15

### **Glasgow, Scotland - Mid-October 1952**

When Harriett and I got off the train in Glasgow's Central Station, I had one U.S. dollar left in my pocket. We were four thousand miles from home, we had no credit cards, no traveler's checks, and no bank account in the USA on which to draw. We had something more however. We had the unshakeable faith that God had opened this door for us to serve Him and that He would keep His promise and *supply all our needs*.

Glasgow Central was the end of the line. The train disgorged all its passengers and the platform was thronged with hundreds of people collecting their baggage, meeting friends and family and hurrying to their next destination. Harriett stayed close behind me as we made our way through the multitude. We searched the crowd for a familiar face, but there was no sign of Pastor Hart.

I had only met George Hart once, at night after the last meeting in London and that was almost three months before. A lot had happened since then. There had been no letters or communication in the meantime. That was not his fault. We were living out of a suitcase and moving almost daily. For one, short, fleeting moment I thought I heard the *Garden intruder* whisper, "He's not here."

Then, suddenly, as if from out of nowhere we saw a neatly dressed elderly gentleman, waving his trademark bowler hat and smiling broadly. George Hart was there to say, "Welcome to Scotland!"

And what a welcome it was. Everything had been arranged including hospitality with a Christian family. The meetings at Partick Bethel were well-advertised with posters prominently displayed and handbills distributed house to house in the Partick area of the city. Pastor Hart shared all the details with us as we travelled across town on a big red double-decker bus.

"Oh, I almost forgot," he said. Reaching into his inside coat pocket he took out an envelope and handed it to me. "This came about a week ago."

It was a letter from Reverend Dexter Couch, pastor of the Piney Grove Baptist Church in Swansboro, North Carolina. (Several times during my senior year I had flown the little Piper Vagabond over there from Greenville, South Carolina to preach for a weekend. I landed the plane in a pasture next to the church and gave free rides to whoever brought the most new visitors to the meetings.) The letter assured me of their prayers, and included a check for \$100. It was a fortune in those days and it came when I was literally down to my last buck. As always, God's timing was perfect. It was the first time they had written and we have not heard from them since then, but by carefully managing we made that gift last us over three months.

The daily schedule was gruelling, even for a young evangelist. Harriett helped me with the Women's Meetings during the morning. On most of the days, at noontime, I preached in the open air to men on their lunch-break at the Singer Sewing Machine factory or in the John Brown shipyards along the River Clyde.

It was here that the great ocean-going ships of the Cunard Lines were built and launched including the QUEEN MARY and QUEEN ELIZABETH. There were Children's Meeting at 6:30 each evening and then the evangelistic Rally at 7:30 p.m. Later each night we went out as a team to the Pubs and Dance Halls to preach and witness for the Lord.

The fortnight, or two weeks, passed in a hurry. Pastor Hart was not satisfied. "Can you stay on for another week?" he inquired.

"Yes," we could. We did not have any other meetings scheduled. At the end of the third week he asked the same question - and it received the same reply. The same thing happened each week for five straight weeks as the blessing of the Lord continued with many precious souls coming to Christ each night.

During the sixth week, Scotland's largest daily newspaper ran a feature article on page two about the crusade, with photos and a three column write-up. Half-inch headlines, "**American Evangelist Visits Partick Bethel,**" told the story.

From the time the newspaper hit the streets I had a stream of phone calls, telegrams and letters from pastors right across Scotland, inviting me to come to their church for an

evangelistic crusade. My diary was packed solid for the next four months just from that one article.

One of the telegrams was from a British evangelist, Eric Hutchings, who happened to be in Glasgow for that weekend. He invited me to meet him at his hotel. I had never heard of him, but Pastor Hart said, "He's the 'Billy Graham' of England, and God is really using him." I accepted his invitation.

My first impression of Eric Hutchings was somewhat disappointing. I had imagined a tall, slim, handsome, dynamic evangelist with penetrating eyes. Instead he was medium height, portly almost to the point of rotund and (to a casual, laid-back, informal American) came across as a rather pompous Brit.

Over tea and scones we discussed the spiritual needs of Britain. Eric had launched an evangelistic team known as "The Hour of Revival" and they had just concluded their first city-wide Crusade in Hastings, a sea-side town in the south of England. His office headquarters was just along the coast in nearby Eastbourne, Sussex.

As we talked my initial impression turned to admiration. Eric Hutchings was a man on fire for God and with a great passion for souls. I would later learn, firsthand, how skilled he was in expounding the Word with an evangelistic fervor. This method was the fulfillment of Christ's words, ". . . *feed my sheep*." It had the effect of creating a deep hunger for God's Word in the heart of Christians, who - let's face it - make up the majority of those attending an evangelistic crusade. But his message was also evangelistic, in that it pointed lost people to the Lord, and demanded a decision concerning what they would do with "Jesus, who is called Christ."

We talked and prayed together. Before I left, Eric kindly invited me to join his team for their next city-wide crusade in Weymouth, a town in the southwest of England. I was honored, but unable to accept because by now I was fully booked through March 1953.

On my way out of the hotel Eric gave me his business card. "Phone me if I can be of any service to you," he said. I thanked him, put the card in my wallet, and forgot about it. The Lord would remind me later on.

The winter of 1952-53 was one of the coldest on record for that part of the world. Our Scottish friends said it was the most frigid they could ever remember. We will never forget it. Most of the homes we stayed in had no central heating. The bedrooms were like an icebox. We dreaded to take a bath in the near freezing room temperature. However, the fellowship we enjoyed with warm-hearted Scots around the hearth before a cozy fire, or over a cup of piping hot tea, more than made up for any personal discomfort we may have experienced. We knew we were where the Lord had called us to serve Him.

The British national drink is tea, with milk in it. It's quite good really. There is a genteel controversy between north and south as to when the milk should be added. The English put the milk in first, then add the tea. The Scots add milk to their tea. Believe it or not, I can tell the difference - but it doesn't matter.

The hospitable Scots would bring us “morning tea” in bed. For us it was quite a luxury. On one occasion, Harriett and I were guests of two, elderly, spinster sisters who shall remain nameless for this account. Early the next morning they brought tea to our bedroom. After putting down a tray with the cups and sugar bowl, they just stood there - watching. We smiled, said “Good morning!” and thanked them. They just stood there, speechless. After a period of awkward silence, they began to giggle, like schoolgirls.

“Is something wrong?” I asked.

“Oh, no!” they replied, almost in unison. “We’ve only seen you at church and we just wanted to see what you looked like in bed.” We all had a big laugh.

The next four months were filled with back-to-back campaigns in local churches and town Missions. We ministered extensively in Ayrshire - Robert Burns country - in little towns with names that we often had difficulty getting our tongues around; names like Kirkintilloch, Auchinleck, Old Cumnock, Kilmarnock and Dumfries. After meetings in Edinburgh, we crossed the Firth of Forth for a crusade in Leven, Fife then on to St. Andrews, Falkirk, Dunfermline, Aberdeen and finally to Stirling and Perth.

The last of the meetings, that resulted from the newspaper article, were just south of the border in Carlisle. This city of approximately 70,000 is the county seat of Cumberland, in the north of England. It is located near the western end of Hadrian’s Wall which extended across the north of England from the Solway Firth to Newcastle at the mouth of the Tyne. Built in the 2nd Century by Publius Hadrianus, a Roman emperor, to protect Roman Britain from the Picts and Scots, it marked the uttermost part of the Roman Empire.

Almost before I realized it our series of meetings had come to an end. Four solid months of daily ministry had been concluded. We had reasonably expected the meetings to multiply; to build on one another until an on-going ministry was established. The Lord had another plan. We had just discovered that we were “expecting” in a different dimension.

Harriett tenderly whispered, “We are pregnant.”

This knowledge came as a surprise to both of us, but we were equally thrilled. It meant that we would need to make some serious changes in our lifestyle. We could no longer continue living out of a suitcase and travelling to a different place each week. We needed to find someplace to make a little nest. We both knew, in our hearts, that we must return to America and establish a place for our longed-for little one.

Then I understood why there were no more meetings arranged. I needed to book us passage home before the beginning of June, or it might not be comfortable for Harriett to travel. This was why the Lord had not continued to open doors for more evangelistic crusades. It was a practical example of His positive guidance. I was about to experience another example of His perfect timing.

It was Wednesday evening, the very last night of the meetings in Carlisle. After the service, I wondered "What next?" Then the Lord reminded me of Eric Hutchings' card in my wallet. I hurried to a pay phone and called him at 10 p.m. I explained that our four months of meetings were over, and that we were planning to return to the United States sometime in May, but that we had the next six weeks free.

"This is perfect timing," Eric said from his home in Eastbourne. "If you had called an hour ago, I wouldn't have had an opening for you just now. If you had called an hour from now I would have already found someone else to fill a very pressing need we have." I wondered what that need could be.

In addition to his ministry with "Hour of Revival" crusades, Eric Hutchings was Vice President of British Youth for Christ. BYFC had film teams going all over Britain showing Gospel films, preaching and conducting evangelistic rallies.

"Thirty minutes ago, Geoffrey Percival phoned to say he'd just come down with the flu and would not be able to take the two weeks of meetings scheduled for him in Scotland," Eric continued. "Can you operate a 16mm movie projector?"

Following my affirmative answer, Eric explained the situation. British Youth for Christ had two weeks of evangelistic meetings programmed for Scotland, beginning Friday night - less than forty-eight hours away. Some of the meetings were scheduled to show a Gospel film, so I needed a screen and all the projection equipment which was, at that moment, in Eastbourne.

"There's a night train leaving Carlisle at 12:24 a.m. that gets into London in time for you to catch the 08:45 train from Victoria to Eastbourne," Eric instructed. "We'll meet you at the station."

My head was spinning. I had just under two hours to return to the Pastor's home where Harriett and I had been staying, pack our suitcases, say "goodbye" and take a taxi to the station and catch the midnight train for London.

Our packing resembled the way they do it in the movies. Everything was thrown in and we had to sit on the case to get it closed. We made it to the station, bought our tickets and boarded the train seconds before it pulled out of Carlisle. We stood in the corridor for a few moments to catch our breath.

In a few minutes the conductor came along and suggested we find a seat for the long night ahead. When he heard my American accent he asked if we'd like to pay a surcharge and get a berth in the sleeping compartment. The price was not unreasonable so we agreed, forgetting the old adage: *You get what you pay for.*

There were four bunks in each cabin. Two men had already occupied the lower berths in our compartment. There were no sheets. The conductor handed us two very hard pillows and a couple of threadbare blankets as we climbed the ladder into the top bunks. We slept in our clothes. The beds were situated astride the railway car rather than with it as in American Pullman and continental trains. This meant that instead of

being gently rocked to sleep by the motion of the carriage, we were constantly thrown from head to foot throughout the night.

We must have looked pretty dishevelled as we disembarked in Eastbourne. Eric didn't seem to mind. He briefed us on the Scottish itinerary, made sure we understood how to use all the equipment; arranged overnight hospitality and early Friday morning we were on a train again, northbound for the Land of Heather.

The Scottish itinerary was very fruitful. Many precious souls came to Christ during those two weeks. While in Edinburgh, I visited a travel agent on Princes Street, Thomas Cook & Son, to arrange for our passage to the United States. They booked us to sail from Southampton to New York on the 6th of May aboard the QUEEN MARY.

Lest auld *acquaintance be forgot*, we said our auld lang syne to many friends in Scotland, and journeyed southwest to join Eric Hutchings for the last three weeks of his city-wide Weymouth Crusade. My principal responsibility was leading satellite meetings in various churches in the surrounding area, plus I made a 16mm documentary film of each aspect of the evangelistic outreach.

We had to interrupt our time during the Weymouth meetings to fulfill two previous obligations: four days in Bournemouth at the British Youth for Christ Conference and a ten day crusade in Barry, Wales. By now it had been almost two years since I first preached in this beautiful Glamorganshire town by the sea. It was an opportunity to renew many old friendships and introduce my bride.

London was in full color on the last weekend before we sailed for America. For many months Britain had been getting ready for the June 2nd coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Wartime food rationing was still in effect in 1953, but it was rumored that it would end when Elizabeth took the throne. It did.

Our send-off was significant. We concluded ten months in Europe and Britain at the very place we began: Speke Hall, in London. Pastor Tink asked me to preach in his church the night before our departure. It was a Youth Meeting and several young people responded to the claims of Jesus Christ.

On the morning of May 6th we made our way across town on a big, red, double-decker London bus to Waterloo station, to catch the special 11:20 a.m. boat-train for Southampton. Embarkation time for Tourist Class passengers was from noon `til two.

At exactly 5 p.m. all lines to the pier were loosed. A deep-throated blast from the ship's horn on the forward stack rattled windows in warehouses along the dockside, and sent a thrill of expectation down my spine. Slowly, and with the aid of tugs, the QUEEN MARY moved majestically, almost silently, from her mooring out into the harbor. The Captain announced, "Tugs away," and the great ship began her five-day voyage to New York.



## 16

### Feeding the Sheep Before the Storm

***“And He gave some . . . evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.”*** Ephesians 4:11

We had been conducting evangelistic crusades in Scotland during the winter of 1952-53 when Harriett discovered that, “We are pregnant!” That important event would take us temporarily back to America. We needed to make a little nest in preparation for our firstborn child. On a fine Spring morning in early May 1953, we arrived in New York City aboard the Cunard liner QUEEN MARY.

Up until that summer I had served the Lord as an evangelist. Then, suddenly and dramatically, God closed all the opportunities for evangelistic crusades. Six weeks of scheduled meetings were cancelled, for one reason or another, within a three day period. Was He trying to get my attention?

After a lot of prayer, it seemed to me that the Lord was asking if I would be willing to be a pastor. That made a lot of sense. I could serve the local church much better as an evangelist if I had some pastoral experience. It also meant that I could be home and help Harriett create a little “nest” for the birth of our first child. I rejoiced at His unmistakable guidance. He obviously wanted to teach me something about a shepherd’s responsibilities and was leading me into a pastorate. I loved the idea.

After a short series of “Revival” meetings in churches throughout the Deep South, I accepted a call to pastor the Beulah Baptist Church in Douglasville, Georgia. It was a small (310 member; 205 show-up-on-Sunday) Southern Baptist Church. The previous year I had been ordained by the Southern Baptists, after graduating from university and just before going overseas.

When I first met with the Pastoral search committee, they explained that it was a full-time Church, but they could only afford a part time pastor. There was no parsonage; the salary was forty dollars a week and, if there was a fifth Sunday in the month, the Church didn’t meet. I balked at the last point.

“If I’m your pastor,” I explained, “we will meet every Sunday, rain or shine, fifth Sunday or not.”

They agreed. So at least the Church was full-time.

To supplement the half-time salary, I sold Insurance in the Atlanta area. It was tough going. I worked on a commission basis and the first ten days I didn’t sell anything. My neighbor, Whitney Searcy, a dedicated Christian and an insurance salesman,

encouraged me to keep on keeping on. He gave me pointers and techniques that have served me well, both in business and ministry.

In addition to selling insurance and pastoring a church, I worked with Atlanta Youth for Christ. The director, Reverend Gene McGee, was a great inspiration to me. My ministry was High School Bible Clubs. I would drive the big yellow school bus to a different school each weekday afternoon. Monday was Decatur High. Tuesday we met at Southwest DeKalb; Wednesday was Clarkston, Thursday took us to Fulton High and we finished the week at Avondale High. At some schools we met in a classroom. At others the kids would pack the bus for a special meeting.

Each week we would select five unsaved students to invite to the next meeting. One would be our target for Monday, another for Tuesday and so on. For example, if Jim was our "target for Monday," everyone in the Bible Club would make a point to speak to Jim sometime on Monday and invite him to come to the next "High B Club." The first two or three invitations probably went in one ear and out the other. But by the end of the day, after thirty or more warm and friendly kids had invited him, Jim could hardly wait until the next meeting! The same was true of Sue, our "target for Tuesday." A lot of young people were saved in those days and challenged to full time service.

On October 4, 1953 the Lord blessed us with the birth of our first baby girl, Deborah Elaine. I almost didn't make it. Harriett was in labor for just over twenty hours. I was determined to stay in the waiting room until she had a safe delivery. The doctor came to me at about the eighteenth hour and said, "It's going to be quite a while until your wife delivers; why don't you go home and get some sleep."

"Don't worry about me, Doctor," I responded. "I'll stay right here until the little one arrives." I was trying to be Mr. Cool, calm and collected.

Hardly half an hour later the doctor came to the door of the crowded waiting room and inquired, "Mr. Bathman?"

"Yes!" I exclaimed, springing off the couch, stumbling over the coffee table and dashing to him.

"It's just as well that you didn't go home," he said. I thought, *Oh my, what has happened now? Is there a problem?*

"Your wife's membrane has just ruptured," he continued.

Everyone in the world - except me - knows that is perfectly normal and means that the baby's arrival is imminent. I was in such a nervous state that I didn't hear the "mem" part of membrane. The only thing I heard was, "Your wife's brain has just ruptured!" I had visions of Harriett being a vegetable for the rest of her life and me left to bring up our only child. Thankfully such was not the case.

The Lord blessed His Word during the year I was pastor at Beulah Baptist. Many precious souls were saved and others rededicated their lives to Christ. We had an eye-

opening Missions Conference, introducing the congregation to many new fields. We had the regular “Revival” meetings in the summer. The deacons didn’t think the Holy Spirit could come any time but the second week in August!

In addition, I baptized about forty-five new members; married and buried a few, and we built a new educational wing with sixteen Sunday School rooms.

The Lord gave me a pastor’s heart during that time and showed me that His work revolves around two very special units: the family and the local church. I’m convinced a para-church organization can justify its existence only so long as it serves the local church somewhere.

\* \* \* \*

In the autumn of 1954, Harriett and I felt God’s leading to move per-manently to Europe. I resigned as pastor of Beulah Baptist Church. October and November were filled with deputation meetings and “Revival” campaigns. I was two weeks in Sumter, South Carolina at the “Little White Church Around the Corner” [later the Sumter Bible Church]. These precious people pledged regular monthly support of fifty dollars. They were the very first church to take on our support and have been faithful every month across the many years.

During November we went to St. Petersburg, Florida for a Youth Crusade organized by evangelist John Ashley Woodhouse. Afterwards, I flew with Paul Hartford, Caribbean director of Youth for Christ, to Cuba and Jamaica for fourteen days of special meetings.

I was no stranger to the Caribbean. During my service years in the US Navy, I was stationed at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and had visited Jamaica many times. On one of those visits, while we were in port for a few days the Ford motor company in downtown Kingston caught fire. I was aboard my ship, at the top of the mast checking on some radar equipment, when I saw the smoke curling up. Just then the fire alarm on board sounded General Quarters. The city mayor had asked for help to fight the fire. It was *swabbies* to the rescue.

Jamaica had suffered a drought during the summer of 1947. There was very little water pressure. Local fire fighters couldn’t get a stream up to the second floor. We patched in our portable “handy-billy” pumps to increase the pressure and soon had the fire under control. The fire could have easily spread, destroying a large part of the city, if we had not acted quickly.

The mayor was deeply grateful. He gave our ship’s company the “Keys to the City” to honor the US Navy servicemen and hosted a special gala dance in the ballroom at the beautiful Myrtle Bank Hotel. I danced into the wee small hours that night (in those pre-conversion days).

Now, seven years later, I was back in Jamaica, as a *new creature* in Christ. I was glad to see that Kingston was on our itinerary. I was scheduled to speak to the Christian Businessmen and the venue was the Myrtle Bank Hotel. Imagine my surprise when I

arrived and discovered that the meeting was in the very ballroom where, as an unconverted sailor boy, I had won a jitter-bug contest and danced until I was dripping wet.

On November 20, 1954, I wrote in my journal: *“Montego Bay. We left in the afternoon to get to Black River for a service at night. We drove for two hours over donkey trails back into the interior of this exotic island to reach our destination. It just about jostled my insides out, but it’s worth every twisting, turning, winding, bumpy mile of it. I’m intoxicated by the magic spell of this island. Right now the temperature is a very pleasant 88° and there is a cool breeze coming in from the sea. I can see banana trees, palm trees, pineapples, poinsettias, oranges and a dozen other fruits I can’t even name. The crystal clear waters of the lazy Caribbean wash the shore just 200 feet from where I sit on the veranda.*

*Wait, I almost forgot. There is another side of Jamaica. Truly this is a land of contrasts. While the physical beauty of this wonderland is thoroughly enchanting (even orchids grow wild here), the human picture is far less attractive. Here the people do not live, they simply exist. Let me record something of their poverty; the thatched roof and mud floor huts, reeking with 10,000 odors and infested with a myriad of vermin. Let me mention the many cults and sects which abound in ever-increasing numbers: the superstition, voodoo, black magic and poco mania which is the daily diet of these spiritually dead wretches.*

*There is the fascination and intrigue of the Cockpit Country, sometimes called “The Land of Look Behind.” People living here have absolutely no contact with other human beings. They are completely shut off from the outside world by a ring of vertical mountains and impenetrable jungle. I am fascinated by the legends of these mysterious people and hope to learn more about them.”*

The Lord was very gracious to let me minister His Word in this beautiful island paradise. I preached the Gospel in every town and village during our time there. It was, in a way, my *swan song* to flying as a missionary in the Western hemisphere. I would leave in less than a month for Europe, but I would treasure forever the memory of those Caribbean days.

\* \* \* \*

Back in Atlanta we packed up our personal belongings, gave away most of our furniture and drove to New York City. We sold our car to pay for the passage overseas. Two days after Christmas we sailed for Southampton, England on board the Cunard liner QUEEN ELIZABETH.

We left America without any plan of returning to our homeland. We did not go to Europe with a five-year commitment, or with the idea that we’d spend twenty-five years there and then retire. We went with the full intention to live and serve and to ultimately die for Jesus Christ in Europe.

When we got off the ship we didn't have a chair to sit on, a table to eat from, a bed to sleep in or a roof over our head. I had a wife and a fifteen month old baby daughter and five US dollars in my pocket to start life all over again in Europe. But together we had an unshakeable faith in the all sufficiency of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to keep His promise and supply all our needs. He did, and *more* “. . . *exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think . . . unto Him be glory!*”

We had no idea, as we disembarked on that cold winter morning, what God was going to do. Over the next twenty-two years the Lord used our ministry to build an evangelistic organization in the British Isles that incorporated hundreds of young people into over 200 teams. The teams would pioneer a new concept in evangelism by reaching people where they lived, worked and played.

We did not know that the ministry would expand to the continent and penetrate the Iron Curtain. Nor did we know that the Lord would provide a small hotel in Austria to be used as a base of operations to train teams for working in communist lands.

We knew none of this as we cautiously descended the gangway from the world's largest passenger liner onto one of the world's most needy mission fields - Europe.



Bill and Harriett with Debbie and Linda Joy on board ship

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## Adventures in England

From the American perspective we were missionaries because we had gone overseas to serve the Lord. The British did not think of their island empire as a mission field. Under Queen Victoria they had sent out missionaries to the uttermost parts of the earth. On one occasion the Queen - herself a committed Christian - had said, "God has given Britain the empire, so that Britain may give the empire the Gospel." Under her reign, England printed more Bibles, sent out more missionaries and did more to evangelize the world than any other nation in all of history up to that time. In their eyes I was an American evangelist. Fine. After all, that was my calling and my gift.

Our first full year in England was one of adjustment. We lived sixty-three miles south of London, in the lovely seaside town of Eastbourne, Sussex. As Harriett and I settled in to our career as "foreign missionaries" it was our great fortune that we could communicate immediately with the "locals." We did not need to learn a new language, although the British loved to say that "Americans haven't spoken English for years!" It was just after the Second World War. The American accent was attractive.

The final "call" from the Lord in 1954 to move us from a pastorate in Georgia back to evangelism in Great Britain, came in the form of an invitation from our friend, Eric Hutchings, a British evangelist and leader of the "Hour of Revival" Team. He invited me to join the Team as Executive Secretary and Associate Evangelist.

Eric Hutchings' message was both evangelistic and expository. It was a twin gift from the Lord that blessed, inspired and fed the "sheep" while striking conviction to the unconverted. He would frequently take an entire book of the Bible and preach right through it during a three week crusade. This created a hunger in the hearts of Christians in the audience to further study the Word. His "invitations" were low-key, clear and left no doubt in the mind of the listener what the Lord was willing to offer those who would trust Him for their salvation.

My responsibility, as Executive Secretary, was to go into a city, usually a year or fifteen months ahead of time, and contact the leaders of various denominations. I shared with them that interest had been expressed locally, in having a united evangelistic crusade in the area and that our team was responding to that interest.

I would invite them to a dinner, sponsored by Mr. Hutchings, in order for them to hear a presentation of how the Team works with the local church and give them an opportunity to ask questions with the assurance that there was no further obligation. If they agreed to this "exploratory meeting," I would compose a letter to go out over the signature of the Anglican Bishop or Rural Dean, the Methodist Superintendent minister, the General Secretary of the Baptist Churches and acknowledged leaders from the Pentecostal and Brethren congregations to every pastor in the area, inviting them to dinner. Then I

booked a nice restaurant that would accommodate two or three hundred pastors and the letter of invitation was sent from our office.

These informational dinners usually resulted in an invitation to the Hour of Revival Team to come for a crusade. A committee was formed and we set up a local office to organize every detail of the city-wide crusade. The “we” in that last sentence was, in reality, Ken Coventry. I had very little to do with the details. Ken had great organizational skills and worked tirelessly behind the scenes. I’m a “people person” not an organizer. Harriett is the organized one in our family.

My responsibility as Associate Evangelist was to conduct satellite crusades in the area and hold pre-crusade rallies. This aspect of the ministry took me literally all over the British Isles and parts of northern France. I met hundreds of pastors and developed some very deep friendships.

Of course I was away from Eastbourne a lot. I had one day off each week but was frequently too far away to get home. Harriett said she was going to get two towels for the bathroom; one to say, “Hers” and the other, “Welcome Stranger.” The first year was very tough for her. She spent a lot of time in tears.

England is an island and the people tend to be very insular until you get to know them. When you do develop a friendship then you’ve made a friend for life. But during those first difficult months Harriett despaired of ever establishing fellowship with anyone.

Up until this point in our marriage we had served the Lord together in ministry. Now, I was gone for much of the time and Harriett was left at home with nothing more to “convert” than a pile of dirty dishes and soiled diapers - which the British called “nappies.”

Three-year old Debbie soon began to wonder why I was so seldom home. “Mommy, why does Daddy have to be away so much?” she asked.

“He’s telling people about Jesus,” Harriett explained.

There was a moment’s pause while she tried to reconcile the amount of time I was gone with the number of people she knew. “But surely everyone knows by now!” she exclaimed.

It wasn’t easy. The winter was cold and damp. There was no central heating in the small terraced house we were renting. Harriett had never built a fire in her life and now, to keep warm, she had to build a fire each morning.

In England the fireplace was the focal point of a room and most social activity took place within six to eight feet and a 180° radius of it. You would roast on one side and freeze on the other. It must be the most inefficient method of heating a habitat known to man. Most of the heat went up the chimney and only a small amount of radiated warmth from the hot bricks would actually raise the room temperature. The door to the hallway was

kept closed to keep the heat in, but this resulted in a terrific draft under the door as cool air rushed in to take the place of warmer air inside.

Upon learning that most American homes do not depend on a fireplace for warmth, an Englishman once asked me, "But what do you sit around?"

As I thought about his question I was embarrassed by the obvious answer, "The television, I suppose."

Knowing how important dialogue, discourse and discussion were to the British and the European, and how we could sit for hours and enjoy each other's company through meaningful conversation, it seemed such a dreadful waste of time to sit, mutely, in front of a box and let the humanists feed us their ideas. We have a multitude of means to communicate in our technological culture, but we've lost the art of communicating. Just then I realized that the importance of the hearth was social, not practical.

One American friend who visited us was astonished at how few British homes had a refrigerator in those days. "Is it true," he asked, "that most English homes do not have a fridge?"

"No," I replied. "Every home I've been in has at least two - but they call them `bedrooms!'"

Bedrooms seldom had a fireplace and those that did had not been used since Victorian days when the gentry had a "parlor maid" to take out the ashes, sweep the hearth and lay a new fire. Our bedroom window in Eastbourne faced east overlooking the English Channel. Many winter mornings we awakened to see ice crystals on the inside of our window in a kaleidoscope of colors beautifully illuminated by the rising sun.

If we wanted hot water we had to build a fire. There was a device in the kitchen known as an Ideal Boiler. Harriett was certain that there had never been a more inappropriate name. It was anything but "ideal." The oven part was quite small and situated close to the floor which meant she had to get down on her knees to empty out the ashes from the previous day's fire. Then it was necessary to lay the paper, wood and coal in just the right order and combination, making sure all the components were dry, before striking the match. Once the fire was going it needed frequent attending until the bed of coals was glowing red. At that point she could add coke, a fuel made by heating soft coal, to the fire.

Then it was time to dash back into the dining room to see if the fire in that fireplace was still going. All of the combustibles - coal, coke, wood, etc. - had to be carried in from outside the house, and all of the ashes and other residue had to be taken out. Harriett finally realized that it wasn't the fireplace that was keeping her warm, but all the activity of servicing it!

After Debbie was fed and dressed it was time to wash the clothes. Surprise, surprise the Ideal Boiler had worked! It was practically boiling. When the spin cycle finished, Harriett



took the clothes out in the back yard and hung them on an improvised line that I had stretched near the house.

The washing machine was the only appliance we had crated up and brought with us from America. For years afterwards we used the wooden crate as a wardrobe to hang our clothes in. Janet, our neighbor from Yorkshire, admired the automatic washer and spin dryer. She described it as “posh.”

We had heard many British folk use the word posh and had gathered from the context in which it was used that it meant something nice, out of the ordinary, maybe even elegant or luxurious. That which we had considered a necessity in America was looked on as a luxury in England. Interesting.

Even more interesting was the etymology of the word posh. It came into the English vocabulary in the later part of the 19th century, after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. There were no air-conditioned ships in those days and the journey from Britain to India was long and hot. The coolest side of the ship, away from the burning middle-eastern sun, was the port side on the outward journey and the starboard side on the return. Passengers sailing out to India, who could afford more comfortable accommodation, would instruct their agent to book their passage accordingly. The travel agent would stamp their application: POSH, which stood for “port out, starboard home.”

We soon discovered that hanging clothes outside to dry was considered an offense by our neighbors. “This is the Duke of Devonshire’s estate,” we were informed. “It devalues our property for nappies to be seen hanging outside on a line.” Oh, sorry! Please give our apologies to the Duke. We’ll take the nappies in as soon as they’re dry.

For the first four months we didn’t have a car. I rode the train, bus or took a taxi whenever I needed to get somewhere. This meant that I was usually stuck in some distant town on my “day off” and unable to get home. This caused a real strain in our marriage.

Eventually we were able to buy a small, two-year old Ford Consul. This enabled me to leave the Crusade office after work, drive home through the night - sometimes arriving at four or five in the morning - and be home during the day on my “day off” and then leave late that evening and drive through the night to be back in the office by 8:30 a.m. the next day.

Harriett felt the pressure more than I did. After all, I was working for the Lord, travelling all over the place, preaching the Word and meeting new and interesting people. She was stuck at home with all the responsibility of raising the family. Meanwhile, we had both decided that Debbie needed a little brother or sister and that it was time to expand the family. It was Harriett that was expanding.

Like many other British families in those days, we didn’t have a fridge, so it was necessary to go shopping each day. This meant that Harriett would get Debbie all dressed up in her winter coat, scarf and mittens, put her in the stroller and walk two blocks to the bus stop. When the bus came, she would collapse the stroller and get on

board. Ten minutes later she would disembark in front of the shops on Terminus Road and begin her search for life's essentials.

When the search was over she started home; juggling an arm load of groceries, folding and unfolding a stroller, getting on and off a bus and straining to restrain a tired and fidgety child pulling in six directions. It was a daily test of her maternal abilities. In addition, she hoped to get back home to get the clothes in before it rained or the Duke developed ulcers.

The summer of 1955 was beautiful; weeks of long, lazy days full of sunshine, blue sky and warm weather. Everyone raved about it. Multitudes travelled from miles around and crowded to the beach to sit in a deck chair under an umbrella and eat "fish `n chips" out of a newspaper. We enjoyed it, but didn't think it was anything out of the ordinary. It was the last such summer for over a decade.

The next year, summer came on a Thursday afternoon. Folks said it was nice, but I was getting a haircut at the time and missed it.

\* \* \* \*

**Footnote:** In the summer of 1955, our Team conducted a two week mission crusade in Amiens, (about seventy-five miles from Paris) a city of 92,000 astride the Somme in the north of France. A treaty between England, Holland, France and Spain was signed there in 1802 and marked a period of peace in the Napoleonic Wars. The meetings attracted the media.

During the crusade, I happened to read an editorial in the newspaper by a French communist in which he said, "We Marxists freely admit that the Christian Gospel is a superior ideology to the Marxist ideology. But we Marxists will win, because you Christians are not dedicated."

That indictment went straight to my heart. At the time I knew nothing about politics, or communism, or Marxism, but I bowed my head and prayed, "Oh God, please don't ever let that be said of me - that I am `not dedicated."

Later on the Lord would test me on that point. Within a few years, He would open a door into the communist world and give me the opportunity to present "a superior ideology" to Marxists who were bound up in materialism. Later on He would show me that when Jesus Christ said, "*Go into all the world,*" He didn't say, "Stop at the Iron Curtain!"

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## 18

### Live Chicks Under a Dead Hen

In many ways, 1955 was a watershed year for me. It was my baptism into a career as fulltime missionary. I preached and conducted evangelistic crusades in many parts of Britain. I was with Mr. Hutchings, as associate evangelist, in two great city-wide

crusades that year. The Tees-side Crusade in Middlesbrough, was in the City Hall and concluded with a giant rally in the Ayresome Park football stadium. It was May and I had been there almost fulltime since January.

Later, in October, we were in the Town Hall in Colechester. This East Anglian community is Britain's oldest recorded town. City records go all the way back to 64 AD. Merchants were doing a thriving business here when St. Paul was on his way to Rome!

The word, "chester" means fortress. It was the fortress city of King Cole; you know, the *merry ole soul*. Atop the Town Hall there was a statue of Queen Helena, mother of Constantine, who ended persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire.

During the 1955 mass evangelism crusades in Middlesbrough and Colechester, I was introduced to a level of ministry I had never experienced. In a word, it was BIG. Instead of preaching to hundreds we were now reaching tens of thousands. We were actively recruiting pastors and churches from all denominations, right across the theological spectrum.

In each of the cities there were several hundred churches involved. I spent time with each pastor to explain the mechanics of our mission and what the crusade could mean to his church. I realized, after prayer, that some of the pastors were liberal in their theology, but that didn't bother me. After all, the team was responsible for the preaching. If there was any compromise, it was on the part of the liberal pastor who had agreed to participate in the crusade. But there were other considerations I would have to face.

It was the Colechester Crusade that started me to rethink my position on ecumenical evangelism. While the mission was underway there was plenty of action. We kept the Crusade office open all day. About mid-way through the Crusade, when the team was out of the office during lunch hour one day, the Rural Dean of the Anglican Church came into the reception room.

"What's all this nonsense the evangelist is telling us about being 'born again?'" he demanded. "Where does he get that stuff?"

There was only one secretary, a young girl of 18, in the office at the time. She was a volunteer and her job was to answer the phone and take messages. The minister's question took her by surprise. Her first reaction was to simply open up her Bible to John's Gospel, chapter three.

"I guess this is what he meant," she said.

The Rural Dean scooped up the Bible, walked over to the window, held it to the light and read the entire third chapter of John without saying a word. When he had finished, he closed the Book thoughtfully, replaced it gently on the desk and said, "Well, I'll be . . . I've never seen that before. I'm quite sure I've never been 'born again' and furthermore, I'm quite certain no one in my parish has ever been 'born again.'" With that, he turned and walked out.

When I learned of the incident I was very uncomfortable. *Because he has agreed to be a sponsor of the Crusade, I thought, we are obligated to send new converts back to his church. We can't do that. Yet, it would be unethical not to do so. We have entered into a relationship with this man.* I struggled with this for some time before reaching a conclusion that would govern my future ministry as an evangelist. My policy from that time has been: "Don't put live chicks under a dead hen."

On the personal level the decision was not an easy one. The Rural Dean was a fine gentleman with a delightful personality. I liked him very much as a person. He had asked me to preach in his parish church the month before. It was a courtesy I'm sure. He must have known we were poles apart theologically, yet his invitation was quite sincere.

Anglican ministers wear clerical collars. I remember asking him, a few days beforehand, whether he wanted me to "walk into my collar, or back into it."

He smiled and said, "I'd appreciate it *awfully* ole chap, if you'd wear a clerical collar."

"Fine," I replied, "but you'll have to loan me one, because I don't have my own."

My neck size was 15" and his size was 16½." I arrived for the morning worship service, dressed in my most conservative charcoal-gray suit and rattling around in his collar.

"Would you mind *awfully* ole chap, putting on a cassock?" he asked. That was a loose-fitting black robe that covered my suit and came down to my ankles. When I got that on he asked, "Would you mind *awfully*, putting on a surplice as well?" That was the white apron-like garment that went over the cassock.

"No problem," I responded. "It'll be the same sausage, just a different skin."

I preached the exact message I would have in my charcoal-gray suit. The only problem was that I tripped on the hem of the cassock as I climbed the steps into the high pulpit. With typical English manners, the congregation looked the other way and tried to pretend it hadn't happened.

These very pleasant memories flooded my mind as I made the arduous decision concerning the relationship of chicks and hens.

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## The House With the Yellow Garage Doors

Even before the Colechester Crusade had finished I was on my way to the west country to make preparations for the Greater Cornwall Evangelistic Crusade. This included over one hundred towns and villages. The Cornish are primarily an agricultural people, although there is some mining. Cornwall has large deposits of tin.

Tradition has it that Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy tin merchant, brought Christianity to the west country in the first century. They are very independent. Many, whom I met, boasted that they had never been to England. Their roots are Celtic.

The casual tourist, passing through Cornwall on the way to Land's End, is impressed by the large number of churches, especially Methodist churches, that distinguish the landscape. Some of them are huge. In Penzance, two very large Methodist churches stand just opposite each other on the main road. One assumes that they were full in times past. Not so. We checked the census statistics for the year when those churches were built and discovered that if every citizen in town had been in church on Sunday there would still have been empty seats.

It appears that our saintly forefathers were not above practicing one-upmanship in their competitive drive to make certain their branch of the denomination had the biggest and best facility in town.

Why do I bother recording this minor human frailty? It illustrates the point that times really haven't changed all that much. The flurry of building bigger and greater barns had a negative impact on Britain's missionary outreach. It also underscores the fact that evangelists are needed more than church planters in the United Kingdom. In a day when many churches are empty, the door is open for evangelists to exercise their gift.

During the latter part of the summer in 1955, it was obvious that we needed to find different accommodations. The small terraced house on Upper Dukes Drive was inadequate and the lease was not renewable.

The owner wanted an older couple without children. Harriett was expecting our second child in a few months.

A significant part of my limited time at home that summer was spent looking for a place to live. At almost every house we enquired someone would greet us at the door shouting, "No children, or dogs." It seemed they were associated into the same category.

Finally, I contacted a Christian friend who, together with his partner, owned a building firm in Eastbourne. I wondered if they would "rent" us a house somewhere. He said that they didn't have any property to rent, but he had something he wanted to show me. We got into his car and drove to an area where they were building several new houses.

It sounds like a contradiction in terms, but it was a new house in Old Town and the location was up on the Downs. The Downs are a low ridge of National Trust property rising about five hundred feet along the south coast. The houses on Peppercombe Road were built literally on the edge of the Trust property and had a breathtaking view of the English Channel. On a clear day, you could see the coast of France.

“Every house but one on this street has already been sold before it’s finished,” he said. “This one, number fifty, for some reason hasn’t sold. My partner and I were talking about that last night and wondered if the Lord had something in mind for this place.”

I began to wonder as well. It’s impossible, I thought. *But then God delights in the impossible. It’s His way of strengthening our faith. If the Lord is in this it will be inspiring to see how He is going to work everything out.*

The price was £3,200 but right away they deducted ten percent and offered it to us for £2,900 (\$8,120 at the current rate of exchange). My annual salary with the Hour of Revival was £510 (\$1,428) and we had \$50 per month income from the little church in South Carolina. That was a grand total of \$2,028 per year. I knew that most mortgage companies insisted on a minimum annual income of at least twenty five percent of the loan. We were a few dollars short.

When I began to search for a bank or mortgage company that would loan me the money I was presented with an impressive catalogue of reasons why they couldn’t do it. First of all, I was a foreigner. Second, I had no security. (I did, of course, but they didn’t recognize Him!) Third, my income was too small. The last was no surprise.

Meanwhile my days in Cornwall were lonely and frustrating. I was rethinking my entire approach to evangelism. Harriett was due in early November. It was getting close and she was large with child. I needed to be home with her.

After searching for over a month I began to despair of ever finding an institution that would make the necessary loan. One day I was in London for a meeting and had some time to explore. As I walked along Threadneedle Street, in the heart of the financial district of the City, I saw a sign over a doorway which read: Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada. I thought, *maybe these folks have a foot on both sides of the Atlantic and will be more sympathetic to my request.*

They were. We sat down and looked at the figures. If I could come up with about £500 for a down payment, reducing the amount needed to borrow, they would write a life insurance policy on me using the house as collateral for the loan. Bottom line: as long as I lived, I’d make monthly payments and if I died they would take the house. Seemed fair to me, but where would I get £500?

I thought about that question as I walked back along Threadneedle Street to where I’d parked the car. “The car!” That was it. I’d sell the car. The ramifications of this decision were not immediately apparent. Losing independent means of transportation for a person with a traveling ministry would be a BIG change, especially if that person was an American and accustomed to having independent means of transportation.

Just about that time, on November 2nd, Linda Joy arrived. Debbie had a baby sister! A week later I brought Harriett and the babe home from the hospital to the little apartment we were renting. We desperately needed more space. At that point we really understood the English phrase, *living in each other's pocket*.

We needed a roof over our head more than I needed wheels under me. We had the car just over eight months and put 22,000 miles on it. I didn't think twice about it. Within a few days the car was sold and the papers for the house signed.

Now it was up to Messrs. Paine and Beteridge to finish building our house. We had fun doing things we'd never done before, like choosing wall colors and floor tiles. I designed some cabinets for the kitchen so Harriett would have working space. Every room in an English home has a door that opens from a hallway. The doors swing into the room instead of back against a wall. This seemed a terrible waste of space. No furniture could be placed in the room within the arc of the door and it meant that the door would always need to be closed. That was the idea. The British like for the door to "screen" the room. We made some adjustments.

The primary adjustments were to our transportation lifestyle. In order to get from the house we were renting to our new house we needed to walk down the street to a bus stop, ride the bus to the railway station in the center of town, catch another bus up to Old Town and walk from the bus stop to our house. We were usually carrying a box or two of personal things each time. We moved house in bits and pieces.

One year to the day after leaving America for mission work in Europe and arriving in Britain with five dollars in our pocket to start life all over again, we moved into a new house located at 50 Peppercombe Road. It was red brick; exactly like all the other houses on the street, but unique in that it was ours.

Most of the homes on Peppercombe Road had their garage door painted either white or dark green. We painted ours canary yellow. The contrast with the mass of red brick looked really nice and made it much easier to direct guests and friends to our home. We told them, "We live in the house with the yellow garage doors." It was a distinguishing landmark.

We had no idea how cold a new house could be. The masonry walls were not completely dried out and felt damp to touch. The linoleum tile floors were wet with condensation and had to be mopped each day. Shoes would mold in the closet in less than a week. There was no central heating. There were two fireplaces in the house; one in the living room and one in the dining room. None of the three bedrooms had any kind of heat and of course there was no heat in the bathroom.

We bought two Valor heaters. These were portable kerosene (the English call it paraffin) convector heaters which we kept burning all the time. They did little more than take the chill off. They were sufficient for the bathroom because it was a small area. I'm not sure we could have coaxed the children into the bath without pre-heating the room.

The house we had rented during the first year was furnished. We purchased a dining table and chairs while we were there. Now we needed beds. We managed to find some on sale the week we moved in. The only rooms in the new house with any furniture were the dining room and the bedrooms. None of the windows had curtains. There were no rugs on the floor. It would be another three years before we could buy anything for the living room.

We moved into our new house on Friday and on Monday I left for meetings in Cornwall. I took the train because we'd sold the car.

I didn't realize at the time what a trial Harriett was having to "accept" what God had called me to. The first two years of our married life we had gone everywhere together. We were a team. That changed dramatically as the Lord began to bless us with children.

Harriett had been unwell after the birth of Linda Joy, suffering from post-partum depression. She was exhausted all the time; couldn't do the washing or cooking. In her mind the only thing she needed was "Bill at home" and that was impossible under the circumstances. She didn't write to her mother about these struggles because she would not have understood such things. Her solution would have been, "You don't have to live like that. Come home."

Our parents, on both sides of the family, were Christians. None of them, however, understood what the Lord had called us to. Throughout the entire twenty-two years we were overseas they kept thinking, "They'll get over it - whatever it is that has taken them away - and they'll come home."

Every week or ten days I would come home for my "day off" between meetings. Harriett would meet me at the door in tears and say goodbye in tears when I left. It was very troubling. I prayed but the answer did not seem apparent, yet it was closer than I could have dreamed.

The Lord sent a young French girl to live with us. Juliette Bouchard was a graduate of the newly established European Bible Institute at Lamorlaye near Paris. She came to work in the French department of the Hour of Revival. Eric Hutchings asked if we would rent her the spare bedroom in our home. We were delighted. She would be company for Harriett while I was away and the extra bit of income would be a help toward our mortgage.

Harriett was overwhelmed with the care and responsibility of two small children. When I was away, she would lay awake at night and rehearse to the Lord all the things she had left behind in America in order to come and live in England. To be honest she was quite angry with the Lord as she paced the floor in the wee hours of the night.

Juliette was intelligent and perceptive. She knew something was bothering Harriett. One evening, as she was pacing the floor, Juliette asked her a very direct question. "Harriett, do you love Bill with a selfish love, that's happy only when you are with him, or do you love him with a love that's happy when he's doing what God has called him to?" The



question stung like a bee. If Juliette had a better grasp of English, she might not have used such harsh, undiplomatic words and the sting would not have been there. But the Lord knew that the sting was exactly what Harriett needed.

Juliette's question had revealed the selfishness of Harriett's love. She realized for the first time that her selfish love was making Bill bear not only his burden but hers as well. That night Harriett saw things from God's perspective: Bill belonged first of all to the Lord, then to her.

A few days later, when I returned from Cornwall, I got off the bus at the end of the street and walked up Peppercombe Road to number fifty. I climbed the steps to our front door and gave my usual knock. Through the small, opaque window in the door I could see Harriett coming down the hall to meet me. Even though I could not see her clearly I knew, by the way she walked, that something wonderful and positive had happened.

Harriett opened the door and flung her arms around me and kissed me warmly. There were no tears; only joy. "What's happened?" I asked.

"I've given you back to the Lord!" she exclaimed.

Neither of us knew just then how soon it would be until the Lord gave Harriett the desire of her heart to have more of Bill - but on His terms.

[The Lord's timing in sending Juliette to us was perfect. She was also His provision for Harriett to see herself from God's perspective.]

\* \* \* \*

"We have a financial crisis in the organization," Mr. Hutchings informed me. "It's serious, Bill. I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to take a cut in pay or perhaps go off salary altogether."

I knew there were problems, I just didn't know how severe. Organizational costs involved in mass-evangelism were enormous. Preparations usually took one year for each crusade. We dovetailed the campaigns in order to accommodate three or possibly four each year. Travel back and forth to crusade cities from our Eastbourne base, setting up an office with telephone communication, renting the football stadium plus advertising the meetings were all very expensive.

It wasn't a complete surprise. One could almost see it coming – like waiting for the other shoe to drop. But when it actually happened it was a shock. My salary with the Hour of Revival was £10 a week before taxes. By the time my National Health Stamp (which covered the socialized medical program) had been deducted, my take-home pay was approximately twenty-five dollars per week. There wasn't a lot to "cut" from that.

"I know it's unfair to ask you to go off salary," Eric continued. "Perhaps we could cut down on travel expenses."

Weekends were always booked for an evangelist. In 1955 I was only home for two Sundays during the year and that was because I had local preaching engagements. A cut in travel expenses would mean that I wouldn't be able to come home even on my "day off." That was unacceptable.

It was unrealistic to expect Eric to understand. His wife, Mary, travelled with him everywhere. She had gifts from the Lord that complemented his and together they were a great team. They had no children, so it was impossible for them to comprehend what it was like to have family responsibilities.

"Let me pray about it, Eric," I responded, even though in my heart I knew the Lord had already given me the answer.

My choices seemed to be a series of impossibilities. How could I take a cut in a salary that was already bare-bones? How could I manage without travel expenses which would mean seldom ever seeing my family? The only alternative, going off salary, offered me the faith-expanding opportunity to trust the Lord all over again to supply all our needs. The prospect was challenging.

Harriett and I reviewed the situation in depth that evening. We were 3,500 miles from our family in America with an ocean in between. Just six weeks before we had signed an agreement to purchase a home. We had a minimum of furniture in two rooms of the house. We no longer had a car for local transportation, or to sell and pay for passage to the USA, but then that wasn't even an option. God had called us to Europe. He would provide.

We considered our assets: good health, two beautiful little girls of our very own, a roof over our head and unshakeable assurance that God had brought us to the British Isles because He had something in mind for us to learn. What was God about to do? What did the future hold? We prayed, we wept, we laughed at the seemingly impossible circumstances and we praised the Lord.

The Bible tells us, concerning our Heavenly Father, "*Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*" If the Lord doesn't sleep why should we both stay awake and worry about these things? Harriett and I slept soundly that night. It was God's problem. It would be thrilling to see just how He resolved it.

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## 20

### Adjusting to Reality

Psalm 121 was very special to us. "*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills.*" The fence at the end of our back yard was right up against National Trust property. From our dining

room window we could see out across the lovely Downs, a low ridge of green hills along the south coast. The question, *“From whence cometh my help,”* is immediately answered in the next verse, *“My help cometh from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”* Should we pull up the meager stakes we had put down in this foreign soil? Should we quit? Our answer from the Word was in verse three, *“He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.”*

The next morning I caught the bus at the foot of our street and rode into town. As I climbed the steps to the Hour of Revival office I remembered that other team members were having similar financial problems. Russell Mills referred to it as the Hour of Survival. I smiled at the truth of that euphemistic thought.

Later that morning I went into Mr. Hutchings’ office. I told him that I had enjoyed working with the team for the last fifteen months; that I had learned many things that would benefit me in future years; that I understood the financial crisis facing the organization and that I had prayed for God’s positive leading in my life concerning whether or not I should remain with the team. The result of my prayerful consideration of all the issues was to submit my notice that in two weeks I would go off salary, leave the team and continue independently with my calling to *“do the work of an evangelist.”*

Going off salary was, of course, a euphemism for either “being fired” or “quitting your job” - depended on your perspective. Either way you were without an income. I looked at the positive side. In reality I was resigning from one job responsibility in order to open the way for God to do something new in my life. My departure from the team was on good terms. There were no hard feelings. We would cooperate whenever possible. I felt really good about it.

Being without a regular (albeit small) income necessitated a reality check. We had made exactly two house payments. As we stopped to think about it we could see the Lord’s perfect timing again. If this had happened two months before we would, humanly speaking, never have been able to qualify for a home loan. We were conscious of His positive guidance to launch out, by faith, and trust Him for the next step in our lives. We knew He would provide for every need.

In a country with two thousand years of history, few things happen quickly. The British like to book speakers and events a long time in advance. I knew the first year would be our hardest. During the two weeks left with the Hour of Revival team I wrote as many letters as I could to pastors around the country informing them of my new status and offering to be their “servant for Jesus’ sake.”

Single church crusades were popular in those days. Many pastors were glad to have someone with the calling of an evangelist to exercise that gift among their people. There were literally only a handful of British evangelists free to go anywhere in the country for a crusade. This shortage was partly responsible for the long advance notice needed to secure an evangelist for special meetings.

Within a very short time I began to receive invitations for ministry in various parts of England, Scotland and Wales. The problem was that they were for six to eight months in advance. Some were for a year ahead. I accepted every invitation in the order it came without regard to the size or prestige of the church. But what would we do for the immediate months ahead? God had the answer.

John Moore, who wrote that beautiful song “Burdens are Lifted at Calvary,” was Director of the Tent Hall in Glasgow. I hadn’t seen him since our train ride south together in 1951. He wrote in mid-March with an invitation to come for a fifteen day crusade in the Tent Hall.

I’ve long since misplaced the copy of his wonderful letter, but the gist was along this tongue-in-cheek line: “I would like for you to come to the Tent for meetings, but I’m afraid that I’m rather selfish. I want you to come sooner rather than later. Could you please come in mid-April?”

That wasn’t even a month away! As an experienced Christian minister, John knew the first few months would be the hardest for me. “Thank YOU Lord! You’ve used John to help lift my burden.”

Our little home on Peppercombe Road was three hundred feet above sea level. From our living room window we could see the entire sweep of Pevensey Bay, where William the Conqueror landed from Normandy in 1066 AD.

Immediately behind the house, the Downs rose steeply for another 200 feet. Just over the backyard fence there was a footpath that led to the top and along the wind-swept ridge to Beachy Head, the highest point on the south coast. From this majestic promontory a sheer chalk cliff plunged straight down into the sea, 536 feet below. In the distance, to the east, you could see Dungeness, Hastings and Bexhill.

For the first few weeks after leaving the Hour of Revival team I was home with my family. There were many jobs needing to be done around the house that I’d never had time for before. The backyard was a disaster area overgrown with briar bushes and gorse. Harriett needed a clothes line for drying. (This was not the Duke’s estate.) I cleared a tree stump from the yard, put in a concrete walk along the side fence, erected a four row twenty-foot clothes line and built a retaining wall for the terrace just outside our dining room window.

During that time Miss Margaret, a school teacher friend from Cambridge, came to visit with us for a few days. She wanted to go outside in the back to play with the children.

“If you go out in the backyard, watch out for the briars,” I warned her, “or you’ll get a run in your hose.”

Any American lady would have understood my caution. Margaret looked at me as if I’d spoken in an unknown tongue.

Then I realized I needed to translate the advice into English. "If you venture out into the back garden, mind the brambles or you'll ladder your stockings!"

"Oh, well why didn't you say so in the first place?" she responded with a friendly smile.

\* \* \* \*

Those early weeks at home "on the Lord's terms" were therapeutic for both of us. The fifty dollars a month from the Sumter Bible Church was our total support during that transition period. True, it went further then than it would today. It would be the equivalent of about five hundred dollars in the late nineties; not enough for a family of four to live on, but sufficient to keep from starving. There were times, however, when we split an egg three ways.

I remember sitting down for our first Christmas dinner at Peppercombe Road. Harriett had prepared a wonderful meal; the children each had a present under the tree, all our bills were paid and the Lord had supplied every need. "How much do we have left over, honey?" I asked, knowing the price of turkeys.

"Sixpence," Harriett replied.

We could identify with the widow woman in Zarephath. Every day she poured out the last few drops of oil from the jar and used the remaining handful of meal in the barrel. But the Lord never let the supply run dry. (1 Kings 17:9-16)

"Let's pray," I said. I gave thanks to the Lord for His provision. We had everything we needed and still had "sixpence" (the equivalent of 7¢) left over. Before the prayer had cooled on my lips and before I could lift my fork and begin to enjoy the delicious dinner, a knock came on our front door.

It was Mr. Louis G. Ford, a Christian businessman who had an ironmonger shop (hardware store) on Terminus Road. "Happy Christmas!" he said with a broad smile, and handed me a large, beautifully decorated basket of fruit. There were nuts and candy bars all mixed in with it.

"Just popped by to drop this off," he said, and with that he was gone.

We deeply appreciated his thoughtful gesture. Later on, when we began to remove some of the goodies from the basket we discovered an envelope. Inside was a Christmas card greeting and a check for ten pounds. That was a week's salary in those days! Harriett stretched it farther than that.

\* \* \* \*

I wondered what it would be like when I left to fulfill some of the invitations for crusade meetings that were beginning to come in. How would Harriett react? I should have known that when the Lord does a work in someone's heart He does it right. She had

given me back to the Lord. In her mind and heart I was first of all His, then hers. I could not have asked for a more supportive wife.

The main problem I faced then was transportation. We didn't have a car. My calling as an evangelist took me all over the country. In those early days there wasn't enough money to buy a train ticket. How was I to get up north to Carlisle or Sunderland? It was over 200 miles.

Then I remembered when I was in the US navy I would hitch-hike home on leave. I decided to try hitch-hiking to my scheduled meetings. I needed to travel light so I wore my nice suit and tie. To my surprise I seldom had to wait more than a few minutes for a lift.

In the months that followed I developed a philosophy of hitching rides based on lots of experience. The following are some pointers to help you get around if you don't have your own set of wheels and need to hitch-hike.

1. Dress nicely. Wear a suit and tie. If you look like a "scruff" folks are less likely to pick you up. A member of Parliament from the west country stopped his Rolls-Bentley to give me a lift because, he said, "I thought you were a businessman and your car had broken down." He drove me all the way from Torquay, Devon back to London.
2. Smile. If you look like a pleasant person, people won't mind sharing a ride with you. If you have a frown or sour look they will think, I have enough problems of my own without having to listen to this guy, and they'll leave you in their dust. A friendly, enthusiastic countenance will get you a long way.
3. Travel light. One small suitcase only. It's surprising what you can get along without. Often there is a space problem in a vehicle that might otherwise pick you up. A small cardboard sign, with the name of the town you're headed for will help. Have the name of your hometown on the other side for your return.
4. Choose carefully where you stand. Think of the driver. You must give him plenty of time to see you. Stand in a place that will be easy for him to pull safely off the road and stop so that his car will not interfere with the flow of traffic. Never stand on a curve or the brow of a hill. If you are near a junction or fork in the road, walk to a spot that will clearly indicate which way you are going.
5. Select your vehicle. "Wait a minute," you say, "beggars can't be choosers!" Why not? My experience taught me that the smaller the car the more people there were in it, while larger cars had fewer people in them. Older cars were more likely to break down and you'd be stuck somewhere. I let all the old cars and small cars go by without any solicitation on my part. I waited for the big Austins or Morris, the Jaguars, the Rovers, the Bentleys, Mercedes and the occasional Rolls Royce. These were the reliable, long distance means of transportation that I would opt for. It worked for me.

This went on for about fifteen months. Eventually we saved enough money to buy a motor-scooter. At last I had independent means of transportation again! I could even take a few extra things with me in the saddle bags.



Bill on motor scooter in front of the house with the yellow garage doors

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## 21

### The work of an Evangelist

2 Timothy 4:5

In August 1956 I was invited to Ash, a picturesque little village in eastern Kent, near Canterbury. Dave Foster, a chalk artist and evangelist with British Youth for Christ, was invited to come with me. Dave and I were old friends. We had worked together before, but we were not fully prepared for what we found in Ash.

Five Christian young people and a school teacher had a burden to reach their community for Christ. With the backing of three local churches they organized the All Ash Crusade. The "All" included several small hamlets in the area, some without any church. A large tent was rented. They advertised the meetings and did all the preparatory ground work with great enthusiasm. The maturity of these young people was quite unique.

During an early morning prayer meeting in the All Ash Crusade, the Lord seemed to say, "What has been done here, by this team, can be done all over Britain." God impressed on my heart a burden to form teams of young people, based on local churches, to take the gospel to people wherever they were. By January 1957 I had found or formed ten teams. Most of the teams were a result of evangelistic crusades I held in local churches all around Britain.

The format was simple. While I was in a local church, preaching a special series of evangelistic sermons for a week or ten days, I would explain my vision to the Pastor concerning reaching the people in his area who never come to church. The best method of outreach is with a team. I would ask him to give me a list of the keenest young people in his church.

Then I would meet for prayer with the young people the Pastor recommended and tell them, "After the evening service tonight, I'm going out to the pub. Would you like to join me?" They were usually shocked at first, but when I explained why I was going they were ready to venture out with me.

Following the evening service, when the older folks had gone home, I would meet again with the "team." We would have a time of prayer together. It's important to first of all talk to God about men, before talking to men about God.

Thus empowered, we went forth. When we reached the pub, I would select one of the men to go inside with me, while the others waited outside and prayed. Stepping inside was a traumatic experience for the young, first-time missionary. It was another world, filled with smoke, smut and suggestive stories.

I looked for the manager. "Good evening, sir," I said with a smile and handshake when properly introduced. "We're a group of young people from the church down the street," I explained. "We're out singing and giving a brief testimony in the various local pubs tonight. We'll only need about five minutes, where would you like for us to stand so your patrons can see and hear us?"

The introductory information answered in advance the three basic questions he would most likely have; "Who are you? What do you want to do? and How long will it take?" Notice that the question we asked him did not require a "yes" or "no" answer. Such questions most often produce a negative answer.

Later on we will examine the format the team used inside the pub or dance hall to witness for Christ. All that was needed was someone to motivate them and lead them out for the first time. After that it was easy.

In February 1957, fifty young people representing ten Gospel teams, met together for a weekend of prayer and exchange of Team ideas. The venue was Herne Bay Court, a medium-sized Christian conference center in the southeast of England. This dedicated group felt led of God to form a prayer fellowship that would link the various teams around the country in a prayer chain.



A name was needed for the fellowship. I had been asking the Lord about that for some time as more and more teams were formed. The week before the conference I was travelling across London on the tube (subway) and somewhere in between Charing Cross and Victoria Station, on the District and Circle Line, the Lord put the question in my mind, "What are you?" I thought about that.

Each individual group was an evangelistic team. The proposed linkup around the British Isles put them on a national basis. Even before the train stopped at Victoria the name seemed obvious: National Evangelistic Teams. N.E.T. Jesus said, "Let down your net . . . I'll make you fishers of men." And, of course, anything in connection with NET was NETwork.

Fifty young people representing ten Gospel teams came to Herne Bay that weekend and went away with a new vision for reaching the lost. Well-known men of God and Bible Conference speakers like Reverend E. Buckhurst Pinch, Mr. A Lindsay Glegg and Major Ian Thomas identified themselves with NET-work as President and Vice Presidents respectively. The national council appointed me as the first Director.

The idea of dedicated Christian young people joining together and forming an independent Gospel Team, based in a local church, began to catch on all over the country. Within a few weeks there were fifteen teams, and by the end of the summer the original number had doubled to twenty teams. Each of the team members had some form of secular employment which meant that they were not a financial burden on the already over-taxed Christian pocketbook in Britain.

In addition they maintained a daily contact with the very people whom they sought to win for Christ. They remained constantly abreast of current interests, problems and frustrations that confronted their peers.



Bill and the Pioneers in a coffee bar serving up the Gospel

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## Outreach Evangelism

### *“From the Coffee Bar to the Communion Table.”*

The amber turn-signal was flashing: I had a growing conviction that evangelism was about to turn a corner. It happened in the late 1950s. We entered a new dimension in evangelistic concepts which many referred to as “Outreach.” The old, familiar signposts were no longer present.

To put you in the context: Evangelical Alliance statistics for 1955 revealed, “In Britain, 8% of the population are members of a church and less than 2% attend a worship service regularly on Sunday.” The actual figure was 1.8%. A friend of mine noted, “The reason most people don’t go to church is because most people don’t go to church.” Why? The majority of people felt awkward and out of place in the unfamiliar, and sometimes unfriendly, environment of the established church.

Just as a Christian might feel out of place in the local “pub” knocking back a pint, the man who is “at home” in those surroundings might feel uncomfortable in one of our churches, singing unfamiliar choruses and hymns. I concluded that if we were ever going to reach lost souls for Jesus Christ, then we’d have to take the Gospel to them.

It would seem absurd to pray for God to send Africans to Britain or America so that we might evangelize them. But without considering the inconsistency we ask the Lord to bring the unsaved into our churches (or stadiums) so they may hear the Gospel. It does not seem ridiculous because over the years it has become our method for evangelism and has replaced the principle laid down by our Lord in the Great Commission.

The truth is, the Bible does not tell sinners to come to church. Earnest prayer for God’s blessing on unscriptural methods is no substitute for obedience to His clear command. If we want to win Africans to Christ, we must go to Africa. The same missionary strategy applies at home. If we are to win men and women to Jesus Christ we must “go” to where they are.

I had to face the simple fact that in Britain, people were being born at a faster rate than they were being “born again.” Everyone rejoiced in 1954, when 3,000 precious souls came forward in one night during the Billy Graham Crusade at London’s Wembley Stadium. That was three percent of the 100,000 people present that night. The results were average for most evangelists involved in crusades during the 1950s.

When I honestly examined the effectiveness of contemporary evangelism, I found it to be wanting. This was not criticism of any brother who faithfully preached the Word. It was a simple acknowledgement that we would never accomplish the task if we continued with the status quo.

Leon Trotsky once wrote, "Whoever among us longs for a quiet life has certainly chosen the wrong epoch." Future historians may refer to the 20th Century as "The Age of Revolution."

The church has had a significant part in precipitating many of the changes through its missionary thrusts. The church has brought literacy and education to many parts of the world. She has taught the importance and dignity of the individual and planted the seeds of personal and spiritual revolution through Christ. In many cases this has led to social and economic change as well.

The communists have successfully exploited this for many years. "You Christians have taught the people to read," one observed to me. "We communists have given them literature." The results of this indoctrination can be seen in the intensely nationalistic viewpoint of an African student, studying in the United States. "When the missionary came to Africa the African had the land and the missionary had the Bible," he asserted. "Today the African has the Bible and the missionary has the land." The fact that this is not true is beside the point. It is an illustration of how successful the communists have been with their propaganda.

As I looked carefully at 20th Century evangelistic methods, I found that they could be reduced to a basic formula: "YOU COME HEAR ME." It did not matter who the evangelist was. His campaign could be in a small church where a few handbills were printed announcing the special meetings. Or it could be projected to the largest scale possible, with an internationally known evangelist, promoted by a full-scale advertising firm utilizing day-glo posters, billboards, radio and television spots; newspapers with feature-length articles and photo interviews plus a dozen movie stars and cowboys flown in to add to the attraction. The formula was still the same: YOU COME HEAR ME.

The basic formula for New Testament evangelism was just the opposite: WE'VE COME TO TELL YOU! At Pentecost, Peter preached, "*This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses.*" The apostle John proclaimed, "*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.*"

This kind of preaching soon landed them in jail, but they steadfastly maintained that. "*We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*" The principle was followed regardless of consequences. For some it meant having their heads chopped off, for others it meant being fed to the lions or crucified upside down, but they kept on telling people that Jesus had risen from the dead, "He is alive!"

Thousands of anonymous people went all across the world preaching the Word. I wondered what would happen if we followed the New Testament example of the Church at Antioch. Perhaps every church would be a missionary society with all its members actively witnessing and sending representatives forth to take the Gospel to unevangelized areas. We might see an army of dedicated young people crossing cultural, racial and ideological boundaries to be ambassadors for Christ.

Jesus Christ described the strategy: *“Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”* (Acts 1:8) Mission work begins at home, in our “Jerusalem.” But it doesn’t stop there. Home is where we are best known. It’s a tough assignment. People know us as we really are. If we pass that test, and win souls “at home,” then we’re ready for our next position; for our Judea, Samaria and uttermost parts.

Be careful. It’s easy to lose sight of the plan. The early Christians settled down in comfortable churches in Jerusalem. They put in stained-glass windows, bought a new organ and paved the parking lot for the growing numbers that commuted by chariot. What happened? *“There was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria . . . they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.”* (Acts 8:1,4) Now, they were back on course, following the divine strategy and fulfilling the original plan.

I often wondered if it would take another wave of persecution to awaken the church. Later, I would see firsthand the fires of persecution that were already raging in Eastern Europe. But I wasn’t ready for that yet.

Many evangelists I worked with agreed that 2% of any given audience responding to an appeal to trust Christ was average and 3% was excellent. The aggregate attendance figures issued by some evangelists seemed misleading. Presumably if the campaign went on long enough the number would exceed the population of the entire area. But no one would suggest that every person had heard the Gospel. The biggest block of people come several times during a campaign and a large percentage come every night.

For many years I was content to preach the Gospel to spiritually well-fed, middle-class Christians in what the Americans called “Revival” meetings and the English referred to as “preaching missions” or evangelistic campaigns. Usually after three or four nights I had memorized the crowd. The lady with the birds on her hat would sit here and the bald-headed gentleman would sit over there, and the young courting couple would sit in the back row, holding hands. They would listen politely and often comment favorably on the message as they left, but for the most part their lives remained unchanged.

Judging the situation in Britain, I concluded that people attended special evangelistic meetings because they already had some interest in spiritual things, or perhaps a close friend or relative persuaded them to come. Even with some “fish in the pool,” the evangelist often failed to communicate because his preaching presupposed a mentality which was not present. From Wesley to Moody one could assume that certain basic Bible truths were universally accepted and believed. Not anymore. The late Archbishop of York, Dr. Cyril Garbett, summed up the situation when he said, “England is in danger of lapsing into complete paganism.”

The post-war Englishman was told by his politicians: “you’ve never had it so good.” Under the benefits of the welfare state he was looked after from the womb to the tomb.

On Thursday afternoons he stood in line at the post office, bought a half-crown postal order and sent it to Littlewood's, hoping to win the football pools. On Saturday he was glued to his radio or television watching "the game." To him, "Jesus" was just an expression he used if his team missed a goal.

The church existed, in the average mind, to fulfill three customary social obligations: **baptism** ("We had our baby 'done' last week."), **marriage** and **funerals**, "England abounds with four-wheeled Christians," I admonished. "You roll up to church in a pram to be baptised, a car to be married and in a hearse to be buried. You're hatched, matched and dispatched, but you have never come to know the One who is *'the Way, the Truth and the Life.'*"

Two devastating World Wars had disrupted the entire British domestic equilibrium. Men were separated from their families to serve in the armed forces. They returned to find cities badly damaged and possibly their homes destroyed. In other cases large areas were declared "slum" and had been cleared. His roots had been pulled up. There was little or nothing within mass society with which he could identify himself. His spiritual foundation gradually eroded.

Protestantism, in its evolution since the Reformation, generally became a comfortable middle-class movement. Any revolutionary change in the pattern of society was viewed as a threat to this preferential position. Thus it became a captive of political conservatism. Small wonder that so many revolutionary movements took an anti-Christian position at their inception.

During the Russian Revolution in 1917, young Bolsheviks asked, "Where is your wealth? Why are you poor? What has the church done for you?" Their wealth was concentrated in the fabulously ornamented Orthodox Church buildings, but the church had given them nothing, spiritually speaking, in return. Thus, partly because of a misrepresentation of real Christianity by a corrupt, apostate and theologically dead Eastern Orthodox church, the communist adopted an atheistic posture and said, "If this is God, we want no part of it."

This was the background, the mosaic, the context in which I found myself in the mid-1950s in the British Isles. Here were two opposing formulas for evangelism. One with its roots in a comfortable, middle-class society, satisfied to maintain the status quo and afraid to risk anything. The other, Biblically based and dating back to a context pregnant with danger; a totalitarian society in which Christians were hated by the Jews, despised by the Greeks and first ignored but later persecuted by Rome.

In the context, heathenism had every earthly advantage; the philosophical schools, the literary classes, social prestige and the great religious system supported by the empire. But a little group of men and women went throughout the world proclaiming, "Christ is risen!" and in effect saying, "We've come to tell you." At a time when many doors were closing, I needed to remember that obedience, not opportunity, was the keyword to evangelistic endeavor.

There are inherent implications in the formula YOU COME HEAR ME. One hears the phrase “living by faith,” but what does it mean? It means that we trust the Lord to supply all our material needs. Experience teaches us that the Lord often works through human instruments. Consequently, the modern evangelist finds himself spending a great deal of time ministering to the very people from whom he expects to derive his support. Surely, the sole motivation for Christian service should be, “. . . *the love of Christ constrains me.*” Otherwise we lose the faith-expanding experience of looking to God for the supply of every need.

The majority of first century evangelists were self-supporting. They used the opportunities provided by their secular employment for aggressive and persuasive witness. In modern, complex social structures such practice is not always possible, but self-confidence must be replaced by Christ-confidence. Our training is never complete without a course in the “university” of Arabia where, in solitary communion with the Lord, we learn to “*have no confidence in the flesh.*”

### **From the COFFEE BAR . . . to the COMMUNION TABLE**

The formula for evangelism had been defined, “We’ve come to tell you.” Now a strategy needed to be worked out to achieve our goal. The first step was easy. It was implicit in the formula. If we were going to reach young people in Britain with the Gospel we needed to go where they were. Fine. Where were they?

In the late 1950s and early `60s British youth were usually divided along social, economic and educational lines. There were the “Grammar School types” with an academic education destined for College or University and a profession. There were the “Secondary Modern types” in comprehensive schools training for special skills and crafts. Then there were gangs of “Mods” and “Rockers.” The Rockers were the macho types, usually wearing leather and riding motorcycles. Some had tattoos. The Mods dressed in suits or a blazer and tie and for transportation relied on the bus, a bike or, when they could afford it, a motorscooter.

Social life centered around the local coffee bar where they met with their peers to discuss the latest trends and make a cup of coffee last all evening. We headed for the coffee bars. We worked as a team, but we divided up once inside and sat at different tables. This was acceptable, as space was limited.

Initially we kept quiet and just listened to their conversation. No, we weren’t wasting time. In fact, we were doing two things at once. First, we were learning what their interests were and picking up bits of information to refer back to later on when we would become involved in the conversation.

Second, we were earning the right to speak. This is very important. Our Lord taught us this when He was on the road to Emmaus. He walked along and listened to the two men as they discussed the events of the day. Later, it was His turn to speak and they listened to Him.

We were always sensitive to any opportunity to speak up. It might come in the form of, "That happened to me once," or "What happened after you told him that?" Once you had spoken, having earned the right to speak, it was generally accepted that you could participate in the discussion. In my case (and at that time) an American accent was a slight advantage.

The Bible says, "If a man will have friends, he must show himself friendly." Our Lord Jesus was the "Friend" of sinners. We genuinely wanted to become their friend. Our venture into the coffee bar was the first step. We were reaching out.

But the objective was to lead them to Jesus Christ, introduce them to a body of believers where they could have Christian fellowship and grow in the Lord. We soon realized that our problem was how to get them from the coffee bar to the communion table. The "coffee bar" could be anywhere outside of Christ while the "communion table" postulated a new birth experience somewhere along the line.

The Lord led us to adopt a four-stage strategy with continuity between each one.

Stage One: Go where they were; into the coffee bars or wherever to make contacts and friends for Christ. This was outreach.

Stage Two: Create a Christian Coffee Bar, an informal place where young people could meet their friends. Preferably this was not on Church premises. Sometimes we rented a café or restaurant for a week. At this stage we provided the music and a message. We usually opened the doors around 9 p.m., after the younger children were home in bed. The CCB would be open until the last bus ran which was usually around mid-night.

During the evening we would have about three programs an hour. Each program consisted of songs from our team the PIONEERS and a short (five minute) message. By the end of the evening the "customers" had heard 25 to 30 minutes of straight from the shoulder Gospel preaching, but it had been delivered in small, easy to digest capsules.

On the last night of the Coffee Bar Crusade I usually preached on the Cross and gave an invitation. The first year, of all those we preached to, we averaged over 33% coming to Christ for salvation. The continuity between stages one and two was one of informal atmosphere. At stage two we introduced a message: Christ died for our sins.

Stage Three: A Rally type meeting. This was usually an auditorium, cinema or town hall. Whenever possible it was on neutral ground. It helped bridge the gap between coffee bar and communion table by introducing the `outsider' to the idea of sitting in rows and facing a podium where a speaker would appear and preach. It was a big step, but one to which they could relate because they were hearing the same message as in Stage Two: Christ died for our sins. The continuity between stages two and three was one of content.

Stage Four: Into Church on Sunday. Again they were sitting in rows and facing a pulpit, but they quickly felt at home. Most of those who successfully made the transition were

converted at stage two, the Christian coffee bar. Some responded at the Rally. The continuity between stages three and four was one of both atmosphere and content. Thus, in the span of one week, we were usually able to bridge the gap between the coffee bar and the communion table.

In later crusades we found it necessary to spend more time preparing the older Christian in church to receive and welcome the newcomers. They needed to understand that these young people had grown up without any Christian teaching or influence. They had never been inside a church or place of worship and it was unlikely that their parents or even grandparents had ever attended church. They were third generation pagans.

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## 23

### Europe on a Motor Scooter

My diary was full now. In 1957 I preached over twenty evangelistic crusades, some of which were three weeks, many were two weeks and the rest were the standard eight-day crusade, from Sunday to Sunday. Most were single church crusades because of my promise to the Lord not to put live chicks under a dead hen. The one united crusade was in Margate, Kent with seventeen evangelical churches involved. There was a real harvest of souls in each place we ministered.

The motor-scooter was more reliable than comfortable. It was perfect for short trips of fifty miles or so. The longer trips were exhausting. I would usually encounter rain (no surprise in the maritime climate of England) somewhere enroute and arrive for a meeting soaked to the skin and chilled to the bone. Many times I preached in wet clothing because there was no time to dry out. During that time I developed emphysema and my health deteriorated.

On one occasion, in the Spring of 1957, we managed to arrange for a friend to stay with the children a few days so Harriett could go with me for a crusade on the Isle of Wight and then on to a British Youth for Christ Conference in Torquay, Devon in the West Country. She rode for hours astride the pillion seat of our motor scooter and never complained, but after 180 miles of sitting in one position in a 50 mph wind, she could hardly walk when we arrived.

In June of 1957 I was guest speaker for a week at Capernwray Hall, the Torchbearer Center founded by Major Ian Thomas. It's located in the northwest of England, near the little town of Carnforth. I could not be expected to know that twenty-five years later our third daughter, Lenora, would attend Bible School there and then go on to work for Torchbearers in Austria.



Major Thomas was a great inspiration to me. The Lord used his influence to change my life during those early years in Britain. I will never forget his challenge to be always “restfully available” to the Lord, 24 hours a day. He has probably led more young people to the Lord Jesus Christ, on a one-to-one basis, than any other man I know. I have never met a more prolific soul-winner.

There were always scores of young people from the continent at Capernwray. One of the guests there, during the week I ministered, was John Parschauer, director of the German Bible Institute in Bensheim on the Bergstrasse. He asked me to come to Bensheim for ten days of meetings in August. I had planned to be in Germany during August and the dates were perfect.

I rode my motor scooter. While crossing France, it started to sprinkle rain just as I was coming into a small village. At first glance French villages seemed very inhospitable, with walls that lined both sides of the road all the way through. Behind the walls, however, were some very nice homes.

Each home had a gate in the wall that opened into a courtyard with the family garden, and a path or walkway leading to the house. Most homes had a garage with a large door opening onto the road. Every gate and door was shut. There seemed to be no place I could find shelter.

Suddenly I spotted an open garage door. Summer showers seldom last very long, so I decided to stop and wait this one out. It was better to ride dry. I pulled into the garage and shut off my engine. I dismounted, removed my crash helmet and was watching the rain, when a very large peasant woman waddled out from behind a partition, and smiled at me. By “large” I do not mean tall. She was perhaps, around five feet - both vertically and horizontally. Not speaking any French to speak of I smiled sheepishly and gestured toward the rain, which by now was pouring down. She understood.

It was an exaggeration to say that she smiled. She only had one tooth. “Grinned” might be a more appropriate description. She asked me if I would like something to drink. My French forsakes me beyond ordering ham and eggs and coffee in a restaurant or enquiring directions to the next town. I *thought* she asked if I’d like something to eat. The French are marvelous cooks and I was hungry. It had been hours since I’d eaten anything. “Oui madame, merci,” I said.

She smiled (make that “grinned”), reached up on a small shelf and took down a dusty glass filled with cobwebs, which she promptly wiped out with her apron, and disappeared behind the panel. I was curious. Walking over to the doorway I peeked around the corner and saw a cow in a stall behind the partition. My new friend had the glass under the cow and was milking!

I thought, *’tis better to be wet than sick* and headed for my motor scooter. Before I could fasten on my helmet and start the engine, she waddled out from behind the divider and with outstretched hand offered me the refreshment of fresh cow’s milk, body temperature. I thought *surely she’ll grin and go, then I can pour this out* - but no. She

stood there, framed in the doorway, with arms folded, smiling her toothless smile, and I drank every lukewarm drop.

The meetings in Bensheim *an der Bergstrasse* were memorable. The Parschauers were veteran missionaries. The family was musical. The daughters sang beautifully together and produced many record albums in both English and German.

One night, just before the service, two cars arrived from Holland: a 1957 Chevy and a late model Volkswagen beetle. The "big" Chevy was the latest model and quite an attraction. The Dutchmen were on their way to Hungary with Bibles and other supplies for Christians there. I was very interested.

Hungary was behind what Winston Churchill called the "Iron Curtain" and I didn't think anyone could go there. The driver of the "beetle" was the team leader. He told me this was his second trip into the communist world. He'd been to Poland the year before. We talked late into the evening and the Lord opened my eyes to another vast mission field, right on our door-step. A field I thought was "closed," off limits, out of bounds for missionaries; a field I hadn't seriously prayed for.

"What's your name again?" I asked. "I want to be sure to pray for you." "A. van der Bijl," he replied, "and thanks. I'll pray for you too."

I've never forgotten that memorable meeting. It was another four years before the Lord led me into a ministry to the communist world, and it was ten years before I saw Mr. van der Bijl again. Our paths crossed many times in Eastern Europe after I began working there. He was widely known in the East by his code name that eventually became his pen name in the West, "Brother Andrew."

After the series of meetings in Bensheim at the Bible Institute, I went on to the little village of Rehe, in the Westerwald, near Wetzlar. The invitation had come from Ulrich Beul, a young German I had met in England two months before. The family operated an Esso *tankstelle* in town and his father owned a fleet of long distance charter busses. The entire family was very active in the local Brethren Assembly. They wanted me to come for a youth crusade.

The Beuls were a close-knit, hard working, salt-of-the-earth Christian family. They had farmed and lived off the land for generations. Their mother had been killed during the Second World War; strafed by the nose gunner of an American bomber returning to England from a raid over Frankfurt.

If she had been working in a munitions factory or some vital industry, I could understand it as a misfortune of war. But Rehe was over a hundred miles from any vital target and she was harvesting wheat in the field.

One could sympathize if the family had said, "Oh yes, we're Christians and we forgive, but you realize that we don't ever want to see another American as long as we live." However, that was not the case. I was amazed at the love and warmth I felt from all the family in spite of the tragedy.

Traveling by motor scooter does not allow for taking many extra things along. I had room for only one small case with one suit in it for the trip. I wore that suit each night when I preached. It was actually the only decent suit I had to my name, period.

One day, during the crusade, they took me shopping in Wetzler. We visited a men's clothing store and they introduced me to the manager with the instructions that he was to fit me with a brand new suit. How could they know I needed a new suit unless it was the Lord who put the thought in their hearts?

That brand new suit doubled my wardrobe! I wore it for many years. Every time I put it on memories of the mission in Rehe flooded my mind.

The suit was to me a "sermon" on forgiveness.

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## 24

### The Reign in Spain

It was shortly after 9 a.m. when we left Perpignan, in the south of France for the Spanish frontier. Three minutes out of town we caught our first glimpse of the dramatic profile of the Pyrenees. These snow-capped sentinels stood as a majestic guard to a land we had longed to look behind. It was November 1958 and this was the first of many trips Harriett and I would make to Spain.

By tradition, Spain was solidly Roman Catholic to the point of intolerance to any evangelical view. Protestant marriages were not recognized, so their children were regarded as illegitimate and denied a public education. The Catholic Church consecrated cemeteries and Protestants could not be buried there. Bibles were contraband and, if found, were confiscated at the border.

We passed through Spanish customs with a minimum of difficulty (meaning they didn't find the Bibles we had on board) and pressed further south. We had no idea at that time that the Lord was preparing us for a lifetime ministry in restricted-access countries.

Our missionary contacts were Bob and Dorothy Love. We had met Dorothy's mother in England and she had given us their address. I wrote to Bob, outlining my desire to come to Spain sometime and asked him if there were any supplies he needed. He wrote back immediately: Bibles were at the top of the list. He offered to arrange a preaching itinerary for me, so the trip quickly evolved from a "sometime" dream to a fixed-date reality. Now we had arrived.

The crystal clear waters of the lazy Mediterranean washed the rugged Costa Brava as we negotiated the twisting road south. Our base of operations was Tarrasa, about 18

kilometers south of Barcelona. Harriett spoke at the women's meetings and gave her testimony while I preached in a dozen or more places throughout the northeastern part of Spain.

Oswald Chambers once said, "You can never reason ahead spiritually. You can reason spiritually in retrospect. Like Abraham's servant, you look back and say, *'I being in the way, the LORD led me.'*" (Genesis 24:27) Looking back on the way the Lord has led me across the years I can confirm what Chambers discovered.

We had lived and worked in Western Europe for ten years when the Lord began to open the door for us to go into Eastern Europe. It began very slowly, almost innocently at first, and not into the communist world, but to a totalitarian, restricted-access country - Spain.

We had a citywide crusade in Madrid, Spain in 1959. By a "citywide crusade" I mean that we had meetings all over the city during the week we were there. We had to change the venue every night. If we had been two nights in the same place the police could have been notified and would no doubt have broken up the meetings and at best deported the missionaries.

Protestant churches could not be built on the street or visible as a Church. Usually there was a little plaque, one foot by fifteen inches, on the outside of an apartment building that read, "Iglesia Bautista" and gave times of the services. People had to go through a passageway into a courtyard in the back. There you would find a Baptist Church. You really had to know where it was to find it.

Everything was low key and very low profile. All the advertising was done by "word of mouth." Nevertheless, we had good attendance at our crusades right across the Iberian peninsula. Between 1958 and 1962 I preached in every corner of Spain and then on to Portugal.

Crossing the border from France, into Spain, was every bit as difficult in those days as (we would find later on) getting into one of the communist countries. Spain was virtually "closed" in the years before Vatican II.

Generalissimo Francisco Franco, known colloquially as *el Caudillo*, was the hard-line military and political dictator who held the country in a tight grip. Hitler and Mussolini were his allies during the Spanish Civil War [1936-39] and helped him defeat the Communists. German Luftwaffe pilots practiced dive-bombing techniques on civilian populations and systematically destroyed Guernica. In gratitude to the Nazis, Franco remained neutral during the Second World War.

If we had gone directly from the United States into Eastern Europe, in those dark days of the "Cold War," we would have been a disaster to the very people we were trying to help. (Although I had studied European history at university, I knew zero about their culture.) We would not have known how to behave, how to dress, how to comport ourselves discretely. I'm sure we would have been the epitome of the "ugly American" in all of its most distasteful forms.

The Apostle Paul said, *"I am made all things to all men, that by all means I might win some."* We needed to learn and absorb their culture; find out about them and where they were coming from. In the process we could share our faith and lead many to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Any type of Protestant work was regarded as a threat by the Catholic authorities. The government was greatly influenced by what the Roman Catholic Church wanted and Rome did not want evangelical missionaries preaching salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Civil Guards, the secret police in Spain, frequently followed us.

On one occasion we were followed by the police for about 100 kilometers in a hair-raising chase across the Spanish countryside. I watched the car, a very powerful Mercedes, gradually closing the gap behind me. When I passed a certain point, or landmark, (where I knew I could see them from a distance) I timed it to see how long it took them to get to that point. A little further on I'd have another landmark that I could compare. They were gradually gaining on me - closing the gap. I was grateful for some racing experience in my youth.

As we came into a small town I slowed down to thirty. Just then I saw an automobile repair shop. The service door was wide open and the bay, which would hold about three cars, was empty. I put on the brakes, turned in and went all the way to the end. Once I was deep inside the building I shut off the engine, got out, opened the hood and looked underneath to "check" different things. The startled mechanic came over and was looking to see. I was watching to see. In just a moment, whoosh! The police car went by. They never did find us. It was the only way we were able to lose them.

In hotels the staff would listen to our conversations. Not to the extent that we would later discover in the communist world, but they would listen. To satisfy their curiosity we played Gospel music and sermons in Spanish on a tape recorder that we had with us. They were intrigued. We would get the whole staff around and let them record their voices. Tape recorders were new then so it was fascinating to them.

We experimented with a lot of different ways to get the Gospel out in addition to preaching night by night. One example was what Bob called our "Gospel bombs." We wrapped Spanish tracts, two or three at a time, in colorful cellophane paper. We made hundreds and tossed them out of the car as we drove across country. People would run to pick them up.

Once, when Bob tossed out a roll in red cellophane, the young man jumped because he thought it was a big firecracker being thrown at him. Wrapping them in cellophane was a protection in case it rained. Many people walked along the road. We knew that eventually the tracts would be found, opened up and someone would discover the Good News.

The "Voice of Tangier," a radio station in North Africa, broadcast the Gospel in several different languages but primarily in Spanish. It was heard loud and clear all over Spain. Listeners who prayed to receive Christ would write to an address in Switzerland. Those

names and addresses were brought into Spain by courier. Bob Love was responsible for follow up on these Spanish language broadcasts.

When time and finances permitted Bob would go around the country to meet new converts and introduce them to a method of Bible study. It was my joy to help him when I was there. We travelled together in my car all over Spain. We preached in different cities every night where he had contacts.

We met new believers, many of whom had never seen another born again Christian. What a joy to talk with them and share fellowship in Christ. The next best thing to leading a soul to Jesus is watching him receive his very first Bible. These were Bibles we had taken into Spain; Bibles regarded as contraband by the Civil Guards.

We had meetings primarily in registered churches where the authorities permitted Protestant worship under restrictions. The building could not appear ecclesiastical in any way. There could be no steeple or stained glass windows or anything architecturally that would make it look like a church. It was just another apartment house in a courtyard behind another set of buildings. There might be a very small plaque on the outside wall to say that inside a doorway, behind the building, there was a church.

We also had many meetings in homes and other “unregistered” churches across the country. Spain was truly a training ground for what the Lord had for me later in communist and other restricted-access countries.

So many positive memories flood my mind when I think of those trips to Spain. Ministry in the villages and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their simple homes as we shared an austere meal around the *brasero*. This was a round, brass charcoal burner under the table that provided warmth for the family. Only their feet and legs were warm on cold winter nights. Their national dish *paella* is basically a bowl of rice with different types of seafood mixed in with the rice and topped off with a small baby octopus. It's not bad. It sort of gets a grip on you after awhile!

The afternoon siesta is an important part of Spanish culture. It means they can stay up much later at night. Meetings advertised to start at 9:00 p.m. would be empty at that time. People might start arriving just after 10:00 and would still be coming in at 11:00 p.m. Frequently they would still be straggling in when I finishing preaching at midnight. I was amazed to see small children out that late playing on the streets at midnight.

At Gibraltar, in the south of Spain, we visited some British missionaries who were stationed at the Rock. We decided it would be nice if we could go across the Straits of Gibraltar to Morocco, visit the Voice of Tangier and meet some of the folks behind the microphone. We flew across and returned in a couple of days by ship.

It was a delightful surprise to see Nick Leonovich again and discover that I had been in university with some of the other guys who were broadcasting from there. We were sorry to hear that they were closing down that station at the end of the year, but relieved to know that their mission had bought some new property and they were moving over to

Monte Carlo. The operation would eventually become Trans World Radio based in Monte Carlo, Monaco.

\* \* \* \*

October 1961

Dave Foster and I spent the month of October 1961 on the Continent. Dave was an evangelist, chalk artist and writer on staff with British Youth for Christ. We had worked together in several crusades across Britain beginning with the All Ash Crusade in 1956. We were billed as an Anglo-American Team. The posters read: **“Bill talks and Dave chalks.”** Dave had a great heart for Europe and would later establish a vital work known as EuroVangelism and move his family to Switzerland.

Our adventure began just after 8 a.m. at the frontier when the Customs officer started searching the car, pulling everything out, opening boxes of food and inspecting other supplies. Just as he was about to discover the precious cargo of Bibles we had stashed away, it seemed as if his hands were suddenly stopped. Something had come up. Another guard shouted to him and he was called away.

“You may reload and drive on,” the officer said. Whew! That was close!

(Some weeks later, when I returned to England, a letter was waiting for me from a keen Christian prayer warrior in Tennessee. It began, “Dear Bill, the Lord awakened me and I got up at 2 a.m. this morning to pray for you.” The letter was dated the day we crossed the frontier. Two o’clock in the morning in Tennessee was 8 a.m. in Spain! Believe me dear friends, **that is where the battles are won - on our knees.**)

Our blue and gray Vauxhall station wagon turned off Madrid’s busy Avenida de Jose Antonio and zigzagged through a complex obstacle course of carts and bicycles along a narrow back street. We stopped in front of a building that looked more like a dilapidated apartment house than a Baptist Church.

A small plaque on the wall identified the presence of an *Iglesia* in a courtyard behind the building. Without exaggeration this was one of the most fruitful of our many trips to Spain. We changed the venue for the crusade meetings each night to avoid attracting too much attention from the authorities. Surprisingly this did not break the continuity of the special series of meetings. Night after night tears of repentance turned to tears of joy. A German girl, studying Spanish in Madrid, was gloriously converted and devoted her secretarial abilities to the cause of Christ in Spain.

Our longtime friend, Bob Love, had invited us for a series of crusades stretching right across the country. In those days, before Vatican II, Spain was just about as closed to the Gospel as the communist countries of Eastern Europe, a truth we would learn firsthand in the next few days. How could we be expected to know that the Lord was preparing both of us for some serious ministry behind what Winston Churchill called the “Iron Curtain?”

Over a period of four years I made many trips from our base in England to Spain, taking Bibles and Christian literature with me each time. I thought I knew most of the missionaries there. This time was different. At our very first stop I heard the name "George Verwer." In each place I visited, Christians talked about a dynamic and audacious young man who didn't know the meaning of "It can't be done here." It was "George Verwer this" and "George Verwer that." I was determined to meet him.

I try not to form an opinion of anyone until I meet him or her. With George Verwer it was unique. I couldn't find anyone that was neutral. Most people were very positive, but some were negative. The most interesting thing was that it followed a pattern. Those who were all "for" George were people I knew from my previous trips to be on fire for the Lord. Other missionaries, who seemed cooler, even critical of George, were those I knew to be simply "time servers" and not really interested in going the "extra mile." I could hardly wait to meet him.

At last we found his base of operations in Madrid. I seem to remember it was a five-room apartment on the third floor, just off one of the main streets, Carlos Mauras. The one fact I clearly remember was how empty it seemed. There was no furniture, except for a few folding chairs and a couple of long trestle tables in one room.

Each table had several manual typewriters. Some empty orange crates salvaged from the local marketplace served as filing and storage space. In the family bedroom there were sleeping bags on the bare hardwood floor.

The Verwer's 18 month old son, Benjie, played happily with an empty spool of thread in a large cardboard Corn Flakes box that served as a playpen.

In another bedroom there was a three-foot pile of envelopes, already addressed, spread out in a circle about six feet in diameter. Each one contained Gospel literature that clearly presented the plan of salvation.

"These are all ready to be mailed," George explained, "as soon as we have the funds to buy stamps." Even at this early stage of his ministry in Spain he had received 15,000 postal requests for a Bible correspondence course.

To meet George Verwer was to become enthused. He was fluent in Spanish, having learned it in Mexico while doing a similar work there in previous years. He had already led a number of young people in Madrid to the Lord and enlisted them in helping him to address the envelopes I had seen piled in the adjoining room. He had a telephone book with the name and address of every telephone subscriber in Spain. It was from this book that he got the addresses for the envelopes. What a great idea!

Then George showed me a relatively small room that was about eight feet by ten feet. There were no windows. I thought at first it was a clothes closet because there were some coats and other items of clothing hanging there. On the floor there were several pairs of nicely polished shoes, a radio and record player, some dishes and other kitchen accessories plus several other hardware and technical items. This is where they keep their personal things, I thought.



“This is where we keep all the stuff we don’t need,” George explained. “We bring everything we have that we don’t absolutely need or use and put it here. It’s all for sale. One day a week we have ‘open house’ and folks come around and buy these things. We use the proceeds to buy postage stamps for the letters you saw in the other room.”

They were living in the most austere circumstances, selling their own personal possessions in order to get the Gospel out across Spain! Until that time I had never met a Christian with that level of dedication. Many years later in Cape Town, South Africa the Lord would introduce me to another man with similar commitment to Christ, but that’s another story.

God spoke to my heart on that autumn afternoon in Madrid. It was clear as a bell, deep down in my heart. The words He used were from the Book of Revelation, chapter three, “I know thy works.” Jesus Christ is dictating letters to the Churches of Asia Minor. John, the “beloved disciple,” is His secretary in seclusion on the Isle of Patmos. To the Church at Sardis He said, “. . . thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” (Revelation 3:1) That was the Word for me.

Charles B. Williams translates it as, “. . . you have a reputation of being alive, but in reality you are dead.” The Lord was saying to me, “I see right through you, Bill Bathman. You have a reputation for life, for ‘being on fire’ as an evangelist, but next to [compared with] my servant George Verwer, you’re dead.”

“Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.” (Hebrews 12:6) Thank you Holy Spirit for loving me enough to chasten me with the Word.

It is an easy thing to compare ourselves to those who are worse than we are, because we look good by comparison. But that is unrealistic, because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. If we’re going to make comparisons we should always compare ourselves to those who are better than we are and thereby be challenged and inspired to improve.

I invited George to come to England as keynote speaker for our Annual NETWORK conference in February 1962 and arranged a month of meetings to follow in the UK. His ministry revolutionized the British Isles. Thank you Lord Jesus for George Verwer. To this day I count it an honor just to have been privileged occasionally to stand in his shadow.

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## Part IV

### When the Cloudy Pillar Moves

***“And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead . . . the way.”***

Exodus 13:21

Gradually, after eleven years in England, our work began to increase on the continent of Europe. In 1965 we transferred our base of operations from Britain to Austria. Our principal target: the communist world of Eastern Europe.

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## 25

### Going Through

Following our ministry in Spain, Dave Foster and I crossed the border into France and drove from Perpignan along the *Cote de Azur* (French Riviera) to Marseille, Nice and along the Grand Cornich to the new headquarters of Trans World Radio in Monte Carlo, Monaco. This scenic roadway is one of the most beautiful in Europe. Dave didn't see much of it because he was busy pounding out an article for VISTA, the British Youth for Christ magazine, on a small portable typewriter balanced precariously on his lap.

While we were in Monte Carlo, Dr. Paul Freed, Director of Trans World Radio, explained a dilemma to us. “We've taken a professional model tape recorder to a Baptist pastor in Zagreb,” he said, “so he can record his sermons in Serbo-Croatian for us to broadcast to the whole nation. Our problem,” he continued “is how to get those tapes out of Yugoslavia. They cannot be mailed. The communist authorities would confiscate them. The pastor cannot bring them out for obvious reasons, and we don't have a team to send in after them.”

I listened with interest, wondering why he was looking at me the way he was. Dave and I were on our way to Vienna. We had meetings there in three days time. After that, we were due back in England.

At dinner on Wednesday evening Dr. Freed inquired, “When must you be in Austria?”

“Saturday afternoon,” I responded.

“Could you possibly go first to Zagreb, pick up the tapes, bring them out with you to the West and mail them to us from Vienna?”

It was a cry for help. It was also a challenge, an opportunity to serve the Lord in a new field. It was also impossible, as far I knew. Zagreb was the capital of the Croatian province of Yugoslavia and Yugoslavia was behind the Iron Curtain. It was a closed country. But the TWR team had gone in. They had left a German made Uher tape recorder with Dr. Josif Horak, Pastor of the Baptist Church.

“Let me pray about it tonight. I’ll tell you in the morning.”

I did some serious praying that evening. The Lord reminded me of what He had told Isaiah when he faced a difficult situation. *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned . . . for I am the LORD, your God.”* Isaiah 43:2,3 NIV I couldn’t think of any barrier that mortal man could put up that God couldn’t handle. But just in case I wavered, He reminded me, *“I have set before you an open door, and no man can close it.”* (Revelation 3:8) That’s all I needed. I was determined to go through that door.

The next morning, after a Continental breakfast, we said goodbye to the TWR staff and left Monte Carlo with only the name and address of a pastor we had never met, in a city we’d never been to. We drove along the autostrada across the top of Italy to Trieste, our gateway to Yugoslavia and the Iron Curtain.

Neither of us had any idea what to expect. We remembered the dramatic words of Sir Winston Churchill so eloquently intoned when he spoke at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri fifteen years before: “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Behind it lay all the ancient capitals of Eastern Europe; Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia.” We had no idea that each of those cities would one day be our mission field.

This was it. Now we could see the electrified barbed wire fence, the guard towers, the soldiers with machine guns and the steel pole across the road ahead. A sign proclaimed the international word “STOP.” We smiled, because there was no alternative.

Dave and I spent the next three hours here, negotiating a tourist visa, exchanging money and watching while the customs officer conducted a very thorough search of our car. We had prayed a lot before we arrived at the border. Both of us were conscious of a deep peace that could only come from the Lord. When the officials asked questions it seemed as though God put the answers into our mouths. We were non-confrontational, polite and answered each question as briefly as possible, often with a “yes” or “no.”

Generally speaking, Americans tend to volunteer too much information. We feel that if we open up and don’t try to keep anything back then others will understand and trust us. It doesn’t work in Europe, especially Eastern Europe. The more one talks, the more suspicious the guards become. They think you are trying to cover up something and all the talk is simply a distraction.

I remembered a European friend once said to me, “Americans are so boring.”

“That’s interesting,” I replied. “What makes you say that?”

“Well, you get into an elevator with an American and by the time you reach the top floor you know his whole life story!”

I had lived in Europe for so long at that time that he momentarily forgot that I was an American. But I knew exactly what he meant. I tried to explain that in America there are wide-open spaces. We don’t have fences, gates and locks on everything. We’re very open with each other, even with strangers.

A European, on the other hand, will tell you a little about himself today. Then, tomorrow, if he trusts you he’ll tell you something more. Each day you learn something new about him that you didn’t know before. In that way, he’s always interesting.

We didn’t volunteer any information at the Yugoslav border. We simply asked for a “tourist visa” for one week, although we knew we’d only be there two days. We had to declare every bit of money we had with us.

Remember, Dave and I had been on the continent for almost a month. We’d travelled from England across France, throughout Spain and then briefly in Italy. We had small amounts of currency from each of those countries: pounds, francs, pesetas and lire plus a few dollars. Everything was declared. We had to keep receipts of all our expenses while in Yugoslavia and these had to balance when we left the country. This was to prove that we had not exchanged any Western currency illegally.

Finally it was all over. The border formalities were complete. Almost abruptly they handed us our passports, raised the red and white striped steel pole, saluted and waved us on. That was it. We were going through.

The change was both immediate and dramatic. Roads in Yugoslavia were narrow and primitive by comparison with the ones in Italy. There was very little traffic and most of it was farm vehicles; tractors pulling a wagon or an ancient combine. It was not unusual to find an ox cart crossing the road from one field to the next. People were poorly dressed. Houses were dilapidated and farms were inadequately tended. Later we would learn that this northernmost province in Yugoslavia was actually the most prosperous.

The rolling alpine foothills of Slovenia were ablaze with autumn colors. We pressed on toward Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. The map indicated there was a major road, the autoput, from there to Zagreb, our destination. The autoput was wider than the regular roads (three lanes), and exit or access was always to the right. It was the Yugoslav equivalent of an autobahn.

Slovenia and Croatia, the two northern provinces of Yugoslavia, were formerly part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Architecture, both urban and rural, is very similar to that of Germany and Austria. This area is predominantly Catholic.

It was late afternoon when we arrived in Zagreb. We drove to the center of town and checked into the Hotel Dubrovnik. We found a little restaurant nearby and enjoyed our first sishkabob.

Dave and I both felt it would be unwise to discuss our plans while in the hotel room. We'd heard that conversations were monitored. We talked in generalities, about the weather, the countryside and where we'd like to go as "tourists."

Later, while waiting at the Reception Desk to ask a question, I saw a door open from a room behind the area. A man came out and quickly close the door behind him. In that brief moment I saw that the room was full of tape recorders. Big Brother was listening!

We decided to use that fact as an opportunity for witness. While in our hotel room we talked about the Lord. We simply gave our testimony to each other and talked about the joy of knowing that our sins were forgiven and that we were saved by the Grace of God. When we were ready to sleep, Dave switched off the light and I said, "Well dear friends, that concludes our broadcast for this evening. Good Night."

Friday, after a Continental breakfast, we set out to find Pastor Josif Horak. I had the piece of paper Dr. Freed had given me with his address. We spotted a policeman and I was about to ask him for directions. Immediately the Lord restrained me. I understood intuitively (it could only have been from the Lord) that the policeman would be curious about why we wanted to visit that street. There were no museums, art galleries, parks or other tourist attractions in that area. He would be suspicious and have us followed. That would compromise our visit and jeopardize our mission objective.

We opted to try and find the street on our own. A little over an hour later Dave spotted the sign indicating the street where Dr. Horak lived. We drove down the street until we found the number of the building in which he lived. My first reaction was to park in front, go immediately in and make contact. Again, the Lord seemed to say, "Look around. Do you see any other cars on this street?"

I looked. There was not a single car parked on the entire street. It would cause unwanted attention if my car were the only one parked on that street. Plus it was from another country with a foreign registration. In addition, it was an English car with the steering wheel on the right. We did not need that kind of unwanted attention. Once again the Lord had warned me before I made the big mistake of parking in the wrong place.

We drove back into town and parked in a public parking lot, then on foot retraced our way back to Dr. Horak's apartment. Along the way we stopped to look in some of the shops and take a picture or two as any tourist would do. It was a precaution to make certain no one was following us.

Yugoslavia was tightly closed in 1961. Josif Broz Tito ruled with an iron fist. His picture was in every office, school and public place. His word was law. Widely regarded in the West as a Maverick, having (ostensibly) broken with Stalin in 1948, this charismatic

partisan had brought the Communist Party to power after World War II without Soviet help.

The name, Yugoslavia, means “the land of the south Slavs.” This fragile union of Balkan rivals could only have been held together through the sheer force of a strong and determined character such as Marshal Tito. Freedom had long been a stranger to this kaleidoscopic nation composed of six Republics, five nationalities, four languages, three major religions, two alphabets and one political party: Communist.

Dr. Josif Horak was delighted to see us especially when he discovered why we had come. He had finished with the recording and was praying for some way to get the tapes out to the West and on to TWR in Monte Carlo. While we talked his wife, Elsie, prepared coffee and something for us to eat. We told him how the Lord had warned us not to ask directions from a policeman and how He led us to this street and then not to park here.

I will never forget that late-October morning in 1961. It was my first meeting with an East European pastor behind the Iron Curtain. We were sitting in an austere little room, drinking a cup of jet-black Yugoslav coffee. When Dr. Horak learned that I was an evangelist, and had a team in England that traveled with me, he said, “You must come back!” Then, putting his hands in front of his chest with the back of his right hand in the palm of his left symbolizing a closed door he continued, “Even if the door is closed - try it, to see if it’s locked.”

It was a commission from the Lord. Deep down in my heart I felt that this is what God wanted me to do with the rest of my life - serve the persecuted Church and suffering Christians in communist and other restricted-access countries. Ever since that October morning God has kept me occupied with being obedient to His orders . . . and going through.



Dr. Horak during an interview with Bill:

“You must come back, even if the door is closed... try it to see if it’s locked.”

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## 26

### Listening to the Persecuted

***“I came to the exiles who lived at Tel Abib near the Kebar River. And there, where they were living, I sat among them for seven days - overwhelmed.”*** Ezekiel 3:15

NIV

On my first trip to Romania in 1965, a pastor told me that 75% of all the Baptist pastors in Romania did not have their own, complete, personal copy of the Bible. (It must be remembered that the Baptists in Romania are the third largest group of Baptists in the world, after the United States and Russia.) The Lord put it on my heart to do something about that.

We began immediately to take Bibles into Romania. From the outset we determined that we would not build secret compartments into our car, and that we would not lie about what we had if the authorities enquired. This is not to imply any criticism of the Lord’s servants who do build secret compartments into their vehicles. Indeed we have been the beneficiaries of these brave soldiers of Christ as we often resupplied our initial load, within the Iron Curtain country, from their larger supply.

My reason was more of a personal one. If we built secret compartments into our vehicles and got in safely, (and with the technology available at the time there was little doubt that we could) then I might be tempted to say, “I did it. I pulled the wool over their eyes.” This would not give the glory to the Lord. I would be taking something that belonged to Him, and He said, *“I am the LORD: that is My name; and My glory will I not give to another.”* (Isaiah 42:8) The Psalmist enjoined us to, *“Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name.”*

As for lying, we felt that it would not honor the Lord, although I know that Rahab deceived the authorities when she hid the spies and that she is honorably mentioned in the picture gallery of saints in Hebrews chapter 11. The man who led me to Christ used to say, “It’s never right to do wrong in order to get a chance to do right.”

Our usual method of loading was to put the Bibles in first. We spread them out over the floor area of the trunk, usually two or three layers deep. Sometimes a blanket was placed on top to separate and protect the precious cargo from the suit cases and other supplies we had on board.

A few miles from the international border, while still in the free world, we would pull over to the side of the road and pray. Often we simply said, "Dear Lord, we didn't ask for this assignment, but when You said, 'Go into all the world,' you did not say - 'Stop at the Iron Curtain.' So here we are Lord. You know what is before us. You know what is beyond the mine fields, the electrified barbed wire, the guard dogs, the watchtowers, the 50 caliber machine guns. We depend entirely on You to get us across all this and to the people so dear to Your great heart. And when You work the miracle, and get us in, we promise - in advance - to give You all the glory."

The custom officials would ask, "Do you have anything to declare?"

We interpreted that question to mean what it would mean on any western border, ie., 'Do you have anything of commercial value that you intend to sell for a profit and therefore must pay duty on?' The honest answer was "No," because we intended to give away the Bibles.

The Communists seemed paranoid about counter revolution. The major part of their security program was designed to thwart any attempt along this line.

In those days the border guards were more concerned with weapons coming into the country, so their first question was, "Do you have any arms or ammunition?"

Again our truthful answer was, "No."

Later on they added other categories. "Do you have any drugs?"

"No."

"Do you have any pornographic literature?"

"Certainly not."

We found it very interesting that the atheist, communist government was concerned about the adverse effect which smut and porn would have on the Workers Paradise. We were embarrassed by the liberal western value system that tolerates this evil in our midst.

For several years we took Bibles with us on every trip. Loads would vary from 75 to 250 depending on space and other considerations. In a relatively short time every pastor had his own copy of the Word of God. We then began to concentrate on getting a Bible to every Christian family.

This was a much larger task than we imagined. Our loads multiplied and the risk factor increased.

God is the only explanation I have for the unprecedented success of this venture. He wanted the people to have His Word. We were simply the postmen. The border



crossings were not without incident. Each one served to evidence the faithfulness of our Heavenly Father. Let me illustrate:

We almost always traveled as a team. On one occasion we arrived at the frontier post just in time to see the custom officials going through the vehicle in front of us with a fine tooth comb. They were taking it apart. The door panels were off, the seats were removed and all the luggage was spread out for careful inspection.

My heart sank. I knew they would not have to look very long or hard to discover the large load of Bibles we had with us in the trunk.

We needed to get visas. Brian, my colleague, went with me into the office to fill out the forms and exchange the required amount of money at the official rate. Brian's wife, Gwynne, stayed in the car with their three year old daughter, Wendy.

Gwynne had made some fudge before we left Salzburg, for us to enjoy on the trip. Wendy remembered.

"Mommy, may I have some fudge . . . please?" she implored.

No problem. Out came the box and Wendy chose a piece. Looking up from her prize she saw the big, tall customs guard who was currently taking apart the vehicle in front of ours.

"I want to give some fudge to that man!" she said emphatically, pointing to the customs official.

Now international frontiers, especially those of communist countries that border the west, are not thoroughfares with traffic racing past. Everything was at a standstill. There was no danger involved in letting Wendy get out of the car. We had been driving for several hours and she was tired of being cooped up in the back seat.

Her Mom opened the door. Wendy raced toward the stern official, her chubby little legs pumping up and down and her long blond hair waving in the wind.

"My Mommy made some fudge. You'll like it. It's really good! We're coming to visit your country. This is for you." On and on she rattled in English, while the startled officer looked down in amazement.

He didn't understand English, but he understood 'fudge' and an innocent little girl's generous intentions. In a moment Wendy had him literally eating out of her hand. He called his colleague over and she gave him a piece of fudge too. Soon the two men were squatting down to meet Wendy at eye level and chatting like old friends.

Just at that moment Brian and I emerged from the border control building with our visas in hand. The customs officer came over to me and said with something akin to an apology, "Excuse me, but I must inspect your car. It's my job."

“Of course,” I replied.

The lock on the trunk was spring loaded so that when I turned the key the catch was released and the lid automatically swung open. The trunk deck had not fully completed its upward arc when the custom officer, with only the most casual glance inside, said “That’s fine. You may go now.”

I could hardly believe my ears. “Have you finished your inspection?” I enquired.

“Yes,” he responded. “Have a nice trip.”

“Thank you, we will,” I assured him.

In my rear view mirror I watched the big steel barrier slowly descend and lock in place. It was painted in alternate red and white stripes and we referred to it as the “peppermint stick.” We were now officially behind the Iron Curtain again, but this time with the largest load of Bibles we had ever attempted to take.

In gratitude to our Heavenly Father we sang the Doxology, “**Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow.**” We drove on toward Bucharest with \$5,000 worth of Romanian Bibles in the car.

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## 27

### Seeing Eyes Made Blind

On another occasion I was loading our car in Salzburg, in preparation for going to Czechoslovakia. As I put the Bibles into the trunk it seemed as though the Lord said to me, “Don’t put the Bibles there.”

“Where shall I put them, Lord?” I wondered.

“Put them on the back seat where they can be seen.” was His reply.

Now if you had been standing next to me I’m quite certain you would not have heard anything. It was not an acoustic vibration. The voice did not thunder from the heavens. But deep down inside it was just as real to me as if He had spoken with an audible voice.

“That’s crazy,” I objected. It wasn’t the first time I had argued with the Lord.

“Very well. Put them where ever you want, but it will be your doing - not Mine,” He warned.

Reluctantly I put the Bibles and Christian literature on the back seat and casually tossed my rain coat over them. Three and a half hours later we arrived at the Czech border where we had the most careful and thorough search we'd ever experienced - in the trunk!

The custom inspector made us take everything out and open it up. He looked under the floor mat, and we had to remove the spare tire. He tapped on the sides of the vehicle to see if it sounded like there might be secret compartments there.

When he was satisfied that we had "nothing to declare" in the trunk he turned his attention to the inside of the car. It was a two-door Opel. I had an 8-track stereo with four speakers so we could enjoy some nice music on the long trips. When he opened the door the music surrounded him and at first he seemed a bit distracted. It was one of Tchaikovsky's something or other. I tried to take advantage of his distraction.

"I'm sorry we don't have any Smetana or Dvorák," I said apologetically, referring to two famous Czechoslovak composers which incidently are some of my favorites. "We hope to find some in Prague."

The customs official was unimpressed. He looked under the front seat then leaned across and opened the glove compartment. He pushed the back of the driver seat forward and reached into the rear seat area. He lifted my rain coat.

I thought my heart would stop. I was standing next to him just inches away. There, in full view, were the Scriptures and Christian literature. To my eternal amazement he put the coat back down, looked up on the back shelf then extricated himself from the car.

"That's all. You may go now," he said as he backed away with a crisp salute.

We sang the Doxology as we drove away from the border. Watching, in my rear view mirror, the peppermint stick descending, I considered along with the Team, just what had happened. The Bible recalls several occasions when our Lord made blind eyes to see. We concluded that, for a moment at least, the Lord had made seeing eyes blind.

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## 28

### **Do You Have any Bibles?**

As more and more visas for communist countries appeared in our passports so the questions at the border multiplied. Then one day it happened. We had completed the visa formalities and made the required currency exchange. All that remained was the Romanian customs inspection. The officer, in a faded blue uniform, approached us casually. He recited the usual catalogue of questions.

“Do you have any arms or ammunition?”

“No.”

“Do you have any drugs?”

“No.”

“Do you have any pornographic literature?”

“No.”

Then came the surprise. Another item had been added to the list. Leaning down a bit so that he could peer right into the car he asked in perfect English, “Do you have any Bibles?”

Remember, we had purposed in our hearts not to tell a lie. Oh, I know that we are in a spiritual war. I know the enemy has no right to know. I know about the Hebrew midwives and how they misrepresented the facts about male births among the Hebrew women to Pharaoh’s secret police to save lives. But we were pledged to tell the truth. In a situation like that you don’t have any time to work out a strategy. It must be determined in advance.

One indispensable requirement for a missionary is a sense of humor. A genuine laugh can be very disarming. I looked up with a big smile at the customs officer and said, “Sure, we have hundreds of them!”

“Go on. Get out of here,” he responded as he waved us through. He didn’t believe me although I had told him the truth.

\* \* \* \*

This story is true, but it is not intended to be a pattern for border strategy. It worked for me, but we must always allow the Lord to be original in others. We are in a spiritual war. Someone has said, “All warfare is based on deception.” Rahab lied to the authorities in Jericho to protect the two spies, (Joshua 2:4,5) yet she is commended in Hebrews 11; is Ruth’s mother-in-law and is mentioned in the Messianic line (Matthew 1:5). This is a personal matter; a record of how the Lord led me. If you are involved in any kind of spiritual warfare, whether smuggling Bibles or whatever, you must trust the Lord to lead you - and then be obedient.

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## A Car for Vasile

Vasile needed a car. It could of course be argued that we all need transportation. But Vasile and his wife, Dolly, were key people in a growing Bible distribution network.

We had frequently asked the Lord to provide a car for this dedicated couple. Nothing had happened. Then one day while praying about the need and looking for a promise, the Lord seemed to answer with a question, *“How many loaves have you?”* (Mark 6:38)

Just shortly before that time we had received, out of the blue, a new car from the First Baptist Church in Pekin, Illinois where our good friend, Don Ingram was the pastor. Although it came at a time when we needed two cars for a growing family and ministry, we felt we should give our station wagon to Vasile.

I took it to the Opel dealer in Bad Reichenhal for a complete service and had a mechanic go over every major system; clutch, brakes, transmission, engine compression and tires. We replaced the windshield wipers, rear brake seals and bought a new set of tires. The car was ready to go.

We travelled out to Romania in two cars. Both vehicles were fully loaded with Bibles and other supplies for the believers in that beleaguered land. Bucharest was our primary objective because we wanted to start the formalities of transferring the title of the car to Vasile as soon as possible. We had no idea how long or involved this process would be.

Needless to say, Vasile was overjoyed. The possibility of adequate transportation had until now been only an illusive dream. Ignoring any risk involved in being associated with foreigners from the West, he volunteered to interpret for us as we negotiated the importation and title transfer.

The procedure was a tedious one involving multiple visits to various bureaucratic offices and filling out endless forms. The vehicle needed to be inspected. Fair enough. Then appraised. (Careful! This could be tricky.)

When the secretary at the finance office appraised the car he based his evaluation on the price of a brand new vehicle. He said, with customary indifference, that we'd have to pay \$1,800 customs duty. He handed me a form with the sum written on it and I was expected to meekly step up to the window and pay. I had anticipated paying some duty, maybe \$600, and was prepared accordingly, but this was an unexpected shock.

I pointed out that he had reached his determination by consulting a price list for new cars and this one was four years old. I explained that first of all we didn't have that much money with us, and secondly, I had no intention of paying that much even if we did. I was polite, but firm. It was interesting to see the reaction of this communist apparatchik. Clearly he was unaccustomed to anyone challenging his conclusions.

Winston Churchill once said in regard to the communists, **“There is nothing they respect more than strength. There is nothing they despise more than weakness.”**

Over the years I have learned that in dealing with communist officials you must walk a narrow line between boldness that could be interpreted as arrogance and courtesy, which might be mistaken for weakness. It is necessary in diplomatic dealings at any level to state your intentions clearly while at the same time leave room to maneuver. This poor Marxist minion needed a back door . . . a way out. It was provided.

“Your mechanics have not examined the car yet.” I reminded him. “You have excellent, highly qualified men who can give you a professional opinion. They will help you determine a fair value for the vehicle based on age and mileage.”

Fairness of course is not a priority in communist countries where ideology takes precedence over pragmatism. But they are very interested in hard currency. The Communist are the biggest capitalists in the world. They just hate competition.

I could only guess what was going on in their minds: *They would like to have \$1,800. Sure, but if this man really did not have \$1,800 would he take the car back with him to Austria? (You betcha buster!) How much blood can we squeeze from this western turnip?*

Several days passed during which time we visited a number of Bureaus to obtain some paper or another. While waiting to talk with an official in one second floor office, I glanced out a window that overlooked the courtyard below. I noticed that the entire area was crowded with western cars, each one sealed with a customs tape. They were rusting away covered with dust and soot. Several had flat tires. Some had been cannibalized for spare parts. It was obvious that they had been there for months, perhaps even years. What was this all about?

Suddenly it came to me. I really believe it was the Lord who gave me insight to see that each one of these vehicles had been brought to Romania as a gift for some citizen from a friend or relative in the West. But why were they rotting away in this courtyard?

As I pondered that question the answer became plain. In most cases the donor did not have time to stay in the country and finish all the bureaucratic paper chase. He would be assured, as we had been, that all would be taken care of. “You can just leave the car here and we’ll complete the import formalities as quickly as possible,” one Party hack told us.

When the donor got back to the United States or where ever he was from, a letter would arrive explaining that there was an extra fee that had been overlooked which must be paid before the car could be released to the intended beneficiary. When that was paid another bureaucratic oversight would be discovered and a further payment needed to satisfy the claim. Later on a notice would come of still another outstanding formality to be completed before delivery could take place. On and on... world without end!

The government never intended to release those automobiles. That courtyard was a gold mine for them; an ongoing source of hard currency extracted from frustrated western friends and relatives who were unable, due to time and financial restraints, to return to Romania and repatriate the car. Besides, what would they find to take back? A rusty, rotting hulk.

Eventually the frustrated donor gives up and stops sending funds to meet the never ending demands. After a discrete time the vehicle is declared “abandoned” and the title is assigned to some Party functionary. He visits the courtyard to collect his prize and finds it necessary to take some parts from other still-to-be-abandoned automobiles in order to make his car road-worthy.

“Dear Lord Jesus,” I prayed, “Please don’t let this happen to us.” In that office, on the second floor, I determined in my heart to completely finish the transaction and have the title clear and in Vasile’s name before leaving the country, or else drive the car back to Salzburg.

The evenings were spent in fellowship with the believers. We helped Vasile distribute Bibles as far afield as the old Roman port of Constanta, on the Black Sea. We continued our mission work as though nothing else was pending.

Periodically, during the week, I would visit one of the bureaus to see how things were progressing. Once I got an estimate of \$1,500 for customs duty. “No thanks,” I smiled. “I’ll just take the car back with me to Austria.” I really didn’t have that much money and I think they were beginning to realize that. They also knew that I would not leave the car in Romania unless everything was in order.

Their next request was for \$1,200 duty. This was \$600 under their original estimate.

“I’ve told you I have \$600 which I think is fair.” Then, after some apparent calculation, “I might be able to find another \$100 to make it \$700 and we can conclude our transaction.”

They feigned offense and the negotiations broke off at that point. Fair enough. Let them stew for a few days while we finish the more important aspect of our current mission.

Finally, on Friday morning I went to the treasury building in Bucharest and waited about an hour to see the Secretary. I greeted him positively and we exchanged pleasantries about his country. I told him we had enjoyed our visit to Romania; that we had been to the Black Sea and also to the mountains around Brasov.

It all sounded very “touristy.” (I didn’t tell him that in each of these places we had preached the Gospel and shared our faith in Christ with persecuted believers for whom his boss - Nicolae Ceausescu - was making life miserable.) At that stage it was best left unsaid.

“Now about the car.” I opened. “I’m prepared to pay \$800 customs duty to conclude this transaction today, and we’ll be on our way back to Austria.”

I had increased my offer by \$100. "In any case we will be leaving Bucharest early tomorrow morning."

He was silent for a moment. It was almost as though he didn't really have any authority in the matter, but was taking his orders from someone else somewhere behind the scenes. As last he said, "This is very awkward. Can you wait here a moment please?"

It reminded me of dealing with the car salesman who strikes a deal, and just when you think you have agreed on a price he has to check it with his manager. He always comes back with a "final" offer that is more than you just agreed, but too close to turn down . . . especially when you've smelled the new upholstery.

After a few minutes he returned, smiling this time.

"We have our final figure for you," he beamed. "You will need to pay \$900 customs duty, or you must take the car with you when you leave our country."

That was it. I knew we would not get any closer, and our time was running out. We did, in fact, have to leave the next morning. That was not a bluff, but I had used it as leverage. The custom authorities had cut their original estimate of \$1,800 in half. Perhaps I could increase what I had only hoped to pay by 50%.

"Done." I responded. "I will find the \$900, but you must have every paper necessary for the registration completed and in our friend's possession before your office closes this afternoon. That includes the license plate in place on the vehicle so we can take a photograph of it."

If you are familiar with how slowly the bureaucratic wheels turn in a socialist environment you will know that I was asking the impossible. The office was to close at 5 pm. It was then about two thirty.

"Can you come back at ten to five?" he asked. "We'll have everything ready."

Vasile went with us to the office. While I was signing travellers checks, he looked over all the forms and paperwork to make sure every detail was complete. I had to admire the way they put the pressure on to finish the job that day. It had all been in the negotiation stage up until two hours before closing down for the weekend.

Later that evening we removed the Austrian license plates from the dark blue Opel station wagon and bolted on the Romanian tags. We accompanied Vasile to the petrol station and filled his tank. Our journey had ended in success. His adventure was just beginning.

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## Changing Tires at Night

A mechanical breakdown behind the Iron Curtain was something to be avoided at all costs. Spare parts were unavailable. There would be interminable delays involving enormous extra expense while we waited for parts to be flown in. Then we would have to pay customs duty on them and finally find a mechanic who could make the necessary repairs on a make and model he'd never seen before. Meanwhile the Secret Police would be curious about this 'foreign car' and a casual inspection might have compromised our precious cargo of Bibles. A breakdown? Unthinkable.

Because of the very high mileage we put on our mission vehicles annually and the extremely poor roads we routinely negotiated, it was necessary to trade in our cars every twelve or fourteen months. This gave us regular opportunities to believe the Lord for a miracle and every new automobile was just that.

With each new vehicle our first trip would be to Romania. We would make contact with the Christians, drop off the Bibles, distribute the aid we'd brought and gather secretly with the believers in home meetings. Our final stop would be a visit to Vasile. It was like the wine at Cana, "the best for the last." Dolly always managed to find something with which to prepare a meal and our fellowship around their meager table was "in the heavenlies."

Late at night, when the city was asleep, Vasile and I would quietly leave his home. The routine became a familiar one. He would take his car and I would follow in mine. No one knew the back streets of Bucharest better than this dedicated soldier of Christ. Eventually he would find an appropriate place in some darkened alley where our transaction could take place unnoticed. It would not do for the Securitate (Ceausescu's fanatical secret police) to discover us.

He parked and I pulled to a stop right behind him. Without exchanging a word we each set to work. I jacked up the left rear wheel on my car and he did the same on his. All four wheels were removed, one at a time, and swapped to the other car. It took about eighteen suspense-filled minutes to complete the job. When it was done Vasile had four brand new tires on his car and I drove very carefully back to Salzburg on his old and bald ones.

Harriett always enjoyed these considerably slower return trips. She regularly had a book or two along and would read out loud to me as I drove. We got through several books that way.

Only once did we have any tire problems as a result of these exchanges. We were going up a mountain road in southern Austria toward Malnitz, to put the car on a train and go through the tunnel to Bad Gastein. It was getting close to the departure time for the train and I was pushing it a little when one of the tires went flat. Fortunately there

was ample room to pull off and change tires. We were the last car on the train but we made it!

After the first time we traded tires like this with Vasile, I took my new car back to the dealer where I had purchased it three weeks before. "Look at this!" I said to the manager. "This car is less than a month old and just look at the state of these tires."

The poor man could hardly believe his eyes. He remembered selling me the car. He looked at the odometer; only 3,500 kilometers; not quite 2,200 miles. He just couldn't understand. Then I told him what I'd done and we had a good laugh together. Afterwards I bought a new set of tires from him.

We had to do it this way because it would have been impossible to take four extra, new tires with us on a new car into Romania without arousing suspicion. Besides, there would have been no room left for the really important things - like Bibles.

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## 31

### Baptizing in a Bathtub

Put yourself in my place for a moment. You have been told that there is a great need for Bibles in Romania. (In those days it was spelled Rumania.) You pray about the need and feel a nudge from the Lord to do something about it. Fine. Where do you start? How do you make contact with people you've never met, who speak another language unknown to you and who live in a country you've never visited?

Add to that the fact that the country is a police state, a totalitarian, communist, atheist dictatorship. It has long been regarded as closed to the Gospel. How do you obey our Lord's great commission, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,*" under those circumstances and in that area?

Those were some of the problems we faced as we considered the new direction in which the Lord was leading us. His commentary regarding the harvest was that it "*truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.*" His solution, "**Pray** ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:37,38)

Prayer. It's the first thing we're taught and one of the last things we learn to do. Jesus taught that prayer is the beginning of our involvement. At first we pray that He will send workers into His harvest. Isaiah, with his ear to the keyhole, overheard the voice of the Lord saying, "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?*" Eventually we can say with Isaiah, "*Here am I; send me!*" (Isaiah 6:8)

Later we learned that many believers in Romania had been praying for the Lord to send laborers into their field. Our obedience to His prompting was a direct answer to their prayers.

Pastor Alex was one of the Christians who had been praying for a long time. He was a faithful preacher of the Word. His ministry was so effective and fruitful that the communist authorities forbid him to preach anymore. He was ordered to sit with the rest of the congregation and listen while one of the laymen preached.

His congregation was very sad that he no longer stood behind the pulpit to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. The following Sunday morning, a dedicated layman went to the pulpit to deliver his `sermon.' He paused a moment and said, "Before I preach this morning I want to call on Brother Alex to lead us in prayer."

Alex rose to his feet, and from his place in the midst of the congregation his voice rang out to God. His `prayer' lasted 45 minutes and was complete with a text from Scripture and expository outline. Each week thereafter, Pastor Alex would be asked by the designated layman to "lead in prayer." The people rejoiced.

Worship services in East Bloc countries were packed with precious souls, hungry for the Word of God. Members of the Securitate, or secret police, were planted into their midst. Their job was to report back to headquarters what took place in the "public meeting." They were there primarily to monitor, to listen for anything that might be considered political or otherwise subversive.

Thus, it was a few weeks before the authorities noticed that a pattern had begun to emerge. Each week it was reported that such and such a layman preached after Alex had prayed. A different layman each week, but always Alex who prayed.

"Isn't this Alex the former pastor?" the chief inspector asked.

"Yes." responded the informer.

"What does he pray about each Sunday?"

"I don't know, I usually drop off to sleep."

"Then find out, damn you!" demanded the inspector. "And I'll send comrade Dimenascu along to make certain you don't go to sleep."

From that time on they began to scrutinize the prayers. Finally it dawned on them what was happening. This man had simply traded a pulpit for a pew - but continued to preach the Word! The authorities were furious. They summoned Pastor Alex for interrogation.

Day after day he was grilled and threatened. They used various methods in their arsenal of dirty tricks to intimidate him. His calm manner seemed to further provoke them. How could he simply keep `turning the other cheek' in response to their abuse?

This man had something they did not, and it was unnerving to them. Their solution: Pastor Alex was forbidden to preach, or pray or utter any sound in the church.

About that time a letter from Chicago, U.S.A. arrived at the tiny, austere apartment on Bucharest's Strda Berzei 29. It was from a Romanian congregation in the Windy City. They were without a pastor. Could he come with his family to serve them?

Alex was born in the United States of Romanian emigree parents. Both his mother and father were converted to Christ after they arrived in America. As they grew in the Lord they felt a growing desire to return to their native land as missionaries. Alex was four years old when the family arrived back in Bucharest in the Spring of 1925.

Could the records be found? He enquired at the American Embassy in Bucharest concerning citizenship. A cable was sent to Washington. Yes, there was a birth certificate establishing the fact that he was born in Chicago, Illinois, United States of America. Pastor Alex was an American citizen!

It had been six months since that final verdict. Six long, uncertain months when I entered the ground floor doorway to the apartment building where Pastor Alex and his family lived. Six months of heart searching. What should they do? His ministry in Bucharest was finished. It had been six months since he had preached or even prayed in his own church. There seemed to be no future for him or his family in Romania.

They had already made their decision to emigrate to the United States as I climbed the 56 steps up to their third floor apartment. The stairwell was dark.

Earlier that morning, after searching for several hours, we had found the street where Pastor Alex lived. We drove down the street until Brian spotted the number we were looking for. Continuing on we drove about half a mile before parking the car. Slowly we traced our way back along the boulevard, stopping to look in some of the shops. If anyone had been following us we were simply typical tourists.

On reaching the apartment building we continued on along the sidewalk for a dozen yards or so. Then, turning to start back in the direction of the car, we quickly surveyed the entire scene. No one was following us. By pre-arrangement, I ducked into the entrance of the apartment block as we passed the ground floor doorway and Brian continued ambling along, looking in the shops. We would meet later, back at the car. It was broad daylight as I climbed the steps. An autumn mid-day sun angled, through narrow unwashed windows, across the stairwell revealing years of accumulated dust on the wrought iron banisters. There were three apartments on each floor. The name of the family was neatly engraved on a little bronze plate by the door. At each landing I glanced at the nameplates, looking for the family whose name had been given to us by a refugee in Vienna. On the third floor I spotted a tarnished plaque bearing the name I was looking for. I studied it briefly, to be sure, then continued on my way to the top of the stair well.

In each of the apartment buildings there was an informer. He was usually someone the police had something on, but had agreed to ignore it as long as he was willing to work

with them. His job was to keep watch and report anything unusual. Unusual, like a foreigner visiting a local pastor. If I was being observed now the best plan would be to carry on up the steps.

When I reached the top I turned around and started down again. Anyone watching me would have concluded that I had not found what I was looking for. I was not responsible for their erroneous conclusion. As I passed the middle doorway on the third floor I scanned the nameplate again to be absolutely sure. Yes. That was where the family lived. Then I counted the steps down to the street level, and walked out of the building into the bright Bucharest sunshine.

Now, hours later, it was 10:30 pm. We had put the car in a public car park about a mile from the apartment. Brian stayed to keep watch and pray. I walked, casually (not too fast and not too slow), the rest of the way. Again I passed the apartment entrance for a short distance and then turned around abruptly. When I was certain no one was following me I disappeared into the doorway and waited a moment for my eyes to adjust to the interior darkness.

Residents of this apartment bloc would push a button to activate the light in the stairwell. The switch made a `klunk' sort of sound as it started a timing mechanism that would turn the light off automatically in about a minute. The sound was loud enough to alert the porter (or informer) that someone had entered the building. He would put down his newspaper and look out through the tiny peep hole so typical in every door.

If it was a family or citizen he recognized he would go back to reading his paper. If it was a stranger, he would watch to see which apartment the person went to.

Those details would be duly reported to the Securitate. Later that night the family would have another visit. This time from the police. Questions would be asked. "Who were they? What did they bring? What did they tell you? What did you give them?" If the police suspected anything, the apartment would be thoroughly searched. A police search was more than just casually looking around and opening a cabinet or two. Drawers would be pulled out and all the contents dumped on the floor while strange hands sifted through various personal items. Floor boards would be taken up. Holes knocked in the wall. Mattresses and pillows slit open. If they found contraband, like Bibles or foreign currency, the family would be arrested.

All this was going through my mind as I climbed the steps. That's why I didn't turn on the light. I didn't need to. I had counted the steps that morning. Now I was counting again. 52, 53, 54 `will they be home?' 55, 56 `this is it. I hope they haven't gone to bed.' I didn't want to knock on the door because the noise would have echoed throughout the stair well. I opted to lightly touch the doorbell. It sounded briefly inside the apartment.

After what seemed like an eternity I heard the key turn in the door. It opened about four inches, but just wide enough for me to see the profile of a man silhouetted against the light in his hallway. He was surprised to see that the stairwell was darkened. From the

look on his face I knew that he had frequently answered a knock-at-the-door-in-the-middle-of-the-night.

For a moment neither of us spoke. Then I remembered the Christian greeting in Romania.

“Pacé,” I whispered.

The door opened wide.

I stepped into the narrow hallway and Pastor Alex closed the door. Then turning he embraced me and, in typical East European fashion, kissed me on both cheeks. He motioned for me to follow him into the little kitchen. As we passed the telephone he put his forefinger to his lips. I understood.

In the kitchen I met his wife, a diminutive saint with a radiant smile. She immediately ladled a bowl of soup from a pot that simmered on the tiny stove and placed it on the table. Pastor Alex indicated that I should sit down. He took a chair on the other side of the table and asked me to lead them in prayer.

Prayer before and after a meal is customary in many Romanian homes. Asking a guest, whom they had just met, to lead in prayer was in some ways a safety precaution. It was not unheard of for the secret police to send someone posing as a ‘believer’ to visit a Christian family. In this way the authorities might evoke some information about church activities or plans from an unsuspecting host.

My prayer concentrated on praise to our heavenly Father for the gift of His Son, and for the precious blood of Jesus which cleanses us from all sin. (I also thanked Him for the food!)

Pastor Alex and his wife were satisfied. From then on we talked openly about the things of the Lord. He shared with me concerning the prohibition to preach or pray and his plans to pastor the church in Chicago.

“You should have been here earlier this evening,” he said with a broad smile.

“Why? What did I miss?” I enquired, knowing from his manner that I’d missed something.

“We had a baptismal service here,” he affirmed. “I baptized four people in my bathtub. I wore a mask.”

“A mask?” I asked.

“Yes, of course.” He explained, “Our young people testify before their peers that they have trusted Christ as their Saviour. They also testify when they have followed the Lord in baptism.”

Pastor Alex went on to explain that the authorities forbid anyone to be baptized without permission from the State. Only when the candidate is a member of a Baptist family will the Department of Cults grudgingly approve. Permission is not granted if one or both of the parents are unbelievers, or if they are from the Orthodox Church. Many young people requesting baptism have come from an Orthodox background.

When they testify openly at work or school that they have been baptized, the authorities are outraged. "Who baptized you?" they demand to know. "Oh, yes," they confess, "it was a man, but I didn't see his face. He wore a mask." In this way new converts can witness to their friends without compromising the identity of the pastor who baptized them.

Before I left his little apartment that evening, Pastor Alex had one more question. They would be leaving for the West in about two weeks and all that he and his wife could take with them were the clothes on their back. He had been writing a history of the Baptist Church in Romania and was worried that he could not take the manuscript with him. All that time and research would be lost.

"Can you help me?" he enquired.

"How?" I responded.

Pastor Alex explained about the manuscript. "Could you possibly take it with you when you leave the country?" "I have an empty space in my car the size of 200 Bibles" I told him.

"You are an angel sent from God!" he enthused.

I've been called a lot of things in my lifetime, but never 'an angel.' But then it's part of an angel's job description to be a servant of the living saints. Perhaps, in that sense only, I could qualify.

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## 32

### **Midnight Visit to an Exile Village**

During the "Dark Days," when Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu held absolute power over all his people, we were frequent visitors to that beleaguered outpost of the old Roman Empire. From our alpine base in Salzburg, Austria we made an average of fourteen trips a year behind the Iron Curtain. Each trip was a minimum of ten days and usually averaged two or more weeks.

Pastor Richard Wurmbrand had been in prison for over fourteen years for his faith in Jesus Christ. In the mid-60s Norwegian Christians ransomed Wurmbrand for \$10,000. The communists laughed all the way to the bank. They thought they were selling a dead man. With eighteen stab wounds, any one of which could have been fatal, he literally *bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus* and was not expected to live more than a few weeks. He came to America, told his story, wrote some books and founded a mission to serve persecuted Christians in communist countries. It was impossible for him to return to his native land, so we frequently served as his "courier."

One of the beneficiaries of Richard Wurmbrand's largess was Pastor Francisc Visky. He had been in prison with Richard for many years. His crime? He was too successful in winning young people for Christ in his large metropolitan church. After serving ten years at hard labor in a prison camp, the communist authorities sent him to the exile village of Pályi near Oradea. [His wife, Julia, has written a book about their experiences. It's in French, but there is a shorter version, in English, called "The Orphans and the Raven" available from: Living Sacrifice Books, P.O. Box 2273 Bartlesville, OK. 74005.]

We did not have an address for him at that time. We only knew that he lived in an "exile village" somewhere in the northwest of the country. Frequently, after someone was released from prison, they were not allowed to return to their home or to resume their ministry, especially if it had been an effective one. They were simply re-assigned to an exile village for the remainder of their lives.

These austere communities were isolated, miles from anywhere, and without any telephones, roads, bus or rail connections to the outside world. The usual fences, watchtowers or barbed wire associated with the camps were missing, but apart from that the only thing that made them different from prison was that a man could live there with his family and eke out a living on the adjacent farm land.

Wurmbrand had given us the name and address of Margareta Balk, a sister in Christ who lived in Oradea. It was our first visit to that remote city in the northwest. We arrived just before 10 p.m. and made our way to her home near the railway station. "She will know where to find Pastor Visky," Richard had assured us.

Although we knew nothing about her at that time, sister Margareta was something of a legend among the Christians in that part of Romania. She had given her life to the Lord many years before and had refrained from marriage in order to serve Him with greater devotion.

On one occasion when she was arrested and questioned by the communist authorities, the officer stopped in the middle of the interrogation to ask, "What are you doing?"

"I am praying," she responded.

"I can't move my hand," he complained. "Please pray for me, that I can move my hand, and I won't write anything more about you."



Margareta was dressed in a woolen night gown and robe with a stocking cap on her head when she answered our knock at the door on that frosty night. We must have been unlikely visitors at that hour, but never-the-less she invited us into her simple apartment. We did not feel the warmth and trust usually associated with fellowship among persecuted Christians. That was understandable. After all we were total strangers. We could have been impostors sent by the police to test her. It had happened many times before to other believers in this beleaguered land.

We explained who we were. She was not impressed. We told her who had sent us. She was non-committal. (Of course she knew Richard and Sabina, but we could be lying about our association with them. How was she to know?) We disclosed to her that we wanted to visit Pastor Visky and understood that she would be able to lead us to where he lived. She remained silent. We shared with her that we had a large gift from Pastor Wurmbrand for Pastor Visky. Her response: "Will you lead us in prayer?"

Prayer is always appropriate. The Bible says, "*Men ought always to pray.*" We bowed our heads and one by one each of us prayed around the circle. We prayed for God's blessing on that dear sister; for the Lord to help us make contact with a brother we had never met. We thanked Him for His wonderful provision in bringing us safely thus far and for helping us to find this sister's home. We acknowledged His sovereignty over all the circumstances involved; we thanked Him for the gift of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and for cleansing us from all sin by His precious blood that was shed on Calvary's cruel cross. It was a very special time.

When the last "Amen!" had sounded and we looked up it was to see a totally different person. Our hostess was now a radiant, warm and cordial sister in Christ. "We can go now," she said graciously as she put on her coat and boots.

We walked silently through the dark streets to where I had left the car. Once we were inside and driving off to the south of the city, I asked her what had changed her mind and made her willing to show us the way.

"When you mentioned 'the precious blood of our Lord Jesus'" she said, "I knew that you were my brothers in Christ."

Months later, when I shared this story with Sabina Wurmbrand, she told me of a time in Bucharest, when Richard was in prison. A man came to her apartment one day saying he was a Christian brother from a church in Cluj. She knew the church, but did not recognize him. He brought greetings from several Christians whom she knew and then began to ask some questions about Christian activity in Bucharest. Before answering any of his questions she smiled sweetly and said, "Would you lead us in a word of prayer, please?" The man was shocked. Turns out that he was a communist agent, sent by the government to spy on the believers. His instructors had not taught him how to pray.

"Now aren't you ashamed of yourself?" Sabina admonished the imposter. The man fled.

It was absolutely imperative that no one know about our late night visit to Pastor Visky. That is why we chose to go under the cloak of darkness. The presence of foreigners in that place of banishment, if discovered, might have brought him many unwelcomed difficulties. There would be endless questions from the authorities: "Who were they? What did they bring you? Why were they here? What did you tell them?"

His little home would have been thoroughly searched; personal items thrown about with disdain by arrogant and ungodly communist police. Such circumstances give new meaning to the Scripture, ". . . *let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing.*"

The isolated exile village of Pályi was not on the map. It was less than ten miles from Oradea, but the road was so deeply rutted it took us two hours to get there. When we were about a mile away, I parked the car in a clump of trees and we went the rest of the way on foot. As we approached, in the midnight darkness, I suddenly heard something that made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. A dog was barking.

Romanians, like other East Europeans, build their villages along a road with their homes on either side. The back of the house opens into a yard for the farm animals. A path leads to the privy and the entire area is enclosed by a fence. Beyond the fences are the fields cultivated by the farmers. Earlier the sister had whispered to me that Pastor Visky and his wife lived at the other end of the village. This meant that we would have to walk the entire length of the hamlet, past forty or more homes - each one with a dog! If one started barking it would set off a chain reaction and the entire community would be aware of our visit.

We stopped for a moment. I remember praying something like this, "Dear Lord Jesus; when Daniel was in the lions' den You shut the mouths of the lions. We're asking You, just now, to please shut the mouths of these dogs." There was a soft chorus of individual agreement as each one of the team said, "Amen!"

At the time when Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, "*not a dog bark[ed]*" when the Death Angel passed over the land. "*Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel,*" God said. (Exodus 11:7) The Lord made a distinction again that night - between us and atheist unbelievers who would have been very unhappy about our presence in their midst and the supplies we brought to a persecuted pastor. We went all the way through the village and - after our visit - back again and not one single dog barked. "Thank you, Jesus!"

It had just turned midnight when we knocked on Pastor Visky's door. He was accustomed to a knock-at-the-door-in-the-middle-of-the-night. It was a favorite hour for the authorities to summon some hapless soul for several hours of questioning. One is awakened out of a deep sleep and vulnerable to intensive interrogation at that time. I regretted that this hour was our only alternative.

His face was ashen as he opened the door. "Pacé," (pah-chea) I whispered. It is the customary Christian greeting in Romania. It literally means "peace" but in Christian circles, when used among the brethren, it is the kind of peace that passes all

understanding. He opened the door widely and beckoned for us to come in. When he'd closed the door he hugged us and kissed us on both cheeks.

We were surprised to discover that there was electricity in the village. There was a single naked light bulb hanging from the ceiling in the center of his one room dwelling. He didn't turn it on, however, for fear that a light burning at that time of night might have attracted unwanted attention from someone who had no business knowing that he had foreign visitors in his house. Instead, he lit a small candle and placed it on a rough hewn table away from the window. The curtains had already been drawn as an extra precaution.

Sister Margareta, whom he knew well, briefly explained why we had come. He was so glad to have some word from his old friend whom he had not seen since they were in prison together. He seemed eager to know where Richard was and what he was doing. Then Pastor Visky looked at my colleague, Brian. "What do you do for the Lord?" he asked.

Brian smiled and said, "I sing for Jesus."

"Oh, praise the Lord!" he exclaimed. "Would you sing a song for me?"

Brian opened his mouth and with perfect pitch immediately hit the note and softly sang one of the most beautiful songs I'd ever heard him sing. I took the opportunity to glance around the room. This simple house was literally a one room dwelling. Pastor Visky was the father of seven children. Nine people lived in this tiny space. In one corner there was a wash stand and what looked like a small camping gas stove for cooking. The children were all asleep; some in bunk beds others on pallets. His wife, Julia, awakened by the knock on the door had taken a seat in the corner and was listening while Brian quietly sang. The only illumination was from the tiny candle.

When Brian finished singing Pastor Visky looked at me. Somehow I knew what was coming. "What do you do for the Lord, my Brother?" he inquired.

I thought a moment about the question, knowing intuitively the consequence of my answer. "I preach the Gospel . . . and seek to win souls for Jesus," I responded. My words sounded kind of lame to me considering the company I was in. "Praise God!" he exclaimed. "Will you preach to me? It's been so long since I've heard another brother expound the Word."

I knew it. I could see it coming. What do you say to someone who has suffered unspeakable indignities for his faith in Christ; someone who has been in prison for ten years, tortured, scorned, abused and mocked? How do you address a man who has been separated from his wife and children for a decade, without once being able to know how or even where they are? In the presence of such a man you can identify with John the Baptist who felt unworthy to even tie the shoe of the One who was coming after him.

What could I do? I opened my Bible and began to share something the Lord had given me from the New Testament in my morning devotions. He listened hungrily to every word. When I had finished, I looked into his eyes that were moist with tears and said, "Now, brother, I need a word from the Lord. Preach to me."

Pastor Francisc Visky shared biblical gems with us in the early hours of that memorable morning. It was a truly awesome experience. I felt as if we *were in the heavenly realms with Christ*.

When he finished, I glanced at his wife. She was seated on a straight-backed chair in a corner of the room away from the light. The area was dark, but her face seemed to glow. I read in my Bible that when Moses came down from the mountain the second time, having talked with God and received the Ten Commandments, that *his face shone with the glory of the LORD*. Again, in the Book of Acts, Stephen - at his martyrdom - *looked up into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God*. The glory of God was reflected in his face, as it had been the face of an angel. Surely I was in the presence of saints who have looked at the face of Jesus and reflected His glory.

Julia's face was aglow. She was 47 years old and had borne seven children, but she didn't look a day over twenty-five. I said, "Pastor, how is it that your wife seems so young?"

"Why don't you ask her about it?" he answered. I did, and I will never forget her response.

"Through my suffering, God has given me my youth," she confessed. [Try that one on your Avon lady the next time you see her!]

We had lost all track of time. The night was far spent and we must leave. It was approaching 2 a.m. and we had to make our way back through the village, past all the dogs and to the car without being discovered.

"Before you go, can you help me?" Pastor Visky asked. "I'm preaching on Sunday, and I don't know how to close my message."

On inquiry into his text I found that he was preaching on the subject of "clouds." I had never preached on that topic before so I asked him, "How are you going to develop the theme?" I was stalling for time to think.

Pastor Visky explained that he was going to call attention to the "Promises of God" by the story in Genesis of the rainbow in the clouds as a sign of God's covenant, "*and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh*." Next, he would illustrate the "Guidance of God" in the wilderness ". . . *by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them*." Then he would talk about the "Sovereignty of God" using the illustration of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration talking with Moses and Elijah when, "*... a bright cloud overshadowed them: and a voice out of the cloud, which said `This is my beloved Son,*

*in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him.*” He had some other illustrations concerning clouds in the Bible which I had forgotten.

“I’m very fortunate,” Pastor Visky admitted, “to have a complete copy of the Bible. I don’t have a concordance or any commentaries to help me in my study, so I don’t know how to conclude my message. Can you help me?”

There was that question again. I wanted with all my heart to help this precious brother, but he had skillfully used all of the references to clouds that I could think of. I quietly prayed: “Dear Lord Jesus, if you have something to help this dear man, I’ll be honored to deliver it.” Just then I remembered Paul’s message to the Church at Thessalonica concerning the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

“The only reference to clouds,” I began slowly “that I can think of, which you haven’t already mentioned, is in First Thessalonians chapter four. Paul is talking about the Second Coming of Christ. In verse sixteen he says, *‘For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.’*”

As I thought back to my university days I seemed to recalled from a Greek class that in the original there was no definite article before the noun. I mentioned this to Pastor Visky. “We shall be caught up in clouds. It’s not ‘the’ clouds that we see from earth - cumulus, stratus altostratus, etc. - but clouds. There will be so many Christians ‘caught up’ when the Lord comes that the skies will be cloudy with people!” I paused reflectively, then said, “Brother, I believe that the skies over Romania will be very cloudy on that day.”

I looked across the crude little table in that austere room and saw by the flickering light of a solitary candle that there were tears in his eyes. It was something else that we had in common.

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## 33

### Breaking the Bank

Pastor Richard Wurmbrand was in prison for fourteen years for his faith in Jesus Christ. After his release and exile to the West he established a mission which focused attention on and prayers for persecuted Christians in communist bloc countries. The money he raised in the West was used to aid the oppressed church in the East. He needed couriers to take the funds into Romania because he could not return to that Iron Curtain country himself.

Richard approached us one day in 1968, to ask if we would be willing, on one of our trips as a team, to deliver funds to the families of imprisoned pastors. We said, "Yes, of course we would be more than happy to do so."

Pastor Wurmband very graciously said, "Now you must take your expenses out of this. You'll need to buy gasoline. There will be expenses for meals and maybe a hotel on some nights. If I send a letter I must put a postage stamp on it."

I smiled and said to Pastor Wurmband, "Thank you very much brother. We appreciate your offer, but we're missionaries - we're going to Romania anyway. Someone else has already paid the postage. We're taking Bibles, medicine and other supplies to these people. We'll be more than happy to deliver your gift and make sure that the person for whom it's intended gets one hundred cents on the dollar."

On the very next trip to Romania we had \$26,000 dollars from Richard Wurmband to distribute among some of the pastors and their families. Pastors who had been in prison. Most had been tortured. Their families were in great need. The funds were mostly in travelers checks, but there was some cash.

It was late summer when we left our mission base in Salzburg, Austria and headed south - over the Alps - into and across Yugoslavia. When we entered Romania we knew we had to cash our travelers checks into Romanian lei. It was against the law for local citizens to have any kind of Western or foreign currency. As tourists we were allowed to take in as much money as we wanted, but we had to cash the funds into their currency in order to distribute it to needy Christians. This meant going to a bank or some official tourist office where they had authorization from the government to legally exchange money. The rate of exchange at that time was eighteen lei for one dollar.

We avoided the "black market." Apart from the fact that it was illegal, it could have been a dangerous trap. Foreigners were frequently suspected of being CIA agents. The Securitate (Secret Police) often posed as someone wanting to change money and offered a very tempting rate of exchange - usually double the going rate. There was a genuine black market and some people were quite willing to pay double the official rate because their own local money was worthless.

If the Securitate had any suspicions concerning a foreigner, they would arrest him on any convenient charge, then search and question him until they found out what they wanted to know. Illegal money exchange was a convenient charge.

We stopped at a bank in one of the first towns that we passed through after we entered Romania. There were four of us in the team. Not wanting to look suspicious, we decided it would be best to cash a relative modest amount the first time. I walked up to the teller, handed her my passport and said, "We're visiting your country and would like to cash some American dollars into lei."

"Yes, of course sir" she replied with an indifferent shrug, "how much do you wish to exchange?"

I thought for a moment, as though I might be reckoning how many days we would be there and how much four of us would need, then I handed her five hundred dollars.

The astonishment on her face as she counted the bills would have inspired a portrait artist to produce a masterpiece. With the aid of an adding machine she worked out the total sum, being careful to subtract the bank's commission. After that she emptied out her cash drawer - totally. Then she turned to a colleague next to her, offered some words of explanation and emptied out her cash drawer. Finally, they called the bank manager. He went into the vault, opened the safe and emptied out the contents.

By now it was difficult to tell who was the most astounded; me or the young teller. With just five hundred dollars we had literally cleared the bank of all their Romanian lei.

The implication of this was worrying. We had \$26,000 dollars that must be cashed. How on earth were we going to cash all that money when \$500 dollars would break the bank? We were only going to be in Romania a certain number of days, probably 10 days, or at the most two weeks on that particular trip.

"Well maybe it's because this is just a very small town," I thought. Considering that five hundred dollars would break the bank, it was obvious that even if we found a place in a large city where we could exchange a thousand dollars or even \$10,000 it would be suspicious to cash that much money at one time. Questions would be asked. Official attention would be drawn that we seriously wished to avoid. We concluded that the Lord had shown us we must cash the money in relatively small amounts.

Translate that situation into a Western context. Suppose, by way of illustration, that you go into a bank in some small or medium size town in mid-America and say, "I would like to have \$1,000 dollars in German deutschmarks marks please." You might be greeted with a similar astonishment as that of our young friend in Romania.

It's understandable if a local bank in Phoenix, Arizona, didn't have a thousand dollars worth of German deutschmarks on hand. They might have to send to a larger, central bank somewhere and order it for the next day. I could understand that. But if I went in with a cashiers check (or American Express travellers checks) for \$10,000 dollars and said, "I want \$10,000 dollars in cash and here's my identification and here's the cashiers check," they would have no problem giving me \$10,000 dollars in an American bank because that's the currency of the United States.

When I went into the Romanian bank, I was not asking them for some foreign currency. I was taking in a foreign currency, one which they wanted very much to increase their economy and to help their international balance of payments. They were glad to get the dollars. The Romanian government actively sought after foreign hard currency. It was remarkable to me that \$500 dollars, when exchanged for lei - the currency of Romania - would totally empty out the bank. I was astonished at that.

It became a pattern. From that time on we stopped at every bank we saw and cashed \$500 dollars. In each case that same amount simply broke the bank.

On one occasion we were going through a town and stopped at the bank only to discover it was closed. I knocked rather loudly on the door because I could see someone inside. It was the security guard. After a few moments he came and unlocked the door. I told him we wanted to exchange some dollars into lei.

He said, "Well, the bank is closed. The manager is at his birthday party, but I'll go get him." This dear man went a couple blocks away to the apartment where the bank manager lived and told him that a group of Americans wanted to cash some dollars into lei. The manager left his birthday party and hurried back to open the bank for us, after hours!

"How much do you wish to exchange?" he inquired with a broad smile.

"Five hundred dollars, please, if it's not a problem" I responded.

"No problem at all," he said brandishing a ring of keys that would have rivalled the Philippian jailor's.

His optimism quickly turned to concern. Finally, after emptying every cash drawer and clearing out the safe, he managed to come up with nine thousand lei. We signed the exchange papers, smiled and left him standing in the midst of an empty bank. Five hundred dollars had totally cleaned him out.

After about 1967 we could not stay in private homes with Christian families as we had done before. The dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu, had declared that all foreigners must stay in hotels. It was easier for the Securitate to keep track of visitors and it was good for the Romanian economy.

In Sibiu there was a tourist office in the Hotel Belvedere where we were staying. On the morning we were to leave town I went down to the tourist agency located in the main lobby. There was an exchange bureau there. While I was changing money at the hotel, Brian went to the bank.

The manager greeted me warmly and I responded by saying, "You know we want to stay in your country for a few days and I'm going to need some Romanian lei. I'd like to exchange some money."

"Oh yes sir, how much would you like?"

"Well," I said, "maybe \$300 dollars."

"Yes, that's fine." He emptied out the drawer. I saw the look of consternation. There was obviously not enough there. He went to the reception desk where they were taking money from the people who had stayed overnight. He cleaned out all of their cash drawers. I stood in the doorway of the tourist office and watched in amazement.

As he rushed past me toward the elevator I said, "Sir, it's alright, don't worry if you don't have enough."



“No, no,” he puffed, “it’s fine. I’ll be right back.”

I don’t know where he went; perhaps it was to the main safe. Eventually he came back after going literally all over the hotel. He was smiling broadly and I knew that he had finally managed to come up with \$300 dollars worth of lei.

“I hope this hasn’t caused you any problem,” I said.

“No, no, it’s alright,” he assured me. “My associate will go to the bank in a few moments and it will be alright.”

I chuckled to myself because I knew that Brian was at the bank that very moment.

Later, as we left in the car, I asked Brian, “How’d you do?”

“Well, \$500 dollars cleaned them out again,” he said.

Can you imagine, with as little as \$800 dollars we had wiped out the town of all the lei that they had? I don’t know how the people can do any kind of business or commerce in a situation like that.

We were a little concerned about leaving some kind of a paper trail the Communist authorities might pick up on. That would mean we could be followed (as had frequently happened to us in Czechoslovakia). If we were going to visit persecuted Christians and leave this valuable aid with them, we wanted to keep as low a profile as possible. Our names were on all those traveler’s checks.

We had to present our passports when we cashed the checks. Each transaction was written up and recorded. We were on the move every day, right across Romania, from Timisoara in the west to Constanzia on the Black Sea. It was fortunate for us that our large and frequent monetary exchanges didn’t seem to raise any suspicions. They had no computers in those days that could track that kind of activity across the country, but that didn’t seem to bother them.

We certainly left a trail, whether the authorities were checking or not. After awhile we felt almost like the James Brothers or Bonnie and Clyde, liberating the banks of all their money as we went from town to town. We went in with traveller checks instead of Tommy guns, but the result was the same - we cleaned out the bank. Our *modus operandi* became routine. We’d pull into a little town somewhere, look for a bank and go straight in. Within minutes we had emptied the bank of all their domestic currency and were on our way again!

When I read in the Bible about “filthy lucre” I think of Romanian currency. The paper on which it is printed is very poor quality by western standards. After changing hands several times it becomes quite worn, dirty and torn.

We knew that the government was printing money furiously, because in many cases the banknotes were in sequential numbers, clean and obviously brand new. Between towns

we would wad up the bills, rub them back and forth - sometimes under foot on the floor of the car - to make them look used and old.

Well worn bills were better than notes that were new to avoid arousing suspicion. If some of the people who had received our gifts turned up in a local shop to buy things with brand new bills, it may have raised questions. We wanted to make the money look as worn and used and old as possible before we distributed it to the believers.

The gifts were given to persecuted Christians whom Pastor Richard Wurmbrand had designated. Some were still in prison and their families were absolutely destitute. Wurmbrand had provided us the means to contact the people. Anutza Moise, from Norway, a Romanian expatriate and fluent in the language, travelled with us on that memorable journey. She personally knew most of the people we visited on that trip. We were introduced to some key Christian leaders across Romania. What a joy to be able to distribute *according to the necessity of the saints*.

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## 34

### All Dressed Up for The Ravens

Sometimes, in our missionary outreach to the suffering Church, we felt like the ravens that brought food and other necessities of life to God's persecuted servant, Elijah, while he waited by the brook Cherith. [see I Kings 17:4-6]

It was the last day of our special trip distributing funds from Pastor Richard Wurmbrand to his Romanian prison contacts and their families. As the hours slipped away and the sun was dropping in the western sky, time was running out. We were concerned because we still had one more family to reach in a town we had not previously visited. It was also the largest gift that we had for any person on the trip. We couldn't waste any time.

To further complicate matters our visas expired at midnight. It was already sundown as we reached the town and we still had 100 km (62 miles) to drive - on Romanian roads! - before reaching the border. Every minute counted.

The Brother we were to meet was a key person that Pastor Wurmbrand knew from his days in prison. He was a man who could be trusted implicitly. He would be responsible to distribute to several other families according to their need. We had put aside \$2,000 which we had already changed into lei. It was a large amount of money in any situation, but in Romania in the mid-60s it was a fortune.

The problem was we had never met this man before, nor had we previously been to this town. We had to find our way, in the dark, without asking a policeman. We needed a miracle.

Under normal circumstances we usually budgeted anywhere from 12 to 24 hours, depending on the size of the town, in order to find the contact person. It might take an entire day in Bucharest, but only an hour in a village. Maps were very scarce and often deliberately misleading. Government officials seemed paranoid about providing accurate maps or city plans. They must have thought everyone was a spy. Bridges and other key landmarks were often omitted from local maps.

You couldn't just go into a town, see a policeman and ask him, "Where does brother so-and-so live?" or "How do I find this street?" The policeman would wonder, "Why do you want to visit that man? You're a Westerner. You're not supposed to be visiting local people. What's going on?" He'd have us followed. Later, that family would have their house searched. All sorts of difficulties would come to that person because of our insensitivity. The unwritten rule in communist countries: Never ask a policeman for directions.

By the time we reached the town it was sundown. Darkness comes pretty fast in the Transylvanian Mountains. I drove slowly, praying for God's guidance and looking for some sign from Him. As we passed an opening in the tree-lined main road I could just barely see down a dirt side-street. There was a light on a house at the end of that street. Somehow it seemed as though the Lord was saying, "Go and knock on that door." We had no idea we were about to witness three miracles.

I stopped the car, backed up and turned down that street. At least it got us off the main road and out of sight from any traffic passing through town. I drove down to the end of that rough, dirt road and stopped. I went up to the door and knocked. The person who answered the knock was a Christian brother. Miracle number one. He spoke German, so we could communicate. Miracle number two. And the third miracle - unless you believe merely in coincidences - he knew where the family we were searching for lived.

He asked his 18 year old daughter to show us the way. She got into our car and led us through a labyrinth of streets in the town to get to the home where the family we sought for lived. It was completely dark by the time we turned down their street. She wasn't exactly sure of the specific house, but being a Romanian and speaking the local dialect she could inquire without arousing suspicion.

For maximum invisibility I pulled up under an oak tree, turned off the lights and stopped the engine. The shadow of the tree coupled with the darkness of the night meant that our car would less likely be seen. Slowly, as our eyes became accustomed to the darkness, we realized that there was a family standing outside, in front of the house.

We knew it was a family. There was a father; the person standing next to him was shorter, obviously the mother and the children, in stair steps, just standing there.

We got out of the car while the young girl that had travelled across town with us gave the Christian greeting - "Pacé" - and the family responded appropriately. This was the very family that we were looking for! We were overjoyed.

The father put a forefinger to his lips indicating that we should be quiet. Motioning for us to follow, he turned and the whole family walked silently into the house. His wife closed the blinds, pulled the curtains and switched on some music to play so that our conversation could not be detected by the listening device that was standard equipment in every Romanian residence.

At that point they just fell on our necks and hugged us and kissed us. "We've been expecting you," the father said.

"Excuse me?" I responded.

"Yes, we've been expecting you," he confirmed.

"How is it that you were expecting us?" I asked, "even my wife, who's in Austria just now, doesn't know where I am. She doesn't know whether we came through Serbia to get here or whether we came through Hungary, because we didn't even make that decision until after we left Salzburg."

The father said, "Last evening my wife dreamed that tonight, at this time, God would send us a very large gift - so we've been waiting for you."

And there they were, all dressed up in their Sunday best, waiting in front of the house to see what God was going to do. We couldn't telephone ahead that we were coming, because all phones were tapped. Nor could we write, because all mail was censored, especially foreign mail. But God has alternative means of communication. They had a dream. The Lord had told them they were going to receive a large gift. That's all they needed to know.

What a privilege to be God's ravens.

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**Footnote:** At the end of our tour *bénéficial* to Romania, we brought Anutza back to Belgrade, Yugoslavia to catch her flight home to Oslo, Norway. As we drove down the Bulevar Franse Deperea from the old city I heard the wail of sirens. Checking my rear view mirror I saw a dozen or so police motorcycle outriders leading a fast-moving convoy of three big Mercedes sedans. I shifted down a gear, moved over to the right lane and let them pass. As the last of the convoy swept by I accelerated and tucked in right behind them. We were doing about 60 m.p.h. as we crossed the Sava River near its confluence with the Danube. What an escort! How convenient that they were headed the same way we were.

It wasn't the first time I'd had a high speed escort. On the previous trip we'd been overtaken by a government Mercedes about ten kilometers west of Belgrade and I'd followed him for almost 400 kilometers on the autoput all the way north to Zagreb. It made an interesting change; me chasing the communists. Along the way we developed a sort of driver's comradery: he'd

overtake, then watch his rear view mirror to see when I had caught up with him and give me a “thumbs up.” He knew where all the radar control points were and slowed appropriately. When we reached Zagreb, I signaled to exit the autoput. I saw that he was going on further so I flashed my lights twice and gave a friendly tap on the horn. He waved, saluted and continued north to Ljubljana.

As we approached the Belgrade airport exit I shifted down and prepared to resume a normal pace, regretting that we would not have this impressive escort all the way to Zagreb again. To my surprise the motorcycle outriders were already leaning into the airport exit turn and with only a slight tap of the break lights the limos followed.

“I can’t imagine who’s in this convoy, Anutza,” I admitted, “but it looks like you’re going to have an escort all the way.”

The pace did not slacken as we roared past the airport perimeter. We were approaching the Terminal Building when the cortege slowed and turned elegantly through opened gates into the diplomatic area to be greeted by guards in dress uniforms, standing ram-rod straight at Present Arms.

We continued straight ahead and pulled up in front of the entrance marked “Departures.” The team helped Anutza disembark as a policeman came over to tell me in Serbo-Croatian to “Move it!”

Anutza had checked in for her flight to Oslo, by the time I walked from the parking lot to the departure hall. Her plane was unexpectedly delayed. No one offered an explanation. Something was going on. Who was in that very official group that had unwittingly hastened our trip out from downtown Belgrade?

We decided to go up to the Observation Deck on the second floor. It was a beautiful, late summer day. The sky was deep blue, punctuated with a ring of cumulus clouds to the south and east. There was just a hint of breeze.

The sight that greeted us was very impressive. Unlike his East European, Warsaw Pact neighbors, who depended on Soviet military planes they could convert to civilian use, Marshal Tito preferred things western. JAT, the official Yugoslav airlines, used Boeing equipment, made in Seattle, Washington, U.S.A. There, along the taxiway, was every gleaming 727 and 737 he could find lined up as if for inspection - but by whom?

Facing them on the other side of the taxiway was an entire squadron of F-80s complete with red star, hammer and sickle. American taxpayers had paid over a million dollars per copy for these fighters. Tito had bought them surplus for \$10,000 each (which Congress loaned him) when the USAF declared them obsolete. To sweeten the deal the US trained the Yugoslav pilots in Texas.

From our perch on the Observation Deck we could see a military brass band. Facing the band and the active runway were about fifty chairs for dignitaries. There was a raised speakers’ platform complete with microphones. A large detachment of soldiers in dress uniform was patiently waiting at attention.

About that time we heard the almost pathetic drone of a relatively small, twin-engine aircraft approaching out of the clouds from the east. As it got closer, we recognized it as an old Soviet

built, propeller driven Illusian II-18. The tail bore Romanian's tri-color blue, yellow and red. It circled the field once probably feeling like Cinderella after her chariot turned to a pumpkin.

Eventually the pilot lined up with the active runway, dumped his landing gear and flaps and touched down quite professionally. The plane taxied over to the area of waiting dignitaries, one of whom I recognized by newspaper photographs as Marshal Josip Broz Tito, Communist President of Yugoslavia.

When the engines were shut down and the props stopped spinning, the ground crew pushed some stairs over to the plane's door while a group of soldiers unrolled a red carpet to the foot of the steps. Tito walked on the carpet toward the stairs and waited patiently.

After what seemed to be several awkward moments the door opened. There, framed in the dark aperture, was Nicolae Ceausescu smiling broadly and waving to no one in particular. While the band played the Romanian national anthem he started down the steps and was followed in a moment by his wife, Elena.

The two old communist leaders embraced at the foot of the steps and kissed each other's cheek. The honor guard fired off a 21-gun salute.

Yes, Virginia, there is honor among thieves.

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## 35

### The Rosenhof Story

In the spring of 1969 our team, the PIONEERS, was in England for a series of evangelistic meetings. While in the London area we visited our long time friend, Ted Hubbard, a barrister from Bromley. Ted was very active in Christian Business Men's organizations in Britain. I mentioned to him that we were going to the United States for an autumn itinerary. He brightened up and said, "Oh, I'll be in the States in September and October this year speaking in several CBMC meetings around the country."

"Great!" I exclaimed. "Maybe we can all get together while we're out there. Let me have a copy of your itinerary when it's finished."

A few days after we got back to Austria, Ted's itinerary came through the mail. I put it in my briefcase and blush to say that I forgot it was even there. But the Lord never forgets. A whole string of divinely arranged circumstances were about to unfold.

In the autumn we went to America and travelled by car across the States from coast to coast. When we arrived in southern California we discovered that two days of meetings had been cancelled. This was very unusual. We needed to make the most of every

moment on a limited itinerary in the States. Suddenly we were stuck in Glendale with a two day gap in our itinerary.

About that time the Lord jogged my memory: I remembered Ted Hubbard's itinerary. I pulled it out of my briefcase and looked to see where he was on that day. Would you believe he was in California during those days? And not just California, but Glendale! We reached him with a local phonecall.

Ted was glad to hear from us; said he was leaving for Palm Springs in a couple of hours and that we were welcome to join him for the next two days at the International Christian Businessmen's conference. "My friend is arranging the programs," Ted informed me. "I'll introduce you to him and there's a good possibility you might be able to speak at one of the sessions."

We drove out to Palm Springs for dinner with Ted Hubbard and some of his friends. He introduced us to the man who was responsible for arranging the program each evening. I sat next to him at the table.

"Our program is completely full as far as speakers are concerned for this whole week," he explained, "but I'll tell you what we'll do. We can give you half an hour following the main evening service. We'll give you 60 seconds to plug it during the plenary assembly. We'll make it an optional session. If the people want to hear you they can stay." That was more than fair.

I took about 45 seconds during the main evening session to plug the "After meeting." It was amazing. Almost 2,000 people remained after the evening meeting to hear what we had to convey. I spoke for about 30 minutes, sharing the story of what God was doing in Eastern Europe, and giving them some firsthand information about the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia.

After the meeting, an immaculate gentleman came to the front and gave me his business card. I looked at the name: Walter Gastil. "Bill, I would like for you to be my guest for lunch tomorrow," he said. "I'd like to introduce you to some friends." He was a very cordial, warm-hearted man and I gladly accepted his invitation.

Later I would learn that Walter almost didn't stay for the After-meeting. He and his wife had been in meetings all day and were tired. "The mind can absorb no more than the seat can endure," he often said. The week before he had just finished reading Brother Andrew's book, "God's Smuggler" and now he was hearing some more news of ministry behind the Iron Curtain.

I didn't know any of the men to whom Walter introduced me at lunch the next day. Subsequently I found out it was like a "Who's Who" of some of the top Christian business people in the United States including Art DeMoss. They listened with interest as I shared my concern to reach the communist world for Jesus Christ. We enjoyed our fellowship over lunch, then left immediately afterwards to continue and conclude our itinerary in America before going back to Austria.

In the meantime, Harriett led a lady to the Lord in our village: Frances Umbreit. She and her husband, Otto, owned a bed-and-breakfast pension or small hotel, called the Rosenhof. Over the months Harriett had been meeting with Francis for Bible study. On one occasion she asked Harriett to pray for her “. . . because my husband and I really don't feel like we can operate the Rosenhof any longer and we want to sell it.”

This was an extraordinary bit of information. We had lived in Europe for many years and had never seen a “For Sale” sign on any property. “For Rent” yes, but not for sale. Possible reason: two World Wars had destroyed so many buildings and homes and killed so many men who build buildings and homes that supply had never caught up with demand.

There was always a shortage. If something was for sale it was sold before ever reaching the open market.

We had been praying a long time for more adequate accommodations. The number of teams going into eastern Europe had increased dramatically since the publication of “God's Smuggler.” Our little house, in the environs of Salzburg, had become a “Go-tell Motel” with wall-to-wall people in sleeping-bags every night on the living room floor. We desperately needed more space.

“Please don't put it on the market,” Harriett pleaded with Frances, “until the Team get back from America.”

When we learned of the pending sale of this beautiful and strategically located property, we phoned Brother Andrew in Holland and sent him the details. We talked with The Slavic Gospel Association and with Gateway Outreach, in Britain. Each of those organizations thought it was a great idea and all agreed that at \$85,000 it was a very reasonable price, but none of them had any capital that they could invest at that particular time in such a property venture.

The need for a hospitality house and training center was apparent. The Rosenhof was in every way the answer to that need. None of the other eight missions working into the East were in a position to take advantage of the opportunity. We had no financial resources on which to draw, indeed we didn't have two dimes to rub together. Yet we had a strong impression that the Rosenhof should be claimed for the Lord. Was God telling us to trust Him for a miracle?

Early in January 1970 we received a letter from Walter Gastil in California. It was the first time we had heard from him since the meeting in October at Palm Springs. In his letter he raised a two-part question: “How could your work expand if you had more people and more money?”

No one had ever before asked us a question like that. I wrote to Walter immediately outlining the great possibility that was ours to purchase the Rosenhof property and explained that no one we knew or worked with had the funds to do it. I felt that we must not let this possibility slip through our fingers - that it should be claimed for the Lord.



The Rosenhof was completely furnished, including dishes, cutlery, two sets of linen for every bed and a power mower for the grass. It had oil-fired central heating; a large fully equipped laundry made it possible to wash, dry and iron all the sheets in one day in the event of a complete turnover of guests. With twenty-two rooms it would comfortably accommodate thirty to thirty-five people.

The building was of typical alpine construction: solid masonry walls, 18 inches thick, made to last 500 years. The roof line was a gentle, 27° pitch with wide (7') eaves. The lower part (first two floors) of the outside was white stucco, and the top floor was dark stained wood. It stood alone on a corner lot with ample room to add an extra wing if necessary.

There were four levels: a full-size basement, two complete floors and a finished loft area with five rooms. The front of the Rosenhof faced south for maximum exposure to the winter sun. All the bedrooms on the second floor opened onto a balcony with a spectacular view of the Alps. The top floor had a single balcony that spread across the front just under the wide eaves.

Salzburg is the center of Europe; exactly halfway between Gibraltar and Moscow and half way between Stockholm and Athens. It's the crossroads of Europe. The main international railway, the Orient Express, runs through Salzburg. A main international autobahn comes through Salzburg. The Rosenhof was just 2½ miles from the autobahn, fifteen minutes from the airport, ten miles from the center of Salzburg and ideally located to be a training center and a hospitality house for teams going into the communist East Bloc countries.

I told Walter, "Half of Europe is behind the Iron Curtain. Salzburg is like the waist of an hour-glass. All the traffic going east and west comes through here. God called us to Europe. We're in the middle of it. We live in Salzburg."

Walter answered by return mail and said, "I love the idea." He made plans to create what he called "...a pool of cash. We've got to claim this for the Lord" he said. "I will send you \$2,000 to put down on the property and serve as a non-returnable binder."

We prayed a lot about that because we were not sure if we wanted to invest another man's capital. We might lose his money if we didn't come up with the \$25,000 down payment. Walter assured us that he felt this was what the Lord wanted him to do. He would send us the funds to use as a binder and we should set a closing date in September.

After much prayer we felt that we should move ahead. On April 15, 1970 we signed the papers with the Umbreits and gave them Walter's \$2,000 as a non-returnable binder to secure the property. We set September 21st as a closing date to make the down payment.

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## Watching God at Work

Immediately we began to cast in our minds just how we could 'help the Lord.' We considered various possibilities and then decided on a summer trip to America to raise funds. The Bible says ". . . *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.*" (Psalm 2:4) I'm sure that the Lord was laughing because we were not 'fund raisers.' Our plan was to go to the United States on the first of June to raise revenue for the Rosenhof. The Lord had other plans.

Eleven days later, on the first weekend in May, a Slavic Gospel Association team came through from England on their way to Yugoslavia. One of the cars broke down in Salzburg and without it they were unable to continue the trip. Brian and I had wanted some time for fellowship with these brothers in order to discuss significant developments in our mutual ministries. We offered to take them down to Zagreb on Saturday. Another team, already there, could bring them back because I was scheduled to preach in Salzburg on that Sunday night. The seven hour journey south was routine.

Brian and I left Zagreb Sunday morning for the return journey, driving northwest on the autoput, through Ljubljana and Kranj, then wound our way north up over the Alps. After completing custom and passport formalities at the frontier we stopped for lunch in a little Alpine restaurant about halfway down the mountain on the Austrian side. We did not know that this would be our last 'proper' meal for some time.

About an hour later, on a left hand bend not far from Villach, we met a bright red Porsche head on. My speedometer was locked at 40 m.p.h., his was stuck at 75. (60 km and 110 km respectively.)

I regained consciousness in very strange circumstances. I couldn't see. I was blind. I could hear doctors talking. They were speaking in German. Slowly it dawned on me that they were in the room where I was and that they were talking about me and giving me less than a 50/50 chance to survive. My pelvis was broken in two places. I had a brain concussion and severe internal bleeding. Brian had a punctured lung, several broken ribs, a fractured scapula and serious cuts around the head and face.

As I regained consciousness and overheard the doctors' conversation, realized the extent of my injuries and pondered the enormous responsibility we had just undertaken, I said, "Lord, have You put me on a shelf? Are You finished with me?" And just as clearly as I have ever heard any human being speak, I heard the Lord say deep down within me, "*I have not put you on a shelf. I have put you back in school, so I can teach you something.*"

When you're lying flat on your back there's only one way to look, and that's straight up. God demonstrated to me something about Himself in that experience. The Lord taught

me that He doesn't need me to raise funds for His cause. He is perfectly capable of doing that without me. He showed me very dramatically!

In the next few weeks it was like the "windows of heaven" opened up and it just rained money. Funds poured in. Some came in little bits, and others in large amounts, but it came in a deluge. We were inundated with financial gifts from Britain, America, and Europe. Even friends in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia had a part. A Youth group from a Tennessee church did yard work and washed cars to earn money to send.

I was blind for several days and it was agony to move. We found out later that a Christian sister in Wales, where we had conducted a crusade in March six weeks before, was praying specifically for my eyes. Her prayer was answered on my fourth day in hospital.

We had no hospitalization insurance, yet we paid all the hospital expenses. We had to replace the vehicle. But most importantly we were able to put aside money for the down payment on the Rosenhof.

I was in the hospital for a month and six weeks at home before I could walk again. During my convalescence I reflected on the remarkable timing of the Lord. He cancelled those meetings in California so we could meet up with Ted Hubbard who would introduce us at a CBMC meeting to a man who would be God's instrument in putting the financial package together for a project we didn't even know about at the time.

During part of the summer Harriett and Gwynne worked with Frances to help out at the Rosenhof and to see how she managed. Frances had a marvelous routine. By 11 a.m. all the beds had been stripped, rooms cleaned, sinks and mirrors polished and linen washed. They picked up lots of good ideas and practical techniques for expediting the work of running a hospitality and training center.

Walter Gastil wrote a personal letter to about twenty-five of his friends describing the Rosenhof project. Demonstrating how much he believed in it, he said, "I'll put a thousand dollars toward this project if you will." Quite a number of people responded generously to his appeal. For the one thousand dollars that he put up, that particular letter generated almost \$25,000 which we were able to use for the down payment!

By the end of summer all the necessary funds had come in to make the down payment on the Rosenhof. On September 21st Brian, Gwynne and Wendy moved in to manage the property. One hour later the first team arrived!

In October 1970, Brian and I felt strong enough to go to the United States for a limited itinerary. Walter Gastil had arranged an extensive program for us with gatherings mostly in private homes. Fortunately, they were not large meetings in churches where we would have to stand for a long time. This was perhaps one of the most extraordinary tours in my life. Walter put us into key homes all across America.

Walter Gastil had been on President Eisenhower's financial advisory team. He was a financial genius. People would phone from all over the United States and ask his

advice. His charge was \$500 an hour (back in those days) for counsel. He generously gave us the benefit of his expertise and experience and introduced us to financially pinnacle-people all across America. Many of those Christian people hosted meetings for us in their homes and invited their friends.

In most cases they would have an outside catering service provide the evening meal. If you looked at the roster of people who were there it was like a "Who's Who" of any particular town; Dallas, Indianapolis, Atlanta, Los Angeles, big key centers all across the United States.

We stayed with Art DeMoss for three days at his spacious home near Valley Forge. Don had a WATTS line and very graciously put his toll-free phone at our disposal. We called people all over the United States to share with them because they had been praying for us since the accident. We were able by this means to talk with friends in areas we could not personally visit.

The myth that money brings happiness was soon dispelled. The Lord used us as missionaries on that trip. In the deep South, God showed me that even in some palatial homes, in affluent Atlanta neighborhoods, there were major problems inside many homes. We learned of marriages that were about to come apart. Kids who were on drugs. We discovered that there could be all sorts of misfortune and unhappiness among the wealthy. We were able to have a ministry of counselling and sharing with prosperous people who were top-drawer socially. The Lord made us missionaries to the 'up and out' on that particular trip, but our hearts were still in Europe.

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### **Training God's Special Forces**

Austria is the only place I have ever lived where all four seasons of the year are in such dramatic contrast. Summers are warm and green. As the leaves turn in autumn the mountains become a pallet of color. Winter is a wonderland. Snow is three feet deep in the garden, and of all the sports associated with winter, ice skating and skiing were our family favorites. Spring time was always just around the corner when the crocus would assert themselves, blooming cheerfully in the garden and you could still see snow on the mountains.

Ten miles from the center of Salzburg - the "Sound of Music" city - is the picturesque little alpine village of Grossgmain. It is located right on the border of Austria and West Germany. Nestled snugly against the Untersberg on the Austrian side, the Rosenhof kept watch on the Staufen, the Schlafende Hexe and the Predigstuhl on the German side.

Very quickly the Rosenhof became well known in Christian circles that had been selected by the Lord for a special ministry. It was an advanced base for literature storage, team training and hospitality right on the threshold of the Iron Curtain. All the major missions working into Eastern Europe (there were only a handful in those days) sent their teams through Salzburg.

When a team came from Holland, northern France or even England they had already traveled a thousand miles just to get to Austria. They usually came loaded with literature. They could rest up and refresh themselves at the Rosenhof before continuing their journey. This was an advantage.

Teams could make a trip to Romania for example, distribute all the literature they had with them and return to our base to load up with Bibles again, for a second trip to another country behind the Iron Curtain, without having to drive all the way back to their headquarters in Holland. Using the Rosenhof as a forward supply base, each team could multiply the effectiveness of their work while minimizing the cost.

If they had never been behind the Iron Curtain, we had a three day, 12-hour-a-day, Team Training program to teach them how to make contact with Christians in a communist country where they couldn't speak the language and dare not ask directions from a policeman. Over the years hundreds of people of all ages and from many different countries, took this training program.

Each summer we had young people from England and America who came as short term missionaries or as volunteers to help out with all the work involved in this vital operation. Most came for three months, but it was not unusual for some to stay on for a full year. They were able to help with winter camps and conferences and enjoy some fabulous alpine skiing. In most cases, by the time they had finished a year they would stay on to help for the rest of the next summer, making fifteen months in all. They were like family to us.

Marlee is a good illustration. She came, originally for three months. After trying her hand in various domestic duties, she settled in the big commercial style kitchen to work as Harriett's apprentice. At first she helped prepare vegetables and made the salads. Then, gaining confidence, she branched into meat dishes, baking and other more difficult tasks. The trick, as always, was to make it all come together at the same time - when she could say, "Dinner's ready!"

Harriett's deep South, home cooking background made her a culinary superstar. She prepared most of the meals for the entire staff, (which in the summer usually tallied ten or twelve) plus any guests and/or students which could easily boost the number to thirty or more. The total could reach ninety meals a day!

She never knew how many to prepare for. Teams arrived at the Rosenhof at all hours. When returning from Eastern Europe they couldn't let us know they were coming because communication was difficult to impossible. Frequently, just as we sat down to dinner, or supper, a VW bus would pull into the gravel parking lot and disgorge half a

dozen tired and hungry missionaries. Harriett devised a clever solution to meet this unforeseen need.

All her menu's had to meet a three-fold criteria. They had to be holdable, stretchable and freezable. Holdable, in case the team we expected was delayed at the border. Stretchable, in case an unexpected team arrived and she suddenly had another dozen folks to feed. Freezable, in case no one showed up. It worked.

We had a cosmopolitan kitchen. On special occasions it was not unusual for our guests to come from eight or ten different countries. In one of the conferences we hosted, the group represented four continents; Europe, Asia, Africa and America. Harriett and Marlee catered for international appetites.

Several well known authors chose the Rosenhof as a retreat facility to give them an opportunity to get away and write. Peter and Anita Deyneka spent several weeks with us following an extended trip through the Soviet Union and wrote a book, "Tanya and the Border Guard," about the experience. Maria Hirschman, from Czechoslovakia who wrote "Hansi - The Girl Who Loved the Swastika" visited us on several occasions. John and Elizabeth Sherrill ("God's Smuggler" and "The Hiding Place") spent several weeks while writing a book. Afterwards they graciously conducted a "Writers' Seminar" and we invited all the missionaries in the area to attend.

Our Marlee was so inspired by the Sherrill's seminar that she wrote a Cook Book complete with pictures and a short story about how she discovered each new recipe.

The training course was tough. On one of the days we had "sealed orders." We handed them an envelope with special instructions, dropped them off in the center of Salzburg, and left them to finish their assignment within the guidelines established by the training program. This meant they could not ask directions or make any inquiries from a policeman. They had to use all their wits and wiles to successfully complete this exercise.

To prepare candidates in case they were apprehended by communist police, we had a simulated "arrest and interrogation." Wearing a mask and with a powerful flashlight in their eyes, we pulled them out of bed in the middle of the night shouting orders in German. They were blindfolded, put into a car and driven around for ten or fifteen minutes, then brought back to a special room at the Rosenhof. By now of course they were completely disoriented.

The room was dark except for a single bright light focused straight at the "prisoner." Since none of us in the team smoked, to be as realistic as possible it was necessary to build a "smoke machine" that blew smoke in the face of those being interrogated. We fired the same type of questions at them that we had been asked when we were the guests of the communist government in one of their jails. It was good preparation and very graphic.

My Dad used to say, "Son, learn from the mistakes of others because you'll never live long enough to make them all yourself." The objective of the training course was to

inform young people about conditions behind the Iron Curtain and help them to avoid making some of the same mistakes we, or other pioneers in this field, had made while working in the communist bloc.

As westerners we could, in all probability, get out alive. We might be arrested and detained (most of us had been at one time or another). We might be declared *persona non grata* as in Yugoslavia, or 'black-listed' and completely barred as we were from Czechoslovakia, but we would eventually get out.

For those who lived in the communist countries, where we worked, it was a different story. Any perceived infraction of their arbitrary and discriminatory laws could result in years of hard labor in a gulag or concentration camp. In Romania or Bulgaria many 'undesirables' (i.e. Christians) were simply taken to a wall and shot. Many times there was no effort at all to conceal the crime. The sheer harshness of the atrocity was intended to be an object lesson to keep the rest of the sheep in line. It was deadly serious business. When our Lord Jesus said, "Go in to all the world" He didn't say anything about coming back. If we got out safely that was a plus. Generally speaking we could go and come, but those who lived there did not have that option.

The onus was on us therefore to make certain that we did nothing that would attract attention to ourselves, which in turn would bring difficulty to our precious Brothers and Sisters in communist lands. Their safety and well-being was always uppermost in our minds. Hence, the urgent need for a Team Training Course.

Not everyone that took the TTC passed. We had no authority to forbid someone to go to Eastern Europe. But several times across the years we felt it necessary to strongly advise against such a trip if we noticed something, during the training period, in the student's character or personality that could not be immediately corrected. One such student was Kathy; but it was me the Lord had to deal with.

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### Kathy

Kathy was twenty-something and from one of our supporting churches in California. Her pastor had written asking if she could come, take the training and go East with one of the teams. We responded in the affirmative and sent her an application. In the section, "Type of ministry" she indicated a desire to work with children. Under, "Language skills" she put "German." We were delighted.

Kathy arrived at the beginning of summer for her three month visit. It was about ten days before the next Team Training Course was to begin. We had already established that there was a place for her in the next team going east. She set right to work, helping

in various ways around the house. Her knowledge of German was sufficient for her to shop for supplies in the village, thus relieving Harriett of a time-consuming chore. She spoke often of her great desire to go to Romania and work with children.

During the first week we noticed that there was something different about Kathy. There was an almost child-like simplicity in her character. She was twenty-something, age-wise, but hardly twelve years old in understanding. Some of the most simple duties were difficult for her to comprehend. We had a problem.

The situation did not improve during the TTC. Somehow, she could not understand the absolute necessity for discretion and security to protect the Christians in the east. She did not meet the requirements demanded by the `sealed orders' excursion into Salzburg. It was difficult for her to follow orders or to keep focused. She wandered off on her own and began conversations with people, telling them about the Lord, which was great - but not what was indicated for that assignment. She flunked both the oral and written exam at the conclusion to the training program.

The day before the team left for Romania, I knew I had to tell Kathy that I didn't think it would be a good idea for her to go. It would crush her, but there was too much at stake for the Believers to take such a risk. I called Kathy to my office.

I began by complimenting her grasp of German. It had improved in the two weeks since she came to Austria. She had been a big help to Harriett in the Kinderstunde, (children's meeting) during the time she was there. I told her I was going to ask her to make a big sacrifice. She was really good with children, and her knowledge of German made her a valuable asset to us at the mission base. "We need you here, Kathy," I told her. "I know you'll miss going to Romania with the team, but I honestly think it's best for you to stay here."

Tears welled up in her big brown eyes. The thought of going to Romania had been uppermost in her mind even before leaving California. It was the one thing she could consistently focus on. She had come so far, worked so hard, dreamed so much and now the dream was being snatched from her grasp. She was hesitant to awake to reality. Her disappointment was apparent. She sat silently for a moment, looking out the window toward the onion-dome steeple on the village church. Then she bowed her head and toyed with the bow on the sash around her waist, curling it with her fingers. Eventually she spoke.

"If you think it's best," she said, her voice quavering, "I'll stay."

\* \* \* \*

The team left on schedule. We had a time of prayer together in the parking lot before their departure. In the days that followed, Kathy worked very hard and no job was too small. We discovered that some were too complicated however. She was willing to tackle almost anything, but it needed to be something simple.



Alpine homes have double windows to keep them warm in winter. There were over 140 windows to wash at the Rosenhof. It was a relatively simple task, but represented a lot of time-consuming work. Kathy was good at it. Her cheery disposition and friendly smile were a benediction to all the staff, and she only broke a few windows.

There was a lot of work to catch up on after a team departed. Administration activities had virtually stopped during a training week. There were letters to be written, financial records to be brought up to date, itineraries to be planned. All this in addition to routine maintenance jobs that could only be done in summer. The pace never seemed to slow down. One morning I was sitting in the lounge. It was a large, comfortably furnished, center room on the second floor. There was a coffee table where I could spread out letters to be answered and various other papers to be considered. I had my small dictaphone in hand and was busy dealing with some urgent correspondence that had been neglected due to the "tyranny of the urgent." All was quiet.

Brian had gone to the Kaufzentrum in town to resupply depleted essentials. Gwynne, was busy in the mission office typing letters. Harriett was in the kitchen creating something nourishing for dinner. Les, our maintenance engineer, had organized a team of volunteers to paint the roof and eaves - not an easy job considering they were seven feet wide and it was a thirty foot drop to the ground! Kathy was cleaning windows. Clothes and linen were being washed in the laundry. The grass was being cut and gardening work done. All the staff were involved in something important that needed to be finished.

The door to the lounge was open. From where I sat I could see in to the hallway and the staircase. I heard someone coming down the stairs, singing softly. It was Kathy. She had a bucket of warm sudsy water in one hand and her window cleaning equipment, paper towels, squeegee and polishing cloth in the other. She smiled brightly and greeted me warmly as she crossed the landing and continued down the steps to the ground floor. She was in view for about six seconds.

I returned her greeting with a smile and continued my work. Some of the letters were to pastors of supporting churches. Some were to government officials in the West concerning persecution of Christian in the East bloc. Others dealt with upcoming itineraries for doctors, pastors and various notables who had expressed a desire to travel with us some time into the communist world.

For a brief moment I rebuked myself for not having closed the door to the lounge. I had been distracted from my work. My work was important. The liberty and freedom of persecuted Believers was involved. Congressmen must be told, pastors must be alerted, prayer must be solicited, itineraries must be organized - I must get on with my work.

For a fleeting instant I had a vision of all the activity going on at that moment in the Rosenhof: Harriett at her stove, Brian at the shop, Les on the roof, Gwynne at her typewriter. We were all doing something very important. Kathy's work was not important. Anyone could clean windows.

Not just anyone could prepare a meal for twenty people and have it ready right on time. Not just anyone could negotiate the best bargain at the market. Not just anyone could engineer the task of painting seven-foot eaves. Not just anyone could diplomatically present the case for the persecuted church to pivotal people in a position to perhaps do something about it. But anyone could wash windows.

My conclusion: what I'm doing, what Harriett, Brian, Gwynne and Les are doing is important, but what Kathy is doing is not so important.

Dear Reader: I am deeply ashamed that I could ever have entertained such a transitory thought. You will be glad to know that the Lord dealt with me instantly. The Divine Judge, who reserves that activity solely to Himself, rebuked me immediately.

It was like a bolt of lightning struck the center of the lounge.

Deep down in my heart I heard the Lord say, very clearly to me: "Do not ever even think such a thing again! Kathy is just as important to me as you are, Bill Bathman. What she is doing is just as important too, because she is doing it with all her heart as unto the LORD. I AM no respecter of persons. I died on Calvary's cross for Kathy, just as I did for you. She is a very precious and special person to Me. I love Kathy just as much as I love you, and Harriett and Brian and Gwynne and . . ."

By now I was in tears. "Please forgive me Lord Jesus" I said, as I closed the door to the lounge so no one else could see my sobs. I prayed and wept for some time. I completely forgot about the letters I was dictating. The most important thing I did that morning was to 'crucify self' and get right with God. That was not easy, because the "flesh" will do anything to survive.

At exactly 12:30 p.m. the lunch bell rang. Harriett had done it again. A delicious meal was ready and waiting. People came from all over the house and garden to the big, spacious, panelled dining room downstairs. And Kathy was there. The room was full and there was the usual buzz of a dozen different conversations, mostly about the morning work. After someone said the grace and everyone sat down, I took a fork and tapped on the side of my glass to get their attention.

"I'd like to share something with you that the Lord said to my heart this morning," I began, "but first of all, I'd like to apologize to you Kathy."

She looked up in surprise when I said that. Her wide-eyed innocence seemed incapable of conceiving anything that I might need to apologize for.

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## Barefoot in a Communist Cell

The phone rang in my office one morning about 11 a.m. The voice on the other end of the line was from Klagenfurt in the south of Austria. It was a missionary friend who worked, as we did, in East bloc countries He had just returned from Czechoslovakia. Josef, a pastor friend of ours, had disappeared without a trace three months before and this message was concerning him.

“Josef, is in prison!” the missionary exclaimed. “Somehow he managed to smuggle a two-word note on a piece of paper out to his wife. All it said was, ‘I’m hungry.’” Little did I know that we were about to witness one of the countless illustrations of God’s perfect timing at the Rosenhof.

An hour later, during our mid-day meal, I shared the news with our team, staff and a visiting team on their way to Yugoslavia. We were all very moved by this sad news and the general discussion around the table was concerning what we could do to help. Harriett’s quick mind sprang into action. She could organize several high-energy food parcels from supplies we had on hand. There were also some basic medical items that could be included. But we were leaving the next day for a mission that had been planned for months. How could we get them to the pastor’s wife?

The visiting team leader spoke up, “We don’t have to be in Yugoslavia until three days from now. We could take the supplies to Czechoslovakia for you.”

Cheers spontaneously rang out from everyone in the dining room. The parcels were immediately packed and made ready. They had to look like personal items and supplies any small group of travelers would need. We didn’t know where the funds would come from to pay for the food and the fuel to get them there, but we authorized the trip by faith. Within two hours the team was on the way to Czechoslovakia with life-saving supplies for the imprisoned pastor and plenty of encouragement for his lonely wife.

A few days later a letter arrived from California which began, “Last night, about 2 a.m., I had a dream about a man who needed food and shoes.” The letter was from a Christian lady who had been in one of our meetings when Brian and I were on the West Coast the previous year. “I woke up and your name flashed into my mind,” she continued. “I was wide awake and felt led of the Lord to pray for your safety. I don’t know if you need any shoes, but here’s a little gift to help with your mission expenses.”

The letter was written on the day we received the phone call about Josef being in prison. The only news we had about Josef was the two-word message, “I’m hungry.” It is standard procedure, when someone is arrested and imprisoned in a communist country, to take away their shoes to prevent them from committing suicide by hanging themselves with their shoe strings.

Then I looked at my watch: 2 a.m. in California is 11 a.m. in Austria. Our phone was ringing half way around the world as the Lord awoke this sister to pray for “. . . a man who needed food;” Josef was hungry - “. . . and shoes.” He was barefoot in a communist cell.

Praying for missionaries is such a vital part of helping them in their difficult task. If you pray for your missionaries you will share with them in God’s reward for a job *well done*. If you’re stuck in commuter traffic, pray for a missionary stuck in the mud on some impossible road to the back of beyond.

In one two week period behind the Iron Curtain we were driving on the worst road conditions we could ever remember in the mountains of Czechoslovakia; involved in a minor accident (no one was injured); had a skirmish with the police in Warsaw; felt outright hostility from people on the streets in East Germany; our car suffered damage from vandals and in Romania a man was “planted” on us in an attempt to trick us into a currency irregularity.

Even if you don’t have specific requests or items to pray for - pray. God will span the time zones, bridge the cultural barriers, cover the mistakes in translation and interpret your prayers to meet a need you may never know about until one day, when you’re leaning on a pearly gate, a missionary will come down a street of gold and say, “Thanks, for your prayers. This is how the Lord answered.”

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### Careless Missionaries

The communist authorities allowed only four theological students at one time to attend the Baptist Seminary in Bucharest. That did not mean four in each class. It meant four students. Period. So every four years, four would graduate. Obviously graduations did not keep up with attrition. There were very few pastors left in Eastern Europe who had not been in prison. Many of them were horribly tortured for their faith in Christ.

If there was a good, sound, faithful pastor in a city or large town somewhere, people would come from miles around to hear him. Those that had come a great distance would sit as close to the front as possible. I noticed that several of them had small, cassette tape recorders and were taping the message. Then they would return to their small town, where their home church was without a pastor, and play the tape for those who could not make the trip.

But what about those in the villages? There was no shepherd for the sheep there. I was so moved by the lack of ministry and teaching in rural areas that I left my tape recorder with one family and determined to find a way to get them some tapes of other pastors’

messages. Thus, cassette tapes would become one of our means to spread the Word of God.

Brother Andrew had a contact at the Phillips factory in Holland. Through him we bought 30 to 50 small, cassette tape recorders at a time. Each trip to the East we would take at least one tape recorder for each team member in the car - sometimes more.

In every village where we knew Christians lived, we stopped to visit and make sure they had a Bible. Then we'd show them the tape recorder and how it worked. They listened with fascination to a message from the Word of God in their own language from a pastor they had heard of, but had never seen.

Soon there were a number of young men recording messages each Sunday. They would put a cassette in their coat pocket, ride their bicycle to a village and leave the tape with a Christian family who had a cassette player. In turn, they would invite neighbors to their home for a service. They would sing hymns, give testimonies, have prayer and then plug in the taped sermon. In this way the Word of God was multiplied even in rural areas.

You could not visit a village without accepting their hospitality. This always included a big meal and in many cases the offer of overnight accommodation. In the mid-60s we could stay with Christians in private homes, but shortly after Nicolae Ceausescu came to power it was forbidden. The communists were the biggest capitalists in the world and clearly understood the value of the tourist trade. Their motto must have been, "Why let these foreigners stay for free with their friends when they can stay in our expensive hotels?"

When it was time to leave the village there were big hugs and kisses on both cheeks and, not infrequently, some tears. I must be a very careless missionary. It seemed that I always forgot to take my tape recorder with me. Over the years I have forgotten literally scores of cassette tape recorders, left behind in some rural village, high in the Transylvanian or Carpathian mountains.

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### **Multiplying a Minister's Ministry**

Each pastor we knew was responsible for several churches. Some had as many as ten churches to care for. This meant that he could visit some congregations only once a quarter or even less. We realized that if the pastor had a car he could reach two and possibly three churches on Sunday. He could also schedule services during the week in order to serve a wider area and reach more people.

We had neither the resources or means to give away automobiles. Obviously one doesn't approach a pastor and say "We're going to buy you a vehicle." In fact it was a cardinal principle in our Team that we never made any kind of promises - period. We had seen other foreigner visitors (usually from America) make all sorts of commitments and then promptly forget about them after they returned home. Meanwhile the East European, who was certain that money grew on trees in the West, waited in vain for fulfillment of the pledge.

If we didn't make any promises then no one would be disappointed. Nevertheless, we sincerely wanted to help. Providing a car for a pastor could easily quadruple his ministry. The price of one vehicle was a tiny fraction of putting four missionaries, already fluent in the language and familiar with the local culture, in the field.

Over the years from Bulgaria to Poland the Lord allowed us to trust Him for 25 to 30 automobiles provided to pastors. Each one was the result of a special burden the Lord placed on our heart and a challenge to trust Him to supply the need.

Like many other areas of our work we developed a criteria for selecting a candidate. The pastor or Christian worker must be someone we had personally known for at least three years. He must have a proven track record of soul-winning and church planting ministry; someone we knew could multiply his ministry many-fold if he had adequate means of transportation. Finally, and this was very important, he must be nominated by a third party.

Usually a pastor might say, "It would be wonderful if Brother So-and-so had a car of some kind. His ministry could expand dramatically." This would be our confirmation. This meant that if that brother did receive a vehicle there would be rejoicing instead of jealousy by his peers. We were guardedly suspicious of (and sometimes disappointed by) someone who would request something for themselves.

Once this four-fold criteria was met, we then approached the pastor himself. We explained that we were not making any promise, but we wondered whether or not he could use an automobile in his ministry. Occasionally one would say, "Well it would be nice, but I'd rather not because . . ." There was always a good reason. It might raise his profile with the secret police; it might engender jealousy from weaker Christians or from unbelievers in his neighborhood. It could spoil his effectiveness for the ministry. It needed to be a personal decision.

In many cases, when we presented the question, "Could you use a vehicle in your ministry to better serve the Lord?" the brother would respond: "Yes it would be a tremendous help to have a car of some sort, but it is a dream. I could never afford one, so I am content with public transportation and my bicycle." We would then share with him that we wanted to pray and believe the Lord to provide the means. Together we would see what the Lord would do. The project was designed to increase everyone's faith - the pastor's and the missionary's.

The type of car depended on a variety of circumstances. The first time we did this I took my own car, an Opel station wagon, from the West. While automobiles manufactured in the West were unquestionably better made than those available in the East there were problems. It was instantly obvious to all the neighbors and the authorities that this man had connections in the West.

That could lead to misunderstanding, suspicion and in one case confiscation. But the biggest problem was spare parts. Downrange a new transmission might replace two hundred New Testaments or a carburetor might take the place of a concordance in our trunk as we became a mobile service department.

We preferred whenever possible to purchase a car made in the country. Thus the pastor could blend in with other motorists and spare parts were not a problem. Accordingly we became acquainted with the Trabant, Dachia, Skoda, Polski Fiat, Lada and Wartburg.

Fuel was another factor. Gasoline (petrol) was very expensive in the East bloc and most often rationed. In Romania motorists were allowed 20 liters, or five gallons per month! The price of \$3.45 per gallon was also an inhibitor to pleasure driving. Because of the rationing system no one was ever able to completely fill their tank.

Western tourists (which was our category since no "missionaries" were allowed) could buy "coupons" for fuel needed while traveling through the country. Each coupon was good for 20 liters. Sometimes we would arrange for several pastors to meet us at a filling station, then line them up and tell the attendant to "Fill every car to the brim, and I'll use any left-over portion of a coupon." It was a new experience for them.

On one trip, Dr. Nick Gheorghita shared with me a wonderful opportunity the Men's Choir had for an evangelistic trip to several cities throughout Romania. There were a total of five cars in the congregation of 2,200 people and all five were available to transport the choir for the evangelistic mission. All they needed was the fuel to make the trip. He asked me privately if I could manage to buy some coupons to make it possible.

"How much will you need?" I asked him.

"800 liters," he replied, a bit sheepishly.

Eight hundred liters! I needed my pocket calculator for that one. It worked out to 200 gallons and would cost \$690. I didn't have enough money with me for that, but there was an American pastor, Don Miller, from St. Louis and a doctor from South Carolina travelling with me. We put our heads and hearts and funds together and found enough to meet the need.

But we couldn't just walk into a Tourist Office, hotel or bank and ask for 800 liters worth of coupons. That would have been far more than we could reasonably be expected to use while on our trip and would have aroused suspicion. We were headed across the Carpathian mountains for meetings in Bacau, which is in the northeast of Romania, near the border with the USSR. We stopped at every hotel, or place where they sold coupons, in towns along the way.

In each office I asked, "How far is it to Bucharest?" When the clerk told me, I would punch some numbers into my calculator and then say, "Please let me have 60 liters worth of coupons, please."

We made at least a dozen such stops before accumulating the required number. When we returned to Oradea and gave the 800 liters worth of coupons to Dr. Nick he was delightfully surprised. Oradea is in the northwestern part of Romania, ten miles from the Hungarian border. Fuel was not rationed in Hungary. It was routine for us to siphon out all but the last two liters of gas remaining in our car before leaving the country. In that way a pastor could use it to take the precious seed to a hungry flock.

\* \* \* \*

The pastors we had met in Eastern Europe over the years seemed to fall into three categories, only one of which managed to stay out of prison. Pastor Richard Wurmbrand was in the first category. When the communists took over in Romania, he stood up immediately and fearlessly challenged them. He was sent immediately to prison.

In the next category were men who avoided any contact with the authorities. "We are pastors," they reasoned. We must 'feed' and look after our sheep."

The communists left them alone for a year or so. Then they would begin by asking a few simple questions. "We keep records of all activities available for the community," they explained. "Let us have a list of people who are members of your church." This was not a totally unreasonable request and to show that they were cooperative citizens they complied.

Then the authorities would want to know his text for a Sunday sermon, the names of any candidates for baptism and who was getting married. Having cooperated once, he was expected to continue. One day, someone from the "Department of Cults" would visit him and say, "Pastor we have all sorts of sources of help for our citizens. When some of your parishioners come and confess their sins to you, come and tell us. We have specialists who can help them with their problem."

Now the pastor faced a terrible dilemma. "I cannot do that," he told them. "My people come to me for spiritual counsel and I must not betray their trust."

"Oh, so now you are against us!" they charged. "You have been very cooperative until now." Afterwards he was sent to prison. The difference was that Wurmbrand was in prison with a clear conscience and the other pastor had a guilty conscience because of his compromise.

The third kind of pastor was very rare. He did not aggressively oppose the authorities, but neither would he cooperate with them, even in the smallest detail. In this way it was very difficult for the communist to find a charge to bring against him. Milos Solc in Prague was this kind of pastor, so also were Dr. Nick Gheorghita and Dr. Paul Negrut in Romania. Josif Tson was in a class by himself. He challenged the authorities through



his writings after they were published in the West. This was the caliber of men we worked with.



The Bathman family outside the Rosenhof

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## 42

### “. . . Before Winter”

Whenever we returned from an evangelistic trip to our alpine base at the Rosenhof there was always a pile of mail awaiting us. On one occasion, in early September, there was a request from a pastor we knew for a car - not for himself, but for another Brother we knew quite well. Before opening the rest of the mail, I bowed my head and prayed, “Dear Lord Jesus, please help us to be part of the provision for this very real need.”

As I continued reading through the stack of correspondence, I discovered another letter with a similar request for an automobile. Now there were two. We had never had two requests at the same time. I shared these letters with the team and together we prayed.

We knew both of these men. We agreed that they were truly, faithful preachers of God’s Word - that a vehicle would quadruple their ministry. We also knew that it would be a miracle, because we had no resources of our own.

I asked the Lord to give me a verse; some promise from the Word that would encourage and strengthen my faith. I was thinking of something like, “. . . *my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:19) or “*Call*

*unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.*" (Jeremiah 33:3) But no. My encouragement was to come another way.

For several days I had been having personal devotions in 2 Timothy. I was reminded to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;" and to ". . . *endure hardness, as a good soldier.*" Then there was the promise that "if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." I thought of our fellow believers in Eastern Europe who suffer daily for their testimony and for the sake of Jesus Christ. There were warnings about perilous times in the last days, about persecutions and afflictions.

The last chapter is one of my favorites. Paul's charge to Timothy to "Preach the Word," and to "do the work of an evangelist." This is followed by a personal appeal from the imprisoned apostle. He asks Timothy to come soon to visit him. It was getting cold in the depths of that Roman dungeon and he had a list of things he would like for the young preacher to bring: *"the cloak that I left at Troas...and the books - especially the parchments."* He concludes by sending greetings to the home Bible study conducted by Priscilla and Aquila and an appeal to make every effort to ". . . *come before winter.*"

That was it! That was the promise I had asked the Lord for: *"...come before winter."* From an unexpected portion of Scripture, the Holy Spirit surprised me with a verse He wanted me to interpret as a promise. Winter comes around the first of November in Alpine climes. The Lord wanted us to believe Him to supply the funds to purchase two cars for pastors in Eastern Europe *before winter.* We barely had six weeks to trust God for a double miracle. That was the kind of faith-expanding impossibility we could relish.

All the team and staff began to focus prayer on this new project. Money began to come in. The fund grew. Within three weeks we had sufficient means to buy one car. Then the flow suddenly stopped. A week passed and not a dime came in toward the next car. Time was running out. Doubts began arise in our hearts. Had we been presumptive? Had we tackled more than we were capable of? That was ridiculous. We were incapable of anything, but God was *able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.* (Ephesians 3:20)

When I asked the Lord why the income had dried up for the car project, a verse of Scripture immediately came to my mind - Mark 6:38. It as about the time when Jesus fed five thousand people. He had been teaching for hours and it was getting late in the day. (Time was running out for us too!) Our Lord was moved with compassion for the multitude. (We had a burden to provide transportation for two of God's servants.) The disciples' solution was "send them away," but Jesus asked, *"How many loaves have you?"*

The question of Jesus to His disciples in the midst of a hungry, restless multitude seemed to take on a personal meaning: How many loaves have you?

Suddenly I remembered our ministry tithe fund. As a team we routinely put aside a percentage of mission income to meet special needs. When we checked the books we

had about one-third of the price for the second car! We all agreed it should be put toward that goal. At once the funds began to come in for the remainder.

By the first week in November we had the joy of delivering two cars to Eastern Europe, and the assurance that this gesture would quadruple the ministry outreach of two very precious Brothers in Christ. It was the Lord's doing. It was marvelous in our sight - and it was . . . *before winter.*

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## Part V

### Life After Burnout

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#### “IN TOUCH” – a Radio Ministry

My radio ministry began in 1969 when Reverend John Olson, Director of Trans World Missions, asked me to do a series of interviews about our work behind the “Iron Curtain.” These were five minute spots which he sandwiched into his fifteen minute daily radio program on Wednesdays. For the next five years I sent John prerecorded five minute programs from our studio in Salzburg, Austria. He used them to build a prayer base for the persecuted church.

The material was gleaned from our regular and frequent trips into the various communist countries of Eastern Europe. I simply talked with brothers and sisters in Christ about their life under totalitarian conditions. Sometimes I had to partially alter their voices (by slightly increasing or decreasing the tape speed) so the authorities could not get a “voice-print” on them. Most of the time I could not identify the city where we made the interview and certainly could not use their names. Sometimes I could not mention the country where the dialogue took place. But the stories were true and very real people told them with a passion of heart born in the fire of persecution.

When the Lord led me into producing a radio program I didn't even know how to work a tape recorder. I had to study the manuals to know what to do. I had no background or training in either the technical or production side, much less the marketing end of the business. I did, however, have a feel for what I thought people wanted to hear and realized immediately that they did not have access to this kind of information from any other source.

By 1972 I was producing my own fifteen-minute weekly radio program in a small recording studio the Lord had provided at the Rosenhof. It was heard on about thirty stations across the United States. I called it IN TOUCH. I was putting American Christians “in touch” with some of God’s choicest saints and letting them speak for themselves. Because I was working in countries closed to the Gospel and among people who might suffer serious consequences if I put a microphone in front of them, I used the *nom de plume* “Bill Joy.” I was honest: I told my audience, “That’s not my name, but it is my experience.”

It was obvious to all who listened to the broadcasts in those days why it was necessary for me not to use my real name. Someone reminded me once that the early Christians were persecuted too, and suggested perhaps that was the reason Simon was called “Peter,” and John was called “Mark.” Hmm-m.

John Olson encouraged me to come to Washington, D.C. for the Annual meeting of the National Religious Broadcasters Association. It was a long way from Salzburg, Austria. He sent me an airline ticket. How could I refuse? I spent sixty life-changing hours in the United States that weekend, meeting other Christian broadcasters and station managers from across the nation.

Many of them asked for the program. I explained that, without a US-based organization, I would not be able to raise the funds to buy time on their station. I promised, however, to provide the program free of charge, packaged and ready to go on the air, if they would find a local commercial sponsor or give the time as a “public service feature.”

As a result of things learned at the NRB Conference, I went back to Salzburg and redesigned the IN TOUCH program to reach an American audience. Russell and Betty Lou Mills, US missionaries living in Europe, and an outstanding husband-wife evangelistic team, had been our neighbors in Eastbourne, England. In the mid-50s we had served together on the Eric Hutchings Evangelistic Team, “Hour of Revival.” Betty Lou writes all her own songs; words and music. I contacted the Mills, explained what I needed, and in a few weeks received a beautiful theme song professionally recorded with an orchestral background.

Now I was ready with a uniquely designed radio program to put American Christians IN TOUCH with the suffering church in communist lands.

But there was another step I did not anticipate.

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## A Place Where it's Warm and Dry

***“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”*** Hebrews 12:11

Frequently I've heard one of the Lord's servants say, "I'd rather burn out than rust out." I've said it myself. Sounds noble at first. But either way, you're "out." It manifests itself in different ways according to the individual. I know what "burn out" was for me. Oh, I was keeping up appearances. I was still as straight as a gun-barrel in my theology, but discovered - to my shame - that I was as empty as a gun-barrel spiritually. I was miserable. It seemed that my prayers would just bounce off the ceiling. God was silent.

Fortunately my plight did not go unnoticed. My long-time friend, Pastor Don Engram, spotted it. Figuratively speaking, he nailed me to the wall right in my Austrian living room, with the straightest sermon I'd ever had preached right to my heart. I was in a dark despair. His message turned on a light of hope.

Don outlined a spiritual rehab program involving a sabbatical leave: a complete break for a specific time from all Christian work and ministry activities. It was "too much" to ask. Every excuse I could find was brought forth. I couldn't do it. There was my ministry into Eastern Europe. There were the new opportunities opening up in the field of radio. Don listened, and then carefully answered each of my rationalizations from the Word. Still I held out even though I knew he was right.

At last Don said, "OK, fine. Carry on. But it will be your ministry - not His."

That did it. I knew that, apart from the Lord, I could do nothing. I put myself under the discipline of Pastor Don Engram. I followed his advice and counsel to the letter and then some; ". . . *heaped up, pressed down and shaken together.*" I was determined to be spiritually rehabilitated.

The first step involved a sabbatical leave for a minimum of six months. We had been on the field overseas for twenty-two years without a furlough. We needed a break.

It was September, 1975. Having committed to get away for at least six months, the next obvious inquiry was, "Where?" I put that question to the Lord without really expecting an answer, because we hadn't been on speaking terms for awhile. To my overwhelming delight, His answer was immediate and clear. If you had been in that room with me you may not have noticed anything, but I heard - just as clearly as any human voice - I heard the Lord say, deep down in my heart, "Spend the winter in a place where it's warm and dry."

I knew it was the Lord speaking to my heart, because I would never have thought of that. Winter, in Austria, was one of my favorite times of the year. The others were

Spring, Summer and Autumn. I had never really liked winter in any other place where we had lived. Winters in England were cold, damp and dreary. By contrast, Austria was a Winter-wonderland, with snow skiing and all the positive winter things that families can do together. Salzburg, the Sound of Music city, gave the world "Silent Night."

The only way for me to obey the Lord, was to "Spend the winter in a place where it's warm and dry." This meant, of course, that we had to get as far away as possible from "the work" or ministry as I had known it. I would not have been willing to go, under any circumstances, if I had not been absolutely certain that the Lord had given me this specific direction. We began to make plans.

Parts of Yugoslavia could be relatively "warm and dry" in the winter. We still had a week of vacation time, so we decided to spy out the land. Harriett and I left Salzburg and drove south, through Klagenfurt and over the Loiblpass into Slovenia. We skirted Ljubljana, the capital, and took the autoput toward Zagreb, but turned south at Novo Mesto and headed toward the Adriatic Sea. We hoped to find a little Croatian fishing village, along the Dalmatian coast, that would be suitable for a sabbatical. At last we arrived in Jablanac.

We spent the next few days relaxing in the late September sun and watching, from our little balcony, as the fishermen plied their trade. We wondered how many Romanians and Bulgarians, having managed to reach this non-aligned communist country, had paid one of those fisherman to deposit them just across the Adriatic in Italy.

It had taken us about nine hours to drive there. As we thought about it, we concluded, it was too close. If we spent our sabbatical on the Croatian coast we would surely drive back "home" to Austria for Christmas. That was not a part of our bargain with Don Engram, nor in accord with the clear leading of the Lord.

Next, we considered North Africa. I had been to Morocco fifteen January's before and still remembered that it was "warm and dry" in the winter. That plan, however, would not give us the opportunity or time to spiritually heal, since we'd be involved in a different language, religion, ethnic and cultural climate.

By the time we left Yugoslavia, and climbed back over the Alps to Austria, we had decided that our sabbatical must be spent in the United States. But where? We had been away for so long that we really didn't have any roots in America. Who did we know in Florida or southern California, the only places we knew that were "warm and dry?"

We arrived back in Salzburg the day before Pastor Guy Davidson and his wife, Martha, returned to the Rosenhof from ministry in Czechoslovakia. They had lots of exciting things to share and answers to prayer, plus about three days left in which they were willing to take "another trip."

Brian Bounds had given the Davidsons our three day training course in preparation for their trip to Prague. We were all delighted at their enthusiasm to go on another mission. Harriett suggested a need we knew of in Hungary. Guy and Martha left immediately after lunch for Budapest.

By the time the Davidsons returned from Hungary, we were packed and ready to leave for America. In response to Guy's question, "Why?" I explained about the sabbatical. He thought it was a good idea and followed up with, "Where are you going to stay?"

"Quite honestly, I really don't know," I said. "My dad lives in Tennessee, so we'll stop by to see him. We have some friends in Florida that we might get in touch with. The only clear direction I have is that the Lord told us to 'Spend the winter in a place where it's warm and dry.'"

Guy looked at me very carefully and a big broad grin spread across his handsome face. "You can't find anywhere in the United States that's warmer or dryer in the winter than Tempe, Arizona," he assured us. "Why don't you come and be our 'missionary in residence' while you take your sabbatical?"

I thanked him sincerely, but didn't give it much serious thought. I grew up in the deep South where the folks all say goodbye with the phrase, "Y'all come." Most would be very surprised if you did. I mistook Guy's sincerity for a western version of "Y'all come."

You can imagine my surprise when, a few days after we arrived at my dad's home in Chattanooga, a letter came from Grace Community Church in Tempe, Arizona. It was from Pastor Guy Davidson, inviting us to come and be their 'missionary in residence' for our entire sabbatical. Before I could recover from that shock, the phone rang and it was Guy calling from Tempe.

"Did you get my letter?" he asked.

"Yes, thanks so much!" I replied.

"When are you coming?" he pressed. "We have a small house that one of our Church families, Fred and Betty Southard, have bought for investment purposes and they are willing to let you have it, rent free, for your sabbatical."

I was overwhelmed. This brother was really serious and had followed up with an offer he made to us while we were still in Austria. "We're on our way," I told him, "and hope to see you in a few days."

\* \* \* \*

Remembering that journey west across America, Harriett often says, "It was one of the most pleasant trips we've ever made." We didn't have to hurry. There was no demanding schedule to meet. We stopped frequently to "smell the roses" or visit some historic site. In New Orleans we saw the Mississippi river boats. In San Antonio we remembered the Alamo. Crossing west Texas we admired the beautiful quarter horses, and dreamed of riding one someday.

It was about 9:45 on a glorious autumn Sunday morning as we neared the little west Texas town of Sheffield. I suggested that we find a church and stop to worship with

them. Harriett agreed. As we slowed down to enter town I keyed the mike on my CB radio and said, "Breaker one nine for a base station, we need some local information."

Immediately a voice came back, "You got some local information, how can I hep you?"

"Ten-four, local information, you got the old Travel Agent on this end. We're just coming into town from the westbound side on that old super-slab, and we'd like to stop and worship the Lord with some of you good folks here. Can you tell me if there's a Baptist Church in town?"

"Big ten-four Travel Agent. After you pass the service station on your right you'll come to a traffic light. It's the only one in town. Hang a left and go down about a block `n a haf and you'll see it right there on your right."

"Ten-four. We sure `preciate that information. You have yourself a real good day; we'll catch you later. This is Travel Agent, we're gone."

It was exactly as our unseen friend had said. We turned left at the light and almost immediately saw a pretty little Baptist Church, nestled among some trees just off to the right. We pulled into the parking lot and shut off the engine. Sunday School had finished and several folks were standing around outside talking before going in for the morning worship service.

In a small town, everyone knows everyone else. We were strangers, but they greeted us warmly and made us feel genuinely welcome. The Pastor introduced himself and asked where we were from. When I said, "Austria," he may have thought I meant Austin. In west Texas, both were a world away.

Sheffield was in "fly over" country as far as missionaries were concerned. They seemed to seldom have any kind of first-hand report of what the Lord was doing in other parts of the world. The Pastor asked me to share something about our overseas ministry, for a quarter of an hour, during the morning service. A seed was planted at that time and three years later we were invited back for a week of meetings. We've been in touch ever since.

After the morning service, a family invited us to dinner in a local Mexican restaurant. Over tacos and tamales, Harriett mentioned how we had admired the horses on the rangelands along the way. Our hosts invited us to their home for the afternoon. They lived on a twenty thousand acre ranch outside Sheffield, and raised - wait for it - quarter horses! These magnificent, muscular animals are known for their endurance under the saddle and capable of high speed for short distances, like a quarter of a mile. Hence their name. We rode horseback for about an hour before it was time to set off, westbound on I-10, for El Paso.

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## Tempe, Arizona Days of Recovery

We couldn't believe our eyes when we walked into the little house in Tempe, that was available to us for the sabbatical. The Women's Ministry, under the leadership of Martha Davidson, had stocked the fridge with milk, eggs, bacon, butter, ground beef, bread and jam. The cupboards had a supply of canned goods and a variety of staples like salt, flour and sugar. There were dishes in the cabinets, cutlery in the drawers plus towels and linen on the shelves in the bathroom.

A local builder had brought in all the furniture we needed from his "show house" storeroom: couch, coffee table, recliner, lamps, even a TV, plus dining table and chairs, a double bed and bedside tables. We walked in with one suitcase each and were immediately "at home."

We just stood in the middle of the room, holding hands, and wept. A verse came to our minds and we said it almost in unison: "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think . . . unto Him be glory."

\* \* \* \*

### Days of Recovery

***"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."*** Isaiah 55:6,7

Vance Havner once said, "Unless we come apart and rest awhile, we may just plain come apart." For a number of years I had ignored the signals. There had been a cooling off in my walk with the Lord. I had mistaken activity for spirituality. Now it was time to slow down in order to catch up.

The weeks and months that followed can best be described as filled with Divine intimacy. The Lord began to speak to my heart again from the very first morning when I sat down at the little desk in the second bedroom, with my Bible, notebook and a cup of coffee.

The familiar words of J. Scriven often came to mind during those days, *Oh, what peace we often forfeit! Oh, what needless pain we bear! All because we do not carry . . . everything to God in prayer.* Truly, "His ears are open unto their prayers." I Peter 3:12

I kept a journal of new thoughts and insights He gave me from the Word. Someday, that might be a book on its own. For that moment anyway, I was determined to make the most of my opportunity to, "spend the winter in a place where it's warm and dry."

\* \* \* \*

## Lenora's Christmas Visit

Harriett and I were in America on our own, without the children, during the sabbatical. Debbie, our eldest, was married and teaching school in Salzburg. Linda Joy had graduated from the Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Mozarteum, and was working in Esslingen, near Stuttgart. Lenora, age fifteen, was still in high school. We didn't want to interrupt her academic year and Debbie said that she could stay with her family while we were in the United States. It was an answer to prayer.

At Christmas, Lenora flew from Salzburg to join us for three weeks during the holidays. While in Arizona she went horseback riding in the desert, skiing in the White Mountains on 10,700 foot Sunrise, browsed through the shops in old Mexico, visited a Christian family in an out-of-the-way Mexican out-back village and learned to drive Daddy's car. You know, the usual things for a teenager.

Once, when returning home from skiing, we stopped at a McDonald's in Globe, Arizona. When we came out after supper I noticed we had a flat tire. While changing the tire I was surprised by the sudden arrival of helpful young men converging from every direction on motorcycles and in pick-up trucks. They were CB'ers and were responding to Lenora's appeal for help on our CB radio. She had given our exact "20" (location)! It was reassuring to know that chivalry was alive and well and that young men still respond to the voice of a maiden in distress.

Before returning to Salzburg, she attended High School in Tempe one day with some friends she'd met at Church. She was very impressed by the sporting activities and asked me, "Why don't we have cheer-leaders in Austria, Dad?"

"Honey," I replied seriously, "by the time they said `Come on, Hohetechnische Lehranstalt für Frauen Berufe' (the name of her school), the game would be over!"

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## Winds of Change

***"And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead . . . the way."***  
Exodus 13:21

By the mid-1970s communism was advancing on every continent. Four-teen countries fell victim to the hammer and sickle between 1976-80. The Marxists were expanding rapidly in Africa, where from the early '60s, so-called "wars of national liberation" sparked fires of conflict all across the dark Continent. The European colonial powers

were pulling out and handing over their African territories to national leadership. On the surface, this looked generous and seemed the only fair thing to do.

The motive, however, was not so benevolent. The high cost of two World Wars, in both manpower and material terms, had left the colonial powers of Western Europe vulnerable to intrigues from the other side of the Iron Curtain.

Behind the tall grey walls of the Kremlin, in the early '40s, Joseph Stalin and Josip Broz Tito carefully planned their post-war strategy. Following the 1936 communist defeat in the Spanish Civil War, Tito had gone into exile in Moscow. There he quickly gained the notice of Stalin, because he was more ruthless than his contemporaries. Together they looked ahead. Africa was vital to the overall communist plan for world domination. It was rich in minerals and control of the strategic trade routes around the Cape of Good Hope was important to their goal.

The problem was how to persuade nations of people who were basically religious that an atheistic ideology, like Marxism, was good for them. There needed to be a well-known communist country, that had broken with Moscow; a country that had adopted an independent, non-aligned posture, to illustrate that "you can be communist without being atheistic." Stalin and Tito decided that communist Yugoslavia would be that example. In 1948 Tito broke with Moscow, but it was only one of many communist deceptions.

Having lost their colonies in the New World during the American Revolution and barred by the Monroe Doctrine, in the nineteenth century, from expanding their control in Latin America, the Europeans turned their attention to Africa. It was the world's last great repository of unclaimed wealth. Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Italy sent delegates to the Berlin Conference, in 1884-85, to discuss their territorial interests in Africa. There were no representatives from black Africa invited, nor were their interests pondered apart from some steps taken to eradicate the Arabic Muslim slave trade. Their ethno-linguistic composition was ignored, but there was talk of civilizing, educating, uplifting and bringing in the rule of law.

The African continent was divided up and parcelled out in a manner reflecting European influence. Virtually no consideration was given to black nations who had lived there for generations. Sometimes national boundaries followed a river, mountain range or other natural geographic barrier. More often, a line was simply drawn arbitrarily on the map, cutting some black nations in half. For example: the Zande (Sudan and Congo); the Chichewa (Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique); Ovambo (Angola and Namibia). In the case of the Ovambo half speak Portuguese, half speak Afrikaans, half drive on the right and half on the left; half are Catholic and half are Lutheran.

The British controlled virtually all of East Africa from Cairo to the Cape. The French managed most of West Africa, while the Belgians controlled the Congo. Angola and Mozambique had been part of the overseas provincial empire of Portugal since 1576. Germany controlled South West Africa (Namibia), Togo, Tanganyika and Cameroon. Italy managed Libya and Somalia.

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What did all this have to do with a missionary on sabbatical in Arizona? It was simply the historic and geo-strategic background of a major decision that was beginning to take shape in our lives.

Early in February 1976, the Lord showed me, through prayer, a very important truth: "As the communist world expands, so does your mission field." This was the initial sign to both Harriett and me that a big change was about to take place.

It was not a change that we sought. Indeed, we resisted strongly at first. The change would involve transferring our base of operations from Europe to the United States. It seemed like a step backwards. We would not have questioned moving to India, Africa or Latin America - but "back to the USA?"

I remembered the call of God to go to Europe in the summer of 1951. It was so clear and strong that I never doubted for a moment that it was His will. The next year, after graduation from university, Harriett and I spent eleven months in Europe, living out of a suitcase, conducting evangelistic crusades in Scotland during the winter of 1952-53. The discovery, "We are pregnant!" was an event that would take us temporarily back to America where I pastored a small Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia while we waited for our firstborn child.

Then, in December 1954, Harriett and I left America without any plan of returning someday to our homeland. We did not go to Europe with a five year commitment, or with the idea that we'd spend twenty-years there and then retire. We went with the full intention to live and serve and to ultimately die for Jesus Christ in Europe. That was many years ago.

Now, in 1976, the cloudy pillar was moving again. Coming to America on a sabbatical leave, after twenty-two years abroad without a furlough, was one thing. Transferring our international base of operations from Europe to the United States was quite another. We sought the Lord. In the words of the old hymn:

Savior, while in simple faith we bow;

From the windows of Thy mercy,

Pour us out a blessing now.

Once again, His guidance was perfect. The more we prayed the clearer His plan became. The Lord spoke to us in those days from His Word and through the advice and counsel of godly men.

We were overseas all during the 1960s and early 70s when American civilization jumped the tracks. The more we learned about our home country and all that had happened culturally while we were gone, the more we realized that we had simply transferred from one mission field to another.

## A New Beginning

In 1976 the Lord made two things very clear to us: the communist world was expanding and so was our mission field. Fourteen nations fell to the communists in the next four years. Accordingly He transferred our base of operations from Europe to the United States in order to more effectively serve that growing need. In 1981 we incorporated IN TOUCH MISSION INTERNATIONAL in Arizona. Our ministry expanded dramatically into Africa, Asia and India, plus Central and South America. Of those general areas South Africa, India and Mexico were our principal target countries because we felt that they were in the immediate path of communist advance.

I remember flying into Madras, India and seeing MIG fighters lined up along the runway. The Russians had close military ties with the government in New Delhi and wanted to use the subcontinent to counter the threat from China.

Mexico, our closest neighbor to the south, shared an almost 2,000 mile border with the United States. Russia had always envied our friendly borders. It took 1.8 million Soviet soldiers just to guard their borders. If Mexico should become a communist country we would be denied that amiable border. Consequently, Moscow built the largest Russian embassy in the world in Mexico City. It was spy-capital Central America, and the Communist Party was very strong in the Amigo Country.

The greatest prize for the communists however was South Africa. The South African Communist Party was the first communist organization to be founded outside the Soviet Union following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. In terms of mineral wealth South Africa is the richest nation on earth. It is strategically located at the southern tip of the continent and controls the sea-lanes around the Cape of Good Hope. Supertankers from the Gulf oil states are too big to go through the Suez Canal, so they must come around the Cape in order to reach markets in Europe and the Americas. It was (and still is) a spiritual battle. If the Soviets controlled South Africa it could seriously damage the American economy and that would adversely effect mission work worldwide.

The story of how God has worked in my life since 1976 while serving Him in those areas, however, will have to be the stuff of another book. ***Going Through*** focuses on Europe, East and West, during the Cold War years leading up to the breaching of the Berlin Wall.

## **Spotlight on Bulgaria**

Our ministry in this mountainous Balkan country goes back to 1966. In the early years of working there we took Bibles and other helps to the believers and preached whenever possible in Varna, Burgas, Plovdiv and Sofia. Many of our trips were in the winter, so we took our skis and passed as tourists. The communists never found our load of Bibles.

In the 1960s and `70s the persecution of believers was very severe. Many pastors and Christian workers were put into prison. I remember sharing an all-day Bible conference with a Bulgarian evangelist who faithfully preached the Word. The power of God was there and it was like we had all been transported "to the third heaven." I spoke with him after the meeting, "Brother, I'd like to pray for you. What is your name?"

He thought for a moment. There was evident confusion on his face as he tried to recall where we were just then. Varna? Sofia? Plovdiv? Yes, we're in Plovdiv! He was suddenly brought back to earth, so to speak. Back to the realities of everyday life in Bulgaria. It was then he told me his name. Turns out he had a different name in each city so he would not build a reputation for himself and thereby attract unwanted attention from the authorities. There was only one Name that he wanted to lift up. The Name of Jesus.

In the early `90s the Lord gave us opportunities to minister in Varna and Kostenets. We attempted to establish a medical clinic, similar to the one in Oradea, Romania. We worked closely with Dr. Dechko Svilenov, a dedicated and active Christian. He accompanied us to Thessaloniki, Greece where we put him in touch with Dr. Demosthenis Katsarkas, founder and director of St. Luke's Hospital in that Macedonian city.

Dr. Dechko introduced us to a member of the Bulgarian parliament who was interested in ITMI's medical plans. He confirmed the need for a Christian Medical Center in Bulgaria and indicated there would be sufficient personnel to staff it. Transportation was offered to get supplies from the port in Thessaloniki to Sofia. The project did not materialize.

Sometimes it happens like that.

## **Romania**

Until the Revolution in 1989, Romania was the most oppressive of the East Bloc countries. We began working here in 1965. Initially it was impossible to preach so we concentrated on taking Bibles. Gradually we ministered in underground and unregistered churches and became better known among the believers.

From 1966 to 1969 we took literally thousands of Bibles to the persecuted church. During the same period we took scores of thousands of dollars on behalf of Richard Wurmbrand to suffering Christians. The monetary gifts were used to help the families of pastors who languished in communist prisons.

Whenever possible we made known in the West the true situation in Romania. Wurmbrand's close friend, and mine, Dr. Nick Gheorghita, introduced me to Josif Tson in 1972. Josif had written a definitive paper on "The Place of a Christian in a Socialist Country." We brought the paper out of the country and sent it to Keston College in England and to publishers in the United States. When the document was safely in the West, Josif published it in Romania. This was the beginning of the Reformation. The shock was immediate. The authorities were furious. Josif was arrested and charged with "treason."

In anticipation of this we had set about, through our own publications, to make Josif's name as widely known as possible. We launched a letter-writing campaign on his behalf. Christians wrote to their Parliamentarians, Congressmen and Senators as well as to Josif. He received letters literally from all over the world.

The persecution of Josif Tson took various forms. He was dismissed from his post at the Baptist Seminary in Bucharest, and 're-assigned' to the Baptist Church in Ploiesti. This was considered the graveyard of churches and the end of his ministry. But the Lord increased his witness. People traveled from all over Romania to hear this great reformer preach the truth.

On October 4, 1974, his home was searched. Seven police officers spent eight hours going through everything in the Tson's tiny apartment. All his books and tapes were confiscated. He was charged again with treason, which carried a mandatory death sentence.

Later, on the same day, I arrived at his home just a few hours after the police had left. I got all the details and a statement from Josif, left at once and drove non-stop through the night to deliver the report to Radio Free Europe in Munich. It was broadcast immediately and the entire nation knew of the proceedings within 24 hours. Josif told me later that this was the only thing that kept him from being shot.

On one occasion, following a visit to Josif, I flew from Salzburg to Geneva for a meeting with the Liberian ambassador to the United Nations. I presented him with a carefully prepared packet of pictures and other documentation concerning persecution of Christians in Romania. The Liberian President was a Christian, and at that time also President of the Baptist World Alliance. He had just completed an official State visit to Romania. Josif thought he might be able to use some diplomatic high level persuasion on Ceausescu.

In 1980, Josif was invited to the United States for a speaking tour in American churches. He was now pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Oradea, a principal city in the northwest of the country. I visited Josif just before leaving Romania on that trip.

"I have a problem," Josif informed me. "One of my closest friends is not too happy about me going to America. Last night he said, 'Josif, as I see it you have one of two alternatives before you. If you go to America and tell the truth [about communism] you

will be considered an enemy of the people. If you go and tell lies and say that everything is fine, you will be an enemy of the Lord.' What should I do?"

His question was sincere. I understood his dilemma. I prayed quietly, as Josif outlined the predicament, and asked the Lord for wisdom. (We're supposed to do that when we lack it.) "Dear Lord Jesus, I don't have an answer, but I'm sure You do," I prayed. "If You have something to say to Josif, my lips are available."

Immediately a thought came to my mind and I heard myself saying, "Josif, you are a Baptist minister, so I must ask you to forgive me for quoting a Methodist hymn." He smiled. "Charles Wesley penned one of my favorites: 'JESUS! The Name high over all.'" Josif remembered. "There is a verse in that hymn that goes like this, *'Tis all my business here below to cry: Behold the Lamb!*' Josif, you can go to America and tell the truth about communism and you'll be well received in patriotic circles there, but you'll be considered an enemy of the people when you return. Or you can go and tell lies, that everything is fine and there are no problems, and you'll be an enemy of the Lord. But I believe there is another alternative that perhaps your friend has not considered. Go to America as a missionary. Determine to know nothing among them *save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified*. Go to America and cry, 'Behold the Lamb!' That's all your business here below."

In 1981 Josif and Elizabeth Tson were exiled from Romania and came as refugees to the United States. He soon became Director of the Romanian Missionary Society. Meanwhile, the Lord was opening the door for us to have evangelistic crusades in Romania. We preached in churches all over the country and hundreds of precious souls were saved.

**Heart attack** The Lord orders our "stops" as well as our "steps."

On Sunday morning March 28, 1982 in Calgary, Alberta I suffered a massive myocardial infarction. Harriett and I had taken three days and driven up to Calgary from Phoenix. It's a beautiful trip and we wanted some time together. I was invited as keynote speaker for a Missions Conference. The Lord had other plans.

I had shaved and was just getting ready to take a shower when the sharp, stabbing pain hit. The sternal pressure felt like an entire football team was sitting on my chest. Harriett recognized the symptoms and called the paramedics. They were there in less than three minutes, started an IV for pain medication and rushed me to the Foothills Hospital, only a mile away.

Over the next few months Harriett patiently nursed me back to health. Gradually my strength returned. Within three months I was back in the office and in another three months ready to resume preaching. The posterior damage left me with half a heart, but I try not to do things half-heartedly.

In early December Josif Tson asked me to go to Romania in the first week of January 1983 for an evangelistic crusade in Oradea, at the Second Baptist Church. It was my



first overseas mission trip since the heart attack. My longtime friend Dr. Nick Gheorghita and a younger man, Dr. Paul Negrut, were co-pastors there.

Doctors Nick and Paul were a very powerful team. The communist authorities had tried every way they knew to break up this dynamic combination. They would give privileges to one and withhold them from the other in a vain attempt to cause jealousy. It didn't work. Dr. Nick said from the beginning, with reference to Dr. Paul, "he must increase and I must decrease." They determined to have no secrets between them. When the communist lied to them (individually) about each other in order to create confusion, they knew what the truth was.

Dr. Nick and I had had a slight dissension some months before and I wondered what to expect. He did not know who was coming for the week of Evangelism and Outreach, only that Josif had told him someone would come.

Harriett and I arrived in Oradea on a bitter cold night the first week of January 1983. When Dr. Nick opened the door his first words were a frosty, "Oh, it's you."

He told someone later, "When I saw them, I knew Bill was going to be the main speaker. We had been friends in the past, but some misunderstanding in the late seventies made our relationship colder. My first reaction was, 'Is this the man they have sent? Couldn't they find anyone else?' I wondered if I should let them in or not and how cordial should I be. In those same moments I sensed God's presence over me. I heard an inner voice telling me that I could either let Bill be a blessing, or I could be a barrier to him and his ministry. The Lord searched my thoughts. I opened the door, welcomed them in, and remained at their service for the rest of the week. The rest is history."

Blessing or a barrier? How wonderful is our gracious God! His ways are past finding out. When self gets in the way He is so patient. The Lord did a work in both of our hearts that very first night. He would expand that work in many other hearts before the week was over.

Brother Ioan Popovici, an Elder at Second Baptist Church, testified that, "Brother Bill's messages had a strong influence in the lives of those who attended [the Week of Evangelism], and because of that most of the non-believers who attended the services were saved. All these had a positive influence over our city, Oradea, because of the large number of people who were invited to respond to the invitation. These were touched by God in a very special way. At the end of the week we had a baptismal service and some eighty people made a public profession of their personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

The Lord did an outstanding work in each of our hearts during that special week. On the last Sunday, in the early morning hours, I had a slight CVA (stroke in lay terms). Again, Harriett recognized the symptoms, but on this occasion there were no paramedics to call. I was paralyzed on my left side. We were on the eighth floor of the Belvedere Hotel in Felix, a spa about five miles from Oradea. No one spoke English at the Reception desk and Dr. Nick couldn't be reached. All she could do was pray.

All? That was enough. By the time we would normally get up in the morning it was over. I couldn't remember anything. There were no symptoms of paralysis. I noticed only that I could not hold anything in my left hand. Harriett drove to church that morning.

Doctors Nick and Paul took one look at me and both said (almost in unison), "You are not going to be able to preach this morning!" Harriett told them what had happened during the night.

"But the Lord has given me a message," I protested.

"It may be your last one," they confirmed.

Dr. Paul took me to a local hospital. "I will not leave you alone here," he said. "People die unnecessarily here all the time." He stayed with me the whole time.

Harriett never let me out of her sight. There was one stressful moment when a medical orderly came to give me a shot. The syringe and needle looked more like it belonged to a veterinarian; a horse doctor at that. It was huge. She demanded to know what was in the syringe and when they could not satisfy her curiosity she refused to allow them to inject me. That was probably the umpteenth time she has saved my life!

Brother Popovici said later, "The entire church body was shocked to hear the news and we all got on our knees and prayed for his recovery. God answered our prayers and Brother Bill experienced a miraculous and quick recovery."

Dr. Paul insisted that we sleep in his home on Sunday night. This was, of course, against the law. He said that he would inform the police and they would understand. Everything would be OK. Months later I found out it wasn't that easy. The ultimatum the police gave Dr. Paul was life in prison if anything happened to me. Those kinds of ultimatums do wonders for your prayer life.

Undoubtedly those were special days ordained by God. He arranged everything and took care of all the details. The words of George Hart came back to us frequently: "God just loves to be trusted!"

Months later, Dr. Nick observed, "I consider Bill as one of the key elements in the revival that started in our church that winter, a movement that still influences the life of our church today. Many who dedicated their lives to the Lord in those days are healthy members in our church.

Despite the harshness of [the] Communist regime, Bill's courage and powerful messages contributed immensely to the wellbeing of our church."

The authorities didn't know what to do about the Revival. It was frightening to them because they could not control what was happening. For example the communist officer who arrested Josif Tson was listening to one of Josif's tapes, to find something with which to accuse him, when he keeled over dead with a heart attack. Another communist official ordered a church to be bulldozed. The next day he discovered he had terminal

cancer and in less than a week he was dead. Still another communist leader ordered Bibles to be confiscated then had them pulverized and made into toilet paper. The next day he was smashed in a car crash.

Just as in New Testament times, *great fear came on all the people.*

The Baptists built a cabin in the mountains to hold Bible camps for young people. The communists found out about it and sent a work detail to destroy the building. When the group arrived and discovered what the cabin was used for they refused to demolish it. The officer in charge then found a group of gypsies and enlisted their help. When they found out that the cabin was where Christians worshiped the Lord, they refused to touch it. Eventually the officer requisitioned a detail of prisoners, brought them to the site and at bayonet point they were required to dismantle the structure.

By this time, however, the officer was so frightened that he came to the pastor and said, "Please, forgive me for this. It's not my idea. I'm just acting on the order given me. Look, we are carefully taking down the building log by log and each log is numbered. We will report that the building is destroyed and you can build it back after we're gone. But, please pray to your God that nothing will happen to me."

Dr. Nick told me, "One of the most important features [of your ministry] was to bring news of what was happening 'out' to the West. In a way they [the authorities] have been afraid to kill us."

It was not uncommon for Christians to be killed simply because of their testimony for Christ. Dr. Paul Negrut came home one evening and noticed a humming sound from the drainpipe at the corner of his house. He usually took hold of the vertical pipe as he rounded the corner and walked toward the door. This time the Lord restrained him from touching it. As he looked closer he saw that part of the metal pipe was glowing. He went inside and called an electrician friend from church. On examination they discovered that someone had connected a live wire directly from a power pole to the drainpipe. If Dr. Paul had touched the pipe, as was his habit, he would have been electrocuted.

Other pastors were "set up" for automobile accidents. The Securitate followed one brother for two days. Then when he left the home of a friend the police car started off in front of him as he drove down a one-way street. That was a change, him following the police. As they crossed one of the side streets the police car suddenly stopped just after clearing the intersection, leaving the pastor's car stranded in the middle of the cross street. Just then the pastor saw a big bus bearing down on him. There were no passengers in the bus. The driver had shoulder straps and was wearing a crash helmet. The impact totalled the pastor's car, but he escaped with just a broken arm. The police car drove off. The wreckage was cleared away. No report was filed. No one was charged with any crime.

A totalitarian police state can only function in a climate of fear. Christians, having experienced the perfect love of a risen Savior, were a source of frustration to the

authorities because they were not easily intimidated. It wasn't that they were so brave. They simply feared God rather than man.

In 1984 Harriett had the idea to take a medical team to Romania. (This was probably a result of the awful conditions she had seen in the hospital the year before.) The wheels were set in motion. The next year, ITMI Board member Dr. Jon Askew traveled with me to Poland and Romania. We met Dr. Ion Popa, the Chief Medical Officer for the northwest of Romania. He graciously took us on a tour of his 800-bed hospital. They did not even have an X-ray machine.

We made no promises at the time, but three months later we returned with \$60,000 worth of high-tech medical equipment, including the first ever ultrasound in Romania. "This has kept the bulldozers from destroying our church," Dr. Nick assured me.

\* \* \* \*

It must be clearly understood that our intention in taking high-tech medical equipment to Romania (for the benefit of all the people there) was to create an atmosphere of better understanding and tolerance on the part of the authorities for the Christians they had traditionally persecuted. We wanted the atheists to perceive the Christians as the goose that laid the golden egg. If they wanted medical supplies from the West, the Christians could help.

It was a long, slow process, one that we monitored carefully and continually. It was like treading on a minefield because these projects had given us a higher profile than ever before. The authorities could decide at any moment that it was not to their ideological advantage and the whole plan could blow up in our face. But something had to be done. We felt the objective was worth the risk.

Without question it kept the door open for us to continue preaching the Word.



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### He Who Laughs - Lasts

#### Humor in the Cold War

Eastern Europe, during the Cold War days, was very depressing. Once, in preparation for a journey, I said to a pastor who would travel with us, "Even the grass and flowers look sad in the communist world."

"Come on, Bill" he responded. "Grass is grass no matter which side of the Iron Curtain it grows on."

"Just wait," I told him. "You'll see."

It dawned on him by the third day into our trip. "You were right," he affirmed, "even the flowers look sad in this part of the world."

The overwhelming senses of depression and despair in a godless society often made me wonder how the people lived under those circumstances. Christians were the great exception to these rules. The joy of the Lord was their strength.

When making contact with Christian friends we parked our car a mile or more from the home or apartment of those we intended to visit. We strolled in silence along the sidewalk. People did not speak to each other on the street. Even eye contact was avoided. Speaking English or German among ourselves would have attracted unwanted attention. We might have been followed and our visit to their home would have been compromised. Then, later on, the police would come: "Who were they?" "What did they want?" "What did they bring you?" "What did you tell them?" These would have been some of the questions demanding an answer if our visit was noticed. We wanted to spare them the hassle. Consequently after a visit we left the apartment and walked silently down the steps. No one spoke in the stairwell.

In the evenings, after a meeting in the Church, we would go to someone's apartment for supper. Romanians have a very large meal around 10 p.m. They would put the telephone under a few pillows, pile some blankets on top, and say "Goodnight" to the listening device installed (at the factory) in every phone.

For the next hour or so they would tell jokes about communism and we'd all crack up laughing. Humor was a therapeutic way of dealing with a very frustrating situation in which it was often impossible to please the communist masters.

Example: Three men were handcuffed and sitting in a railway car in East Germany waiting to be shipped off to Siberia. "Why are they sending you away?" his colleagues ask the first man. "I was five minutes early for work, and they accused me of spying," he replied. "What about you?" they asked the second one. "I was five minutes late for work, and they accused me of sabotage," he answered. "And what about you?" they enquired of the third man. "Well, I was on time," he responded "and they discovered I was wearing a watch made in West Berlin."

\* \* \* \*

We often heard people say, "The government pretends to pay us and we pretend to work."

\* \* \* \*

There's a story about the communist commissar who felt he needed to visit a psychiatrist. When he arrived at the doctor's office he was surprised to find several hundred people in the waiting room. He took a number and several hours passed before he was able to talk with the doctor. By the time he got in to see him, he had forgotten why he had come.

"Don't worry," said the doctor. "It happens all the time. I'll help you remember. Now, let's see, is it a financial problem?"

"No, no" said the commissar; "I have plenty of money. There's no meat in the shops, there are no groceries in the stores, and there's no gasoline at the station. I have plenty of money."

"Well then, is it a housing problem?" the doctor enquired.

"No, no, we have plenty of room in our apartment" the commissar assured him. "We have 450 square feet and there's just my wife and four children, plus my mother-in-law and my parents living with us. No, we have plenty of room."

"Well, is it a domestic problem then?" asked the doctor.

"Yes! That's it," exclaimed the commissar. "My wife and I have been having great arguments. She says that communism is 'scientific' and I say that it's political. What do you say?"

The psychiatrist turned up the volume on the radio in his office, then leaned over close to the commissar's ear. "You are right," he whispered. "It's political. If it had been scientific they would have experimented first of all with animals."

\* \* \* \*

Our longtime friend, Dr. Paul Negrut, discovered five contradictions in the communist system:

- No one works, but the Plan is accomplished.
- The Plan is accomplished, but at the market there is no food.
- At the market there is no food, but the people eat.
- The people eat, but they are not satisfied.
- The people are not satisfied, but they applaud.

\* \* \* \*

A Romanian newspaper reporter was writing an article on contented workers. He interviewed workers after a shift at the Ford plant in Detroit. They were frowning. The reporter asked, "Why are you frowning?"

"Because we have to work a year to buy a Ford car," they replied.

The reporter went to Stuttgart and interviewed workers after a shift at the Mercedes plant. They were frowning. The reporter asked, "Why are you frowning?"

"Because we must work four years to buy a Mercedes," they replied.

Then the reporter went to Brashov and interviewed Romanian workers leaving a factory. They were smiling! "Why are you smiling?" the reporter asked.

"Today we can buy cornflower (the smallest thing you can eat in Romania, from which they make *mamaliga*)!" they exclaimed.

\* \* \* \*

Many Romanian jokes had to do with food, namely the shortage of it. Example:

In former days you went to a macelaria (butcher shop) and inside was meat (carne). In communist times you went inside a carne (meat shop) and saw only the Butcher.

\* \* \* \*

In former days you went into a grocery store and there were shop assistants to help you find what you wanted. In communist times you went into a grocery store and there were tour guides who told you, "This is where the potatoes used to be. This is where the bread used to be. This is where the cheese used to be, etc."

\* \* \* \*

Some Christians (usually those devoid of any humor) compromised with the authorities during the communist times. Some even betrayed fellow Christians. Now that the situation has changed in Eastern Europe some of these compromisers and betrayers are presenting themselves as "heroes" to the many foreigners coming in to save the

country. The words to a traditional Romanian song about “heroes” have been altered slightly:

Heroes have been and heroes will be forever.

Errors have been and errors will be forever.

Errors have been and “heroes” they are now!

I think by now you have a small picture of the large part that humor played in helping the Christians to cope with the rigors imposed by communism. For the most part they have kept that keen sense of being able to see the funny side of life. Much has changed since the Revolution(s) in 1989, but humor still has a role to play.

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### God’s Guinea Pig

Mail was censored, phones were tapped, and informers were everywhere. I could never tell any of the Christians in advance that I was coming at such and such a time. Our trips were always planned in response to a definite leading of the Lord. The route we took, the people we visited, even the supplies we carried were all the result of His positive guidance. The success of any trip depended on His perfect timing. In circumstances like that it’s easier to understand the necessity to “pray without ceasing.”

Sometimes we were God’s guinea pigs. For example, it was a bitter cold day in early January when I arrived at Dr. Nick Gheorghita’s home in Oradea. Dr. Paul Negrut was already there. They were both surprised to see me, which was not unusual because, as usual, I had not told them I was coming.

I knew something was amiss when I saw the ‘knowing’ glances they exchanged.

“God has sent you at this time,” they said - almost in unison.

“Why? What’s up?” I asked innocently.

“Two days ago, Ceausescu issued a decree that no visitor from the West can speak to any group of Romanians on any subject under any circumstances without written approval from Bucharest,” Dr. Paul informed me. He was talking about Nicolae Ceausescu, the ruthless communist dictator of Romania.

“It’s called ‘Decree 407’” Dr. Nick explained.



“Well, it looks like I won’t be able to preach while I’m here this time,” I observed.

Dr. Paul disagreed. “You don’t understand. God has sent you here, at this time, to test this law.” He paused for a moment to let the implication of that statement settle in. “This is another one of those unwritten laws that Josef Tson exposed.”

A totalitarian police state can only function in a climate of fear. Some things are such an egregious violation of basic human rights and freedoms that the authorities cannot write them down. If they did, then somehow it might come to light in the West and make Romania look like a backward and repressive State. It might jeopardize their “Most Favored Nation” status.

The tyrant’s solution was rumor. Pass the word that this or that is “forbidden.” People are like sheep and will obediently follow without questions.

“The authorities have told the General Secretary of the Baptist Union to go around the country and explain to all the pastors that they cannot have any foreigners in their pulpit without written permission from Bucharest,” Dr. Nick explained.

“If we do not challenge this immediately,” Dr. Paul injected, “it will take effect by default.”

“I’m ready for whatever you have for me to do,” I responded, “but first, let’s pray about it.”

I remembered Dieter, whom I’d met a few years earlier in Bulgaria. He had explained to me how the communists maintain control of whole populations with a relatively small number of people. In response to my question: “What’s it like to live in a communist country?” Dieter replied in whispered tones, “You’re scared, you’re hungry and you are quiet.”

“You’re scared because you know the authorities have all the power. They can do anything they want to do. You have heard all sorts of stories about the prisons and the gulags and what goes on there,” Dieter continued. “Some of your friends have been in prison and you hardly recognized them when they finally got out. In such a climate of fear you cannot trust anyone. Your best friend might betray you to save his own neck. Sometimes even family members cannot be trusted.”

You’re hungry. This was evident everywhere. Food was rationed, deliberately kept in short supply. Romanian housewives spent an average of thirty-five hours a week just standing in line at shops whose shelves were virtually empty. If a large amount of time each day must be spent collecting enough food just to survive there was little or no time left over to plan counter-revolution.

“And you are quiet.” Dieter’s words still echoed in my ears. “You become just another automaton, to say ‘Yes sir, very good sir, whatever you say sir.’ The communists do not want everyone to become a communist. It is an elite organization.”

To my knowledge Dieter had never met either Dr. Nick or Dr. Paul. These two men (like many others we worked with in the “dark days”) were not afraid because they had discovered the truth that *“Perfect love casteth out fear.”*

The authorities had made it known to the leadership of the Baptist Union that the law was written, but not published. The President of the Baptist Union and the General Secretary, had become apparent tools of the State to bring pressure on the churches. In this way the government could say, “We are not persecuting the church. It is their own internal problem.” Thus a “law,” which no one had seen or read, was being used to intimidate weaker pastors. Those with more courage demand to see the statute in writing before they would abide by it. Obviously the government was reluctant to print or publish the decree because it would be very bad propaganda for the “worker’s paradise.”

My job, it turned out, was to travel around Romania preaching in as many churches as possible. This had not only the immediate benefit associated with proclaiming Christ, but pastors were encouraged to keep on keeping on. The trip was not without its ironies.

On Friday evening I was scheduled to preach at the Baptist Church in Lugoj. That afternoon the President of the Baptist Union arrived with the task of telling the pastor that he must not allow foreigners to preach in his pulpit. Pastor David, a fearless man of God, graciously received us both. He invited the President to stay for the evening service and to lead in prayer. Poor man; he looked and must have felt very uncomfortable sitting next to me on the platform that night.

Decree 407 withered and died as did many other unwritten rules and regulations, but not before being challenged. Challenged by brave men determined to *“obey God rather than men.”*

**Footnote:** Some months later the President of the Baptist Union invited me to preach in his church in Cluj. I was surprised, but agreed and a date was set. When I arrived at the Church on Sunday evening the room was packed. People were wedged tightly into the bench type pews. Several hundred were standing all around the edges and in the aisle, right down to the front. The President handed me a note before I went up the steps to the pulpit platform. I wondered, what does this mean? What could this man be trying to tell me at this moment?

While the choir sang I unfolded the small piece of paper. The only writing on it was a Scripture reference, “Acts 10:33.” I was puzzled. I recognized the chapter as a record of Peter’s visit to Cornelius in Joppa. What did that have to do with me? Then I opened my Bible and read the verse: “I sent for you . . . and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

It was easy to preach after that. Later, during the invitation, the President came forward and rededicated his life to Jesus Christ. Truly, *God is no respecter of persons.*



Bill overlooking Budapest, Hungary during a recent trip

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## 50

### The Miracle Revolution

#### Romania: December 1989

In November 1989 I had dinner in Cluj at number 50 Manistur with my longtime friend, Dr. Nelu Dan. He was a dentist by profession, but in reality he was a children's evangelist. Nelu shared with me that this would be the last time we could enjoy fellowship in his home because it was scheduled to be demolished. I had seen the bulldozers waiting ominously at the end of the street when I arrived. He had lived in the same memory-filled home since he was born.

If there were a single icon that symbolized the reign of Nicolae Ceausescu it would be the bulldozer. He destroyed entire villages where peasants had lived and farmed for generations and replaced their homes with ugly, high-rise, prefabricated concrete slab apartment buildings. In Bucharest, he cut a path almost two miles long and 300 meters wide through the heart of the capital to build the "Avenue of the Victory of Socialism." In its path many historic Churches and cultural landmarks were leveled. The unsightly gash led to a slight hill on which he built a modest 2,000-room palace as a monument to his ego. Now the bulldozers had reached Manistur.

Political earthquakes had been shaking Eastern Europe during all of 1989 leveling many governments. First, Poland had thrown off the shackles of communism, then Hungary. Czechoslovakia followed soon after. Yugoslavia was already non-aligned. Bulgaria was next. By November East Germany was coming apart and the Berlin Wall was

dismantled. Only Romania was left firmly in the totalitarian grip of a ruthless communist dictator.

In mid-December some demonstrations began in Timisoara. Ceausescu instructed his troops to maintain order, then left the country for a 3-day state visit to Iran. The situation deteriorated rapidly in his absence. So, conditioned to follow explicit orders from the dictator, no one seemed to know quite what to do.

People were in the streets shouting, "Down with Ceausescu" and demanding, "What's in the dollar shops, now in our shops," - a reference to the special stores where goods could only be purchased with foreign currency. As the wave of unrest spread, crowds smashed the windows of bookstores in the main Town Square, pulled out all books by Ceausescu and set them on fire. Dr. Paul Negrut mused, "Now for the first time, the writings of Ceausescu provide light."

As the situation got out of hand, Elena Ceausescu, the tyrant's Jezebel-type wife and First Deputy Prime Minister, ordered the total annihilation of Timisoara, a city of over 300,000 inhabitants. The Army refused to carry out the order. Many soldiers were shot by the Securitate, who then commandeered army tanks intending to crush the crowds. Because Ceausescu did not trust the Army he had kept them low on both ammunition and fuel. As the Securitate drove towards the center of town the tanks ran out of diesel and stopped.

Just before Christmas, plan "M" was activated. It was a senseless insane idea to punish the entire nation if ever the nepotistic Ceausescus were about to topple. The total destruction of Timisoara was an example. Another plan was to poison water reservoirs to kill entire populations. A group of terrorists were killed near Cluj-Napoca as they attempted to blow up a dam that would have virtually destroyed that beautiful Transylvanian university city.

Shortly after his return to Bucharest, Nicolae Ceausescu gave a speech in which the crowd of 100,000 angry citizens roundly jeered him. This had never happened. Fear was written all over his face as he left the balcony. Moments later his helicopter lifted off the roof pad and headed for a military base somewhere in the countryside.

It was a ruse. He was arrested and tried before a military tribunal. On Christmas day 1989, Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, were executed by a military firing squad. It was important that justice be swift in the trial and execution of the Ceausescus. Every moment's delay increased the risk of rescue by the Securitate, who were homing in on a radio signal emanating from his wristwatch. As long as he was alive the awful slaughter continued. The moment word went out, along with TV pictures, of his death the killing virtually stopped.

You can imagine the peasants joy in villages earmarked for destruction under the Ceausescu regime. For some the reprieve had come just hours before the bulldozers began their awful task. For the village of Vladiceasca, and several hundred others, it

was already too late. Today there is only a barren field where for generations a thriving little community had lived and loved and worked together.

Although I had just returned from Romania, I longed to get back immediately to be with my friends in their crisis hour. It was the end of the year and our mission funds were exhausted. Fortunately I had enough frequent flyer miles for a free round-trip ticket to Europe. I made plans to leave as soon as possible. ITMI Board members, Dr. Don Engram, Reverend Don Miller and Dave Culross agreed to go with me. We loaded up with medical supplies and Bibles. The pastors had financial gifts from their congregations. They covered the cost of renting a car in Vienna.

When we arrived, the first week in January 1990, the Romanian border guards greeted us with, "Welcome to FREE Romania!" Our visas were gratis and we didn't have to exchange the customary \$10 per day. They only casually looked in the trunk (boot), asked if we had Bibles and when we responded, "Yes," they said "Fine. We hope you enjoy your visit."

Gasoline was no longer rationed. Lines at the pumps were much shorter; average waiting time was 30 minutes versus 12 to 15 hours. There was no longer a prohibition on Sunday driving. In my 24 years experience (at that time) working in Romania, I had never seen anything like that which was taking place. People in the streets were talking, laughing and greeting one another. No one was a stranger. We traveled over 500 miles by car within Romania. People along the road smiled, waved and with two fingers extended gave us the "V" for victory sign. Soldiers and police did likewise.

We checked into a hotel, more out of habit than anything else. It was our base of operations for the week. We visited Christian friends in a wide area of the country, from Cluj to Timisoara. In Arad there was still sporadic gunfire two streets over from Pastor Bulzan's home. They had not buried all the casualties from the Securitate slaughter. It was bitter cold and the frozen bodies, many unidentified, were laid out in rows awaiting internment.

As we drove across the country there was a noticeable absence of any reference to socialism. There were no red stars or hammer and sickle insignia. Instead, church bells rang joyfully. Every Romanian tri-color flag had a hole cut in the yellow middle strip where the words "Republica Socialista Romania" had been.

Christian leaders were concerned about a spiritual vacuum in the country due to the long and oppressive atheist regime. Rodica, a district nurse in Cluj, went into a shop and the clerk was so interested in our visit that she asked for the address of the church so she could come and hear the Gospel. Previously when Rodica would greet her medical colleagues at work with "God bless you," they would respond, "Why do you say that? There is no god." Now they ask, "Where can we go to hear about the God you've told us about?"

For two generations the people had been told lies; "There is no god. We'll build a paradise on earth." The door was now open to spread the Truth in every city. Doctors

Nick and Paul were involved in finding solutions to the problems associated with the spiritual vacuum. Together with other responsible leaders, they expressed concern that the country might be flooded with all the negatives from the West including New Age, pornography, cults, heavy metal and AIDS. Romania needed a Christian alternative as quickly as possible to fill the void left by years of godless atheistic teaching.

Ninety percent of the evangelical churches had inadequate facilities because the previous regime denied permission to build, remodel or even redecorate. Many fine churches were bulldozed. They did not have Christian literature, newspapers or magazines. They needed training for child evangelism. Potential Christian leaders needed to be educated; new churches built to replace those destroyed by the atheists.

The question on everyone's mind was, "How will Romania look in two years?" Part of the answer lay in what Christians would do. Romania, with the largest number of Christians in Europe, East or West, had the spiritual potential to be a mission-sending nation and to evangelize the continent.

Every Christian leader we talked with showed a remarkable consideration for the communists who had so recently ruled their lives. There was a noticeable lack of desire for revenge. Apart from the top leaders and members of the Securitate responsible for years of atrocities and who must be tried as criminals and punished, the rank and file Party member joined more out of convenience than conviction. Many were students who would have been denied further education apart from Party membership.

"These are some of our most brilliant minds," observed Ovidiu Bulzan, an architect and dynamic young lay pastor in Arad. "No one else will have them now. Where will they turn? There is a great harvest to reap among these former Communist Party members." He concluded with a very relevant truth: "If we don't love them, we will lose them."

Dr. Paul Negrut, a leading spokesman for persecuted Christians in Romania observed, "From tyranny to democracy you must go through anarchy, because all the structures, political and economic, must be destroyed." Fortunately, the anarchy following Ceausescu's demise was relatively mild, non-violent and almost disciplined. For example: on Friday January 12 the interim government announced that the Communist Party was declared illegal. On Sunday the 14th the ban was rescinded and promised to be decided by a national referendum in two weeks. Before I left Europe, the national referendum had been cancelled. During those turbulent days it seemed that whatever group had the loudest voice in the streets got the attention of the media and decisions were made on the basis of volume rather than vote.

When, after seven days, we checked out of the hotel in Oradea the manager said, "There's no charge. You've brought medical supplies and other aid to our country and we are grateful." This generosity gave new meaning to the phrase that greeted us when we arrived: "Welcome to FREE Romania!"

Before leaving, I visited Nelu Dan in Cluj, at number 50 Manistur. His little home was still standing. He was beaming with joy. "Ceausescu was going to demolish my house, but God demolished Ceausescu!" he exclaimed.

Postscript: In the years immediately following the Romanian Revolution, IN TOUCH MISSION INTERNATIONAL (ITMI) continued to support evangelism, church planting and provide medical aid. Harriett Bathman, ITMI's Project Director, worked closely with Dr. Nick Gheorghita to establish the Bethesda Medical Clinic in Oradea and a dental clinic in a small village near the Serbian border. She also organized surgical teams to visit Romanian hospitals and share Western methods and technology.

We continued to use the strategy that had served us so well during the previous thirty years: to work alongside nationals. They already know the language, culture and customs of the people they serve. Our vision was to facilitate that service. In keeping with that vision ITMI helped to rebuild an orphanage, "Casa Dorca," in Prilipet, Romania.

One bright Sunday morning, on my next trip to Romania in March 1990, I preached from I Kings 17, Elijah by the brook. Afterwards, over lunch with the pastor, I said, "It's been our joy over these many years to be God's ravens, to bring you things from time to time. But you must understand something: '*... the brook is drying up.*' There is a day coming when God will judge my country for its national sins. I am concerned for Romania. Concerned that you will be able to continue after the financial umbilical cord linking you to America has been cut."

In the spring of 1992 the Lord led us, by a series of circumstances, to meet Dimitrie Stiopu, better known to his friends as Mitruts. He had already established several Christian businesses including a restaurant in Caransebes. Since that time we have worked closely with Mitruts, helping him to establish a training center for Christian businessmen.

The most urgent need is to help national workers build a Christian infrastructure. Since 1992 ITMI has helped establish Christian businesses in former communist countries to create a framework that will facilitate an ongoing ministry. In this way nationals can build their own churches, support their own pastors, establish Christian schools, print literature, evangelize their own people and send out mission teams.

Thus, in the time-honored tradition, the missionary works himself out of a job.

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## A Chronology

December 1, 1927 First saw the light of day. Don't remember a thing.

September 1933 Started school - Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Summer 1939 First drove a car by myself (on Daytona Beach).

August 1942 Moved from Chattanooga to Decatur (Atlanta), Georgia.

September 1942 Started High School in Decatur, Georgia.

December 1943 Got my driver's license, drove a grocery truck.

Spring 1944 Drove a laundry van (after school) and chauffeured.

Summer 1944 Bought my first car.

Summer 1945 Began racing in dirt-track competition. WWII was over!

May 1946 Graduated from High School, answered call to preach.

June 1946 Enlisted in the U S Navy, boot camp Bainbridge, Maryland.

August 46 NAS, Quanset Point, RI. Sept/Oct NAS Brunswick, Main.

January 47 Radar school Boston, Mass. My ship USS English DD696 {Home port: New Orleans, LA.

(sea duty) {Summer - Guantanamo Bay Cuba, Nassau Bahamas, {Kingston, Jamaica, Panama Canal etc. + many small islands. Preached first sermon, Baptist Church in Pontchartrain, LA.

May 1948 Honorable Discharge, USN Base, Pensacola, Florida.

June 1948 Met Harriett in Decatur, Georgia.

BJU years Sept. 8, 1948 Got SAVED, first time I ever heard the Gospel.

February 14, 1949 Began flight training.

March 8, 1949 First solo flight.

July 2, 1949 First cross-country solo flight.

July 6, 1949 Passed test for private pilot's license.

April 3, 1950 Purchased Piper "Vagabond" NC 4121H.

June - Aug. 1950 Western states itinerary with Julian Courteol.

October 1950 first hint of a "call" to Europe.

January 1951 answered "call" to Europe.



May 30 to late August - first SUMMER of ministry in Europe.

September 2, 1951 Married Harriett Elaine Wilhite.

October 27, 1951 flight in "Vagabond" to Lost Creek, KY.

June 1952 Graduated from BJU.

SUMMER 1952 to May 1953,

Bill and Harriett in Europe and British Isles.

Summer 1953 Returned on QUEEN MARY to USA for Evangelism.

September 1953 Pastor of Beulah Baptist Church, Douglasville, Georgia.

\* October 4, 1953 Deborah Elaine Bathman (born in Atlanta, Georgia).

October 1954 Resigned as pastor, went on evangelism in Cuba & BWI.

December 1954, sailed for Europe on the QUEEN ELIZABETH.

Jan 1955 - Mar 1956 Worked with Eric Hutchings, "Hour of Revival."

\* November 2, 1955 Linda Joy born in Eastbourne, Sussex.

March 1956 Launched out in evangelistic work in Britain.

April 1956 Two week Crusade in Tent Hall, Glasgow, Scotland.

August 1956 ALL ASH CRUSADE.

September 1956 Began forming Teams in each Crusade.

February 1957 Founded: National Evangelistic Teams (NETwork).

Summer 1957 Motor scootered across Europe; met Brother Andrew.

January 1958 Began continental work in Spain.

Summer 1959 and Summer 1960 spent in Germany.

\* November 16, 1960 Lenora Dawn born in Eastbourne, Sussex.

August 12, 1961 East Germany builds the Berlin Wall.

September 1961 Birmingham Crusade. Met Brian Bounds.

October 1961 Spanish Crusades (with Dave Foster) met George Verwer.

late Oct/Nov 1961 First trip behind Iron Curtain, to Yugoslavia.

February 1962 Founded "The Pioneers" evang. Team, with Brian Bounds.

March 1962 Beginning of serious, long term commitment to E. Europe.

Summer 1962 Farell House Student, L'abri, Switz. (Dr. Francis Schaffer).

October 1962 Began "Outreach" Crusade ministry in British Isles.

Summer 1963 Continental evangelism in Austria. Led an O.M. team.

Sept - Dec 1964 Studied German at Goethe Inst. in Bad Reichenhall.

Jan - Mar 1965 Searched for a house in Austria.

May 1965 Moved from England to Austria.

Summer and Autumn 1965 continued language study. (trips to E. Eur).

1966 - 1968 Work expanded rapidly into Eastern Europe.

Aug. 21, 1968 Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia.

May 2, 1970 Serious car crash in Austria on return from Yugoslavia.

September 21, 1970 moved into the Rosenhof.

October 1970 Began "In Touch" Radio program.

Sept. 1975 Sabbatical leave to "a place where it's warm and dry."

June 1976 transferred base of operations from Europe to USA.

1977 Evangelism and training nationals in USSR, Cyprus, Greece, Rhodesia, South Africa, Kenya, Egypt and middle-East. 1978 Began ministry with Global Outreach in E. Europe, Ireland.

Sept 1978 Harriett with me to South Africa, Argentina and Brazil.

1979 Many countries of Latin America and Central America.

1980 Six Republics of the USSR, ministry expands in South Africa.

January 1981 Founded IN TOUCH MISSION INTERNATIONAL.

Oct/Nov 1981 First trip to Japan, China, India and around the world.

March 28, 1982 Massive myocardial infarction Calgary, Alberta.

January 1983 First trip to Romania after the heart attack.

November 1984 began serious work in Poland.

1985 met Erlo Stegen & KwaSizabantu; ministry expands in Africa.

Oct/Nov 1987 Harriett with me to India, Bangladesh and Nepal.

January 1988 Lenora with me to South Africa; God calls her to S.A.

March 25, 1989 Lenora marries Peter Hammond in Cape Town.

November 1989 The Berlin Wall comes down.

Sept/Oct 1992 Ministry in Albania with Peter Hammond.

December 1, 1992 Bill reaches 65 (and no retirement in sight)!



Bill still enjoys preaching and evangelism at 71

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## Pictures



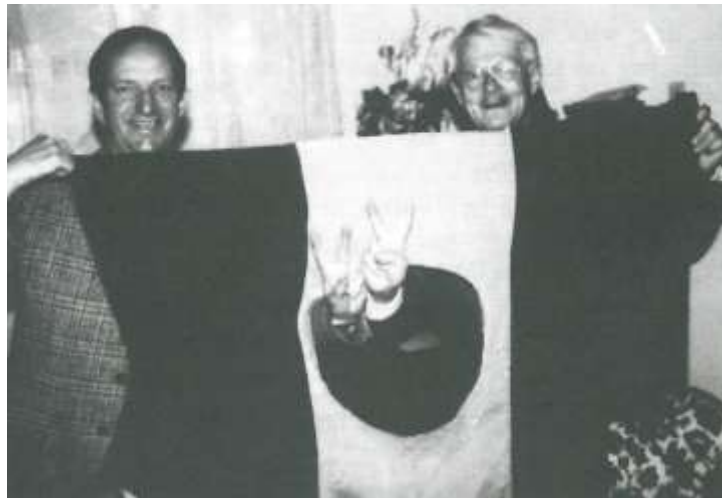
Bill with George Verwer in Madrid, 1961



Bill and Harriett, September 2, 1951



Summer Team, 1950: Julian Courteol, Ed White and Bill



Don Engram and Bill celebrate Romania's miracle Revolution

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## Family Matters

Some of our American friends, and particularly our parents, worried about our going overseas. They were concerned about the “sacrifice” we were making; the lost opportunities for our children and a host of other things that parents worry about. Although they were Christians, my folks never quite understood that God had called us to serve Him in Europe. They lived in the hope that one day we would “get over it” and return home. They never lost an opportunity to tell me of a church that was looking for a

Pastor, hoping I might “hear the call” and that someday we would return to America and “settle down.”

Eventually they resigned themselves to our living abroad. Twenty-two years overseas, without a furlough, helped them get used to the idea. After my dad retired, he and Betty, my stepmother, visited us several times in Europe. We took them on royal guided tours and they loved it.

Harriett and I had three daughters: Debbie, Linda Joy and Lenora. (We stopped with three children because we heard that every fourth child born in the world was Chinese!) It's fair to say we had most of the problems many parents encounter when raising children. Our kids were not always perfect - primarily because they had an imperfect dad - but they were ours. And we loved them. Looking back, with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, I would do things a lot differently. For one thing, I'd spend more time with my girls. I guess that's the lament of most parents.

Reminiscing on these pages would be incomplete without a sketch of our girls.

**Deborah Elaine** made her arrival in Atlanta, Georgia, our only child to be born in the U.S.A. She was fifteen months old when we returned to Europe to make our home in the British Isles. At that time she didn't have much say in the matter. She adjusted to where we lived right along with her mom and dad. From her earliest childhood she wanted to be a schoolteacher. As a little girl she would line up her dollies at a desk or table, place a book in front of them and then, using a little blackboard, “teach” them their ABC's from the front of the class. Debbie was our intellectual. I'm sure she got that from her mom. She was always first in her class.

Debbie began school in Eastbourne, England and was ready to take her 11+ exams about the time we transferred our base of operations to Austria in August of 1965. We wondered how the children (we had three by then) would fare studying in a new language.

Harriett talked with the Head Mistress at the Austrian Volksschule. She suggested that, since the girls had started to school in England at an earlier age than the children in Austria, it might be best to let them repeat a year (during which time they would learn the language) than try to have them learn both a new language and new subjects. We all agreed.

Debbie didn't speak any German when she started to school in September. There was no bilingual education program. Austria is a German speaking country, so if you want to live and function in Austria you must speak German. She was totally immersed (a good Baptist term) in both the language and culture of her new home. By Christmas time she was fluent in German and had accelerated to the next grade.

Harriett learned and spoke German better than I did, because I was travelling constantly in Eastern Europe with the team. She helped the girls with their homework; laboriously prepared shopping lists before going to the village store and participated in Eltern Sprechtag - a ‘moment of truth day’ when parents meet teachers.

Debbie's grades were perfect. If for some reason she dropped to second place in her class, there was no living with her until she made it up and was again in first place. She won a scholarship to the University of Salzburg on the basis of her academic ability.

Our local church activities centered on the Baptist Church in Salzburg. There, in the youth group, Debbie met Hans Pelzmann. He was six years older than she was and had a good job at the local Ford dealership. I don't know if it was love at first sight, but they saw a lot of each other. European young people did not "date" or "go steady" as their American counterparts did. Their social activities were almost always in a group comprised of church or school peers.

Hans was special. His parents found Christ through the ministry of an American missionary, and he told us - later - he always planned to marry an American girl. His love for the great outdoors involved mountain climbing and skiing. Debbie shared these joys. He was the only sweetheart Debbie ever had and she was the only girl he was ever interested in. They were married in July 1972, when she was only eighteen, which of course is far too young as any father will testify concerning his first daughter.

In fact, they were married twice, in two languages and in two countries. The first ceremony, a civil one required by law in Austria, was in the morning at the picturesque Mirabelle Palace in downtown Salzburg. The English-speaking service was in the afternoon at the lovely Alpine Inn Chapel in Berchtesgaden, Germany. Their reception was at the Rosenhof, our alpine mission headquarters.

All Austrian schools, whatever the discipline, are serious about two things: music and skiing. Every teacher in the Austrian system must be proficient not only in the area of their expertise, but also in skiing and at least one musical instrument. As soon as Debbie finished her studies at the University she got a job teaching in a local Austrian school just over a mile from where they lived.

**Linda Joy** arrived in November 1955 at the end of our first year in England. She was, as her name implied, a joy. From her early years she was destined for the theater. Linda was our diminutive artist and actress. As a little girl she would dress up in mommy's clothes, prance around in high heels and put on a show. Her sense of humor was contagious.

Linda Joy was nine years old when we moved to Austria. Of all our children, she seemed to miss England the most. Each of our girls spoke with a 'proper' English accent, but Linda Joy sounded like the BBC. She picked up German very quickly however and soon felt at home. Her desire to study dramatic arts never diminished.

We were all delightfully surprised when, at age twelve, she wrote a play. It was a comedy satire about life in the seventh grade. She typed the script, recruited her neighborhood peers, rehearsed their lines and set a date for the performance. For two weeks before the big day I couldn't park the car in the garage because that was the "stage." We rigged up a curtain. She painted posters to place on trees in strategic spots around the village, and sold tickets for the two scheduled performances.

On the morning of the play, Linda Joy made Kool Aid and had some cookies for sale that mom had baked. Everyone loved the show! It was so popular that she had to have a repeat "command" performance. After all her expenses were met she had a profit of 480 Austrian shillings - nearly \$20. Not bad for a long day's fun when you're twelve years old. We wondered what she'd do with her newfound wealth.

Several weeks later, Harriett was cleaning up Linda Joy's room. Tidiness was not her strong point. Amidst the "things" on her desk was a receipt from the International Mission to Lepers for 480 Austrian shillings. We remembered a visit to our Church by one of their missionaries a month before. The entire proceeds from her very first theatrical production had gone to this worthwhile cause! Now we knew what she had done with her newfound wealth.

By sixteen, Linda Joy was in the Wirtschaftskundliches Bundesreal Gymnasium für Maedchen in Salzburg. It was an "A" level academic high school, but she was not a happy camper. Her dreams were of the theater. Her goal was to attend the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Europe's premier school of music and dramatic arts.

As a Christian and as her dad, I was concerned about her undeniable and growing interest in the theater. I was thinking as an American. "Honey, I'm uncomfortable about your plans to become an actress," I told her.

"Why, Dad?" she wondered. "When our Lord Jesus said, 'Go into all the world' don't you think that means the theatrical world as well? Who's going to witness to artists in that field?"

Her logic was devastating. She was born and raised in Europe, so naturally she thought like a European. I needed to consider how they think. Theater in the European culture is quite different to the American counterpart. In many cases the sense of nationhood is preserved by two time-tested factors: the Church and dramatic arts. It is the means for cultural mores, social values and behavior to be passed on from one generation to the next. In America we have TV sitcoms, fast food and drive-thru banks, but precious little that binds us together culturally. Some even bow the knee to multi-culturalism and in the process leave God out of our American culture completely.

Linda Joy's interests were classical theater: Kleist, Moliere and Shakespeare. Her special area was children and their interests. With money she had saved and a little help from her dad, Linda Joy bought a small Honda 50cc motorcycle. This solved a big transportation problem, as her school was ten miles from where we lived in Grossgmain. Some solutions have dangers attached. This was no exception.

One afternoon it began to rain as Linda Joy left school. The road was dry under the archway of the Art Gallery and Museum, but as she leaned into the curve at the exit the cobblestones were wet. The little motorcycle slipped and landed on top of her, breaking her left leg. Several hours later, long after she was due home, we received a phone call from the Landeskrankenhaus (County Hospital) with the news. We rushed to the infirmary only to find her with a big smile, hobbling around on a cast with the aid of a



crutch and busy looking after the elderly lady with whom she shared a double room. That was Linda Joy. She seemed always to be genuinely concerned about others, especially children and the elderly.

In the days that followed, Linda Joy became a real friend to this dear woman. She would bring her fresh water, fluff her pillow, rearrange the flowers and read to her for hours. In the process Linda Joy shared her frustration concerning high school and told of the dream that one day she would attend the Mozarteum. The old lady listened with interest while a plan was developing in her mind.

One day, toward the end of the first week, the woman's son visited the hospital. The lady introduced Linda Joy and told him all about how much help she had been to her and the fun they'd had together. She told her son how dissatisfied Linda was with high school and how she longed to enroll in the Mozarteum.

"How old are you?" the son inquired.

"Sixteen, sir," Linda responded.

A look of concern crossed his face. "That's a bit young for the Mozarteum," he said. "The minimum age is eighteen, but I'll see what I can do."

*What did he mean, I'll see what I can do? Linda thought. Who was this man?*

Turns out, the lady's son was one of the directors at the Mozarteum! He arranged for an exception to be made. Shortly after her release from hospital, Linda Joy had an audition that included two monologues, one classic and one modern. They liked what they heard. She was offered a Begabten Stipendium (talent scholarship). Her credits were transferred from high school and she began studies for her dramatic arts career. Her classmates called her "Linda Baby." Three years later she graduated with honors - the youngest student in the history of the school!

**Lenora Dawn**, our youngest daughter, was born at dawn on November 16, 1960 in Eastbourne, Sussex, England. We named her after my mother, Lenora, who was the youngest daughter of her mother whose name was also Lenora. She wasn't quite five years old when we moved to Austria.

Every village in Austria has its own dialect. Some natives speak only the local dialect and never really learn German. Lenora was the only one in our family that spoke the local dialect. Her two older sisters began by learning Hochdeutsch in school. Winter arrived by the time she was five. We put skis on her, pushed her out the front door and she skied down hill to the local kindergarten. It was a sport she was born for.

Skiing was a family sport we all enjoyed. "C'mon kids," I shouted, "let's slap on the boards and bomb the slopes." By the end of the first year in Austria, however, all our children were on the advanced runs while Harriett and I stuck conservatively to the intermediate grades.

One day, while we were on the slopes, a gentleman visiting Austria asked our girls, "What's the matter with your parents? You speak better German than they do and you ski better than they do!"

Each year Austrian public school teachers take their classes into the mountains to a youth hostel for ten days of skiing. It's a way of life in alpine communities. The children have ski instruction in the morning, practice what they've learned in the afternoon and then have one academic class in the evening - just to remind them that they are still "in school." The teacher watches for the most promising skiers. These are separated from the rest and given special coaching to improve their skills.

Lenora was always in the group that was selected for advanced instruction. In her youthful *naivete* she didn't know that they were grooming her for the Olympics. After all, they've got to start somewhere. Whenever I pointed this out to her, she downplayed my paternal pride with an exasperated: "Daddy!"

Lenora was the only one of our three daughters that came with us to America when the Lord transferred our base of operations from Austria to Arizona in 1976. Debbie was married and teaching school, plus expecting their first child. Linda Joy was a professional actress in classical theater in Germany. The move appealed to Lenora because she could get her driver's license two years earlier than her peers in Salzburg. The only downside: she couldn't ski in the desert.

Age-wise she was a junior in high school, but it didn't offer her an academic challenge. European schools were at least two years ahead of their US counterparts, plus she was fluent in both German and English and had studied French as a foreign language. Still there was a lot to learn. She was unfamiliar with the rules of American football and on one occasion a gym teacher, with a sense of humor, sent her all over school looking for a "scrimmage line." She thought it was something with which you tie up something else.

After graduation from high school we discussed where she should go for further education. Her first choice was Northern Arizona University (NAU) at Flagstaff. Last time I checked, the elevation was 7,200 feet above sea level and there were mountains all around. In addition, there was snow on the mountains in winter, and guess what - there was skiing on the snow on the mountains!

"Your ole dad wasn't born yesterday," I assured her. "I know why you want to go to NAU. If you go up there to school you'll have to promise me one thing."

"What's that Dad?" she asked, almost with dread.

"You'll have to promise me that you won't let your studies interfere with your skiing," I sternly informed her.

NAU was a good experience for Lenora. On our missionary income we couldn't afford to send her out of state or to a private Christian school. As a resident of Arizona she could attend at a reasonable rate of tuition. She worked as a ski instructor during the winter

and won many contests in women's free-style downhill competition. In the off season she got a job as a waitress at a nice local restaurant.

She was in her second year at Northern Arizona University before she had any new subjects academically. After that it was work. There was still time for off campus activities at the local Baptist Church where she met a nice young man who was preparing for the ministry. They sang beautifully together and served the Lord joyfully. He was confident that she was going to be his wife and told her so, but Lenora didn't share his assurance. They agreed to be "just friends" at a distance.

That distance would soon increase after graduation as Lenora went to England for a year of Bible study at "Capernwray," Major Ian Thomas's Torchbearer center near the Lake District. This was followed by a year of missionary work at the Torchbearer facility in Schladming, Austria.

Looking back we can see this as one of the Lord's ". . . all things." Just as He had let me fly for three years, He let Lenora be involved in a ministry that catered to alpine sports. The door to the mission house where she lived was less than 100 feet from a gondola lift that, in 26 minutes, took her to the top of the Alps and provided her with breath-taking runs down olympic slopes.

Lenora's trek from Austria to Africa and how she met her future husband, Dr. Peter Hammond, is "a book" in itself. I will have to pen that pilgrimage in a later chronicle or leave it for a worthier scribe.

Just this for now: When all is said and done, it's **family** that matters.

## About the Author

Bill Bathman is a missionary evangelist. His message is Christ-centered and Bible based. He and his wife, Harriett, spent 22 years in Europe, without a furlough, working first from a base in the British Isles and later from Salzburg, Austria. The primary focus for his ministry during the Cold War years was behind what Winston Churchill called the "Iron Curtain," the communist bloc of nations in Eastern Europe.

For ten years, Bill was host for "In Touch," a daily radio program with news and interviews from a Christian perspective. It was heard on many US stations and in the Caribbean. Since 1977 he has travelled regularly to southern Africa. He worked in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) over a period of three years during the long war there. When missionaries were denied a visa to war zones and other danger areas, he went in as a 'correspondent' - often on a military flight.

Bill is founder and Director of IN TOUCH MISSION INTERNATIONAL, dedicated to serving persecuted Christians in the communist world and other restricted-access countries. He and Harriett have three children and ten grandchildren. For over 20 years

Bill has written and published Global Glance, a monthly geo-strategic analysis from a Christian perspective. His insight into current events in the light of biblical prophecy is further enhanced by extensive travel through more than 95 countries. He is regarded as a missionary statesman.